

Place, People, and Health: Korean Apartment Residents' Experiences of
Local Social Relationships and Their Effects on Mental Health and Well-being

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A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2019

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Built Environment

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Abstract

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How can neighborhood environment affect residents' mental health and well-being? In the broad context of understanding this mechanism, this dissertation focuses on the residents' social relationships based on the neighborhood and their effects on mental health and well-being. Concentrating on the experiences of the apartment residents in Pangyo, Seoul metropolitan area, Korea, this study discusses and seeks answers to the following questions: 1) what are the nature/characteristics (essences) of experienced local social relationships of residents in the neighborhood which consists of multi-layered high-rise apartment complexes; 2) how do spatial characteristics of such residential settings contribute to the experiences of local social relationships; and 3) how do residents' experiences of local social relationships from their everyday living environment contribute to their mental health and well-being.

Through a phenomenological research, including dialogical-conversational interviews and thematic analysis, the discourse of twenty-eight women residents about their years of experiences in the neighborhood were explored. Except for the relations established through

local institutions, participants formed their relations with their neighbors by repetitively encountering them in and around the apartment complexes. The spatial settings of apartment complexes, however, did not actively support these place-based encounters because of the highly compartmentalized spatial structures with a short moving line. Thus, the places of possible encounters were generally limited to the common use spaces which participants had to pass through in the course of their everyday lives — such as the elevators, and the entrance areas of the buildings and the underground parking lots.

The local social relations experienced by participants have both positive and negative effects on their mental health and well-being. In other words, local social relationships are multifaceted and have complex relationship with health. Participants found that the existence of neighbors and interactions with them contributed to their mental health and well-being. They received emotional social support, which helped them cope with daily stress and keep positive mood, from their intimate neighbors and generally positive relationships with neighbors. They also received diverse instrumental support from their local social networks thanks to the physical proximity and related immediacy. Participants had mostly shallow relationships with their neighbors and further they had generally low sense of belonging to their everyday living place, but these experiences did not seem to have strong effects on their mental health and well-being within the socioeconomic context of this neighborhood. However, the superficiality of social relationships which primarily centered around participants' children rather than themselves, was experienced as stressful. These relations seemed to have negative effects on mental well-being, interlinking with the competitive children education and related comparisons. The general social comparisons between neighbors, beyond the education issue, also made participants feel inferiority and stressful.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My Ph.D. journey was filled with opportunities, the joy of learning, and achievements. At the same time, it was difficult with lots of challenges and uncertainties. I know that I could not have completed the journey and this dissertation without invaluable support and love from many people.

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my doctoral dissertation committee. Professor Robert Mugerauer, my adviser and committee chair, I don't know how to thank him enough for what he has done for me in the past six years. His intellectual and emotional support, encouragements, insights, and belief in me and my research have led me to proceed and finish this long journey. I sincerely thank Professor Jeffrey Hou who has always provided appropriate and timely support for my research. I have learned a lot from his friendly but also inspirational attitudes. I also would like to deeply thank Professor Christopher Campbell for his careful and thorough reading of my manuscript and for valuable comments. It greatly helped me improve the manuscript as well as informed me about the significance about the study. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Ann Vander Stoep, my GSR, for her continuous support, time, and attention for me. Her guidance in the area of mental health, including psychiatric epidemiology courses and constructive advices, was very helpful for my research.

I appreciate all the faculty and staff of the Ph.D. program of the Built Environment, College of Built Environments, and Department of Urban Design and Planning for providing academic and financial assistance. I am particularly grateful for having opportunities to create and teach the brand-new BE undergraduate courses (BE 200 & 220) with my brilliant Ph.D. colleagues and advisers. I would like to thank the Fulbright Program, which funded my early years of doctoral study. In addition to the financial support, the program provided me great opportunities to meet and connect with wonderful people around the world.

I want to sincerely thank my study participants, the women residents of Pangyo new town for generously participating in this research project and willingly sharing their life stories with me. Your stories allowed me to recognize what seems trivial is not in fact trivial and the significance of humanistic research.

My sincere thankfulness also goes to my colleagues and friends. My colleagues at UW, thank you so much for your presence and companionship in this period. Sharing thoughts, experiences, and good and bad time with you was the essential part of my Ph.D. journey. I also want to thank my precious friends who have always supported and believed me.

I would like to send my deepest gratitude to my family. My parents, Ung-Hwoe Gu and Gwang-Ju Yun, I believe that I was born with the best thing that I can ever have in my life: you two. I am profoundly grateful for your endless love, support, and prayers throughout the duration of my doctoral study. My sister Ja-Hye and brother Ja-Sung, I am deeply thankful for your presence in my life. Thank you so much for your encouragements and all the casual conversations that made me smile. My husband, Jonathan (Keon-Ho), I do appreciate your all kinds of support that indeed helped me finish up the dissertation. Thank you for always reminding me that I don't need to be perfect and making me feel OK even when everything is crumbling.

I also want to thank all the memories from Seoul, the air, lakes, trees, and local beers and wines of Seattle, and the museums, libraries, and art centers of NYC. They gave me great joy and energy.

DEDICATION

To my people and places

There is a myth, sometimes widespread, that a person need do only inner work, in order to be alive like this; that a man is entirely responsible for his own problems; and that to cure himself, he need only change himself... The fact is, a person is so far formed by his surroundings, that his state of harmony depends entirely on his harmony with his surroundings. Some kinds of physical and social circumstances help a person come to life. Others make it very difficult.

-- Christopher Alexander, in The Timeless Way of Building, p.109

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Our everyday life and who we are cannot be considered in isolation from our everyday living environment. Where we live is strongly related with the style we see and experience the world, the people we meet, and the way we understand ourselves. In this context, researchers have claimed that place, or more specifically neighborhood, is relevant for human health and well-being because it constitutes as well as contains social relations and physical attributes of our life (Cummins et al., 2007; Diez Roux & Mair, 2010). According to Curtis (2010), place and space where people live their everyday lives are not just containers for epidemiological processes; rather, they can contribute to processes which constitute health variations among individuals. This dissertation starts here, with a primary question of how place can affect our health and well-being, especially in terms of mental or psychological dimension.

As mental health has been considered as a matter of individual rather than environmental features, the broader level place effects have been understudied for a long time (Kim, 2008). This tendency has changed with an awareness that the etiology of mental health is complex, requiring the action and interaction of genes and diverse types of environmental factors (Tsuang, 2000). In

the field of mental health research, socio-economic condition or social stratification has been the most well-studied non-individual level factor. There have been a number of trials to explore how economic deprivation and material poverty are associated with poor mental health including well-known classical studies such as Durkheim (1897). One important issue in the study of the socioeconomic condition effects on mental health is whether or not the result is caused from the effects of the area deprivation. It was frequently assumed that any associations observed between places and health came from the population characteristics (Macintyre et al., 2002). However, in the studies of the late 1990s, most investigators started to conclude that where you live matters for health, even though it is probably not as much as who you are (Pickett & Pearl, 2001).

With the increasing concern on place effects on health, neighborhood-level environments have recently received particular attention. Many studies have examined the effects of neighborhood poverty on mental health (Silver et al., 2002; Stafford & Marmot, 2003), however, recent advances have focused on how other environmental characteristics of neighborhood — such as social cohesion, safety and crime, social and physical disorder, local food environments, and accessibility to diverse amenities — can influence health (Cummins et al., 2007). On this research issue, there has been an increase in the number of studies over the last two decades (Araya et al., 2006; Duncan et al., 2013; Echeverria et al., 2008; Galea et al., 2005; Gary et al., 2007; Lowe et al., 2014). Nevertheless, still, little is known about the effects of neighborhood environment on mental health with the inconclusive study findings — while some studies have reported evidence of relationships between neighborhood features and mental health, others have shown no or contradictory relationships between them. These inconsistent study results seem to reflect the poor understanding of the complexities underlying the relationship between neighborhood environment and mental health, which may partly come from a lack of any clear

theorizing about the mechanisms linking them (Evans, 2003; Saarloos et al., 2009; Lachowycz & Jones, 2013). Indeed, despite the recent high interests in this research discipline, limited progress has been made in the task of uncovering *how* neighborhood environments can affect mental health (O'Campo et al., 2009). As a matter of fact, finding underlying mechanisms could be the most difficult intellectual challenge for researchers who are interested in the relationship between place and mental health (Evans, 2003). It is mainly because there are undoubtedly complex and diverse pathways linking neighborhood environments and residents' mental health, which expose "how little we know about the way neighborhoods shape subjective experience and ultimately determine the psychological and physical health of their residents (Kirchner & Shiffman, 2016, p. 1212)."

Even though it would be very difficult, the task of finding the mechanism of how neighborhood environments can affect health is paramount at this time. Then, how can we approach the complex '*how*' question in the relationship between neighborhood environment and mental health? To answer the question, researchers have suggested conceptual frameworks or explanatory models which attempt to select and relate a dizzying array of relevant factors within the complex system, such as Northridge & Schulz (2003, see Figure 1-1). However, reflecting the inherent complex nature of the relationship between place and health, these frameworks are often contradictory to each other, and there is no one used with clear consensus. Nevertheless, these diverse attempts seem to make a gradual progress. Recently, with an attention on the high complexity of the relationship between place and health, researchers note that there is a need for further understanding of the underlying explanatory processes that can account for the linkage

between place and mental health and well-being (Wells & Harris, 2007).

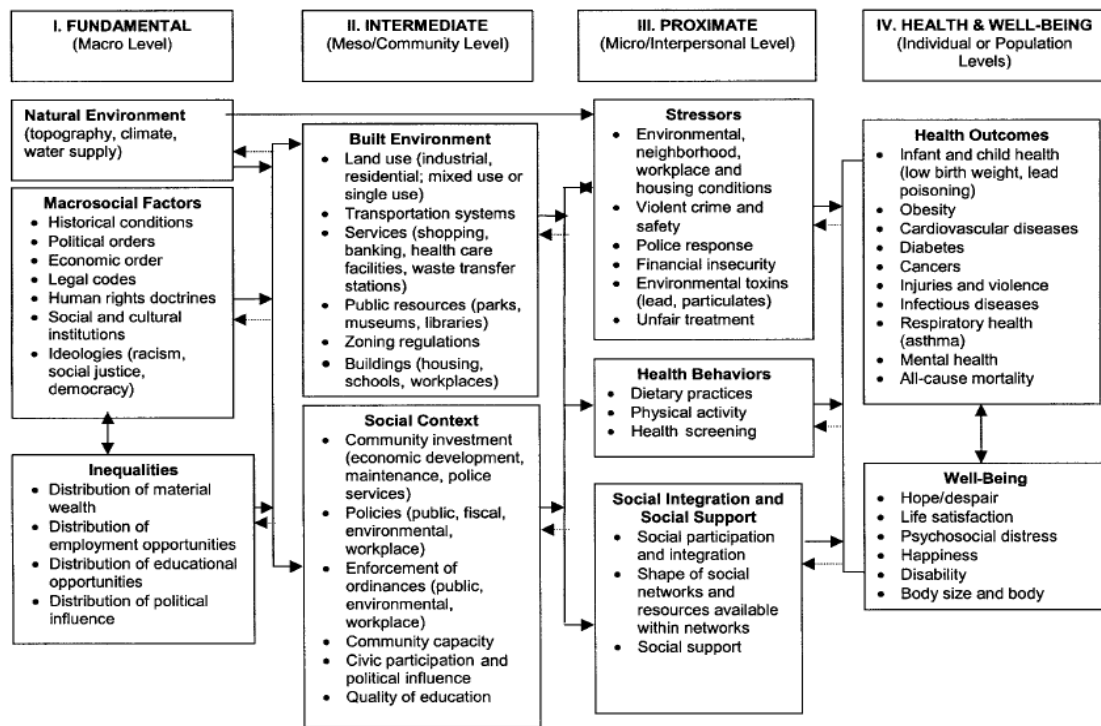


Figure 1-1. A conceptual framework for navigating pathways and planning healthy cities
Excerpted from Northridge & Schulz, 2003, p. 559

Specifically, in their recent reviews of studies on neighborhood and mental health, many researchers have emphasized the significance of understanding about how environmental characteristics are linked to individual-level behavioral or psychosocial processes, and then have effects on our mental health (Barnett et al., 2017; Clark et al., 2007; Diez Roux & Mair, 2010; Evans, 2003; Fong et al., 2018; Gascon et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2016; Kim, 2008). Because health outcome is presented at the individual level, neighborhood-level environment necessarily exerts its influences on mental health through individual-level processes (Diez Roux, 2001), by altering people’s behavioral and psychosocial pathways (Evans, 2003; Kim, 2008). In terms of the individual-level processes, literatures have suggested possible behavioral or psychosocial

factors — even though they are various and inconsistent—, such as *physical activity, social support, stress and mastery, place attachment or identity, and fear of crime*. For instance, neighborhood physical characteristics may influence the level of physical activity such as walking, which in turn can have effects on mental health. Or, neighborhood may affect individuals' health through their symbolic meaning-making about the place. Considering the level of complexity of the relationships between place and health, identifying and focusing on each individual process at a time seems a reasonable approach to answer the question of how neighborhood environment can affect residents' mental health.

Among these diverse factors, social support (or social cohesion, social integration, social capital, and many other related concepts) through social relations based on neighborhood is most frequently and importantly discussed across the disciplines. On the one hand, researchers have attempted to explain how neighborhood environments can affect residents' social relations by focusing on diverse factors (Leyden, 2003; Hanibuchi et al., 2012). The neighborhood characteristics which can be influential on social relations are various, including regional poverty (Sampson & Grove, 1989; Rankin & Quane, 2000), social diversity/homogeneity (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Costa & Kahn, 2003; Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2010), and physical design (Paranagamage et al., 2010; Wilkerson et al., 2012). On the other hand, there are many studies on the association between social support and mental health at neighborhood level, especially as health researchers have focused on the effects of social capital or community on mental health (Araya et al., 2006; Echeverria et al., 2008; Harpham et al., 2004; Mair et al., 2010; Mitchell & LaGory, 2002). Furthermore, there are few empirical studies which examined the mediating role of social relations and support in the association between neighborhood (or housing) and mental health (Brown et al., 2009; Kruger et al., 2007; Wells & Harris, 2007).

These studies, in spite of their importance and contribution in articulating the pathways, show inconsistent and often contradictory outcomes. The inconsistency may not be surprising considering the complex, multi-faceted topic itself (Cummins et al., 2007; Saarloos & Timmersmans, 2009). Because the concepts covered in this topic, such as ‘neighborhood’, ‘social relations’, or ‘health’ are all “dynamic and process-oriented and not static or linear outcome-oriented phenomena” (Almedom, 2005, p. 944), it is difficult to address them solely by means of quantitative methodological approaches (Cowley, 1997). In the same vein, Almedom (2005) noted that qualitative research can complement the statistical studies by shedding light on the intractable relationships between neighborhood social environment and mental health. In her comprehensive review of the studies on community social relations and mental health, Curtis (2010) also concluded that qualitative studies conducted in particular neighborhoods provided most convincing evidence about how neighborhood social environments can affect people’s mental health. According to Curtis, qualitative studies can provide insights into the “intricate associations between material and social conditions and health and well-being” (Curtis, 2010, p. 117), which may not be deterministic but quite complex.

In this sense, I found a need to conduct intensive qualitative case studies based on documentation of individuals’ particular experiences of local social relations and mental health. As Cummins et al. (2007) point out, intensive qualitative approaches are valuable in that they are powerfully suggestive of pathways relating environmental contexts to people, but these approaches have been poorly integrated into empirical research in this area. Through an intensive case study focusing on the role of local social relationships, we can get a much richer and nuanced understanding of how, why, and in what contexts individuals’ local social relations are

experienced in their everyday living environment. Further, in that process, we can also observe how the experiences of social relations can specifically influence their health and well-being.

Qualitative approach to the complexity

In this research, the topic and goals of the research have decided the research methodology. With my long-standing interests of understanding the mechanism between place and mental health, I originally thought about conducting quantitative research which may investigate the effects of physical residential settings on mental health by using statistical analysis methods. However, in the process of doing literature review and developing research questions, I came to realize that I needed somewhat different methodological approaches in order to explore the primary research question: ‘how’ and ‘why’ the residential environments/neighborhood affect residents’ mental health and well-being. When little is known about a research topic or problem, a qualitative approach is often used to get insights about the problem. As discussed earlier, despite the surprising progress in the field of research on neighborhood environment and mental health, we know little about how they can be linked. For instance, when we focus on the role of local social relationships (among numerous other environmental attributes), understanding of how neighborhood contexts are manifested in the characteristics of social relations and how specifically the social relations can provide social support or stress and then contribute to mental health remains largely inconclusive (Campbell, 1999).

Also importantly, the underlying mechanisms which link the residential environment and mental health would consist of dynamically complex interrelationships between diverse attributes. Therefore, I cannot study the whole mechanism at once; at the same time, since those relationships are tightly interrelated as a whole, it cannot be a matter of singling out just one

aspect and then seeing how one causes the other. In this context, the important question is how to study the whole mechanism without reducing it to isolated parts. Regarding this, Lewontin and Levins (2007) claim that processes of abstraction that can give rise to useful models should be conducted as a way of investigation in understanding the whole. There are diverse types of systems we would like to study such as organisms, ecosystems, and societies which are different in their components and the structures of their processes. Although they are all different, they are still some kinds of systems that can be abstracted with elements and feedbacks (Lewontin & Levins, 2007). That is to say, whatever the model, the core relation is a feedback loop—whether it is simple and direct or much longer and indirect—since feedback must occur between the interacting elements of the system. Then, we can set up the most basic elements and feedback loops between them first, and then build stories from there. In this context, this study looks at the entire scene without separating each attribute but focuses on the *role of social relationships (and following social support or other psychosocial results)* in the mechanism as the most basic and significant element. In other words, since the relationships between place and mental health are intrinsically complex systems, the role of social relationships in the mechanism is mainly explored to allow the structures of these phenomena to emerge from the whole.

1.2 The Study Site

In exploring and addressing the research issue, this study concentrates on the case of apartment complexes in Seoul Metropolitan Area, South Korea. A surprising uniformity in housing type is observed in this country: more than a half of Korean people currently live in similar-looking high-rise apartment buildings (KOSIS, 2016). It would be no exaggeration to say that apartments have been at the center of Korean people's lives after the country's urbanization. When Korean people reflect on their lives, apartment is frequently, almost always, cited in their

stories: an apartment as evidence for their diligence and hard work for their family or as a subject of sad experience by reluctantly selling it because of the economic hardship (Ahn, 2013). At the same time, the very fact that South Korea is known as one of the most stressed-out countries with the highest suicide rate among the OECD countries (Kim & Ohtake, 2014) let me wonder how the unique dominant living environment, a major constituent of people's daily lives but mostly unnoticed, can contribute to social relations between residents and ultimately lead to their mental health and well-being.

In this section, I will briefly describe the prior Korean studies on apartments and mental health and apartments and social relations, and then explain my research approach on this issue. First, in terms of the studies on how living in apartments affect mental health¹, a few recent studies investigated the effects of characteristics of apartment housing on mental health (Table 1 in Appendix A). The covered characteristics are largely limited to safety/convenience of living place or housing type (public rental or private apartments) with an attention on the segregation problem of the disadvantaged people (Han & Jun, 2018; Lee, 2012; Lim, 2013), rather than include diverse social or physical characteristics of the place. Studies with a focus on social environments of apartments are very limited. K. Kang et al. (2009) and Han & Jun (2018) found that apartment residents who had better social relationships with their neighbors had better mental health, but there is only one study which focused on the association between neighborly relationships and mental health at housing level (Shin et al. 2018). Shin and colleagues found

¹ As Korean apartment housing usually exists as a form of large complex (It will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3), apartments seem to be covered at both housing and neighborhood level in these studies. I also summarized studies which focus on the environmental characteristics of the broader level neighborhoods and their effects on mental health (Table 2 in Appendix A). As researchers in urban planning fields showed higher interests in this topic (Kim et al., 2017), there are more studies which examined the associations between physical characteristics of neighborhood and mental health. Studies which examined the effects of social environmental characteristics (including social relations) showed no associations between neighborhood social capital and health, and these results may be due to the use of data collected at the large size administrative area (Han, 2013).

that town house residents had a higher level of subjective depressive symptoms than apartment or detached house residents and that apartment residents had lower depressive symptoms when they had a higher sense of belonging and trust with neighbors. However, as this study was not conducted in specific places, the local contexts were not considered in the analysis.

Second, there are plenty of studies on how characteristics of apartment housing can affect residents' neighborly relations (Table 3 in Appendix A). These studies investigate the effects of diverse social and physical characteristics of apartments on residents' social relations and show generally consistent study findings. In terms of physical characteristics, well-connected ring roads system (Choi & Kong, 2007; Lee & Shin, 2009), centrally allocated outdoor spaces (Jang & Park, 2013; Y. Kang et al., 2009; Park & Lee, 2012), diverse community facilities and the use of those spaces (Lim & Han, 2011; Seo & Chiu, 2013) are associated with better social connections while living on a higher floor has negative social effects (Choi & Kong, 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Lee & Shin, 2009). Diverse socio-cultural characteristics of apartments are associated with residents' social relations as well. Living in private apartment housing (Ha & Suh, 2000; Yu et al., 2015), socio-economically homogeneous residential settings (Ahn & Kim, 2018; Chun, 2004; Kim & Nam, 2005), and community programs and activities (Kim & Jeong, 2016; Oh & Yun, 2013; Yun & Oh, 2014) were all associated with better social relationships among the residents.

Despite these diverse empirical studies, as they mainly focus on examining the effects of systematically varied characteristics of apartments (such as physical characteristics or type of housing) on residents' social relations/health, it is difficult to have realistic understanding of 'what the social relation based on apartment complexes is' from the existing studies. In other words, there is inadequate attention to the realities of the social relations that these studies refer

to. It is important to identify how diverse characteristics of apartment housing can affect residents' social relations and mental health. However, these studies cannot explain how, why, and through what processes the social relations and the following support or stress are experienced by the residents in their everyday living, and further, how the experienced social relations can help the residents' mental health and well-being.

In general, contextualized case studies of how specific sub-types of Korean apartment housing can affect residents' lives are hard to find, even though it is the most common way of life in this country. Recently, several Korean sociologists and architectural researchers started meaningful discussions on the way of living in Korean apartments (Gelézeau, 2008; Jun, 2008; Park, 2011; C. Park, 2013; I. Park, 2013) in addition to the empirical studies introduced above. They provide thoughtful insights about the meaning of living in Korean apartments, such as how the unique spatial structure can bring up diverse social issues (C. Park, 2013; I. Park, 2013), or how apartments produce and represent major social problems in Korean society (Jun, 2008). However, these discourses are based on the universalized view toward lives in apartments. With regard to this, Jung (2017) argues that the existing academic approaches to Korean apartments have found general attributes of the apartments rather than analyzed the actual specific aspects of lives experienced in the residential setting, presuming apartments or apartment residents as a homogenous entity, underscoring the point that it is hard to apprehend the actual complex dynamics emergent in apartment complexes by using such universalizing approaches.

I want to document and interpret people's lived experiences to understand how they really experience local social relations from their everyday living in high-rise apartment complexes instead of alienating them from their reality. An intensive case study, which can bring up the mundane socio-cultural and spatial situations that the residents face every day, but

normally don't pay attention to, can more fully answer the question of what the essential structure of local social relations is in the given setting. By gathering everyday lived experiences through residents' own stories, which Freire calls "Name their worlds" (1970, p. 85), the thick description of the phenomenon will be possible. In this context, phenomenology provides a cognitive tool for this study in understanding and analyzing the various meanings about the experiences of local social relations and their contribution to mental health in the particular residential settings. I will come back to the details in Chapter 2.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

This study will make sense of how residents experience their local social relationships in the neighborhood of multi-layered high-rise apartment complexes in the broad context of exploring how place of residence affects people's mental health and well-being. As taking an intensive qualitative methodological approach, this study does not intend to explicitly examine the broader issue of mediating effect of social relationships in place-health relations. Rather, this study investigates the dynamically complex relationships among place, social relations, and mental health and well-being by focusing on the role of social relations in the social processes involved. In this investigation, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the nature/characteristics (essences) of experienced local social relationships of residents in the neighborhood which consists of multi-layered high-rise apartment complexes?
2. How do spatial characteristics of such residential settings contribute to the experiences of local social relationships?

3. How do residents' experiences of local social relationships from their everyday living environment contribute to their mental health and well-being?

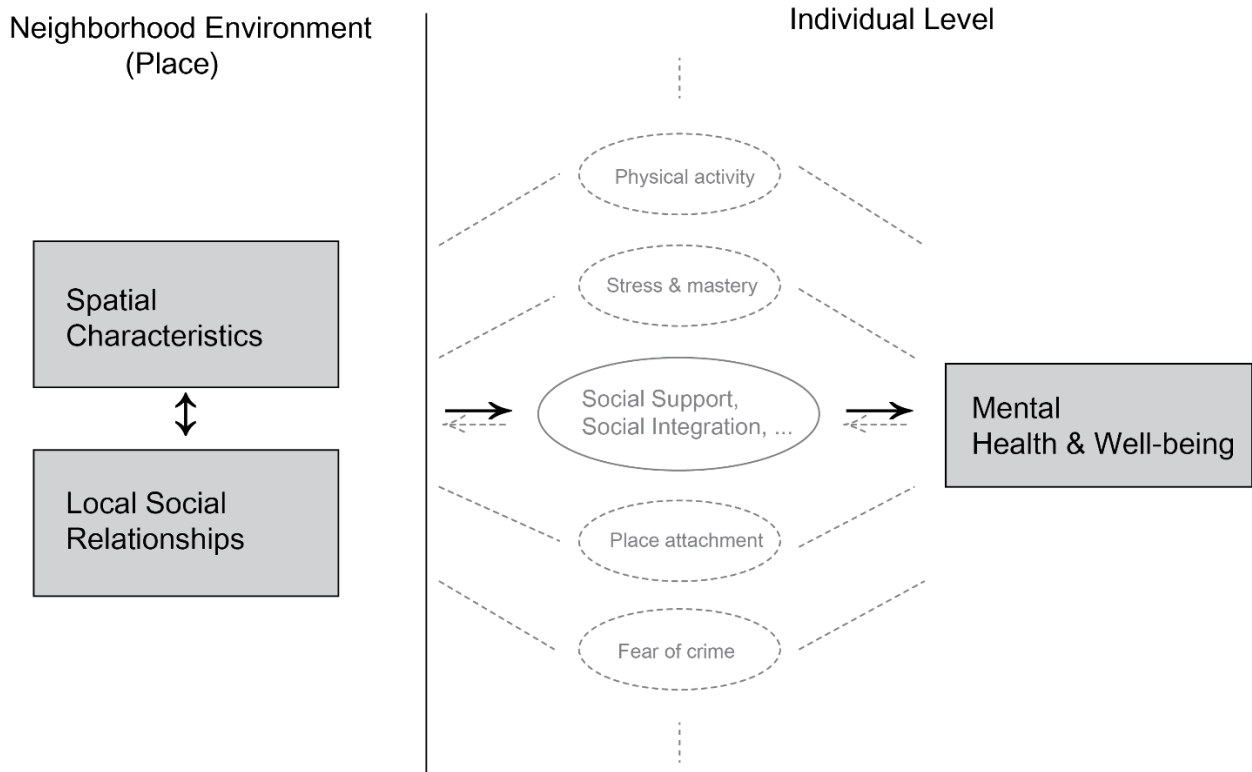


Figure 1-2. Basic questions about dynamic relations [Solid line: the focus of this study] (source: author)

It is anticipated that the results of this study will provide partial but improved explanations that show how neighborhoods contribute to residents' mental health through their social relations based on the neighborhood. As mentioned before, the fundamental documentation of individuals' particular experiences can contribute to understanding the tight and complex interrelationships within this mechanism.

1.4 Conceptual Clarifications

There are three principal concepts to the research question of how people experience social relations in their neighborhood, influencing mental health and well-being. First, neighborhood; second, social relationship; third, mental health and well-being. These three concepts are all very difficult to be defined since they deal with complex dimensions; moreover, diverse terms are used interchangeably for these concepts without clear consensus on a theoretical or empirical definition. In this section, how these three principal concepts are used in this study will be explained.

1.4.1 Neighborhood or Residential Environment

This study focuses on social relationships based on neighborhood/residential environment. First, as a clearer term, residential environment is commonly represented as “an area of housing surrounded by or mixed with several nonresidential uses of environment (Banerjee et al., 1984).” In this sense, the residential environment in this study can be understood as apartment buildings and complexes where participants reside and surrounding commercial, educational, and green areas. Residential environment is interchangeably used with neighborhood, which is a more common but more ambiguous term. Despite the ambiguity, as this term is more broadly used in academic literatures and everyday lives, I decided to use the term, neighborhood, as well.

There is no agreement on an exact definition, but from the literatures in this field, the neighborhood is considered as a specific area which is larger than a household and smaller than a city, which provides certain services, and where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially (Krupat, 1985; Hallman, 1984). Importantly, neighborhood cannot be clearly defined, since it is

not fixed, but varies from person to person (Hester, 1975). According to Hallman (1984), it is a “subjective entity as well as an objective reality”; hence, a person’s perception can decide the definition of neighborhood rather than it being a matter of any geographical area. In this context, the boundary of neighborhood for this study is not established by the researcher, but it is defined by participants themselves as their own socio-spatial unit including the area where relationships are formed with other people living within it (Amerigo & Aragonés, 1997).

As Korean apartment housing usually exists as a form of large complex, it is covered both at housing and neighborhood dimension in the Korean literatures. Even though an apartment complex is formalized with the spatial structure, name, and legal definition, recent studies repetitively showed that apartment residents perceive a space larger than their apartment complex as their neighborhood, such as surrounding several apartment complexes (Kim, 2003; Kim, 2010) or a town/an administrative area (Choi & Kong, 2007; Song, 2017). In this vein, I do not limit the range of neighborhood to an apartment complex in this study. Therefore, the neighborhood in this study can be an apartment building, an apartment complex, or be expanded to a broader surrounding area depending on the perception of each participant.

1.4.2 Local Social Relationships

Social relationships in general

Indicating that many studies use diverse terms to deal with consequences of social relationships for health and well-being, House et al. (1988) identify the structures and processes through which social relationships affect health and well-being by distinguishing three aspects of social relationships. First, *social integration/isolation* which refers to the existence or quantity of social relationships. Second, *social network structure* which refers to structural properties which characterize the social relationships, such as reciprocity, durability, density, or homogeneity.

Third, *relational contents* which refer to the functional nature or quality of social relationships. According to House and the colleagues (1988), these relational contents can be understood as social processes through which social integration and networks may have their effects on health. They identified three relational contents: 1) social support which refers to the positive or stress-buffering aspects of relationships, 2) relational conflict which refers to the negative or conflictive aspects of relationships, and 3) social regulation which refers to the regulating or controlling quality of relationships.

In this dissertation, the generic term of *social relationships* is intentionally used. Above all, the three aspects of social relationships are all included in this study. This broad conceptualization originates from this study's real-life context. To explain, when people experience their social relationships in everyday life, they do not recognize and accept the relationships in terms of separate categories of their quantity, characteristic, and function.² These are highly theoretical constructs which even researchers do not clearly distinguish in their studies. In this vein, the term 'social relationships' is used as a concept which includes the diverse dimensions of relationships. However, I do not totally refute the need of distinguishing the different aspects of social relationships. Certainly, different dimensions of social relationships exist empirically as well as theoretically. Therefore, even though 'social relationships' is used as an umbrella term to deal with diverse aspects of relationships in real-life context, in interpreting and analyzing the interview contents, the respective aspects of relationships such as relations' characteristics or their functions are at least roughly identified and then discussed.

² When I used the distinguished terms such as social support or social integration in pilot interviews, it was so unnatural that casual conversations with participants were disturbed. When using the umbrella term 'social relationships', participants brought diverse dimensions of social relationships into the conversations by their own.

Also, even though most prior studies focus on the concept of social support in dealing with the effects of social relationships on health and well-being, this study does not concentrate only on the positive effects of social relationships on health. It is argued that interests in positive aspects of social relationships should not rule out their possible negative effects (Rook, 1984; Antonucci, 1985). Indeed, as House et al. (1988) indicate, some social processes are not necessarily positive for health and well-being. By opening up the possible functions of social relationships beyond social support with the use of generic term ‘social relationships’, I explore both positive and negative effects of local social relationships.

As I concentrate on the offline social relationships which are experienced in the neighborhood, the social relationships based on the online system are not the focus of this study. I also do not focus on the role of online social networking systems in mediating the offline social relationships. However, as participants used the online social networking system (such as internet messenger programs) to connect and interact with their neighbors in their everyday lives, those activities are briefly discussed in the context of dealing with the offline relationships.

Local social relationships

In this study, local social relationships mean social relationships based on neighborhood/residential environment. It can be basically understood as *social relationships with people in the same neighborhood*. In this study, local social relationships include all types of social relationships, whether it is strong or weak. The former is generally called friendship, which is a stronger form of mutual relationships based on affective involvement (Brown, 1981). And the latter is neighborship, or relationship with *neighbors*, who are defined by proximity — the people who live on the block or next door (Unger & Wandersman, 1985).

However, the categorization into friendship and neighborship does not apply well to the context of this study. This is due to a different understanding of ‘neighborship’ and ‘friendship’ in Korean cultural context. Specifically, the intensive/intimate form of relationships with neighbors may be understood and labelled ‘friendship’ in other countries including the US. For instance, Gans (1961) explained in his report of the US suburban communities, “Homogeneous neighbors may become *friends*, whereas heterogenous ones ... eventually limit themselves to *being neighborly*.” (p. 136) However, even though the relationship with neighbors is strong and intimate enough to be called as friendship in other places, it is not necessarily regarded as friendship in Korea. In this country, the range of ‘friend’ or ‘friendship’ is quite narrow, expected to be intimate and long lasting based on the extensive shared history (Choi et al., 1993). As a comparative example, French et al. (2006) reported that Korean students had more intimate and exclusive friendship and exhibited less extensive social interactions compared to the US students. As it is difficult to be labelled as ‘friends’, the range of ‘neighbor’ or ‘neighborship’ is relatively wider and can be much more intimate than the general understanding of neighborship. Thus, while neighborship generally means weaker social relationships based on physical proximity in the US or other countries, Korean has more diverse range of neighborship from weak one to strong one. It is not impossible that neighbors become friends, but in this case, the level of intimacy should be very higher. Not to distort the original meaning in the real life, I do not translate the intimate/strong relationships with neighbors as friendship in this study. Those friendship-like relationships are described as ‘intimate/strong relationships with neighbors’ following the study participants’ words.

With the collective characteristic of neighborhood, the operation of relationships within a neighborhood is generally divided into two different dimensions: individual-level personal

social networks and neighborhood-level social networks. According to Unger & Wandersman (1985), neighbors develop linkages with key individuals in a neighborhood to get support and benefit (personal social networks) while they may also establish linkages through participation in neighborhood organizations (neighborhood social networks). This study covers the both dimensions of social networks, however, participants mostly experienced only personal social ties with their neighbors; therefore, the experience of formal participation is much less covered (see 4.1.4).

As social relationships compose community (Colclough & Sitaraman, 2005), local social relationships are frequently discussed with the idea of community, which is “one of the most vague and elusive concepts in social science” (Shore, 1994, p. 98). According to Hillery (1955), community consists of people's social interactions within a certain geographical area and common ties. However, as people came to maintain extensive social network in the wider urban area, the significance of a limited geographical area — usually neighborhoods — has been seriously questioned (Ahlbrandt, 1980; Unger & Wandersman, 1985). Indeed, there are diverse community types which are not based on places, such as internet-based communities. In this sense, place-based community can be one of the subsets of all possible community types in a modern world (Colclough & Sitaraman, 2005). Conducting a study focusing on the lived experiences in a neighborhood dimension, I naturally discuss the neighborhood community in several parts of the dissertation. Due to the conflicting understandings and debates over the possibilities of the neighborhood community in the modern society, there is no consensus on its definition (Valentine, 2001). In this study, I define it as ‘a body of people living in the same local territory who interact with one another and share a sense of belonging to the group’ by referring to Stebbins (1987) and Dale (1990). As Colclough & Sitaraman (2005) claimed, I see that this

type of community can be one of the subsets of the communities, but have an open perspective toward its form: it can be real or just symbolic as an imagined mental construct.

1.4.3 Mental Health and Well-being

The third central concept, ‘mental health and well-being’ might be considered even more complex since it, like ‘health’, covers broad domains. The concept of ‘mental health’ could be inappropriate from a phenomenological perspective in relation to the matter of mind-body dualism, however, while there are complex connections between mind and body, pathways that influence mental health are not identical to those that are important for physical health although they are closely linked (Curtis, 2010). In this sense, as a study focusing on the mechanisms which influence mental and psychological status, the concept of ‘mental health’ is used.

In this study, mental health is explored from a perspective which encompasses general ‘quality of life’ and ‘well-being’ formulations based on self-reported health status. Consistent interpretations of this concept by scholars (Canguilhem, 2008; Goldstein, 2000) show that health needs to be understood in relation to the individual's lifeworld beyond the medical diagnosis. According to Gadamer (1996, 113p), health is “a state of equilibrium of the life in which we are able to be ourselves”, and “involved in the world and being together with one’s fellow human beings, in active and rewarding engagement in one’s everyday tasks.” That is to say, it is a state of being balanced in which individuals are able to do what they do without being incapacitated. This understanding is quite similar with WHO's definition of mental health, “it is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” In this vein, mental health and well-being will be explored in a broader

way beyond the realm of absence/existence of medical disorder and will be reflected in the individual's general perceptions about satisfying her/his life is.

1.5 Personal Positionality

Every researcher is positioned in some ways in the context of his/her research. Even though researchers try to maintain distance and objectivity, the position inevitably influences the research. In that sense, in presenting the research findings, clearly describing my own positionality would be better than pretending an impossible absolute objectivity.

First of all, the broad research question of this study — 'how places affect humans' — is indeed my life-long inquiry. Since my childhood, I have been very sensitive toward the surrounding environment and frequently wondered about why certain places make me feel certain emotions. I later learned that not everyone has a strong curiosity about the place-based emotions. From interests in momentary emotions to more continuous psychological influences, I have believed that our surroundings have certain effects on us, whether we recognize it or not.

I was born in Korea and had lived in there before coming to the US to do my doctoral study. Despite my interests in the place effects, I had not seriously pondered over the possible effects of apartment housing; maybe because it was an ordinary everyday setting for me. As it is for many other Korean people. Nevertheless, I do not think that I got into the swing of 'a life in apartment' just unconsciously. Even though I lived in apartments for a substantial amount of time in my life, it is not appropriate to describe myself as a typical 'apartment kid'³. To me, the most memorable home is a three-story townhouse where I lived from five to nine years old. The townhouse was located on the southeastern edge of Seoul which was quiet and not fully

³ In Korea, young generation who are born and bred in apartment housing commonly called 'apartment kids'.

developed as an urban setting at that time. Behind the house, there was a small hill and a brook which allowed me to play with my friends who also lived in the townhouse. There were two identical town houses standing side by side. Sixteen households lived in there, and all knew each other. The townhouse was the first home which my parents bought. Because they bought this house, instead of an apartment which may have brought financial benefits quickly to them⁴; after leaving this townhouse to live in a little bigger place, my family had to move to a newly rented apartment every couple of years until they were finally able to buy the very first apartment. Under this circumstance, I lived in five different apartment complexes over a 15year period, being different from most of my Korean friends who had lived in just one or two apartments in their youth. With my strong memory in the townhouse and the several times of moving between different apartments, living in apartments was not totally natural to me; rather, I had some distance from it. Afterward, six years of the living experience in the US makes me have more distance from Korean apartments and the lives there, by defamiliarizing⁵ this way of life. Through the distance obtained over a long period of time, I was able to deeply reflect on the lives in apartments at last.

In terms of the local social relations, my experiences as a childless adult were quite different from the experiences by the study participants who are all parents; since relationships with neighbors greatly change with having and rearing children as a momentum. Indeed, neighbors have not occupied almost any room in my social network yet. Nevertheless, my recent life situations have made me continuously reflect on the meaning and importance of the relationships based on place of residence which I never seriously thought about. Six years of

⁴ Since 1990s, housing price in Seoul greatly increased, and this increase was mostly concentrated on apartments, rather than other housing types (The Seoul Institute, 2003).

⁵ To make something well-known seem unfamiliar

residing in a foreign country, especially two years in New York City, put me in a somewhat ironical situation: thinking and writing about local social relations without having enough local social relations. During this time, I have learned freedom and loneliness from being disconnected, limitations of connections through the internet, and the importance of sharing everyday lives with someone close by. Thanks to this coincidental situation, I was able to be immersed in this specific topic despite the considerable distance between my own experiences and the participants’.

1.6 Dissertation Organization

This dissertation consists of seven chapters including this introduction chapter which establishes the context, scope, and significance of this study. In chapter 2, research methodology and specific research design and process are covered. I explain why this study takes phenomenology as a theoretical paradigm which provides a cognitive tool throughout the study and discuss the related specific research strategies. In terms of research design and process, details of data collection including the recruitment strategy and criteria, the participants, and the interview process are explained. I also discuss the process of interview transcriptions and analysis methods. In chapter 3, I explain the context of spatial setting considered in this study. Understanding the historical, socio-cultural, and spatial characteristics of Korean apartment complexes will be a basis for discussion of the experienced lives of the residents in that setting. In addition to the explanation of the apartment complexes in general, I describe the socio-cultural and spatial characteristics of the specific study site. From chapter 4 to chapter 6, findings about the studied phenomenon are presented. In chapter 4, I discuss four emergent themes which characterize the experiences of local social relationships in the studied apartment complexes. In chapter 5, I illustrate how spatial characteristics and contexts operated in the participants’

experiences of local social relations. In chapter 6, the effects of the social experienced relations on the participants' mental health and well-being is recapitulated. In each chapter, I contextualize my findings within the existing literature instead of having a traditional, separate literature review section. By reflecting on the existing literatures and examining how this study can support or challenge them, I thoroughly discuss and expand the findings of this study. Through this process, research problems of this study can be more profoundly understood. In chapter 7, as a conclusion, the findings of this study are summarized addressing the research questions. Lastly, I discuss the limitations and implications of this study with suggestions for the future studies.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

2.1 Research Methodology

Phenomenology is both the theoretical paradigm and the main research methodology of this research, guiding the selection of research methods and the whole research process. Phenomenological research, which understands a particular phenomenon through the eyes of those who have experienced it, is appropriate when the research focus is on the complex and contemporary phenomenon within real-life context. I am interested in how residents experience their local social relations from the everyday living in high-rise apartment complexes and how these experiences contribute to their mental health and well-being. To understand and reveal the complexity of the research phenomenon, the thick description of everyday lived experiences will be gathered and analyzed.

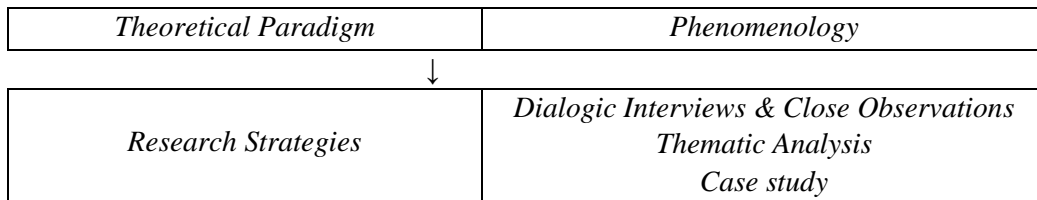


Figure 2-1. Research paradigm and strategies

2.1.1 Phenomenological Approach

What is phenomenology

Phenomenology has at least two different meanings. First, as a school of philosophical thought, it is a technical research program for the study of human consciousness. Second, phenomenology is a specific qualitative method for discovering, describing, and analyzing the underlying structure of lived experiences. In this study, phenomenology refers to the second

notion as a distinctive research method, but it is “inseparable from the corresponding philosophical attitude” (Jurema et al., 2006).

Phenomenology has been developed in order to be better able to discern and describe the underlying structures of experience. It is especially useful when focused on our “lifeworlds,” that is, on the social-built-natural environment in which we find ourselves living every day. This complex *umwelt* or surround is normally experienced inattentively, pre-reflectively, because as the site where we focus on specific tasks it recedes into the background — This view is in agreement with Gestalt theory’s findings about figure and ground. For example, when going down from an upper story apartment to the ground floor, we usually don’t pay attention to the shape, material, or placement of the elevator call button: we just push the button and wait, perhaps impatiently, for the elevator to appear. Similarly, if we are going to a café across the street to meet a friend, we usually do not attend to which direction the other people getting out of the elevator are going, but just wait until the opening is cleared so we can get out. There would be differences of the number, types, and level of politeness of people getting off elevators from one place to another in other parts of the world. Such differences could be interesting enough that we might reflect on them. At the same time, no matter how varied our experiences of the interactions among different sorts of people in various places, the various elevators are directly experienced as elevators, which we would not confuse with experiences of couches. That is, while different kinds of phenomena may vary considerably, they have some fundamental characteristics that make them “of a kind.”

Phenomenology is interested in eventually identifying those features or structures that constitute the given experiences. Of course, that is an eventual, even ideal goal; but in any case, the research that would make explicit and analyze elements or structures that had been ordinarily

implicit has to proceed as a kind of radical empiricism, examining instances of a given phenomenon one by one. Multiple phenomenological studies of a given phenomenon and its underlying structures would be required before any larger observations could be made. That means, for instance, elevator behavior and experiences from various cities all need to be described carefully before conducting a larger scale study. Indeed, any empirical science begins with individual case studies before they add up. Thus, even though interesting questions would be raised in each individual study, phenomenology avoids the push to try to generalize or universalize.

Unlike the natural sciences, and the social/human sciences that would be given the same recognition, phenomenology does not aim at proving anything, not even by establishing statistical probability of the connection between elements. It was intended to be a basic empirical approach to the world by seeking “the meaning, significance, uniqueness, or singularity of this or that experience as we live through it or as it is given in our experience and consciousness” (van Manen, 2014, p. 39). In this sense, the importance of “bracketing,” was insisted as a core phenomenological method. It fundamentally means setting aside our own presuppositions, projections, and judgments. Bracketing out judgments concerning the ontological, epistemological, or comparative status acknowledges that a genuine account of the experience itself establishes the legitimacy of the phenomenon as something to be attended to. The experience itself, as experienced, was real, and what would be of interest is the character, the structure of that experience. Any further interest in trying to establish the characteristics of what is given in the experience or to explain what caused that experience would involve a different, necessarily subsequent study. Indeed, the original intention of the founders such as Edmund Husserl, was that close phenomenological description and analysis would provide a sound

foundation, where a clear understanding of what the phenomena amounted to could then be studied on a larger scale by the natural and social sciences (Husserl, 1950).

Application in this dissertation

Phenomenological research starts with discerning the phenomena which draws serious attention from the researcher (van Manen, 1990). Along with the personal positionality described earlier, the phenomena that came to the fore for me during these preliminary studies were a) the co-constitutive generation of the phenomena itself (social relations and support) from its own sub-elements and b) all that with the meaning of health and well-being in the course of living in high-rise apartment complexes. By this point, it was clear that my interest was not in a scientific project in the usual sense, neither statistically establishing linear causality among the major elements already identified in the subject area, nor proving anything. In other words, this research project does not attempt to drive all the way from the built environments and social relations-support to the broad realm of health and well-being. Rather, this is a necessary preliminary study focusing on the built environment — social relations dynamic and the relation of this complex to health and well-being. Through this study, I explore how and why local social relations are experienced in a such way and how they can contribute to mental health and well-being, and how spatial characteristics are manifested in their experiences of social relations, without any intention to verify specific associations.

With the phenomenon clearly located, the project is prepared for the next step — "bracketing off." Applied here it means setting aside for now, but not ignoring in the long run, the scientific research on the topic and all the many dimensions of the huge phenomenon of health and wellbeing. The decision to bracket the scientific findings was not difficult since I had found, for all their importance, that there were so many studies but often contradictory outcomes

(see 1.1). For instance, while many studies emphasized the positive effect of social support through local social relations, which are often studied under the term of social capital, some other studies showed no significant effect. In this study, these findings and details were bracketed and set aside until the interpretation phase. Again, the basic problem and interesting phenomena for me turned out to be the more focused issue of mental health in relation to a small number of individuals in a specific built environment—the lifeworld of high-rise living in Korea. The idea was that this focal empirical work would, as the major phenomenologists contend, provide a foundation which would feed back into the large-scale science — in general or likely in the additional quantitative work to which I can return in the future.

2.1.2 Dialogical-Conversational Interviews and Close Observations

The procedures of a phenomenological study are distinctive, but not exotic or unique. Thus, both the relation to and difference from related approaches need to be clarified. Indeed, the basic observations and the basic listening have much in common with those in ethnography, some sociology, and so on.⁶

Openness

A first major point of the approach is to “remain open.” This does not mean unfocused or attending to whatever comes up, but that the researcher does not have a set of pre-given categories that she is looking to fill in, that she is trying to find in the observations and interviews. The dialogues specifically ask for and remain focused on a discussion of the issue,

⁶ For instance, ethnomethodology has been called a phenomenological sociology. Garfinkel often labeled his work this way and “many ethnomethodologists regard their work as more or less phenomenological.” This view has been disputed as well as supported (Rogers, 1983, pp. 115-162; Liberman, 2013). Since this dissertation is not an anatomy of closely related theories and methods, these subtleties, however important in their own right, will not be pursued.

for example, “what is your experience like in this apartment complex, both in regard to social relationships and the place itself.” Assumptions, inquiry, and judgments about whether the phenomena are a projection of own human capacity onto another being, intrusion of early childhood experiences into adult life, and so on are set aside. What constitutes the phenomena, if not observable behavior or material processes, is a crucial question but must be postponed to subsequent investigations. James (1961) pointed this out, “you cannot possibly come to understand the report of an overwhelming religious experience, perhaps a conversion experience, if you start with the conviction that accounts are themselves delusional because there is no God, or gods, or sacred powers, but only displaced projections of own human (in)capacities to another being, intrusion of early childhood experiences into adult life, indigestion, and so on.”

This open observation or listening cannot occur if we already have identified specific variables to be discovered, counted and measured, then compared with other seemingly correlate elements. Positive science’s reductions of the number of variables and of observable phenomena to what are supposed to be the minimal units, which assumes that the basic elements and their relationships, once studied, can be added back up to explain the overall phenomenon is in fact the inverse of the phenomenological reduction. The latter assumes that the phenomenon is an irreducible whole, which necessarily cannot be attended to in its entirety at a given time, but which can be understood as we explore the dynamic co-constitution of all the elements. This approach is not especially unique to phenomenology, as it has commonalities with complexity theory.

What is crucial here is the bracketing: that from the start of the investigation and during attention along the way, what we encounter has not already been sorted into what is useful and what is not, according to our own views or previous studies, or what usually is called the

literature. Instead, once an interesting phenomenon has been described, then what is found can be integrated with existing literature and a fuller analysis can be continued. The literature would provide sensitivity to some aspects of the description that had been overlooked enriching further work, or perhaps at the next level of formalization, reinforce or render unlikely scientific hypotheses. In this sense, I integrated the relevant literatures with the study findings, examining how they can support, challenge, or be applied to the context of the current study, but it was only after the interview based on the openness.

Dialogic-conversational interviews

Phenomenology, aiming to move toward understanding individuals' personal life stories, engages in dialogic (Freire, 1970, 1973) or conversational (van Manen, 1990) interviews. Jurema et al. (2006) explains that phenomenological research emphasizes careful listening to speech of the interviewee because the words of the interviewee can unveil the way each sees the world. The phenomenological interview neither begins with nor moves toward the categories or concepts of the interviewer but proceeds in unfolding the terms that are meaningful to the one being interviewed. However, the open, engaged format does not imply that it is "unstructured or simply open-ended" (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). The process is disciplined by the researcher's core question that led to the interview in the first place and requires expertise in "remaining oriented to one's question or notion in such a strong manner that one does not get easily carried-away with interviews that go everywhere and nowhere" (van Manen, 1990, pp. 66-67).

With the researcher's deep question clearly in mind, and normally explained to the interviewees in clear terms at the beginning, the researcher seeks to enter into the world of the others, to approach genuine dialogue in which the others "name their world," that is, in their own terms, articulate their view of the world reflecting their situation (Freire, 1970, p. 85). In the

encounter, person to person, what is articulated or delineated aims to let come forth the generative words and images that concretely present the aspirations, concerns, and values, as well as the obstacles to their fulfillment and constitute the complex of their generative themes (Freire, 1970). In sum, dialogue first sets out and then explores modes of being-together with others in a particular historical spatial-cultural lifeworld, that is, in the dynamic complex of relations of each to the others and to their shared natural and built environments, all of which co-constitute the meanings of their lifeworld. This realm and the experiences therein can be analyzed phenomenologically (Maturana & Varela, 1998; Mugerauer, 2010a, 2010b; Varela et al., 1991).

Observations

Close observation, though a term shared with other qualitative approaches, is also distinctive when it is done phenomenologically. According to van Manen, “in contrast to the more experimental or behavioral observation research techniques, close observation tries to break through the distance often created by observational methods. Rather than observing subjects by means of observational schemata and checklists, for example the researcher tries to enter the lifeworld of the persons whose experiences are relevant study material for the research project” (1990, pp. 68-69; 2014, p. 318). This requires simultaneously operating as a genuine dialogue partner and maintaining a reflective orientation. In this vein, the observation can be an extension of the interview, rather than separated.

2.1.3 Thematic Analysis

Themes

Phenomenological reflection is reflectively analyzing the thematic aspects of the experience. The theme, however, is not identical with the ideas used in other qualitative approaches. According to van Manen, “In qualitative research models, such as grounded theory, ethnography, and concept analysis, the idea of theme and theme analysis possesses different meanings from the way that theme is used in phenomenological inquiry. For example, these have various goals aiming to codify and develop theory, to discover the categories that identify and describe cultural groups and practices, or content analysis actually preselects the themes it is looking for in the empirical data. These approaches often note the idea that themes emerge from the data through comparison, for example of narratives” (van Manen, 2014, p. 319). For phenomenology, the theme is a dimension of a phenomenon that takes place in a concrete reality and that mediates among the persons involved. In other words, phenomenological themes can be understood as the “structures of experience” which make up that experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). They are not conceptual abstractions. Given our normal unreflective mode of operating in our familiar lifeworld, it doesn’t seem to have any formal patterns. Thus, for reflection on our experiences and shared lifeworld we need to seek themes which express the essence of the notion and touch the core of the notion we attempt to understand (van Manen, 1990).

Freire explains that the themes are “located in concentric circles, moving from the general to the particular” (Freire, 1970, p. 103). The broadest unit includes universal themes, while the smaller circles (each region, city, society, or culture) can contain its own particular themes in addition to the universal themes. Thus, even the most specific themes are rooted in larger historical sequences and universal structures. In the case of people living in high-rise apartment complexes in Korea, the generative themes can unfold within capitalist, technological urbanization, with its growing density. The phenomena studied in this dissertation are on the one

hand particular to each participant, and on the other a matter of ‘a being with one another’.

Always already “in a situation, [people] find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark” (Freire, 1970, p. 90) and in which they try come to discover others in the same situation, with the same limits and possibilities.

The researcher’s task is to identify the fundamental and sub-themes in a particular life-world, to understand them, then make them explicit (van Manen, 1990, pp. 100-101). The critical importance of themes lies in there because “our lived experiences and the structures of meanings (themes) in terms of which these lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 101).

Thematic analysis

Husserl, Heidegger, and other classic phenomenologists stressed phenomenological analysis as an art, not a reproducible methodology.⁷ The position is that phenomenological analysis finally rests on discernment and judgment by experts. In a generally accepted and professionally utilized description of the stages of skill acquisition, one passes from being a

⁷ In addition to this holistic approach, the more analytical approach exists as another stream of phenomenological analysis. While phenomena are held to be non-reducible to a small set of elements that might be related in a linear cause-effect manner, the holistic approach was rejected as ‘merely subjective’ by the received view of positive science, operative from before the birth of phenomenology, and still dominant. Thus, to have phenomenological work ceded credibility, Giorgi (2009) developed techniques and protocols that were intended to be more scientific than most interpretive phenomenology. Giorgi’s was the first such successful system, which works by taking meaning units from what is said about an experience, discarding what is left over, thus producing ‘data.’ The protocol involves a set of matrices, which successively a) refine/reduce the base description of the natural b) shifting to a research attitude which transfers the ordinary language into professional or technical terms (especially those of psychology and sociology), c) a further transformation of the professional or technological language to make it more explicit in respect to the phenomena at hand (Giorgi, 2009, p.14). The overall process aims to move from ordinary language description, through more precise conceptual expression, to analysis.

In the same tradition, a more hermeneutic than descriptive version was generated by Jonathan Smith. His IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) won acceptance by researchers and academic journals with unexpected speed especially in Europe. This approach does not stress the phenomenological reduction to the same extent as Giorgi’s, nor the holistic openness of the classic phenomenological analysis, but provides the often-sought scientific dimension. On the one hand, its strongly structured, strong rule-based format is easier to learn, but especially for novices may become somewhat mechanical. The emphasis is on substantial interviews, but as few as three are often recommended. On the other hand, interviewers are encouraged to bring into analysis other theoretical perspectives and a creative use of metaphors and cultural issues, so that often the result overemphasizes the interview’s perspective.

novice, first following rules (fixed procedures) as in much training; next, through experience of assessing situations as an advanced beginner; then, as a competent performer, choosing a plan and operating more freely; to proficient, both intuitively understanding the task and thinking analytically; finally becoming expert with fluid performance without conscious, deliberate decisions, but nonetheless with grounded skill, or know how (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Contemporary masters with such expertise, such as Paulo Freire and Max van Manen show learners how to move from open, still messy observations and interviews to finding the patterns that render the phenomena understandable.

In this dissertation, I followed van Manen's thematic analysis process. In one formalization of the types of phenomenological interpretation, van Manen identifies three approaches to discerning thematic aspects of a phenomenon:

1. The holistic approach or sententious approach; attending to text or visual documentation as a whole.
2. The selective or highlighting in approach; listening to or reading a text several times and asking what seems especially revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described.
3. The detailed or line-by-line approach; looking at every single sentence and asking what does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the experience, about the phenomenon to be studied.

(2014, pp. 320-325; 1990, pp. 92-93.)

For most complex, social life situations, as distinct from one person's experience of anger or guilt for instance, the first mode is not possible, so I set it aside for this study. The second and

third approaches, however, are both important for this dissertation and naturally lend themselves to being combined. The second is a kind of seeking some landmarks while the third carefully works out the details and subtleties of what is described, which then allows the relationships among elements to become clearer. Subsequently, “the task is to hold on to [emergent] themes by lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Finally, the relationships of particular details and the coherent themes need to be related to each other, and, perhaps, clusters of themes, or mega-themes. This is further developed below in section 2.2.4.

2.1.4 Case Study

This research will focus on the lives in a selected neighborhood as a case study site to delineate and analyze answers for the proposed research questions by understanding the residents’ experiences of local social relations through the discourse of everyday life in that given setting. Case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, when the study contains lots of variables, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context without clearly evident boundaries between phenomenon and context (Creswell, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), the essential requisite for conducting case study should stem from researcher’s motivation to illuminate understanding of complex phenomena. Employing case study method seems legitimate as the focus of this research, human experiences of social relations and its contributions to mental health, is hard to be quantified because of its innate co-constitutive complexity.

Even though there are misunderstandings about the case study including the belief context-independent knowledge is more valuable than context-dependent knowledge, in the

study of human affairs, there exists only context-dependent knowledge; therefore, concrete, context-dependent knowledge can be more valuable than the search for predictive theories (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Attempts at formal generalization are of course significant for scientific development, but it should also be noted that they are not the only legitimate method of social/human science research. Flyvbjerg (2001) clearly shows their mutual complement by saying, “Studies focusing on large random samples are essential for the development of social science; for example, in understanding the degree to which certain phenomena are present in a given group or how they vary across cases. The advantage of large samples is *breadth*, while their problem is one of *depth*. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science.” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.87)

As stated, the fundamental value of case study research lies in its in-depth analysis of a research issue, as understanding the issue from the perspective of participants (Merriam, 2009). In addition, case studies have value in that they can capture various perspectives with open attitude toward the complexity in the given, limited setting. Thus, they can provide opportunities to gain a greater understanding of the research issue and reduce the possibilities for any bias. This characteristic can be especially valuable for this study, which covers dynamic and not static concepts such as social relations and health.

2.2 Research Design and Process

Along with the archival research about Korean apartment complexes which was conducted to contextualize the main empirical concerns of the study, four months of intensive fieldwork in a selected study site is a significant part of this study for major data collection. In the following sections of this chapter, I will explain the process and details of the data collection and analysis.

2.2.1 The Site

Three apartment complexes in Pangyo new town, Seoul metropolitan area, were chosen as a study site. Pangyo is one of the new towns located in Seoul metropolitan area which were built as government-led development projects. During the last decade, from the completion of the development to the present, Pangyo is known as a residential place of the middle or upper-middle class in Korea. Generally, in the studies of neighborhood social relations and mental health, deprived areas have received more attention with the possible negative health effects of impoverished social networks in the area, since cumulative social and environmental risk factors have greater impact on health than singular risk factors (Cattell, 2001; Evans, 2003). However, with a focus on the specific residential setting — apartment complexes in Korea —, selecting a residential place of the middle or upper class seemed more helpful to understand the current social scene in Korean society. This is because apartments can be said as living places of the middle or upper class in Korea (Park, 2011; specifically, 28.1% of low-income, 56.8% of middle-income, and 74.5% of high-income class of people live in apartments — see table 3-1 in chapter 3).

The characteristic as a new town provides a proper setting for this study: First, being recently planned and built (2003-2009), this new town is mostly occupied by apartment buildings and complexes; and apartment is even the one and only housing type in the administrative district (Sampyeong-dong) of the study site. Studies which investigate local social relations or community building among apartment residents usually set the geographical limit at one apartment complex. This can be a reasonable approach to focus on the effects of living in an apartment complex; however, as Joung (2014) indicates and the current study results will show, it is unusual that the range of local social relations of residents is just limited to one complex.

Hence, the specification of geographical limit sometimes led to inconsistent and distorted study results about apartment residents' experiences of social relations in their lifeworld. In this study, by selecting a neighborhood which consists of apartment complexes,⁸ it is possible to focus on the lives in the specific housing type —apartments — but not to have an artificial limitation of social relationships. This setting also allows for the exploration of when and why social relations are formed and maintained inside/outside the apartment complexes where the participants live. Second, in this new town, people have recently formed their local social relationships, whether they are successful or not; therefore, the role of social relations and support in healthy life could be more effectively investigated from residents' experiences and narratives. Moreover, the first residents group who moved into this new town was randomly placed in each unit by a lottery based on the housing subscription merit system, which made most of the residents form their social relationships with their neighbors without previous connections. This study does not intend to examine the specific effects of move-in to a new town on social relations, but this study site provides a good setting to explore how the characteristics of the residential environment have contributed to the residents' experience of social relations and how the experience of social relations relates to mental health.

In selecting the apartment complexes as a study site, the accessibility to the participants and the site is also importantly considered. As explained in detail in the following chapter, apartment complexes are not easily accessible by non-residents because of the psychological barrier, as well as the closed spatial structure. Further, even though outsiders can enter an apartment complex and approach random residents, conducting successful interviews with them

⁸ The spatial form which several or dozen of apartment complexes gather together is the most commonly observed in new towns like Pangyo, by providing lots of housing units at once as a urban planning approach, but it is also common in Seoul and other big cities in Korea.

would be difficult considering the required depth of the interview contents. It can be better understood with the fact that the participants of this study are residents of the middle-class residential place. According to Jung (2017), while the main subjects of modern ethnographic studies are people from marginal positions who want their stories to be heard, the middle-class people do not want to open their private lives and do not have any need to participate in research. For instance, in a study by Bleibleh (2013), which investigates Palestinians' traumatic experiences of Israeli invasion, "there was no need to schedule any appointment with the residents; it was enough to knock at their doors to talk with them about their experience" (pp.76-77). This approach is never possible in the studied neighborhood. Jung (2017) also explains that studies conducted in well-off areas sometimes become relatively superficial because of this characteristic. Therefore, to get the greatest in-depth information from the middle-class participants, the researcher should not be regarded as a total outsider and needs to be felt familiar enough to help participants free-heartedly share their private lives. The fact that I had lived in the new town from 2010 to 2013 and have the familiarity with this area and people was highly helpful on multiple aspects in conducting in-depth interviews with the participants. I already established a network of relationships in the field and therefore was able to exist as an insider during the field study period. Moreover, the personal positionality as a woman in my early 30s greatly helped me to have casual but in-depth conversations with the women participants, which is absolutely crucial for the success of the research. In this context, Complex G, which I lived in the past and is located at the center of the east side of the new town, and two other adjacent complexes (Complex H & I) were selected as study sites.

2.2.2 Participants

Since the purpose of phenomenological research lies in discovering and interpreting the essence of shared experience, it requires a “closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant” through purposive sampling (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p.56). In this study, participants were selected through the purposive sampling to successfully investigate the main research questions.

Above all, to gather richer stories about the experiences of local social relations, I exclusively focused on a population of women with children. It is reported that men and women experience their neighborhoods in a different way (Stafford et al., 2005). With the different experiences, neighborhoods can have more impacts on women’s life and health: self-reported health is more closely associated with the residential environment of women than for men (Stafford et al., 2005) and neighborhood fragmentation is also associated with women’s mental health but not men’s (Ivory et al., 2011). Narrowing down to the issues of local social relations and community, women have more active local social relations (Chatters, 1989), engage in more neighboring (Kusenbach, 2006), participate in more neighborhood activities (Campbell & Lee, 1990), have higher community attachment (Theodori, 2004), and experience higher local social support than men (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Campbell & Gillies (2001) described this gendered characteristic of local social network, “...it was women who played the key role in creating, sustaining, and accessing informal social networks at the local community level (p 336).” This phenomenon is similarly observed in Korea — women have more local social relations and participate in more neighborhood activities compared to men (Joung, 2014; Kim & Park, 1999; Kwak, 2004).

The different level of neighboring between men and women is often explained with gender expectations, especially motherhood (Campbell & Lee, 1990). In fact, the presence of children is found to have significant impacts on local social relations regardless of the gender issue, as parenthood provides a turning point for the replacement of social network members (Fischer, 1989; Stueve & Gerson, 1977). For instance, Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe (1989) found that the permanently childless adults, both men and women, were the most isolated in neighborhood social networks. Grannis (2009) even states, “neighborhood networks are essentially networks amongst households with children (p.139).” However, mothering, rather than parenting, is found to be more strongly associated with neighborhood experiences and local social networks (Windsong, 2018). Studies on this issue are limited, but there are some meaningful results. Mothers of young children experienced greatly limited social networks, while there were no significant changes in fathers’ social networks (Munch et al., 1997). It is also found that women were more concerned with childcare opportunities when they evaluated neighborhoods (Sweet et al., 2005) and that mothers were more likely to be volunteers for school-related neighborhood activities (Wang & Fahey, 2011). A Korean study (Lee & Yoo, 1999) also explained the reason for more active local social relations of women as their more involvement in daily lives of the family members, especially children. In this context, women with children was selected as an appropriate group to explore how local social relations are experienced and have effects on their health and well-being. With a concentration on women with children, a few other recruitment criteria were also applied in the process of the interviews.

Workforce participation The level of work-force participation was brought into the recruitment strategy after I found participants’ different experiences of local social relations depending on it. Local social relations are differently experienced for people in the workforce and not in the

workforce (Ziersch et al., 2005). Studies have consistently found that women who spend longer time at home, especially housewives, have more important neighborly relations (Mayo, 1979; Lee & Yoo, 1999; Joung, 2014) even though the number of neighbors that they know may not be greatly different from the case of women with outside jobs (Joung, 2014). In the early stage of the fieldwork, I conducted interviews with a few full-time working women with children who had continuously worked outside full-time since their movements to the apartment complexes. They knew some neighbors mostly through their children, engaged in some neighborhood activities, but their limited experiences of local social relations were hard to understand as ‘shared experiences’ with the ones by those who did not have full-time outside jobs. Their lack of experiences of social relations in the neighborhood and related problems would be an important part in understanding the whole lived experiences of residents in the apartment complexes; but it is out of range for a study which investigates how the present, rather than absent, local social relations are experienced in the specific physical setting. In this sense, only women who do not have full-time outside jobs at the time of the interviews were selected as participants.

Considering the global social trend accompanying a surprising increase in the number of women who work fulltime outside the home, the focus on those who are without full-time outside jobs may seem as an anachronistic approach. However, in Korean social context, focusing on this group to understand the existing local social relations would be reasonable. Above all, the number of married women without fulltime outside jobs still accounts for more than half of the total population. Specifically, the percentage of husband and wife both working was 43.9% of the whole couples in Korea in 2015 (KOSIS, 2016).⁹ Given a Korean study result

⁹ The percentage was 38.1 % for the couples who had pre-school children, 51.6% for who had elementary school children, and 57.6 for who had middle and high school children. Regardless of the marital status, the rate of

which showed women tend not to participate in workforce as their husbands' income goes higher (Chang & Chun, 2014), the proportion of full-time outside working women is likely to be lower than average in this relatively well-off neighborhood.

The low workforce participation of Korean women was basically based on the patriarchal society which are deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy (Lee et al., 2004). In the patriarchal system of roles of family members, the dominant conception is that the husband is the "outside person" who provides the main economic support; the wife is the "inside person" whose main responsibility is maintenance of the household. However, in the last few decades, these traditional roles have been greatly challenged so that the gender division of labor has decreased with a tangible increase in the number of working women outside home (Yoo et al., 2016). Notwithstanding the changes, to work as a woman is still not that easy: South Korea ranks the lowest of Glass-ceiling index ¹⁰ of all OECD countries in 2016 (The Economist, 2017). Importantly, it is pointed out that women's responsibility as a mother has not changed or even increased in the transition from the traditional gender roles to the modern ones (Park, 2009). In this situation, many women leave their mid-career due to childcare and education.¹¹ According to Lee (2019), when Korean working women had their first child, 65.8 % of them experienced

workforce participation of Korean women is also quite low compared to other developed countries. In 2016, Korean women's activity rate (the ratio to the total labor force to the population of working age) was 58.4%, which ranked the 31st of 35 OECD countries.

¹⁰ This is an indicator towards environment for working women which combines data on higher education, workforce participation, pay, child-care costs, maternity and paternity rights, business-school applications and representation in senior jobs (The Economist, 2017).

¹¹ At the same time, women's social status has led to the great decrease of the fertility rate along with the bad job prospects and increasing housing prices. In 2018, South Korea's fertility rate was 0.98, which (falling below 1.0) was for the first time in world history except for during wartime. Wealthy countries around the world have faced a similar trend, but the phenomenon has been manifested rapidly and seriously in South Korea (KOSTAT, 2019; Haas, 2018). In 2012, the proportion of the Korean childless households was 15.4% when including all married couples, while the proportion was 2.4% when only including couples in which the wife was over the age of 35 (KOSTAT, 2015).

career interruptions, by quitting their jobs (50.3%) or finding other jobs (15.5%). This social context is clearly reflected in the participants group of this study: except for the participants in their 60s—who were strongly required to follow the traditional role of women—, all of the participants in this study had full-time outside jobs in the past but quit their jobs due to childcare or education; and some of them recently came back to work as part-time workers; and some others had plans to work again soon as their children grow up.

Length of residence As another criteria, to explore the residents' richer experiences in the neighborhood, only participants who had lived more than three years in the new town, regardless of the tenure type, were included.¹² Although the living period of residents is often regarded as one of the elements which can affect the quantity or quality of the local social relations, the empirical results about whether it is are inconsistent (Chun, 2004; Joung & Choi, 2016). Therefore, this criterion is set for covering the shared experiences in the neighborhood over a period of time. In this study, the longest length of residence is 7 years at the time of the interview

¹² As presented in table 2-1, all of the renter participants were under 'jeonse' system. Korean private housing rent system is categorized into three types: jeonse (or chonse), monthly rental with deposit, and monthly rental without deposit. Jeonse is a term describing the unique Korean rental system. Under this system, a renter makes a lump sum deposit with the owner (normally 40-80% of the market value; normally 70% for apartments and 40-50% for detached housing) to lease a home, without additional monthly rent payments; and the full amount of deposit is returned at the end of the contracted period. Jeonse is for a short-contracted period: two years are guaranteed by law, but the contract can be extended based on the mutual agreement. The important feature of Jeonse system is that "it offers home financing for both landlord and tenant – for the tenant, the deposit is a form of compulsory savings that can be used as seed money for buying a home; it has thus been considered a stepping-stone to home purchase; for landlords, jeonse deposits provide a source of investment capital without recourse to private banks and banking charges" (Ronald & Jin, 2010). Recently, jeonse system has been in retreat: According to KOSIS, it accounted for 28.2 % of all homes in 2000 (along with 54.2 % of home owners and 14.8 % of monthly renters) but it was 15.2 % of all homes in 2017 (along with 57.7 % of home owners and 23.3 % of monthly renters). It is mainly because of the low interest rates in the current Korean economy, which means that landlords have poorer returns on jeonse deposits. At the time of the interview (2016), the amount of money for Jeonse was around 75 % of the property price.

since the earliest move-in time was 2009.¹³ Most of the participants had lived more than 5 years in the complex at the time of the interview, so they were able to talk about their own lived experiences of local social relations which were accumulated during that time.

Family life cycles Among the potential participants, I attempted to recruit participants of diverse family life cycles: women with pre-school children, school-age children, and adult children.¹⁴

The notion for the criteria was that local social relations vary depending on the stage of family life cycle (Joung, 2014), because the level of mutual dependence of the parent-children relations how much parents involve in other social network (Emerson, 1972; Ishii-Kuntz & Karen, 1989). I expected that experiences of participants of diverse family life cycles would add depth in understanding the essences of local social relations.

Participants with adult children can be considered as heterogeneous from the other two groups, regarding the basic recruitment criteria ‘women with children’ with a focus on the possible effects of children/mothering on local social relations, but they were also included in the study with two reasons. First, because of the Korean custom of adult children living with their parents until marriage, almost all of the participants lived together with at least one of their children at the time of the interviews.¹⁵ Only two participants did not live with any of their

¹³ According to Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport (2017), the average residence period is 10.6 years for home owners and 3.6 years for renters in 2016. National average of residence period is 7.7 years (regardless of tenure type), but it is 6.4 years in the case of Seoul metropolitan area.

¹⁴ Originally, I planned a recruitment of diverse age cohorts, but it was apparent that participants’ family life cycles, rather than age, affected the experiences of local social relations in the process of interviews. Therefore, family life cycle was brought into the recruitment strategy instead of age. In this study, family life cycle is based on the age of youngest children (Korean Women’s Development Institute, 2016).

¹⁵ According to KOSIS (2015), 32% of parents who are older than 60 live together with their adult children. In Seoul metropolitan area, where most of the decent jobs are provided with the most expensive housing, the proportion of young adults (age 20-34) who live with their parents reaches 61.2 % (Korea Labor Institute, 2017). Recently, this phenomenon has been explained with financial limitations of young adults rather than cultural reasons (Winsor, 2018).

children, however, they also had lived together with their youngest adult children until a few months and a year before the interviews. As the effects of adult children living at home on mothers' local social relations were hardly known, there was no evidence for dismissing this group. Second, and more importantly, even though participants with adult children may have not local social relations in the studied neighborhood, they would possibly have experienced local social relations which were associated with their children in the past. I considered that these cases were differentiated from the continuous absence of local social relations, and that these experiences would provide opportunities to more thoroughly understand the 'shared experiences' of women with children.

I recruited the first several participants based on my established social network in the neighborhood and then accessed others through snowball sampling. Considering the closed spatial structure of the apartment complexes, culturally exclusive atmosphere, and required depth of conversational interviews, snowball sampling was the best sampling strategy.

I aimed to recruit a similar number of the participants from each cohort of the family life cycles. However, the final number of participants with pre-school children (6) was less than the participants with school-age children (12) and the participants with adult children (9). This recruitment result can be one of the limitations of this study, but also can be attributed to the neighborhood's characteristics — The relatively expensive housing price and large unit sizes may not be generally affordable for parents with pre-school children. 20 participants were the owners of the housing units while 8 participants were jeonse renters. Most of the participants had lived in the apartment complexes for 6-7 years, along with 4 participants who had lived there shorter than 4 years. Excluding several participants who were interviewed in the early stage of

the interviews but not included due to the selection criteria, the stories of 27 participants were included as main data of the study. Table 2-1 is a list of the participants.

Table 2-1. List of study participants

NO	Name (pseudonym)	Age	Occupation ^a	Tenure Type	Time of move-in ^b	Age of children ^c
1	Mi-Sun	53	housewife	Owner	2009	25, 23
2	Young-Ju	42	housewife	Renter (Jeonse)	2012 (2014)	11, 9, 6
3	Jina	38	part-time lecturer	Renter (Jeonse)	2009 (2014)	8, 2
4	Suji	45	housewife	Renter (Jeonse)	2011	10, 10
5	Kyoung-Ja	57	housewife	Owner	2009	26, 22
6	Jin-Sook	59	housewife	Owner	2009	(32, 30)
7	Bora	34	housewife	Owner	2009	6, 3
8	Sun	45	housewife (part-time seller)	Owner	2009	13, 5
9	Hae-Yoon	45	housewife	Owner	2009	(19),17
10	Ok-Sun	52	housewife	Owner	2010	26, (22)
11	Jung-Sook	61	housewife	Owner	2009	36, (35, 30)
12	Myung-Jin	58	housewife (company worker)	Owner	2009	(31), 27
13	Noori	45	housewife	Owner	2009	17, 13
14	Dasom	44	housewife	Renter (Jeonse)	2010	17, 14
15	Ara	43	housewife	Renter (Jeonse)	2010	15, 15
16	Yumi	42	housewife (graduate student)	Owner	2009	15, 11, 9
17	Ga-Young	46	housewife	Owner	2009	18, 16
18	Song	43	housewife (bank teller)	Owner	2009	15, 12
19	Jiwon	46	part-time researcher	Owner	2009	18, 15
20	Min	44	part-time lecturer	Renter (Jeonse)	2009	15, 14
21	Ha-Ram	33	housewife	Owner	2009	8, 6
22	Soon-Ja	64	housewife (private business)	Owner	2009	(37, 34, 31)
23	Doo-Sim	63	housewife	Owner	2009	(36), 34
24	Han	47	housewife (school teacher)	Renter (Jeonse)	2012	18, 17
25	Cho-Ah	36	housewife	Renter (Jeonse)	2013	9, 5
26	Bok-Lim	69	housewife	Owner	2009	40, 37, 35
27	Kyuri	42	housewife	Owner	2009	11

^a When participants had their occupations but left them while they lived in the studied neighborhood, the occupation is noted in parenthesis.

^b When participants moved within the same neighborhood, the second move-in date is noted in parenthesis.

^c When their child does not live together with the participants, the age of the children is noted in parenthesis.

2.2.3 Interviews

Prior to conducting the main interviews, I conducted pilot interviews with three residents of the new town. The purpose of the pilot interviews lies in restructuring the interview contents and questions. All of the three participants were included in my established social network and they were also the start points of the snowball sampling. By conducting three pilot interviews which had the form of casual conversations but were full of rich information, I was able to better understand the lived experiences in the neighborhood regarding the research questions and modify a semi-structured interview questionnaire.

Interviews as a main data collection were implemented during the months from June to September in 2016. Each interview was conducted in a quite different way depending on what the participant focused on and talked about, although there was a semi-structured interview questionnaire (see Appendix B). I constructed the questionnaire about local social relationships and mental health and well-being based on the existing literature — questions regarding social relationships are generated based on Cattell (2001), Cattell et al. (2008), Social Support Questionnaire (SSQSR) by Sarason et al. (1987); questions on social relationships and mental well-being are based on Keyes' mental health continuum (2002). However, the questionnaire was not a fixed one, as the purpose lay in eliciting speech from the interviewees so that they can describe their experiences. According to van Manen, "The art of the researcher in the hermeneutic interview is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open, to keep himself or herself and the interviewee oriented to the substance of the thing being questioned" (van Manen, 1990, p. 98). In the interviews, I made the participants to elaborate on their experiences enough before asking following/probing questions. Each interview began with a casual question about their current lives in the neighborhood. I asked when they moved in the

new town and the main reasons of move-in first, and then asked them what it was like to live in there. These questions helped the participants easily start reflecting on and talking about their past and current lives in the neighborhood; and the conversations naturally led to their experiences of social relationships and their impacts. To help effective reflection of their social ties, a closeness circle tool— which is frequently used to obtain an interpersonal inventory of people — was also used (see Appendix C). By doing an activity of placing important people in their lives in the closeness circle in the middle of the interviews, participants were able to effectively recall their experiences and share them with the researcher.

I set up a place and time for each interview in advance when the participant was introduced by the previous participant(s). Interviews were mostly conducted in cafes, parks, and the participants' homes in the neighborhood according to the participants' preference. Before conducting any formal, recorded interviews, I introduced the purpose of the study and their involvement, by verbally explaining it and making all the participants read the information statement (Appendix D), to let them know their participation was completely voluntary. Each interview lasted around 90 minutes. Conversations were conducted in Korean, the language of the participants and the researcher. All interview sessions were digitally audio-recorded with participants' permission to capture the nuances of the interviews. Some participants looked a bit nervous when they were asked about recording the conversations, but all of the participants agreed to it. Recruitment for interviews were finished when information reached a point of saturation that is when no new information generated from more interviews. Transcription was carried out immediately after each interview in order to retain vivid memory (Appendix E). Interviews were transcribed in Korean first, reviewed, and then later translated to English. To

protect identities, all proper names were converted into pseudonyms in the transcript and any published or presented versions.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was focused on finding themes and patterns generated in the interviews. While I conducted interviews, I attempted to immerse myself in the participants' stories to identify recurred themes to understand what their experiences were. From an early stage in which the reported experiences were essentially memorized, they were thought about, compared among themselves and with imagined alternative, so that during a long, slow process certain themes emerged. These were not pre-identified from the literature and then looked for. After that, I repetitively read the transcripts and listened to the recordings of the interviews. In this process, the raw material was considered, over and over, in terms of the themes; at the same time, the themes were tested against the raw material and modified as appropriate. I highlighted the recurring themes in each transcript and made notes of all possible sub-themes. Then the themes themselves were considered in relation to each other, which might lead to some consolidation or clarification of differences. Finally, the theme or clusters of themes were looked at to see if they might belong together as dimensions of one or two mega-themes.

Data analysis was conducted for 9 months after finishing the fieldwork. During this period, I had a weekly meeting with my adviser, who is a competent and experienced researcher in phenomenology. This mutual review process with experienced researcher was taken to ensure the rigor of the study. We constantly discussed all the contents, including what patterns of the phenomenon should be included and what others should be eliminated, how they can be clustered into a thematic structure, and how they can be connected and gathered into a larger coherent narrative (Appendix F). Through this process, we were able to reach agreement of

going through a number of dialogues and discussions. It can be understood as co-creating data, which emerges out of the relationship between researcher and co-researcher including the 27 participants of the study (Finlay, 2012).

3. THE PLACE: APARTMENT COMPLEXES IN KOREA

In this chapter, I introduce the spatial settings of this study which contextualize the empirical concerns of this research. Currently, more than a half of Korean people live in similar-looking high-rise high-density apartment buildings as a result of extensive state-led land and housing developments. The characteristics of the Seoul metropolitan area also have been mainly shaped through the government-led housing development projects (Lee & Shin, 2012). I begin by explaining the general history and main characteristics of Korean apartment complexes, and then explain the significant socio-spatial characteristics of the study site, Pangyo new town. Thus, I locate this place in the broad context of Korean apartment complexes and help understand the contexts and characteristics of the study site.

3.1 Korean Apartments

3.1.1 Historical Background and Social & Cultural Characteristics

To many people, the first image that pops into mind when they think of the scenery of Korea would be a grey forest of high-rise apartment buildings. This scenery reflects a lack of diversity in housing type in this country: indeed, more than half of the population lives in apartment buildings (KOSIS, 2017). What were the reasons behind this scene?

As its various names — flat, unit, co-op, condominium, block, or tenement — imply, multi-family apartment housing exists in different forms from country to country with its social, political, economic, and environmental context. In general, the modern high-rise apartment housing appeared after the Second World War, being constructed as a solution for housing shortages across the world including European countries and Asia (Appold & Yuen, 2007; Musterd & Van Kempen, 2007; Yuen, 2009). In western countries, many of them were

constructed for social welfare reasons and became places of diverse social problems, while high-rise apartments in the current period are mostly constructed for economic reasons and the cityscape (Kearns et al., 2012; Musterd & Van Kempen, 2007).

High-rise apartments in Korea were also constructed as a solution for housing shortages but have followed a different pattern. In the 1960s, after the Korean War which destroyed about 600,000 houses and made another 320,000 uninhabitable (Wen, 1988), unprecedented rapid economic growth started and was concentrated in urban areas of Korea. Urbanization accelerated as a number of people poured into the cities from the traditional rural areas for the new industrial work opportunities which significantly rose as a consequence of export-oriented development strategies (La Grange & Jung, 2004). With rapid urbanization in the war-devastated areas, the country faced a significant housing shortage (Ronald & Lee, 2012). Apartments were constructed to address this housing shortage (Jeong & Ban, 2014), like the cases of the European countries. However, the object of provision was different: Korean apartment housing was mostly sold as a residence for the middle-class rather than rented as public housing for the socially disadvantaged (Jeon, 2016; Jung, 2016; Park & Hong, 2009).¹⁶ At that time, the government considered economic development to be the best solution to housing problems, as economic growth was expected to increase the income of households and enhance the ability of consumers to buy their home (Lim, 2005). As one of the efforts, a series of “The Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development” was conducted from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s. A part of this plan was implementing massive housing construction to keep the housing supply parallel with the economic growth of the country (Jeong & Ban, 2014). In other words, constructing apartments

¹⁶ Apartment housing in Korea was also provided for the low-income people at first, but due to few public resources available for housing constructions and pressure from the increasing number of urban population, the housing supply gradually changed its aim targeting consumers in the middle classes (Jeong & Ban, 2014; Ronald & Lee, 2012).

was believed to be an important and effective complement to the economic growth. This massive apartment construction was also attributed to the needs of the times in which western rationality, emphasizing efficiency and economy, predominated. The president Chunghee Park claimed that traditional Korean residential culture was irrational and uneconomical and that Korean people should undergo a ‘lifestyle revolution’ toward rationality (Kwon & Kim, 2012). The efficiency and economy represented in apartment housing were pursued. Under this circumstance, private construction companies mainly implemented the housing constructions through the great financial support from the government (KRIHS, 1979).



Figure 3-1. A scene which shows a dramatic change of housing in Seoul.
From *Apgujeong-dong in 1976*, by Jun, Mincho. 1976.

With the massive supply policies of the government, apartments have become predominant across the country. Until the 1970s, the traditional single-family home was the most common form of housing in Korea; but high-rise apartment dwellings started to replace single-family homes from the early 1980s with several housing supply policies of the government such

as the Construction program for Two Million Dwellings (1988~1992) and the Five-Year Plan for New Economy (1993~1997) (Ha, 2010). Housing construction was especially vigorous from 1989 to 2007. During that time, more than 10 million housing units (70.6% of all housing in South Korea) were constructed (KNHC, 2009). The proportion of the apartment housings to all types of homes reached 53% in 2005 (KOSTAT, 2005, 2009; Jeong & Ban, 2014). The proportion reaches 60% in 2016 (KOSIS, 2016).



Figure 3-2. Apartment complexes in Seoul, Korea

Available from Newstof: <http://www.newstof.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=711> (Accessed March 1, 2019)

The government also mainly led the sales of the private apartments beyond supplying them. They had frequently intervened in the private housing sector through the diverse policies including price controls on new apartments, pre-construction sale system, and residential land development regulations (Kim & Kim, 2000).¹⁷ Due to these policies, the government was able

¹⁷ Under the pre-construction system, apartment buyers have to pay in advance for their apartments in instalments before taking occupancy. As explained in Lee & Shin (2012), “The home buyers had to pay 20 per cent of the whole purchase price when signing a sale-purchase contract with the construction company and then pay another 60 percent of the purchase price in three-monthly instalments while the housing unit’s construction was in progress. The remaining 20 per cent was to be paid when the apartment was ready to be occupied. Thus, private savings

to strongly control the housing market. These interventions were also financially beneficial for both developers and consumers: the pre-construction sale system allowed the construction companies to raise money even before constructing the apartment buildings, and consumers were also able to buy apartments at a lower price under the sale price regulations, then make a profit by selling them back with a jump in the price (Kim, 1993; Lee & Shin, 2012). Therefore, housing supply and purchase at this time can be understood as capital accumulation, by both the developers and the consumers, rather than just providing or finding habitation (La Grange & Jung, 2004). In the same vein, we can understand that the benefits of the construction companies and consumers were the major reasons of the spread of the apartments along with the government's massive housing supply.

With the above-mentioned benefits for consumers, apartment ownership became the most important and effective means to increase personal assets (Leipziger et al., 1992; Gelézeau, 2008; Jeon, 2016). The value as a wealth-producing commodity has made apartments more than a place to live (Park & Hong, 2009): owning an apartment means owning a product of high marketable quality so that selecting criteria for housing have changed to 'a good house to sell' from 'a good house to live in'. In addition to the financial benefits, owning an apartment has become a necessary condition for memberships in the Korean middle-class by symbolizing a stable and ideal middle-class life (KRIHS, 2001). This is highly different from many other countries, such as Japan and UK, where apartments were mainly built for public rental (Park & Hong, 2009; Kearns et al., 2012). Under this circumstance, the apartment has become a typical housing type for the Korean middle and upper class. Table 3-1 shows the current distribution of housing types by income level.

became the main source of construction finance and enabled the state to make land available at no cost to itself' (Lee & Shin, 2012, p.1340).

Table 3-1. Housing types by income level in Korea (Source: KOSIS 2017)

Area	Income level	Housing type		
		Apartment	Detached housing	Multi-family housing
Nationwide	Low-income	28.1	51.8	11.5
	Middle-income	56.8	26.0	12.9
	High-income	74.5	15.0	8.0
Seoul Metropolitan Area	Low-income	30.1	40.6	18.8
	Middle-income	52.7	22.4	19.8
	High-income	74.6	11.5	10.8

Unit (%)

Apartment branding has further instigated this phenomenon since the 2000s (Kwon & Baek, 2013). When the number of apartments built per year plunged after the Korean economic crisis at the end of the 1990s, the government implemented deregulation policies in the housing industry to facilitate the housing supply, including the abolition of price controls on new apartments. This movement triggered excessive competitions among private apartment construction companies by making them free to set their own prices (Jung, 2016). To survive the competitions, they implemented apartment branding strategies focusing on their advertisements.¹⁸ These advertisements tried to show ‘how different their apartment is from the other ordinary apartments’ and to make distinctive and luxurious images of the apartment (C. Park, 2013; Jung, 2016). Lots of apartment complexes recently built are even named ‘~castle’ or ‘~palace’ to show their distinctive identities (Jun, 2008), and their names are visibly presented

¹⁸ Despite the abolishment of price controls, the pre-construction sale system was maintained. Therefore, the prices which home-buyers had to pay ahead were much higher than the past. H. Park (2013) claims that the apartment branding may have worked a prescription for the people’s fears in that situation.

on the walls of the apartment buildings. Further, living in particular apartments in particular areas can easily disclose people's social standing to others (Park & Hong, 2009).

However, not all apartments in Korea are relevant to the financial or symbolic benefits. Even though apartment housing in Korea was predominantly provided as a residence for the middle-class, apartments as public rental housing also have been provided from the late 1980s (Kwon & Kim, 2012).¹⁹ Public apartments may look similar to private apartments (Seo & Chiu, 2014), but they are often differentiated from the private apartments due to the relatively lower heights of the buildings, different building shapes, and different brand names on the walls (Lee et al., 2016). It is reported that residents of the long-term public rental apartments mostly consist of the elderly and the sick, suffer from social deprivation, and feel ashamed of their residential places (Cho et al., 2011; Kim, 2004; Park et al., 2009). As public rental apartments are perceived as places of the marginalized and impoverished, diverse social problems have come up in these areas (Lee et al., 2018) like the similar phenomena have been reported throughout the large public housing estates in Europe (Dekker & Van Kempen, 2005; Turkington et al., 2004).

Another noticeable characteristic of Korean apartment housing is its high exclusivity, which is presented by being constructed as a form of complex owing to the historical context. To provide new housing in the postwar period, public investments for constructing various urban infrastructures were required. However, the Korean government, focused on export enlargements and economic growth, was not willing to put enough effort into building urban infrastructures which required lots of money and labor (I. Park, 2013). In this situation, constructing apartment complexes could be a way for the government to be rid of this burdensome liability since this

¹⁹ In Korea, the volume of public rental housing stock (including public rental apartments) accounts for 5.5 % of total housing stock (Seo & Chiu, 2014; Jeon, 2016), which is a low level compared with neighboring Japan (37%) and Hong Kong (35%) (Jeong & Ban, 2014).

strategy allowed private construction companies to build numerous housing units with additional service facilities (generally called community facilities) such as open spaces, playgrounds, and parking lots without massive public investments. The responsibility for construction cost of the service facilities fell on the residents of apartment complexes (C. Park, 2013; I. Park, 2013). As a result of this movement, apartment complexes have provided various services only for the residents of the complex. This privatized housing provision and the following social phenomenon are quite similar with the common interest housing developments (CIDs) of the US. McKenzie (1994) explained, as construction of residence (including condominiums and planned unit development of single-family homes) was dominated by developers who had arranged homeowner associations to provide quality spaces, the private residential governments replaced the existing municipal governments; and the privatized services have been offered only for the residents. As Blandy (2013) indicates, gated communities would be a representative case of the privatized housing, which have recently increased in many countries shifting their forms according to the socio-cultural contexts (Gelézeau, 2008). Recently, researchers have understood apartment complexes in Korea as one of the gated community cases (Gelézeau, 2008; Jung, 2012; Jung, 2016).

In gated communities which are now featured in most of cities around the world, social homogeneity is preserved mainly based on the critical similarities of socio-economic status (Roitman, 2010). In Korean apartment housing, the social homogeneity based on the similar socio-economic level has been also observed (Lee, 2012). Chun (2004) saw apartment housing as a residential type where people with similar socio-economic conditions (in terms of occupations, education level, or ages) are gathered. Jung (2012) also claimed that because of the high housing price, residents who have similar socio-economic status live together in the

apartment complexes. It has been pointed out that homogenous communities may promote segregation between residents and the rest (Mckenzie, 1994; Low, 2003). In Korean cities, where it is common that many apartment complexes are placed together, this segregation issue is easily observed between private and public apartment complexes (Lee, 2012; Lee et al., 2018).

Recently, with the aim of de-concentrating poverty and enhancing diversity, trials to mix private and public housing units within the same building or complex have been made (Chun, 2004; Kim et al. 2017).

3.1.2 Spatial Characteristics

Along with the unique historic and social background, Korean apartments have distinct spatial characteristics. Above all, despite the recently made variations, apartments look quite similar each other in terms of both the exterior and the interior of each unit (Kwon & Kim, 2012). Korean architectural researchers explained this characteristic with the historical background. According to Kwon and Kim (2012) and C. Park (2013), the design of the units had to be universal for everyone to raise the marketability of apartments which were massively provided for sale. For this reason, the government presupposed a nuclear family of 3-5 members as a universal dweller type and decided a standardized spatial configuration which was suitable for that dweller type (Kwon & Kim, 2012). In addition, implementation of the housing subscription system²⁰ based on the size category of the area for exclusive use (85 meter² and

²⁰ Korea has a unique regulation system for the allocation of newly built apartments (including apartments built by private construction companies) in terms of the selection of customers. The housing subscription system is enforced for new housing developments which include more than 20 housing units. With this system, the customers for housing is selected according to the government rules before the completion of the housing developments. To buy a newly built housing unit, saving for housing subscription is mandatory as an application system for prospective buyers. After paying money into the installment account for a certain period, people have a qualification for new apartment applications. For the prospective buyers with savings account, the scoring scheme is also applied, using diverse eligibility criteria (the number of years without owning a house, the number of dependent family members, and the subscription account period). Along with the merit system, the lottery system is also applied within each limit.

smaller, between 85 and 102 meter², between 102 and 135 meter², 135 meter² and above) also contributed to the standardized design (C. Park, 2013). This is because, when the general spatial configuration and size of the units were decided, the unit plans were forced to be fixed in a similar way. Therefore, except for the differences in scale depending on the unit sizes, the spatial configurations of apartments have been very similar (Kwon & Kim, 2012). The plan design has greatly diversified since 2005, but the similarly designed units already occupied many apartment buildings and complexes. C. Park shows examples of the almost same design of apartment units (Figure 3-3).

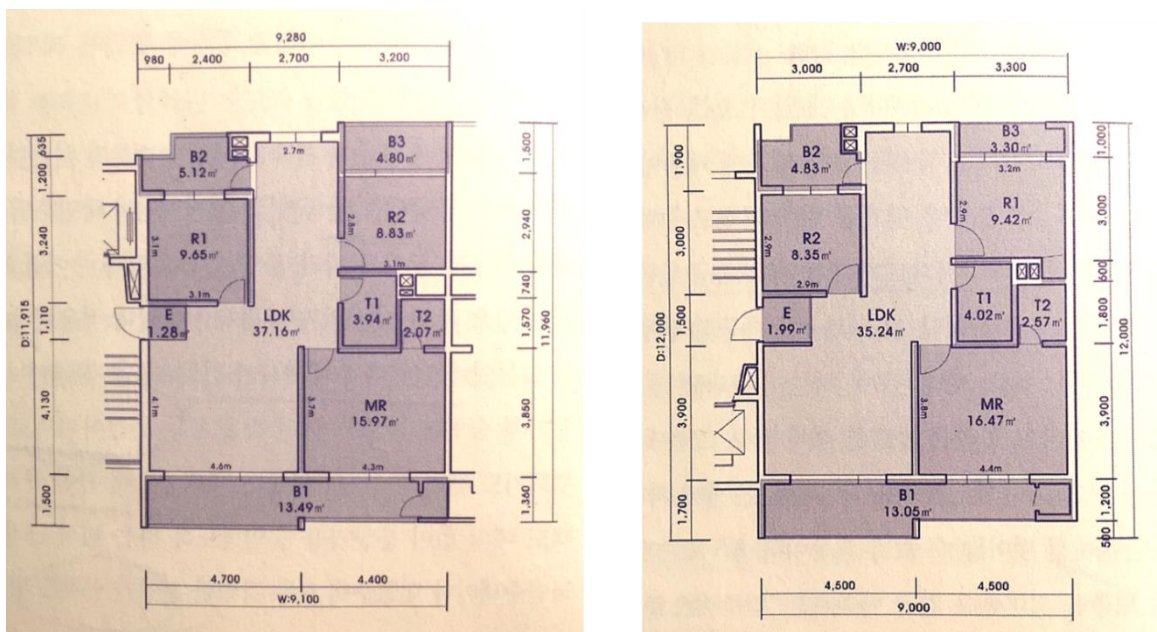


Figure 3-3. A comparison of the similar size apartment units

Left: an apartment plan of SH (Seoul Housing & Communities Corporation), Right: an apartment plan of a private construction company. Excerpted from C. Park (2013), p. 224

The apartment housing is also most commonly built as a high-rise (more than 15 stories)²¹ and direct-access type (which has two or three units on each floor with an elevator in the middle of the units) building, with highly limited indoor shared spaces. Korean architectural researchers explained that these common characteristics are the results of the attempts to provide the most spacious and pleasant individual living units. According to C. Park (2013) and I. Park (2013), the heights of buildings were required to be higher to secure large outdoor spaces while maintaining wide individual living units. Lobbies, lounges, or balconies were also not included or disappeared in the indoor building areas to reserve the maximum personal spaces within a limited area.



Figure 3-4. Corridor type apartment buildings (left) and direct-access type apartment buildings (right)

Note: Whereas corridor type apartment buildings have one entrance area and elevator hall in the middle, direct-access type buildings have entrances and elevator hall in the middle of every two units.

Available from <http://news.donga.com/3/01/20140417/62855530/1> (left) and

https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1004740169&plink=COPYPASTE&cooper=SBSNEWSSEND (right) (Accessed March 1, 2019)

²¹ According to Korean building regulations, apartment housing is defined as ‘a multi-unit dwelling with more than 5 stories.’ Before 2005, 15 stories apartment buildings were most commonly constructed, but recently built apartment buildings are generally higher.

Furthermore, in the process of offering well-lighted and privacy-preserving individual living units, corridor type apartment buildings have largely changed into direct-access type buildings (Figure 3-4). Recently, corridor type apartment buildings, which are very common in Europe and the US, are mostly provided for public rental housing in Korea. According to I. Park (2013), the exceptional focus on individual living units was caused from the fact that Korean apartments have been designed and constructed as products. As explained earlier, Korean apartments started as private housing for sale from the beginning while apartments in Western countries started to be built as public housing. This characteristic has made ‘reserving personal space to the maximum’ as a norm for the apartment construction in Korea.

Another conspicuous characteristic is that each building forms part of a complex, instead of directly connected to urban public space. The complex planning concept was largely based on Perry’s neighborhood unit approach, which provides service facilities such as schools, retail, and parks for its residents within the boundary of the neighborhood (Choi et al., 2013; Kong & Kim, 2009; C. Park, 2013). Housing estates with many apartment buildings are also observed in other countries (Musterd & Van Kempen, 2007; Yuen et al., 2006). However, the universalized exclusive complex system with high-quality service facilities is unique in Korea (Jeon, 2016). Being constructed as a form of complex, Korean apartment housing has a basically similar design principle: several or a dozen of large high-rise buildings, diverse community facilities, and outdoor green spaces are placed together in a complex. However, as various planning methods have been applied according to the demands of different periods, spatial elements and configurations of apartment complexes have changed reflecting the planning trends as well as social changes (Choi et al., 2013; Kong & Kim, 2009).²² For instance, in the early years of

²² Choi et al. (2013) investigated the periodic changes in spatial configuration of apartment complexes in Seoul with quantitative spatial analysis. From 1966 to 1975, when large scale apartment complexes started to be developed,

apartment construction, community spaces/facilities were routinely arranged in a monotonous way, so these spaces worked as simple pathways or parking lots rather than being used as places for social interactions among residents (Kong & Kim, 2009). Yet, since 2000, as apartment complexes with brand names were introduced, community spaces such as large-size parks, multipurpose plazas, and diverse community facilities have appeared as essential elements in apartment complexes (Choi et al., 2005; Kong & Kim, 2009). To some extent emphasizing community spaces may have reflected the changes of people's life styles and heightened awareness of importance of community, but it was also a result of apartment providers' marketing strategies which were intended to boost the housing market by making use of this social trend (Choi et al., 2005; Choi et al. 2013). In other words, apartment construction companies tried to differentiate their products by making an image of a lifestyle that promotes well-being. Indeed, the quality and quantity of community facilities can affect the price of apartment (Cha et al., 2014).

These community facilities are defined as 'facilities which apartment residents use in common for their everyday lives or community interactions' (Kang, 2016). The types and sizes of community facilities have varied according to the changes in housing laws (Cha et al., 2014). Specifically, the types and sizes of community facilities were decided based on the number of housing units in the apartment complexes in the past, while more flexible planning based on the needs of residents has been allowed since 2013 (Kim, 2018). The operating costs of these

schools, retails, and parks were placed in the center of the complex. From 1976 to 1985, there was an increased interest in securing commercial supremacy for retails, which was reflected in the increased centrality of retails. From 1986 to 1989, there was much new focus on pedestrian circulation and community spaces which was reflected in the increased centrality of the entry and increased community spaces such as parks. From 1990 to 1995, by succeeding and enhancing the previous planning methods, internalization in parks and recreational facilities was observed. From 1996 to 2000, there was increased interest in securing green spaces and landscaping planning. Since 2000, apartments with brand names have been introduced. In this period, the importance of parks, recreational facilities, and exercise facilities has been enhanced as a part of gentrification trends.

facilities are shared by apartment residents, through their maintenance fees. The operations are often entrusted to agencies, but they can also be managed by organizations composed of apartment residents (Kim, 2011).

With the increasing importance and the relevant policy changes — such as a permission to construct underground parking lots —, types of indoor and outdoor community facilities have highly diversified (Jung & Oh, 2015; Yang et al., 2018). According to Moon et al. (2017), in the recently developed private apartment complexes, community facilities include day care centers, libraries, gyms, indoor driving ranges, table tennis rooms, saunas, senior centers, cafes, plazas, playgrounds, outdoor exercise equipment, basketball courts, and soccer fields. However, in the recent studies which investigated the characteristics and uses of those facilities (Lee, 2009; Cha et al., 2014; Yang et al, 2018; Kim, 2018), low usage of the facilities, no regard for residents' differences, and the emphasis on quantity over quality were reported in common. In public rental apartments, community facilities have also increased and diversified (Kang, 2018), but poor maintenance and changed usage due to inconsiderate designs for users are easily observed (Kang, 2016; Kim, 2018).

Importantly, the form of complex contributes to the spatial exclusivity. Especially in the private apartment complexes, community facilities and infrastructures are provided only for the residents and outsiders' access into the complex is restricted (Cha et al., 2014; I. Park, 2013). Therefore, apartment complexes have worked as 'private oases' for residents by offering many services which should have been provided from public (C. Park, 2013). This exclusive service provision (such as green open spaces and recreational facilities) has been similarly presented in the suburban neighborhoods of the US, as a result of the similar privatized housing developments (McKenzie, 1994). As this case shows, the exclusivity along with spatial configuration is not an

unusual phenomenon in the current urban environments. According to Loukaitou-Sideris (2009), segregating, containing, and enclosing uses, homogenizing urban form, and prohibiting anything that falls outside a narrow set of activities have been the trend of the last decades. In addition to the above-mentioned exclusive services, most of Korean apartment complexes are enclosed with a wall or fence, have a barricade system at their gates, and are protected by several security guards all the time, which are understood as typical characteristics of gated communities.

Not surprisingly, apartment complexes are almost completely isolated from the surrounding urban space in this situation. According to the Korean architectural law, an apartment complex is defined as an area which is ‘surrounded by streets or railroads’, no matter how many buildings cluster or how large the area is (C. Park, 2013). That is to say, by law apartment complexes must be segregated by main streets from the urban public space to have their particular identity. In this situation, individual living units in apartment complexes never contact urban public space directly, so, private space and public space are thoroughly segregated within the city. This physical segregation has also been supported by the apartment branding strategies because living in the apartment complexes which are separated from the public urban space can be understood as one of the differentiation strategies to show off one’s wealth.

In the recently built apartment complexes, diverse spatial attempts to reduce the exclusivity and segregation are observed. These attempts can be understood as trials to challenge the main concept of apartment complex construction: providing exclusive services to the residents. For instance, there are some apartment complexes which have small parks or plazas at the boundary of the complexes without walls (Jung & Oh, 2015). Locating commercial facilities alongside the main streets, instead of inside the complexes, is also conducted with an expectation to reduce the segregation between inside and outside (Rim, 2011). However, all kinds of

facilities in apartment complexes, such as open space, playgrounds, community centers, libraries, and even streets are built and managed with the money from the residents. Thus, residents naturally become to be reluctant to allow outsiders to use their spaces or facilities (C. Park, 2013), as described in the anthropological report of the lives in apartment complexes (Jung, 2017).

Spatial configurations of the apartment complexes, including the layout of apartment buildings/facilities and the circulation system of inner roads, were quite identical in the past but some variations have been recently made. For instance, apartment buildings were largely arranged as a straight-line shape in the early years, but currently the layout is diverse including a L-shape, an open-rectangular shape, a mixed type, as well as the traditional straight-line shape (Byun & Kim, 2015; Jung & Oh, 2015; Kong & Kim, 2009). As community spaces have greatly increased and diversified, the layout method which can increase the accessibility to those spaces becomes important. According to Kong & Kim (2009), among many shared spaces, public plazas do the most important role in connecting the diverse spatial elements. Jung & Oh (2015) reported the same result by analyzing spatial characteristics of the recently constructed apartment complexes — in most cases, public plazas were located at the center of the complexes, being connected to other shared spaces. The even distribution of shared spaces was the second most common type. In terms of the road circulations, several circulation systems such as a lattice-type, a ring-type, a mixed type, and a cul-de-sac are employed without one predominant type (Byun & Kim, 2015; Jung & Oh, 2015).

Recently, Korean architectural researchers have attempted to analyze the structure of the pedestrian circulations in apartment complexes (Byun & Kim, 2015; C. Park, 2013; I. Park, 2013). I. Park (2013) insisted that a tree structure is normally found in Korean apartment

complexes with the high degree of spatial compartmentalization, which allows only one moving line from individual units to the outside surrounding area. This spatial structure is similar with the case of a tree which has only one way from the root to the leaf at the end of a terminal branch. Christopher Alexander (1964) already criticized the tree structure in modern cities where each part interacts with the whole only through an inflexible hierarchical and pyramidal relationship. Alexander claimed that with this physical backbone, there should be some essential ingredient missing. On the other hand, based on the spatial analysis results of 252 apartment complexes in Seoul, Byun & Kim (2015) showed that a loop structure, which has a more flexible spatial hierarchy, was also found along with the tree structure.

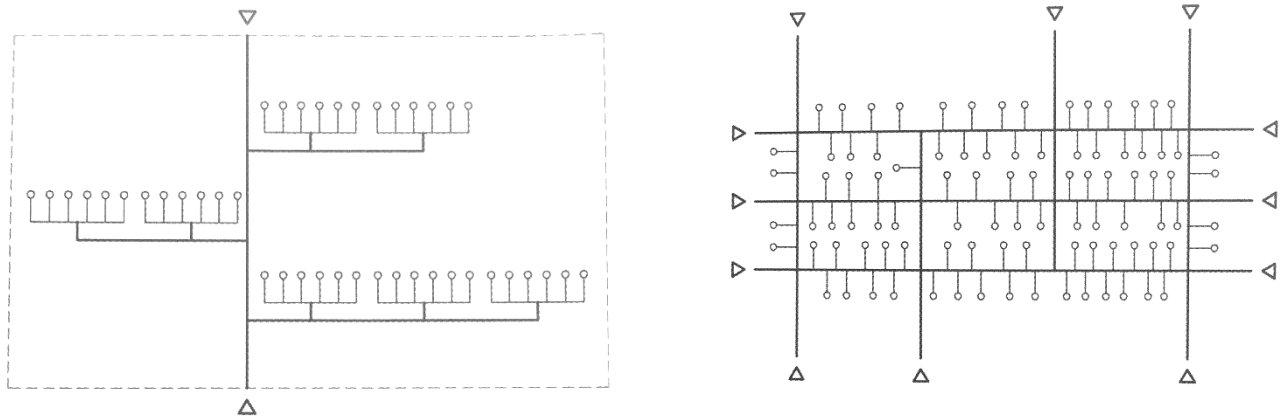


Figure 3-5. Comparison of spatial structures according to housing types

Left: tree structure in an apartment complex, Right: net structure in a residential area of detached houses
 Excerpted from I. Park (2013), p. 50

3.2 Pangyo: The Study Site

In this section, the socio-cultural and spatial characteristics of Pangyo new town are explained. To situate the study site in the broad context of Korean apartment complexes which was explained in the previous section, this section covers not only the three apartment complexes where the study participants reside but also the general contexts and characteristics of this new town.

3.2.1 Socio-cultural Characteristics as a New Town

Since the late 1980s, new town development has been central to Korean government's housing provision policy, as the housing system became a political target with the country's democratization. The government did not regard housing as a main component of a social welfare system but did attempt to solve housing shortage problems and to placate the dissatisfied urban public (Lee & Shin, 2012). The first new town development project was also implemented under the strong housing supply policy of the government, the Construction program for Two Million Dwellings (1988~1992). The five first-generation new town developments were conducted within a 25kilometer radius of Seoul's city center: Bundang, Ilsan, Pyeongchon, Sanbon, and Jungdong from 1989 to 1996.

In the late 1990s, after the first new town development project, the Korean economic crisis agitated deregulation policies in the housing industry as explained in the previous section. At this time, the private sector and local governments strongly criticized the government's involvement in the housing industry and demanded deregulation of the policies. With deregulation of several policies explained earlier, the government also lifted restrictions on

greenbelts and green areas, which led to construction of 10 more new towns, as the second-phase new town development (Figure 3-6).

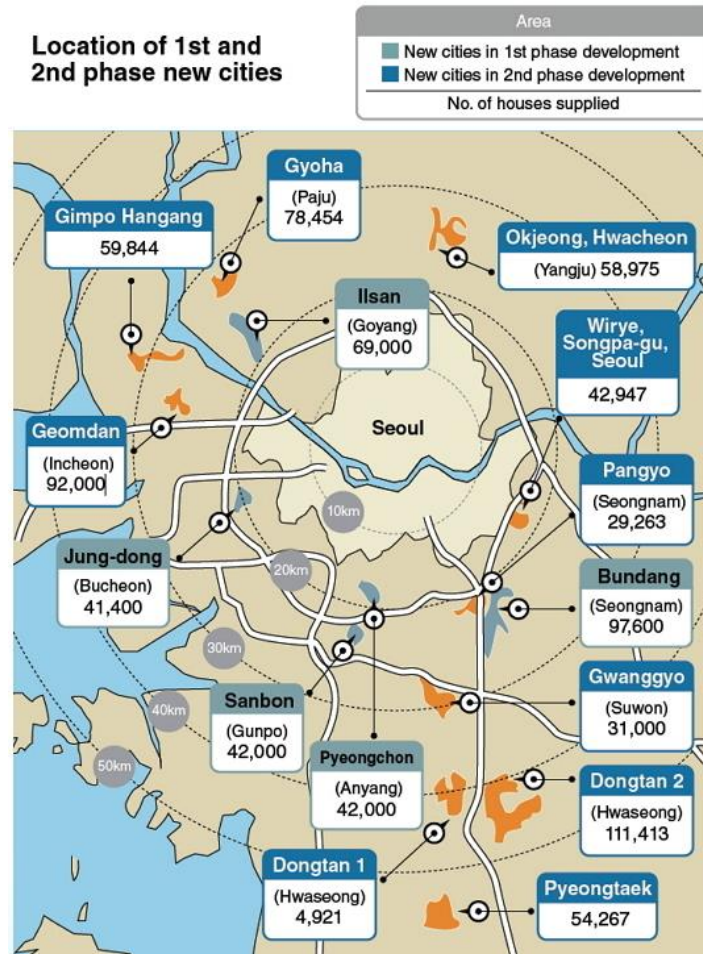


Figure 3-6. Location of 1st and 2nd phase new cities in Korea
(Source: The Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport)

Pangyo, the site of this research, is a planned new town as one of the second-phase new town developments. For a long time, any development of this area was restricted since it was designated as part of the Nam Dan Green Area by the central government in May 1976. During that time, this area was under constant pressure by the real estate market for development due to its beneficial location, between Seoul and Bundang. The development was finally approved in 2001 to alleviate the excessive demand for housing in Gangnam (a commercial, business, and education center of Seoul).

The development project was officially conducted by the Korean Land Development Corporation (KLDC), the Korea National Housing Corporation (KNHC), and the local governments (Gyeonggi province and Seongnam city) and managed by the Ministry of Construction and Transport.²³ After going through serious conflicts over the development density and the share of public and private housing, the government presented development plans including provision of about 30,000 new housing units. As the real estate market of Bundang and Gangnam dramatically rose right before the planned advanced sales in 2005, the president group stopped the whole process. To prevent speculative purchasing of apartments in the new town, they made a major shift including the division of sales of apartments over the two years instead of all at once, the increases of public rental apartment units for the low-income groups, and the increases of the share of small-sized apartment units (Lee & Shin, 2012). The provided public rental apartments include national rental housing and ten-year public rental housing.²⁴

²³ In 2009, the KLDC and the KNHC were merged into the Korea Land and Housing Corporation.

²⁴ Types and characteristics of the current public rental housing in Korea can be summarized as follows (Source: Data from the Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, 2018; Kim, 2014; Jin & Lee, 2013). Among them, the short-term lease and purchase public rental housing was first launched in Pangyo.

Type and period	Qualifications	Rent levels compared to market rent (%)
Permanent public housing	Less than 50% of the avg. income, priority to beneficiary of national basic livelihood	Less than 30
50-year public housing	Less than 50m ² : less than 70% of the avg. income, priority to monthly income of less than 50%	50-70
National rental housing (maximum 30 years)	Less than 60m ² : less than 70% of the avg. income Greater than 60: less than the avg. income	50-80
Long-term jeonse housing (maximum 20 years)	Less than 85m ² : less than 150% of the avg. income Greater than 85m ² : less than 180% of the avg. income	Less than 80
Purchase-lease housing (5 years)	Less than 60m ² : less than 100% of the avg. income	70-80
Short-term lease and purchase (5-year & 10-year public rental housing)	Houseless households (other various criteria according to housing types) * Once tenants have rented an apartment for 5 or 10 years, they are given the option to purchase their apartments for a price less than its government-assessed value.	Less than 90
Happy house (6 years)	University students and graduates, newly married couples	60-80

Finally, 10,168 public apartment units and 24,191 private apartment units were planned in four administrative districts of the new town — Unjung-dong, Sampyeong-dong, Pangyo-dong, and Baekhyun-dong. The current population and housing status in Pangyo new town is shown in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Population and housing status in Pangyo new town (KOSIS, 2015)

District (Dong)	Population	Number of Households	Number of Housing	Number of apartments
Sampyeong-dong (East Pangyo)	25,229	8,326	7,760	7,760
Baekhyun-dong (East Pangyo)	25,814	8,820	8,705	8,479
Pangyo-dong (West Pangyo)	23,197	7,177	6,493	5,256
Unjung-dong (West Pangyo)	20,073	6,760	6,273	4,542
Total	94,313	31,083	29,231	26,037

With the beneficial location, the sales of new housing units drew great attention from the Korean people, recording the highest housing subscription (lottery) competition rate by that time (Ahn, 2017). Since apartments in new towns have been provided at a lower price compared to the existing apartments, purchase of new apartments in new towns often led to profits accruing from real estate in time. In the case of Pangyo, there was even a buzzword “Lotto Pangyo” when the apartment units were on sale, although the government tried hard to prevent speculative purchasing of apartments. The increases in housing prices in this new town have shown that the expectation was not wrong. According to the Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the real transaction price of an apartment unit in one of the most expensive apartment complexes of this new town was increased to 1.4 billion won at the time of the field study in 2016, which was originally around 750 million won when provided in 2009. The price of apartments in Pangyo new town has been the highest among the new towns in the Seoul

metropolitan area, and it is even similar to the price of the apartments in Seoul's most expensive neighborhoods.²⁵

Along with the several beneficial characteristics coming from the location, such as the excellent accessibility to Gangnam, the great educational environment of this new town is also believed to contribute to the increases in housing prices.²⁶ Indeed, according to a study which analyzes diverse attributes that affect the housing price change rate after pre-sale acquisition (Park et al., 2014), in east Pangyo, the possibility of being assigned to innovative public schools had positive effects on the price change rate. At the same time, the distance to the neighborhood public elementary school from an apartment showed a negative effect.

3.2.2 Spatial Characteristics and Structural Elements

Characteristics of Pangyo new town

The total size of Pangyo new town is 9.3 km² including residential areas of 3 km², industrial areas of 661,160 m², public infrastructure areas of 3.3 km², green space of 2.2 km², and commercial areas of 165,290 m² (Gyeonggi Province et al., 2003). The density announced in 2003 is 96 people per hectare which represents much lower density compared to the previous new towns such as Bundang (198) or Gwachun (274) (MCT, 2001).

²⁵ At the time of summer 2016, the apartment price per pyeong (3.3m²) was over 30 million won in Gangnam and Seocho districts in Seoul. The price was around 23 million in Yongsan and Songpa districts, and the price of Pangyo was similar with these two regions (Yongsan and Songpa) (Cho, 2016; Jung, 2016).

²⁶ It is often believed that education factors such as education performance of schools and private teaching institutions can make an impact on apartment prices as Gangnam district has shown drastic increases in apartment prices since 2000. However, according to Kim & Lee (2007), rapid increase in apartment prices did not necessarily stem from education factors in the other areas, except for Gangnam.

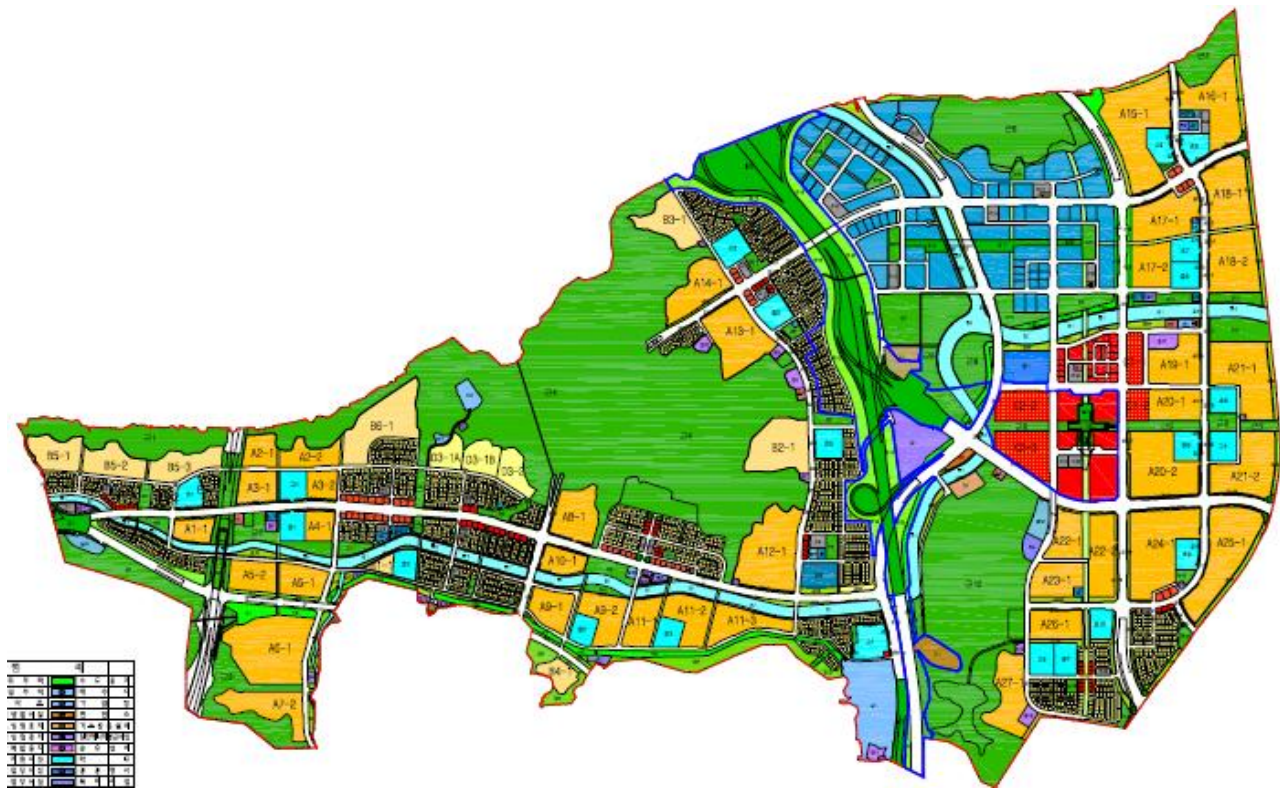


Figure 3-7. A map of Pangyo new town – east side and west side

(dark yellow: apartment complexes, light yellow: detached housings, light blue: elementary and secondary schools, blue: business area, red: commercial area, green: green area, brown: electricity supply facilities, and purple: religious facilities)

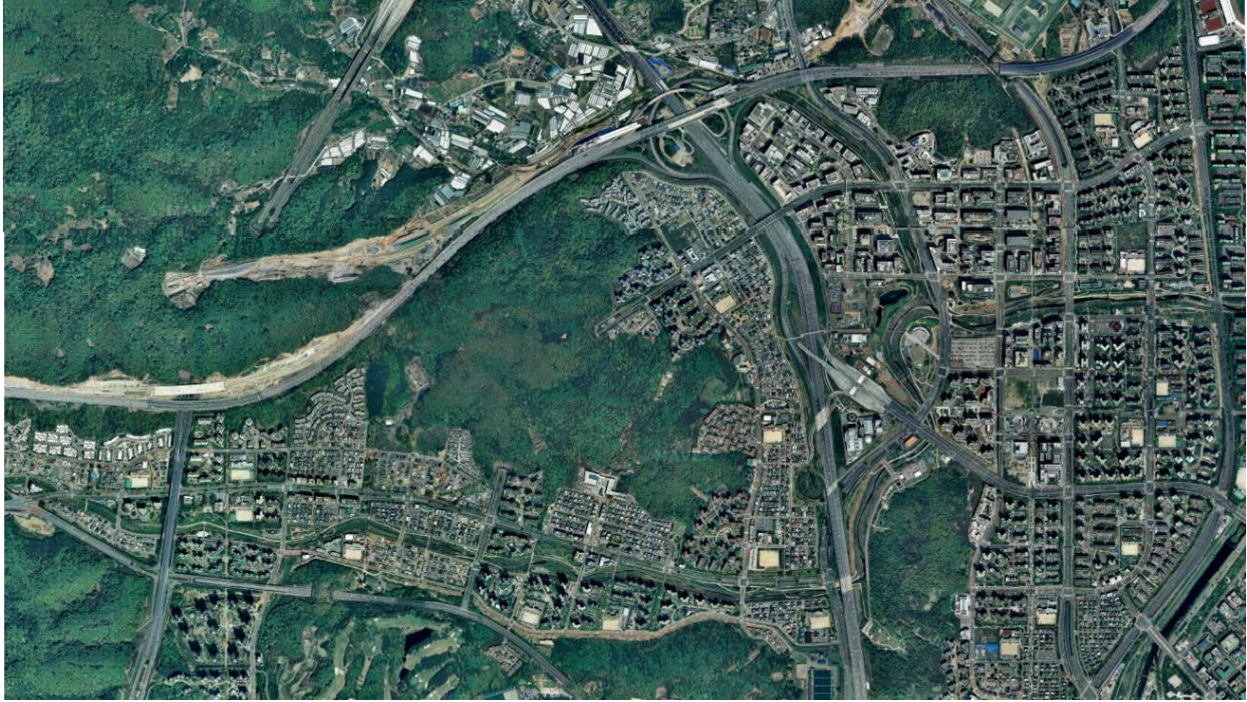


Figure 3-8. Aerial view of Pangyo new town (source: NAVER Map)

The new town is divided as an east side and a west side based on the main highway (Gyeongbu Expressway). The west side is mainly filled with residential areas which include a relatively high rate of detached housing lots. The east side consists of residential areas, commercial areas, and IT business areas. The IT business area, also called ‘Pangyo venture district’ or ‘Pangyo Techno Valley’, has been developed aiming to have self-sustaining business facilities and to avoid Pangyo from becoming a commuter town for Seoul. This IT business area has been successful, significantly affecting the economic development of this region with more than 1300 companies based here.

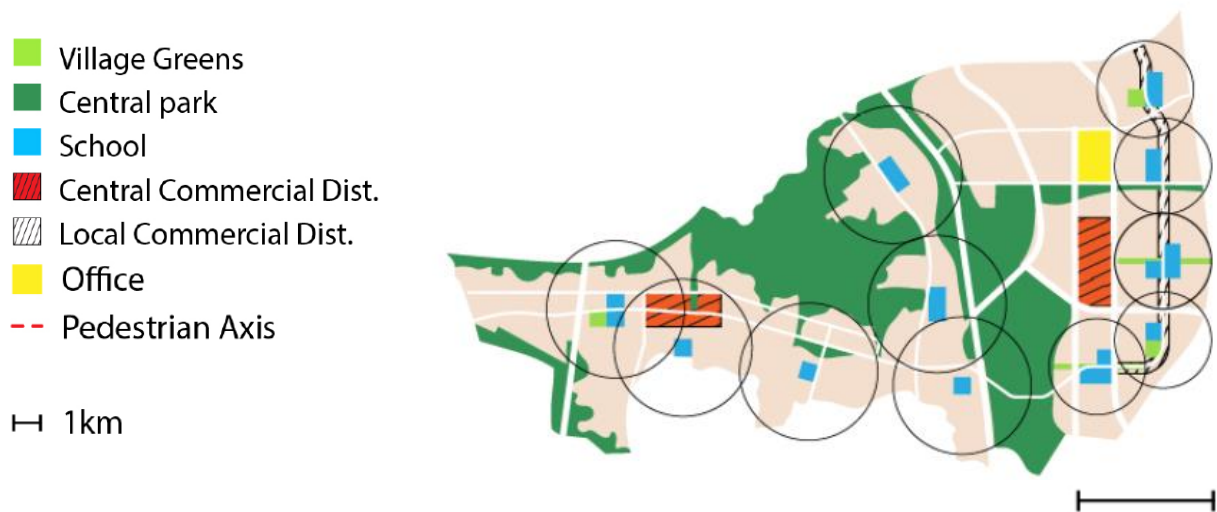


Figure 3-9. Neighborhood unit and walkability planning of Pangyo new town
(excerpted from Lee & Park, 2015, p199)

According to a spatial analysis by Lee and Park (2015), Pangyo new town has a neighborhood unit system which locates 5-6 middle size apartment complexes within a 400-m radius (Figure 3-9). In this new town, pedestrian-only green spaces (neighborhood parks) are largely located at the intersections of the apartment complexes, rather than segregated inside the complexes or separated from the living spaces. Lee and Park explained that this neighborhood park system can enhance the walking activities for transport as well as recreation.

Like many other new towns and neighborhoods in Seoul metropolitan area, the most common housing type in Pangyo is the apartment complex. In the case of east Pangyo which includes two administrative areas Sampyeong-dong and Baekhyun-dong, the number of apartment units is 16,239 while the whole number of housing is 16,465. Baekhyun-dong includes ~200 detached housings which are located at the south part of east Pangyo, but all of the housings in Sampyeong-dong are apartments (mostly apartment complexes, along with high-rise

mixed residential buildings and studio flats near the Pangyo Techno Valley). The three studied apartment complexes (G, H, & I) are also located in this district.



Figure 3-10. 18 apartment complexes in east Pangyo

Figure 3-10 presents 18 apartment complexes in the east side, and Table 3-3 shows the basic information of these complexes. Four apartment complexes (E, F, L, & M) are national rental housings and three apartment complexes (C, a part of K, & Q) are ten-year public rental housing. The national rental apartments were built as a corridor-access type so that it is relatively easy to differentiate them (as explained in 3.1) while the ten-year public rental apartments do not have any distinctive physical characteristics. Among the 14 apartment complexes (except for the four national rental apartments), there are differences in landscape design and types and locations of community facilities by being designed and constructed by various construction companies.

Table 3-3. 18 Apartment complexes in east Pangyo

Complex	Number of households	Number of buildings	Floors (the highest)	Public rental housing	Construction company (Initial)
A	1,147	25	15		Private (P)
B	721	16	15		Private (E)
C	870	12	18	ten-year public rental	Private (G)
D	748	12	18		Private (N)
E	775	9	17	national rental	Private (S)
F	1,297	13	20	national rental	KNHC
G	585	11	22		Private (DY) + KNHC
H	447	7	22		Private (H)
I	850	14	25		Private (K)
J	948	14	25		Private (DW)
K	281	13	25		Private (J)
	491			ten-year public rental	Private (J)
L	1,722	23	25	national rental	Private (G)
M	1,974	20	25	national rental	Private (N)
N	584	11	22		KNHC
O	396	6	22		Private (B)
P	464	7	24		KNHC
Q	340	6	22	ten-year public rental	Private (DL)
R	348	15	10		KNHC
Total	14,938	234	-	-	-

The three apartment complexes

Three apartment complexes (G, H, and I) are the study site of this dissertation. All of them were sold and allocated by the housing subscription system in 2006, and residents started to move in late 2009. Complex G includes 585 units (107m²: 188 units / 137 m²: 397 units), Complex H includes 447 units (110m²: 197 units / 133m²: 220 units / 155m²: 30 units), and Complex I includes 850 units (127m²: 333 units / 144m²: 500 units / 188m²: 11 units / 226m²: 6 units). As shown in Figure 00, which is provided in Lee & Park (2015), the three apartment complexes are placed in a neighborhood unit with a 400-m radius.



Figure 3-11. A map of the three apartment complexes (G, H, and I)



Figure 3-12. Aerial view of the three apartment complexes (source: NAVER maps)



Figure 3-13. Complex G

Available from MK news: <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/realstate/view/2018/07/457409/> (Accessed April 27, 2019)

Note: See Figure 3-29 for the locations of figures in this section.

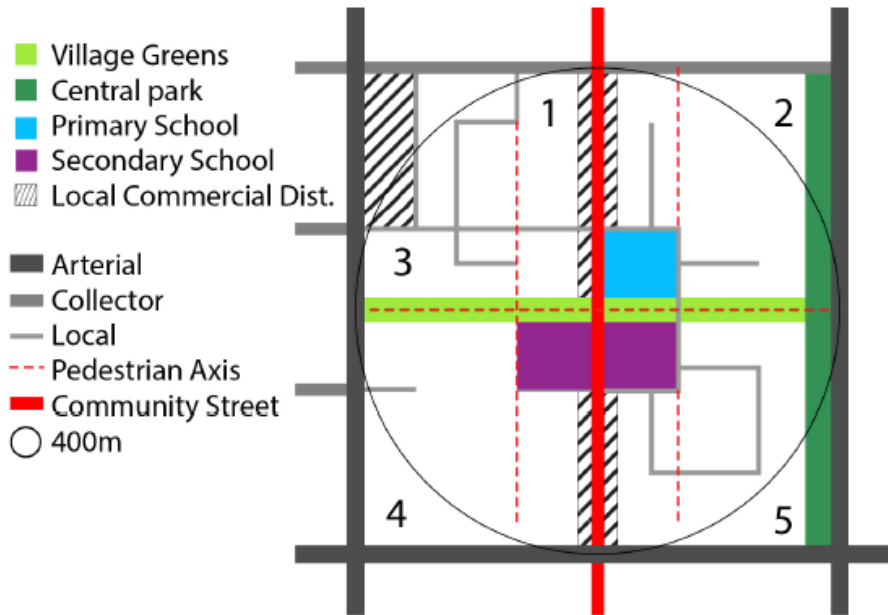


Figure 3-14. Neighborhood unit diagram of the study site (1: Complex G, 2: Complex I, 3: Complex H)
 Excerpted from Lee & Park, 2015, p. 198

As explained in the previous section, apartment buildings form big complexes instead of being located alone. Due to the small shops located alongside the community street and a public trail park which spatially connects several complexes and outside areas (Figure 3-15), the spatial structure of these complexes can be felt as less closed/segregated in comparison to the old Korean apartment complexes. However, since each complex is still enclosed with a low wall with a number of trees and has a vehicle control system protected by security guards at the main gate (Figure 3-16 & 17), outsiders' access into the complex is psychologically, rather than physically, restricted.

In terms of the commercial facilities, many small shops such as grocery store, convenience store, bakery, restaurants, and cafes are located along the local community street between the apartment complexes, instead of having one or two big commercial buildings at the corner or in the center of the complexes (Figure 3-18).



Figure 3-15. A public trail park which connects apartment complexes (source: author)



Figure 3-16. A vehicle control system at the entrance of Complex H (source: author)



Figure 3-17. Complex G & H enclosed with low walls and trees (source: author)

Among these small shops, there are quite a few real estate agency offices since the real estate market of this neighborhood has been continuously issued. In addition to these small shops along the street, the neighborhood has big supermarkets and a department store in the main commercial area which is located one or two blocks away from the apartment complexes.

Regarding the education facilities, three public schools—elementary, middle, and high school— are also placed at the community street where small commercial shops are located, different from the old apartment complexes which usually include schools inside the complexes. Around five apartment complexes usually belong to the same elementary school district in this new town; therefore, a group of these apartment complexes is regarded as a small district within the official administrative district ‘dong’.



Figure 3-18. Small shops along the community street between Complex G and I (source: author)



Figure 3-19. Small shops along the community street with Complex I (source: author)



Figure 3-20. The elementary school located at the neighborhood

Available from Joongangilbo: <https://jmagazine.joins.com/monthly/view/305104> (Accessed April 27, 2019)

Diverse community facilities are also located at the complexes. Indoor spaces include gyms, indoor driving ranges, table tennis rooms, senior centers, day care centers, and small libraries, and outdoor spaces include plazas, playgrounds, outdoor exercise equipment, and badminton/basketball courts. Several outdoor spaces are distributed around the spaces (Figure 3-21, 22, & 23) while indoor spaces are gathered in one or two buildings which are located at the community street or in the center of the complex (Figure 3-24 & 25). Outdoor spaces are similar across the complexes, but types of indoor spaces vary according to the number of households in each complex. Specifically, the largest complex (Complex I) include all the above-mentioned indoor spaces, while the smallest complex (Complex H) does not have senior centers and day care centers inside the complex. There are no restrictions on the use of outdoor community facilities while indoor facilities can be used by only the residents of the complex, and sports facilities usually require inexpensive usage fee for the management. Since apartment complexes are physically and psychologically segregated from the surrounding urban space, these

indoor/outdoor community facilities in the apartment complexes cannot be public spaces which are open to everyone. However, when focusing on the residents of the apartment complexes (in other words, the participants of this study), those spaces can be understood as a kind of third spaces where casual encounters and social interactions between residents can occur.



Figure 3-21. Outdoor plaza in Complex I (source: author)

Like other relatively new apartment complexes in Korea, they have primary underground parking lots with a few ground parking lots. This design approach was expected to facilitate more social encounters and gathering on the ground in the complexes where no cars occupy the space.²⁷ Thus, diverse gathering spots with landscape design, playgrounds, and outdoor exercise facilities are located on the empty ground space.

²⁷ However, recent studies found that underground parking lots are not necessarily helpful for social gatherings in the outdoor spaces, as they encourage more use of automobiles or decrease the time spent in the outdoor spaces (Lee & Park, 2015).



Figure 3-22. Small outdoor gathering spot in Complex H (source: author)



Figure 3-23. Playground in Complex G (source: author)



Figure 3-24. Indoor community center building in the center of Complex I (source: author)



Figure 3-25. Indoor community center building at the corner of Complex H (source: author)

The complexes consist of flat-type, tower-type, and mixed-type apartment buildings.²⁸ A relatively low-rise flat-type buildings are placed near to the main community street while tower-type and mixed-type buildings are placed more inside part of the complexes. Each building in the complexes has two to five units per floor, whether it is a flat-type or tower-type. All the buildings in the complexes are direct-access type which has an elevator hall per every two or three units (Figure 3-26). In this spatial structure, only two or three units directly face each other as sharing a building entrance, elevator hall, and stairs (Figure 3-27). However, all units in a building (or several buildings) share an underground parking lot together which is connected to all elevators and staircases of the building (Figure 3-28).

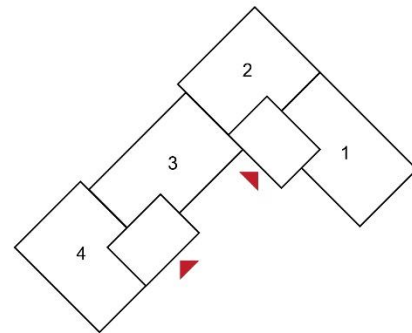
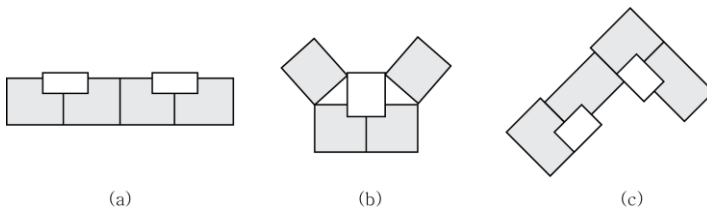


Figure 3-26. Two entrances of a mixed-type apartment building with four units per floor (source: author)

Note: Unit 1 & Unit 2 (or Unit 3 & Unit 4) share the entrance, elevator hall, and staircases



28

a. Flat-type (mostly constructed before 2000) b. tower-type (since 2000) and c. mixed-type (since 2010) buildings



Figure 3-27. Elevator hall which is shared by two or three units (source: author)

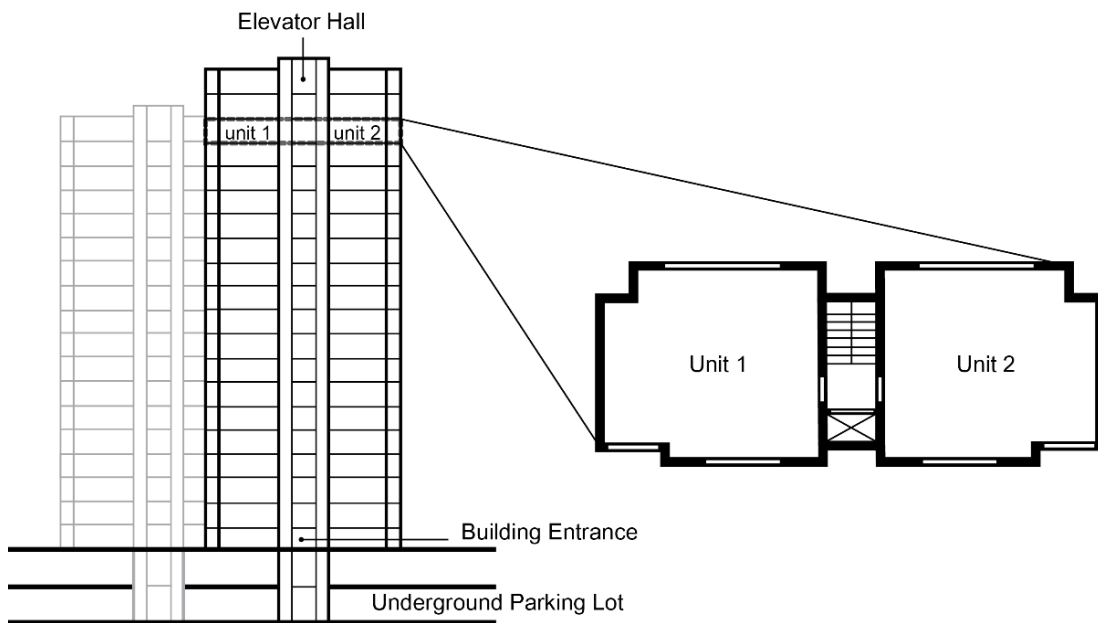


Figure 3-28. Schematic diagram of the spatial structure of an apartment building (source: author)



Figure 3-29. Locations of the figures (from 3-13 to 3-25) on the map (source: author)

Note: All the pictures (except for pictures with additional sources) were taken by the author, from 2pm to 5pm, on sunny weekdays in September 2016. From my observation and experiences, these are normal scenes at this time, with a difference from evening time (more people at the street cafes and restaurants) and a difference from weekends (more children at the playgrounds).

4. LOCAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

This chapter discusses the essences of local social relations experienced in the studied apartment complexes. Despite individual differences, the participants shared some patterns of their local social relationships. The positional characteristic of the participants — women with children — had huge effects on the shared experiences, while social and physical contexts of the neighborhood were also closely related with commonalities of the experiences. Even though participants shared commonalities of the experiences, it was found that there were great differences in the experienced local social relations according to the stage of life cycle to which participants belonged. Across the main themes, I will describe and explain the differences between the groups.

4.1 Themes: Essences of Local Social Relationships

Table 4-1. Themes and sub-themes of experiences of local social relationships

	Themes	Sub-themes
1	Why local social relations work	1-1) Physical proximity
		1-2) Children and mothering
		1-3) Similarity
2	Having shallow relations	2-1) Incidental relations
		2-2) Superficial relations
		2-3) Temporary relations
3	Making comparisons with neighbors	3-1) Feeling comparative deprivation
		3-2) Pressure of conformity
		3-3) Reactions to comparisons and stress
4	Living in a micro-community with other place values	4-1) Weak sense of belonging to the neighborhood
		4-2) Other values of the place: asset value
		4-3) Other values of the place: symbolic image

Four main themes that have emerged from the interviews are 1) why local social relations work, 2) having shallow relations, 3) making comparisons with neighbors, and 4) living in a micro-community with other place values. Although these four themes may simplify the complexity of the experiences of local social relationships, they can provide an overview of how participants perceived, understood, and experienced their social world which was established with their neighbors. The main themes and sub-themes under each main theme are presented in Table 4-1.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Why Local Social Relations Work

In modern society, there is enough potential for people to be pulled apart instead of holding together in the limited place (Krupat, 1985). Indeed, why do local social relations work in the current urban system, which provides many other possibilities for social connections beyond the realm of local areas? In discussing the social relationships which participants had in their neighborhood, the factors which made them form and maintain those relationships emerged. The major promoters for the local social relationships included physical proximity, being involved in raising children, and the similarity between the residents. This section deals with these factors before peering into other aspects of the local social relations and their possible impacts on health and well-being.

1-1) Physical proximity

In the modern society, the neighborhood seems to play a less important role as the physical area which is open to its residents widens (Lawhon, 2009). It is true: people's dependence on the neighborhood has dramatically decreased compared to the past when people had much poorer mobility. However, even in the modern society, it seems that the power of

physical proximity plays an important role in forming and maintaining social relations. The physical proximity alone cannot make people form and maintain relationships. However, as Valentine (2001) clarifies, “shared activities, relationships, and support naturally emerge through the accident of proximity” (p. 112). That is to say, ‘living within arm’s reach’ allowed participants to easily have more frequent contacts and interactions with their neighbors — and it was important to build up intimate relationships. Physical proximity is significant by allowing the participants to give and receive immediate help and support from their neighbors, both emotional and material. Participants talked about the importance of having people within easy distance, which helped them meet and talk with those people anytime they needed support.

It is good to have people who I can call when I feel depressed. When I feel bad because of something, I call them, and they buy me something delicious... In my current life, the relations with neighbors are the most important after the relations with my family. There is a physical distance between me and other friends. I am emotionally closer to my friends, but I cannot meet them every day. We meet just once in a while, like once per two or three months. But you know, I can meet my neighbors every day. At least three or four times per week. So, if I don’t have them, my life will be really lonely. (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children)

...I meet these people almost every day. Because we do the exercise together. We usually have a cup of coffee after finishing the exercise. I think it is really helpful for my life to have people who I can have a cup of coffee and conversation whenever I want to talk about something. (Dasom, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I have some neighbors who are really intimate with me, for instance, I can easily ask them ‘Bring me soy sauce, I am running out of it’... whenever I need something although my home is not organized. I really think I have good neighbors. You know, they cannot indeed help me solve the difficult problems in my life. But, when I need something small, or want to have a casual conversation, it is really great to have people who can be with me, help me, and talk about what I want to discuss. It is my big asset. The relationships with these people are important to me. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

I have not been really intimate with my neighbors, but I got some help since we live in a proximate distance and meet quite often... When my daughter suffered from an atopic skin disease, I talked about it with a neighbor in the elevator. And she introduced me another neighbor, a Korean medicine doctor, who also lived

in the same building, and the doctor recommended a good medicine and my daughter was fully recovered after having that medicine for three months. I was so grateful to be helped by just living here together and meeting in the elevator... Sometimes, when I took my kids out to the playground in the complex and met people there, we exchange casual help, like babysitting others' kids for a while when someone should do something. Those kinds of things made me feel good. (Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

In addition to giving and receiving immediate help, physical proximity helped the participants easily do daily work together with their neighbors and share details of everyday lives which were regarded as important and pleasant elements in their lives. Since the participants spent a relatively long time in the neighborhood, there were diverse everyday routines which they can do and share with their neighbors. In terms of doing daily housework together, it was like a relationship with a colleague at work: they went to market together to buy groceries, took care of their children together, and rode their children to private education institutes together²⁹. They also did diverse activities for fun or health with their neighbors, such as physical exercise, hobbies, and shopping.

The person who I go climbing together, I am really intimate with her. She was also the mother of my child's classmate several years ago. I always set aside a time for her on Friday. We usually go climbing but sometimes watch movies, and so on. We share every detail in our lives... (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I met my neighbors two or three times per week. We meet in the neighborhood cafes, go to the supermarket to buy some grocery, and do exercise together. We are intimate since we meet really often. When the kids go to the same private education institution, we ride them together and go to the grocery market while the kids are in the class, and then we bring them back home together. (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

²⁹ In Korean, these private education institutes are called 'Hagwon'. The most well-known role of these institutes is as cram schools, which specialize in training students for particular goals, such as passing the entrance exam of the specialized secondary schools or universities. However, beyond these particular goals, attending hagwon is really common for Korean students. It works as an ordinary supplementary education institution that helps students keep up with the school curriculum and improve test scores. Pre-school age younger children also often attend nonacademic hagwon for art, music, and physical education. According to KOSTAT (2010), 75 percent of primary and secondary school students have attended hagwon or used other private supplementary education services.

... We take the same yoga class in the neighborhood gym. After the class, we have a cup of coffee and spend some time together. Almost every day. Because of this, I meet these people most frequently. I go to the gym as long as I do not have other things to do. Then we spend almost five hours together — we do the exercise together, have a cup of coffee, go to the grocery market, and then finally say good bye and go home for making dinner... My husband keeps suggesting moving out... There is an economic reason. But for the male, it is just a place to sleep and have a rest since he leaves for work in the morning and arrives at night. For the female, it is not. I have all of my social relationships here. I have settled in here and had social life here. (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children).

1-2) Children and mothering

Physical proximity is one important factor that helps people form and maintain social relations in the neighborhood. However, that is not the only factor. Lots of participants formed and maintained their local relations based on another powerful reason: their children. Especially for the participants with little kids and school-age children, their children became an important link between them in forming and maintaining social relationships.

In many cases, the local relations were formed naturally through the educational institutions of the children — school or pre-school. In this new town and most of apartment complexes in Korea, public schools — which were assigned to students by the government education offices according to the place of residence — were located at the corner of or inside the apartment complexes. Although it depends on the size of the apartment complexes, in many cases, four or five adjacent apartment complexes belong to the same school district (See Chapter 3 for more details). In this setting, as their children went to neighborhood schools, participants had many opportunities to meet their neighbors — literally those who lived in the same neighborhood — who were the parents of their children's school mates as well. In the case of the pre-schools, it is not assigned but a choice; however, the kids usually went to one of the pre-schools around the neighborhood. Therefore, the mothers of the pre-school age kids also had

some opportunities to meet their neighbors by sending their kids to pre-school. Jina, who had lived in the neighborhood before her daughter entered the school, talked about the big change in her local social relations after the daughter went to the neighborhood elementary school.

After my daughter entered the elementary school, I have formed really many relations with other mothers. Nowadays, I am really busy to say hello to my acquaintances when I walk down the neighborhood street. Previously, when my daughter was younger, I did not have that many relations. Now I have lots of relations through my daughter. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school children)

When it comes to the way of establishing relations, some participants got closer with other mothers because their kids were intimate friends or class mates. In other cases, they established relations when they met other mothers at school on the occasions of official events held by the schools, although their children were not that intimate with each other. After establishing relations through the school events, participants had maintained their relations with the school parents — their neighbors.

I have a group doing calligraphy together as a hobby. This group was made of the mothers of my child's classmates. Our children were all in the same class, and one mother invited an instructor and opened a calligraphy class. We learned it for three months, and when the class was finished then it naturally became a meeting of us. We use a room in community center and do the calligraphy together...usually we more concentrate on a chat, though. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

Nowadays, we all have online messenger chatting rooms of mothers of the same class, so we can contact each other via the messenger. Usually, when we meet each other in the school events, we have a cup of coffee together after the event. These gatherings help us to get closer. Sometimes some of us have beers together in the evening... Not all mothers participate in this kind of meeting, but quite a few come. (Sun, 45 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

...I first met these mothers who I frequently meet through a voluntary program at the school. The voluntary program is for caring the kids at school in order to protect bullying. The school invites mothers who can participate in the program and forms two persons as a team. For the program, which we do once per two months, we patrol here and there of the school during the break time. And during

the class time of children, we usually have a casual conversation. By doing this, the team members spend a whole day together. Naturally, I had lots of conversations and talked a lot with my partner. And we also got close to another team in the same class by doing this several times together. (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

In some cases, the participants met their neighbors from the local churches or sports center, where their children were not the main users of the place, but still the existence of their children worked as an important link which made them establish relations and get closer. Suji met her most intimate neighbor in a neighborhood gym when she learned swimming. Although they met in a place not related to their children, the reason that made them closer and maintain good relationship is that they had the same age children and similar experiences as raising them.

...I started learning swimming after quitting my job when my twins entered the elementary school. And I met a person in the gym and then started a conversation just casually. And we found out that we had the same age children. Moreover, we had similar experiences in childbirth... I had a hard time because of subfertility and she also had the similar experience. Both of us are not wordy, but we got along really well... And then she introduced other intimate mothers who also have the same age children. I was able to get closer to the other mothers, too. We focus on our kids and do diverse activities together for them. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

To most of the participants with little kids or school-age children, the local social relations with other mothers accounted for most of relations in their current lives. This would be strongly related to the fact that they were currently engrossed in their role as mothers, among many other possible roles in their lives. As stated earlier, except for older participants who had never had other occupations in their lives, all of the participants with little kids or school-age children quit their full-time jobs after their childbirth or while raising their kids to concentrate on childcare and children's education. It was easily observed that their lives fairly revolved around their kids — in addition to quitting their jobs for their kids, some of the participants even moved in this neighborhood for better education of their kids, because a public elementary school and a

middle school in this neighborhood have been known for innovative education. Since their everyday lives were tied to their children, who mostly spend time in the neighborhood, the participants' daily activities and relations were also quite tied to the local boundary. Under this circumstance, the local relations naturally accounted for huge parts of their daily lives.

...Here, I only know people who are related to my children. Such as the mother of my kid's friend. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

I have close relationships with the mothers who belong to the same school district. But only them. You know, we can establish relations within the limit of the everyday living space. So, my relations do not expand beyond the limit. (Dasom, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I am satisfied with my current social relationships here. I have lots of intimate people in the neighborhood... my current relationships in the life all consist of the mothers of the friends of my kids... (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

The local social relations, which accounted for huge parts of the relations of the participants with little kids or school-age children, were naturally formed through their children as explained above but maintained for quite instrumental and practical reasons, at least in early days of the relations. Participants reported that they met other mothers to let their kids play or do diverse activities with other kids.

I have a reading club in the neighborhood. Ah, not for me, for the kids. The mothers of ten kids meet and select good books, then each buy one book. And the kids share the books and the book reviews with other kids. After one cycle is done, we select the new books and buy the books again. [Was the club formed at school?] No, we made the club by our own. Three of the mothers, including me, were intimate and we wanted to do something good for our kids. We made this club by inviting other mothers whom we already had known in the neighborhood. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

There is a mother who does volunteer work at a library in the apartment complex. Since she usually stayed there, other mothers naturally met in the library. When I first met them, a mother did quilting. At that time, my daughter

wanted to make dolls by herself, and the mother said she would let her know how to do it. So, I brought her to the library, and she made dolls, bags, and so on... After that we also made winter scarves together. By doing these things, we got lots of activities doing together. Our kids learned swimming together, and they participated in the small swimming competition together. All the other participants of the competition were really good at swimming, but our kids were foundering in the water...but that was a good motivation to them. The kids have done diverse activities together and have grown up together. Nowadays, we³⁰ are also doing a new voluntary works together. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

When the kids were in the first grade, we frequently invited each other, including the kids and the mothers, to home in order to make kids a friend and let them play together. We did it for the kids. (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

Since their relations were fundamentally formed and maintained as a mother of a kid, not as one's self, many of the relations seemed to have functional or instrumental value (This will be discussed in detail in 4.1.2). Nevertheless, the relations between the mothers were still seemingly important since these relations can allow them to share the same and significant experiences of their current lives: raising children. Moreover, some of the relations developed into intimate and strong relations, regardless of their children, when they were able to share more than their role as a mother. Let us look at these in more detail in the next section.

1-3) Similarity

Living close to each other and raising kids at the same time were significant in forming and maintaining social relations, but these were not enough for building strong/intimate relationships between the neighbors. Like other social relationships, local social relations are greatly affected by similarity between people, as sharing something in common helps people

³⁰ She often used the word 'we' by indicating her and the mothers when describing the diverse activities, but the main agents of the activities were their kids.

open their minds and build up good relations. Participants talked about their experiences of forming and maintaining relationships based on diverse similarities. The range of similarity was quite wide but all conceivable — for instance, when their ages were similar with their neighbors, participants easily formed relations.

...I said hello to them when I met neighbors in the elevator. Someday, the mother who lives on the 17th floor spoke to me and asked having a cup of coffee or lunch together. She said, she, me, and another neighbor who lives on the 13th floor were all similar in the age, so how about having a lunch together. And then a new person moved in the right next door of the person on the 17th floor, who is also of the similar age. We finally had a lunch together and became close to each other. (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children)

All the other neighbors in this building are older than me. My son is the youngest among the kids. So, I just have said hello to them. It is difficult to be closer when there is a big age gap...On the contrary, I was able to get close to a mother who I met at the school since she and I are of the same age. We were not that intimate when the kids were in the same class, but after we found out that we are the same age, we have met more often and then become intimate. (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age children)

In addition to the age of the participants, when the age of their children was similar, participants were likely to build and maintain relations with their neighbors. As explained above, the participants with school-age children easily established relations with the mothers of the classmates of their kids. The relations were formed naturally since they had many opportunities to meet in association with the school events, but the relations were also able to be maintained with their common interests of their children in the same age. Outside the school, when the participants formed relations by casually encountering their neighbors in the neighborhood, having similar age children helped them to easily build relations as shown in Jina's case.

I casually encountered diverse neighbors in the neighborhood — when I am in the elevator, when the shuttle bus drops my kid off, when I park in the underground parking lot — and then I say hello to them. But it is not easy to become close to the neighbors who have a child having a big age gap with my kid. However, if they are of a similar age, it is different. I know a neighbor

whose kid is 6, and my daughter is 8. They really liked each other and played well when they met in the playground. Then, she and I got to talk more rather than just saying hello. This happened frequently. When the kids played together well, we (I and the other mother) asked each other such as, what are you doing, how many kids do you have, how about the school life.... Then we became intimate. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

As raising kids of similar age, participants discovered and shared common interests; and this was an important element in developing relations. As described in the following participants' stories, by being unable to share common interests of their kids, they were not able to develop deeper relations with their neighbors (Hae-Yoon), or they were not able to maintain good relationships with old friends who were in a quite different stage of life cycle (Ha-Ram & Han).

I knew one neighbor by frequently encountering in the neighborhood. Even though she is similar in the age with me, her kid is a preschooler while I have a child who is a college student. So, there are not many things we can talk about together. For instance, if the kids are in the similar age group like high school students, we can talk about the progress of the study, the colleges, choice of the majors, and so on. But she and I cannot talk about these things. I think having the same interests is really important in maintaining relationships. If we do not have anything in common, we can still gladly say hello when we meet, but we cannot find something we can feel empathy. (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

My old school friends are pushed back on the list... I got married really early. They just got married and gave a birth just right now. I cannot speak the same language with them since we are totally different in the current stage of the lifecycle. (Ha-Ram, 33 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school children)

I am not that intimate with the ex-coworkers or college friends. We barely contact each other, and meeting with them is also not that pleasant to me... This is because many of my friends do not get married or have a very young child. So, we cannot talk about things about the kids together. We cannot have a good conversation. I prefer meeting people who I can really talk with. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

Actually, the fact that they were all raising children at the same time was one of the big similarities which made the participants establish relations with other mothers. Maybe because of

that, children became the powerful driver of local social relations between the residents with little kids or school-age children. However, to have a deeper and more intimate relation, participants needed to share more similarities with their neighbors rather than just the role of a mother. One of them was sharing similar values and perspectives to the life. When the participants with school-age children talked about having similar perspectives to the life, they usually mentioned the importance of having similar views on education since children's education was a significant matter of interest to them. When they had similar tendencies and perspectives, including views on education, they had possibilities of becoming much more intimate, furthermore being life-long friends based on shared experiences and history.³¹

...When we talk to each other, we naturally talk about our own view on education. And if someone is too much obsessed with the education, I am not comfortable with them. If someone is easygoing and relaxing regarding the education issues, I can get along with them well. Since they are similar with myself. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

I can become intimate with a neighbor only when we have similar perspectives. That allows me not to have any resistance about meeting her. Having similar perspectives means that we think in a similar way, we can develop a bond of sympathy, and we have many other similar values. Then we can get intimate soon. If someone has a totally different view to the world or has a really different personality, it would be burdensome to meet that person. But if we have many things in common, and have similar views on education, I think 'oh, this person is great...' Then we can become close. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

I had not had good relationships with other mothers, or neighbors, until my kids were in the first grade. I just had some meetings with other mothers which were only for the kids—in order to let them play with other kids. I was not able to find a person who was of one mind. I did not have a person who shared the similar perspectives, such as views on education, so I had maintained just OK relationships with them. But when I met the mothers who have similar views on education, I was able to get along with them really well. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

³¹ We cannot see the future of the participants, however, the older participants frequently talked about their intimate and deep relations with some of their previous neighbors. By establishing intimate relations with them based on diverse similarities, they have been able to continue good relations. This will be more discussed in 4.1.2 and 4.2.1.

Coming back to what makes the participants better form and maintain their local relations, having a similar socioeconomic condition was also one of the significant factors. Participants said, although they did not take the socioeconomic conditions into account when they first formed the relations, only the relations with neighbors with similar socioeconomic background naturally continued for a long time. Consciously or unconsciously, the participants maintained relationships with who were similar in social position to themselves, because they felt comfort when they were with similar people.

I feel comfort when I am with a similar person with me in social position. If someone lived in a really luxurious home and had a maid, I would feel uncomfortable. I may like visiting the house, but I would not like to invite the person to my home. Actually, the neighbors who are close to me are quite similar with me. We were actually talking about those kinds of things — we are able to keep good relations because we are similar in almost everything, including economic conditions. When we have a birthday party of the kids, we just bring the friends of the kid to the family restaurant, but some mothers used a catering service. I didn't go there, but other mothers let me know it was felt really uncomfortable and burdensome. (Sun, 45 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

I think I am not that close to the neighbors who are really well-off in this neighborhood. The people who are still close to me have similar economic conditions, what husbands do is also not that different. You know, there are so many well-off people who have professional jobs such as doctors. But there is no one among my intimate people. Those different people are just acquaintances. Before I know it, I have formed and maintained relationships with people who are in a similar condition with me. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I met a neighbor when I just moved in the neighborhood, as separating recyclable waste in front of the apartment building. After our oldest children went to pre-school, we frequently met to let our second kids, both are girls, play together. Our general economic condition was not greatly different, but there was a disparity in economic power between the husbands... Her husband was frugal. When we went shopping together, there was a big difference in what we bought... There were also big differences in educational factors. Since her husband did not like to let their kids have private education, she also kept it down. But at that time, I let my first kid begin the English academy since I was not able to teach him at home any more. And she said it was ridiculous — since my kid was too young. After having experienced these things, we were

estranged. We still say hello to each other when we meet in the building, but we are not that close to each other anymore. From this experience, I realized the difference in economic condition can be recognized and have effects on the relationship. Not just economic conditions, you know, there are other things. I graduated a not prestigious college, and I think highly educated people keep friends with similar people in the neighborhood. There are so many professors, doctors, and lawyers in the neighborhood. They speak really coherently. I think they will think that we are really different from themselves when they see us, honestly. Similar people can become friends. (Ha-Ram, 33 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

Apartments are usually regarded as a setting where fairly homogeneous people in terms of their socioeconomic status gather and live together, so the similarities among residents might be higher compared to other residential settings. Bora said that she felt comfortable with her neighbors since they were quite similar in economic position as living in the same apartment complex. However, from the stories of Cho-Ah & Bok-Lim, it was observed that they found some levels of diversity and heterogeneity in their neighborhoods. Therefore, it could be understood that the participants were likely to select a few of their neighbors who were in a similar socioeconomic condition as a friend, rather than living with greatly homogeneous neighbors.

I think that the socioeconomic condition was not influential when I formed the relationships at first, but after establishing relationships, I felt comfortable since the people who are in a similar socioeconomic condition gather together... Because we all live in the same neighborhood, we are all similar in terms of those things. So, when my kids play with other kids and when I spend time with my neighbors, I think I felt comfortable. (Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

Since I had lived in B town, there are so many native people who were grown up in the neighborhood. So, I think they were more similar in terms of many things, such as economic conditions and educational levels... But this is a new town, so we have relatively diverse people here... It was hard to get used to the neighborhood at first to me. (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

Because this is a new town, there are diverse people from diverse places. So, I have thought that there is quite a big gap between people. Like... the living standard, the cultural level, something like that. When I meet neighbors in the local church, I always think that so many diverse people are living in the neighborhood. (Bok-Lim, 69 years old, owner, three adult children)

In addition to the similarities of age, perspectives, and socioeconomic conditions, participants reported diverse elements of their lives which they found something common with their neighbors; their past experiences, hobbies, life patterns, and so on. By finding and sharing these diverse similarities, the local social relations were developed into more intimate and primary relations.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Having Shallow Relations

From the stories of the participants, the characteristics of the local social relations appear superficial, temporary, and incidental to the participants except for intimate relationships with a few close neighbors. This might be a characteristic which is observed in all human relationships: wherever we are, we form intimate relations with a few people and maintain shallow relations with all the others. This is expected, since people are naturally limited in the social relations they can form (Fischer, 1977). However, how and why people form those shallow relations with others could be different according to the social, cultural, or environmental context in the given setting. Therefore, in interpreting the contents of this theme, the important issue lies in understanding the specific context of this residential setting which is related to why and how people form the incidental, superficial, and temporary relations with many neighbors. Several unique socio-spatial conditions are reported by the participants, which are intertwined in a dynamically complex way in people's lives and strongly linked to the pattern of social relations among the residents.

2-1) Incidental relations

For many participants, the social relations with their neighbors were regarded as incidental, which were only secondary to the principal relations in their lives. This was more frequently observed in the participants with adolescent or adult children. Compared to the participants with little kids who were tied to their children in their daily lives, the participants with adolescent or adult children did not have to stay and spend most of time in the neighborhood. Having the freedom to meet people in other places, relationships based on the neighborhood were treated as incidental or less important.

...I need to make an appointment to meet the neighbors here. It is hard to meet people just casually. And the frequency of appointment is also low... We rarely meet, and also quite separated from each other. When I lived in the previous neighborhood, I had many natural interactions with my neighbors as raising our kids together. But now I do not have that kind of interactions any more. But I think that there is no problem because I already have many good relations...But I am grateful that I have a few but good neighbors here. Not necessary, but it is a plus in my life. (Mi-Sun, 53 years old, owner, two adult children)

I do not have anyone who is really intimate with me in this neighborhood. I frequently meet my old friend who resides near here, and I also meet the friends from the previous neighborhood at least once or twice per month. They are the friends who have faith in me, so even if I cannot see them often, like just once per year, they should think that I am just so busy rather than I do not want to see them. They are the people who really understand me... In this neighborhood, everyone came from everywhere. So, I think that we still do not know each other enough to talk about and share everything in our lives. I think people just gauge reactions... (embarrassed laugh) I think we don't have common things that we can feel the sense of kinship. (Soon-Ja, 64 years old, owner, three adult children)

However, it cannot be said that the nature of neighborhood is just incidental. In fact, the principal relations of the many participants with adolescent or adult children were the relations which had been formed in their previous neighborhoods. As said by Mi-Sun, when their children were young kids, they were able to naturally meet and become intimate with many neighbors through their children. In the current stage of their lives, however, those intimate relations with

neighbors were difficult to build. In some parts, it was because they did not need more people in their lives, but it was also because that they were somewhat daunted by having experienced psychological and environmental changes at their age. Ok-Sun talked of her experience about a lack of energy in forming and maintaining relations; and Doo-Sim and Bok-Lim mentioned the need to cut back the relations in their current economic situations after their husbands' retirement.

As we get older, having relations becomes more difficult. First, it is tiresome... or I can say it is difficult. Because, it is harder to accept something new and different compared to the past when I was young. It is difficult to humor and please someone I do not know well... And when my kids were younger, I was able to meet many people because of the kids. Even when we just played in the playground, many mothers talked to me and had conversations... I do not have that opportunities now. I do not have many opportunities and feel difficult to have new relations. (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children)

When I was young, I had appointments with my neighbors at least once or twice per week. I had a full of lunch schedules. After I became 60, I got to finish those relations. There would be several reasons... I think one of them is a financial situation. You know, we usually gather up money to do casual meetings (to eat or to do some activities together). So, as preparing the retirement, I cut off those things. There was a group for which I paid 100\$ per month, and another one which I paid money for going trips... I cut off all those unnecessary relations to minimize my personal cost. (Doo-Sim, 63 years old, owner, two adult children)

... I think it was a matter of age. I think I simplified my relations with people to match for my age and economic situation. The economic situation was against my will, anyway... I cut off the relations that I think somewhat excessive to me. (Bok-Lim, 69 years old, owner, three adult children)

Although the participants had other primary relations at a moderate distance and believed the relations in the current neighborhood were incidental, living without intimate people in the proximate location made them feel lonely. Jin-Sook talked about her experience of loneliness in the current neighborhood, which came from the fact that she did not have one really intimate person within easy distance whom she can meet anytime. She compared her present with the past

when her children were younger and she was able to naturally build close relations in the neighborhood.

I still often meet the people in the previous neighborhood, and I am so intimate with them. But they are different from the people here. Although the previous neighborhood is not that far from here, to go there, I need to set my mind to it — But here, I can meet people immediately. I have some intimate people here, but they are not that intimate compared to the people in the previous neighborhood. You know, we say, having one person in our life can make us happy. The person you can meet anytime as wearing slippers. But I do not have the one in this neighborhood. The person whom I can call anytime. [Did you have that one in the previous neighborhood?] Yes, I did. But in this neighborhood, the neighbors are the people I met after finishing raising my kids. So, we already had a line that we cannot cross. We cannot open everything about us. Since we met after our children were all grown up, we already had an individual world... we already had all the people, meetings, and lives. People do not want to make new one, do not open all the things. So, I feel lonely. Nevertheless, I do not ask people whom I encounter in the gym to have a coffee, something like that. [Why?] Maintaining current one is hard enough... and making new one is difficult. In the past, I invited people to come my home and have a tea although the place was not clean; now, I am about to invite them, but just quit doing it as thinking my place is dirty so I should not... (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

Meanwhile, the reason why the participants with adult children did not build closer relations with the current neighbors also lies in the fact that their husbands had retired.

According to some participants with adult children, they needed to spend lots of time with their husbands who did not work anymore; and in that lifestyle, it was hard to form intimate relations with other neighbors.

My husband retired and stay home, so we sometime go to take a humanities lecture course. I go there only with my husband. It is hard to arrange schedules with other people. I need to break up my time to spend time with my husband. I was able to spend lots of time with other people in the past, but now I cannot do that since I should not neglect him... (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

I enjoy my hobbies... but I usually do it with my husband. He retired. So, I usually do the things with my husband and go to church with him as well.
(Myung-Jin, 58 years old, owner, two adult children)

I have been doing aquarobics in the sports center for 7 years after moving in this neighborhood. I say hello to the people I meet in the class, but I have never had lunch with them although there are many people having lunch together after the class. It is because my husband is at home. I should have lunch with him. (Doo-Sim, 63 years old, owner, two adult children)

On the other hand, in the case of the participants with pre-school or elementary school age children, their relations with neighbors were largely more than incidental relations. Some participants had thought that their local relations were mostly incidental and unimportant when they just moved in the neighborhood or when they were able to easily meet other primary people (such as family members or friends). However, in general, their current lives which was tied to the neighborhood made them naturally build primary relations with their neighbors.

...I started to interact with my neighbors after I got to know many young mothers as my child went to a pre-school. Before that time, I was almost living in seclusion for two years. I never went out during the day but went outside when my husband came home in the evening. I did not know anyone in the neighborhood but got to know people by sending my kid to the pre-school. In that process, I met my new best friend in my life. She was a mother of the friend of my kid in the pre-school. It is hard to meet a real friend after growing up...people usually measure others by their own standards. But luckily, I was able to meet a great friend here and we have been doing all the things together.
(Ha-Ram, 33 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

When I just moved in here, I did not have any affection for the neighborhood. So, I went somewhere else to do something. I usually went to my mom's house, my previous neighborhood, since it was not far from here...Then my daughter got along with other kids in her pre-school, and I became intimate with the mothers of the kids. If my daughter hadn't, I never would have met them...
(Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

2-2) Superficial relations

Then, to the participants with little kids or school-age children, were their local social relations mostly deep and strong? Based on the participants' stories, it seemed that just a few of those relationships are indeed significant to them due to the characteristics of the relations which they had. With their children, they had come to establish local social relations as a 'school parent'. In this form of relation, they met the other people as a mother of a kid, not as one's own self. This identity issue was well presented in their languages which the participants used to address their neighbors. During the interviews, when the participants indicated someone or a group of neighbors with whom they had formed relations through their children, they used the term 'that mother' or 'those mothers'.³² Moreover, in the case of specifying the person, they called the person 'mother of OO (child's name)' or just 'OO', instead of the own name of the person. It was also the same when they had conversations with those people in person; or, when they were intimate enough, younger person called their older neighbors 'unnie'³³ but still without using their own names. Except for a few cases, the participants did not know or use the name of their neighbors who were connected because of their children, even in the cases that they were quite intimate with each other.³⁴ Under this circumstance, sometimes the participants established relations with the school parents because of the need to share information for their children's education. Moreover, they ended up as 'competitor' to each other because they existed as a mother of the kids who were placed in the fierce education competition.

...Here, I only know people who are related to my children. Such as the mother of my kid's friend. So...I feel something is missing. For now, we do our role as

³² In Korean, there is a word which means 'she', but it is usually not used in casual conversations.

³³ It means older sister, but the meaning of this term expands much further than just blood related siblings. It is what a woman calls an older woman who is close with them.

³⁴ On the contrary, all participants addressed their old school friends with their own names. In the case of the neighbors who they knew through the religious communities, they addressed their neighbors with their own names, job titles in the communities, or baptismal names. Even in the relations formed without any relevance to their children, children's name was frequently used to address their neighbors.

a supporter for our children. And what should children do in Korea? In this country, the zeal for children's education is really high, right? Everyone wants to send their children to prestigious schools, but it is not possible for everyone. Only a selected few can do it... So, people naturally became a competitor... although we are not aware of it, I believe it is inside our unconscious mind. Then, we cannot be in a really nice relation in which people truly wish and support for others doing well... there is a limitation. Although we tried to get closer and take care of each other, there is a limitation as long as the original aim of the relationships lies in children's education. If I belong to a religious community or do some hobbies with neighbors here, it would be different. However, to meet as a mother of someone is not showing true myself. It is hard to show something honest. It is hard for me and I believe it will be hard for others. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

When I moved in here first, I felt difficult because there was an atmosphere that people explored each other... We were connected as a school parent in the beginning. It was not possible to make an individual relation since we were all parents... I saw people look for others who can be beneficial in some aspects — such as having information about the private education. It was not natural. I thought it was an exploration. So, it was hard to get along with the people... (Dasom, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

Originally, I do not like having many relations. I am a person who does not want to have a large network of relationships... I had many relationships with the school parents in this neighborhood until two years ago, including 6th grade mother groups, 7th, and 8th... There were so many and people knew all the others in the networks. When I met them... I felt that meetings with them were not beneficial to me but wasteful. So, I cut some relations. My first kid is a son and he was lacking in many things in the school. So, I intentionally went to many meetings and had many connections with other mothers. But the second kid, a daughter, took care of herself well — so, I did not have to worry about her school life. Therefore, I have not had any meetings related to her. I intentionally have not. (Jiwon, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Under this circumstance, their relations easily became physically close but emotionally distant.

Even though some relations developed into close and intimate ones, most of the local relations were shallow: participants described these relationships as burdensome, spurious, and careful.

Cho-Ah talked about her burdensome experience with neighbors and explained why she felt burdened with these relationships.

...I saw some mothers who are really intimate with each other. Of course, not everyone does, but some people fall out about trifles although they have been getting along with for several years... I think those relations are shallow since they were originally connected because of the kids. I do not like having broad networks...I feel burdened when people approach me. I push them away. It is just not easy to get along with... My second daughter started a pre-school 8 months ago. When I let my kid take on a bus, I met several mothers. I say hello and have some casual conversations, but I feel burdened when I meet them every morning. [Why do you feel in that way?] Honestly, I do not want to be closer. I already have many relationships in my life, do a bible study with others, and meet my other old friends once per week. I am already busy enough. I hate to have strangers in my life. In fact, the mothers suggested to have a coffee together, so I did it once per one or two months. But they want to meet more often recently. I feel burdened, but it is hard to avoid them... (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

Since she felt the relationships with neighbors were unnecessary and incidental, she did not want to have more people in her life. In this situation, just casual interactions with the neighbors can be felt burdened. The local relationships were also described as spurious by many participants. Participants mentioned that they were not really intimate with their neighbors even though they met the neighbors more often than the any other people in their lives. The relationships primarily centered around their children, as shown in that they ‘never meet during the summer or winter break’, or ‘do not meet often after the class changes as the school year changes’.

I meet the people in the neighborhood, the school mothers, more frequently than others...but I do not rely on them or have attachment to them. The frequency of meeting is much higher, though. The relationships in this neighborhood were just accidentally built rather than I really wanted to have. I have other relations which were desperately needed. For instance, I think my book club members almost saved my life. Other friendships were also made when I really needed...So, here, I have intentionally tried to avoid the meetings with people... I pretended to have other schedules although I did not. There is what I just realized while talking about this experience right now: I barely rely on the people here even though they are not bad. You know, we never contact or meet each other during the summer or winter break of the kids. We meet only when there is a school event. But my other people do not interact in that way. Previously, I was seriously sick due to otolithiasis and was not able to answer the phones — so, the other people visited me since they were so worried about my condition. However, the people in the neighborhood even did not know the

fact that I was that sick. (Ga-Young, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Participants also believed that the local social relations need to be carefully dealt with. They said that the local relations as school parents were different from private and casual relations between general neighbors. It was not a relation that they could feel comfortable — As Kyuri and Han said, they were not able to talk about everything on their mind with the other ‘school parents’.

I met the mothers of the class of the last year frequently, when the kids were in the same class at school. But we do not meet often after the class changed as the school year changed... Having relationships with school mothers is really different from growing kids together before children enter the school. I need to take care of what I am saying to the school parents. I should not talk about everything in my mind... (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

I talk about several things with the school parents, but honestly saying, there is a line we should not cross. I talk about some kinds of things... they are all objective things. But I do not talk about my worry or something private to them. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

In these relations, participants respected the distance between themselves and the neighbors. They tried not to cause troubles to the others and felt stressed when the others overstepped the expected line. Keeping proper distance is always important in maintaining all relations, but in this setting, the distance was pretty remote—they wanted to keep the superficial relations with the school parents.

As raising my kids, I meet many school parents. They are really different from my old friends or some intimate neighbors here. I need to take care about what I am saying, I need to check up on them, and I need to cater to them in some cases. Therefore, I always think I need to keep the distance between us. I saw many people have problems by crossing the line. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

In these relations, I have been doing well and had no problems, since I have tried to be careful and not to make any troubles... Recently, I had a small issue with a mother who I really do not know well. It is really childish... My kid had a birthday party and she did not invite the kid of that mother. They are in the same

class, but we are not able to invite all of the classmates. The kid also did not invite my kid when she had a birthday party several months ago, and I did not care about it at all. It was just fine. They are not that close. At that time, my kid said 'I want to go there, too' so I let her know that it is not possible to invite all people to the party. But this kid, she nagged my daughter why she was not invited... And the mother called me and said unpleasant things. I felt so offended. We do not know each other well. Before this happened, I did not have any problems like this since I have been trying to build the wall around me.... In order not to make any problems... (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

2-3) Temporary relations

Friends and relatives may live anywhere, but neighbors by definition reside near at hand (Keller, 1968). That is to say, neighbors can be neighbors only when they live close. In the stories of the participants, the social relations based on the place were believed as temporary ones since their current residential place was thought to be temporary. In modern society, especially in the Korean context, a residential place is almost always temporary — people move several times in their lifetime for a number of reasons: job relocation, change of family situation, a desire to live in a bigger place, and so on. Home owners may live longer than the renters, but they are also likely to move at some point. As introduced in chapter 2, the average length of residence is 10.6 years for homeowners and 3.6 years for renters. Regardless of tenure type, the average of residence period is 6.4 years in Seoul metropolitan area.³⁵ In this context, the idea of temporary relation makes sense.

The temporariness of the local relations was experienced with a moving plan for participants themselves, but it was also experienced with the change of the neighbors in the living place. Han realized the transitory nature of the local relations by losing neighbors who she

³⁵ For reference, the average tenure of a US home seller in 2011 is 9 years, which is increased by 50 percent compared to 6 years in the period from 2001 to 2008, following the collapse of the real estate bubble.

casually had encountered in her everyday life. Otherwise, experiencing move-out of their close neighbors in the past several years, the Soon-Ja and Doo-Sim confirmed that the local relation is temporary and that it is difficult to keep the good relations overcoming the distance.

In the first several years in this neighborhood, I had a positive impression regarding the use of elevator... I do not know if it was all the same in the neighborhood or just the case of my building, but people always smiled and said hello to each other in the elevator. To everyone. I really loved the atmosphere and let my kids say hello to the people as well. I was able to know on which floor who lived... Then, after a few years, the residents started to change. The atmosphere also changed. People have not said hello to each other... the people who have lived in the building for a long time still do it, but the new people do not. So... I have hesitated to say hello to the people. This is because, some people did not kindly respond to me when I said hello to them. It hurt my feeling... Now I say hello only to the people who I really know, or to whom I know that they kindly respond to it. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I frequently met the neighbors previously...but many people in my complex moved out. So, people whom I know do not remain here at all. The people who were close to me and had many conversations all moved out. (Soon-Ja, 64 years old, owner, three adult children)

There is a friend who I met after moving in this neighborhood. She lived in the next building and we went to the same church. When she was living here, we sat on the benches in the apartment complex and talked a lot. She introduced many other neighbors to me. She knew diverse things and full of subjects for conversations... So, we got along with each other when she lived here. When I was with her, I did not have any other friends and did not need any more. But, she moved to the Jeju Island two years ago. I went there several times at first since I really missed her, but I know that she will not move back to here and it is hard to keep the relation. We still contact each other, but not as close as the past. Currently, I never meet any neighbor in the neighborhood. No one. (Doo-Sim, 63 years old, owner, two adult children)

By acknowledging the temporary nature, limitation was naturally set up for the local social relations: the participants believed that the local relations would not last for a long time and that those would be altered by some other people at some point. This belief affected how they dealt with the local relations and the attitudes toward the neighbors in their everyday lives.

Consciously or unconsciously, the participants did not try to be closer to their neighbors.

I hardly have intimate neighbors. I have not actively participated in school events or something like that... since I have been busy studying at the graduate school. I have not made many interactions with other mothers. Actually, I already planned to move out from the neighborhood 2 years and 6 months ago. So maybe, I have been preparing to sell the apartment and leave the neighborhood in my mind rather than trying to be closer to the neighbors... (Yumi, 42 years old, owner, three school-age children)

I don't think I should live here... rather, I am thinking to move to a neighborhood where my parents live in the future, after when my kids enter the college. I think I will live here less than two more years from now. Maybe, because of this thought, I do not try to be closer to many people... (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

...I think I can meet other new people after moving in the new place. I know I cannot continue relationships with people in this neighborhood for my entire life. There is a limitation. We should meet new people... we cannot keep connections forever. You know, like I have kept connections only with the most intimate few people from the previous neighborhood. (Kyoung-Ja, 57 years old, owner, two adult children)

As stated before, the participants with adolescent or adult children have maintained the intimate relations with their previous neighbors as their primary relations. However, this was also allowed for just a few; and a majority of relations with neighbors remained only temporary. Song talked about the transitory nature of the relations with neighbors. Although she had maintained great relations with some neighbors, she believed that there was an unavoidable limitation in the relations with neighbors. As indicated as one of the reasons for the superficiality of the local relations, meeting the neighbors as a mother of a kid, not as one's own self was believed as a reason why people cannot overcome the distance when they are separated from one another.

The neighbors here will be alienated from me if I move to another place. Out of mind, out of sight. The relations were established through the kids, not myself. Maybe, I can keep good relations with a few people in this neighborhood. But I think most of the people will be forgotten soon. You know, the old friends, although we are all at different places, contact just two or three-time per year, we are always the same friends. On the other hand, the neighbors — we meet every day, do all the things together, but a small matter can divide us. Maybe a few would be different, but even they are not the same with the old friends. Neighbors are great when everything is going well, but I think, if I have difficulties in my life, they cannot be the same. They are just competitors who I

do not want to show my weakness because of my pride. People say a good neighbor is better than a brother far off, but I also think good relations with neighbors are possible when all the other things are good. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

4.1.3 Theme 3: Making Comparisons with Neighbors

In addition to the generally shallow characteristics of the neighborhood, I found another distinctive characteristic from the observed local social relations: comparisons with neighbors. In the discourse of their years of experiences in the neighborhood, many participants talked about their experiences of making comparisons with their neighbors whom they can see and meet in their daily lives, describing why and how they feel stressed regarding their local social relations. Notably, the experiences of comparisons and related stresses were mainly told by the participants with school-age children, who had relatively many social connections in the neighborhood. In the neighborhood, it was possible that residents lived sharing just a minimum of their lives, if they did not have many connections with others as shown in the stories of the participants with adult children. However, in the case of the participants with school-age children, as a parent of child who was the student of a neighborhood school, they naturally established local social relations and belonged to the social network of the neighborhood. Belonging to this social network, the participants shared or saw the details of their neighbors' lifestyles; and the comparisons of each other's lives started there.

3-1) Feeling comparative deprivation

Comparison topics were diverse: Kyuri talked about the comparisons of general consumption levels and cultural activities while Kyoung-Ja compared the different economic levels which were revealed through the housing ownership status.

...The living standard in this neighborhood is quite high...So there are many people who work in a professional field. It seems that they are well-off and live it up... Sometimes I feel and think I am below the level of their lives. I am being compared...when my kid says that someone in his school went on vacation to somewhere, I think we may need to go there, too... (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

We came from a rural area, and it was really difficult to buy just one apartment...but in the case of people who have lived in Seoul for a long time, they have several apartments...There are so many people like them around here...So I have a feeling of doubt about my life. I don't know what is living well... I really don't know. There are so many people, like 7 out of 10, who only take care of the real estate, stock market, and financial technology... I cannot follow them... (Kyoung-Ja, 57 years old, owner, two school-age children)

As we can easily imagine, these comparisons made the participants feel stressed, first of all, by having a sense of inferiority and comparative deprivation. Although the residents of the studied apartment complexes seemed not to be greatly different in terms of their social status, they were still different in terms of their wealth or lifestyles. As diverse people lived close — not just physically but also socially — to each other in the neighborhood, they had chances of observation of the others' lives which can result in making comparisons with the others. Talking about her experience of comparison and resultant stress, Song mentioned her feeling of comparative deprivation when she saw the more prosperous people in the neighborhood after moving in there. She felt empty from this experience, and it led to conflicts with her family members.

...I felt envy of the more prosperous people... I felt I did not have enough compared to them. What I mean is that... when I moved in this neighborhood, I saw that everyone' quality of life is different. It is the same apartment complex, same neighborhood, but there are more prosperous people. When I saw them first, I was not able to satisfy with my life although I moved in a better home and a better neighborhood compared to the past. There are many people who are more affluent although we live in this neighborhood together. Oddly enough, while I ate three meals a day and the quality of my life is not bad at all, but I feel comparative deprivation... By seeing the people who are more affluent, more educated, more beautiful, had resided abroad for years, have all the things that I did not have, I felt comparative deprivation, and I felt empty... I was somewhat nervous and anxious after moving in here... My husband owns a business —

sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. So, I had not felt nervous about it before, but after moving in here, I did. There is more to life than money, but I thought that money could decide the level of happiness to some extent... Since my living standard did not match the others in the neighborhood, the quality of my life sharply declined. At that time, I felt stressed, had a fight with my husband frequently, and my anger was delivered to my children... Then the family was torn apart. My husband got grey hair and sick because of the stress... I had not known that stress can develop into a disease, but I realized that it is possible at that time. I was not happy. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Similarly, in the story of Yumi, she talked about her experience of feeling comparative deprivation which came from the fact that her family was not able to go on an overseas trip in the summer while many other neighbors did. Although that was mostly caused from the special situation —her husband has been studying for his exam— rather than her economic status, she explained that she had felt pain and suffered from depression from this experience.

My husband has been studying...so I have not been able to go on a trip for a year. All the other people went on trips, but I was not able to. This summer, other families had overseas trips for the vacation, but I was the only one who was not able to go. That kind of thing made me feel big pain and suffer from depression. People living here frequently go on trips. Some people go to overseas trip often... To go a trip, I should save more money because we have many children. So, if someone can go a trip next year, we may be able to go there in two years. Pangyo is a good place to live... but you know, it is a well-off neighborhood. At the same time, other people's lifestyles can be easily observed... When I cannot go but others can go...I find it difficult. [Did you feel the same before your husband started to study?] It was less...but now I cannot do the things at all. In my current situation, I cannot do the things, but others can do. And there are also differences between people. My husband and I were not rich from the beginning, so we pushed our fortunes to buy an apartment and came here. And I am obsessional with my three children's education. However, there are people who say that you need to enjoy trips and foods to be happy and be satisfied with your life... We think that investing in real estate is more important than enjoying life in the present, while other people really enjoy their lives although they have less property assets. The quality of their lives would be much better than us, I know, but I cannot give up mine maybe because of my background and the continued lifestyle. Hence, upgrading the properties and enjoying life at the same time is too difficult... There is no limit to people's greed. (Yumi, 42 years old, owner, three school-age children)

I found that comparisons happened although there was no huge difference between their lives. As Yumi said, her family had invested more money in the real estate since they believed it is more important than enjoying life in the present. She admitted that it was her own choice as a result of her lifestyle; nevertheless, the comparisons of current quality of life with her neighbors continuously bothered her. Similarly, in the story of Ara, she said that sometimes she felt comparative deprivation by comparing with her neighbors who were more financially well off than her. She gave an example of tent shopping to explain the atmosphere of the neighborhood where ‘buying something good’ meant buying luxury items like designer brand bags. This experience let her know how she and her neighbors were different in the level of consumption; however, the difference between them would not be that huge in the context of the whole society.

There are so many affluent people in this neighborhood... so I feel inferiority about those things. The reason I do not go to café frequently is that I honestly think the price of coffee is too expensive. Having capsule coffee in my home is much cheaper. But the people in this neighborhood have a coffee in a café and go to a department store without constraint... I do not. For instance, when my kids were younger, we went camping frequently; so, I bought a really expensive tent. Then I said to the people, ‘I bought one on an impulse’ and they all asked me ‘which bag?’ So, I said ‘No, it is a tent. It is Louis Vitton in the tent world’. (chuckle) (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

3-2) Pressure of conformity

On the other hand, the comparisons often led to stress by making the participants feel the pressure of conformity. Conform to what? It was conforming to what society expected from people, that is to say, specified or standardized answers to the things in our life — property, education, success, marriage, and so on. The existence of a strongly believed and conducted way of life for everyone — we may understand it as a norm of the society — was presented in what Jina said.

I was in the doctoral course when my first daughter was born. I was thirty at that time. I was quick about the things. I got married in 29. You know, we can categorize the doctoral students into four. First, who get married and work well. Second, who get married but don't work well. Third, who don't get married but work well. And fourth, who don't get married and don't work well. I really didn't want to be the number three or four. Even if you would work really well... I think it is better to be compatible. So, I thought, although I cannot be the first case, I would be the second case at least. If you miss the best time to get married... when you are young, it is OK. But if you are old, it looks ugly. It can screw people. Even if times have changed and will change, I believe that we should do what others do. Within an appropriate time, get married and have a baby. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

As shown in the case of Jina, the pressure of conformity should be understood in the dimension of the whole society, not just in the neighborhood. However, as the participants frequently saw and met their neighbors in their everyday lives, the comparison and resultant pressure of conformity seemed to often take place in the neighborhood dimension. From the interviews, the pressure of conformity occurring in the neighborhood was most clearly presented in the stories of the participants who had school-age children regarding their children's education. Because their local social relations were mostly based on the relations as neighborhood school parents, comparisons in terms of children education was driving conformity to what they should do for education. In this vein, the neighborhood might be understood as a place where standardized social value was continuously reproduced and came into action in everyday lives by instigating comparisons between the people who live there.

Regarding their children's education, the participants faced the invisible but existing competition with their neighbors which they should not fall behind. As Kyuri stated, by meeting the neighbors, they were exposed to the comparison which caused stress in their life. Meanwhile, regarding their children's education and their future, the participants with school-age children generally felt status anxiety. Young-Ju vividly described this anxiety by comparing her own

childhood when she was able to be living in the moment without anxiety about the future with her children's present. She observed that even the children felt the same anxiety with adults regarding what the society expected from them.

I talked about the private educational institutes a lot with other mothers... I do not let my son take the extra classes since he doesn't like it. But the mothers often said to me you should not do it in that way... There are good things when I meet them, but I feel stressed frequently. It made me think if I am wrong, if I need to let him take more classes... It is a comparison. Actually, I feel really stressed when I meet them. (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

In fact, I have all the conditions to be happy outwardly, however, if someone asks me if I live a full and happy life in my everyday life, I cannot say yes. It is not. I feel anxiety, and I am worried about my children. I am worrying about if my kids live in adversity in the future. The competition in the society is fierce... How can they do well without trying hard enough while other kids go to several private education institutes...? Nowadays, many kids receive early education. So, it is obviously compared with other kids immediately. Everyone tries really hard from an early age, so, it is hard to catch up the gap which is once widened... In our experiences, we have a fixed idea that if you do not study hard, you will not have a good job; then, you will live in adversity. I am not free from the idea as well. Even though there are some exceptions, it is a high probability... And when I see my kids play, I cannot enjoy the moment and think it is a good and happy thing. Rather, I think and worry about how they can survive this harsh world... I am really not able to be living in the moment. I cannot because I am anxious. Meanwhile, considering my childhood, I was really able to be living in the moment. I was immersed in playing with my friends from morning till night. But currently, the kids do not have time to be immersed in playing without mothers' interference. I don't know if my life as adult has been happy enough, but I think my life when I was a kid, was perfectly happy... The kids don't think that they are poor. I think they are poor... Even the kids see themselves in the structure of the society when they think about themselves. 'I got good grades, I study in good education facilities, my parents have great occupations...so I am happy' I think that they see themselves in this way. They believe they are happy although they go to lots of private educational institutes and do not have enough time to play with their friends. They think in the same way with us. They feel the anxiety from the society in the same way with us. So, they feel or believe that they are happy when they are relieved from the anxiety by doing things what others do. When we do something unique, if that is different from others, we feel anxiety... and the kids are the same. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

In this situation, comparing what their children do for education or how well they are doing compared to others gave bigger anxiety to the mothers and made them feel pressure to do more

things for their children's education. When they met their neighbors —other mothers—, they felt that the others' anxiety was transmitted to them and that the feeling of anxiety was even amplified.

...When I meet the mothers who obsess over the education, I feel their anxiety is transmitted and delivered to me... Honestly, I always try not to be anxious with my children's education. I always do my endeavor. But, after I meet them, I am easily stimulated, and the anxiety gets bigger. They always talk about the things... such as 'why don't you let your children do more academic activities?' 'There is a new private educational institute and it is good.'... After I heard about these things, I feel overstressed...So I try to meet them for minimum amount of time. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

Competition is too strong. I am worried about my children although I try not to be anxious... I intentionally do not have many meetings with other mothers. The reason is that, when they say exchanging information, in many cases, the information is garbage...And the information easily stimulates the anxiety. [Many people have talked about the anxiety as well.] Yes, I have the anxiety. It is a problem of the society... the education thing. Although I have a job like this (lecturer) by studying hard, but I think this is an age that we cannot succeed by just studying. So...my daughter is really good with her hands, such as making things. I sometimes think she can do whatever she wants like art or design. But sometimes, on the other hand, if she can and she wants, I hope she can be a physician, a doctor. I know she is just 8 years old...but the education fever of the mothers is so high, so sometimes I think like that in this atmosphere. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

3-3) Reactions to comparisons and stress

Feeling inferiority and the pressure of stressful norming with their neighbors, the participants sometimes experienced their local relations as stressful ones. Then, how did the participants react to the situation and how were the neighborhood-based relations operationalized in their lifeworld with their reactions? Commonly, they avoided relationships with those who instigated the comparisons and resultant stress. Ara controlled the depth of the relationships by decreasing the frequency of the meetings and avoiding conversations about her personal life.

Similarly, Song also controlled the depth/level of relationships by closing her private life (“not inviting them to home”) from more prosperous people. As describing her experience of comparison and stress, she said that she had moved on from the self-stress caused from comparisons; but her continuing endeavor to avoid the neighbors who may instigate the comparisons showed that she was still not free from it. In a more proactive way, Suji had broken with the relationships with those who tended to reinforce the comparisons by talking about the sensitive issues.

I do not talk about my personal things with those people. It is like building a wall. The topic such as a private educational institute... when I do not hear about it, I am just fine, but when I heard about those things, I become to make a comparison with other kids and think about if I need to make them do more... So I just don't see them frequently. I know I feel definitely stressed by meeting them. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

...Now we (few intimate neighbors) are quite relaxed with each other, so we go to each other's home often. Like 'I am hungry, can you give me some food?' or 'Come to my home, let's have a cup of coffee'. Although we are with disheveled hair and zero makeup, we can meet each other because we know each other really well. However, in the neighborhood, there are also people who are more beautiful than me and have a better home than me. I don't want to show mine to them. So, I do not invite those people to my home. I meet those people outside, such as a restaurant or a café. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

You can often feel inferiority. This is because...there are really affluent people, for instance, a family goes to overseas trip several times per year and stay there for more than a month, or frequent to Jeju Island like a home. By seeing those things make you feel inferiority. However, I believe it can vary depending on where you leave the value. If I really envy about those things, I would feel hurt, but I do not. There are big differences between people in the same neighborhood. Some families are really prosperous while others are not. But we can make compromise... Actually, I think I already broke with those people. I severed meetings with people like that. I just see them, only when I have to, like school events. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

Further, the participants found other comforting relations which can give them relief from the stressful relations of the neighborhood. Suji talked about her experiences of the highly stressful relations with people she met when she just moved into the neighborhood. Being

stressed with the neighbors who focused too much on materialistic values, she went to back to church where she had not attended for a long time. In the case of Young-Ju, she started to join in Havruta group³⁶ — she attended the regular meetings which were held in the place for an hour away from the neighborhood, but she loved it and waited for it all the time. She explained that the reason why she started the activity is that she wanted to meet people who were able to share the similar values and concerns beyond the relations in the neighborhood, which were formed just due to the proximity, regardless of the shared values.

When I moved in, at first, they often contacted me, saying meet up and let the kids play together. So, I joined. Then when we had conversations, there were so many uncomfortable things to me. You know, the topics of the conversation are not my thing. About the children's education... or the income of the husbands. Like that kind of things. I wondered 'why these people talked about this'? I had thought I knew a diverse group of people from my working experience as a designer. I met people who worked in factories and white colors... but when I began belonging to the society of mothers, I was really shocked. There were really diverse types of people. It was so difficult. Leaving those things behind, when my kid ended the first year in the elementary school, I went to back to church after long years. I met other people there. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I have learned Havruta in Gangnam station with people who come from all around Seoul. I think that the reason I started this activity lies in my own value... you know, there are lots of people living in the world with different values. I wanted to meet people who can share the similar values with me. Therefore... I looked for them and went there... They were all strangers at first. I still do not meet them often, just once per a week. But by taking classes together, they have become important and close people to me than my neighbors. This is because we feel a sense of kinship, by having similar values. I don't feel empathy for the people in the neighborhood. We just live in the same neighborhood and have children in the same age. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

³⁶ Havruta, also spelled chavruta, is a traditional rabbinic approach to Talmudic study in which a pair of students analyze, discuss, and debate a shared text. Unlike a teacher-student relationship, havruta-style learning puts each student in the position of analyzing the text, organizing his/her thoughts into logical arguments, explaining his/her reasoning to his/her partner, hearing out his/her partner's reasoning, and questioning and sharpening each other's ideas, often arriving at entirely new insights into the meaning of the text (Jeff, 2011).

Ga-Young, who was the mother of two high-school students, experienced ‘culture shock’ derived from observing huge differences between her life and her neighbors’ lives when she moved in Bundang, her previous neighborhood before moving in the study site.³⁷ Suffering from mental difficulties which even needed treatment, she joined in a local book club in order not to become a part of the stressful group and to overcome the stress from the relations in the neighborhood.

I am originally from an island in the rural area. I had a traditional big family which has lots of ancestor worship ceremonies per a year. I experienced a culture shock when I came to Seoul Metropolitan area for the first time, in Bundang. The people were not blamed at all for their individual lives... I had thought more about a community than myself, so did my mother, therefore, I had believed it was normal. However, I realized that I had sacrificed so much for my family...and it was not a norm of the society anymore. Then I suffered partial paralysis and got psychiatric treatments... It was a time when my first son reached a preschool age. At that time, we had lots of debt by buying the new apartment, so we had to pay it and also had to give my husband’s family financial support. Hence, I was not able to send my kid to preschool. Therefore, I didn’t know anyone in the neighborhood... I thought I needed to meet some, so I went to a place where the mothers let their kids take on a shuttle bus. I met some people there. And I realized that they had lived totally different lives from mine. I thought, ‘That kind of life is possible? How dare can they do that?’... For instance, I stayed a whole week when my in-laws had an ancestor worship ceremony while they just dropped by there in the evening of the very day. I suffered from confusion in my own values... In addition, I was so shocked about that the mothers made their kids take expensive private education although the kids were just six or seven. I thought I was able to teach my kids by my own, but money was their only way out. I was shocked with these things... At that time, I thought I had to keep myself instead of becoming a part of the group, so I started something different, then I have been doing well because my life is balanced. [What was something different?] I joined in a local book club with women ranging from the 30s to the 70s. I met people who had experienced a lot...that was really helpful than meeting my peer group only. At first, I held up under the stress with my pride such as, ‘Others go to a department store. But I read books’. I think I was immature at that time. There are just diverse values in the world. However, by doing that, I was able to truly love my life and overcome the stress from material things. But at that time, I was so confused and had a hard time. (Ga-Young, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

³⁷ Although her experiences of comparisons did not happen in the study site, the story of her reaction to the stress from the neighborhood relations is worthwhile to be included here. Bundang is a new town in Seoul metropolitan area which also consists of lots of apartment complexes.

While these reactions arose in dealing with stress caused from observations and comparisons with their neighbors, participants were not able to totally sever their relations with them. As we saw in the participants' stories from 4.1.2, they have kept shallow relations with their neighbors. The reason was, as above mentioned, that they were usually connected with their neighbors as a parent of a child who was the student of a neighborhood school. Therefore, the social network in the neighborhood cannot be totally broken. On some occasions, they had to meet people whom they did not want to meet. Or, they needed some people within a proximate distance who can share their everyday lives as raising their children, at least superficially, so that they can get diverse form of social support. Consequently, not staying out of the network, they also cannot be entirely free from the norm of the neighborhood and the pressure of conformity to the people in the network.

From the discourse of the participants, we can see how they were exposed to comparisons with their neighbors in their daily lives, how they were stressed by feeling comparative deprivation and pressure of conformity, and how they reacted to the situations to decrease their stress. Living in the apartment complexes, people built their own relationships, compared themselves with their neighbors, and stayed in the range of the 'norm' of the neighborhood (or society as a whole) by trying to be similar with their neighbors. Although they felt stressed with the standardized system, they still existed in the system while they tried to minimize the stress in different manifestations of their own endeavor. Even in the case of the participants who chose the proactive way of avoiding the relations, they were not able to totally cut off the relations with their neighbors. Under this circumstance, the system was activated by the residents themselves and reinforced through the social relations between them.

The social system in the neighborhood would be understood as a self-organized structure since there is no outside power in this system — even though the standardized value has been built by the whole society, it is not the main player which conducts the system of comparisons and conformity. The people themselves have led the system in this way, without being in the mechanical system. We may understand this self-organized system with an example of the movement of a flock of birds flying together. We can see that they stay as a whole and do not fall apart without touching each other as making a turn, based on the vortices generated by its flock mates. Similarly, based on the social proximity to each other in the apartment complexes, people move together — more specifically, they conform to the standardized value or norm of the society by comparing themselves with others.

4.1.4. Theme 4: Living in a Micro-community with Other Place Values

In the interviews with participants, the neighborhood community (or place-based community) was naturally discussed as a collective dimension of the local social relations. Reflecting the conflicting understandings about neighborhood community, the findings are very contextual. Even though participants had diverse personal social networks based on their neighborhood, they had generally weak sense of belonging to the neighborhood, or a larger group of people associated with the place.³⁸ In other words, the residential environment seemed

³⁸ It seemed that some participants used the terms ‘sense of belonging’ (소속감 [so-sok-gam]) and ‘sense of community’ (공동체意識 [gong-dong-che-ui-sik]) interchangeably. They are highly conceptual so that it is difficult to clearly differentiate in everyday lives. However, in academic discussion, they are differentiated. In their most widely cited theoretical framework for the sense of community, McMillan & Chavis (1986) suggested four dimensions: (1) sense of belonging or a personal relatedness (membership), (2) sense of mattering and making a difference within the group (influence), (3) members’ needs are being met (fulfillment), and (4) shared emotional connections through experiences (emotional connection). Under this theoretical framework, sense of belonging is one element of the sense of community. I did not change the original words by the participants in the quotes, but used ‘sense of belonging’ in my explanation and discussion because it makes more sense in the context and it was used by more participants.

to work as a setting for a micro-community with acquaintances, rather than a community with larger groups of people who resided together.

I also found that the residential place (apartment complexes) had other values in the participants' lives beyond the hyper-localized or limited communal value. First, the monetary value of the apartments was obviously important for the participants' lives. In a few cases, the focus on the monetary value was also manifested in participants' community activities and social relations. Second, in relation to the distinctive social status of the apartment complex and the neighborhood, participants strongly experienced the symbolic image of the place.

4-1) Weak Sense of Belonging to the Neighborhood

Even though all participants had their face-to-face personal networks in the apartment complexes, many of them mentioned that they had no sense of neighborhood community. In other words, they barely had a sense of belonging to a larger group of people in the apartment complexes or the broader local area. In the participants' stories, the sense of belonging to the residential place/neighborhood was seldomly observed regardless of whether they were the renters or the owners of the apartments.

...I do not feel any sense of belonging to the neighborhood. I have criticized people for not caring how other people live, but I think I may be just the same person. In the past, in the previous neighborhoods, we went to nursing homes and orphanages together with the neighbors. At that time, there were so many poor people we should care. Nowadays, we do not have that attitudes anymore. (Soon-Ja, 64 years old, owner, three adult children)

I do not feel sense of community about the neighborhood... I wanted to have it when I moved in the neighborhood at first. I am a person who has participated in many group meetings for education and other things... So, actually I thought I would join in some groups if there were some groups for the apartment community or children's education because I did not work at that time. But it was not easy practically. If you want to do it, you should proactively play an important role and sacrifice yourself. I did not want to sacrifice my life... The

selfish thought was bigger. (Jiwon, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

I have not specially felt sense of belonging. When I lived in the rural area, it certainly existed. There, everyone knew each other, and people share food when there was an event for a family... I do not know how other people are living here. I do not know who my neighbors are. (Ga-Young, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Sense of belonging? Not at all. No one will care about my absence... There are too many comings and goings of people. Many mothers who want to give opportunities for innovative education for their kids came here, and the existing mothers frequently take their kids abroad to teach English... Everyone is coming and going. Per month, several kids come and go in a class. It is hard to feel sense of belonging in this situation. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

...I don't think I belong to this neighborhood. I think it is because I lived in the previous neighborhood for a long time. When I lived there, I brought up my children, sending them to schools, suffering from the stress ... I had a sense of fellowship with my neighbors there since we had that hard time together and shared it... Here, I moved into this neighborhood after I finished raising my kids. There are not many things I can talk about with people. (Jung-Sook, 61 years old, owner, three adult children)

The observed reason for the weak sense of belonging was diverse. Some explained it with their attitudinal changes toward individualism, especially when they had participated in some kinds of community activities in the past (Jiwon & Soon-Ja). Otherwise, the anonymized neighbors in big and dense living environments and temporary settlements were also mentioned as reasons for the absence of sense of belonging. For instance, Jung-Sook talked about her comparative experience in the previous neighborhood, where she had built sense of belonging for a long time by raising children with her neighbors.

As expected in the story of Jung-Sook, participants with pre-school or school-age children in the current study seemed to have a relatively higher sense of belonging or sense of community. As shown in the stories of Jina and Bora, sense of community associated with place was experienced as the lives of their children centered on the neighborhood. However, in the

strict sense, the sense of belonging to the neighborhood was not strong for the participants themselves, as the neighborhood had a meaning largely as a setting for their children's lives.

I think I can feel it (sense of community) a little bit as my daughter started to go to school. Before, it was just a place of residence without any meaning. I was really bored when my husband was not at home in the evening. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

The neighborhood... I think I become attached to here. Maybe it is because I had my kids here and lived with them here... When I went to the previous neighborhood right after moving in this neighborhood, I felt homesick, but I do not feel in that way anymore. It might be because of the time, everyday lives, and memories in here. But still, it is not that important to live here to me. (Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

If the neighborhood has any meaning to me, it is because of my children's school. My kids go to school in the neighborhood. There is no reason I should live here after all of my kids go to college. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

Rather than it is important to live here... it has a meaning because my kids go to school here. Because they have their school days here. It will be memorable to them. Because of that, the place is meaningful for my kids... (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

For the participants, when the residential place had any meaning in terms of communality, it was mostly through their small, face-to-face, and informal personal networks. Except for their acquaintances, they did not seem to have a communal sense with the larger group of people in the apartment complexes. Few participants mentioned that these personal networks made them have some sense of belonging to the neighborhood (see the following quotes of Dasom & Min). However, as explained earlier, many other participants did not have a sense of belonging to the neighborhood despite their strong personal social networks in the place. As obviously presented in the story of Ara, these intimate personal relations were not necessarily led to a sense of broader level community associated with the neighborhood. This was also similarly presented in the story of Suji — although she had strong social bond within the neighborhood, it was still

based on her personal relations with a few close people and excluded other residents in the neighborhood.

I think it is hard to say that I have a sense of belonging to the neighborhood...I may have it in terms of my local church groups or my kid's schools. (Sun, 45 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

I did not have any intimate neighbors in the previous neighborhood. I usually stayed at home with my kids and did not go out much. I did not know many school parents as well. But now I have many close people here. It makes me feel to belong to this neighborhood. (Dasom, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I think it becomes my neighborhood by living here... Because I have my friends here, who were originally not my friends, but now they are more intimate than my friends in some ways. I can share things with them when my kids have some issues. And there are people who can watch out for my children in the neighborhood... (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

To me, it is not important to live here. But the relationships that I have here have effects on my healthy and happy life. I got influenced a lot by this person who I do climbing together. She has a great marital relation, so always kindly advises me how to deal with the dissatisfaction with my husband. Sometimes I speak evil of him, but she always finds something positive...then I has been brainwashed by her. (chuckle) Like this, the close people in the neighborhood are important to me, but I do not put any meaning to the neighborhood. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I am greatly satisfied with the relations I have in the neighborhood. We all help each other and do diverse activities together [...] The kids started to play baseball together this year. At first, we mothers took care of it, but we did not know the rules well. So, we called our husbands. At first, a father who plays the baseball well taught the game rules to the kids and led them... Then the other fathers felt sorry about him and they also came out to the ground. There were many kids on the schoolyard, so our kids were mixed with others. Then we made a T-shirt with a logo for them. Then it seems like a baseball team...Fathers involved in the baseball games, but they were shy and did not get along with others well. So, we arranged a time for dinner for all the families, then they also become closer... But by doing this, other kids in the neighborhood really want to join in the group and do the activities together. But it is just a meeting formed by some intimate mothers, so we cannot include them in what we do... We just try to keep it ourselves... (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

The generally weak sense of belonging to the neighborhood does not mean that participants do not carry out any neighboring activities with people in the neighborhood. In the participants' stories which were introduced in the previous sections, we can find some neighboring activities — such as saying hello or exchanging casual help — with neighbors whom they do not know personally. However, these activities usually arose between the people who lived in a part of the same building. Specifically, not all but some participants said hello to their neighbors in the elevators, at the building entrances and the surrounding places, and at the entrance areas of the underground parking lots which were shared by only part of residents in the building. These activities seldomly occurred in other places of the apartment complexes, except for the cases when participants were with their young children in the playgrounds or other common use areas in the complexes. Except for these limited situations in the limited places, evidence of participants' affinity for other majority of people in the apartment complex that they do not know was barely found.

4-2) Other Values of the Place: Asset Value

For the participants, the residential environment seemed to work as a setting for a micro-community with acquaintances rather than a community with larger groups of neighbors. Then, what other values did participants perceive or experience from their residential place beyond the personal social network? I found that one of them would be related to the asset value of the place. In the interviews, renters talked about the possible differences in their attitudes toward the community from owning the apartment, even though many owners also did not feel strong sense of belonging — which seemed to be rather weaker than the renter groups with young children.

...Except for the school parents, I only know the people in my next door in this neighborhood. I think there is a difference between the owners and renters. For

owners, they own it and they will live longer; but the renters have to move every two years. I know that owners participate in the residents' meetings since they naturally have interests in what is related to their property value. But in the case of the renters, why do they participate in the meetings? So, it is hard to be cohesive with neighbors. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

Sense of community about the neighborhood... I barely have it. Maybe some about my children's school. It is just individualistic. That is because... maybe I do not own the apartment. Probably. If I owned my apartment here, I would participate in the voluntary work for the apartment complex. I just participate in the voluntary work for the school now. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I think it might be somewhat different if I owned my own apartment here. I hardly have sense of community about the neighborhood or belonging because I just rent the apartment... There are some contents uploaded about the apartment community on the website, but I do not read it. I do not have interests in it. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

However, these beliefs by the renters were not totally wrong. At least in terms of the participation in community activities, there was a difference between the owners and renters in the participants group. While there were no renter participants who participated in apartment complex-level community activities, four owner participants (Kyoung-Ja, Hae-Yoon, Ga-Young, & Ha-Ram) had participated or were participating in formal and informal community activities for their apartment complexes and the residents. These activities included volunteer works in community facilities (libraries & cafes) and participation in online and offline community meetings of the apartment complexes. Hae-Yoon showed that the experience of voluntary work in the community library helped her have a sense of community associated with the residential place; However, the activities did not necessarily contribute to the other participants' sense of belonging to the neighborhood.

I worked as a volunteer for my apartment complex for a short time. I did it just shortly, though... I worked in the community library for children. I had fun working there. And it made me to have a sense of community.... Because I was

able to meet some people who I did not know... I was not intimate with them but I could say hello and smile to them... (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

These volunteering community activities by participants cannot be just thought as an expression of interests in the property value even though they were the owners of the place. Community welfare and personal achievements seemed to be the significant objective of these activities. However, according to what participants said, community meetings in the apartment complexes were sometimes conducted with a strong aim to keep the price of the property high. As mentioned by Kyong-Ja, there was an informal community meeting of the residents for property price fixing, and they internally set a lower limit of the selling price of each apartment unit. Meanwhile, as shown in the story of Ha-Ram, the community meetings also tried to increase the monetary value of their apartment complex by keeping the quality of the physical environment of the complex. This could be an effort to make the apartments as a good place to live, but these activities also seemed to focus on the asset value of the apartments. In this sense, both communal value and exchange value of the place were manifested in these community activities.

There are people who want to sell it and move out as soon as possible, and there was a say that real estate offices post decreased price on their website... So, I went to the community meeting with some other residents I know. And we talked about setting the lower limit of the selling price to prevent people from selling it with a low price... (Kyoung-Ja, 57 years old, owner, two adult children)

Sense of belonging... I don't know if I have it. But I hope that my apartment (complex) gets better... There is a messenger chatting room for the residents of my complex. For owners, without renters... So, there were people from 200 units. People talk about the real estate market a lot in the room. For instance, the real estate offices posted decreased price or false offerings on their websites to draw attention from the customers. Then, the residents found that suspicious information and shared it in our chatting room, then asked if it is right or false... People always say that we have to make an effort to protect our apartments... You know, the new rapid subway station will be built next to the complex. People also talked about it a lot for a while. The original urban planning was

beneficial for our complex, but there were some other opinions about the station entrance which was planned to be located toward the school. The school parents worried about the safety issue which may be brought by the construction, while the residents in my complex made an objection to changing the plan... The residents also prevented building a new swimming pool across the complex since it would cause serious parking problems around the complex... The neighborhood seniors are strong and cheering themselves up. I came here to live longer rather than selling it back to make profit, but I hope the value is increasing. I think my complex is well managed by the residents. The community facilities are great including the café, the library, and the gym. It is all the result of the residents' endeavors to make a luxury apartment complex. The other complexes around mine also try the same what we did... (Ha-Ram, 33 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

As explained in Chapter 3, Korean apartment is definitely more than a place to live for the people. It is a highly commoditized product which has unbeatable monetary value. Although one's residential place generally represents his/her major personal and financial investment regardless of location (Freeman, 1993), the value of real estate is especially higher to Koreans: in 2016, real estate holdings took up around 75% of net household assets of Korean people while the ratio stood at between 35 to 55 in the US, UK, and Japan (Kum, 2017). Reflecting this circumstance, participants who first moved in the new town by winning a housing lottery often talked about the increase of the property price when describing their experiences in the apartment complexes. Since considerable profits accrued from real estate of this new town were expected in advance, some participants bought their apartments as an investment even by paying the premium.³⁹

When we won the ownership of the apartment from the drawing, the competition was really strong. The competition rate is one out of hundreds. At that time, originally my husband's colleagues all had applied to the apartments sale, but we had not. They all strongly recommended to applying for it, so we applied on the

³⁹ In Korean real estate market, some people resell their apartments that they are allotted, for an extra money (it is called 'premium') although it is illegal. In other words, premium means the difference between the original price for purchase right and the sale price of the apartment. Premium is formed when there is fierce competition for apartments with many consumers but less supply, or, there is a big gap between the relatively lower price for the allotted apartments and higher market price. It can be abused as a measure to increase property.

last day. Then, all the others didn't get it, but we did. After that, this new town was greatly built, and the price also has increased a lot. Everyone envied us and talked about the price increase... I also cannot ignore the financial gain. When other people talk about it, I feel great. I think I made a great investment. It was worth it. (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

This neighborhood was quite clean because it was newly built.... It was a combination of many reasons, but the investment was the biggest aim of buying this apartment. I bought the apartment by paying premium. (Mi-Sun, 53 years old, owner, two adult children)

In this sense, the asset value of the apartment is one of the most important reasons for moving in and out; because they can make a huge profit buying selling back their apartments thanks to the increase of the property price for the past several years. Actually, many participants already sold their apartments at the time of the interview and planned to move out soon; and many others were also thinking of selling their apartments.

Current apartment is a bit small but the apartment I will move in is bigger. The kids are growing, so we need a bigger apartment. To buy a bigger apartment in this neighborhood needs huge amount of money, but that apartment (in a different town) does not need that much... If I had a lot of money, I would like to live here, though. (Yumi, 42 years old, owner, three school-age children)

We bought this apartment as an investment. We are not able to live here anymore since we need to get places for the two sons when they get married... and we need to plan for our later years. We should sell the current one. We also do not know how the real estate market will change in the future. Maybe this is the time we should sell it. So, we are going to sell the current apartment and move in a smaller, cheaper apartment. Actually, I really love to live here. So, it was really difficult to make up my mind about moving out. But I took my mind off it for my sons. (Kyoung-Ja, 57 years old, owner, two adult children)

The high interests on the monetary value of the apartment were also presented in their relations with neighbors. Some participants said that a topic for the first conversation with their neighbors was related to the real estate value of their property. Since it was a common interest for the residents, they were able to easily start a conversation with that topic when they encountered.

Otherwise, some of the participants talked about their good relations with the manager of the real

estate offices in the neighborhood — with their big interests on the property value, they met the managers frequently and kept good relations.⁴⁰

In the elevator, I asked questions about real estate transactions to the people who live in the same building, then we naturally talked about other things and had a cup of coffee... Sometimes people asked and talked about the market price of the apartment or their future plans about selling it... (Myung-Jin, 58 years old, owner, two adult children)

...I also go to the real estate agent office next to the bakery quite often. Just having a chat with the agent or asking some question about the estate market. (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

In this neighborhood, I do not know any other person outside this building. Oh, there is one. The real estate office manager (chuckle). I contacted her a lot about the transactions. (Mi-Sun, 53 years old, owner, two adult children)

4-3) Other Values of the Place: Symbolic Image

As the monetary value of the apartments is greatly concerned, apartments create social classes which divide people. As where people live — to be specific, living in which apartment in which area — discloses their social standing to others, the apartment becomes a mean of distinction between people. Although the social classes do not officially exist in the society, the symbolic images are strong enough to make people recognize the distinction. Since this new town consists of considerably high price of apartments, when the participants talked about their experiences of neighborhoods, many of them mentioned their satisfactions with positive symbolic images which come from being regarded as a living place of middle or upper class.

I think people's perception or image of the neighborhood is definitely different. Sometimes I go to play golf in S area where has much lower living standards and image compared to here. They recognize me as a person who lives in Pangyo.

⁴⁰ When the new town was built, real estate offices occupied all the commercial spaces which were allocated for neighborhood shops. As time went by, and people moved in the neighborhood, most of the spaces were changed into diverse commercial shops such as bakeries or grocery stores; but some of them remained in the place since many real estate transactions still happened in the neighborhood. At the time of the interview, there were 7 real estate agent offices around the 3 apartment complexes.

You know, that kind of perception. I heard that people in Gangnam cannot leave the place because of this kind of thing although it is really expensive... Setting myself aside, I think living here is important for my kids like when they get married, they can have a better image. As mothers in Gangnam do... I go along with the atmosphere as well... If my kids have a better image from living here, it would be beneficial to select a better partner. (Mi-Sun, 53 years old, owner, two adult children)

G neighborhood, where I lived before, was ridiculous, even though I know I should not say in this way when talking about neighborhoods. I had no choice but to live there because of my husband's work. I never went to the neighborhood before in my life. The living standard was surprisingly different... I was not even able to buy a good quality fruit. I asked the owner of the fruit shop to buy and store some good quality fruits, but he said that the good quality fruits with expensive price would not be sold in that neighborhood. So, I had to buy fruits in other neighborhoods... I knew that the living standard can be that different according to neighborhoods by that experience [...] There is an image from where you live. When someone asks where you live, when I lived there, I did not like talking about it and did not mention it before someone asked. However, as living here, when someone asks that question, I can happily answer to it and the people's responses are also different. The image of this neighborhood is excellent. The living standard and the quality of life is also higher. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

When people ask where you live, and I say it is Pangyo, then they say 'oh you are quite well off'. I always let them know it is not mine, it is the bank's. (laugh) I think there is a tendency that people acknowledge people based on where they live. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I do not try to feel a sense of belonging to the place... I think I never thought about it. I just like and appreciate the current living environment. I would like to live here continuously... I feel great that I can provide this nice setting to my kids. But I don't think I have pride in where I live. Just, when I meet people outside the neighborhood and they ask where you live, I can happily answer that I live here. There is a good image from living here. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Honestly, there is an image given by the neighborhood. I think I should not have pride in where I live because there are many people who struggle to live and battle with poverty... But anyway, I appreciate that I live in this neighborhood. Sometimes I think if my children can live like this. I hope they can live just like this. We mothers talk about that kind of thing a lot. Although there are many worries—we care about all the things including our children's education and money—, but with all those problems, we hope they can live with the living standard that we have now. (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

The use of social network services also instigated the production and the spread of the symbolic images of the neighborhood. Several participants mentioned their experiences of satisfaction when their acquaintances saw their SNS posts and envied them of living in the neighborhood, or when they saw other people's positive posts about the neighborhood.

My nephew, who lived in Europe, said that the commercial street of this neighborhood is similar with Europe. He comes here often for those things even he lives in Gangnam. It is really easy to come here from Gangnam by driving car or using public transportations...I feel good when I heard that. Not just him, many relatives and friends come to this neighborhood for fun — to eat something in the cafes or restaurants here. And they post the pictures to their SNS account such as Facebook. I am surprised to see those things and feel good. (Yumi, 42 years old, owner, three school-age children)

I have done the SNS such as Instagram or Kakao Story... I just post my daily lives here without any intention, but my friends always say that your neighborhood is really great... (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

This distinction effect by apartment is deep-seated in the modern history of Korea. As explained in Chapter 3, since 1980s, living in an apartment has been a necessary condition for Korean middle-class membership, since it symbolizes a stable and ideal middle-class life with massive apartment housing supply by the government. As 50% of the population becomes to live in apartments, the fantasy about living in apartments has diminished in comparison to the past but still exists. That is to say, the distinction by apartment has become more specified. In the past, it was just about 'whether living in an apartment or not' as shown in the story of Yumi and Ga-Young, but now it is more about 'living in which apartment in which area' as presented in the story of the daughter of Soon-Ja.

I lived in D neighborhood for 2 years after getting married, lived in H neighborhood, lived in G neighborhood, then came here. They were all low-priced multiplex housings. And you know, Korean people have a fantasy about apartment. People want to live in an apartment but not in townhouses... It is

greatly managed and has great environments... So, I have changed the living places and came to live in the apartment. (Yumi, 42 years old, owner, three school-age children)

At first, I felt great living in an apartment since I had wanted to live in it. When I was a college student, I have changed rooms for rent. So, just seeing apartments brought me to tears. Why there is no one place for me, where I can live without worrying about to pay rent which is raised every year. At that time, I was a housing refugee. Once, I went to a housewarming party by my teacher who had got married and moved in an apartment. It was around 10 pyeong (33m² or 360 ft²). I said to the teacher that I envy you and I love to live in a place like this, and she said to me why you have such a little dream, you should live in a 20 pyeong apartment... (Ga-Young, 46 years old, owner, two school-age children)

My daughter moved to an apartment in J neighborhood since she cannot afford to live here. She said, when the neighbors of the neighborhood asked where you lived before and she said it is Pangyo, they all wondered why you moved out from the good neighborhood where they want to move in someday.... So, she does not talk about it anymore to the people. (chuckles) It is the place where young people dream to live in My daughter said that she was not able to buy a cup of coffee to someone when she lived here since she was on a tight budget. (Soon-Ja, 64 years old, owner, three adult children)

4.2 Reflections and Discussions

In the previous part of this chapter, I illustrated the essences of local social relations which participants experienced in their everyday living environment. In that process, diverse dimensions of the social relations were described, including why the relations work, the dominant network types, and the characteristics of the relations. In this section, I will expand my findings by reflecting on the existing research literature which are relevant to the current study.

4.2.1 Characteristics of Local Social Relations and Community

Neighborhood-based communities are highly contextual and non-comparable (Rose, 1990; Valentine, 2001). Indeed, the operation of local social relations can greatly vary according to people, place, and situations. Nevertheless, the observed major factors which promoted the

social relations in the current study — physical proximity, children and mothering, and the similarity between the residents — largely overlap with findings from the existing studies. Based on a review of the empirical literatures about local social relations, Krupat (1985) found that proximity, family, and common interest as three glues for the social relations in the contemporary urban system. Gans (1962) reported that proximity is the most important factor for local relations when homogenous people reside in the neighborhood while Mayo (1979) and Grannis (2009) claimed that the number of children who live together or the existence of children is the most important factor in establishing local social relations. Similarly, a Korean researcher Joung (2014) also found that children and frequent encounters in daily lives were the two most important attributes which influence local relations.

In the current study, participants' local social relations and the reciprocity associated with such relations are largely confined to their acquaintances who they personally know, and hardly extend to other residents outside of their personal acquaintances. This finding concurs with Campbell and Gillies (2001). In their qualitative study in a south east English town, Campbell and Gillies reported that community relationships of trust and reciprocity were restricted to small face-to-face well-known groups of people and that these informal face-to-face networks of neighbors and friends did a dominant role in the neighborhood social networks and social capital. They also argued that this finding is in opposition to Putnam's view on social capital (1994), which emphasized the significant role of participation in community activities and the extension of trust to community members who do not know each other rather than informal face-to-face networks.

In the current study, the dominant role of informal personal networks clearly appeared in comparison to other types of neighborhood social networks. Participation in community

initiatives, whether the activities were conducted for the community welfare or maintenance of the asset value, seemed to do just a minor role in participants' local social networks. In a study of residents of 36 Korean apartment complexes across the country, Im et al. (2003) found that residents' participation rate in any community activities was around 10%. The minor role of community activity participation is also presented in another UK neighborhood qualitative study by Cattell (2001), which showed that participation in formal or informal community activities was not the main source of social networks and social support for the majority of the residents. Based on their study findings, Campbell and Gillies (2001) claimed that more attention should be paid to the significant role of the small face-to-face informal networks in understanding neighborhood social networks and related social resources. They also referred to work by Pahl (1996) who indicated relative neglect of the informal neighborship and friendship in studies of social network.

The ignorance of the small-scale informal relations in neighborhood is similar in Korean studies on local social networks. In general, the characteristics and significance of social relations based on residential place have not been thoroughly studied in Korea, despite the great socio-spatial changes of the country which would have affected those relations (Joung, 2014). In the recently developed academic discourses on Korean apartments, researchers have discussed the possibility of so-called 'apartment community' (Shin, 2000; Im, 2003; Choi, 2006; Jun, 2008; Kang, 2010; I. Park, 2013, C. Park, 2013), but these studies have not paid great attention on informal personal social networks of residents. In his recent anthropological report on a Korean apartment complex, Jung (2017) provided a vivid illustration of community-related activities by apartment residents; however, the discussion of informal face-to-face networks was also largely dismissed in his study. However, with its observed dominant role in the current

study, the informal personal network seems to need more attention to better understand the realities of the local social relations. Especially in terms of the contributions of local social relations to individuals' health and quality of life, they are highly significant because they could be the major form of place-based social networks.

Along with the dominant and relatively strong personal informal network, many participants had a low sense of belonging to a larger group of people in the apartment complexes. This finding supports the result of a recent comparative study on sense of community in Korea (Song, 2017). In this study, Song (2017) found that apartment residents had a lowest sense of belonging to the neighborhoods and trust between neighbors compared to the residents in other residential types (detached houses and low-rise multi-family housing). The finding of the current study is also in the same context with a claim of a Korean sociologist, Kang (2010), which predicts that living in apartments will strengthen social networks centered around personal connections and undermine community centered around the residential place. He simply explained that this is because apartment is a housing type fundamentally based on individualism, but we many need more comprehensive explanations to understand this phenomenon.

In the recent discussion about community in Korean apartment housing, researchers seem to have focused on identifying what can contribute to or disturb community building in apartments at the general level, rather than conducting in-depth case studies which can describe the specific phenomena. In such discussions, some have argued that apartment complexes might be in favorable circumstances to build a community and establish communal relationships among residents (Shin, 2000; Im, 2003; Choi, 2006). According to this view, residents of an apartment complex are in a similar social position, have cooperative tasks, and live together in the same physical realm; so, these characteristics may promote a better sense of community. However, the

current study results show that those attributes may have helped a formation of small personal network between limited residents but have not greatly contributed to a larger community at the apartment complex level.

On the contrary, focusing on the socio-cultural context of apartment housing, some Korean researchers gave negative evaluations in its possibility for community building and social capital. Behind these negative evaluations, there is a strong commodity characteristic of apartment housing. For instance, I. Park (2013) claimed that since the asset value in exchange of apartments is extremely significant (as real estate holdings took up around 75% of net household assets of Korean people, Kum, 2017), residents are highly exclusive for matters which can have effects on the asset value of the apartments. Therefore, communities in apartment complexes are likely to end up as alliances for property price-fixing rather than to be reciprocal ones. In the current study, I also found that few owner participants participated in community activities which were aimed for maintaining asset value. Due to the great importance of monetary values of their apartments, they joined in these group activities to keep their interests to the best. However, we should more calmly see if the commodity-oriented attitudes or activities indeed disturb community building. Reporting his observation of the residents' activities to keep the asset value of their apartments, Jung (2017) claimed that the dichotomous view of community, which only advocates trust and reciprocity but rules out any interest-related activities, may not be appropriate for the complex nature of the modern society anymore. According to his study, apartment residents perceived that both of the economic value and the communality of their residential place were significant for their lives.

If the strong commodity character of apartment housing disturbs community building at the apartment complexes, it would be rather associated with the temporary settlement owing to

the commodity character and people's related attitude. In the current study, temporariness was discussed as one of the characteristics which made participants have distant relations with their neighbors as well as indicated as a reason for the low sense of belonging by a few participants. This tendency was observed from both owners and renters. In relation to this, Kang (2010) argues that apartment residents are likely to see their place of residence largely as a product that they just temporarily use, because apartments have worked as the most important and effective means to increase personal assets. Jung (2017) also claimed that the short duration of residence makes residents not to have interests in their neighbors and the common tasks of the place, especially in the case of renters, but also owners, since both groups believe that they will not live there for a long time.

Quantitative empirical studies about apartment complexes in Korea have shown inconsistent results on this issue. A longer residential period was significantly associated with higher sense of community in several studies (Lee & Shin, 2009; Ha, 2010; Park, 2014; Lee & Kang, 2014; Song, 2017) but not in some other studies (Chun, 2004; Choi & Kong, 2007). However, the inconsistent results may not totally disclaim the effects of temporary settlement. This is because I think the attitudes toward the place — seeing their places as temporary ones — could have effects on the sense of community in addition to the actual duration of residence. In a similar vein, the study results about the effects of the tenure type on sense of community are also inconsistent. There are studies which showed apartment owners had higher sense of community (Choi & Kong, 2007; Ha, 2010), but some studies conducted in big cities in Korea found that tenure type was not associated with apartment residents' sense of community (Chun, 2004; Park, 2014).

Considering many critics on the possibility of neighborhood-based community in the contemporary society, the low sense of belonging to the neighborhood-level community may not be surprising. As Cater and Jones (1989) and Young (1990) claimed, the concept of local community may be too romanticized or idealized. Further, Crow and Allan (1994) insisted that local communities are not natural phenomena, referring to Bulmer's claim that "the so-called natural helping networks of the traditional neighborhood were not actually natural at all but developed as a response to certain highly specified social conditions" (Bulmer, 1986, p 92). Korean sociologist Jun (2008) emphasized the same point as criticizing the romanticized vision of apartment community. According to him, people do not keenly aware the need of social capital through local community, especially in apartment settings where privacy and individualism are highly prioritized.

In the large and dense residential setting of apartment complex where no one exactly knows how many people live nearby and who they are, it seems natural that most people in the complex exist as anonymous to each other. In the participants' lives, those anonymous people did not seem to exist even as a neighbor. Participants perceived people as neighbors at least when they knew the faces of the people or their existences in the neighborhood. Also, the limited neighborhood which participants experienced seemed to be based on desire for some distance. In this sense, the life in apartment complexes might be close to the concept which Young (1990) explains as a good city life. According to Young, the city life is a form of social relations as the "being together of strangers", which does not need to create a community of mutual identification and reciprocity. As similarly observed in the apartment complexes, non-communal relations are dominant form of relations in the city life — she insisted that there is no need to devalue this non-communality because the non-communal relations do not involve alienation.

On the other hand, we may need to think about a distinction between communities *of* place and communities *in* place when we discuss place-based communities. Colclough and Sitaraman (2005) argued that place-based communities are not destroyed by modernization and related huge social changes. Communities *in* place, which are based on common experience occurring within a place instead of common experience of place, are newly emerging while communities *of* place may grow down. In this vein, even though there are no history, traditions, and long-standing institutions which constitute communities of place, the shared experience within a place can become a basis for communities in that place. Referring to Stacey (1960), Colclough and Sitaraman claimed that neighbors in the urban neighborhood would be similar with the groups of immigrants who came to the town and settled down together, therefore “have a sense of belonging to a group within the town and not the town itself (Stacey, 1960, p177).” It seems that the findings of the current study partly support this claim. In the studied apartment complexes, communities *in* place exist through common experiences by neighbors, but as a form of very localized, micro communities based on the relationships among personal acquaintances. Communities of place, which are caused from common experience of place, were hard to observe in the studied apartment complexes. The residential place, instead, seemed to have a stronger value as an asset and as a status symbol.

4.2.2 Local Social Relations of Women with Children

Ahlbrandt (1984) noted that, in the analysis of place and community, the characteristics of a given population must be taken into account because people behave very differently according to their positions. Indeed, the studied social relations seem to be greatly affected by the characteristics of the specific group of participants: women with children. Recently, Windsong (2018) noted that existing scholarship on neighborhoods and community does not

fully cover gender, specifically motherhood, even though it is significant for understanding community. Findings of the current study also highlights the need of contextualizing gender dynamics in studies of neighborhood and community.

As explained in chapter 2, this specific group was chosen because they were likely to have more local social relations with the presence of their children, as literatures have indicated (Ishii-Kuntz & Seccombe, 1989; Lee & Yoo, 1999; Wang & Fahey, 2011). Findings of the current study obviously showed that participants' neighborhood-based relations were highly centered around their children, often rather than themselves. In the described lifeworld of the participants, the presence of pre-school or school-age children affected the intensity and characteristics of the local social relations as well as the way how the spatial settings were experienced. Participants had local social relations which were not related to their children, such as through local religious communities or sport facilities, but their children, or mothering of them, were at the center of the most active local social relations. Even though participants with adult children currently had few local social relations through their children, their past experiences of local social relations which were centered around their children still worked as norms in their local social worlds. Beyond the social relations in the neighborhood, the general experiences of the neighborhood environments seem to be strongly related with their motherhoods (which will be discussed in chapter 5). A study of a US neighborhood captured this phenomenon in a similar manner, "Women experienced their neighborhood as mothers, and as such, women participated in neighborhood activities as an extension of the family, used public space within the neighborhood as mothers, and described certain gender expectations specifically tied to femininity as mothering (Windsong, 2018, p. 9)."

The effect of mothering in local social relations are also identified from the fact that differences of experienced social relations were mainly observed in terms of the family life cycles. As discussed earlier, family life cycle, rather than participants' age or other characteristics, greatly affects the experiences of local social relations. The significance of family life cycle in social relations concurs with several existing studies (Emerson, 1972; Stueve & Gerson, 1977; Ishii-Kuntz & Karen, 1989; Fischer, 1989). Especially in the recent empirical study conducted in Seoul, Joung (2014) also presents findings about the great changes in women's neighborhood relations by belonging to different stages in the family life cycle.

With this children-oriented characteristic, the observed local social relations seem highly functional especially for women with school-age children. As discussed, some of these relations were experienced as intimate and supportive, but also in many cases, participants kept the social relations for their children despite the superficiality and stressful characteristics. In this sense, we can see that some of the local social relations are maintained by constraint. That is to say, the maternal role can locate mothers in the unwanted local social network from a sense of duty.

This interpretation supports the perspective which pointed to the possible oppressive characteristics of neighborhood communities for women. Many researchers have noted that the women-centered responsibility for private and domestic sphere of the neighborhood community is posited by the socially constructed gender expectations which emphasize their roles as mothers (Taylor & Whittier, 1998; Stall & Stoecker, 1998; Martin, 2002). In this context, neighborhood communities were commonly perceived as spaces "where women interacted and shared experiences, resources, and support" (Marouli, 1995, p. 544) by considering women as guardians of the small-scale communities (Eriksson et al., 2011). Regarding the women-centered roles in neighborhood community, Valentine (2001) noted that traditional neighborhood communities

can be oppressive to women with the restrictions of roles which often define and limit women's lives. Similarly, Newman & Henderson (2014) argued that women with children may participate in neighborhood activities in a way that strengthens hegemonic mothering ideologies.

This possibly oppressive nature of the local social relations for women with children can be understood as cross-cultural, considering the literatures from diverse parts of the world. However, in the current study, as the children-oriented social relations are interlinked with the unique social context of competitive children education, local social relations seem to be experienced in a more distinctive way.

4.2.3 Comparisons and Conformity

In the current study, mutual observations and comparisons among neighbors were saliently observed. According to social psychologists, in fact, social comparison is a "ubiquitous social phenomenon" (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007, p16). It is about our desire to precisely know ourselves, which is fulfilled by comparing oneself with others as well as obtaining objective information (Festinger, 1954) and plays a significant role in constructing social reality (Sherif, 1936). In the studies of social relationships and their effects, social comparison is explained in relation with the concept of social influence. According to Marsden & Friedkin (1994), "people obtain normative guidance by comparing their attitudes with those of a reference group of similar others. Attitudes are confirmed and reinforced when they are shared with the comparison group but altered when they are discrepant" (Marsden & Friedkin, 1994, p 5).

In the discourse of communities, the conformity to the social norm is often discussed. For instance, de Certeau & Mayol (1998) describe how a norm of a neighborhood importantly works in terms of the people's everyday lives with their neighbors in the place. "The practice of the neighborhood is a tacit collective convention, unwritten, but legible to all dwellers through the

codes of language and of behavior: a norm exists and it is even weighty enough to play the game of social exclusion when faced with “eccentrics,” who are not or do not act like us. Conversely, this norm is the manifestation of a contract that has a positive compensation: it allows for the coexistence on the same territory of partners who are, a priori, not linked; a contract, thus a “constraint” that obliges each person, so that the life of the “collective public” that is the neighborhood becomes possible for everyone (p16).” In the current study, the norm in the neighborhood did not seem to exclude people based on it; but the social norm certainly existed, and people followed it to some extent for their coexistence with their neighbors. In this vein, community is often perceived as a unit where conformity is promoted with the loss of diversity (Mason, 2018; Young, 1990).

Even though social comparison, which might be followed by pressure of conformity, is common and natural in human social life, the findings of this study leaves a question about how the specific socio-spatial contexts of the studied setting can contribute to the active manifestation of the phenomenon. It is hard to find studies about how the neighborhood-level social or spatial characteristics (or their interactions with broader socio-cultural factors) can affect the social comparisons between people. It may seem natural because social comparison is generally understood at the individual dimension or broader cultural dimension. However, considering the increasing number of studies which explore the relationships between the neighborhood characteristics and other social relational aspects, such as social support or social cohesion, this area is highly ignored. Recently, Baldwin & Mussweiler (2018) found a difference in terms of social-comparison proclivity according to a region. In their study which analyzed people’s Google search results about comparisons, tighter and more collectivist US states (mostly located in the southern part of the country) made more searches for social-comparison emotions

compared to other more loose and individual states. Even though this study deals with the existing difference in social comparison between much greater geographical regions, we may at least think of a possibility of place effects in terms of social comparison.

A few Korean researchers have made a claim about the possibility that socio-spatial characteristics of apartment settings can contribute to social comparisons between the neighbors, although empirical study result on this issue is almost absent. First, Kwon & Kim (2012) argue that in the process of providing apartments, highly standardized space focusing on efficiency and marketability was provided as assuming residents with standardized lifestyles. In other words, apartments have a space system which basically expects standardized lives of the users. In this vein, whether they are based on the comparison and conformity or not, the standardized lifestyle and value in apartments are expected results.

Kang (2013) argues that highly dense Korean apartment is a housing system where observations and comparative evaluations between neighbors can easily occur, then ideas or behaviors are likely to spread widely. He claims that in this system, making distinctions and catching-ups are conducted in a part of everyday lives such as children's educations and consumptions. He also argues that the highly standardized structures and lifestyles of apartments reinforce the belief among people that it is desirable to follow what others do; and this mimesis can be strongly manifested in Korea where the upward comparison and egalitarianism are easily observed. Although the empirical basis for his arguments is not fully provided, Kang's arguments hold true in many parts of the current study. As he argues, in the current study, mutual observations and comparative evaluations easily occurred among apartment neighbors; and imitations were sometimes followed because residents felt the pressure of conformity in the situations. However, the high physical density, which he indicates as the major reason for the

comparisons between apartment residents, may not be enough for explaining this phenomenon. With the high density, people may see their neighbors' cars and clothes on a daily basis by using the same elevators and parking lots with their dozens or hundreds of neighbors. This would be a form of possible observations between neighbors in the apartment complexes; however, the topics which the participants mentioned in terms of the observations and following comparisons went beyond the superficial dimension. The topics covered more concrete realms of our lives: detailed life styles including consumption level, educational activities, and so on. In this vein, it can be understood that the experienced social density based on physical density instigated more active observations between the residents. That is to say, without belonging to the social network, observations hardly happen although they live really close to each other.

On the contrary, Jung (2017) explains that the 'culture of indifference' dominated Korean apartment complexes in general. According to his arguments, having indifferent attitudes toward neighbors in apartments is a pretty normal and right action; in this vein, apartments can work as a setting for keeping superficial relations with neighbors as avoiding unnecessary emotional connections. He explains that this indifference can be understood as a social style which reduces stresses by keeping excessive social encounters to a superficial level and maintaining impersonal social relations as Simmel insists (1905). In terms of the matter of social comparisons between neighbors, he argues that if the residents do not have interests in others' detailed lifestyles and consumption level, the comparisons with neighbors can be prevented under the culture of indifference since the visible general quality of life is similar among socioeconomically homogenous apartment residents.

Findings from the current study support and challenge his finding at the same time. Above all, the current study agrees the dominant 'culture of indifference' in apartments with the

finding that participants' relationships with majority of neighbors were quite shallow. It was clear that there was a line between the apartment residents which should not be overstepped. However, it should be also noted that the indifference is not the only norm/culture among the apartment residents. Surely, a certain group of residents can live without sharing their lives with their neighbors; however, whether they wanted it or not, a certain group, such as the mothers of young children, was likely to make social connections with their neighbors through their children. With these relations, observations and comparisons occurred among the neighbors especially in terms of children's education. If people existed only as a resident of an apartment complex, the described social comparison may hardly occur. However, diverse groups (such as neighborhood school parents and residents of apartments) overlap in the realm of a neighborhood in a real-life context, as observed in the current study.

The studies focused on apartment settings help us to think about the phenomena with its specific socio-spatial context, but to draw more comprehensive explanations, I will discuss other studies concerning larger historical and social contexts which are relevant to social comparisons. As a Korean sociologist Woo (2016) argues, because major cities in Korea are all reconstructed cities in the postwar period, in order to discuss the contemporary cities and the life in the cities, we cannot help but look back the history of reconstruction, the 60 years of modern history. We can find many trials to explain the prevalent comparisons and conformity in the whole historical and cultural contexts of the Korean society. Even though these explanations do not explicitly deal with the spatial attributes, they cannot be totally separated from the effects of spatial changes since the drastic modernization of the country is always at the heart in those explanations; and the massive apartment constructions were also always at the center of the modernization.

According to Woo (2016), strong mentality of growth-first has dominated South Korea since 1960s, as the country has tried hard to grow wealthy and not to fall behind the advanced nations of the West. In this context, endless competition has become the common law of the society and most people obsessively pursue the standardized life which is decided by society in the fear of failure. Similarly, Tudor (2012) explains that the country has achieved unprecedented material growth within a short time based on the mentality of growth-first, but a culture of competition — which was a mandatory requirement for growth — has been deeply embedded in the overall Korean society. He also argues that the competitive culture is not limited to the economic realm but dominates the realms of whole life as Korean people have internalized it.

Kim (2014) also finds the root of prevalent comparisons from the rapid modernization of the country. As the modernization was moved full speed to catch up the advanced countries, the existing traditional communities rapidly fell apart and people suddenly faced highly individualized western-style lives when they were not able to build their own individualistic world views. Therefore, people were placed in a situation that both of individual's independence and social cohesion leave much to be desired. Under this circumstance, isolated individuals who are confused about their own identities compare themselves with others, then come and go between happiness and misery according to the result of comparisons.

Psychological approaches also help to explain why social comparisons between people are prevalent in Korean societies. Koo & Suh (2015) claims that in the country's collectivistic culture, Korean people tend to more focus on extrinsic values such as money and other's approval and to be less concerned with intrinsic values. In relation to this claim, several psychological studies show that people those who relatively focus on extrinsic values make more

social comparisons since extrinsic values need external social information to be evaluated (Fujita, 2008; Lee et al., 2010).

While the matter of comparison and following conformity is broadly observed in Korean society, it is agreed that they can be found in starkest form in education issues (Kim & Ohtake, 2014; Oh, 2000).⁴¹ According to Oh (2000), it is common for Korean parents to find the reasoning of action from their acquaintances' education methods for their children. The current study result also echoes these findings. In the participants' stories, I was able to observe the social norm about education which was at the center of their comparisons and the conforming behaviors. The social norm would be a product of the whole society, but can be saliently manifested at the neighborhood level where the schools and school-related relations are particularly located. The social networks in the neighborhood seemed to strengthen the pressure to conform to the norm, combining with the strong education fever in Korean society.

In a survey about Korean people's social comparison orientation (Kim & Ohtake, 2014), it was reported that who lived in Gangnam area, where is considered as the national center of the intense education in Korea, were higher in social comparison orientation than other Korean people. Kim & Ohtake explained that this higher comparison orientation of Gangnam could be related with the fierce education competition of children. In this vein, the comparison and conforming behaviors between neighbors in terms of education would be also more saliently

⁴¹ Education fever usually explains Korean parents' aspiration and support for education, but it also reflects a complex social system including collectivistic perspectives on education and economic reward systems beyond the mere psychological passion. The similar phenomenon is also observed in other Northeast Asian countries such as China and Japan. In Korea, education fever has been working as a strong motivation of belonging to a higher level of social class, since education is an important means for credential to get a good job in a highly competitive Korean society. In the country which largely lacks natural resources, human resources have been the most significant asset for developments. It is also believed that the education fever was one of the reasons why Korea quickly recovered from Korean war and to achieve huge economic growth. (Lee, 2003; Kim et al., 2005; Seth, 2002).

manifested in the study site, Pangyo. Not comparable with Gangnam area, however, it can also be understood as one of the regions with high education fever in Seoul metropolitan area.

5. SPATIAL EFFECTS ON LOCAL SOCIAL RELATIONS

Before dealing with the observed spatial effects on local social relations, I want to think about how we should approach this issue. For researchers in the field of built environment, whether physical designs of neighborhood can affect social outcomes or not has been an important debate topic. After longtime arguments, currently, opportunistic approaches to interrelationship between a neighborhood's physical design and the assumed social interaction are broadly accepted. That is to say, physical design would not directly have impacts on social interactions, but only attract people who are predisposed to social interaction (Patricios, 2002). In fact, physical design may not strictly speaking determinants of social interaction or community (Carfferty, 1979). Other than the design of the space, factors operating at the macro-level such as demographic or behavioral variables can affect the behaviors in neighborhood spaces (Hester, 1975). For instance, it is commonly expected that high-rise spatial settings of apartment housing negatively affect the social relations among the residents. However, the research results about the social effects of high-rise apartment housing are not consistent. Notably, some studies conducted in Asian countries (Chang, 1975; Yuen et al., 2006; Yuen, 2009), refuted concerns that high-rise housing deteriorates social interactions among neighbors. This inconsistency may come from the different socioeconomic context (middle-income or low-income, owner or renter, or conditions of housing market). Importantly, the outcomes of living in high-rise housing seemingly depend on other diverse moderating factors, those associated with residents themselves and the environmental and neighborhood contexts (Gifford, 2007; Kearns et al., 2012). Moreover, because the place itself is always the result of continuing interactions between physical and social dimension (Cattell et al., 2008), it is difficult to clearly identify if certain social phenomenon occurs under the influence of specific spatial characteristics.

Nevertheless, the physical characteristics of residential setting are important in terms of the neighborly relations, since the physical design inevitably provides possibilities of people's contacts and interactions (Talen, 2002; Gehl, 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2012). A well-designed place can create 'opportunities' where social interactions are more likely to occur (Hallman, 1984). That is to say, the role of physical design as a 'facilitator' is important in establishing social relations by providing conditions to develop shared values and behaviors (Paranagamage et al., 2010). In this sense, I will discuss my findings about the participants' spatial experiences in relation with their local social relations.

5.1 Spatial Experiences of Participants

In the previous chapter, I discussed the essence of experiences of social relations in the high-rise apartment complexes that I studied with the four emergent themes 1) why local social relations work, 2) having shallow relations, 3) making comparisons with neighbors, and 4) living in a micro-community with other place values. In discussion of the four themes, how spatial contexts were involved in the experiences was not explicitly covered. Indeed, much of our spatial experience is lived pre-reflectively as the latent foundation of bodily being (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Therefore, it is difficult to illuminate the tangled web of relationships between spatial forms and human life, although any human experiences are at least partly related to the contexts and characteristics of the place. In the narratives of the participants, some spatial elements were apparently recognized in terms of how they were related to the experiences of local social relations. On the other hand, certain spatial characteristics and contexts seemed to latently affect the experiences of social relations through unconscious embodied experiences or by reinforcing other related social drivers. The spatial experiences also greatly varied according to which stage of life the participants belonged to. In this section, I will explain how spatial characteristics and

contexts operated in the participants' experiences of local social relations. First, I will discuss how the apartment residential settings were commonly experienced in relation to the participants' social relations. Second, I will describe how groups of different life cycles had different spatial experiences in terms of their local social relations.

5.1.1 Common Spatial Experiences

In the participants' experiences of local social relations, spatial characteristics of the apartment complexes seemed to affect broadly two types of neighboring. The first one is about 'forming and developing' actual social connections with neighbors and/or sense of community, and the second one is about 'maintaining' the established social networks. The spatial characteristics associated with the two types of neighboring do not seem mutually exclusive, but also not the same. The spatial structures and characteristics of residential settings seem to more explicitly affect the first type of neighboring activities, while they are more latently engaged in the second type.

First, participants formed their relations with their neighbors by encountering them in and around the apartment complexes except for the relations originally established through local institutions (such as schools or churches). In the cases of relations built through local institutions, repetitive encounters in the neighborhood also helped participants develop the relations. By encountering their neighbors repetitively in the neighborhood, participants acknowledged their existence and then naturally came to form some levels of relations — even though the relations solely built through casual encounters were less common than the relations built through local institutions —. The encounters are basically based on the physical proximity between the neighbors within the limited neighborhood space. However, physical proximity itself cannot guarantee the repetitive encounters which can lead to the establishment of social relations. The

spatial characteristics and structures which can support the encounters are also required. Grannis (2009) explains that by encountering and being seen in both formal and informal public spaces of a local area, people come to recognize each other as a neighbor. In that sense, diverse mundane spaces of residential environment can facilitate social relations based on local area.

Theoretically, the encounters can happen in any common use spaces where residents use together, whether they are entirely public or semi-public. As multi-unit dwellings where lots of people gathered, there were diverse common use spaces in and around the studied apartment complexes. Almost every place in the complexes can be communal except for individual apartment units. Specifically, there were common use spaces inside the building: elevators, stairs, corridors between the units on the same floor, entrances, and underground parking lots. Within the apartment complexes, there were many outdoor common use spaces such as playgrounds, plazas, small parks, and roads, as well as indoor community facilities such as gyms and libraries. However, in reality, active encounters and gatherings did not generally occur in these spaces in the apartment complexes. These can be explained with the unsupportive spatial settings: the highly compartmentalized and closed spatial structures with a short moving line.

In these apartment complexes, the everyday moving lines of the participants were described as quite short and limited — in the cases of the participants frequently using cars, the moving line started from the individual units, connected to the elevators, and then finished at the underground parking lots. As the apartment complexes had the primary underground parking lots, participants directly came and went between their apartment units and the underground parking lots without stopping by any places in the apartment complexes. Some participants explained that they were able to naturally meet more neighbors when leaving and arriving home by using ground parking lots in the previous apartments. However, in the current system of

underground parking lots which was in fact much more convenient for them, it was hard to meet many neighbors. Therefore, the places of possible encounters were generally limited to the spots which participants had to pass through in the course of their everyday lives such as the elevators, and the entrance areas of the buildings and the underground parking lots. Due to the greatly compartmentalized spatial structure which emphasized privacy (as only two or three units shared the same floor), only a part of residents in a building used the same common use spaces. Under this circumstance, although they lived with thousands of people at close quarters, the number of people that they were able to actually encounter was greatly limited with this short moving line.⁴² As explained in chapter 4, the neighboring activities such as saying hello to neighbors without personal networks also tended to be limited to this narrow spatial realm.

Outside of the buildings, diverse common use spaces also can be places of casual encounters. In the complexes, there were playgrounds, plazas, small parks, roads, as well as indoor community facilities such as gyms and libraries. Diverse types of small commercial shops were also located along the roadsides between the complexes — which were all accessible within a walk of five to ten minutes.⁴³ However, these places were not included in the everyday routines of every participant. To the participants who did not need to use or pass through these places in their everyday lives, these places barely provided chances for casual encounters with neighbors. In terms of use of these spaces, the life cycle of the participants (which will be explained in detail in the next section), individual behavioral differences, and the unattractiveness of the

⁴² The importance of using the common spaces in establishing the relations was revealed in the cases of the participants who lived in the unit of the first floor, where they barely needed to use elevators. These participants almost did not know the residents who resided in the same building while other participants knew at least some people in the same building.

⁴³ In big cities of Korea, especially Seoul, the level of mixed use and density is higher than the critical point. The level of provision of local facilities is various depending on location, but large apartment complexes usually have quite diverse local facilities in the surrounding areas. There is a big difference in distance/time of daily walk between US cities and Seoul when other socioeconomic condition is similar (S. Park et al., 2015).

places seemed to be associated. For instance, playgrounds in the apartment complexes or cafes next to neighborhood schools were frequented by participants with young children and provided for casual encounters for these groups. On the other hand, participants who frequently drove cars rarely visited small shops in the neighborhood because of the difficult access by car while other participants more often used these shops. In the case of the community facilities in apartment complexes, some participants did not use those places simply because they were unappealing to them.

In terms of maintaining and reinforcing the established personal networks between neighbors, the affordability of neighborhood spaces for social interactions seemed to be important. Participants arranged meetings with their intimate neighbors rather than resorting to casual encounters in the neighborhood — even in the case they lived in the same building, they often set up a separate place where they met. In this vein, diverse shared spaces in and around the apartment complexes provided spaces for interactions. These places included private and public spaces in the neighborhood such as cafes, restaurants, bars, community facilities of apartment complexes such as libraries and meeting rooms, and outdoor gathering spots. The specific level of physical proximity, which was significant for repetitive encounters occurring in the limited common use spaces, seemed to have inconsistent effects on maintaining the established relationships. In some cases, living in the same complex or same building worked importantly for reinforcing the relations. In other cases, living at walking distance in the neighborhood seemed to be enough for the participants to get immediate help and do ordinary things together.

5.1.2 Spatial Experiences by Different Groups

From describing and interpreting what participants discussed, I discovered how differently participants experienced their local social relations according to the group to which

they currently belonged to. How the groups are divided can vary depending upon diverse issues, but roughly, the difference was mainly observed between the groups which were divided by their stage in life and that of their children. Every participant had some levels of local social relations in their daily lives; however, the characteristics and the depth of relationships with their neighbors appeared differently according to the stage of life cycle. And because of that, the exactly same residential settings were differently experienced and operated in the lifeworld of the participants.

Understanding these differences including how participants assessed their present experiences in relation to those in former and anticipated future residences and the correlation with their spatial-physical contexts will be the main issue of this section. I will describe and analyze how experiences in different lifeworld phases correlate with the spaces inhabited. To help understand the spatial experiences which vary according to the life stage of the participants, a diagram of social relations in spatial dimension is provided when explaining each group.

Participants with school children

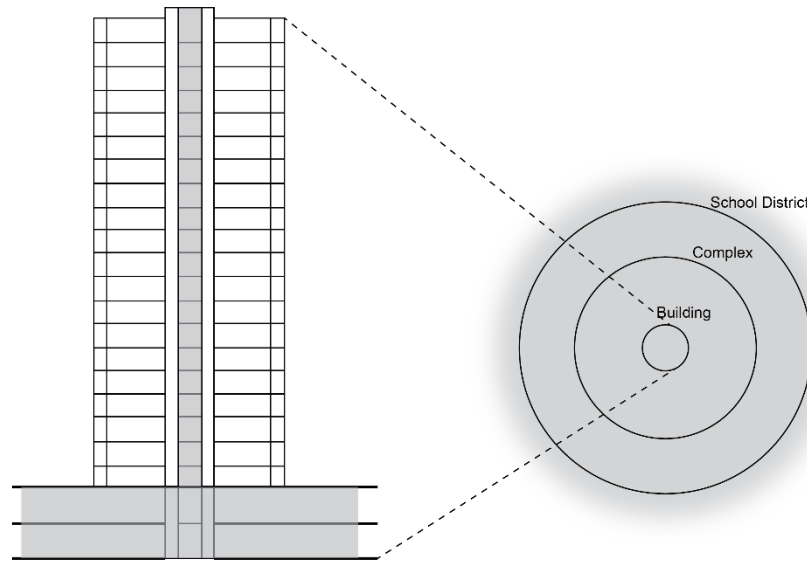
Participants with school-age children, especially young kids, were the groups who had more engaging relations with their neighbors. Especially, as explained in the previous parts, the participants with school-age children came to belong to a dense local social network as a parent of child who was the student of a neighborhood school. The mothers' lives substantially revolved around their kids — as they concentrated on the care of their children, especially education, their social relations were also likely to occur with people associated with their children. In this situation, whether they wanted it or not, relations with neighbors became relatively primary and important in their lives, since their neighbors belonged to the same network which was built through their children. These local relations were experienced as deep and intimate ones in some

cases; however, they were also experienced as superficial since the relation was neither started with nor focused on the participant herself, but they were experienced as a mother of a kid.

For the participants with school-age children, the physical realm of local relations got expanded outside the complex, as their children belonged to the neighborhood school (Figure 5-1). They had many opportunities for relations in and around the schools, as officially meeting their neighbors at the schools in the occasion of school events or casually encountering them on their way to school when they walked their children there. Since the route to schools was quite short and the only way, encounters can easily happen in the neighborhood; such frequent encounters between acquaintances helped to build closer relations.

I was able to be close to the mothers who live in the neighborhood because of my kid. We walked our children to the school when they were in the first grade. And it was easy to meet them when waiting for signal at the crosswalk. Then we walked the kids to the school together from there and came back home together. And sometimes someone asked how about having a cup of coffee before going home. There is a café in front of the school. You know, the guests of the café are all the mothers of the school children. (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

As several adjacent apartment complexes belonged to the same school district, the spatial realm of local social relations naturally included the area of these apartment complexes. In this sense, the planning decision about allocation of the apartment complexes and schools already decided the approximate spatial realm of their social relations even before they moved in.



Places of social interactions (bulding level) Physical realm of local social relations

Figure 5-1. Social relations in spatial dimension: case of the participants with school children

In a similar vein, with their more existential being in the neighborhood, the participants with school-age kids more deeply engaged in the everyday lives of the neighborhood. Although it is hard to say that they made active use of all shared spaces in the neighborhood area, at least compared to the participants with adult children, they made more frequent uses of diverse places in the neighborhood including several facilities located in the community centers and outdoor gathering spots in and around the complexes.

Interestingly, as the neighborhood had many cafes and restaurants near the apartment complexes, those cafes and restaurants were experienced as their representative communal or shared places where they frequently met their neighbors. This is compared to the past experiences of the participants with adult children, who often invited their neighbors to their homes. In the current neighborhood, participants with pre-school kids still invited their neighbors to their homes since it was more convenient with the small kids; but the groups of participants

with school-age (and adolescent) children mentioned that they rarely invited their neighbors home.

In my case, I meet my neighbors a lot in the cafes of the neighborhood. Or we have some short conversations at a table in the building of the market when we go there to buy some groceries. We rarely go to each other's home. We meet in the café much more frequently. (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I think I do not bump into many people on the street. Rather, I see many neighbors in the neighborhood cafes or grocery markets. I guess it is because people usually drive. (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Sometimes, we have a cup of coffee together at home. But it is uncomfortable to invite people to home even though we are quite intimate... We go to the cafes around our apartment complexes. There are many. And neighborhood churches also have cafes inside. It is cheaper than other places, so, we go there often. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two school-age children)

In the past, I easily went to my neighbors' homes a lot and they came to mine as well. Just casually to have lunch together. Maybe it was because the kids were smaller at that time...Anyway, I have not done it in this neighborhood. I was shocked with that at first. I thought it is just natural to meet at someone's home between neighbors. But here, people think meeting at cafes is just normal and natural. (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I arranged meetings with my neighbors in the local department store or the cafes on the street. Usually having lunch or brunch. I once or twice invited someone to my home and had lunch together... but it is not often. Nowadays, people usually meet outside. Even kids just play in the playgrounds or go to kids' cafes together. I think it is a greatly individualistic culture. (Noori, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

By having these semi-public commercial spaces as normal places for meetings, the communality they experienced might be different from the traditional one. The reason why they had these spaces as representative communal spaces could be explained by several possible factors — it would have been caused by the spatial setting which has many cafes and restaurants around the neighborhood, or from the attitudinal changes of the people toward the relations with neighbors and privacy.

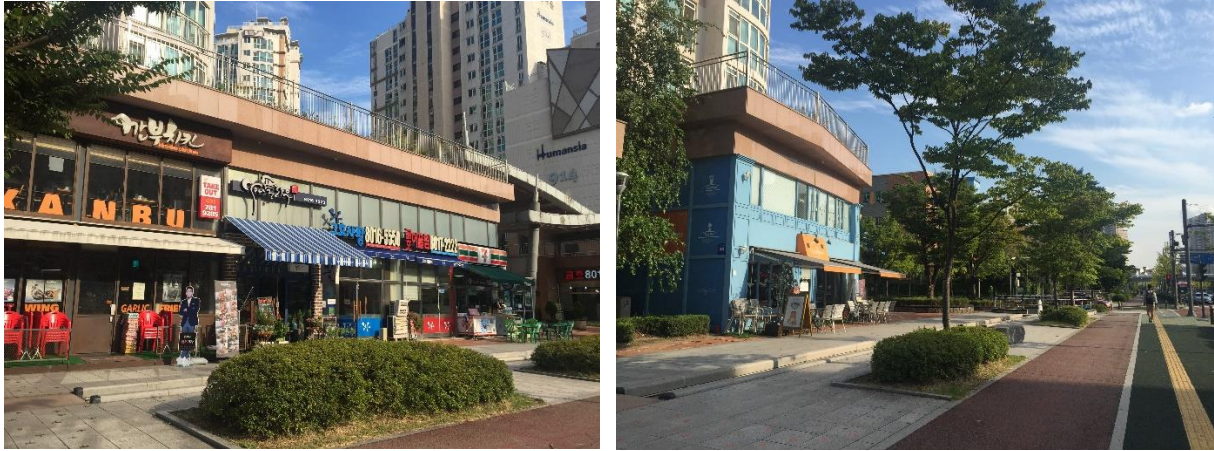


Figure 5-2. The main places where participants with school-age children socialize with neighbors (Cafes and restaurants near the neighborhood schools)

As they were closely bound together within the limited space, mostly through the schools, the experienced social density was much higher than the other groups. They more frequently experienced the encounters with their neighbors due to their much broader social network. However, for few participants, these encountering experiences were unpleasant and tiring.

In this neighborhood, the route that people come and go is decided and the schools are adjacent to the apartments, so I meet my neighbors quite often. But just I do not go out frequently. If I go out, I should meet someone, and I do not want to meet someone when I look untidy... And someone says hello, but I do not know who she is... I also do not know what year of the class we belong together...
(Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

I encounter some acquaintances in the neighborhood. But it is unwelcoming. It is just meeting a mere acquaintance... they are not close to me. If I meet intimate people, it would be of course good. When I meet those acquaintances, we just say hello and casually ask how you are doing... how your kids are doing... (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

Sometimes I encounter my neighbors on the streets. But it is always uncomfortable rather than feeling nice. The neighborhood is really small. When the people have conversations, we become to talk about someone, and you know, the someone can be a person who lives my next door. So, we need to take care

when we talk...like ‘there could be some people around here who know the mentioned person...’ (Ha-Ram, 33 years old, owner, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

What makes the encounters unpleasant would not be the encounter itself, since the encounters with people whom they barely know are regarded as natural in the high-density settings and not being depicted as especially uncomfortable. The unpleasant encounters let us know about the social density which participants with school-age children experienced. The social density can be tiring, in association with the superficial relations with neighbors or mutual observations and gossiping.

As a sub-group of participants with school-age children, the participants with adolescent (middle-school or high-school) children were at the cusp between the participants with (elementary) school children and the participants with adult children by having characteristics in both groups regarding their local social relations and related spatial experiences. Since high-schools or middle-schools included larger areas as their school districts, participants belonged to the broadest local social network through their children at this stage. The physical realm of their local social relations included several more apartment complexes in the region, not just the few adjacent apartments complexes (Figure 5-3). To share information or their emotional stresses about the education of their children (this is the most important period for education because their children are about to take college entrance exam), they often arranged meetings with their intimate neighbors in the neighborhood cafes, restaurants, or community facilities located in the apartment complexes.

However, since their children were less dependent on them compared to younger kids, they started to have incidental relations with their neighbors by trying to return to outside work opportunities or meeting other people outside the realm of neighborhood. The level of intimacy

they experienced with their neighbors also seemed to be weaker than what the participants with young kids experienced.

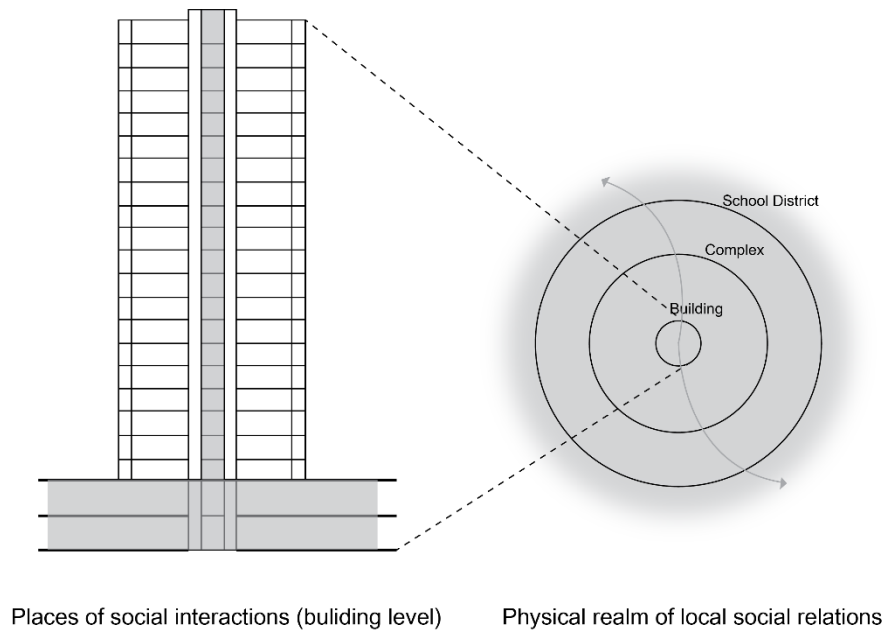


Figure 5-3. Social relations in spatial dimension: case of the participants with adolescent children

Participants with pre-school children

The participants with pre-school children also had relatively engaging relations with their neighbors. They were similar to the mothers with school-age children in many ways, but there were some differences in the characteristics of social relations and the spatial experiences in the residential area. The daily lives of the mothers with pre-school children were so tied to their kids that they needed and chose to spend most of their time in the neighborhood — the territory of their kids' everyday living. Therefore, they also deeply engaged in the everyday lives of the neighborhood and made frequent use of shared spaces in the apartment complexes as mothers with school-age children did.

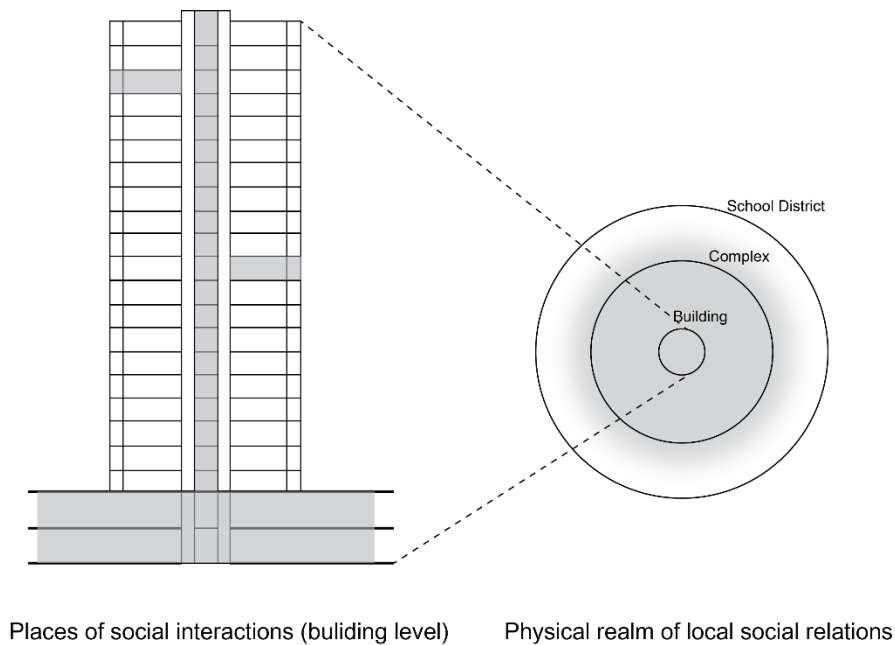


Figure 5-4. Social relations in spatial dimension: case of the participants with pre-school children

As a difference, because of the small kids, their living sphere was more limited within the complex, centered around their individual home units. In the same vein, in terms of the physical realm of local social relations, they were likely to form and maintain relations with neighbors who resided in the same complex (Figure 5-4). They bumped into neighbors in the common outdoor spaces of the complex such as entrance areas of the building/complex when they waited for the preschool shuttle buses or such as playgrounds when they watched their children playing in the playgrounds. These repetitive encounters within a complex often led to a formation of more intimate relations. In this sense, it can be understood that specific physical proximity — by living in the same complex — had more effects on the local social relations of the participants with pre-school kids than the participants with school-age children.

Even though the kids don't go to the same pre-school, it is easy to meet peer groups when they play in the playground in the complex. Naturally, we started a conversation with a topic of the kids, like asking the age of the kid. When the kids played together, mothers were able to become close. (Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

Since we had kids, we were able to meet. When they went to pre-school, we met every day as waiting the shuttle bus in front of the building. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

This group usually belonged to a smaller network with their peer groups in the neighborhood, rather than belonging to a bigger and denser social network of neighborhood based on the schools. The local social relations they had seemed to be more intimate and less superficial than the ones of the participants with school-age children, as this group (participants with pre-school kids) needed more support from their neighbors in raising kids and were much less obsessed with education issues at this stage.



Figure 5-5. The main places where participants with pre-school children socialize with neighbors (Gathering spots in front of an apartment building and a playground in a complex)

Participants with adult children

Participants with adult children had less engaging social relations with the neighbors in their current lives.⁴⁴ The most contributing factor for this difference was the absence of their children from their current neighborhood — most of the adult children lived together with this group of participants (see chapter 2), but the children were almost absent in the perspective of neighborhood lives due to their very low dependence on their parents —. Without the active interaction of their children in the current local life, the depth and quantity of local social relations were experienced in a quite different way. The number of the neighbors whom they knew was quite small in most cases. Some of them were intimate with other neighbors by belonging to the local religious groups or doing the hobbies or exercises together, but the level of intimacy of the relations was not described as same as the ones which the participants with young kids had.

Not being tied to the territory of their children, they had more opportunities to meet other people outside the neighborhood; interestingly, some of these acquaintances were their previous neighbors in the previous neighborhoods. Many participants talked about how different their local social relations were in the past when their kids were younger. The past relations that they described were very similar to what the mothers with young kids currently had in the current neighborhood — doing all the things together and raising kids with their neighbors.

When I lived in the previous neighborhood, I was young, there were lots of relations with other mothers as bringing up kids together...now I don't have any

⁴⁴ There are two important notes about this group. First, this study does not include participants who are older than 70. Therefore, the findings of this study do not reflect the cases of the residents in that age who may have different local social relations with their neighbors. Second, because this group of participants moved in this neighborhood 7 years ago, they may have less engaging relations with their current neighbors, compared to other people of this life stage who have lived in their neighborhoods for a longer time. That is to say, the other people may have better local social relations with their neighbors despite the absence of their children in their current neighborhood lives, since they may have maintained their local social relations which they developed when their children and they were young. There is a 3-years of difference between the average length of residence for the Korean home owners (10.6 years) and the length of the residence of this group of participants (7 years).

new relationships which are caused from my children [...] When I lived there, I needed to often meet the lady next door and ask her help because of my children. I went everywhere in the neighborhood... going to a stationary shop to buy supplies for the children, and also buying the chicken from the nearby shop to feed my children... There were lots of things to do in the neighborhood, so I always came and went in there. But now I am past that kind of age... (Mi-Sun, 53 years old, owner, two adult children)

... (in the past) the atmosphere was really different. At that time, learning swimming was a famous hobby. So, we all together went to the neighborhood sports center by taking the shuttle bus every morning at 10am. When the lesson was finished, children were still in the school, so we went to someone's home and cooked together, relaxed with a cup of freshly brewed coffee, just had a chat, and then went to the local market together... When I moved in here, our children already became adults, so I don't have any link which can help me to be close to the neighbors. In the previous neighborhood, even in the case that I was not that intimate with neighbors, all of us had children in the similar ages... so we always were able to talk about our children. (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

The past experiences of more engaging local relations in their previous neighborhoods affected their current local social relations. In many cases, the participants had kept their good relationships with previous neighbors which were regarded as cohesive and more important than the current local social relations. Thus, as described before, the current local relations were easily regarded as incidental relations in their lives, as they lived with their own comparative experiences of the past. Even in the cases which participants had not kept the relations with previous neighbors or had difficulty to meet them because of the distance, they thought that it was difficult to build those intimate relations with neighbors in the current stage of their lives, without active participation of their children in the local life.

Meanwhile, in their current lives of the neighborhood, the local relations were formed and maintained focusing on the participants themselves instead of their children. As Myung-Jin reported, these relations gave comfort by allowing them to avoid unwanted superficial relations with their neighbors.

...when I lived in the previous neighborhood, there were some conflicts from meeting diverse people. Such as having different economic conditions... So, there were some people who I had been close at first but grew apart later. Here, I have not had that experience. I think that happened because I met people due to my kids at that time, but currently I do not. Nowadays, I meet people focusing on myself instead of my kids. So, I can meet people who are quite similar with me. In the past, I didn't meet people focusing on me, I just naturally got closer with people whom I met for my kids or whom I got to know through my kids. (Myung-Jin, 58 years old, owner, two adult children)

However, at the same time, as they did not share the experiences of raising kids with their current neighbors, the opportunities for the local relations can be limited. In this sense, the social density of the neighborhood was experienced different by them: it was not high at all but low enough to make them feel lonely. Even though they believed the current local relations were not important and primary in their lives, some participants experienced the loneliness by having less engaging and intimate relations with their neighbors in their lives.

...I don't think I belong to this neighborhood. I think it is because I lived in the previous neighborhood for a long time. When I lived there, I brought up my children, sending them to schools, suffering from the stress ... I had a sense of fellowship with my neighbors there since we had that hard time together and shared it... Here, I moved into this neighborhood after I finished raising my kids. There are not many things I can talk about with people. [...] The only people I know here are my church members. Sometimes I meet people in the elevator, but just give them a nod. If they are close to my age, maybe I can talk a little more, but mostly they are much older or younger than me. So, I don't have anyone who is really close to me here. Nobody comes to my home and neither do I. (Jung-Sook, 61 years old, owner, three adult children)

...when I lived there, there were many people around me. So, I took care of it. I did always care about what other people thought...I was not able to remain aloof from them. Here, there are not many interactions, so I just live in my own way. It has good things and bad things... It is comfortable and I don't have to care about anything... But, on the contrary, it is nice to get a validation from people and have people watch and praise...People need someone who can acknowledge and praise themselves. Here, I cannot share or make brag of something good comfortably. Actually, there are not many things to talk about. We shared the same interests in the past, but now, we don't. (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

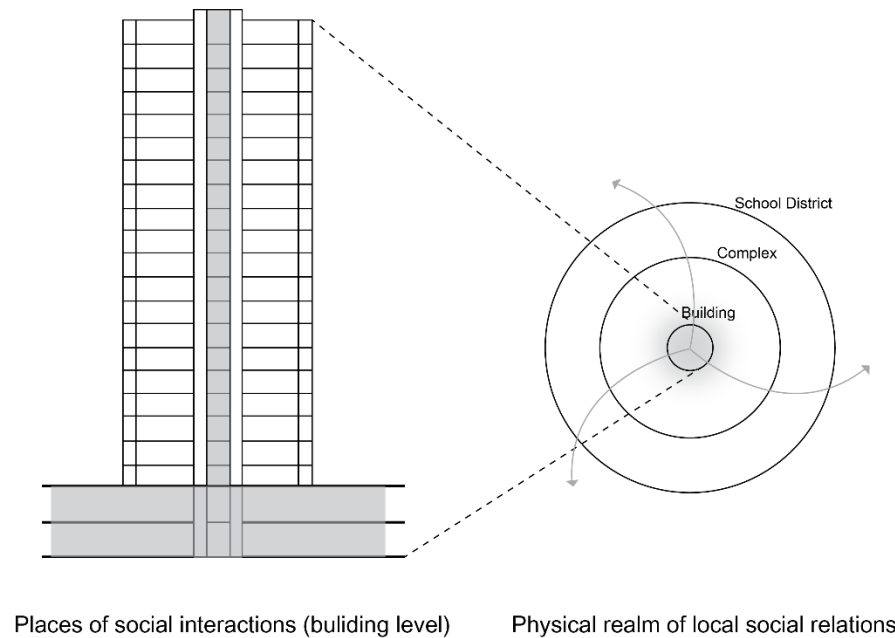


Figure 5-6. Social relations in spatial dimension: case of the participants with adult children

For the participants with adult children, the most specific level of physical proximity had greater effects on the formation of local social relations. That is to say, their spatial realm of local social relations was presented as the narrowest — within the building. As they were not involved in the neighborhood network through their children, casual encounters in the common use spaces could be almost the only way of establishing social relations with their neighbors unless they belonged to other groups (such as groups for churches or hobbies) in the neighborhood. Therefore, in many cases of the participants with adult children, the neighbors whom they knew were limited to the residents living in the same buildings and using the same elevators. However, considering that they had and met other primary people outside the neighborhood in their daily lives, their spatial realm of social relations was rather broader than the other groups; but it was just most limited in the current neighborhood area (Figure 5-6).

They also experienced the neighborhood places as the least communal. Except for the common use spaces connected to each unit such as elevators, main entrances of the buildings,

and parking lots — which were located in the most private realm of the semi-public areas —, other common use spaces were not actively experienced with its communal characters. Many of them said that they did not see or encounter many neighbors in their daily lives; some even depicted it as a desolate place. By experiencing the neighborhood as a desolate and vacant place, they were not able to be more engaged in the current relations based on the place. Their current spatial experiences were easily compared with their past experiences of the other residential places, which were believed to be much more supportive for casual encounters and gatherings. In their past residential places, which were also apartment complexes in most of cases, they had sat on the benches with neighbors in the green areas of the complexes, walked everywhere to see and be seen, and their kids had played in the common corridor of the apartment buildings.

At that time, I lived in the small, corridor type apartment... it was fun. When I opened the door in the morning, everyone came out at the same time. The kids played in the corridor and went to the playground all together. We just easily came in and out frequently of everyone's home... Now people don't do it anymore, and I think it will bother me as well. So, we do not have a cup of coffee at home, we do not eat something together at home, and we do all the things outside. Nowadays, I feel sorry for the kids who live in this setting, especially in terms of forming social relations. There is a kid living on the 7th floor, she only knows her parents and grandparents but no other people in the building. In the past, when I was busy doing something at home, my kids just easily went to the next door and had food with them... Now, the kids cannot do something like that at all. Even in the playgrounds, there are not many kids. Young mothers don't let their kids play there, instead, they go to kids' cafés and other places... (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children)

... We didn't dine out that often at that time, so we usually invited the neighbors to the home and ate food together. I never thought that it was tiresome, but now I rarely invite someone to my home. (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

In the previous neighborhood, there were many small green areas. I was able to sit on benches in the green area and see kids playing and read books... I met lots of people passing by when sitting on the benches. We just said hello to each other and smiled. Here, it is not easy... There are not many places like that. I think those things... interactions with people are important in my life. But I do not have it now. (Soon-Ja, 64 years old, owner, three adult children)

The above-mentioned spatial elements of the previous neighborhoods — common use corridors in the buildings, one big commercial center inside the complexes, small green open areas, and ground parking lots — can be actually more supportive for social gatherings and encounters between people. However, as they clearly recognized, the active existence of children in the local lives may have also greatly affected their experiences of communality of neighborhood places.

5.2 Reflections and Discussions

In this section, I will contextualize my findings about how spatial characteristics and structures of residential environments can influence the experiences of social relations by discussing the findings in relation to the existing literature. In the current study, spatial characteristics of the apartment complexes seemed to affect the participants' socializations broadly in two ways: helping casual encounters and providing spaces for further social interactions with their neighbors. In the study site, diverse and possibly communal semi-public places were provided in and around the apartment complexes — which in fact offered settings for social gatherings between acquaintances —, however, repetitive casual encounters were likely to occur only in a highly limited spatial realm (in a part of a building) with a basically short moving line based on the compartmentalized spatial structure.

Recently, Korean architectural researchers have tried to explain this unsupportiveness for neighboring with the spatial structure of apartment complexes. Kwon & Kim (2012) focus on the effects of the highly compartmentalized spatial structure of the apartment complexes on social relations: apartments are separated into each complex; they are compartmentalized into each building within the complex, then further compartmentalized by each entrance or floor; they are also compartmentalized into individual units on the same floor. With this compartmentalized

spatial structure which does not support natural social interactions, although each unit is closely located to others, residents can easily disconnect themselves from other residents (Kwon & Kim, 2012). Emphasizing the tree structure (which was introduced in chapter 3), I. Park (2013) argues that the spatial structure of Korean apartment complexes can have dangerous effects on people's way of life by cutting the connection or interaction between them. According to him, under this spatial structure, the number of people whom residents can casually encounter is quite limited because only a few people use the same one-way moving line; therefore, relationships among neighbors are likely to be quite selective, occurring between just a few.

The current study results concur with this explanation — as the participants lived with neighbors who were physically near but in fact distant by being partitioned with walls, and had short moving lines which start from the individual unit, connect to the elevator, and then finish at the underground parking lot, the number of people they were able to meet in and around the apartment complexes was greatly limited. Some empirical studies conducted in Korea also reported relevant findings. Yoon et al. (1989) showed that residents of corridor type buildings had more neighborly relations than direct access type building. This result can help explanation of the limited opportunities for social encounters in the studied apartment complexes, which all consisted of direct access type buildings. Lee & Shin (2009) also reported that when parking lots were located on the ground area, the residents had a higher sense of community than the residents of the apartments with underground parking lots. Furthermore, Lee & Shin (2009) and Choi & Kong (2007) showed that a sense of community was higher for the residents of apartment complexes which had connected inner ring roads compared to the apartment complexes with separated inner roads. These results could be understood with the idea that the

connected circular road systems help the establishment of more frequent and better social interactions among the residents, breaking from the inflexible hierarchical spatial structure.

In addition to the spatial structure, the presence and use of shared spaces is generally understood as significant both in helping casual encounters and providing places for further social interactions. Similar with the critiques about a lack of shared spaces in apartment housing in the western countries (Evans et al., 2003), Korean apartment housing was also infamous with the inadequate shared spaces despite their importance as only places of chance encounters which become the basis of social connections and sense of belonging (C. Park, 2013). However, as introduced in chapter 3, the formal community facilities have greatly increased and diversified in the last two decades in apartment complexes. Nevertheless, whether these spaces can effectively promote social interactions is somewhat questionable. Findings of the current study showed that the presence of diverse community spaces did not guarantee socializations and neighboring between neighbors, as these spaces were not included in the everyday routines of every participant. This result largely concurs with a recent comparative study on residents' sense of community according to housing types in Korea. In this study, Song (2017) found that community spaces in apartment complexes did not support neighboring activities as they were separated from everyday walking route, while alleys which detached houses were built along enabled active neighboring activities. Joung (2014) also reported that community spaces in Korean apartment complexes were not the most commonly used places for neighboring.

However, as presented in the case of participants with young children, these spaces provide settings for interactions. Thus, the use of these spaces may promote social relations among neighbors. Several empirical studies of Korean apartment complexes identified the associations between use of community spaces and better social relations or community building,

beyond the presence of those spaces. Specifically, when residents made more use of the green spaces in their apartment complexes (M. Park et al., 2015) or the diverse community facilities (Kim & Nam, 2005; M. Park et al., 2015), they had a higher sense of community and better social relations. This is also the same in the case of public rental housing — Seo & Chiu (2014) found that when the residents made less frequent use of outdoor spaces and community facilities, they had much lower level of social networking with their neighbors compared to the residents in other similar public housing.

Studies of Korean apartment complexes usually focus on the formal community spaces when analyzing the spatial effects, but the informal shared spaces in the neighborhood, such as commercial shops, cafes, and restaurants can do a significant role in socialization. Diverse local facilities are believed to be important for connections since they can bring residents together by providing focal elements (DETR, 2000; Paranagamage et al., 2010). According to Baum & Palmer (2002), places allowing people to meet outside people's homes, such as pubs, local shops, and sporting grounds, can help maintain loose ties and networks between them. The importance of providing various retail, commercial, education, and community facilities which are accessible by walking has been emphasized under the name of 'mixed use'. It is believed that mixed-use local streets can encourage social exchange, reduce feelings of isolation, and contribute to the growth of social capital (Leyden, 2003; Jones et al., 2007).

In the studied neighborhood, these places seemed to encourage casual social exchange even though it did not apply for everyone. Moreover, participants used these places as a representative place for social gatherings with their acquaintances than any other places in the neighborhood. This finding also concurs with Joung (2014), which showed that neighborhood commercial spaces were the most common places of local social interactions for women

residents of apartment complexes in Seoul. It is not clear why people prefer using neighborhood commercial spaces for social interaction. As explained, it might be caused by the spatial setting which has many cafes and restaurants around the neighborhood, or from the attitudinal changes. Interestingly, architectural researcher C. Park (2013) explains that apartment residents are not curious about other residents' units due to its homogeneity in design, therefore visiting other's unit is "reproduction of the scene of my home, movement to where is totally same with mine." (Gong, 2007, p177; a Korean novel cited in C. Park, 2013)

Crow & Allman (1994) noted that places with strong physical boundaries with barriers to exclude outsiders are often believed as a potent base for territorial communities, even though communities need not to be territorial communities with designated place. Apartment complexes have relatively strong physical boundaries, but it is hard to see that the studied apartment complexes work as 'territorial communities' considering the generally low sense of belonging to the place. The largely limited encounters in the apartment complexes may provide some clues for understanding the low sense of belonging. Opportunities for casual interaction afforded through local features are believed to be important for people's perceptions of inclusion and a sense of community (Cattell & Evans, 1999; Cattell & Herring, 2002). Of course, like all the other people-place relations, this result can vary from person to person and place to place. As described in the cases of participants who did not enjoy encountering school parents, casual encounters in neighborhoods can be the source of emotional discomfort for some people, because the effects of encounters largely depend on the characteristics of people or particular context of the place (Cattell et al., 2008). Nevertheless, encounters are fundamental features in forming and maintaining social relations based on place (Gans, 1961); therefore, we may think about the

possibilities that unsupportive spatial structures for casual encounters can contribute to a low sense of belonging to the neighborhood community.

One of the important findings of the current study is that participants' spatial experiences greatly varied according to their life cycle, specifically in terms of their local social relations. This variance itself is not new, as we recognize that the social effects of living in certain residential place depend on diverse factors including residents themselves (Hester, 1975; Gifford, 2007). However, especially in the literatures of Korean apartment complexes and their effects on social relations, it is hard to find studies about the different spatial experiences by different groups of people. Recently, Joung (2014) examined how the spatial realm of local social relations and spaces for social interaction varied according to family life cycle of women residents in the empirical study of two neighborhoods in Seoul. The findings of the current study largely support her study results. Identical with my finding, Joung found that the spatial boundary of local social relations was limited in apartment complexes in the case of women of child rearing and child launching period, while women of school-aged children period interacted with residents who lived within the school district. Joung also reported that the group of women with adult children mainly formed their local social relations by casual social encounters, which is echoed in the current study. There is a difference between the two studies in the use of community facilities of this group (women with adult children) — I found the group of women with adult children did not actively use community facilities while Joung reported this group mainly used community facilities in walking distance for social interactions.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Although there are a number of studies on the relationship between social support and health, the meaning of social networks and support and their health-related mechanisms are largely inconclusive (Campbell et al., 1999). Indeed, establishing explicit associations between social relations and mental health is challenging, because social connectedness and well-being is highly intertwined in our lives (Cattell, 2001; Strange et al., 2014). Especially among qualitative research on the associations between experiences of social environment and mental health, only few relate their research to mental health outcomes in an explicit way; and they also do not deal with absence or presence of mental illness. According to Curtis (2010), this body of research asks if we need to think social integration and social support “as an aspect of well-being and a health outcome in itself” (p.117) rather than establish its relationship to mental illness. In the current study, I also found that it is challenging to make explicit how the diverse experiences of local social relations are associated with mental health and well-being. However, in this chapter, I will provide a richer picture of the supportive or possibly detrimental dimensions of local social relations by clarifying, summarizing, and discussing the experienced local social relations which seemed to be relevant for mental health and well-being.

6.1 Positive and Negative Effects on Mental Health & Well-being

As living in the modern society where the importance of relations based on geographical area is greatly decreased, most participants did not think that their local social relations were absolutely essential for their health and well-being. This may also be related to the context of the study area which is relatively well-off, thus the members have diverse social and economic resources outside the neighborhood. Except for the two participants who raised young kids

without having any other family members or friends nearby, all the other participants did not include any members of their local social networks in the first circle of the closeness circle (see chapter 2 and Appendix C). Everyone placed their family members in the first circle and placed their intimate friends in the first or second circle. Neighbors were mostly placed in the third circles. As Cantor (1997) identified, relationships with neighbors were more peripheral social ties compared to family members and friends.

However, at the same time, no one denied the significance of local social relations for sustenance of their mental well-being. Even though local social relations were not one of the most essential relations to them, participants found that the existence of neighbors and interactions with them contribute to their healthy lives in diverse ways. Most obviously, participants received emotional social support from their intimate neighbors as well as generally positive relationships with neighbors. The support helped them cope with daily stress and keep positive mood in everyday lives. In addition to the emotional support, thanks to the physical proximity and related immediacy, participants received diverse instrumental support from their local social networks. Participants' stories, which were already introduced in chapter 4, showed how the beneficial effects of local social relations worked in their lifeworld.

It is good to have people who I can call when I feel depressed. When I feel bad because of something, I call them, and they buy me something delicious... In my current life, the relations with neighbors are the most important after the relations with my family. There is a physical distance between me and other friends. I am emotionally closer to my friends, but I cannot meet them every day. We meet just once in a while, like once per two or three months. But you know, I can meet my neighbors every day. At least three or four times per week. So, if I don't have them, my life will be really lonely. (Ok-Sun, 52 years old, owner, two adult children)

I have some neighbors who are really intimate with me, for instance, I can easily ask them 'Bring me soy sauce, I am running out of it'... whenever I need something, although my home is not organized. I really think I have good neighbors. You know, they cannot indeed help me solve the difficult problems in

my life. But, when I need something small, or want to have a casual conversation, it is really great to have people who can be with me, help me, and talk about what I want to discuss. It is my big asset. The relationships with these people are important to me. (Song, 43 years old, owner, two school-age children)

Litwak & Szelenyi (1969) claimed that neighbors are apt for merely instrumental tasks that require proximity and immediacy. The proximity and immediacy seemed to significantly involve in providing social support indeed. However, sometimes the relationships became more than that. According to Thoits (2011), secondary group members who have prior similar experience, can supply different but helpful support to individuals through their experiential knowledge. This argument can help explain how participants became to feel empathy by engaging with their neighbors who shared the similar experiences, such as raising kids or living in the same temporal-spatial dimension.

Some participants also seemed to promote their well-being through social engagement by doing some group activities together with their neighbors. These activities included a hobby group, local religious groups, and some team activities for children's education. These group engagements seemed to give them a sense of belonging and companionship with their neighbors as well as social support.

The person who I go climbing together, I am really intimate with her. She was also the mother of my child's classmate several years ago. I always set aside a time for her on Friday. We usually go climbing but sometimes watch movies, and so on. We share every detail in our lives... (Ara, 43 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I met my neighbors two or three times per week. We meet in the neighborhood cafes, go to the supermarket to buy some grocery, and do exercise together. We are intimate since we meet really often. When the kids go to the same private education institution, we ride them together and go to the grocery market while the kids are in the class, and then we bring them back home together. (Min, 44 years old, renter, two school-age children)

I am greatly satisfied with the relations I have in the neighborhood. We all help each other and do diverse activities together [...] we got lots of activities doing together. Our kids learned swimming together, and they participated in the small

swimming competition together. All the other participants of the competition were really good at swimming, but our kids were foundering in the water...but that was a good motivation to them. The kids have done diverse activities together and have grown up together. Nowadays, we are also doing a new voluntary works together. (Suji, 45 years old, renter, two school-age children)

The importance of social support from neighbors and a sense of belonging was also found from the inverse experiences of the participants with adult children. As they did not have intimate neighbors who provided enough social support or helped to have sense of belonging —especially in comparison to their previous experiences —, the participants felt lonely and unconnected.

You know, we say, having one person in our life can make us happy. The person you can meet anytime as wearing slippers. But I do not have the one in this neighborhood. The person whom I can call anytime. [Did you have that one in the previous neighborhood?] Yes, I did. But in this neighborhood, the neighbors are the people I met after finishing raising my kids. So, we already had a line that we cannot cross. We cannot open everything about us. Since we met after our children were all grown up, we already had an individual world... we already had all the people, meetings, and lives. People do not want to make new one, do not open all the things. So, I feel lonely. (Jin-Sook, 59 years old, owner, two adult children)

...I don't think I belong to this neighborhood. I think it is because I lived in the previous neighborhood for a long time. When I lived there, I brought up my children, sending them to schools, suffering from the stress ... I had a sense of fellowship with my neighbors there since we had that hard time together and shared it... Here, I moved into this neighborhood after I finished raising my kids. There are not many things I can talk about with people. [...] The only people I know here are my church members. Sometimes I meet people in the elevator, but just give them a nod. If they are close to my age, maybe I can talk a little more, but mostly they are much older or younger than me. So, I don't have anyone who is really close to me here. Nobody comes to my home and neither do I. (Jung-Sook, 61 years old, owner, three adult children)

As many researchers have claimed (Berkman et al., 2000; Cohen, 2004; Curtis, 2010; Eriksson, 2011), it is obvious that the various forms of social support provided by local social relations contribute to health by buffering the stressful life experiences. It is one of the mechanisms suggested to underlie the beneficial effects of general social relation, along with the main effects, which suggest that social relationships importantly regulate psychological well-

being and many physiological functions (Hostinar & Gunnar, 2013). The findings of the current study also support the obvious mechanism, which explains that people receive beneficial social support by involvement in local social networks.

Beyond the support from intimate neighbors and acquaintances, it seemed that more casual, minor, and less obvious forms of social interactions which took place in the residential place also contributed to participants' well-being. These experiences were reported by just a few participants while the importance of social support from acquaintances was acknowledged by all.

Sometimes, when I took my kids out to the playground in the complex and met people there, we can exchange casual help, like babysitting others' kids for a while when someone should do something. Those kinds of things made me feel good. (Bora, 34 years old, owner, two pre-school age children)

I worked as a volunteer for my apartment complex for a short time. I did it just shortly, though... I worked in the community library for children. I had fun working there. And it made me to have a sense of community.... Because I was able to meet some people who I did not know... I was not intimate with them, but I could say hello and smile to them... (Hae-Yoon, 45 years old, owner, two school-age children)

In the first several years in this neighborhood, I had a positive impression regarding the use of elevator... I do not know if it was all the same in the neighborhood or just the case of my building, but people always smiled and said hello to each other in the elevator. To everyone. I really loved the atmosphere and let my kids say hello to the people as well. I was able to know on which floor who lived... Then, after a few years, the residents started to change. The atmosphere also changed. People have not said hello to each other... the people who have lived in the building for a long time still do it, but the new people do not. So... I have hesitated to say hello to the people. This is because, some people did not kindly respond to me when I said hello to them. It hurt my feeling... Now I say hello only to the people who I really know, or to whom I know that they kindly respond to it. (Han, 47 years old, renter, two adult children)

In the previous neighborhood, there were many small green areas. I was able to sit on benches in the green area and see kids playing and read books... I met lots of people passing by when sitting on the benches. We just said hello to each other and smiled. Here, it is not easy... There are not many places like that. I think those things... interactions with people are important in my life. But I do

not have it now. (Cho-Ah, 36 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

As discussed earlier, these casual social interactions with unknown people mostly arose only in the limited spatial realm (common use spaces at the building level) and in the limited circumstances (being with children). Therefore, in chapter 5, I suggested a possibility that limited encounters and communal activities can contribute to a low sense of belonging to the place. Nevertheless, experiences of these communal activities gave positive emotions to the participants. On the contrary, when they did not experience those minor interactions that they expected, it was reported as disappointing. This disappointment especially seemed to come from a comparison with their previous positive experiences. It is hard to say that these minor social interactions were salient for the participants' health and well-being as these experiences were reported by a few. However, at least, these interactions seemed to contribute to more positive and fulfilling everyday life. According to Curtis (2010), these loose ties among people who share the spaces of the neighborhood are significant, because they contribute to sense of belonging. Cattell & Evans (1999) and Cattell & Herring (2002) also argued that having casual interactions in the neighborhood are important for perception of inclusion.

In the current study, the neighborships which participants experienced were largely incidental, superficial, and temporary. These shallow relations were regarded greatly detrimental for the health of society and individuals by the classical sociologists. Wirth (1938) argued that superficial and transient urban social relations lead people to the state of anomie by having secondary rather than primary contacts and losing intimate relations. Simmel (1905) also suggested that people in highly dense urban environments keep social encounters to a superficial level and maintain impersonal social relations in order to reduce incoming nervous stimulation.

Regarding the impersonal social relations, Durkheim (1897) even noted that the pathological social aspects of modern society, represented as a loosening of non-economic social ties, contribute to the increasing suicide rates.

However, in the modern setting and in this neighborhood, the superficial and transient local social relations seem to be largely taken for granted.⁴⁵ Participants needed and appreciated some level of social support from residential place, especially through a few intimate people, but it is uncertain if stronger or more traditional community-like social cohesion based on neighborhood is needed for their health and well-being. That is to say, participants had mostly shallow relationships with their neighbors and further they had generally low sense of belonging to their everyday living place, but these experiences did not seem to have strong effects on their mental health and well-being. However, this phenomenon must have reflected the social, economic, and cultural context of this specific setting. In other words, the meaning and effects of local social relations would be different from other neighborhoods in different socioeconomic or cultural contexts. For instance, Stafford et al. (2008) showed that social capital had greater effects on mental health in poor neighborhoods. Recently, Korean researchers Kim (2018) and Tak (2016) also found that the beneficial effects of neighborhood-based social capital on mental health were greater for groups with lower socio-economic status.

However, the superficiality of social relationships which primarily centered around participants' children rather than themselves, seemed to be somewhat stressful for them. As neighborhoods or apartment complexes were identified with the school districts, the mothers' local social relations were situated in another social dimension. As explained, these social

⁴⁵ In explaining his finding about social relations in the urban setting, Fischer (1977) noted that the findings do not dismiss the classic theory. According to Fischer, because there would be no more true communities in the modern society, all comparisons become irrelevant to the historical argument. The findings and the discussion in the current study can be understood in the same context.

relations as a school parent (but also as a neighbor in the socio-spatial context of this setting) were frequently described as unwanted, burdensome, and spurious. However, with their gendered role and duty, participants kept these relations. Moreover, these relations seemed to have negative effects on mental well-being, interlinking with the competitive children education and related comparisons. As explained, I found that participants got stressed by making comparisons with their neighbors. By sharing and seeing the details of their neighbors' lives, participants were stressed by experiencing comparative deprivation and feeling the pressure of conformity. Especially in the case of the participants with school-age children, they were likely to be more exposed to observations and comparisons by belonging to the social network of the neighborhood through their children.

In terms of the pressure of conformity in a society or neighborhood, there are explanations about how social relations control people's behaviors. Focusing on the negative consequences of social capital, Portes & Landolt (1996) and Portes (2000) argued that social ties can restrict individual freedoms with demands for conformity and bring about greater control over unruly behavior. It is in the same context with the argument of De Certeau & Mayol (1998) about a norm of neighborhoods which is powerful enough to socially exclude strange behaviors. In the current study, the discourses of the participants reveal that they feel pressure of conformity to the norm of the society. These phenomena were more explicitly experienced and described by a certain group of people, in terms of children's education.

I talked about the private educational institutes a lot with other mothers... I do not let my son take the extra classes since he doesn't like it. But the mothers often said to me you should not do it in that way... There are good things when I meet them, but I feel stressed frequently. It made me think if I am wrong, if I need to let him take more classes... It is a comparison. Actually, I feel really stressed when I meet them. (Kyuri, 42 years old, owner, one school-age child)

...When I meet the mothers who obsess over the education, I feel their anxiety is transmitted and delivered to me... Honestly, I always try not to be anxious with

my children's education. I always do my endeavor. But, after I meet them, I am easily stimulated, and the anxiety gets bigger. They always talk about the things... such as 'why don't you let your children do more academic activities?' 'There is a new private educational institute and it is good.'... After I heard about these things, I feel overstressed... So I try to meet them for minimum amount of time. (Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, two school-age and one pre-school age children)

Competition is too strong. I am worried about my children although I try not to be anxious... I intentionally do not have many meetings with other mothers. The reason is that, when they say exchanging information, in many cases, the information is garbage... And the information easily stimulates the anxiety. [Many people have talked about the anxiety as well.] Yes, I have the anxiety. It is a problem of the society... the education thing. Although I have a job like this (lecturer) by studying hard, but I think this is an age that we cannot succeed by just studying. So... my daughter is really good with her hands, such as making things. I sometimes think she can do whatever she wants like art or design. But sometimes, on the other hand, if she can and she wants, I hope she can be a physician, a doctor. I know she is just 8 years old... but the education fever of the mothers is so high, so sometimes I think like that in this atmosphere. (Jina, 38 years old, renter, one school-age and one pre-school age children)

In their study envisioning a conceptual framework of how social networks impact health, Berkman et al. (2000) indicated that social influence is an important but often ignored pathway through which social networks impact health. According to them, interpersonal influences between the members in social networks extend from the network's norms and values. In other words, as belonging to the same social network, people compare themselves with others and tend to conform to the norms and behaviors which can influence health. To explain the possible social influence on health, they give an example of the health behaviors which people are likely to do as a result of social comparison (such as smoking or dietary patterns). In the current study, the social influence seems to similarly link the social relations and health outcomes. However, I would like to focus on the effect of comparison itself rather than the consequences of changing behaviors.

Even though it is suggested that there are positive functions of social comparison such as obtaining objective information and then getting the motive of self-improvement, there is growing evidence that especially those high in social comparison orientation are affected more negatively by social comparisons (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). Many Korean researchers have conducted research on this issue. Han et al. (2014) explained that social relationships make people evaluate themselves by comparing with others; and through the comparisons, people can put themselves down and feel inferiority. They also examined that people who located themselves lower in class hierarchy than their objective positions had a lower satisfaction with life. Kim & Ohtake (2014) also found that when people made more upward comparisons through their social relations, they had poorer mental health conditions. In a similar vein, Han & Kang (2015) claims that social connectedness between people provides psychological stability, but at the same time, there is a possibility of feeling fatigue by being monitored and monitoring. Although not all of these studies particularly cover the social relations based on neighborhood, they all support the findings of the current study.

6.2 Complexity in Local Social Relations and Mental Health & Well-being

In the current study, I found that associations between local social relations and mental health are inconsistent. It concurs with the claims that the link between neighborhood social relations and mental health is highly variable and complex (Campbell & Gillies, 2001; Eriksson et al., 2009; Campbell, 2011). Findings of the current study also echo the work of Ziersch et al. (2005), which emphasized that social capital based on neighborhood is multifaceted and has complex relationship with health. Based on their mixed method empirical study in Australia, Ziersch and colleagues argued that neighborhood ties do not always contribute to mental health positively and that they may have conflictual characteristics and negative effects on health.

According to Curtis (2010), both quantitative and qualitative studies suggest very complex relationships between place-based social relations and mental health. How social relations and mental health are associated may vary from place to place and from person to person in the same place. As Campbell (2011) emphasizes, “social capital is a crucial thread in the complex tangle of factors that mediate the impacts of social relations on health, but it is only one thread, and its impacts are by no means straightforward.”

Like all the other relations in our life, local social relations can be a joy or a burden (Marshall, 2001). Even though studies on the impact of social relations on health have mainly focused on positive sides by equating social interaction with social support (Han & Kang, 2015), social ties have dual nature entailing costs as well as rewards (Han et al., 2014) as observed in the current study. Moreover, negative social relations may need more attention since they can have more potent effects on well-being than positive relations (Rook, 1984). That is to say, people tend to weight negative information about others more heavily than positive information, because their rareness makes the experience more salient (Hamilton & Zanna, 1972; Rook, 1984). Especially in terms of local social relations, they are likely to be continued even when unwanted since the relations are based on sharing everyday living places (Han & Kang, 2015). In the current study, a social dynamic embedded in the relations made participants maintain their relations. Most of social networks established in the neighborhood were hard to be entirely broken, since they were formed and maintained through their children.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Primary Findings

This study explored how neighborhood contributes to residents' mental health and well-being through their local social relationships. Since the entire network of relations among residential place, social relationships, and mental health is linked in a dynamically complex way, I focused on the role of social relationships to understand the specific structures of the phenomena. Concentrating on the experiences of the apartment residents in Pangyo, Seoul metropolitan area, Korea, I investigated the dynamic between physical and social environment of neighborhood and the relation of this complex to residents' health and well-being. Referring to the research questions of this study, I summarize the main findings as follows.

1. What are the essences of experienced local social relationships of residents in the neighborhood which consists of multi-layered high-rise apartment complexes?

In the dense and large residential setting where no one exactly knew how many people lived nearby and who they were, most people existed as anonymous each other; however, at the same time, participants had relatively strong personal informal network with their acquaintances in the neighborhood. In overall context, individual characteristics of the participants greatly affected the experienced social relations; above all, according to the current life stage which they belonged to, participants differently experienced their local social relations. This is because neighborhood-based relations were highly centered around their children rather than themselves, and because the existence and the age of children decide the stage of life cycle.

The selective relations in the neighborhood were commonly promoted by physical proximity, children and mothering, and the similarity between the residents. Except for a few very close and intimate relationships, the neighborships which participants experienced were

largely incidental, superficial, and temporary. Especially for the participants with adolescent or adult children, relationships with their neighbors became more secondary and incidental as they were not tied to their children and the lives in the neighborhood. In the case of participants with school-age children, as they established their local social relations as a mother of children rather than themselves, the relationships with their neighbors (at the same time school parents) often became superficial. Furthermore, as their current residential place was believed to be temporary, limitation was naturally set up for social relationships with neighbors.

As a distinctive characteristic of the relations, mutual observations and comparisons among neighbors were observed. Especially to the participants who had relatively dense social networks in the neighborhood, observations and comparisons among neighbors easily occurred which made them feel the pressure of conformity to the norm of the society. The social norm about education was at the center of their comparisons and the conforming behaviors. It would be a product of the whole society but was saliently manifested at the neighborhood level where the schools and school-related relations were particularly located. In this vein, the neighborhood might be understood as a place where standardized social value was continuously reproduced and came into action in everyday lives.

Even though participants had diverse personal social networks based on their residential place, they had generally weak sense of belonging to the place, or a larger group of people associated with the place. At the same time, the residential place — apartment complexes — were experienced with other significant values beyond the hyper-localized communal value, such the asset value and strong symbolic image of the place. The focus on the monetary value was also manifested in participants' community activities and social relations in some cases.

2. How do spatial characteristics of such residential settings contribute to the experiences of local social relationships?

In participants' engagement with the social dimension of neighborhood, the spatial settings were involved in mostly pre-reflective and unnoticeable ways. However, especially in forming and developing social connections between neighbors, the spatial structures and characteristics of the apartment complexes explicitly played an important role despite the individual differences. Except for the relations established through local institutions (such as school or church), participants formed their relations with their neighbors by repetitively encountering them in and around the apartment complexes. Nevertheless, the spatial settings of apartment complexes in general did not actively support these place-based encounters because of the highly compartmentalized spatial structures with a short moving line. Thus, the places of possible encounters were generally limited to the common use spaces which participants had to pass through in the course of their everyday lives — such as the elevators, and the entrance areas of the buildings and the underground parking lots. As diverse outdoor and indoor community facilities were not included in the everyday routines of many participants, these places barely provided chances for casual encounters or neighboring activities. These limited encounters and neighboring activities may also provide clues for the participants' generally low sense of belonging to the place. In terms of maintaining the established personal networks between neighbors, diverse shared spaces in and around the apartment complexes provided spaces for interactions. These places included private and public spaces in the neighborhood such as cafes, restaurants, bars, community facilities, and outdoor gathering spots.

Participants' spatial experiences greatly varied according to their life cycle, specifically in terms of their local social relations. For the participants with school-age children, the physical realm of local relations got expanded outside the complex, as their children belonged to the neighborhood school. They also made relatively frequent uses of diverse places in the

neighborhood including several facilities and outdoor gathering spots in and around the complexes. Neighborhood cafes and restaurants were the representative places for gathering with intimate neighbors. In the case of participants with pre-school children, because of the small kids, their living sphere was more limited within the complex, centered around their individual home units. On the contrary, participants with adolescent children belonged to the broadest local social network through their children as their children's schools included larger areas as their school districts. These two groups also used diverse semi-public spaces in the neighborhood for their social gatherings with intimate neighbors. For the participants with adult children, as they were not involved in the neighborhood network through their children, casual encounters in the common use spaces could be almost the only way of establishing social relations with their neighbors unless they belonged to other groups (such as groups for churches or hobbies) in the neighborhood. Therefore, in many cases of the participants with adult children, the neighbors whom they knew were limited to the residents living in the same buildings and using the same elevators. They also experienced the neighborhood places as the least communal as they did not make a great use of diverse public or semi-public spaces in the neighborhood.

3. How do residents' experiences of local social relationships from their everyday living environment contribute to their mental health and well-being?

The local social relations experienced by participants have both positive and negative effects on their mental health and well-being. In other words, local social relationships are multifaceted and have complex relationship with health. Even though local social relations were not the most essential relations to the participants, they found that the existence of neighbors and interactions with them contributed to their mental health and well-being. Participants received emotional social support, which helped them cope with daily stress and keep positive mood, from their intimate neighbors and generally positive relationships with neighbors. They also

received diverse instrumental support from their local social networks thanks to the physical proximity and related immediacy.

Participants had mostly shallow relationships with their neighbors and further they had generally low sense of belonging to their everyday living place, but these experiences did not seem to have strong effects on their mental health and well-being within the socioeconomic context of this neighborhood. However, the superficiality of social relationships which primarily centered around participants' children rather than themselves, was experienced as stressful. These relations seemed to have negative effects on mental well-being, interlinking with the competitive children education and related comparisons. The general social comparisons between neighbors, beyond the education issue, also made participants feel inferiority and stressful.

7.2 Contributions and Implications

This study has significance in providing insights and improved explanations about how neighborhood can be related to individual's health and well-being through a fundamental empirical case study. To delve into this complex topic, this study especially focuses on the experiences of social relationships based on neighborhood as an important psychosocial and stress-related dimension which can contribute to the association between neighborhood and health. In that process, I observed the way the historical, social, cultural, and spatial neighborhood contexts are closely intertwined with the characteristics of local social relations. At the same time, the multifaceted characteristics of local social relationships, which can enhance or threaten residents' mental health and well-being, are also understood.

By dealing with the multifaceted characteristics of local social relations, this study also makes contributions to challenging the generally simplified view about the effects of

neighborhood social networks on health and well-being. As previously mentioned, existing studies have mainly focused on the positive effects of local social relations. There are several studies which have questioned the salutary effects of local social networks (Cattell, 2001; Caughy et al., 2003; Portes & Landolt, 1996), however, these studies focus on poor or problematic neighborhoods and the harmful effects of the social networks formed in those settings. In the current study, which is conducted in a relatively well-off neighborhood, I have found that the social networks between neighbors can have negative effects on mental health and well-being by generating everyday stress in the neighborhood context. Even though the level of experienced stress may not seriously threaten health, this finding is important in indicating that the contextual characteristics of neighborhood/society can be manifested in unhealthy relations.

In addition to the contributions to the broader level of research inquiry, the specifically studied phenomenon — how apartment residents experience their local social relationships — has significance in itself. The local social relationship is important for the health of both individuals and the society, but the characteristics of social relations based on residential place have not been thoroughly discussed in Korean academic discourses (Joung, 2014). As the most common housing type in this country, apartment complexes recently have received attention from researchers; however, these studies have focused on finding general problems and issues of apartments without providing concrete cases of individuals. Moreover, as the concept of ‘apartment community’ has been importantly researched, most of the studies on this issue concentrate on the neighborhood-level formal participation without paying attention to the informal personal social network. However, individual-level informal personal network is also fundamental for healthy neighborhood and community. In this vein, this study has importance in investigating the nature and characteristics of informal and formal social relationships between

apartment neighbors with an intensive case study. Of course, this case does not represent the lives of all apartment residents, which greatly vary according to the specific locations and contexts. Nevertheless, by dealing with a case which is situated within the same broader social context with the common spatial characteristics of apartment housing, this case study to some extent has discerned the shared phenomena of local social relationships which Korean apartment residents experience.

There could be an underlying question about the significance and legitimacy of dealing with social relations and community building among apartment residents, in relation to its exclusive characteristics as a gated community. As presented in the previous chapters, Korean apartment complexes have characteristics of gated communities. Surely, excessive physical and social exclusivity based on residential settings should not be accepted; yet, it should be noted that socio-spatial segregation is a worldwide trend that is hard to be extracted from any specific city or country within a short time. Especially in Korea, where the apartment is the most common residential setting, it is the place of everyday living where necessary social connections are established and maintained. Although there is an issue about whether the apartment communities can be healthy for the holistic society, the importance of social relations and community building among the residents cannot be discounted; rather, we need to better understand the nature of relations and community based on this residential setting and to search for the way inhabitants can co-exist with other members in the society in a more positive way.

This study also contributes to our understanding of the everyday processes in the neighborhood which influence health and well-being of women with children. As indicated by I. Park (2013) and S. Park et al. (2015) in their research about Korean neighborhoods and housing, women with children, especially housewives, are population groups relatively left out of the

picture.⁴⁶ In this study, women's relationships with neighbors are surprisingly centered around their children. This phenomenon brings up significant issues that we need to seriously think about. First of all, in the dimension of individual's health, this children-centeredness seems to bring diverse problems in women's lives. I already discussed the possible oppressive characteristics of neighborhood communities for women in chapter 4. As discussed in this study, many stresses from relationships with neighbors arise from existing only as someone's mothers rather than as themselves; that is an autonomy-related conflict between the role as a mother and oneself. This conflict appears in every aspect of their lives beyond the relationships with neighbors — such as a strong conflict between occupational self-realization and caring for children as a mother — having great influences on their health and well-being.⁴⁷ This result obviously shows that more attention and support for women's social burden with their roles as mothers are required in order to improve their quality of life, health, and well-being. Second, in terms of local community, women with children can be understood as a group which has strong communality with neighbors based on the shared focus on children. Even though their interests can be limited on children's education rather than the whole neighborhood as their social relationships are built through children and schools (Joung, 2014), the strong communality can provide a possibility that they may become more actively involved in community issues. Indeed, there were some participants who engaged in voluntary groups in the neighborhood which are related with play or education of children. In that sense, how to use this strong communality in supporting local communities should be importantly considered.

⁴⁶ I. Park (2013) argues that because scholars and professionals spend less time at home, they may not have regard for the importance and meaning of neighborhood and local community. He also indicates that nevertheless a half of the population including women with children still spend most of time in their neighborhoods.

⁴⁷ The contents about the role conflict in individual's life are not included in this dissertation because it is the beyond the realm of this study. Throughout all the interviews with the participants, stress from the role conflict was consistently found as one of the most important aspects for their mental health and well-being.

This study also has some implications for planning of apartment complex. As stated, the spatial structure and characteristics cannot guarantee good social relationships in the place, but they are certainly significant in providing opportunities for connections between neighbors. Even though relations with neighbors can be experienced in unhealthy ways, it does not mean that we should preclude forming social connections with neighbors. Rather, basic spatial approaches can help people who are relatively isolated form more positive relations with their neighbors. From the findings of this study, shared spaces which can support encounters and gatherings between residents are highlighted as fundamental for establishing or maintaining local social relations. However, as discussed in chapter 5 and summarized above, the spaces which are ‘naturally’ shared with neighbors in the everyday routines are highly limited under the spatial structure of the apartment complexes. Nevertheless, we can think of several spatial strategies which can promote more social interactions among residents. To help the use of shared spaces in and around the complex, first, it is necessary to provide more programs and contents which can attract people to come and stay in the spaces. Studied apartment complexes have a relatively good quality of indoor and outdoor community facilities, but they are not actively used by many people because they do not have good reasons to go there and spend time in their busy everyday lives. Especially in the case of women with adult children, as they are not tied to the territory of their children, more attractions to spend time out of their homes are needed. Running outdoor events such as markets in the public square more frequently or providing more diverse hobby and exercise programs in the community facilities would enhance the use of neighborhood spaces. Second, as important public spaces in the neighborhood, local streets — between apartment complexes or anywhere — should have good commercial facilities such as shops and cafes. As discussed in the findings, cafes and restaurants near the apartment complexes are used

as representative communal places which support casual meetings with neighbors. Shops alongside the streets can also provide opportunities for casual encounters in everyday lives. However, in providing these commercial facilities, we should carefully consider subtle details which can make huge effects. For instance, small shops at the boundary of the apartment complexes are generally regarded as a good spatial feature in terms of possibilities for social interaction among diverse people. However, in the real lives of the participants, due to the limited types of shops and difficult access by car, they were not actively used by many participants. Third, it is important to increase and improve and the semi-private common use spaces which are located in the everyday routines of apartment residents. Even though diverse programs of community facilities and convivial local streets with good facilities can lead to more use of shared spaces, there exist groups of people who only meet their neighbors in the places they must pass through in the course of everyday lives. For those people, these spaces are the only places for forming social connections; nevertheless, even in good quality apartment complexes, these spaces (such as corridors or balconies) are normally minimized in order to increase personal space to the maximum. Increasing and improving semi-private common use spaces is also significant in that these spaces can make people interact with their neighbors as individuals with their own identities, which is different from interacting as a potential neighbor or stranger in the other public spaces.

7.3 Limitations and Future Studies

This study concentrates on the case of apartment residents to identify and interpret the shared essential structures of local social relationships that occurred in that specific residential setting. With this focused study, it is not clear whether the characteristics of experienced social relationships among residents are observed solely in apartment residential settings or whether

they are more general phenomena which can be observed in wider urban residential areas. It might be hard to deny that apartment settings are likely to present certain contextual attributes influencing local social relations, such as the highly commoditized characteristic of housing or high-level of spatial compartmentalization. Consistent results of comparative studies between residents of apartment housing and detached housing support this environmental or contextual difference, by showing that the residents in detached housings had better quality social relations with their neighbors or higher sense of community compared to the apartment residents (Kim & Lee, 1989; Kim & Kim, 1998; Kwon & Choi, 2014; Shim et al., 2014; Song, 2017).

Nevertheless, diverse studies conducted in different types of residential settings will more clearly elaborate the environmental characteristics which are related to residents' social relations with neighbors.

The findings of this study do not cover the experiences of people who are likely to have fewer social relations and to be more isolated in the local area (including men, full-time working women, and other women who are socially withdrawn for any reasons). As a phenomenological study which concentrates on the essence of shared experience — in this case, the present local social relations —, a closely defined group that can provide enough information about the studied phenomenon is necessarily required. Nevertheless, as a tight case study focusing specifically on the group with some levels of local relations, this study is not able to deal with all the dimensions of local social relations experienced in the neighborhood. As Campbell (2011) states, local social relationships have the highly context-specific nature in their constitutions and potential health effects. Thus, there are strong variations between social groups living within particular small neighborhoods. In that sense, conducting studies with diverse groups which have different characteristics in the same neighborhood can contribute to better understanding of local

social relations and their effects on health. In the context of the current study, future research which investigates the experiences of those who hardly have connections in the neighborhood can broaden the understanding of the phenomena including the meaning of the absence of neighbors in modern society.

On the other hand, even though I chose the study site to understand the lives of middle-class in apartment complexes, it is expected that residents of the apartments in poor neighborhoods will have very different experiences in their local social relations. For instance, when women residents have to spend more time on their jobs for a living, the social network among mothers cannot be well established; yet, out of necessity, they may have relatively cohesive relations to support each other. Exploring the characteristics of local relations and their effects on mental health and well-being in different sites and comparing study results with the current study will be another fruitful area for future study. The comparative studies will be possible in various aspects beyond the socio-economic contexts of the neighborhood, such as different spatial configurations or programs to facilitate social interactions.

Last but not least, I explored the relationship between place and health with a focus on social relationships and the following psychosocial effects, due to the high complexity of place — health dynamic. Studies with a focus on various other dimensions which are embedded in the dynamic can provide more details about the mechanisms and improved explanations from different perspectives. Multiple studies conducted in diverse dimensions, both in qualitative and quantitative approaches, will help better answer the question of how place can affect our health and well-being.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

I believe that this study can start a meaningful academic discussion by concentrating on the everyday life experienced in the specific residential environment: the Korean apartment complex. As a unique outcome of Korean modern history (Jun, 2009) and the most powerful symbol of Korean society (I. Park, 2013), apartments are deeply entangled in almost every aspect of the society. It is indeed a special social space which is hard to be explained in a simple way. It is not just an effective means to increase personal assets, nor is it only an ideal space designed in the most efficient way. The apartment itself is a product of surprisingly complex dynamics of diverse entities, which requires deeper understandings and discussions for future directions. In this circumstance, understanding and documenting how people live together with others in that residential setting and how these experiences contribute to their health and well-being would be a small but important step forward to the discussion of this crucial topic.

Generally, South Korea is believed to be an overstressed society represented with the highest suicide rate in the industrialized world for the last decade. Even though this phenomenon lies outside this study's present inquiry, exploration of the everyday lives in apartments provides an opportunity to reaffirm some threads of the texture of the overstressed society. The observed social phenomena in this study — obsession with children's education, strong comparisons with others, and absence of collective community — are all highly identical with the representative concepts which describe the current overstressed Korean society.

In the context of the whole society, this study is on a micro level covering the mundane, routine, and habitual phenomena that we experience on a daily basis. However, what seems to be trivial is not in fact trivial. The patterns of everyday life are manifested as the result of diverse systems and ideologies in the society. At the same time, everyday lives of individuals also

comprise how the society works. We tend to make much account of bigger things that happen to us; however, what really fills up life is our ordinary pre-reflective engagement in the world.

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<Appendix A>

Table 1. Studies of the association between place (housing & neighborhood level) and mental health and well-being in Korea

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Physical and Social environmental features investigated	Health measure used	Key findings
Choi et al., 2012	To prove the relationship between housing environment and mental health	10,608 adults in 7,000 households across the country (Primary data: the 4th Korea Welfare Panel Study in 2009)	Cross-sectional/ Multiple regression analysis	Housing environmental characteristics (type of house and levels of floor), house performance (structure and materials, ventilation and sunlight, noise and smell, safety from disaster), and housing facilities (water system, kitchen, toilet, bathroom, heating system)	CES-D	Householder economic variables significantly were related with housing environment and resident mental health. Housing environmental variables were also significantly related with residents' mental health.
Lee 2012	To examine the effects of living in permanent public apartments on mental health	942 residents of permanent public apartments in three cities of Jeonbuk	Cross-sectional/ OLS regression model	Living in permanent public housing Perception of neighborhood environment, perception of neighborhood socioeconomic status, neighborhood stigma, social connections in neighborhood	CES-D	There was significant depression score difference between permanent public housing and others. Social environmental factors did not mediate the effects of segregation on mental health.
Lim 2013	To examine the effects of living in public apartments on mental health	10,829 adults across the country (Primary data: the 7th Korea Welfare Panel Study in 2012)	Cross-sectional/ Propensity Score Matching	Housing type (public or private)	CES-D	The high level of depression in the residents of public housing might be related with their demographic characteristics or earned income, not with the housing itself.
Han & Jun, 2018	To examine the difference in the level of mental health and determinants of mental health between public and private housing residents	163 Private, 198 national rental, and 69 permanent public apartment residents. (Primary data: the 11th Korea Welfare Panel Study in 2016)	Cross-sectional/ Multiple regression analysis	Housing type (public or private), housing management cost, rent, and house performance (structure and materials, ventilation and sunlight, noise and smell, safety from disaster) Neighborhood level noise and air pollution, satisfaction with neighborhood environment, and satisfaction with social relations	CES-D	People living in public apartments were less mentally healthy than people living in private apartments. Mental health of private apartment residents was more likely to be affected by neighborhood environment while the mental health of permanent public apartment residents was more likely to be affected by housing characteristics.
Kang et al., 2009	To examine how environmental characteristics of apartments affect residents' health	270 apartment residents in S city	Cross-sectional/ Logistic regression analysis	Satisfaction level of relationships with neighbors, apartment complex, apartment unit, apartment management, and surrounding neighborhood environment	Self-perceived health status	The group which showed higher satisfaction with the apartment complex and relationships with neighbors was in lower risk of perceived health status.

Table 1. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Physical and Social environmental features investigated	Health measure used	Key findings
Jung 2012	To find out the difference of life satisfaction and depression between urban and rural elderly in relation to housing environment	503 elderly in Daejeon city and 676 elderly in Chungnam area (Primary data: the 2008 survey on the elderly by Ministry of health and welfare)	Cross-sectional/ Multiple regression analysis	Housing type, housing convenience, and neighborhood safety	15 items to measure depression	Depression between the two groups did not show a statistically significant difference. The depression of urban elderly was significantly related to health status, life attitude, economic level, age, and convenience of housing. The depression of rural elderly significantly related to health status, life attitude, and economic level.
S. Kim et al., 2013	To investigate how social and physical characteristics of housing affect individuals' health	5,566 households across the country (Primary data: the 7th Korea Welfare Panel Study in 2012)	Cross-sectional/ Dichotomous logistic regression	Unit size, facilities, housing structure, and performance level according to the minimum housing standard by the government, tenure type	CES-D	Diverse housing characteristics affected the depression of individuals. The housing tenure type also had direct and indirect effects on the health of individuals.
Lee et al., 2014	To identify the relationship between the physical environment and mental health of the adolescents in urban and rural areas.	154 high school students in Seoul and 219 high school students in Jeonbuk area	Cross-sectional/ Generalized linear model	Housing environment (facility/installation, security/health, amenity, privacy, nature awareness), Neighborhood environment (disorder and public convenience) school environment (Noise, overcrowding, security)	CES-D	The physical environmental factors (including housing, neighborhood, and school) had more effects on adolescents' mental health in urban areas.
Nam et al., 2013	To examine the influence of older people's satisfaction of housing on their quality of life and the depression.	386 elders (more than 60 years of age) who visited four senior clubs in Cheongju	Cross-sectional/ Structural equation modeling	Housing safety and convenience	GDS-K	Housing safety had not any significant influence on older people's self-esteem and depression, while inconvenience had influences on their depression.
Shin et al., 2018	To investigate the effects of housing and neighborhood characteristics on residents' depression by housing type	684 respondents in Seoul (345 apartment residents, 102 detached house residents, and 237 town house residents)	Cross-sectional/ Hierarchical analysis	Housing characteristics: tenure type and duration of residence Neighborhood characteristics: satisfaction in neighborhood, sense of community, trust, number of neighbors who they interact with/help/trust, number of meetings with neighbors	Depression index	Neighborhood characteristics affected residents' depression level. Sense of community and trust were significantly associated with depression level of the apartment residents.

Table 2. Studies of the association between place (neighborhood level) and mental health and well-being in Korea

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Neighborhood definition	Physical and Social environmental features investigated	Health measure used	Key findings
Kim & Ahn, 2011	To discover the relationship between the characteristics of physical environment and physical and mental health of the elderly	381 elderly in districts of Jongro, Guro, Dongjak, Kangseo, and Gwangjin in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ Structural equation modeling	500m radiance buffers around participant's residence	Walkability related features, public transportation related features, elderly service amenities, and religion facilities Social participation level	GDS-K	Physical environment encouraged the social participation of the elderly and consecutively affected the status of their physical and mental health.
D. Kim et al., 2013	To verify the relationship between neighborhood environment and depression of the elderly and mediating role of social connections in this relationship	2,111 elders (more than 60 years of age) in Seoul (Primary data: the 2008 Seoul Welfare Panel Study)	Cross-sectional/ Structural equation modeling	Participant-defined neighborhood	Perceived physical environment (neighborhood characteristics, public transportation, and education environment) and social environment (safety and satisfaction) Social connections: social support and social participation	3 items to measure depression	The neighborhood environment directly affected the depression level of the elderly. The social connection did function as partial mediator on the relationship between neighborhood environment and depression after controlling the individual variables.
Ko et al., 2012	To investigate the relationship between the neighborhood characteristics and geriatric depressive symptoms	1,413 elders (more than 65 years of age) in Seoul (Primary data: the 2010 Seoul Welfare Panel Study)	Cross-sectional/ Generalized linear model	Administrative district unit (Gu)	Park density per resident, district welfare budget for older adults, and district crime rates	Self-rating Depression Scale (SDS)	District welfare budget for older adults was positively associated with the log odds of having severe symptoms of depression. District crime had a significant negative impact while park density had no significant impact.
Sung 2011	To identify the relationship of the built environment at the urban neighborhood level with personal health indicators including depression	976 adults living in 31 administrative districts(dong) in Seoul (Primary data: Korea National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey)	Cross-sectional/ Multilevel regression model	Administrative district unit (Dong)	Population density, land-use diversity, accessibility to public transportation, and accessibility parks	Depression index	Planning tools for built environment at the neighborhood level may have an important role in increasing physical activity but not about depression.

Table 2. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Neighborhood definition	Physical and Social environmental features investigated	Health measure used	Key findings
Yun 2014	To examine the impacts of residents' perception of community social disorganization on depressive mood	677 adults residing in Daegu	Cross-sectional/ regression model	Participant-defined neighborhood	Informal social control and neighborhood disorder	CES-D	The depression model showed that informal social control and disorder are important factors to predict residents' psychological distress.
Kim 2016	To examine the relationship between perceived neighborhood characteristics and self-rated health or depressive symptoms.	2,028 elderly residing in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis	500m radiance buffers around participant's residence	Accessibility to public facilities (walking/jogging environment) Neighborhood social capital	Self-rated health & CES-D	Both physical environment and neighborhood social capital had significant effects on self-rated health and depression.
Moon et al., 2018	To examine the effect of physical environmental characteristics of neighborhood on mental health and well-being	668 adults residing in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ Regression analysis	Participant-defined neighborhood	Perceived neighborhood safety/pleasantness/convenience	KGHQ & MHC-SF	Physical environmental characteristics of neighborhood affected respondents' mental health and well-being.
Park et al., 2017	To examine the effect of neighborhood-level physical environment on residents' depression	82,419 adults residing in Gyeonggi	Cross-sectional/ Multi-level regression analysis	Administrative district unit (Dong)	Population, average height of buildings, standard deviation of buildings height, development density, apartment density, other housing density, neighborhood living facility density, land use mix, public transportation service area ratio	Depression	High-rise buildings and mixed land use with industrial zone can have negative impacts on depression. Neighborhood living facilities and public transportation services can have positive effects on mental health.

Table 2. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Neighborhood definition	Physical and Social environmental features investigated	Health measure used	Key findings
Kim & Kim, 2013	To examine the association between perceived neighborhood social and physical environments and personal health	45,605 adults residing in Seoul (Primary data for health variable: 2011 Seoul Survey)	Cross-sectional/ Linear mixed model analysis	Administrative district unit (Gu)	Objective factors: number of crimes, number of traffic accidents, number of fires, number of flood victims, pedestrian and road system Perceived social and physical environmental stress from neighborhood	Self-rated health	Residing in physically and socially stressful environments was significantly associated with low self-rated health.
Park et al., 2016	To examine how the characteristics of area influence people's health	229,186 adults residing in 253 administrative areas (Primary data: 2011 regional health survey)	Cross-sectional/ Multi-level logistic regression analysis	Administrative district unit (Gu and Gun)	Social capital (trust, reciprocity, group membership, provinces turnout)	Self-rated health	Area deprivation significantly influenced the health while social capital was not significant.
Han, 2013	To examine the association between social capital (at the individual level and administrative level) and self-rated health	5482 adults residing in 25 administrative areas in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ Random intercept logistic regression analysis	Administrative district unit (Gu)	Social capital (perceived helpfulness and organizational participation)	Self-rated health	Individual level social capital was associated with good health while administrative level social capital was not associated with health.

Table 3. Studies of the association between apartments characteristics and local social relations/community in Korea (studies since 2000)

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Apartments features investigated	Social relations features investigated	Key findings
Lee & Shin, 2009	To analyze the sources that affect the sense of community of residents who live in apartment complexes	748 residents of 18 apartments in Gwangju	Cross-sectional/multiple regression analysis	Basic characteristics: number of units, number of buildings, number of floors, size of the areas Environmental characteristics: satisfaction with apartment complexes, comfortability, territoriality, accessibility	Sense of community	Comfortability, accessibility, and residents' satisfaction of the environment of apartment complex, public amenities, and brand of the apartment positively affected individuals' sense of community.
Lee & Shin, 2009b	To explore whether the physical structure of apartment complex influences residents' sense of community	748 residents of 18 apartments in Gwangju	Cross-sectional/Anova & correlation analysis	Physical characteristics: pedestrian system, road system, types of outdoor spaces, building types, layout of buildings, types of unit plans, floors of units, parking type	Sense of community	The pedestrian system, the road system in the apartment complex, the public space system, and the parking type showed a significant relationship with the sense of community.
Lee, 2010	To identify causal relationship among the sources that affect the sense of community of residents who live in apartment complexes	748 residents of 18 apartments in Gwangju	Path analysis	Residents' socioeconomic characteristics, residents' attitude toward community, objective conditions of housing, environmental and psychological characteristics of housing, the interaction among residents.	Sense of community	Density (-), resident' cognition of apartment complex, comfort level of community, attitude of participation, life cycle and number of intimate neighbors significantly affected sense of community.
Chun, 2004	To find whether social heterogeneity in an apartment complex is desirable or not	372 residents of 10 apartments in Seoul and Bundang	Cross-sectional/regression analysis & Anova	The mixture type of homogenous/heterogeneous apartment units (in terms of size)	Social capital (intimacy, participation, sense of community and trust)	The degree of social capital was higher in the similar sized apartment complex, such as small sized unit apartment or large sized unit apartment complex.
Lee et al., 2009	To investigate the social inclusion of public housing residents	32 residents in two adjacent apartment complexes (16 in public housing and 16 in private housing)	Cross-sectional/Qualitative interviews	Permanent public housing or private housing	Social relations and integration	Public rental housing tenants had weaker social ties with their neighbors than private housing tenants.

Table 3. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Apartments features investigated	Social relations features investigated	Key findings
Joung & Choi, 2016	To identify the importance of neighborhood relations, establishing factors of the relations, spatial realm of the relations, and the places for interactions	447 women residents in apartment complexes and detached houses of two neighborhoods in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ multiple regression analysis	Housing types and other housing characteristics, the spatial realm of neighborhood, place for interactions with neighbors	Neighborhood relations	While the effect of housing characteristics on neighborhood relations was highly limited, the demographic factor (family life cycle) greatly affected the relations.
Jang & Park, 2013	To identify the relationships among residents' space use behavior, neighborhood, and sense of community	354 residents in four apartment complexes in Busan	Cross-sectional /Structural equation modeling	Layout of outdoor spaces	Neighborhood and sense of community	When outdoor spaces were located in the center of the complexes and well connected to each apartment building, the residents more frequently and for longer periods used the facilities and had better relations with their neighbors.
Ha & Suh, 2000	To investigate sense of community and attitudes toward community activities of apartment residents	2256 apartment residents in Seoul, Daegu, and Chungju	Cross-sectional/ correlation analysis & T-test	Public or Private housing	Neighborhood & participation in apartment community activities	Most of apartment residents did not actively participate in apartment community activities. Residents of private housing had more positive attitudes toward community activities in apartment complexes.
Im et al., 2003	To explore the restoration of local community based on apartment complexes	1340 residents in 36 apartment complexes across the country	Cross-sectional/ correlation analysis	Apartment community activities and participation	Neighborhood relationship	Participating in community activities of the apartment complexes had a positive impact on improving the social relationships among neighbors.
Kim & Choi, 2012	To identify the effect of physical exclusiveness of apartment complexes on neighborhood relationship	182 residents in 4 apartment complexes in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ ANOVA	Degree of physical exclusiveness of apartment complexes (measured by the physical components such as a barricade at the main entrance and building guard system)	Neighborhood relationship	Residents in apartment complexes with a higher degree of physical exclusiveness had relatively better relationships with the neighbors of the same complex.

Table 3. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Apartments features investigated	Social relations features investigated	Key findings
Park & Lee, 2012	To identify the effect of central courtyard on social relations and sense of community	109 apartment residents in Eunpyeong new town	Cross sectional/ regression analysis	Presence of the central courtyard	Social activities and sense of community	More diverse social activities and more frequent social gatherings were observed in the apartments with a central courtyard. More social interactions led to a higher sense of community.
Choi & Kong, 2007	To analyze the effects of design factors and other housing characteristics on sense of community	466 residents in 45 apartment complexes in Busan	Cross sectional/ regression analysis	Design factors of apartment complex (layout of buildings, pedestrian system, and road system) and basic physical characteristics (the building-to-land ratio and floor area ratio) Housing characteristic (unit size, duration of residence, tenure type)	Sense of community (community attachment, community identity, and social interaction)	Layout of buildings, green open spaces, apartment brands were significantly associated with sense of community of the residents. Tenure type was associated with community attachment while duration of residence was not associated with any factors of sense of community.
Kim et al., 2005	To analyze the effect of layout of community facilities on sense of community	461 residents in 6 apartment complexes in Daegu	Cross-sectional/ correlation analysis	Layout of community facilities (commercial shops, play grounds, and resting areas)	The level of social interaction and sense of community	When commercial facilities were located near the main entrance of the complex, the residents had chances for more encounters and interactions.
Kim et al., 2015	To examine the use of common use spaces as a place of interactions and its effect on social relations	79 low-rise multi-dwelling residents and 119 apartment residents in Ilsan	Cross-sectional/ regression analysis & T-test	High-rise or low-rise housing Common use spaces	Social interactions with neighbors and satisfaction with it	High-rise apartment residents had the narrower range of neighbors and felt less satisfaction from their interactions with neighbors compared to the residents living in low-rise multi-family housing.
Kim & Nam, 2005	To examine the effect of layout characteristics of public/private housing on residents' social relationships	125 residents in three public apartments in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ ANOVA	Layout of public and private apartment complexes	Neighborhood relationships	Residents had better social relations with their neighbors when public and private apartment buildings were located in each separated complex rather than mixed in the same complex.

Table 3. continued

Authors and year	Research objective	Study sample	Study design /Analytic framework	Apartments features investigated	Social relations features investigated	Key findings
Park et al., 2015	To investigate how residents' satisfaction with community facilities are related with their sense of community	560 apartment residents in Sejong c	Cross-sectional/ ANOVA & multiple regression analysis	Satisfaction with community facilities (green open spaces and community centers) and other environmental factors (pedestrian system, transportations, education and social welfare facilities)	Sense of community	When residents made more use of the green spaces or the diverse community facilities, they had a higher sense of community and better social relations.
Kang et al., 2009	To examine the effect of the location of central squares in apartment complexes on residents' sense of community	240 residents in four apartment complexes in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ ANOVA & correlation analysis	Open or close-structure of central square (in terms of its accessibility)	Sense of community	Central squares in the apartment complexes were located so as to be more open to the residents, the residents had a higher sense of community.
Jung et al., 2015	To explore how physical environmental characteristics of apartment complexes can affect residents' sense of community	212 apartment residents of two different neighborhoods in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ regression analysis	Pedestrian-oriented or auto-oriented environments	Sense of community	Residents with pedestrian-oriented environments had better sense of community than the residents with auto-oriented environments.
Ha, 2010	To compare the differences in social capital according to housing tenure systems of apartment residents	230 residents in the four apartments complexes in Seoul	Cross-sectional/ Interview and comparison analysis	Housing tenure (homeowner, private rental, 50-year public rental, and 5-year public rental)	Social capital (social trust, norms, and networks)	Social capital varied according to housing tenure types —owners had better neighborly relations. A longer residential period was also significantly associated with good social relations in some studies
Seo & Chiu, 2014	To examine the effect of the physical environment and use of the environments on the social cohesiveness of residents in permanent public rental housing	351 residents in four disadvantaged housing estates	Cross-sectional/ ANOVA and regression analysis	Physical environments (amenity facilities, accessibility by transport, spatial integration of apartment complex with neighborhood)	Social cohesiveness	Physical environments and their use were significantly associated with the social cohesiveness. When the residents made less frequent use of outdoor spaces and community facilities, they had much lower level of social networking with their neighbors compared to the residents in other similar public housing.

<Appendix B> List of Semi-structured Interview Questions

Social relationships/support in the neighborhood

- When did you move in this new town? What was the main reason of move-in?
- What is it like to live in/around here?
- How do you feel about your current social relationships (not limited to residential environment) in your everyday life? Do you think you have warm and trusting relationships with others?
- Do you feel that you belong to the apartment complex/neighborhood? (if not many social relations) Do you feel sense of belonging here, nevertheless?
- Can you place important people in your life in this closeness circle?
- Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help or are tense?
- Of your important social relations, how many are based on your residential environment? Where they live in the neighborhood?
- How did you start to meet and interact with your neighbors after moving in this new town? (From any kind of institutions or community groups?)
- In addition to the relationships from institutions or community groups, have you met your neighbors from casual/incidental interactions in your residential environment? If yes, how did it work? Where?
- What other contextual aspects contribute to forming and maintaining your social relationships in the neighborhood – distance, SES, lifecycle, others?
- How are your local social networks in terms of different environmental scales (building-complex-neighborhood)?
- How often/where/for what/do you meet your (close) neighbors?
- Do you think there are cases that you don't get help when needed in this residential setting?

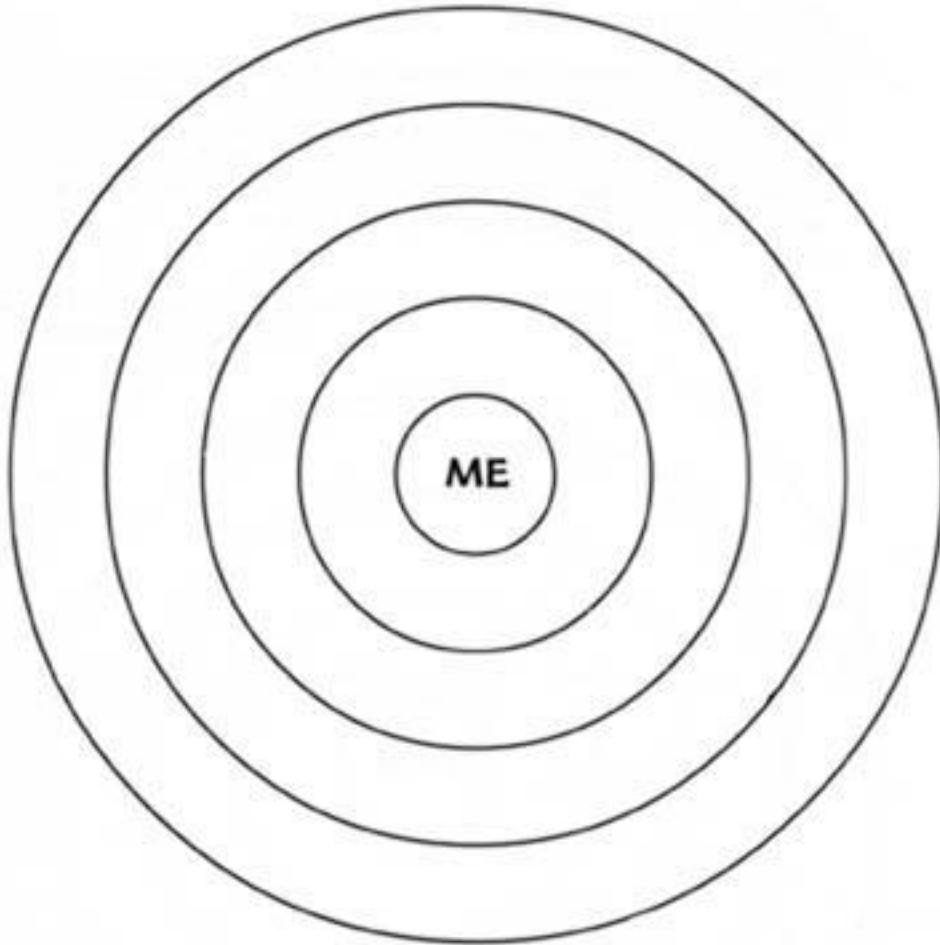
Connections to mental health and well-being

- How would you rate your life overall these days? How satisfied you are with your life?
- (Over the past 2 weeks) Have you recently felt down or depressed? How often?
- Have you recently felt little interest or pleasure in doing things? How often?
- Tell me about your overall happiness and quality of life now. What contributes to your happiness and what impairs it?

- Compared to the past before moving in here, have your general quality of life and satisfaction changed? How?
- Is living in this residential setting important to you? Does it make you feel good and happy or not? What aspects of this residential environment affect you to feel in that way?
- Have you felt stress with your residential environment? If any, why?
- How much of your happiness depends on your social relationships/support you have here?
- Which kinds of networks are most effective in generating and sustaining social support and benefiting health and well-being, quality of life?
- Who are the people mostly affect your happiness?

<Appendix C> Closeness Circle

This tool provides a visual diagram of the participants' social relationships. Research participants are asked to place important people in their life in the closeness circle during the interview. By this way, participants can give a picture of the closeness they feel with their families/friends/neighbors.



<Appendix D> Information Statement

Information Statement

I am a doctoral student at University of Washington, in the U.S. I am asking you to be in my doctoral dissertation study. The purpose of this statement is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read this statement carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the study, study procedures, your right as a volunteer, and anything else about the research that is not clear to you.

Research Objectives:

I intend to research how lived experiences in high-rise high-density urban residential environments related to residents' mental well-being and quality of life with a focus on the role of social relationships with neighbors. I want to try to make sense of how people have experienced their social relations/support in the highly urban residential settings, and how their experiences of social relationships have contributed to their well-being. To effectively investigate the research topic, I will conduct a study in Pangyo, a newly planned town, where people have recently formed their local social relations in their current residential environments. To understand the residents' experiences of social relationships and well-being, I will collect residents' oral histories about it.

Study Procedures:

As a resident of Pangyo, you have been identified to participate in my study in order to provide oral history on your lived experience in this new town. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to comment on your social relationships and how it has affected your well-being and quality of life. I will also ask you questions about your thoughts and experiences about your residential environment/neighborhood.

The interview can be conducted any places in the neighborhood where you prefer. Please note that there is a possibility that we may encounter people you know during this process. The interview will last no more than 90 minutes. With your permission, I would like to audio-record your interviews so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation.

Descriptions and Confidentiality of the Study:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no general risks or benefits for choosing to be a part of this study. You may refuse to participate at any time during the study. You may skip any questions that may make you uncomfortable or cause you harm, with no

penalty. You may also ask me questions during the interview or at any other time during the research process.

I will be protecting your confidentiality at all times in order to minimize any risks to which you might be vulnerable. All interview recordings and notes will be kept confidential, and they will not be public at any time during or after the research. In my dissertation and my field notes, I will be giving all of my participants pseudonyms. I will keep the link between your name and the pseudonym in a separate, secured location. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information. The data collected in this study will be included in my dissertation at University of Washington, and I have no affiliation with any other authority or institution.

The researcher conducting this research is Naeun Gu. Please ask me any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you can contact me at:

Email: naeungu@uw.edu

<http://be.washington.edu/phd/student-profiles/#gu>

You may contact my academic advisor, Prof. Robert Mugerauer, at drbobm@uw.edu.

<Appendix E> A Sample of Original Interview Transcript (in Korean)

Young-Ju, 42 years old, renter, with two school-age and one pre-school age children

여기 사시는 게 전반적으로 어떠세요? 여기 온 게, 아이들 입장에서, 교육적인 면 그 목적이 컸으니까요. 그 측면에서는 만족할 만한 좋은 동네, 학교 같아요. 한국 공교육에서 이만하면 꽤 만족할만한... 어느 정도는 자유롭고, 선생님들이 굉장히 의욕이 많으세요. 그 의욕은 공부를 잘 시키겠다하는 측면의 의욕이라기보다는, 좋은 선생님이라고 해야 하나. 인격적인 것도 그렇고 가르치는 것도 한국이 사실 주입식 교육을 많이 하는데 여기서는 주입식 교육을 안 하고 애들을 좀 더 참여시키는 방향으로 하려고 노력하시는 분들이 많이 있고, 그게 어느 정도는 지금 자리를 많이 잡은 것 같아요. 가르치는 내용 면이나 아이들이 경험하고 오는 면에서...만족하고 있어요. **중국에서 살다 오신 건데, 그 전엔 어디에 사셨죠?** 일산에 살았는데, 그 때는 애들이 학교 가기 전이라 지금이랑 객관적으로 비교는 안돼요. 제가 학교 다닐 때랑은 완전히 달라졌으니까 그건 비교가 안되고, 다른 학교 보내는 엄마들 이야기 들어보면 이런 점이 정말 괜찮다 싶은... 우리나라는 촌지 문제도 많은데 그런 문제도 깨끗하니까. 커피 한 잔 안 받고. 선생님들이 다른 학교에서는 부모님 직업이나 사회적 지위에도 관심을 갖는 것 같은데 여기서는 전혀 물어보지 않으니까 선생님이 알 수가 없고, 그런 면에서 좀 자연스럽게 아이들에게 공평하게 대하는 면이 있는 거 같아요. 그걸 굳이 알려고 하지 않으니까. **그때는 직장생활을 하셨는지?** 했어요, 하다가 막내 낳고 임신 휴직하고 중국 갔다가 거기서 애기 낳고, 복직해야 할 시점에 사직서를 낸 거예요. **그러면 아무래도 지금은 아이들에게 포커스가 많이 가 있으실 텐데... 그럼 여기에 살면서 어머니의 삶이 전반적으로 만족스러우세요?** 그렇진 않아요. **어떤 부분이 아쉬우세요?** 어떤 게 아쉽냐구요. 그건 모르겠어요. 내가 다른 지역에 가면 더 나은 삶을 살 수 있었을지 비교가 안되니까. 사실 비교라는 건 내가 같은 나이에 같은 상황에서 다른 곳에 살아본 경험이 있었어야 했는데.. 저는 그 전엔 직장에 다니면서 다른 지역에 살았었던 말이에요. 그러니까 거기에서의 삶과 직장을 안 다니는 상태에서 순전히 아이엄마의 역할을 하면서의 여기서의 삶이... 역할 자체가 너무 달라졌단 말이에요. 그런 면에서 지역적으로 비교하는 건, 내가 그 전에 직장 일을 하지 않고 그 지역에 살았다라면, 삶 자체가 비슷한 패턴일 테니 비교가 될텐데 지금은 비교 자체가.... 거의 불가능하죠. 여기서 나 개인으로서의 삶이 그렇게 만족스럽지는 않다고 느끼는 건... 아마 제 역할이 바뀌어서 그런 것일 수도 있을 것 같아요. 그런 점에서 관계들도 아쉽구요. **어떤 점이 아쉬우신 거예요?** 여기서는 알게 된 사람들이 아이와 관련된 사람들만을 알죠. 아이 엄마라든가. 음... 그래서 뭐가 아쉽냐면 일단 우리는 아이의 서포터 역할을 하는 사람들이잖아요. 근데 한국에서 아이들이 해야 되는 거는..한국은 교육열이 높고 애들을 좋은 학교에 보내고 싶어하잖아요. 근데 모두가 좋은 학교에 갈 수는 없는 상황이지 않아요. 정말 소수만이 가는데. 근데 모두가 그걸 원한단 말이에요. 그러다 보니까 당연히 경쟁자가 될 수 밖에 없는 거죠 서로서로가. 그래서 경쟁자들이 있는데... 굳이 인식을 하지 않아도 무의식 안에 그게 있는 것 같아요. 그래서 경쟁자의 부모와의 관계가, 정말, 상대방이 잘 되기를 바라고 진심으로 후원해주고 걱정해줄 수 있는 그런 관계는 아닌 거 같아요. 한계가 있을 수 밖에 없는 거 같아요. 아무리 친하려고 잘 하려고 노력을 해도, 목적이 거기에 (자녀 교육) 있는 한은 엄연히 한계가 있죠. 내 역할은 자녀 교육을

하는 거고, 다른 사람들도 대부분 그런 생각을 갖고 있는데, 그러다 보니 관계가 경쟁자라는... 그런 한계. 무의식 안에 있는 거 같아요. 그런 면에서 편안하고... 뭐랄까 공동체라고 해야 할까요? 공동체죠. 그런 마을 공동체의 역할을 하기에는 약간의 한계가 있는 게... 제가 여기서 종교생활을 한다거나 취미생활을 한다면 다른 성격을 가질 거 같아요. 근데 그러지 않고, 가끔 대하는 사람들이 친구 엄마들... 그러면은 그런 한계는 있는 거 같아요.. 여기서 4년 가까이 사셨는데 소속감 같은 것은? 전혀 없어요. 내가 없어진다고 해서 뭐... 여기는 너무 많은 사람들이 왔다갔다 하는 곳이에요. 여기는. 대부분 리터니들이 많이 오죠. 국제 학교 다니다가 좀 더 혁신적이고 주입식 교육을 시키지 않기 원하는 엄마들이 많이 오고. 또 있던 엄마들도 수없이 외국으로 애들을 잠깐씩 데리고 나가고. 영어를 잘하고 싶어서. 그렇게 왔다갔다 하는게... 뭐 반 안에서 한 달에도 몇 명씩 전학을 왔다갔다 하는 상황에서 소속감을 느끼긴 힘들죠.

[Working on Closeness Circle] 상당수가 동네 사람들 (대부분 세 번째 원, 소수 두 번째 원)

아까 얘기해주셨을 때 교육문제 때문에 완전히 친밀하긴 어렵다라고 얘기해주셨잖아요...그 분들이 이 분들인가요? 그런 엄마들은 사실 이 가장 밖에 있는 분들이고. 그런 와중에도 나랑 생각이 비슷하고 그런 분들은 이 두 번째 원에 개별적으로 몇 명 들어온 소수의 엄마들인거죠. 이 분들은 그런 마음으로 만나지는 않고. 사실 이 분(바깥쪽)들도 더 가까워질 기회가 있었으면 그러지 않을 수도 있는데, 누구의 엄마, 누구의 엄마 이렇게 만나는 거는 '나'를 보여주는 건 아니잖아요. 뭐랄까. 솔직한 모습을 보여주는 게 어려워요. 어느 정도는 좀 적당히 차리고 보여주는 모습들에서는 좀 가깝기가 힘들거든요. 솔직해져야 더 가까워질 수 있는 거잖아요. 나이에 체면도 있고 하니까... 이 밖에서... 서로들, 이 사람도 마찬가지로 저도 마찬가지고, 이 밖에서 맘들 수 밖에 없는 한계가 있죠. **그럼 가까운 분들하고는 어떻게 만나셨는지?** 처음에는 그냥 반 친구 엄마로 만났죠. 만나서 얘기를 해보면 교육관 같은 얘기가 나오잖아요. 그런데 딱 보면, 공부를 너무 많이 시킨다 하면 이렇게 좀... 어우... 그렇게 되고. 그냥 (마음에) 여유가 있네 하면 좀... 그런데 사실 여기에서 여유를 가지고 있다는 것은 열심히 살지 않는다는 거거든요. 열심히 살면 아무래도 여유가 없고, 시간을 다투어서 하는 것도 많고, 성과가 나오고. 엄마 입장에서 애를... 사실 초등학교가 자기가 알아서 열심히 할 나이는 아니란 말예요. 초등학교들은 엄마가 열심히 시켜주면 엄마 말을 잘 듣는 경우에 나가서 열심히 하고 오는. 애가 활동하는 걸 보면 엄마의 교육관이 엇보이거든요 어느 정도는. 그런데 여유가 없고, 좀 나름 목표를 가지고 열심히 달리는 친구들은. 사실 접근하기가 쉽지 않고 시간도 별로 없고. 그런데 이 원(안쪽)에 들어 있는 엄마들은 따로 만나는 엄마들이예요. 딸들 엄마들이예요. 우리 아들과 노는 아이들은 아니예요. **(그럼 어떻게?)** 나도 여기 있으면 외롭잖아요. 누구와 얘기도 하고 싶고 말이 통하는 사람과 만나고 싶고 수다도 떨고 싶고. 애 키우면서 받는 스트레스, 남편 험담, 그런 솔직한 얘기를 하고 싶은 사람을 찾는 거죠. 자연스럽게. 나름의 탐색을 하다가 자연스럽게 그런 거 같아요. 그런 사람도 서로 서로 탐색을 한다고 해야 하나요. 그런 와중에 차 한 잔 마시고 한 번 얘기를 나눠봤는데 한 시간이 참 금방 갔다, 집에 왔는데 다음에 한 번 더 보고 싶다, 하는 사람이면 애랑 상관없이 따로 더 친하게 되는 거죠. 그렇게 해서 엮어진 몇몇 사람들이 이 원 안에 들어 있는 거고 이 밖의 엄마들은 공식적인 모임이나 이런 거에 가서 밖에서 만나면

그냥 잘 지내셨어요 하고 인사하는 정도의. **이 분들 외에는 동네에서 알고 지내고 그런 분들이 거의 없으신 거예요?** 음.... 없는 거 같아요. 제가 여기 하부르타 동료들이라 적었는데, 제가 이걸 강남역에서 배우거든요. 여기에는 서울 전역에서 와요. 그러니까 여기랑은 상관이 없고... 사실 여기 가게 된 것도 가치관이라고 해야 하나요. 가치관이 다양한 사람들이 세상에 살고 있잖아요. 그런데 비슷한 가치관을 갖고 있는 사람들을 만나고 싶다는 생각이 든단 말예요. 그래서 이제 찾게 되는... 찾아 가서 이제... 다 처음 보는 사람들. 동아리 비슷한 거예요. 찾게 되어서 만나서, 이제 일주일에 한 번 만나서 수업 듣고 오는데, 그렇게 만나게 된 사람들. 하지만 자주 만나지도 않고, 가끔 보지만 그런데도 이 범주 안에 들어 있는 거예요 (두번째 원 가리키며). 왜냐면, 가치관이 비슷하다는 그런 동질감. 여기는 사실 그런 동질감은 없거든요 (세번째 원의 학부모들 가리키며). 그냥 내 아이와 같은 나이라는 거랑, 같은 지역에 산다는 그 정도고. 여기는 가치관이 어느 정도 비슷하다는 것 (하부르타 동료들). **하부르타가 어떤 건가요?** 하하. 유대인이 탈무드 가지고 토론을 배우죠. 탈무드를 배운단 말이에요. 그 탈무드를 배우는 방법이에요. 질문하고 대답하고 질문하고 대답하고. 그러는 과정에서 진리를 깨우쳐가는 뭐 그런 모임이에요. 그거 배울 때는 제가 막 반짝반짝. (웃음) **그럼 이게 취미...? 취미죠. 그럼 이거 외에 운동이나 그런 것도 하세요?** 여기 교회에서 화요일 목요일 아침에 요가 해요. **그럼 그 요가에서는 인사하거나 지내시는 분은 없으세요?** 네 없어요. 그러면은... **이 동네 안에서는 아이들 학교나 유치원 외에는 다른 어떤 모임이나 기관을 통해 아는 이웃은 거의 없다고 보시면 되겠네요?** 네. **그럼 동네에서 엘리베이터에서 알고 지내는 분들은?** 옆집 밖에 없어요. 근데 또 그런 것도 있는 거 같아요. 세입자와 집주인과는 약간 다른 거 같아요. 집주인은 이게 내 집이고 오래 살 거고, 세입자는 또 2년마다 움직여야 하니까... 그리고 옆집과는 친해지기 쉬운데 아랫집과는 친해지기 어렵습니다. 층간소음 때문에...저도 모르겠어요. 내가 둔한 건지... 저는 윗 집에서 런닝머신을 뛰어도 안 불편하거든요. 전에 집에서 살 때 위에서 런닝머신도 뛰고 피아노도 많이 쳤는데 그냥 그런가 보다 했지 짜증이 나거나 불편하지 않았어요. 근데 우리 밑에 집은... 우리 집은 애도 많고 하니까. 그런데 공교롭게도 나처럼 애 키우는 사람이 살면 함께 시끄러우니까, 또 저녁 되면 피곤하니까 시끄럽기도 전에 잠들어 버리니까. 근데 그렇지 않은 사람들은 힘들 수도 있을 것 같아요. 그건 체감이 다르기 때문에... 왜 시끄럽다 그러지? 물론 이해는 안 가지만... 통종도 사람마다 느끼는 게 다르다고 하더라구요. 어떤 사람은 이렇게 하면 별로 안 아픈데.. 몸에 병이 있는 사람은 바람만 스쳐도 아프다고 하는 사람도 있다고 하더라구요. 그냥 그렇게 이해하려고 노력을 하죠. 통종도 사람마다 다르니까 소리도 사람마다 다르게 들리는 구나.. 그렇게 그냥 이해하려고 노력은 하는데.. 그래도 갈등이 있죠. 자꾸 전화하고 하니까. 피아노 치지 말라고 하니까. 그래서 옆집이랑은 괜찮은데 아랫집이랑은 불편하더라구요. 엘리베이터에서 만나면 좀 민망하죠. 죄인의 입장에서 만나야 하니까.

그러면... 아무래도 어머니시기 때문에 학교라는 그런 맥락적인 게 이웃관계를 형성하는데 영향을 미치고, 또 자가소유가 아니시기 때문에 그런 부분에서 아무래도 더 막 친해져야겠다 그런 마음이 없다는 얘기도 해주셨고... 네. 그리고 또 그런 거는 반상친가. 요새는 입주자 모임이라고 하나요? 그런 거에 자가인 사람들은 많이 나가잖아요. 일단 내 재산권에 관련된 얘기들을 더 관심 있게 듣잖아요. 그런데 자가가 아닌 사람들은 내 집이 아닌데 굳이... 입주자 회의에 참여하지 않으니까 마을 사람들과의

결속력이 좀 적은 것 같아요. 어떤 동네 살고 어떤 단지에 살고 그런게 이웃관계에는 영향을 안 미치나요? 전혀요. 다 아이들을 통한 관계니까요. 그럼 이분들을 얼마나 자주 만나세요? 아까 바깥 쪽에 있는 엄마들은... 한 한 달에 한번? 큰 애 받은 빼고. 5학년이 되니까 모임이 잘 없어요. 근데 나머지 애들은 한 한 달에 한 번 정도. (그럼 카톡 같은 걸로 연락을 하셔서?) 네 반톡이 있어요. 그게 있어서... 그 반톡에서 정기 모임을 가지고 한 달에 한 번 정도. 좀 더 친한 사람들은 그래도 일주일에 한 번 정도. (그럼 보통 어디에서 많이 만나세요?) 근처 카페, 식당. 더 멀리 벗어나지는 않고.

(택배 와서 잠시 가지러 갔다 오심)

그러면 여기 지내시면서 약간 외롭다거나, 내가 좀 마음적으로 얘기하기 힘들다 그런 느낌 받으신 적 있으세요? 처음에 와서 아는 사람 하나도 없고 그랬을 때는 정말 누구라도 얘기도 하고 싶고 그랬는데... 그 정도는 금새 해결이 됐어요. 오히려 뭐랄까요. 공해가 느껴질 때가 있어요. 그게 뭐냐면... 공부에 대해 지나친 스트레스를 느끼고 있는, 그런...강박을 느끼고 있는 엄마들을 계속 만나면 그 불안이 저에게 전염되는 것 같아서. 사실 나도 아이를 키우면서 불안을 안 느끼려고 노력하고, 불안을 느껴봐야 큰 도움도 안 되는 것 같고 해서. 나름 그 노력을 해야 하는데. 그런 자극을 계속 받고 오면 불안감이 더 커져서. 그런 자극을 안 받고 싶을 때가 많아요. 그런데 포커스를 두고 있는 사람은 늘 그런 얘기를 하니까... 뭘 안 시켜서 어떡할 거야. 무슨 학원이 좋다는데. 뭐 이런 얘기.. 우리 애는 얼마나 잘 하고 있는지 그런 얘기들을 듣고 오면... 자꾸 불안감이 생기고 그게 나한테 스트레스가 되니까. 오히려 그런 자극을 안 받고 싶다는 생각이 들 때는 있지만, 어디 가서 그런 걸 물어보고 싶다가나.... 그런 건... 전혀 아니에요. 아까 말했던 가치관을 함께 하는 사람들 얘기는 그 한 시간을 하고 나면 즐겁고, 나에게 에너지를 주고, 그런 즐거운, 기쁜 마음이 느껴지는데. 에너지를 받아오거든요. 근데 그렇지 않은 대부분의 이 바깥 테두리의 엄마들과의 만남에서는 그런 얘기는 전혀 오가지 않는단 말이에요. 그러면 가서 어쨌든 팽배해있는 그 불안감을 굳이 전염을...받아서 오고 싶지도 않고. 그런데도 받아서 올 수 밖에 없는 최소한의 활동은 그래도 또 해야 하니까, 그럴 때 마다 안 그러고 싶다는 생각을 하는데. 가서 더 알아와야지 더 얘기해야지 그런 생각은 안 하는 거 같아요. **여기 직장생활을 하는 엄마들이 많진 않으세요?** 많지 않아요. 전업 주부들이 훨씬 많아요. 직장 엄마들이 소수죠.

최근 삶에 대해 어느 정도 만족하시는 것 같으세요? (웃음) 요즘에 그런 생각을 했었어요. 얼마 전에 사실은. 어디서 설문 조사한 거를 봤는데 당신 지금 행복합니까 그런 질문을 했다는 거예요. 내가 그런 질문을, 아님 누군가가 그런 질문을 받으면 그게 얼마나 주관적인 대답일까를 생각해 봤어요. 대부분의 사람들은 그런 질문을 받으면 내면 깊숙이에 들어가서 대답을.... 자기 내면 깊숙이에 들어갈 수조차 없는 사람들이 훨씬 많을 거 같아요. '나는 남편 있지, 자식도 있지, 아파트 내 아파트지, 차도 있지, 먹고 살기 괜찮지, 이만하면 행복한 거 아닌가? 네 저 행복해요'. 이렇게 생각하는 사람들이 훨씬 더 많을 거 같아요. 그러니까 본인이 본인의 행복을 측정을 어찌면 못 하는 사람들도 있을 거 같아요. 그래서 그렇게 조사한 행복이 정확하게 조사가 됐는지조차 나는 의심스럽다는 생각이 드는 게... 저 사람은 항상 불안해하고 걱정하고 해서 전혀 안 행복해 보이는 사람이... 나는 교육을 많이 받았고, 남편의 직업도 이 정도는

되고, 아이들은 공부를 잘 하고 있고 하니까... 나는 행복해 라고 얘기하고 그렇지 못한 사람을 불행하다고 안쓰럽게 생각하는 사람들도 있단 말이에요. 사실은 그건 알 수 없는 건데... 많은 사람들의 가치관이 이걸 가지면 행복한 거야, 라고 생각을 하는 거 같아요. 아이한테도 니가 이걸 가져야지 행복하니까 이걸 가지기 위해 노력하자고 얘기하고, 본인 또한 그거에 대한 확신을 가지고 있고, 그렇게 사는 사람들이 굉장히 많은 거 같아요... 내 삶에 만족을 합니까 라고 물었을 때 나는 솔직히 얘기해서 네 만족합니다 라고 말을 못하겠어요. 왜냐면 겉으로 보기에는 행복할 수 있는 조건을 다 가지고 있어요. 다 가지고 있는데, 내가 걱정 없이 불안 없이 하루를 아주 기쁘고 충만하게 그렇게 살아가고 있냐고 하면 저는 그건 아니거든요. 불안도 느껴지고 아이들도 걱정되고, 다른 아이들은 학원을 몇 개 다니는데 우리는 이렇게 열심히 안 해서 어쩌나... 그리고 또 애가 팽팽 노는 걸 보면 애가 놀 때 너무나 즐겁고 행복해가 아니라 아이고 저렇게 놀아서 어떡해 이런 생각이 들거든요. 그러니까 현실에 충실하게 살지 않아요. 현실에 충실하게 살 수가 없어요. 불안해서. 그런데, 내가 어렸을 때를 생각해보면 정말 현실에 충실하게 살았어요. 내일 생각은 숙제 달랑 하나, 뭐 안 해가면 못하는 거고. 그리고 하루종일 아침부터 밤까지 놀고 완전 놀이에 몰입해서 살았거든요. 그런데 요즘 애들 그렇게 놀이에 몰입할 수 있는 시간도 없고, 엄마의 간섭 없이 그렇게 놀이에 몰입할 수 있는 애들 없잖아요. 나는 어른이 되고 나서의 나의 삶은 행복했는지 모르겠지만, 적어도 초등학교 때까지 나의 삶은, 완벽히 행복했던 거 같거든요. 하루종일 놀 생각 밖에 안하고. 밥 먹을 때 되면 엄마가 찾으러 오면 가서 밥 먹고 또 나가서 다시 놀고 그랬으니까. 요새 아이들한테 물어 보면요. 내가 보기엔 그 아이들 불쌍한데, 그 아이들 자기가 불쌍하다고 생각 안 해요. 그 아이들도, 그 가치관이라는 건 누구나 다 온전히 내 자신을 나만 객관적으로 보는 사람은 없어요. 그냥 사회 안에서의 나를 조망해요. 나의 행복을 볼 때. 그러면 나 이렇게 학원 다니고 우리 엄마 아빠 직업이 뭐고, 개들도 그 생각해요. 이만하면 공부 좀 하는 편이고, 이만하면 반에서 인정받는 편이고. 나 이 정도면 행복한 거 아닌가? 저 행복한 사람이에요 이렇게 얘기하는 거예요 학원은 수십개 다니고 있으면서. 숙제할 때 하기도 싫고 더 놀고 싶은데 참고 앉아서 하지만... 개들도 똑같은 생각을 하더라구요. 개들도 사회적인 불안감을 똑같이 느끼는 거예요. 그런 불안감이 해소되었을 때... 그런 안정적인 상태에 대해서 행복감을 느끼더라구요. 애들도 마찬가지로. 그러니까 남들처럼 하지 않으면 다 불안감을 느껴요. 내가 하고 있는 게 좀 독특한 일일때, 이게 남들하고 좀 다른 거 같다, 그러면 애들도 그 안에서... 대부분의 사람들이, 아이조차, 요즘은 그래요. 학원을 정말 많이 다니는데... 너 힘들지 않니? 물어보면 아니요 전 좋은데요 이라고. (웃음)

한국에서는 보여지는 게 중요하니 사람들은 가방도 사야 되고, 옷도 사야 되고. 그거 사려면 또 벌어야 되고, 벌자니 힘들고, 계속 악순환이죠. 남한테 보여주는 게 중요하고 남한테 예쁘게 보여질 때만 행복을 느끼는 사람도 있어요. 내가 남한테 돋보일 때만 행복을 느끼는... 근데 그런 사람은 그 때만 행복하기 때문에... 그냥 내가 그거 이외에 나는 행복을 못 느끼는데 라고 얘기하면 그 사람을 행복하게 해 줄 수 있는 건 그거 밖에 없는 거죠. **그렇군요... 제가 2 주 동안 얼마나 자주 우울하셨는지에 대한 질문을 던진다면 어떻게 대답을 하실 거예요?** 저는 우울할 때가 그때 밖에 없어요. 애가... 제가 가진 불안감은 그거 밖에 없거든요. 우리 애들이 커서, 좀 힘들게 살면 어떡하나 거기에 대한 불안감이 있어요. 왜냐면 너무나 경쟁이 치열한 사회고... 대학이란 곳도 이제는 어지간히 공부해서는 가기도 힘든 곳이 되었던 말이에요. 그래서 저 정도 노력가지고는 택도 없을텐데 라는 생각이 들 때. 그래서 정말 나중에 대학도

못 가고 계속 늙어서 나랑 계속 살면..(웃음) 직장도 못 갖고 장가도 못 가고 그러면 어떡하지? 왜냐면...
 요새는 조기 교육을 많이 해요. 당장 비교가 돼요 다른 친구들이랑. 너무 이제는 애기 때부터 다들
 시작해서 다 노력하기 때문에 한 번 벌어진 격차는 정말 따라잡기가 힘들어요. 그렇게 해서... 우리가
 지금까지 살아온 경험에 의하면, 많이 못 배우면 좋은 직업을 가지기 힘들고, 그러면 좀 힘들게
 살아간다는 건 고정관념을 가지고 있잖아요. 저도 거기에서 자유롭지 못하고. 왜냐하면 꽤나 많이
 확률적으로 그런 편이거든요. 안 그런 사람들도 있기는 하나. 확률적으로 그게 높은 확률이란 말이에요.
 그러니까 그... 확률 안에 끼지 못했을 때의 불안감을 나도 가지고 있어요. 근데 내 애가 알아서 열심히
 해줬으면 참 좋겠지만, 안 그렇거든요. 안 그런데, 그렇게 푸쉬하는 역할을 했을 때 애가 그 역할을
 불편해 하잖아요. 내가 자유롭게 놀고 있는데 누가 날 푸쉬하면 누가 좋아하겠어요. 그럼 자연스럽게
 마찰이 생긴단 말이에요... 최소한의 숙제는 좀 하고 놀았으면 좋겠다고 해도, 애는 아직 어리니까 그
 애기도 먹히질 않고. 일단은 놀고, 숙제 안 하고, 안 하고 학교에 가고. 그럼 막 아침에 하자... 그럼 애는
 성질을 내고. 그런 상황에서 제가 스트레스를 느껴요. 좀 해줬으면 하는데... 그 푸쉬자의 역할을 내가 안
 해도 되는 상황이면... 그 푸쉬하는 역할을 빼면 저는 불행감을 느끼는 일이 하나도 없는 거 같아요.
 다른데에서는 아주 만족하게 잘 살고 있는데, 그 역할이 제일 힘들고 싫은 역할인데. 지금 제가 하는 것
 중의 메인의 역할이거든요. 거기에서 스트레스를 많이 받아요. 아이랑 잘 지내고 싶은데, 그 잘
 지내려면... 내가 전혀 푸쉬를 하지 않아야 하고, 그렇게 하면 또 나는 불안하고. 그 사이에서의 갈등.
 그게 제일 커요. **그러면은... 어떻게 행복을 제일 느끼게 하는 거 같으세요?** 행복을 느끼게 하는
 거는...순간순간 그림 같은 거라서... 저는 하부르타 할 때 정말 행복해요. 그 때 말을 하잖아요. 생각이
 같은 사람들끼리 얘기를 하고 나면 정말 기분이 좋고, 그렇지 이거 나만 하는 생각 아니지, 지금 정말
 이상한 거 맞지? 라는 생각을 함께 하는 사람이 있으면 그 순간 행복하고. 또 거기 선생님이 너무 훌륭한
 가치관을 가지신 분이 선생님이죠. 다른 학원 같은 데 가면 선생님이면서도 대부분 어느 정도의
 직업인이잖아요. 그런데 이 선생님이랑 공부할 때는 정말 스승 같은 느낌인 거예요. 그런 공부할 때
 행복감이 느껴지고. 또 비슷한 가치관을 가진 엄마와 이야기를 할 때, 같은 생각에 대해 얘기할 때 그럴
 때는 행복하고. 비... 밤엔 빗소리 들을 때 행복하고. (웃음) 요새 비가 계속 오고 있잖아요. 비가 계속 올
 때 행복하고. 개구리 소리도 들리잖아요. 그 소리 들릴 때 행복하고... 밖은 굉장히 습한데 집에는 에어컨
 틀어서 쾌적할 때 행복하고요 (웃음). 커피 마실 때. 집 싹 치워놓고 앉아서 쉴 때. 맛있는 거 먹을 때.
**그럼 여기로 이사오시기 전이랑 비교해서, 삶의 질이라던가 행복한 정도, 가 어떻게 변화하신 거
 같으세요?** 중국이나 일산 살 때와 비교해서, 삶의 질은 지금이 나아요. 경제적으로 더 이상 제가
 서포트하지 않아도 남편 혼자 벌어도 이제 생활이 가능하게 된 게... 지금이 경제적으로는 가장 여유..
 아직 여유 있다고 하긴 뭐하지만, 예전엔 좀 힘들었다면 이젠 좀 덜 힘들다고 해야겠죠. 경제적인
 발전으로만 보면 불편함이 지금 좀 덜한 상태인데. 제가 심리적으로 느끼는 불편함은 지금이 가장 큰 거
 같아요. 차라리 애기들이 어렸을 때는 가르치는 걸로 스트레스를 받지 않았으니까. 물론 아이들 유치원
 때부터 가르치는 사람들도 있고 하지만. 저는 그때는 그런 것도 몰랐고 직장 다니느라... 가르치는 거에
 대해 관심도 없었고, 관심이 없으니까 못하는지도 모르고 있어서 편안했죠. 근데 직장 다니는 건
 힘들었어요. 체력적으로도 힘들고 스트레스도 많이 받고. 애들을 놔두고 다녀야 하니까 그런 면에서
 받는 스트레스가 있었어요. 그래서 직장을 다닐 때는 육아스트레스는 없었지만, 엄마로서 직장을

다닌다는 그런 역할, 그런 게 힘들었었구요. 그만두고 나서 중국에 갔을 때는 직장도 안 다니고, 그 때까지는 애기들이라... 그 때는 이것도 저것도 스트레가 없죠, 어떻게 보면 되게 유토피아인데. 근데 또 거기엔 내 나라가 아니라서. 내 나라가 아니니 언어적인 불편함, 이동의 불편함, 내 마음대로 여기서처럼 할 수가 없으니까. 그런 불편함. 근데 그래도 그 중에서 내가 선택할 수 있다면, 외국에서 나갔던 그 시간이 그 때는 몰랐지만... 비교해보니 좋았던 거 같아요. 아무래도 저한테는 애가 편하고 행복한 곳이 내가 편하고 행복한 곳인 거 같아요.

지금 판교 이 동네에 사시는 게 어머니께 중요하다는 생각이 드세요? 안 중요해요. 판 데로 가도 돼요. 근데 아이들이 이 학교를 좋아해요. 아이들 학교로는 좋은 거 같아요. 그래서 굳이 판 데로 이사를 안 하지만... 저는 여기에 대해서 그런 애착 같은 건 없어요. **그럼 여기서 갖고 계신 인간관계, 별로 안 친하신 분들은 빼놓더라도, 친하신 분들이 사시는 데 있어서 행복하게 지내시는 데 있어서 영향을 미치시는 거 같으세요?** 그쵸. 중요하죠. 이 분들이 없으면 외로움을 느끼겠죠. 이 분들 때문에 가슴이 답답할 때나 그럴 때 위안을 얻을 수 있는 사람들이 이 사람들이니까... 중요. 중요하죠.

그럼 어떤 인간관계가 행복에 가장 큰 영향을 끼치고 있는 거 같으세요? 일단 남편이겠죠. 둘이 사이가 안 좋다거나 하면 전반적으로 안정된 심리가 아니잖아요. 근데 그 사람이랑 잘 지내면 모든 사람을 안정된 상태로 대할 수 있잖아요. 특히 가족, 아이들을 대할 때 남편과의 관계에서 불만이 있다거나 저 사람이 싫다 이렇게 되면, 애들이 영향을 받겠죠. 엄마가 짜증이 나있고 평상시에 기분이 안 좋고 그러면. 부부관계가 중요한 것 같아요.

동네에서 다니시는 동선, 주로 어디를 많이 이용하세요? 요가 할 때는 앞에 교회 가고, 저기 빠리 바게뜨 옆에 헌 책방. 거기에 책 빌리러 가거든요. 그리고 그 옆에 작은 시장 같은 거. 그 쪽 상권을 제일 많이 이용해요. 하루에 한 번 짬은 왔다갔다 하죠. 그러다 보면 엄마들도 오고 하니깐 가끔 아는 사람도 만나고. **그러면 엘리베이터에서 다른 분들 만나면 인사를 하세요?** 잘 모르는 사람인데, 일단, 안녕하세요라고 인사는 하죠. 자주 만나면 저분은 몇 층 사시는 구나 그 정도는 알죠. 근데 그 이상 더 얘기하거나 그러지는 않구요. 단지 안에 있는 다른 공간들에 가시기도 하나요? 아니요. **커뮤니티 센터는 이용하세요?** 우리 단지에 커뮤니티 센터가 있어요? 안 가봤어요. 가봐야겠네요. 애들 데리고 놀이터는 자주 가요. 공원은 탄천 산책하러 자주 가고. 놀이터는 여기 바로 단지 안에 있는 것. 아니면 교회 놀이터도 자주 가요. 거기가 넓어서. **(거기 가시면 다른 엄마들 만나시기도 하고 그러는 거예요?)** 아니요 주로 애들만 보내는 거예요. 큰 애를 같이 못 보낼 때, 아니면 데려다 줄 때 가긴 하는데. 엄마들이 잘 안 나와요. 요새는 아빠들이 많이 나와요. 많이 달라졌어요. 나가면 대부분 아빠들이, 엄마들은 이제 집에서 쉬고. 키즈카페 같은데 가도 이제는 많이 달라졌어요. 아빠들이 많이 와요. 여권이 많이 신장이 되서... 보통 주말에 그렇고. 근데 평일에 노는 아빠들, 프리랜서도 많아서, 학교 학부모 봉사활동에도 아빠들이 참여를 많이 하세요... 아파트 단지 안에서는, 여기 사람이 많지 않아요. 사람 구경하기 힘들죠. 많이 안 다녀요. 참 한적하다... 다들 집 안에 들어가서 뭐하나. 특히 주말 오전 같을 때 나와보면. 정말 없다. 주말 오전인데 이렇게 사람이 없다. 사람 사는 동네 맞나 싶을 정도로 사람 없다 생각이 들거든요. 다들 뭐하지. 자주 생각해요. 참 조용하다. 다들 뭐하나.

After finding all the recurring themes by reading the transcripts repetitively and internalizing them, I have reviewed all the possible themes with my adviser. Not to dismiss the original nuances of the experiences, possible sub-themes and detailed contents were also noted in Korean. In this process, themes were considered in relation to each other, consolidated, and eliminated.