

# The Study on Transformation of Family Structure and Orientation of Family Welfare in Korea

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The purpose of this study is to understand the characteristics of existing Korean family welfare in relation to the structure and features of traditional family as well as to search the orientation of family welfare based on an analysis of the structures and characteristics of rapidly changing family in contemporary period. Most recently, it is distinctly observed that the Korean family is transitioning from one of patrilineal to that of bilateral family structure. In accordance with this change, Korean family welfare needs to change from a type that requires the families to take care of their own elderly, children, disabled, or sick members by themselves while the government selectively supports the families that have problems in supportive abilities to a type that in which all families become the subject of welfare while the premise of normal families supporting their own members is abolished.

*Keywords: Patrilineal family, bilateral family, rule of residence, rule of inheritance, rule of descent, family welfare*

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## Introduction

In general discussion on social welfare, family is regarded as a passive object. For instance, the expression often seen in some introductory books of social welfare state, “the traditional function of family is lost in the process of industrialization such that social welfare has emerged in terms of supplementing and supporting its function,” and it holds the typical understanding that family is the object of welfare.<sup>1</sup> Family, however, is an autonomic group and a subject itself distributing and controlling social resources. Family might be passively influenced by the change

of society, but its logic might also carry it out in reverse. Accordingly, in discussions of social welfare it should be thought that the features of family structure and type could be an independent variable to describe the type of welfare in each society as well as the emergence and changing process of social welfare. Understanding family welfare is like understanding general social welfare. In terms of function, in fact, family welfare based on support and supplement of family function is largely reiterated in modern society welfare that manages the life of social members. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of family welfare in a society and its orientation should be achieved from understanding the features of its family structure and type. In addition, we need to establish new direction for family welfare in understanding the change of family features. This study acknowledges, from this point of view, the characteristics of present Korean family welfare at the level of structure and features of the traditional family, and searches for the orientation of family welfare hereafter based on an analysis of the structures and characteristics in the rapidly changing recent family. Needless to say it is not a simple work, but the accumulated results of research make it possible. On that account, this study can be said to be one part in a series of research steps to be achieved rather than the finished.

### **The Structure and Features of the Traditional Family in Korea<sup>2</sup>**

The constitution of the traditional family in Korea is based on the paternal direct lineage structure. The paternal direct lineage structure implies that the family is based on paternal lineage, that is, father · husband · son, where the eldest son succeeds the family line. Describing the meaning of this paternal direct lineage structure in terms of descent, inheritance, and residence, which

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1. The recognition of family as an object of social change is based on the assumption of the "formation of the nuclear family and loss of the traditional family due to industrialization or urbanization." The researchers on family, however, have already turned this assumption down since 1960s. As the results of studies with objects of western or Korean societies have found that there are no mechanical causal relationship between industrialization or urbanization and trend toward the nuclear family. Rather, it is found that the family strategy in the process of industrialization has strengthened the enlarged family. Refer to Ahn Byung-Chul (1989); Cho Eun (1995); Laslett and Peter (1965), etc.
  2. "Tradition" here does not imply long time ago or far distance and from mid 17th to recent time in which Korean family and kinship has largely been transformed into direct paternal lineage system.

definitely affects family and kinship structure, the Korean traditional family features patrilineal descent, primogeniture, and patrilocal residence.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, a combination of patrilineal descent, primogeniture, and patrilocal residence causes an exclusive bond of patrilineally related males only. People biologically belonging to a patrilineal group closely interact under the daily space of family and inheritance amidst the distribution of social resources, and also come from the paternal lineage that patrilineally related males bind exclusively to and form family based on. Accordingly, the core of family relations also consists based on not the couple but the father-son relation. And as shown in the bilateral family or ambilateral family, since in the parental family a married couple combined is neither both parents of the husband and wife nor one of the two sides selectively but the parents of the husband fixedly, the scope of combination of family beyond the unit of nuclear family is clear.

The remarkable thing related to this discussion among the features of the Korean traditional family is that the family constitution is based on the father-son relation, and the scope of combination of family beyond the unit of the nuclear family is clear. The fact that the family is based on the father-son relation implies that it prefers birth to marriage and that the female has an inferior position within family. In the case where both marriage and the husband-wife relation are important in the family constitution, according to the bond of the couple through marriage and its destruction through death, the family constantly appears and disappears. Contrasting this, in the case where both birth and the father-son relation are important, the family survives and does not discontinue through the marriage or death of individuals as long as the birth or adoption of a son continues. Likewise, the characteristic of the Korean traditional family can be explained in terms of the 'group' having a super-individual vitality.

Generally, a group features its distinct scope and membership, its highly differentiated internal position · role structure defining each member's specific relation to all other members, its common goal, its persistent levying mechanism, and its continuous survival (Layton 1997: 39). As the definite scope, membership,

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3. Family and kinship structure is affected by various external factors, which cause the change of family and kinship structure by changing residence, inheritance and descent rules. Among the rules of residence, inheritance and descent most sensitive is the rule of residence, for it hardly conflict with the existing family and kinship structure in spite of its changing by the social change. However, the change of residence rule enormously affects reconstruction of family by changing the family members interacting ordinarily.

and continuity have been examined earlier, there are some typical characteristics in the divided internal role structure, common goal, and levying mechanism, etc. in the Korean traditional family. That is, succession or inheritance in the Korean family is not determined by individual features but structurally, by standards such as sex, birth order, or birth from legal wife or concubine. Position or power between family members is also determined by a super-individual structure. For super-personal attributes, the maintenance and continuance of the family do not depend on its members, instead mechanism solve by family itself develop. As the automatic levy mechanism, like a system of adoption, develops, the family maintains its continuance by itself regardless of its members survival or death or other individual features. In other words, the family as a group is a subject having self-vitality, whose maintenance and continuance no longer depends on individuals, rather it defines and levies each human individual as a member of the group for its maintenance and continuance.<sup>4</sup>

## The Change of Family Structure in Korea

### 1. The change of residence rule

Residence of the traditional Korean family after marriage was patrilocal residence. Of course, under the direct structure that the eldest son lives with his parents only, the other sons separate from their parents house at the same time of, or at certain time after, marriage. But such also corresponds to patrilocal residence, since they live near their parents house and have a close relationship with them. However, as has been generally known, the tendency of setting up a branch family (household) at marriage by even the eldest son, as well as younger sons, has been distinctive in the course of urbanization and industrialization, resulting in parents residing in rural areas and married sons residing in urban areas. Collateral to this tendency, family organization has been simplified due to the decrease in

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4. These features of the Korean traditional family correspond to the concept of 'Jip (house)' suggested by Choi Jae-seok. He claims that the concept of 'Jip' must be understood in order to grasp the concept of the Korean traditional family. His idea of 'Jip' implies the architecture resided in by a family as well as a realistic family group, a conceptual family group of the same blood group ranging from the past to the future, which is a basic unit of society where an individual is not separated from this 'Jip,' which has priority over the individual (Choi Jae-seok 1974: 46-51).

family members and the constitutive generations (Ahn Ho-Yong 1991: 187). Reviewing this widely developed phenomenon in the light of family form, it certainly is a trend towards the nuclear family. As a matter of fact, many scholars have asserted that the Korean family is reforming into the nuclear family on the basis of these indexes. However, the supportive basis of the nuclear family trend has been shrunk by those discussions against it arguing that not only the form but also the concept, value, and structure of the family have to be taken into consideration for the estimation of the family type of a society.

The nuclear family trend in the aspect of family form can be described, in other words, that the rule of residence has been changed from patrilocal to neolocal residence. As described above, the interpretation of taking the trend of neolocal residence as the trend toward the nuclear family is based on one point of view. However, it cannot be argued, as do those who do not agree with the trend to the nuclear family, that the traditional family structure is being maintained in spite of the shift to the neolocal residence. Since the rule of residence can rather easily be changed without serious conflict with the existing family-kinship structure, it could have been rapidly changed in accordance with the social changes represented by modernization, and rapid change in the existing family structure might not have appeared in such changes. However, in the long-term view, the change in the rule of residence is more extensive than apparently identified over a short period. The change of residential rules is followed by changes in the local alignment of family members, which ultimately brings forth reorganization of the whole society (Murdock 1949: 17). Considering these factors, the change in the rule of residence affects family · kinship structure severely. The reason that the change in the rule of residence is so important is that it determines the family members and the specific class of people who become the members of a family as the specific rule of residence binds strongly (Murdock 1949: 17-19).

In general, the change in the rule of residence does not immediately alter the concept and structure of the existing family. However, it does provide a basis for the change of the concept and structure of the family by changing the members who are deposited in the space named the family (household) where daily life interactions, such as economic cooperation, social and mental protection, and relations take place and form intensively. Therefore, the shift from the patrilocal to the neolocal weakens the strong binding force in the daily lives of patrilineal kinsmen. Recently though, changes showing the weakening of the binding force between patrilineal kinsmen in the family structure due to the effect of the neolocal trend are apparent; in fact, such changes have long since progressed.

In the discussions cited earlier, Choi Jae-seok asserted, though the formal nuclear family trend had become widespread by the 1970s, that patrilineal characteristics were still being maintained in that the continuing recognition of supporting parents and not considering that branch families are a separation of the parent family (household) and the son-family (household), as evidenced by continued close interactions between the parent family and the son-family. However, various data he collected shows that the changes are occurring in the daily life interactions in a wide area of space. For example, research shows that 70% of households of eldest sons, which have branched off, pay living expenses separately and that the daily life matters of the parent household are settled independently of the eldest son (Choi Jae-seok 1982: 220-223); this shows that the separation of daily life has progressed in the continuing predominant atmosphere of the conventional family structure.

Such trends of daily life separation have been gaining momentum. In a recent survey<sup>5</sup> concerning the capacity to give economic help to their husband's or wife's parents, 47% replied they could not afford to help parents, 30% replied they could only help their husband's parents, 2% replied they could only help their wife's parents, and 21% replied they could afford to help both their husband's and wife's parents. Among those who did not live with their parents, 68% of men and 70% of women replied they could not afford the time to visit their parents often; most men and women replied that they could only afford the time to visit their parents at major family events, which shows that daily life separation caused by residential changes has been generalized.

It can easily be assumed that structural changes in protective and supportive functions of family will be brought about if such separation of daily life continues for a long time. In fact, those indexes indicating the rapid changes in the protective and supportive functions of the family in the patrilineal direct lineage family became distinctive. Table 1 below shows that the traditional trend of sons, especially the eldest sons supporting their parents, have largely changed. The ratio of descendants supporting their parents has decreased from 62.1% in 1994 to 53.3% in 2002; the ratio of eldest sons supporting their parents has decreased from 33.1% to 22.7%. In comparison, the ratio of parents who support

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5. The survey was carried out jointly by the *Jungang Ilbo* and Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation targeting 1,000 people in their teens to 50s living in the Seoul and Gyeonggi areas from December 2004 to January 2005 (*Jungang Ilbo*, Feb. 10, 2005). Samples comprised of area, sex, age class in due proportion. 1:1 home interview visits were conducted.

**Table 1.** Supporters of Household Parents (Unit:%)

Year	Descendant								Other
	Eldest Son	Younger Sons	Sons	Daughter	Daughters	Sons & Daughters	Sub-Total	By Themselves	
1994	33.1	7.6	8.7	1.6	N/A	11.1	62.1	37.6	0.3
1998	27.0	10.9	8.9	1.4	0.4	9.6	58.2	41.6	0.2
2002	22.7	N/A	17.5	N/A	1.7	11.4	53.3	46.3	0.5

Source: National Statistical Office, Social Statistics Survey Report, yearly (edited).

\*N/A: questions differ by year. No available data for the year.

themselves has increased from 37.6% to 46.3%, while the ratio of sons and daughters jointly supporting their parents has slowly increased. In summary, fewer descendants support their parents and more parents support themselves; in cases of supporting parents, more and more sons and daughters support their parents jointly.

According to the survey report cited above, only 17% said that they wanted to live with their children. For the question on their means of livelihood in their old age, 48% said they would take care of themselves, 33% said their children and family would have to support them, and 15% said that the government should support them. These results show, in the change of patrilineal supportive and protective function structure, i.e., in the trend toward self-support as shown in Table 1, that structural change in the roles of children from the eldest sons to joint support by all children is being intensified. With such a trend, one thing noteworthy is that the binding relationship between the parent household and that of the daughters is becoming stronger compared with the traditional family relationship, though the binding relationship between the parent household and that of the sons, especially that of the eldest son, is becoming weaker. It can be evidenced by the trend shown in Table 1, and also in Table 5 which indicates an equivalent role for both daughter and son in their attitudes of supporting parents and living together with children when older.

## 2. The change of inheritance rule

Inheritance is closely related with supportive responsibility, i.e., supporting the livelihood of aged parents and carrying out religious services after their death. In the first half of the Choseon Dynasty the equivalent duties had fallen upon sons

and daughters -- the inheritance had been equally shared, while in the second half of the Choseon Dynasty the support and service of ancestors had been the responsibility of the eldest son, and inheritance had also been focused on the eldest son. Therefore, as discussed above, it can be expected that the changes in the rule of residence and subsequent changes in the supporting and protecting functional structure marks change in traditional inheritance customs.

In legal terms, the inheritance system in Korea has already shifted from the paternal direct lineage structure. The Law of Inheritance of Korea, through revisions in 1977 and 1989, has been changed from a paternal direct lineage system to an equal-for-both-sex system (Cho Yoon-Kyung 2002: 81-87). In detail we now have a reduction of the scope of inheritance rights to cousins, equal rights to sons and daughters, the abolition of superiority of the household head by separating the primogeniture and religious service rights, adjustment of a wife's sole inheritance priority to be equal to that of the husband, and the strengthening of a wife's inheritance rights by increasing the amount of inheritance (Cho Yoon-Kyung 2002: 87). The revisions to the law, including the above-mentioned points, mean the changes from the paternal direct lineage inheritance system to a maternal lineage one: Eldest son to younger sons, sons to daughters, children to wife, to a bilateral lineage and conjugally equal system by legalizing a significant reduction of the scope of the successors of inheritance, abrogating primogeniture and priority of sons to daughters, and spouse-centered inheritance. These changes exactly coincide with the structural changes in the parent supporting functions from children/eldest son/son(s) centered to the self-support and equal support by son(s) and daughter(s).

But the problem is that these legal modifications do not agree with the actual customs of inheritance. In general, inheritance cases by legal decision are rare in Korea where most inheritance occurs in accordance with custom. Therefore, understanding the changes in customary inheritance is essential to the discussions on the structure of inheritance. To this point, a recent decision of the court is worthy of notice. On 7. 21. 2005, the Supreme Court decided that women have the right of lineage (Mun-jung) membership. The importance of this decision in relation to this discussion is that the constitution and management of lineage are subject to the scope of customary law, thus, in the background of the decision is the change of relevant customs. As described in the decision,<sup>6</sup> it was enabled by the

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6. "...while in the family structure, the ratio of families which have daughters only have been

change of the conventional kinship · family customs based on the paternal direct lineage system into the orientation discussed above, thereby reconfirming the change officially. What is important is that such changes as described in the text of the decision, including the increase of families having only daughters, the equal role of son and daughter in supporting parents, women's participation the religious services to ancestors etc., enabled the qualification of women as lineage members to acquire equal rights and responsibilities as men. Considering that a lineage member's duties are religious services to ancestors and maintaining grave sites while one's rights include disposal and distribution of the assets of the lineage, qualifying women for lineage membership means that legal and customary rights of succeeding the properties of lineage are given to women as equal to men. In summary, the decision of the Supreme Court clarifies that equal rights for women in succeeding the assets of lineage are guaranteed in customary terms as well as legal terms. Of course, lineage refers to a different group to the family itself, and family assets can be passed on according to the will of the inheritee, so it will be too much to expect that the changes made in the succession of lineage assets will be made in the family succession in the same manner. However, as described in the decision, a lineage is indivisible from the traditional family in Korea. Even their structures are almost the same. Therefore, the same trend of change can be presumably be realized in the family system. In a recent survey,<sup>7</sup> 63% of subjects agreed that the succession or donation should be done on an equal basis without bias, showing that inheritance has already begun to shift from the paternal direct lineage system.

Changes in inheritance have a close relationship with that of family succession. In the traditional family system, primogeniture held its ground on the fact of the eldest son's succession of the family. In particular, the wealth gained in the parents' generation was inherited, to a certain extent, by children other than the eldest son. However, the properties inherited from ancestors, for example, the

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increased due to the decrease of birth rate based on the trend of the nuclear family consisted of parents and unmarried children, and the diminishing trend of preferring sons or family succession, not any significant difference between sons and daughters in supporting parent when old. And according to the trend toward the nuclear family, the procedures and concept of the religious services, which had been strictly regulated, for ancestors have been changed. Therefore, it is not recognized as being peculiar any more for women to participate in the religious services for ancestors..." (the Supreme Court, 2002DA1178 the Text of Decision for the case of lineage Membership Verification, 2005: 4-5).

7. *Jungang Ilbo*, 2. 10. 2005

house, were almost sure to be inherited by the eldest son. Earlier in this paper, it was mentioned that in the patrilineal system, a family is represented by a 'house' which carries the idea of a super-human group inherited from far ancestors to descendants, as well as the physical object including house and land. Therefore, it was natural for the eldest son, who succeeds the 'super-personal house,' to succeed the house or other properties succeeded from ancestors which are considered to be indivisible from the 'super-personal house.' It is commonly acknowledged that the preference-to-son and son-adoption institution have been developed on the basis of such traditional patrilineal family succession. The birth control program conducted during the 1970s to 1980s was an external factor stressing such traditional family succession. However, as the conventional family succession structure continued, the stress on birth control appeared in the form of an unbalanced sex ratio. The deepening of the gap in the sex ratio in the process of lowering the birth rate is directly related to the patrilineal family succession structure. In the meantime, a phenomenon has been appearing which indicates the fundamental change in the traditional family succession structure.

Table 2 shows that the total sex ratio in 2003 and 2004 is adjacent to the natural sex ratio at birth (105 : 2). Especially, for the first and second child, it has been within the range of the natural sex ratio at birth since around 2000. What

**Table 2.** Trend in Sex Ratio at Birth (unit: number of sons per 100 daughters)

	94	95	99	00	01	02	03	04
Total Ratio at Birth	115.2	113.2	109.6	110.2	109.0	110.0	108.7	108.2
1st child	106.0	105.8	105.6	106.2	105.4	106.5	104.9	105.2
2nd child	114.1	111.7	107.6	107.9	106.4	107.3	107.0	106.2
3rd child	202.2	177.2	141.8	141.7	140.3	140.0	135.2	132.0
4th child and over	224.2	203.9	154.5	167.5	152.4	152.5	149.2	139.1

Source: National Statistical Office. Birth & Death Report in 2005.

**Table 3.** Trend of Total Birth Rate (unit: number of children per 1 impregnable woman)

	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
Total Birth Ratio	1.67	1.65	1.58	1.54	1.47	1.42	1.47	1.30	1.17	1.19	1.16

Source: National Statistical Office. Birth & Death Report in 2005.

we should be concerned about are third children; it can be seen that the ratio has significantly decreased compared to 10 years' earlier. Of course, even in 2004, the sex ratio of the third, and fourth children and over are 132.0 and 139.1 respectively which shows a significant deviation, although it has surprisingly reduced when compared with 1994. Reviewing the decrease of the sex ratio in conjunction with the reduction of the birth rate in Table 3, the recent sex ratio is almost the same as the natural ratio and therefore, it can be concluded that sex control at birth due to the preference for sons has almost disappeared. Though the recent decrease in the total birth rate originated partially by the postponement of marriage and increasing numbers of those who do not marry, its major cause is that most married couples have only one or two children. Therefore, the recent approach of the sex ratio towards the natural ratio means that most married couples do not discriminate the sex of their child, that is, the idea that the family successor has to be the son has been thinned, and the same trend will continue in the same manner in the future too.

### 3. The change of descent rule

The rule of descent concerns the belonging to a paternal or maternal group at birth. This rule seldom changes with time. The resistance of the rule of descent to change is presumably caused by the fact of a fundamental interest in blood ties. The fact that the rule of descent survives longest in changes of the family and kinship system means, in other words, that the change of the rule of descent is evidence which finalizes the change of the conventional family and kinship structure. In Korea, the traditional rule of descent is patrilineal descent. That is, a person is born endowed with the father's surname and its origin (*bon*), and automatically belongs to a paternal lineage. Probably, most Koreans still take succeeding one's father's surname to be quite natural, while considering it somewhat strange to use both their father's and mother's surnames at the same time. This is because the patrilineal descent rule is rooted so deep. However, such cases have occurred recently in the realm of the 'seemingly' unchanging rule of descent, which can be considered a significant matter.

As almost everyone knows, the householder system was abrogated by the revision of Civil Law, which cast a critical affect on the changes in the rule of descent. In compliance with this revision, a new national individual identification register system based on the one-person one-register will be enforced after Jan. 1, 2008. Reviewing the revision, it can be concluded that the patrilineal rule

of descent will not be able to be applied. Up to the present, the surnames of children follows paternal lineage abolishing maternal line, however, in the future when the revised law is enforced, surnames of children shall be determined by mutual agreement between the father and the mother. In case agreement cannot be made, the Family Court shall determine the surname by the request of the father or mother. In case that a change of surname and origin is required for the benefit of a child, it would be done under the approval of the Family Court by the request of the father, mother, or child. An adopted child will be given the surname of their step-father and they will have equal rights as a natural child. All these changes are in direct opposition to the patrilineal rule of descent. In brief, according to the existing rule of descent, a child is born endowed with paternal lineage, but according to the new Civil Law, one of the lineages of the father or mother can be chosen, and can be changed in case of remarriage or adoption. The new rule of descent can be defined as ambilateral descent in light of 'selection,' or bilateral in light of the 'equality of parents' blood lines.' Of course, for sometime after the enforcement of the new identification system, the patrilineal rule of descent will be applied in most cases. However, the idea of conventional patrilineal descent will diminish with the inheritance of mothers' surnames and origins by children of unmarried mothers or changes of surnames and origins of children of remarried parents.

#### 4. Synthesizing the changes: From the paternal direct lineage family to the bilateral family

The changes in the Korean family system have been discussed in the light of the rule of residence, the rule of inheritance, the rule of descent, and related features of family member relationships. To summarize the changes; the settlement of neolocal residence, the weakening of the bond between the married couple's family(household) and the husband's parents' family(household), the strengthening of the bond between the married couple family(household) and the wife's parents' family(household), the equalization of the inheritance rights between the male descendants and female descendants, the weakening of the predominance of the idea of the son's succeeding the family lineage, and the appearance of ambilateral and bilateral descent. These recent changes in the Korean family can be captured in the idea of the nuclear family. That is, the trend toward the nuclear family can be defined as the trend of the couple-relation becoming more important and sexual equality being realized in the trend toward the dismantling

of the paternal direct lineage structure. Nevertheless, the definition of the nuclear family is not so simple. A nuclear family in general is a family consisting of a married couple and their unmarried children. However, a nuclear family is an universal human social grouping, either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded (Murdock 1949: 2). That is, a nuclear family is not an individual family unit but an elementary unit, which combines in a diversity of ways to form a larger family widespread in societies, which we cannot define as a nuclear family society. Thus, the trend toward a nuclear family system can be defined by whether a nuclear family is its own unit as a complete family or combines into a larger family.

Of course, the trend toward the nuclear family in Korea should be discussed on the basis of wider and in-depth studies on the behavior, values, and ideas of the family. But the important point is that the permanent binding of the father and the son, as in the traditional paternal direct lineage structure, has been weakened. However, that does not mean that nuclear families are dividing completely. For example, see Table 4 which is the result of a survey on attitudes toward supporting old parents. Table 4 shows significant difference from Table 1 presenting the actual situation of supporting old parents. By considering Table 1 and Table 4 together, it can be seen that the awareness and the attitude of responsibility to supporting old parents are still strong, even though many descendants do not actually support their old parents due to a diversity of reasons. As an example of 'attitude' towards the supporting parents, the bond with parents can be said to be maintained. However, the orientation of such bonds are equalized between the paternal and maternal lines. Such a characteristic was verified in the discussion above. The equalization of the bonds in paternal and maternal lines means that the subjects of the bonds are the married couples and not the father-the son (or the mother-the daughter in the opposite case), giving equal weight between the paternal and the maternal lines in the family structure. Like this, though the exclusive bonds in paternal lines have been dismantled, the bonds between the married couple and with their original families still exist. In addition, considering that the bonds are equalized between the paternal and maternal lines, it can be concluded that the trend is toward bilateral or ambilateral families.

Since the paternal and maternal lines are balanced in the constitution or the binding of a family together, the scope of this family bonding is extended to the original families of paternal and maternal lines. If the idea of family is extended to include past and future, like the family in the paternal direct lineage system,

**Table 4.** Opinions on the Supporting of Old Parents (unit: %)

Year	By themselves	Family						Family, government, society	Government, society	Others
		Eldest son	Sons	Daughters	Sons & Daughters	Whoever able among children	Sub-total			
1998	8.1	22.4	7.0	0.5	14.5	45.5	89.9	-	1.9	0.1
2002	9.6	15.1	13.9	1.0	19.5	21.2	70.7	18.2	1.3	0.2

Source: National Statistical Office, Social Statistical Survey Report, Yearly Reports (extracted).

the scope of a family will be extended exponentially by each generation. Therefore, since an ambilateral family cannot be extended for more than 3 or 4 generations, the kind of permanency that the paternal direct lineage family had will be no more. Additionally, the scope of family binding is very large, even within three or four generations, because the bonds are made in both the paternal and maternal lines. In such cases, theoretically, though all the paternal and maternal lineages in the three or four generations can be combined, it is common that a certain extent of nuclear families (households) are bound by selection in the light of living together, close economic cooperation, daily protection, and other tie-ups<sup>8</sup>. Because of these points, the bilateral family and kinship system is characterized by the selection of membership by individuals (Lee Kwang-kyu 1996: 128) in that the qualification of family or kinship membership and the tie-up relationships are determined by necessity and that the membership qualification is flexible (Peterson 2000: 19-20). In other words, that the selection in the family binding based on the individual's necessity is becoming more important and that the family membership is flexible mean that the family constitution is no more structurally given, which again can be interpreted to mean that the family constitution is shifting from being group centered to becoming an individual centered system. By individual centered family constitution, a diversity of binding types can be formed, including a married couple binding with the husband's

8. In general, the maternal and paternal lineage members that bind together among the ambilateral family and kinship are those who are in close blood-line distance to the I (ego); paternal and maternal grand parents, parents, and direct children and grand children. Therefore, the collateral relatives in the ambilateral family system are less important. For example, the reduction of the scope of successors to the cousins of the inheritee in Korean Law of Inheritance can be an example of a reduction of the rights and duties of collateral relatives in the progress of the bilateral family trend.

parents or wife's parents, a nuclear family centered on the married couple, singles who did not get married or remarried, and parent-child(ren), etc.

Meanwhile, the balancing of the paternal and maternal lineage bondings means an equal weight between the two lines in the family constitution and that the family constitution is established centering on not the father-son but rather the husband-wife relation. As shown in Table 5, the awareness that there is sex discrimination in social and business circles is still high, but recent awareness in sex discrimination in family life shows significant results. Of course there can be deviation between the structural sex discrimination and awareness. Anyway, such a result is something surprising and can be interpreted as the progress of sex equality based on a more balanced weight between the paternal and maternal lineages. The improvement in the equality of the sexes in family life brings forth changes in the couple relation. Since the couple relation in a paternal direct lineage type family shows the characteristics of women being combined to men subordinately, cancellation, such as divorce, is not easy. Promotion of the woman's position in the family and the consequent equalization of the couple relation makes it easier for couples to be dismantled, such as divorce, and restructured, such as remarriage, thus consequently, dismantling and reconstruction of the couple relation are activated. The rapid increase of the divorce rate<sup>9</sup> since the 1990s has been widely acknowledged. As shown in Table 6 below, the causes of divorce are changing from conflicts in character, which have been decreasing due to economic problems, which have been rapidly increasing. It means that divorce related to the promotion of a woman's position in the family or the weakening of subordinate relationships is rapidly increasing. Remarriage is also increasing, due to increasing divorce (see Table 7 below). These phenomena indicate the weakening of the binding forces between family members along with the individualization of the family structure.

As pointed out earlier, the key matter of bilateral family constitution is not the father-son but the husband-wife relation. In other words, the maintenance and reproduction in the patrilineal family is dependent upon the 'birth' of a son, but the formation of a bilateral family is determined by 'marriage.' The concept of divorce changes in accordance with the importance of the husband-wife relation. In a patrilineal family, divorce means only the driving out of the woman, but the

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9. Based on the coarse divorce rate which indicates the number of divorced among 1,000 persons, the rate has continually increased: 0.5 in 1977, 1.1 in 1990, 2.6 in 1998, and 2.9 in 2004 (Korean Statistical Office, Guidebook on the Demographic Survey, 2005).

**Table 5.** Awareness of Sex discrimination (%)

	Yes			So & so	No		
	Much	Some	Subtotal		Little	Not at all	Subtotal
<2002>							
Home	7.6	30.4	38.1	26.8	22.8	12.3	35.1
School	3.8	27.5	31.3	38.7	22.5	7.5	30.0
Business	23.3	43.9	67.3	22.8	7.0	3.0	10.0
Society	27.4	42.3	69.7	22.2	5.7	2.4	8.1

Source: National Statistical Office, Social Statistical Survey Report, 2002.

**Table 6.** Divorce by Causes (%)

Year	Conflict	Health	Financial	Other
1993	85.0	1.1	2.4	11.5
1995	83.1	0.9	2.9	13.0
2000	74.5	0.9	10.7	14.0
2003	70.0	0.6	16.4	13.1

Source: National Statistical Office, 2003 Demographic Year Book Marriage-Divorce (extract).

**Table 7.** Marriage by Type (%)

Year	1st(M)-1st(F)	Rem.(M)-1st(F)	1st(M)-Rem.(F)	Rem.(M)-Rem.(F)
1991	89.4	3.5	2.5	4.6
1995	86.3	3.6	3.6	6.5
2000	82.0	3.5	4.9	9.6
2003	77.7	3.9	5.8	12.6

Source: National Statistical Office, 2003 Demographic Year Book Marriage-Divorce (extract).

family itself remains the same. It is because women have not been the subjects of family constitution from the beginning. But a bilateral family differs. At divorce, the husband and wife who have been key members of the family may be absorbed into their original families or remain as independent entities until remarriage. That is, divorce in a bilateral family means the dismantling of the couple-centered family and the separation of the original families of the couple, which have been loosely bonded through the couple. The bilateral family structure is characterized by the fact that divorce means the dismantling of the family because the couple relation has been the core of the family constitution, and also by the activation of divorce and remarriage because of the weakened bond between the couple. Consequently, the bilateral family is characteristically sub-

ject to active formation · change · extinction.

## Reestablishment of Family Welfare Orientation

Basically, the family welfare in Korea is characterized by the development taking the family as the universal unit having biological, history transcendental, and class transcendental features, and the ‘welfare through the family’ wherein the family takes care of their own aged, children, disabled, or sick members by themselves with the government selectively supporting those families that have problems in supportive abilities, so that families can carry out welfare functions (Kim Heung-Ju 1994: 35-36). Since the family is considered to be a universal entity, normal and ideal images of the family are always assumed in the progress of family welfare. While protecting normal or ideal families, other families are defined to be problem families, to which welfare programs are applied, strengthening the function of the individual family. To classify such characteristics of Korean family welfare by welfare type,<sup>10</sup> we see the type emphasizing family and kinship’ duties, and the type supplementing specific family’s function (Choi Kyung-Suk 2001: 96). In summary, the family welfare system of Korea is based on the classification of normal and abnormal families, wherein normal families are not considered to be the objectives of welfare programs, while abnormal families are supported by individual · following-up · residual type of interference.

However, such characteristics of Korean family welfare cannot be continued due to the increase of the cost of family support system and the changes in family structure and characteristics. As pointed in many prior studies, social pressure on the increase of the quantity and quality of the services required for fostering,

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10. The family welfare types of the world can be classified into: The type emphasizing the duties of family and kinship; the type supplementing a specific family's function; the type emphasizing family closeness, according to the attitude toward the roles of traditional family and the degree of government interference (Choi Kyung-Suk 2001: 95-96). In countries emphasizing the duties of family and kinship, fostering and supporting duties are primarily taken on by the family kinship, and the government takes minimum responsibility. In the type supplementing a specific family's function, a certain type of family is defined as normal and the rest of the families which do not come under this type are considered to be the families which need support. The family closeness type recognizes diverse family forms, based on an equal husband-wife relationship, interferes with the wholeness of the family, and actively interferes with the prevention and resolution of family problems.

training, socialization, and support for individuals, as well as the needs of individual members of society for such services, has been increasing. Consequently, the cost required in the operation of the family support system related to fostering, training, socializing, and support is rapidly increasing. Accordingly, it can be said that even normal families became unable to operate a normal family support system wherein the family welfare policy, as emphasizing the duties of family or kinship, cannot be maintained for long.

The pressure for changes in family welfare is also exerted by the changes in the structure and characteristics of the traditional family, which comprises the major subject of this paper. As discussed above, the Korean family is being transformed from the patrilineal into the bilateral. In having clear criteria and membership, a formalized internal position and role structure, a common goal, a mechanism consistently levying members, and permanence, the patrilineal family is a group having transcendent individual characteristics and self life. On the other hand, a bilateral family lacks in stable criteria or membership, is weak in internal position and role structure, and furthermore, lacks in the life which transcends individuals. If what is important in the patrilineal family constitution is the logic of the family itself, the formation-change-extinction of a family in the bilateral family structure are determined by individual selection or individual elements. While the patrilineal family implies an ideal type of family, the bilateral family cannot form an ideal structure, and cannot but form diversified forms of families due to the characteristics of binding by individual selection. While the patrilineal family binds members strongly on the basis of a formalized internal position and role structure and a common goal of a permanent family group, the bilateral family is loose in binding forces and unstable due to the weak formalized internal structure and lack of a common goal that transcends individual goals. The strong binding of family members, in other words, implies that the maintenance and continuance logic of the family, which owns self life, is assigned to individual members as the duties which transcend personalities, and also means that mutual protective and supportive duties between members also transcend personalities. Contrastingly, the looseness and instability of binding forces in the bilateral family implies that the protection and support of family members do not lead to transcendent duties.

Finally, in the course of transferring from the patrilineal to the bilateral family structure, those propositions which have been supporting the basic characteristics of the welfare of the Korean family include -- that there exists an ideal or normal family type; that mutual protection and support among family members have

super-personal duties and rights and thus the primary responsibility of protection and support of family members (social member) rest on the family or kinship -- can no more exist. Consequently, Korean family welfare, which is characterized by the emphasis on the overall responsibilities of family and kinship and the residual supplementation of the function of the families with problems, will lose its justness gradually. Therefore, first of all, it is required that Korean family welfare get rid of policy that interferes and instead support improving the ideal family type, wherein developing a pro-family movement<sup>11</sup> for the family type that is considered to be normal and ideal and defining those family types which do not come under such normal or ideal type. In other words, given that family types cannot but be diversified, it shall be necessary to depart from maintaining and restoring so called normal type families and approach supporting diversified family functions. In such an approach, which implies that all families come as objects of welfare, the premise that normal families have to operate a self-supporting function for their own members has to be abolished. As a matter of fact, emphasizing the duties of family and kinship, and supplementing the function of specific families which have departed from the normal type of family, are in the same context because the concept of a normal family implies a family operating self-supportive system, while other families have problems in which the nation interferes with in order to help settle.

Like this, Korean family welfare is faced with the pressure for socialization of the family support system by changes in the structure and characteristics of the family too. Meanwhile, considering the orientation of changes in the family structure and characteristics, the line of family welfare policy to socialize the family support system must sublimate to induce the family bond in a specific direction. For example, a parental-support allowance or a tax/financial support policy for old parents living together aims at inducing the of parent and son. Considering the orientation of changes in the family structure and characteristics, these policies are losing their efficacy and can bring about an inverse

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11. The pro-family movement is a conservative political campaign emphasizing the continuance and restoration of the normal family type based on morality to prevent dismantling of the family (Kim Heung-Ju 1994: 35). This movement has the premise that the family problems in modern society are caused by the deviation from the normal family form due to moral deficiency. That is, this movement stands on the view point that the problem is caused by the moral deficiency of the family, and does not view the problem as a social one. Therefore, it justifies the government's lack of a solution for the problem and is characterized by moral-ideological control over the family in trouble.

redistribution of wealth. As pointed out above, generalization of the branching family from parents is caused by daily life need, so it is difficult for these policies to have an effect. Moreover, because old parents living together in urban areas gives rise to a good deal of additional expenses, it is possible that the recipients who can live together in urban areas by the benevolence of these policies are the rich who have a low burden of parents-support.

Like this case, it is expected that the policies aiming at inducing the family bond toward a specific direction are losing their efficacy more and more because the family constitution is shifting from being group centered to becoming individual centered and therefore diverse forms of family are given more weight. Accordingly, it is required that Korean family welfare receive the individual's selection of diverse family binding. Take the policies discussed above as an example: If an old person wants to receive favor from those policies, he has to live together with his son regardless of his situation or preference. But now, old people in the situation of diverse family binding, by reason of their preference or need, are increasing and there is the need to provide them with the same favor.

## **Conclusion**

Recently, the core institutions, including householders or those with the qualification of lineage membership, which have been the basis of traditional Korean family, are rapidly changing. Needless to say, the characteristics of family welfare have to be modified in accordance with the changes in family structure or characteristics. Therefore, a detailed analyses on the family structure and characteristics in a changing Korea have to be carried out immediately in relation to the family welfare. However, the discussions on Korean family welfare seem to have taken their first step mistakenly. Reviewing existing discussions, one can hardly find any explanation but criticisms on the characteristics of Korean family welfare. The explanatory framework for the characteristics of existing family welfare is important in that it can be applied to the explanation on the desired orientation of transforming the basic characteristics of welfare in accordance with future changes in family structure. Commencing from this awareness of the problem, this paper has studied the orientation of family welfare by defining the family structure and characteristics of Korea with the concept of the bilateral family that conforms with the new family structure and characteristics. Having no formalized shape, the bilateral family structure has weaker binding forces than the paternal

direct lineage structure, is active in terms of formation-change-extinction, and individual members play important roles in family structure. Therefore, the characteristics of the family model based on the conventional patrilineal family, which is a group having a formalized ideal shape and self-life, combining members strongly with a deliberated internal position and role structure on the basis of the common goal of maintaining the continuance of the family member group, with protective and supportive duties of family members who are given as super-personal obligation, will not be able to be maintained. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that Korean family welfare in the future has to socialize the protective and supportive services for individuals on the basis of accepting diverse types of family.

The necessity of socializing individual protective and supportive functions of the family has been presented in many prior studies. However, in such situations as the strong idea of the paternal direct lineage family, such assertions could hardly secure sufficient persuasive ground, and Korean family welfare has been developed towards maintaining and restoring the supportive system which can be presumed to be achievable in an ideal family. However, as discussed above, the foundation that has justified the characteristics of existing family welfare, whether in ideology or in reality, is disappearing quickly according to the rapid change of the structure and characteristics of the Korean family. Therefore, basically, the orientation of family functions must be socialized, and what functions, how far, and in what manner such socialization should be implemented remain as urgent study.

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