“A Message on Life to the Young”–
Perceiving a Senior Volunteer Activity
in Japan from an Intergenerational
Perspective

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ABSTRACT. Intergenerational programming has gained more recognition in Japan in the last decade or so, as research and reports on the status and case studies of intergenerational programs become available since mid-1990s. This paper examines the case study of a volunteer narrative group called G-117 formed primarily by seniors who are survivors of the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake as an example of an emerging intergenerational program. The research was carried out mainly during fieldwork among senior volunteer groups in Kobe from late 2001 to early 2002, primarily through qualitative approaches of interviews and participant observation. I propose that besides observational research, a more in-depth engagement through ethnographic case study, although much less common in intergenerational program research, is also important in
providing rich, contextualized understanding of the development of an intergenerational program, particularly in a cross-cultural setting.

KEYWORDS. Intergenerational volunteers, observational research, ethnographic case study, cross-cultural programs

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational programming has gained more recognition in Japan in the last decade or so, as research and reports on the status and case studies of intergenerational programs become available since mid-1990s (e.g., JARC, 1994; Sawano, 1999; Kaplan et al., 1998; Thang, 2001; Butts and Kusano, 2002). A small but growing network called the Japan Intergenerational Network spearheaded by Atsuko Kusano of Shinshu University to promote intergenerational programming in Japan further shows interest garnering from the ground on the subject. Furthermore, in an effort to promote intergenerational programming, the state has introduced the Intergenerational Exchange Award in 1999 to recognize organizations most actively involved with intergenerational programming (Sawano, 1999).

Several reasons have led to increasing recognition for intergenerational programming in Japanese society. Rapid aging and dwindling birth rate, a fall in the proportion of three-generational households, coupled with youth problems such as violence and deviant behavior among children have caused concerns in society and encouraged one to look to intergenerational interactions—where old serve as guiding post and transmitter of desirable social values—as one possible solution to positive social change. From the policy makers’ point of view, in an aging society which requires more manpower in health care and welfare services, exposing young people to the old may influence them towards future career choice to work with elderly people (Butts and Kusano, 2002).

Intergenerational programming in Japan, although not necessarily appearing under the banner of intergenerational programs per se, have consistently appeared under a variety of initiatives and policy directives.
over the years. Intergenerational programming first appears as one way to promote well-being and purpose of life of older persons under the framework of a ‘lifelong learning society’ in early 1980; and again in the 1986 “General Principles Concerning Measures for the Longevity Society.” The 1996 new Fundamental Law on Policies for an Aging Society continues to promote intergenerational programming as a measure to promote ‘active social participation’ of older persons. The ‘Volunteer school’ program started since 1977 by Ministry of Education also often involve students interacting with older persons in institutional or community context as they volunteer. Such opportunities are further enhanced with new plans such as the ‘Integrated Learning Time’ for all schools since 2002 which encourages students to volunteer and interact with the community, where older persons constitutes an integral part (Thang, 2002).

At first glance, intergenerational programming appears a top-down initiative with the government playing an active role in making it happen. However, a close look at many of the programs will reveal that motivation from the citizens as individual players play equally, if not more important roles in making intergenerational connections possible. Many of these may not have begun with any ‘big direction’ in mind, nor will they conceived first as an intergenerational initiative; however, they may later concur as they find directions and sustainability from the intergenerational approach. Probably due to the image of intergenerational initiatives as co-opted into the state agenda, the citizen initiatives seem to be only marginally connected to issue-oriented civil society movement, such as the environment movement in the 1970s (Hirata, 2002: 16). Nonetheless, the ground-up intergenerational initiatives provide an interesting case of integration between the state and citizen driven initiatives in efforts to link the generations. A case study of an intergenerational initiative will further provide insights to the opportunities and limitations of expending intergenerational programs and activities in Japan.

This paper examines the case study of a volunteer narrative group called G-117 formed primarily by seniors who are survivors of the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake as an example of an emerging intergenerational program. The research was carried out mainly during fieldwork among senior volunteer groups in Kobe from late 2001 to early 2002, primarily through qualitative approaches of interviews and participant observation. As pointed out by Kuehne and Collins (1997), although an effective way in capturing the context and participants,
‘observational research’ is underused as a method of studying and evaluating intergenerational programs. I propose that besides observational research, a more indepth engagement through ethnographic case study, although much less common in intergenerational program research, is also important in providing rich, contextualized understanding of the development of an intergenerational program, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. This is supported by Ward (1999), who finds ethnographic approach suitable for the intergenerational field because of characteristics such as the following:

(a) the locations include naturalistic settings and their contexts; (b) the focus is on the perspective of the insider; (c) researchers are personally involved in the research, and (d) both the informal, often implicit, agenda and the open and clearly stated agenda are of interest. (Ward, 1999:11)

Through an ethnography perspective, this paper shall first provide the contextual background to the initiation of the group in discussion. This is followed by an observation and analysis of one activity of G-117 and a discussion on perceiving the group from the perspective of intergenerational engagements. In the study, I propose the significance of strategizing their activities within the conceptual framework of an intergenerational initiative to ensure continuity and gaining recognition for their efforts to link the generations through narrative.

G-117 (GROUP 117): HOW IT STARTED

The narrative group, G-117, was formed in 1999 as a volunteer group with the main objective of narrating the experiences of the 1995 earthquake. It is one of the numerous groups that were formed as a result of the earthquake.

Emergence of volunteer activism in contemporary Japan is closely tied to the January 17, 1995, earthquake which struck the Hanshin-Awaji area of Japan with a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale. The catastrophe has resulted in the lose of 6,400 lives, leaving 320,000 people homeless. However, on the positive note, it has resulted in a tremendous rise of volunteer organizations in the region. In a survey on volunteer activities by Hyogo Prefecture (N = 4,829 groups), 30 percent of the volunteer organizations in the region were established after the earthquake. In Kobe, a city that was severely hit by the earthquake,
half of the voluntary organization surveyed indicated that they were established as a result of the earthquake (Hyogo Prefecture Social Welfare Council, 2001). Among the volunteers, many were themselves earthquake victims who have formed groups to help fellow victims and lobby for citizens’ participation in rebuilding the cities. In general, these volunteer groups tend to be small and fairly informal organizations, with more than 50% of the groups having less than 20 members. 70% of their activities are related to welfare for the needy (ibid.).

According to the 2001 report (ibid.), among the volunteers in the region, those in the sixties age group formed the bulk of the volunteers (23.6%) followed by the fifties (21%), the seventies (16.7%) and the forties (13%). In total, volunteers above age fifty formed 61.3% of the volunteer population in the region. This is expected as the retirees, when compared with the younger age groups, tends to have more time, energy and even financial resources for volunteer commitment.

The G-117 is typical of a post-earthquake volunteer group which is small in size, and specialized in its volunteer objective. It is however, unique as a group that focuses on ‘narrative’ rather than the more usual disaster-related volunteering relating to helping the homeless, needy and aged; re-building of the earthquake-stricken areas or fund-raising. According to the group members, they are probably the only organized narrative group. The G-117, which has about a dozen members, is led by Mr. Hasegawa (in his early fifties) who lost his house during the earthquake. Why the mission of narrative of the disaster? Mr. Hasegawa states, “It is important for people to hear the ‘raw’ voice (nama no koe o kiite), the real experience, not just reports from the mass media.” The group was only formed four years after the earthquake because many of the members were too traumatized by their multiple losses to have the courage to speak out sooner. The rapid reconstruction of the city, however, prompted them to realize the urgency of their action as a way to preserve the collective memories of the disaster, which is fast fading away as visible signs of the disaster were rapidly disappearing in the changing cityscape.

Since their inception in 1999, the G-117 has spoken to more than 20 different groups. Some of these events were covered by the media, which further promoted the group’s reputation. Most of these groups are made up of student from other parts of Japan who visited Kobe as part of their graduation or year-end school excursions. Kobe—with its historic blend of Japanese and Western influence, has always been a tourist spot for locals and foreigners. After the earthquake, study tours of Kobe have begun to include the earthquake experience of Kobe.
In a typical narrative activity with a school group, the G-117 would recommend that the students begin their study trip about the earthquake with a visit of the Kobe Earthquake Memorial Museum situated at Sannomiya, the city centre of Kobe. Sometimes, if there is time, the group may arrange that the students visit the reconstructed public apartments built for earthquake victims, or an orphanage housing children who lost their parents during the disaster. After that, the group members will lead the students who are divided into small groups of 10 to 15 to various damage areas that were preserved as memorial sites. Group members who are living or used to live in the area would give a narration on the extent of damage the area has suffered during the earthquake and about its restoration. One of the highlights of the narration is the sharing with students on the loss of their loved ones during the earthquake. Such emotional accounts readily resonates in the heart of the students and certainly impacted them deeper than objective news reports such as “Kobe is struck with an earthquake killing more than 6,000 people.”

In a way, the narrative session bears resemblance to the ‘healing history’ project reported by Ohsako (2002), where German pupils and Jewish seniors engaged in a dialogue; they discussed and shared their experience and feelings towards the Holocaust. According to Ohsako, the project enables “the healing of wounds that history has inflicted” (p. 209).

From a psychological perspective, members of G-117 engages in an interaction with the self as they spoke to the students (Yamori). While the students are deeply moved by the narrative, the narrator’s socio-psychological world as a victim is also altered in the course of the narration. There have been various studies on the health and mental health problems among earthquake victims and the loss of meaning in life seems is to have seriously affected their chances of recovery (Shinfuku, 1999). Yamori reported that members of G-117 have found a “purpose of living” as a result of their engagement in the voluntary activity (Yamori, 2002). The courage to speak out is itself a therapeutic process to them. Members also find consolation and support in friendship with each other. To students who attended the talks, too, their empathy towards one of the narrators has prompted some to start regular correspondence with her.

In the following, I move beyond psychological implications to examine the group activities within the framework of intergenerational programming and process.
THE DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF G-117

The G-117 certainly did not begin as an intergenerational initiative. When the group began in 1999, Mr. Hasegawa and the members’ mission were simply to share with others their frightening memories of the few seconds of violent tremble, and their experiences in the aftermath of the quake, including their unsettling lives in emergency shelters and temporary housing. News reports of one of their earlier talks to Japanese elementary students from Gifu Prefecture reflected this focus:

At first, at the Merican Park in Central District, Hasegawa described how the surrounding has been damaged by the earthquake. After showing the students a damage building near to Nankin Street which has remained since the earthquake, Mr. Hayashi (81 years old) took over to describe how his residence at the Higashi-Nada district was completely destroyed. He talked about the awful experience of becoming homeless in the cold winter with the lack of food. (Yomiuri News, June 100, 2000)

The students’ reaction of the talks shows that the group has fulfilled its objective, “From the talk, I learnt how terrifying an earthquake is!”; “I heard about the earthquake from volunteers who came to help in Kobe. Today, I really got to understand how frightening it was!” In these instances, the elder persons were seen little beyond their roles as resource persons with their first hand accounts about the earthquake. Although they are interacting across the generations, the elderly persons were not seen as someone who can enrich and enhance the life of the young listeners.

The initial efforts to facilitate some form of meaningful intergenerational engagements emerged as new female members joined the group in 2000. According to Mr. Hasegawa, the re-positioning of the narratives from ‘learning about the terror of earthquake’ to ‘learning about the importance of life through the disaster’ first came about as Miss Tamagawa, a poet became affiliated with the group in mid 2000. Her poems on the earthquake basically deal with the theme of the need to treasure life and how the victims struggled to rebuild their lives.

It was also the same period when Mrs. Shono (68 years old) saw news report on G-117 activities and decided to participate as a member. Mrs. Shono lost her 29-year-old son when her house collapsed during the earthquake. She was also seriously injured in the quake and was hospitalized for a few months. She is driven to play an active role as a narrator...
of the painful experience because of several reasons. First, she shares
the same concerns with the group about preserving the collective mem-
ories of the quake. Second, as she ages, she feels the urge to contribute
something to the society before she is too frail to do it, and finally, the
various incidents in Japan relating to youth violence, such as bullying
and suicides of young people, have prompted her to do her part to save
the lives of young people, because, “If I don’t talk about it now, I will
surely regret in the future.”

Since she joined the G-117, Mrs. Shono has become one of the most
active speakers in the group. Her narration, which focuses on transmit-
ting to the young the values of life, shifted the focus of the group closer
to an intergenerational approach.

The following is a narration of the group’s activity at a middle school
in Nara city. The paper ends with a discussion connecting the G-117
with the concept of a school-based intergenerational program.

The G-117’s Talk at a Middle School

The G-117 was invited to give a talk to 240 second year middle
school students in Nara city in mid December 2001. It was their first in-
vitation outside Kobe as their main activities since the group’s forma-
tion has been with receiving school group visits to Kobe and speaking in
schools within Kobe.

The group began their activity by showing the students a short tele-
vision documentary on Kobe earthquake. After watching the show,
the students gathered in the sports hall to hear the talk. Mrs. Shono and
Mrs. Asai were the speakers while Mr. Hasegawa was in charge of
flashing some visuals, including photographs of Mrs. Shono’s damaged
house and Mrs. Asai’s demised daughter. This paper focuses on Mrs.
Shono’s narration and discusses the significance of her narration in
intergenerational connections.

Mrs. Shono started her talk with a description of that day when her
house collapsed burying her and her son. She was a good narrator,
bringing the audience with her as she related the hours she laid in the de-
bris in total darkness, too frail to answer to her old neighbor’s faint cry
for help. She was later rescued by her dog but her son was only found
the next day. She stopped to weep a little when she recalled the moment
her son’s death was confirmed.

Then she turned the narration to her injury and recovery as a patient
in chaotic medical condition where medication and bed space were seri-
ously lacking. Next, she moved back to talk about the day of the earth-
quake. She emphasized that “there’s nothing we can do about natural
disaster,” but recalling why her son lost his life, “I was told by my
daughter that beside her unconscious brother was the table, which still
stood in the midst of the debris. If my son had noticed that it was an
earthquake and hid under the table, he would have been saved. So all of
you, in any event, simply hide under the table . . . as long as you have
your life, you can do anything.”

Her narration frequently swung to and forth from the scene of the
earthquake to her experiences during hospitalization, and to the death of
her son. In between these narratives, she intentionally sent moral mes-
Sages to the young. She first explained to the students why she wanted to
talk to them:

We can’t do anything with earthquakes and natural disasters, but
just two years ago, I often read about news on youth violence such
as youth killing others youth, killing their grandparents, murdering
their parents, bullying their friends, what is the world coming to?
There was a time that it was happening so often. At that time, I
thought to myself, “It is so regretful that many people are dying, it
is a regret that people are wasting away the only life that they are
given, this should not be so.” With such thought, I joined the
group, because I want to do it for those who have passed away, as a
way of paying respect to the many people who have died.

Her messages to the young could be divided into the following em-
phasis:

• Stop violence
  “Let’s say among you there are two or three people who are bully-
ing a friend. When you see this, you should have the courage to
say, ‘Hey, stop it, we should be good friends’ even if you may get
beaten up for it. It is inhuman not to stop your friends from bully-
ing others. . . . When we get angry and wanted to turn violent, it
could be detrimental if we do not immediately take two or three
steps back. We will be like an animal if we just hit on instinct be-
cause we feel angry. . . ”

• Unconditional love of parents to their children
  “The unbearable sadness to a parent who lost her child—you will
understand when you grow up and become adults. The girls, espe-
cially, from the time you give birth to a child and become a mother,
you will at some point understand the unconditional love that your
 parents have showered on you all these years. . . . Mothers forget
about the pains of childbirth when they look at their cute children—that’s how much love parents feel for their children. Hence, don’t tell your parents you want to leave them when you become a middle school student. It’s because of your parents that you are what you are today. . . . I have many regrets even at this age. I wished I had listened more to what my mother had to say when she was alive. Therefore, when you are free, even when you are busy with your studies, listen to your parents and ask them for advice. Talk to your parents about things in the past, things happening now, anything . . . ”

• Connecting with the older generations and volunteering
  “Take advantage of the presence of your grandparents and learn various things from them. The knowledge will be useful to you as you grow up. . . . Nowadays grandparents are really lonely. Why is it so? Because very few are still staying with children. Most elderly are staying alone nowadays, therefore, when you walk on the street and meet an elderly in the neighborhood, greet them ‘good day.’ These elderly men and women will be happy to be greeted by young people; your greeting will be a source of happiness for them. This is a small way to volunteer—just be greeting others. It may sound strange to say that this is volunteering . . . but it is a form of volunteering as long as the kindness and desire to help others begins from your heart. Volunteering does not only mean benefitting others, you also benefit as you volunteer.”

• Be kind to others
  “You’re in your second year now. I learnt from my son that in the second year, you have senpai (senior) above you and kohai (junior) below you. You are sandwiched in between. If you think you want to bully your junior just because your senior have bullied you, this is not good. Your should reflect upon your position and be nice to your junior. Don’t you want to become the senior that your juniors will always respect?”

She ended her 30 minute talk with the following:

“You are given a life by your parents, it is precious, you should take good care of yourself and do not become a burden to your parents. It will be unfilial of you to hurt yourself or become disabled because you did not take good care of yourself. I hope you treasure your life dearly.”
As December was closed to the seventh anniversary of the earthquake on January 17, the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Company) followed the G-117 throughout the whole event. They were filmed from their train rides to Nara and the process of the event. After the talks by Mrs. Shono and Mrs. Arai (Mrs. Arai refused to let the film crew took her face), a few students stayed back and posed questions to Mr. Hasegawa and Mrs. Shono. The whole event was broadcast on January 17 the following year as part of the Kobe earthquake memorial special.

**G-117 AS AN INTERGENERATIONAL INITIATIVE**

In the discussion on intergenerational approaches in schools, Kaplan (2001) emphasizes the mutual benefits of the approach to both the old and the young, “civic-minded senior adults contribute to the educational process and make important contributions to children’s lives. Conversely, children bring much energy, enthusiasm, and support into the lives of seniors” (p. 4).

Although the G-117 did not operate from the intergenerational perspective, their activities and intentions parallel with the characteristics of an intergenerational initiative, as seen in the case of Mrs. Shono’s talk above. Moreover, in the talk, she intentionally brought herself closer to the students with frequent mention of her own children and their experiences, such as the senior-junior relations and typical youth problems such as bullying.

At first glance, the event seems one-sided with Mrs. Shono as the only one speaking while the students listened. However, the students were able to reflect upon her narration in their written comments to G-117 after the event. As mentioned, in some earlier talks to elementary school students, the relationship continued as a few students ‘volunteered’ to keep in touch through letters with Mrs. Shono to keep her company. Two-way communications is thus a possible positive outcome. The mini letters of reflections from students who heard the G-117 talks are always collated and published in the group’s newsletter, and referred to as “love letters from the young to nourish us.”

Although the G-117 did not perceive themselves as an intergenerational initiative, it has begun to strategize themselves as a specialized narration group on first hand earthquake experiences with the aim of educating the young a year after they were formed. In their monthly study meetings, they discussed issues as fundamental as “what is the purpose of our group?” and explore better ways of communications, with ques-
tions like “What shall we speak about?” and “How shall we speak more effectively?” Mr. Hasegawa maintains that the female members are better speakers than the men do because as mothers, they relate better to the children; and are able to bring themselves ‘to their level’ as they speak.

To expand their activities in schools, the group has recently applied for a grant to support their volunteer activities with the students. They titled their proposal, ‘education of the heart’ (kokoro no kyoiku), reflecting their emphasis on moral education to the children via their talks. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful in their application. Mr. Hasegawa felt that it could be because compared to most volunteer groups focusing on helping the old and disabled, a narration group like G-117 is seen to incur little, if any expenses. But this is not necessarily true, as Mr. Hasegawa pointed out, “we require equipment like microphones, and incur expenses such as transport cost and postage cost as we send materials to people who wrote in with their request, and production of newsletters and so forth.”

**G-117 and School-Based Intergenerational Approach**

Despite receiving no grant support from grant for volunteer organizations, the G-117 is expected to relate their activities more with schools in Japan. Kaplan (2001, 6-7) classifies the intergenerational programs in schools into the following categories:

a. Connections to the school curriculum  
b. History  
c. The performing arts  
d. Language arts  
e. Technological skills development  
f. Environmental education  
g. Others

Using this classification, the G-117’s connection with schools would come under the categories of ‘connections to the school curriculum,’ ‘history,’ as well as ‘environmental education.’ For example, their invitation to speak at the middle school in Nara combines the three forms: it is ‘history’–as students listened to a significant event that happened seven years ago when they were still an elementary student, ‘a connection to the school curriculum’ as they presented during the ‘integrated learning’ time under the designated theme of ‘learning about peace’
heiwa gakushuu). It is also ‘environmental education’ as students learned about the destructiveness of natural disasters and gained some knowledge about what to do during such time.

G-117 has great potential in expanding their activities throughout schools in Japan as they strategize their talks along the educational concerns of the new educational structure and ideas such as the ‘integrated learning’ plan. The weekly ‘integrated learning’ is a new initiative by the Ministry of Education. It was implemented as part of the “rainbow plan” in the educational restructure plan of 2001. Along with other measures such as five-day school week (from April 2002) and expansion of the community’s role in school education, the state hopes that a wider education beyond textbooks and classroom teachings could elevate crisis such as youth crimes, school violence, bullying, school refusal, the decline of moral standards among children long faced by the educational system.

Lately, the group reflected Mr. Hasegawa’s concern with the continuity of the group activities. As a result of the publicity gained from the NHK program in January, the group has seen an increase in requests for them to talk to students. The requests, however, were met with disagreement among the group members. Some begin to feel reluctant about exposing themselves too often, reflecting their struggle between keeping their memories as personal and private narrative versus sharing it with more people and using their personal experience as a catalyst for discussing wider educational and moral issues. I argue that the conflict shows the need for an intergenerational approach as a framework to give meaning to their volunteer efforts. Without a clear position of the intention of their efforts, members would feel psychologically exhausted and soon begin to question their purpose as volunteers.

One way to sustain their survival, is thus to recognize and continue to strategize their activities within the conceptual framework of an intergenerational initiative. With the broad framework, they can re-define their intentions, focus on training and planning of an intergenerational activity with the expected outcome of benefits for both the receivers and speakers. They can then also work towards gaining recognitions for their work in the area of intergenerational activities.

**CONCLUSION**

What are the implications of G-117 on intergenerational programming in Japan? First, its development from being an outlet of personal pain and
personal memories of the earthquake to one with a broader educational objective with the young contributes to the concept of ‘generativity’ in adult development (Erikson, 1959) where older persons find guiding and caring the next generation necessarily for them to be ‘generative.’ More older persons have found such opportunities to be shrinking as changing family structures, less opportunities to interact with their own grandchildren because of nuclear living arrangement, and falling fertility have resulted in lesser number of grandchildren.

Benefits to the older persons’ well being and development is commonly perceived outcome of sharing with another generation (Kuehne, 2003). Furthermore, bringing the message to schools—beyond private communication between grandparents and grandchildren in a familial context—suggests the significance of intergenerational initiative of this sort as beyond mere sentimental terms to include the value of an intergenerational exchange in effecting change in school children and serving to teach them the value of life. This parallels with Moody and Disch’s (1989) call on the need to position intergenerational programming more accurately to highlight its importance to the larger social and political relevance.

Second, the present ambiguous position of G-117 as an intergenerational initiative reflects the limited scope defined as intergenerational activity in Japan. Despite evidence of intergenerational programming as gaining momentum in Japan with support from both government efforts and civic initiatives, the general directions in promoting intergenerational programming are still absent. As noted by Butts and Kusano (2002), there is a lack of an overarching theoretical framework in Japan and the different types of intergenerational initiatives are often viewed as distinctly separate and conceptually unrelated (p. 258).

In general, intergenerational activities, or sedaikan koryuu, still commonly evokes images of interactions in the form of elderly playing traditional games or doing folkcraft with the young; or the young paying visits to frail elderly in nursing homes (Thang, 2002). There is also a lack of interagency and cross-disciplinary collaborative arrangements in Japan (Butts and Kusano, 2002: 258). Such characteristics in the conceptualization of an intergenerational initiative in Japan only serve to limit intergenerational approaches and prevent groups and programs that happen to chance upon intergenerational approaches to adopt an intergenerational ‘eye’ in evaluating their efforts and in charting their direction for sustainability in the intergenerational realm. Japan, as an aging society which is still grappling with the changes in the percep-
tions of old age, and changing values of the young, certainly have rooms to innovate, invent and expand their conceptualizations of intergenerational programming not only to encompass, but to promote collaborations of a variety of approaches and initiatives as long as they fulfill the intentions of benefiting the generations across the life spectrum.

NOTES

1. The proportion of persons age 65 and above is 17.4% in 2000, and expected to reach 27.9% by 2020. The total fertility rate is 1.33 in 2001 (c.f. Kono, 2003).
2. The percentage of persons aged 60 and over co-living with children is 47.9% in 2001 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2001).
3. Yamori is a psychologist, also the co-leader of the group. He is the only member who was not an earthquake victim. He has been observing the group to study the psychological impact of narrative as therapy.
4. My latest contact with the group was with Mr. Hasegawa through telephone on March 23, 2002.

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Received: 10/14/04
Reviewed: 12/20/04
Accepted: 03/30/05