Societal Transition on Mongolian Families
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ABSTRACT
Mongolia is located in Northern Asia bordering on Russia and China. Mongolian culture has been described as unique due to its traditionally nomadic way of living. Since societal transition that took place in 1990, studies on Mongolian family system have primarily focused on quantitative data that provide basic demographic descriptions; there are few qualitative research studies conducted. Much remains to be learned in significant changes in traditional Mongolian values and practices, specifically related to poverty and alcoholism. The “Social Ecological Model” framework was used to explain impacts of societal change on Mongolian families and social issues of unemployment, alcoholism, public service and low quality education affecting families. On the other hand, there are cultural values and principles that have survived through the significant changes in the country, and they are identified as cultural strengths.

BACKGROUND
When Mongolia made a transition from a centrally planned government to a market economy, many industries were closed or privatized. Due to a lack of central governance, nationwide unemployment soared and poverty increased. According to Asian Development Bank, 39% of population live under poverty line in 2011. World Health Organization reported that 22% of men and 5% of women are alcohol dependent in 2006. 68% of the population live in urban areas in 2010 which show an increase from 57% in 2000. (Population and Housing Census) In 2009, monthly average wage was estimated at 308.1 tug – $235. (National Statistics Office)

METHOD
The qualitative study is based on data collected from a convenience sample in three provinces (aimag): Ar缠hangai, Uvurkhangai, Darkhan-Uul, and two districts - Baganuur and Bayankhoshuu in Ulaanbaatar city. 30 people were interviewed and 150 participants completed brief surveys questions.

RESULTS

“Socio-Ecological Model” by Urie Bronfenbrenner

Public Service
- Education and Health System’s quality decreased and became less affordable.
- Our county has over 2000 people and we do not have any of K12 schools. Because of overcrowding, one classroom serves to three phrases of classes. Each class consists of an average, 50 students and the worst class finishes at 9 PM.

Value Changes
- Respect for each other decreased
- Competition for oneself increased
- I cannot feel too better for you
- Change in couple’s roles and responsibilities
- Shift from communal to individualistic value

Social Norm
- Men fail in their responsibility to provide economic resource to family.
- Men respect their friends of brotherhood, while women think they are drinking buddies. 
- Poor pressure in young men “I drank to stay with my friend”

Migration to cities
- Started since 2000
- 70% (yurt) districts around the capital city
- Poverty, unemployment, pollution and health issues

Public Policy
- “Human Development Fund”
  - For every person, every month, $20
  - For students, every month, $70
- For elders, once $500
- Increase in alcoholism, unemployment and poverty resulted

Natural Disaster
- Hard winter 2009-2010
- Herders lost most of their livestock animals which is their sole economic income

Macro-System
- Centralized system to privatized units
  - Nationwide unemployment
  - Few companies in alcohol industry
  - Mostly families are ‘working class’
  - Salary did not increase
  - People either take salary loan or have additional income from livestock products or agriculture.

Cultural Strengths
- Environmental Conservation
  - “Nomadic culture is dependent on the nature and Mongolians had preserved it for generations and should be continued. Every morning, women sprinkle a sample from their milk tea to the nature and mountains wishing for blessings and well being for their families.
- Respect for both elders and youth
  - Traditional saying: “Respect elders in a fathom [unit used to measure length – 1.8 meters] and respect youth a little less than a fathom.”
  - Children-based family
    - Healthy body, family wellbeing and children’s education were top responses to what were the most important things in participants’ lives. Most people were willing to do everything for their children to get the best education possible.
  - Communication in marriage
    - Respect your husband, love your wife.
- Concentration on girls
  - Families invest in daughters’ education equally.

Socio-Ecological Model (SEM)
- Macro-system describes the culture in which individuals live and shares common identity and values.
- Exosystem refers to the community level influence, including fairly established norms, standards, and social networks.
- Mesosystem refers to organizational or institutional factors that shape or structure the environment within which the individual and interpersonal relations occur.
- Microsystem consist of individual or interpersonal features and those aspects of groups that comprise the social identity.

DISCUSSION
According to the SEM, systems evolve over time creating a new and unique society. Economic opportunity from natural resource in Mongolia can help creating a new system that is sustainable. Further research is needed to examine the effect in applying cultural strength to developmental programs targeting individuals.

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REFERENCE