

Full Length Research Paper

## Correlations between cultural orientations and successful aging of Filipino elders

Carmencita Del Villar

Faculty, Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Philippines.

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Through the years, the topic of aging has been investigated in relation to the elders' place in cultural traditions, the roles they played in managing the family, their functions in the community, the challenges they faced as a result of their physical and psychological changes, and their well-being as they aged. Although there still seems to be a deficit in research about elders, considering their growing presence in society, some of these studies are worth mentioning.

**Key words:** Cultural orientations, aging, Filipino elders.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Elders' roles in society

Elders, since the early times, have become vital and essential members of society by assuming different roles: As "living ancestors, family historians, mentors, nurturers, and role models for aging" (Bengston and Burton, 1990; Kornhaber, 1996). Further, Hentig (1946) highlighted that elders played important roles during the pre-industrial age among American Indians namely: The roles of "mother, father, teacher, as the real parents work for their physical survival" and the roles of "grandmother if often mystical, earning her special prestige as a woman born to good luck... provide knowledge of the secrets of nature, and provide permanency amidst the catastrophe of life... [and provide] security, stability, wisdom, and permanence" (390) among the Black culture. Kornhaber and Woodward

(1981b) defined important positions of grandparents as "family historian, living ancestor, nurturer, mentor, role model, crony, wizard, and hero." Japanese elders, played very important roles in the old traditional society as Strom and Strom (1993) recounted how elders were "accorded an honored, respected, and ritualized place in the culture initiated with a rite of passage" (705). Similarly, elders were accorded special privileges in the pre-industrialized African tribal cultures as Paulme (1960) noted that grandmothers were given the title of *umufasoni*, which meant that they have become the noble ones because they have reached an important phase in their life. The tribe would now accord her respect. McGoldrick et al. (1996) recorded that "old age among French-Canadian families brings considerable status, more so than in the dominant American culture... Grandmothers are revered

E-mail: cpdelvillar@gmail.com.

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and respected as repositories of knowledge about the entire family kinship network (84).” Hentig (1946) declared that grandmothers played a critical role in the life of the family – that which was “primitive but effective mechanism of group survival (390).” Paulme (1960) further observed that the matrilineal tradition pervaded in African-American society and that female elders enjoyed high status and regard for their contribution in nurturing their grandchildren. In countries like Brazil, Columbia, China, and Japan, elders were looked up to with respect and reverence (Gardiner et al., 1998). Among the Tupian tribe of South America, grandfathers were seen as culture heroes (Josphy, 1968). In the Philippines, elders too were revered. Medina (1991) wrote that the elders in the Philippine society “have traditionally enjoyed a special place of honor (218).” They were seen as assets because they were respected and sought after for their experience and good judgment. Saraswathi (2003) wrote that in India, old age was linked to good standing, wisdom, and reverence. The family as well as the community sought the elders’ advice on a wide range of matters.

### **Elders’ functions**

Elders play important functions in their families. For instance, Native American elders were known for the close interaction they have with their grandchildren. They were regarded not only as caregivers but also as teachers. Relationship between the elders and grandchildren started early in the children’s lives as elders were often open and accessible when it came to caring for the little ones (McGoldrick et al., 1982). For the Ojibway Indians, grandparents were given the honor of naming the new grandchildren. In the 1980s in urban China, 24% of households comprised of three generations where parents and children lived in their grandparents homes while the figure was even higher in rural households. Grandparents’ function among Chinese families was seen as extremely important (Tien and Lee, 1988). Grandmothers kept themselves busy keeping house and taking care of the children while their daughters-in-law worked (Amoss and Harrell, 1981). Grandfathers, on the other hand, were a good sources of treats, stories, and even comfort when the grandchildren needed them (Wolf, 1978). Falbo (1991) found that the presence of elders in the lives of their grandchildren was beneficial in that having educated grandparents was correlated to the children’s good academic performance and pleasant personality. In Micronesia, grandparents engaged themselves actively in the nurturing, healing, and teaching of their grandchildren. They supplied the “emotional glue” that kept the extended family intact (Amoss and Harrel, 1981). Kornhaber and Woodward (1981) added that elders were “the source of support in times of family crisis and illness or when parents had to

work outside the home (42).”

### **Elders in relationships with family**

In Western cultures, grandparents are likewise seen as having close relationships with their families. Willmott and Young (1960) portrayed the close connection between grandparents and grandchildren among British working-class families. Erickson (1950) pictured the Yurok grandmother’s “mystical role as spiritual guide and intercessor with other worlds... If a child shows disturbance or complains of pain indicating that he may have seen wise people, his grandmother goes out into the garden or the creek... and speaks to the spirits (173).” Grandparents are so involved in nurturing the young ones that they were blamed when these children displayed any unpleasant character. Blum (1983) emphasized the “love, support, sanction and facilitating attitudes of grandparents are needed by new parents (161).”

### **Elders’ transformations as a result of aging**

Elders are said to be at a stage in their lives when they are naturally compelled to undergo certain transformations as a result of the natural phase of aging. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, described the later phases of life using his own experience that “at sixty, my ears were obedient organs of the reception of truth...and at seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right” (Zehnyun, 1996. 71). The famous psychologist, Carl Jung in the 1930s, noted that during a person’s middle life, one began to turn one’s attention from mastering the world and began focusing on the inner self. An inner urge manifested to encourage the person to realize the potentials one has left unrecognized and began to question the meaning of life that was already half lived (Jung, 1933). Another renowned psychologist Erik Erikson (Erikson, 1997) identified the eighth psychosocial stage which took place at ages 65 and older. It is called the last chapter of life or *ego-integrity*, when the elder was supposed to have accepted life at its fullness including all of its successes and defeats, achievements or failures, and wisdom as its final prize. Joan Erikson, wife of Erikson, wrote about the ninth stage of aging, the 80s and 90s, when new demands meet the body no matter how well-cared for they were. Their bodies, she continued, now began to weaken and did not function as before....”independence and control are challenged, self-esteem and confidence weaken...hope and trust, which once provided firm support, are no longer the sturdy props of former days...to face down despair with faith and appropriate humility is perhaps the wisest course...

(1997.117)”

### Difficulties experienced by elders

As elders experienced their aging simultaneously with developments in modern society, challenges begin to weigh down on them. Hickey (1980), for instance, observed certain American stereotypes that attributed disabilities and diseases experienced by elders to old age. Old age was seen as some kind of a terminal disease that began to set in at age 65. Gruman (1978) noted that as early as the nineteenth century, old debilitated men were perceived as strange and even “dangerous...useless...hopeless” and that they were compelled to retire and to be where they belonged – at home. Gillis (1996) observed that old people were seen as a “separate age group, with its own special times and places...to the old age home.” Cole (1996) saw segregating old people as the appropriate way of dealing with them. The old man in a rocking chair and the old widow in her sewing task became the familiar images of elders. In the Philippines, there were many problems that beset the elderly. Montes (1982) cited in Medina 1991 enumerated some of those problems such as: loss of income, feelings of abandonment, loneliness, diminished physical abilities, and lack of free or affordable health services. Lolarga (1982) added that retirement could be an ordeal for those used to working most of their lives. The sudden loss of an important activity, like going to work, could feel like losing a purpose for living. Medina (2001) added that diminishing physical abilities, especially the senses of sight and hearing, may cause difficulties in relating with members of the family. As a result, elders could feel misunderstood and isolated. Strom et al. (1995)’s three-generational study of grand parenting in Japan discovered that the grandparents themselves believed that there was an erosion in their status in the family. They felt more difficulty and disappointment in dealing with their children and grandchildren. They attributed these problems to the generation gap, their grandchildren’s gender, and age among others. One Filipino study tackled this same problem. The survey found that some elders no longer enjoyed as much respect as they once had and added that the young generation was now less respectful and compliant when it came to the old practice of showing respect (Social Research Center, UST. 1986).

### Elders through the periods in history

Synthesizing the above discussion, Zalman (1995) provided a perspective of the place and experience of elders in society during two important periods in history and added a third period that was seen to be already happening. He termed the periods as *movements in a*

*symphony*. He wrote:

In the *first movement*, which precedes the Industrial Revolution, elders have honored roles in society as spiritual leaders, political advisors, and teachers of the young. In the *second movement*, which begins with the Industrial Revolution and its emphasis on the production and consumption of material goods, elders lose their esteemed place in society. They become victims of *gerontophobia*, an irrational fear of advanced age based on disempowering cultural stereotypes. In the *third movement*, people begin searching for new myths and models to ennoble the experience of old age... they initiate a major cultural shift to revive *elderhood* in the modern world. This search for more meaningful roles in old age is in part a response to our evolution from an industrial economy to a postindustrial information and service economy, which has changed our understanding of what constitutes productivity. ... It means making available the wisdom, balanced judgment, and guidance that can help our technological culture have a healthier relationship with the natural world (57-58).

Bengston and Burton (1990) added that two important occurrences in the past fifty years that significantly influenced aging in industrialized societies resulting in a variety of family situations for the elderly: Demographic factors such as longevity and decreased fertility; and multiplicity of family structure and behaviors.

### Elders’ well-being

With the growing interest about the aging population, a number of studies dwelt on the elders’ well-being and the factors that influenced it. Xu et al. (1999), Shi (1985) and Hu (1985) cited in (Zhenyun, 1996) agreed that the elders’ health as well as standing in the family were highly influential in the elders’ feelings of well-being. Other factors were the income, marital status, educational level, and number of children. Xu and Wang (1994); Xu et al. (1992) found that daily activities and marriage significantly influenced the elders’ mental health, quality of life, and well-being. Other factors that were also found to be important were recreation such as dancing and volunteering. Meng (1991) found that living with the family directly influenced the elders’ quality of life. Li et al. (1991) and Shi et al. (1988) likewise found that elders who lived satisfactorily with their family and had good marriage experienced better mental health. Wood and Roberson (1976) discovered that those who were involved in grand parenting were the ones who experienced more life satisfaction. Kivnick (1980) too found connection between grandparenting and mental health and life satisfaction. From his study, five dimensions of the meaning of grandparenting emerged: As a “valued elder,” “immortality through clan,”

“responsible for family well-being,” “reinvolverment with the personal past,” and “indulgence.”

### **Elders in the context of communication**

Other developments were found on the elders' well being specific in the context of communication. Del Villar's (2014) study on Filipino elders in the communication context found significant correlations between the elders' attitude about aging and self-esteem, willingness to communicate and self-esteem, and communication satisfaction and self-esteem. The study's findings confirmed that self-esteem played a crucial role in determining a person's well-being. Having a high self-esteem was associated with feelings of overall satisfaction. A key lesson from those findings was that if elders felt good about themselves, they also felt good about aging; and if they felt good about aging they also became happy elders. The same study also confirmed the important correlation between willingness to communicate and self-esteem. Respondents who looked forward to connecting with people from different age groups and statuses in life were also the ones who had high self-esteem. Most of the elders even looked forward to sharing their wisdom with younger people even if the latter now refused to seek the former's counsel. Another key lesson from the study was that if elders were willing to interact with most people, they also felt good about themselves. The study also confirmed the strong association between communication satisfaction and self-esteem. Respondents who generally felt satisfied with their conversations were mostly the ones with high self-esteem. Another practical lesson from the study was that not only did self-esteem influence communication satisfaction, feeling satisfied also caused self-esteem to improve. For example, elders may be made to feel that their company was sought and that conversations with them was worth their family's time. They should also be listened to. Listening was shown to be an important part of a conversation and would grant the speaker some importance and satisfaction.

Interacting with fellow humans has been proven to be essential to everyone; it could not be undermined. Its absence would be akin to losing a vital life-giving connection. In the Del Villar's (2014) study, one significant manifestation of connection with others was willingness to communicate and the satisfaction one derived from it. Another important indicator of a healthy self-worth was one's attitude about oneself in the context of the stage in life one happened to be. A case in point was how elders felt about their own aging and how comfortable they were with its consequent physical and mental drawbacks. Putting all of these together, having a healthy self-esteem was essential because it affected the elders' whole being. A healthy well-being was associated with feelings of assurance and security. And if elders felt

secure about themselves, they also felt at ease connecting with those around them.

Despite past studies on aging, so many questions still beset not only the aging population but also society in general. In the Philippines, there is still a dearth in studies about aging; more importantly, studies that looked into an important variable - culture and its influence on aging people. It would be interesting to find out how culture affected the way elders perceived themselves, how fate and spirituality influenced their acceptance or non-acceptance of the inevitability of aging, the relationships of Filipino cultural orientations of high-power distance, collectivistic value, masculinity, and subjectivity to nature, to their successful aging. The present study was an attempt in that direction as it looked into the cultural dimension and its relationship to the successful aging among Filipino elders; specifically, the relationship between four cultural orientations (high-power distance, collectivism, masculinity, and subjectivity to nature) and successful aging

### **Study Frameworks**

The following sections discussed the important cultural concepts that framed the study: High-power distance cultural orientation, collectivism, masculinity, subjectivity to nature, and successful aging.

#### **High-power distance cultural orientation**

Hofstede (1980) Cited in Gudykunst and Kim (2003) ranked the Philippines a high number 4 in power-distance among 53 countries. The dominant characteristics of high power cultures particularly evident among Filipinos are: Inequality of individuals, dependence on superiors and unquestioning acceptance of directives from them, parental emphasis on obedience at home, respect for elders as a virtue, and high respect for those in authority.

The family is where values related to power-distance are first learned. As Hofstede et al. (2010) claimed, “All people start acquiring their mental software immediately after birth, from the elders in whose presence they grew up...” (67). In high-power-distance cultures, children learn to be respectful and submissive to their parents... and “this lasts through their adulthood...as long as the parents are alive...The pattern of dependence on seniors ...pervades all human contacts” (67). This enculturation carries over to the children's lives outside the family.

The school, where children spend an average of 20 years is where the “mental programming” that starts at home continues. Teachers instill the values of respect and submission. As Hofstede et al. (2010) argued, “the role pair parent-child is replaced by the role pair teacher-student... Teachers are treated with respect or even fear... Teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticized and are treated with deference even outside

school" (69).

The values developed at home and in school are carried over to the workplace, "The role pairs parent-child, teacher-student... are now complemented by the role pair boss-subordinate, and it should not surprise anybody when attitudes toward parents, especially fathers, and toward teachers, which are part of our mental programming, are transferred toward bosses" (73).

Del Villar (2012a) developed a typology of compliance-gaining strategies based on what Filipinos commonly used to make requests or orders. Results revealed a 14 factor model explaining 76.11% of the total variance in the data. The 14 factors were named: Reason, friendship, affection, credibility, rules, security, gift, enjoyment, intimidation, compassion, family, sincerity, power, and interest. From among those 14 factors, factor 13 or power ranked the highest with a mean score of 4.27 (SD=.70) in the 8 items that clustered under it. This means that respondents agreed almost strongly to all the items that referred to power as manifested in different forms. The manifestations of power were: Power by someone who was influential, someone who was an elder, a parent, a superior or boss, or an authority. In the Filipino society this is understandable because, by nature, Filipino culture is a high-power-orientation culture. The high-power-orientation among Filipinos was also previously confirmed by Del Villar (2012b) in her study of the intercultural sensitivity of Filipinos employed in multinational corporations. The study revealed that generally, older people were highly respected and that subordinates were compliant and commonly did not question their superiors.

In the Filipino culture, it was not uncommon to find characteristics such as dependence on superiors, unquestioning acceptance of directives from them, virtue of respect for elders, and high regard for those in authority in the home, in school, and in the workplace. This orientation was deeply entrenched in the Filipinos "mental programming" which according to Hofstede et. al. (2010) started early in a child's life and extended to the time he worked for a living. Children were traditionally socialized to unquestioningly respect their parents, obediently follow orders from their teachers, and be dutifully compliant employees in the workplace. As Hofstede argued, "this pattern of dependence on seniors...pervades all human contacts (5)."

Jocano (1988) described the traditional Filipino society as being "organized on the basis of generation and concept of seniority which involves deference to and respect for older persons, regardless of gender (247)." According to Fernandez (1943) this custom of respect for the elders could be traced back to the early history when age was linked to wisdom and was a requirement for the highly respected position of *datu* or head of the village. The *datu*, in turn, consulted with his council of elders regarding governance. Medina (2001) further illustrated how elders were generally regarded in society. She

explained that the "polite way to speak to the elderly person is to use *opo* instead of *oo* for yes, and to use the plural form of the second person, *kayo*, instead of the singular form *ikaw* for you." The kissing of the hand or *pagmamano* was another common way of showing respect when greeting an elder.

Since previous studies have confirmed that Hofstede's findings indeed applied to Filipinos, the present study hypothesized that Filipinos in the present study would also have a high-power distance orientation.

### Collectivism cultural orientation

Hofstede and Bond (1984) explained that in individualistic cultures, "people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only" whereas "people belonging to in groups or collectivities are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty (56)." This showed that in individualistic cultures, people tended to accentuate individual achievements that lead to self-realization whereas collectivistic cultures tended to lay more emphasis on fitting and belonging in their groups. Much importance was placed on achieving one's potentials in life and being someone different rather than just being like the others. In a collectivistic culture, more meaning was given to being one of the others and fitting into the group. As Saleh and Gufwoli (1982) stated, "...uniqueness is a secondary fact...Group activities are dominant, responsibility is shared and accountability is collective...harmony and cooperation among the group tend to be emphasized more (327)."

Hofstede (2001) ranked the Philippines #31 among 53 countries in the Individualism-Collectivism values scale. This meant that the country was more collectivistic than individualistic. Del Villar (2012b) confirmed Hofstede's conclusion in a study of Filipinos working in multinational corporations. It was revealed that their Mean collectivism score was high (M=17.8, SD=.94) and that it was also significantly correlated to their intercultural sensitivity.

Since previous studies have confirmed that Hofstede's findings indeed applied to Filipinos, the present study hypothesized that Filipinos in the present study would also have a collectivistic cultural orientation.

### Masculinity cultural orientation

According to Hofstede (1991), there were differences in the way gender roles were interpreted and practiced in different cultures. He pointed out that "masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles were clearly distinct (i.e. men were supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women were supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (82-83)." This meant that

in cultures where the masculine orientation dominated, much value was placed on material things, power, strength and boldness whereas caring, rearing and nurturing prevailed in cultures where femininity dominated. Work effectiveness, accomplishment, and goals were given much emphasis in masculine societies whereas service and quality of life were emphasized in feminine cultures.

Hofstede (1980) added that masculine cultures stressed achievement and that work was central such that the organization could interfere with their private lives if necessary. He added that because work was central to people's lives and that they strived to excel, there were too much stresses and challenges. There were also differences in the way men and women were valued in the workplace. Men, being the masculine one, were more valued than women such that salary and advancement were reflective of this value.

Philippines ranked #11/12 among 53 countries in masculine orientation (Hofstede, 2001). In studies by Del Villar (2010, 2012b) it was revealed that Filipinos were indeed highly masculine. Respondents in both the 2010 and 2012b studies rated high mean scores in masculinity orientation supporting Hofstede's claim. The study also revealed that generally: Males and females had different roles, it seemed natural for men to deal with facts while women dealt with feelings, influence and power were emphasized, and lastly, competence, ambition, and material things were given importance.

In the present study, it was hypothesized that the masculine orientation of the Filipino culture still pervaded and that material success, competition, strength, and accomplishment were still important. Therefore the Filipino elders would also rate high in masculinity score.

### **Subjectivity to nature orientation**

According to Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck (1960), there were three different ways of perceiving the relationship between humans and nature. These were: Humans were subject to nature, humans cooperated with nature, and humans controlled nature. These different ways of perceiving the relationship affected people's "frames of reference for human desires, attitudes, and behaviors (153)".

In cultures that believed humans were subject to nature, people accepted that "...the most powerful forces of life were outside their control. Whether the force be a god, fate, or magic, a person cannot overcome it and must therefore learn to accept it (153)." This view recognized that all events were a manifestation of "oneness with the world" that resulted in a "harmonious world." This belief was tied to the Catholic belief and acceptance of "fate in controlling life and nature."

In cultures that believed that humans cooperated with

nature, there was the perception that "nature is part of life and not a hostile force waiting to be subdued. (153)." This view accepted that people should exist and live in harmony with nature and not control it for their benefit.

In cultures that believed in controlling nature, people believed that it was their right and obligation to "conquer and direct the forces of nature to our advantage (154)." This view was commonly found in the West where there was the strong movement towards technology, change, and science. This culture believed in taming nature and "clear separation from nature" (154).

In the present study, it was hypothesized that the Filipino culture, being predominantly Catholic, would be accepting of the belief that there was an outside force (God) controlling nature and the fate of humans.

Filipino elders would therefore openly accept their subjectivity to nature.

### **Successful aging**

Rowe and Khan (1997) distinguished between "normal aging that is marked by high risk of illness and successful aging that is marked by low risk of disability and high cognitive and physical functioning." They identified the three components of what they termed successful aging namely "low probability of disease or disability, high cognitive and physical function capacity, and active engagement with life". Strawbridge (2002) noted that the term "successful aging" implied "competitiveness" and suggested the term "healthy aging" instead. Aldwin and Gilmer (2004) proposed "optimal aging" because they noted "cultural diversity in approaches... that complicated usage of a term such as successful aging.

Some researches on aging recognized that there was a growing number of elderly citizens who were functioning at their optimal level and still contributing to society. These researchers continued to seek out information on what made others more successful than the rest (Fries, 2002; Cantoni, 1998, Peel et al., 2005, Phelan and Larson, 2002; Lupien, 2004).

A number of more recent studies highlighted factors other than those related to physical health as determinants of successful aging. These factors had to do with emotional well-being and quality of life rather than the absence of diseases (Depp and Jeste, 2009; Depp et al., 2007; Jeste et al., 2010; Reichstadt et al., 2010). In these studies, some respondents rated themselves high even when they did not meet the "standard" measure of successful aging. Other factors identified as being related to successful aging were positive attitude, successful coping strategies, community life, ability to bounce back from challenges, and emotional well being.

In the present study, successful aging was defined as possessing the important factors that make elders reach their optimum best. These were: A positive attitude about

aging, the right coping strategies to deal with the physical and emotional changes that inevitably come with the aging process, a healthy self-worth, and a happy disposition. It was believed that, with the right attitude, coupled with pro-active and meaning-based strategies, a positive self-esteem, and the ability to see the happy side of life, one would be able to effectively conquer the challenges of aging.

## Elements that make up successful aging

### Attitudes about aging

Wrench et al. (2008) defined attitude as “a pre-disposition...a tendency that we have to do something...a tendency to evaluate people, ideas, or objects. Evaluative... means making judgments of good or bad, desirable or undesirable, or likable or unlikable (142).” It was a “hypothetical construct” which meant that, similar to belief and value, it could not be perceived by the senses and existed only in the mind. Although it existed only in the mind, it influenced our behavior. Our evaluation of something determined how we behaved toward it.

One’s attitude about aging was important in the sense that it has been found to be associated with life satisfaction. According to Elejalde-Ruiz (2011), attitude could make all the difference in that “how people feel inside, and their expectations of their capabilities, can have a greater impact on health, happiness and even longevity.” In an experiment conducted by psychologist Langer (1979) it was concluded that it was “expectation, not biology, [that lead] many elderly people to set physical limits on themselves; they assume they’ll fall apart, so they let it happen.” Sheehy (1995), too, concluded that “it is our psychological attitude and behavior that more likely determine the quality and duration of our third age (419)” and not just our genes.

Levy (1968), a social psychologist, reported that those who held negative attitudes towards aging were significantly more likely to have old age diseases when they grew old compared to those who held positive attitudes. Further studies (Levy, 1975) also showed that those with positive attitudes lived longer by as much as 7.5 years than those with negative views. An explanation provided was that of the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies where “those who believe that older people remain active, vital and healthy members of society may take better care of themselves, continuing good eating and exercise patterns. They can see a point in giving up smoking or beginning an exercise plan even in their 60s and 70s. Conversely, people who thought that aging inevitably brought infirmity and illness could consciously or unconsciously let that happen (10).”

Luszcz and Fitzgerald (1986) revealed that although

older adults showed less negative attitudes towards themselves, their attitudes were still less positive when compared with their ratings of middle-aged adults. This meant that they looked at themselves less positively than they looked at other adults younger than themselves. Heckhausen and Krueger (1993), on the other hand, concluded that the older the adults, the more positive their attitudes tended to be. The older adults, however, still believed that their positive traits declined while their negative traits increased as they aged. Heckhausen and Brim (1997) further found that the older adults’ problems were consistent with their belief.

On the contrary, Cohen (2005) reported that older adults experienced “high morale... even among those who are frail. The positive outlook of people ... isn’t the exception – it’s the rule (14).” Cohen forwarded a number of factors responsible for this positive disposition among which were: “greater acceptance of life’s realities, a greater sense of self, and a long-term perspective that makes it easier to accept the inevitable slings and arrows of daily life”. Cohen further explained that in addition to those psychological factors, new research proved that “changes in the older brain itself play an important role in the emotional aplomb and equanimity of many older adult (14).” Older brains, because of the physiological changes they have gone through, have become more balanced. As a result of their maturity, they have developed “ability to control... emotions and modulate... behavior appropriately (17).” Despite challenges in life, mature brains have the “capacity to ride out emotional storms [with] more flexibility and resiliency (17).” These were also due to the experiences older adults went through which stimulated the growth and maturity of their brain.

Cohen (2005) also mentioned a research conducted by Canli and his colleagues in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, about the nature of older adults. Among their findings were: As adults matured, their experience of negative emotions became less severe; older adults paid more attention to positive stimuli rather than negative ones; elders were more likely to remember positive experiences rather than those which were negative. They concluded that as an individual matured, his “amygdalae showed decreased reactivity to negative information while maintaining or increasing their reactivity to positive information (18)”. As a result, older adults became generally “calmer in the face of life’s challenges.” Amygdalae was described as a part of the body’s limbic system that was specifically responsible for the processing of emotions.

In Del Villar’s (2014) study about the correlation between self-worth and selected communication traits among Filipino elders, it was revealed that majority of the respondents had a high positive attitude about aging. This meant that, on the average, the aging respondents viewed aging as good, right, beneficial, fair, and positive.

Only 4.4% of the respondents saw aging as bad, wrong, harmful, unfair, and negative. Among the representative reasons given by those who viewed aging as good, fair, beneficial, and positive were:

1. "It is beneficial because it gives you time to reflect on life."
2. "It is positive because you overcome the trials of life."
3. "It is good because it is natural and part of life."
4. "It is good because you are respected."
5. "It is fair because you give way for the young generation to take over."
6. "It is positive because aging symbolizes the beauty of life."
7. "It is positive because you gain a wiser view of life."

Indeed, the positive attitude was evident among majority of the respondents. Elders saw aging as a natural event of life that must be accepted wholeheartedly. They saw no need to resist something as natural as aging.

Based on these previous findings, it could be inferred that attitude about aging was an essential ingredient to successful aging.

### **Pro-active and meaning-based acceptance coping strategies**

Folkman and Lazarus (1985) studied the coping process people went through when faced with stress. They identified two basic ways of coping namely: Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The former aimed to find a solution to change the "source of the stress" thereby allowing the individual to free himself from it. The latter, on the other hand, managed the emotional distress connected to the situation to allow the individual to adjust better. Because stress disturbed the physical and psychological well-being of an individual as a result of internal or external factors, the body's natural tendency was to look for a way to restore the balance.

Lazarus and Cohen (1977) developed the transactional model of stress and coping which provided a framework for analyzing the process that occurred when an individual coped with stress. They explained that "stressful experiences are construed as person-environment transactions." When an external stressor happened, the individual would make a preliminary appraisal to determine how threatening the stressor was. One would then evaluate the "controllability" of the event depending on the available resources. From among the individual's available coping resources, one would choose which ones to use to deal with the situation. These could be in the form of problem-focused coping strategies or emotion-focused coping strategies. Actual coping would follow wherein one would choose strategies to manage the event. An outcome of the process would be a return

to emotional balance and a healthy functioning body.

Brannon and Feist (2009) identified one positive coping strategy which they called "pro-active coping" when an individual would anticipate a problem and prepare for it. Other positive coping strategies they identified were social coping when an individual would seek support from other people, "meaning-focused coping" when an individual would focus on "deriving meaning from the stressful experience", and "avoiding thoughts" when the individual would avoid situations that would cause the anxiety to happen. They also included other coping strategies where the individual would keep oneself healthy, do relaxation exercises, and use humor to deal with the tension. All these positive adaptive coping strategies were believed to improve an individual's functioning.

There were also negative strategies or "maladaptive coping or non-coping" strategies that were identified and which were believed to simply reduce symptoms of the stress but not the source of the disorder (Jacofsky et al., 2009 n.d). Among these maladaptive strategies were "dissociation, sensitization, safety behaviors, anxious avoidance, and escape." In dissociation, the individual would "compartmentalize thoughts, memories, and emotions" associated with the stress. In sensitization, the person would run through the fearful event in an effort to get used to it so that when it happened the impact would no longer be as strong. In safety behaviors, the individual would rely on another person or thing for support as a means of coping with stress. In anxious avoidance and escape, the person would avoid all stress situations by all means.

Carver (1989) analyzed the Ironson's Hurricane Andrew recovery dataset (Ironson et al., 1994.) and concluded that there was a moderate support to the hypotheses that socio-economic status, education, and religion were correlated with active coping strategies. Further evidence proved that active coping strategies were correlated with health and that those who used avoidant strategies were the ones who experienced poorer health. People would generally use all the strategies mentioned above depending on the situation they found themselves in. Holahan and Moos (1987) however argued that "generally speaking, active coping strategies...are thought to be better ways to deal with stressful events, and avoidant coping strategies appear to be a psychological risk factor or marker for adverse responses to stressful life events (13)."

Using Holahan and Moos' (1987) reasoning, two strategies appeared to be positively related to successful aging. First was a strategy that would allow the elders to be pro-active in finding solutions to the challenges related to their aging. They would take an active role in planning their lives using the available resources they probably have previously planned and worked for. This was about focusing on something constructive so that they would be



the best they could possibly be. This was also about making plans to improve their situation. Second was a strategy that would permit a positive and meaning-based acceptance of their aging. This would allow the elders to seek the appropriate philosophy that would help them understand and positively accept the realities of aging. This was about accepting the realities of aging even as they found joy and fulfillment. More importantly, this was about seeing aging as a natural process and the culmination of one's life mission.

In the present study, the two coping strategies (pro-active and meaning-based acceptance of aging strategies) were included among the important ingredients of successful aging.

### Self-esteem

Wrench et al. (2008) defined self-esteem as the "view people have of themselves in terms of total worth (48)." Those who have low self-esteem "tend to lack confidence in their own ability and to evaluate their own competence negatively... They expect failure in whatever they attempt to accomplish, including interactions with others (48)." Generally, those with low self-esteem felt more comfortable as followers while those with high self-esteem tended to be leaders. Rosenberg (1965) indicated that people with high-self esteem were satisfied with themselves, felt that they "have a number of good qualities", "able to do things as well as most other people", "have so much to be proud of", "feel that [they] are persons of worth", respected themselves, and had a positive attitude towards themselves.

Beebe et al. (2011) referred to self-esteem as self-worth. It was described as a "description of who you are... an evaluation of who you are...related to feeling and expressing positive messages toward others as well as being supportive of other people (43)."

Self-esteem was consciously or unconsciously measured when people compared themselves to others. The comparison served as a reference to how good they performed against others. Performing simple tasks might not be enough to judge one's worth, but if the more important tasks were involved, then one's worth could be challenged. Coupled with the worth one gave to oneself was the general feeling of happiness. Having a high self-esteem was also associated with the feeling of welfare and satisfaction.

As illustrated by McKay and Fanning (1992), self-esteem has been repeatedly proven in the field of social science as vital to human survival. Without it, one's existence could be "enormously painful." They stressed that one mark that distinguished humans from animals was having the ability to be aware of oneself and attaching value to it. The problem with this, they emphasized, was that when you have a low valuation of

yourself (for whatever reason) you also "reject parts of yourself... [thus damaging] the psychological structures that literally keep you alive (1)." This self-rejection could result in the individual avoiding any perceived source of the problem. For instance, the person might avoid any forms of interactions with other people because they might bring him pain. The person could literally limit his "ability to open [himself] with others, express sexuality, be the center of attention, hear criticism, ask for help, or solve problems." The problem could become worse if the person built boundaries to protect himself. In examining the causes and effects of self-esteem, McKay and Fanning (1992) pointed out the difficulty saying that the issue could be compared to the "chicken and egg" question. As they analyzed, "it seems that self-esteem grows out of your circumstances in life, and at the same time, your circumstances in life are influenced strongly by your self-esteem. Which came first? (54)."

Whichever came first, or whichever was the cause or the effect, self-esteem or the circumstances surrounding people, their self-esteem would be extremely important because it could affect their whole being. Having a positive well-being would always be associated with feelings of self-confidence. And if people were confident about themselves, they would also be at ease whatever their age. If they were confident they would also become more willing and consequently satisfied with communication with people around them. If there was one variable that could be used to gauge people's general well-being, self-esteem should be it.

The present study was an attempt to find the association between self-esteem and some selected variables. Based on studies about self-esteem, it could be inferred that self-esteem and the circumstances surrounding the elders would be positively correlated. The better the elders' self-esteem, the better their circumstances. Or, as McKay and Fanning (1992) confounded, the better the circumstances surrounding the elders, the better their self-esteem.

In Del Villar (2014)'s study correlating the Filipino elders' self-worth with some selected communication traits, it was revealed that majority of the respondents (455 or 57.2%) registered high self-esteem, 300 or 37.7% rated moderate, while 40 or 5% rated low self-esteem. The mean self-esteem score was 36.81 (SD=7.42) which meant that on the average the respondents had a high level of self-esteem. Based on the indicators of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), the elders generally felt satisfied with themselves, thought they were good most of the time, felt that they had "a number of good qualities," were able to do things "as well as most people," did not feel useless, felt that they were persons of "worth when compared with others," had respect for themselves, did not feel they were a failure, and had a "positive attitude toward themselves."

From these findings, it could be inferred that a positive

self-esteem was an important ingredient of successful aging.

## Happiness

Helliwell et al. (2013) defined happiness in two ways – “first as an emotion (Were you happy yesterday?) and the second as an evaluation (Are you happy with your life as a whole?)” In their worldwide survey, a clear distinction was made between the two: Happiness as an emotion and happiness with life as a whole or “sense of life satisfaction.” In their yearly surveys comparing the happiness index of countries around the globe, three types of measures were used: Measure of positive emotions that included how the respondents felt the day prior to the survey, measures of negative emotions that included how negatively the respondents felt the day prior to answering the survey, and their evaluations of life as a whole. These three types of measures were referred to as the “primary measures of subjective well-being.”

Oishi et al. (2013) argued that happiness has been referred to as subjective well-being (SWB) in research in the last 30 years and that the real meaning of the concept has been “elusive.” It was precisely for this reason that Diener (1984) advocated the use of the term subjective well-being or SWB instead of happiness because of the uncertainties that have been associated with the term. As the term SWB came to be more popularly used to refer to “subjective evaluation of life as a whole, the presence of pleasant emotions, and the relative absence of unpleasant emotions” (542), the term happiness was likewise more often used thus leading back to the previous problem of its meaning. So, Oishi et al. (2013) sought to trace the historical and cultural connotations of the term. Their findings showed that the ancient meanings of happiness “centered around good luck, fortune, or external conditions in general” and that these were mostly used in collectivistic cultures. The connotation, however, was not the same in individualistic cultures. More evidence showed that culture played an important role in conceptualizing the term happiness with many cultures still focusing on fortune and luck. There were the exceptions of some cultures like that of the Americans which saw happiness as “feeling-centric”, attainable, and conscious.

Siedlecki et al. (2008) found that the happiness level of elders tended to be higher than those of younger adults. A number of reasons were given such as the difference in the connotation of happiness as viewed by the different age groups. It was explained that there could be “developmental shifts” in meanings as people age.

Sheehy (1995) stated that elders, women especially, actually became happier as they grew older. She stated that “clinical disorders, including depression, continued to drop off in older women. The peak age for depression

has now descended into the mid thirties (192).” The first findings about this improvement in the happiness of elder women came out from the studies by Strole (1980) when he did a follow up of the 1954 Midtown Manhattan Study. He discovered that women “enjoyed marked progress in mental health...The improvement in mental health and well-being among older women was accumulating generationally (193).” Similarly, a report from Millman, an associate of Strole (Sheehy, 1995) found a strong correlation between happiness and age also among women. Women became happier as they aged.

Men too became happier as they aged. According to Vaillant (1990), by the time they reached 65 they have developed “self-mastery.” They have acquired the “ability to handle life’s accidents and conflicts without passivity, blaming, or bitterness (356)”. Overall, traits that contributed to happiness have shifted from “spontaneity, creative flair, and the knack of easy sociability to... being dependable, well organized, and pragmatic (356).” From these findings, it could be inferred that happiness, which referred to a positive, bright, buoyant general evaluation of life as a whole, was an important ingredient of successful aging.

Based on the above discussions of the variables, the present study sought to find out if the Filipino cultural orientations (high-power distance, collectivism, masculinity, and subjectivity to nature) were related to successful aging. Specifically, the following objectives were addressed:

1. To determine the high-power distance score of Filipino elders.
2. To determine their collectivism score.
3. To determine their masculinity score.
4. To determine their subjectivity to nature score.
5. To determine their level of successful aging.
6. To determine the relationship of each of the four cultural dimensions to successful aging.
7. To determine which among the cultural orientations best serve as indicator/s of successful aging.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Since the Filipino culture belonged to the high-power distance orientation, their elders would rate high in power distance orientation.

H2: Since the Filipino culture belonged to the collectivistic culture, their elders would rate high in collectivism orientation.

H3: Since Filipinos belonged to the high masculine cultural orientation, their elders would rate high in masculinity orientation.

H4: Since Filipinos were predominantly Catholic and

therefore believed in subjectivity to nature, their elders would rate high in subjectivity to nature.

H5: Since Filipinos belonged to the high-power distance cultural orientation which valued those with power (i.e. the elders), their elders would experience successful aging.

H6: Since Filipinos belonged to the collectivistic culture which valued and cared for the in-group (i.e. the family), their elders would experience successful aging.

H7: Since elders belonged to the masculine culture and valued the masculine traits of material success, competition, strength, and accomplishment, they would experience successful aging.

H8: Since Filipinos believed that humans were subject to nature, their elders would willingly accept the aging process and experience successful aging.

H9: The four cultural orientations were significant predictors of successful aging

## METHOD

The study was descriptive in nature employing both quantitative and qualitative techniques with survey as the main method. Purposive sampling of 816 willing and able respondents, ages ranging from 60 and older, from different sectors of society (government and private institutions for the elderly catering to different socio-economic classes, elders living independently on their own, and those living with their families) was conducted in a face-to-face setting. Most of the respondents accomplished the questionnaires on their own while some needed assistance. Further, selected respondents (those who rated very high or very low in the questionnaires) were invited to participate in the interview. Observations were also conducted in selected contexts.

## Instruments

All instruments used in the study were based on the indicators established by previous studies and modified to adapt to the conditions of the elder respondents.

1. The High- power Distance Questionnaire was a 5-item questionnaire about one's high-power distance orientation. Using Hofstede's indicators (Hofstede, 1980), the questionnaire was modified to suit the elder respondents. The highest possible score was 25 while the lowest was 5. An arbitrary classification, where 18.35 to 25 indicated high-power distance, 11.70 to 18.30 indicated moderate, and 5 to 11.65 indicated low, was developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .78.

2. The Collectivism Questionnaire was a 5-item questionnaire about one's collectivistic orientation. Using Hofstede's indicators (Hofstede, 1980), the questionnaire was modified to adapt to the elder respondents. An arbitrary classification, where 18.35 to 25 indicated high-power distance, 11.70 to 18.30 indicated moderate, and 5 to 11.65 indicated low, was developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .76.

3. The Masculinity Questionnaire was a 5-item questionnaire about one's masculinity orientation. Using Hofstede's indicators (Hofstede, 1980), the questionnaire was modified to suit the elder respondents. An arbitrary classification, where 18.35 to 25 indicated high-power distance, 11.70 to 18.30 indicated moderate, and 5 to 11.65 indicated low, was developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .77.

4. The Nature Subjectivity Questionnaire was a 5-item questionnaire about one's subjectivity to nature orientation. Using Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck's Person/Nature Orientation indicators (Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, 1960), the questionnaire was modified to adapt to the elder respondents. An arbitrary classification, where 18.35 to 25 indicated high-power distance, 11.70 to 18.30 indicated moderate, and 5 to 11.65 indicated low, was developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .80.

5. The Coping Strategies Questionnaire was a 12-item questionnaire about one's coping strategies. Based on Carver's Brief COPE indicators, the questionnaire was modified to suit the elder respondents. From the possible six strategies (pro-active, meaning-focused, religion, seeking support, avoidance/escape, and denial/non-coping), respondents were asked to rate which of the strategies they most often used. Based on their rating, the preferred strategy was identified.

6. The Happiness Scale was a simple one-item questionnaire about one's general level of happiness. Elder respondents were asked to rate, from a highest of 7 to a lowest of 1, their feeling of happiness. A score of 7 indicated very happy, 6 indicated happy, 5 was moderately happy, 4 was neutral, 3 was moderately unhappy, 2 was unhappy, and 1 was very unhappy.

7. The Attitude about Aging scale was a 4-item questionnaire about one's attitudes about aging. Using Wrench, McCroskey, and Richmond's (2008) indicators, the questionnaire was modified to adapt to the elder respondents. An arbitrary classification, where 20 to 28 indicated positive attitude about aging, 12 to 19 indicated neutral attitude, and 4 to 11 indicated negative attitude, was arbitrarily developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .82.

8. The Self-esteem Scale was a 5-item questionnaire about one's level of self-esteem. Using Rosenberg's (1965) indicators, the questionnaire was modified to suit the elder respondents. An arbitrary classification, where 18.35 to 25 indicated high self-esteem, 11.70 to 18.30 indicated moderate, and 5 to 11.65 indicated low, was developed for purposes of the present study. It had an alpha estimate of .83.

## Data analyses

1. To address objective 1 (To determine the high-power distance score of the respondents) scores in the High-power Questionnaire were computed and summarized.

2. To address objective 2 (To determine the collectivism score of the respondents) scores in the Collectivism Questionnaire were computed and summarized.

3. To address objective 3 (To determine the masculinity score) scores in the Masculinity Questionnaire were computed and summarized.

4. To address objective 4 (To determine the subjectivity to nature score) scores in the Subjectivity to Nature Questionnaire were computed and summarized.

5. To address objective 5 (To determine the level of successful aging) scores in the attitudes about aging, coping A and B strategies, self-esteem, and happiness scales were combined to make up the successful aging score.

6. To address objective 6 (To determine the relationship of each of the four cultural dimensions to successful aging) the scores in each

of the four cultural dimensions were correlated with the scores in successful aging.

7. To address objective 7 (To determine which among the cultural orientations best served as indicator/s of successful aging) all the variables were analyzed using Multiple Regression.

All the qualitative results from the interviews and observations were analyzed to complement the quantitative data.

## RESULTS

### Elders in the Philippines: general background

According to the Philippine National Statistics Office (NSO), as of the latest census (2010) senior citizens constituted 6.8% (6.2M) of the 92.1M household population. Senior citizens were those aged 60 and above. This figure was higher by 6% recorded in the year 2000. Females comprised 55.8% while males numbered 44.2%. Whereas males consistently outnumbered females by 102 to 100 in the 15 to 64 age groups, the figure changed to 73 to 100 among the 65 and over.

As of 2000, the World Health Organization estimated that the life expectancy of Filipino males age 60 or over, had an additional 10.6 years while females had an additional 12.1 years (WHO, 2002). On the contrary, an average of 12.4 years for males and 14.3 years for females were taken away as a result of poor health. Those needing care would triple by year 2050. Of those, 42.2% would belong to the 60 years old or older.

### Socio-demographic profile of the respondents in the study

There were 816 respondents who participated in this study. Ages ranged from 60 to over 95 where majority (373, 46.2%) belonged to the 60 to 65 bracket followed by 188 (23.3%) from the 66 to 70 bracket, 107 (13.3%) from the 71 to 75 group, 67 (8.3%) from the 76 to 80 group, 41 (5.1%) from the 81 to 85 group, 18 (2.2%) from the 86 to 90 group, 11 (1.4%) from the 91 to 95 age group, and 2 (.2%) from those over 95 years old. Four hundred forty nine (449, 55.2%) were females while 364 (44.7%) were males.

Majority or 502 (61.6%) were still working while 310 (38%) were no longer employed. Majority (601, 73.7%) belonged to the middle class, 151 (18.5%) to the lower class, and only 57 (7%) to the upper class.

Majority (503, 61.6%) owned houses and lived with family or relatives, 181 (22.2%) lived in houses owned by family or relatives, 101 (12.4%) lived alone in their own houses, and 29 (3.6%) lived in private or government institutions for the aged.

Majority (452, 55.3%) was married, 232 (28.4%) were widowed, 85 (10.4%) were single, 45 (5.5%) were separated, divorced or annulled.

Majority (279, 34.2%) finished college while 90 (11%) pursued graduate or post graduate education. One hundred thirty two (132, 16.2%) had partial college education, 170 (20.8%) had high school or partial high school education, 136 (16.7%) had elementary or partial elementary education. Only 7 indicated no form of education.

Eighty eight percent (88.7%, 724) have stopped pursuing continuing education or training while 88 (10.8%) still pursued some forms of education.

Majority of the elders or 558 (68.4%) engaged in some forms of leisure while 253 (31%) had none whatsoever.

One hundred three (103, 12.6%) experienced excellent health, 518 (63.5%) were in good health, 167 (20.5%) were in a not "so good" health, while only 24 (2.9%) were in bad health. Among the elders, 290 (35.5%) exercised regularly, 312 (38.2%) exercised occasionally, and 209 (25.6%) did not exercise at all.

### High-power distance cultural orientation

The mean power distance score of the elder respondents was 19.24 (SD=3.717) which indicated that they belonged to the high-power distance cultural orientation. More than half of the elder respondents (481, 58.9%) rated high power while 308 (37.7%) rated moderate. Only 20 (2.5%) rated low power. This showed that, generally, positions of power and authority (elders, government officials, teachers) were respected and privileged. One important indicator of high power distance was that elders and those in positions of power (grandparents, parents, doctors, teachers, government officials) were never addressed by their first names. Their titles were always affixed to their names when they were addressed or referred to. When spoken to, the polite terms *opo* [yes], *hindi po* [no], and the plural form of the second person, *kayo* [you] were always used. The kissing of the hand or *pagmamano* was commonly used as a form of greeting them. This finding confirmed Hofstede's (1980) theory that Filipinos belonged to the high-power distance cultural orientation.

In the Filipino culture, the high-power distance orientation was deeply entrenched. As Hofstede (2010) theorized, people acquired their "mental software" beginning the day they were born and continued throughout their lives as they were enculturated in their homes, schools, and workplaces. And as the present study proved, the orientation was followed through to their old age. Majority of the elder respondents in the present study rated high-power distance followed by those who rated moderately. Only 2.5% rated low-power distance. The elders, in an interview, disclosed that in their long years of existence, they did not observe any marked changes in the way old people were generally treated by society. They, during their youth, showed respect to their elders. In turn, they

**Table 1.** High-power distance score distribution

	Frequency	Percent
High	481	58.9
Moderate	308	37.7
Low	20	2.5
Total	809	100

**Table 2.** Collectivism score distribution.

	Frequency	Percent
High	362	44.4
Moderate	406	49.8
Low	42	5.1
Total	810	100

received the same kind of respect from the younger generation. Although there were exceptions, they generally felt that they were still highly regarded by their families. When asked about those exceptions, one 63 year old narrated her sad experience of being violated when a young person tried to beat her to a parking slot in a mall. She said that she patiently waited for a slot to be vacated and when one was finally available, a young driver tried to beat her to it. When she insisted on getting what she believed was hers, the young person sneered and shouted a disparaging *gurang* [old witch]. The experience left her feeling offended. Another, a retiring teacher, shared her experience of being made to feel old and dispensable by his younger colleagues in the university. Their insensitive remarks and jokes hurt his feelings.

The study's first hypothesis, that since Filipinos belonged to the high-power distance cultural orientation, Filipino elders too would have a high-power distance orientation, was strongly supported.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the high-power distance scores. It should be noted that not all the 816 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

The modified high-power distance questionnaire was also tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. Results showed a moderately high reliability ( $r = .78$ ).

### Collectivism cultural orientation

The mean collectivism score of the elder respondents was 17.96 (SD=3.83) indicating moderate collectivism. Majority of the respondents (406, 49.8%) rated moderate, while 362 (44.4%) rated high. Only 42 (5.1%) rated low collectivism. This result supported Hofstede's (1980)

theory that ranked the Philippines #31 in collectivism among 53 countries.

Typical to collectivistic cultures, the Filipino elders emphasized the importance given to belonging to an in-group such as family, relatives, or close friends. Being identified closely to one's family had deeper meaning than being independent and alone. In a group, everything was shared from joyful moments to responsibilities and problems. One did not feel alone and left out. There was always someone to depend on and people to be with.

The Filipino elders in the study emphasized the importance of family and friends. One 80 year old respondent disclosed that being with her family, now that she needed care, gave her so much security. She happily recalled that being together as a family was the value she instilled in her children when they were growing up. She believed she was now reaping the benefits because it was the same value they were using to treat her.

Not everyone though lived the collectivistic value. Some elders in the study believed that they preferred being independent and on their own for as long as they could manage it. Similar to the findings of the NSO where 5.38% of senior citizens lived independently, the present findings discovered that as much as 12.4% of the respondents lived alone in their own houses. Most of them were also in the 60 to 70 age range. One of those living alone, a 65 year old, claimed that she has discovered the joy of solitude when her children left home to build their own families. Early on, she made sure that she had enough money to sustain herself for the rest of her life and did not need financial support from her children. She had enough activities to keep herself busy and a few friends to socialize with every now and then. When the time came when she would be needing care, she would move into an institution for the elderly. At the time of the interview, she was already looking around for an institution that would suit her needs.

The second hypothesis, that since Filipinos belonged to the collectivistic cultural orientation, Filipino elders too would have collectivistic orientation, was supported.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the collectivism scores. It should be noted that not all the 816 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the items in the modified Collectivism instrument. Results showed a moderately high reliability ( $r = .76$ ).

### Masculinity cultural orientation

The Mean masculinity score of the respondents was 16.97 (SD=3.53) which indicated moderate masculinity. Majority (507, 62.1%) rated moderate while 261 (32%) rated high. Only 42 (5.1%) rated low. Males rated significantly higher (Mean diff=0.85,  $t=3.44$ ,  $p=.001$ ) with

**Table 3.** Masculinity score distribution.

	Frequency	Percent
High	261	32
Moderate	507	62.1
Low	42	5.1
Total	810	100

a Mean masculinity score of 17.44 (SD= 3.60) while females rated a Mean score of 16.59 (SD=3.43).

In Hofstede's previous research (2001), the Philippines ranked #11/12 among 53 countries in masculinity orientation. This was supported by Del Villar's findings (2010, 2012b) among younger Filipinos and those working in multi-national corporations. In the present study, it appeared that Filipinos did not rate very high but scored only moderately. There seemed to be a shift from high to moderate masculinity. It should be noted that in Hofstede's research, the Filipinos surveyed were those active in the workforce. It was the same case in the Del Villar studies (2010, 2012b) thus the high Mean masculinity scores. The respondents in the present study were older adults and no longer actively competing for promotion or recognition in the workplace. Despite that, their Mean masculinity score was in the moderate.

In the interviews conducted, respondents (both males and females) were asked about the masculine qualities they still possessed now that they were older. Some admitted that they still worked for material success, professional accomplishments, and other similar endeavors. For instance, one 62 year old male, who was still employed, admitted that he was still very much in the race for promotion and salary increase in his organization.

He still made effort to improve himself professionally and would most likely continue growing even after he retired from work. Another, a 66 year old retired female teacher from a state university, have continued doing research and joining conferences. She claimed that by being active, she has kept her mind and body in top shape.

Most of the other elders have slowed down. A group of women from a subdivision in Paranaque, all members of the senior citizens' club, found renewed enjoyment in the company of fellow elders. They would occasionally sponsor garden projects for their village or go out of town once a year. The simple joy they derived from each others' company was enough as far as they were concerned. A 75 year old grandfather has also found renewed sense of importance in watching over his grandchildren when their parents went to work. Another grandmother enjoyed doing the same thing.

To most of the elders, accomplishment might have been their focus during their younger years, but they have willingly accepted that the case was different now

that they were older. They were no longer obsessed with success, strength, and competition, as they used to.

The study's third hypothesis, that since Filipinos belonged to the high masculine cultural orientation, Filipino elders too would have high masculine orientation, was not fully supported. Majority of the elders rated only moderately. Table 3 shows the distribution of the masculinity scores. It should be noted that not all the 816 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

The Cronbach's Alpha score of the modified questionnaire was moderately high at  $r=.77$

### Subjectivity to nature

The mean subjectivity to nature score of the respondents was 19.94 (SD=3.75) which indicated that they strongly believed they were subject to nature. Majority of the respondents (549 or 67.3%) rated high while 248 (30.4%) rated moderate. Only 12 or 1.5% rated low. The elder respondents believed that they were subject to nature and that it determined their destiny; they were where they were at the moment because it was meant to be; God was all powerful and controlled everything that happened to them; they were content and accepting of everything that God sent their way; and they would live a harmonious life if they openly accepted their destiny.

One explanation for this strong tendency to believe in subjectivity to nature was the fact that the Philippines was still a predominantly Catholic country. As Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck (1960) theorized, Catholic countries have a strong belief that destiny has the power over life and that everything that happened was a manifestation of the force of nature. And because humans were subject to nature, they should accept their fate and live in harmony with it.

The interviews also revealed that a number of elders' had a strong belief in God. One 86 year old woman believed that she was at peace with the world because she openly accepted what God had planned for her. Aging was natural in the same way that death was natural. It would happen whether she liked it or not so there was no point in resisting the inevitable. Another 70 year old believed that God planned for everything to happen because there were reasons for them. He had faith that although he did not understand them, all the reasons were meant as preparations for the afterlife.

The study's fourth hypothesis, that the Filipino culture, being predominantly Catholic, would be accepting of the belief that there was an outside force (God) controlling nature and the fate of humans, was strongly supported.

Table 4 shows the distribution of the subjectivity to nature score. It should be noted that not all the 816 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

**Table 4.** Distribution of the subjectivity to nature score.

	Frequency	Percent
High	549	67.3
Moderate	248	30.4
Low	12	1.5
Total	809	100

**Table 5.** Successful aging score distribution.

	Frequency	Percent
High	678	83.1
Moderate	117	14.3
Low	2	2
Total	797	100

Cronbach's Alpha result showed that the items in the modified questionnaire had a moderately high reliability ( $r=.80$ ).

### Successful aging

The mean successful aging score of the elder respondents was high at 13.43 ( $SD= 1.72$ ) which showed that they generally enjoyed successful aging. Majority (678, 83.1%) rated high, 117 (14.3%) rated moderate and only 1 (.2%) rated low.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the successful aging scores. It should be noted that not all the 816 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

It is to be recalled that, in the present study, successful aging had four components: Positive attitude about aging, use of coping strategies A and B, high level of happiness, and positive self-esteem. This was based on the assumption that if an elder experienced a positive attitude about aging, was pro-active in dealing with the challenges of aging, derived fulfilling meanings in aging, was happy, and had a positive self-esteem, he or she would experience successful aging.

The following sections describe the individual results in the four components of aging.

### Attitude about aging

The respondents in the study had a Mean attitude about aging score of 23.01 ( $SD=4.49$ ) which corresponded to a very high positive attitude. Majority or 645 (79%) rated

very high in attitude, 154 (18.9%) rated moderate, and 9 (1.1%) rated low. The elder respondents felt that aging was good, right, fair, and wise because:

1. They had the privilege to see their family grow.
2. They participated in the normal process of life or the natural order of things.
3. They became the younger generation's role model.
4. They gained a sense of accomplishment.
5. They had the chance to realize the true meaning of life.
6. They experienced the cycle of life – birth and death. Their experiences helped them gain wisdom.

This was in line with what Cohen (2005) argued: Older adults in general possessed a positive attitude and this was more of a rule than an exception. Among the reasons he gave were the elders' wide understanding and acceptance of life's realities making it easy for them to take on the difficulties that came their way. In addition, because of the physiological changes in the older brains, elders became more emotionally stable and in control. The present study's findings also supported Del Villar's (2014) study which discovered that older adults had a high positive attitude about aging.

There were also some who had a negative attitude about aging. Some elders felt that aging was bad, wrong, unfair, and unwise because:

1. Aging made you weaker.
2. Aging caused your looks to fade.

You became prone to sickness and your mental faculties deteriorate.

The modified Attitude about aging questionnaire rated a moderately high  $r=.82$  in the Cronbach's Alpha test.

### Coping strategy

A total of 222 (27.2%) elders chose coping strategy A (pro-active) and 344 (42.2%) preferred strategy B (meaning-based acceptance) when dealing with the challenges of aging. It is to be noted that respondents were allowed to rate as many strategies as they preferred to use. Although the pro-active and meaning-based strategies were not the highest ranking choices, they were nonetheless chosen by a sizeable number of elders when dealing with the challenges of life. However, only strategies A and B were given points because they were the only two strategies included among the elements of successful aging. The most often used strategy among the respondents was strategy C (religion) which was chosen by 481 (58.9%). The least used strategy was strategy F or denial and non-coping (32, 3.9%).

As Holohan and Moos (1987) theorized, coping strategies A and B were the ones positively related to

successful aging. Strategy A called for elders to be proactive in finding solutions to the problems of aging. This strategy allowed elders to be actively involved in improving their lives using the resources available to them. Strategy B called for elders to have a positive and meaning-based acceptance of their aging. This allowed them to seek the most appropriate philosophies in understanding and positively accepting the realities of aging.

In the interviews, a number of elders disclosed that they have started seeing aging as a natural process of life. This was not their belief when they were younger but age somehow made them accept aging as inevitable. Having this outlook offered a more peaceful view of life. Some saw aging as a culmination of their life purpose. They may not have realized it right away, but aging made them see what their purpose was and that made it (aging) more acceptable. Having a meaningful understanding of aging was not enough though. Some made conscious efforts to be practical and improve their condition no matter how little resources they had. A few elder respondents admitted learning new skills to help improve their financial status. One 65 year old retired employee, for instance, enrolled in a wealth management seminar and seriously considered starting a small business that would allow her money to grow. Another invested in medium risk investments in her bank.

### Self-esteem

The mean self-esteem score was 21.02 (SD=3.2) which indicated that on the average, the elder respondents had a high self-esteem. Majority or 655 (80.3%) rated high, 150 (18.4%) rated moderate, while 5 (6%) rated low. This demonstrated that generally, elders felt "satisfied with themselves," thought they were good most of the time, believed that they had some "good qualities" to be proud of, accomplished as well as others, never felt useless, thought they were "persons of worth," had respect for themselves, never thought of themselves as failure, and had a general positive attitude about themselves.

During an interview, a number of elders who rated high in self-esteem explained that they had the capacity to lead active lives. Although they were mostly retired from employment, they still found a number of reasons to be active, involved, and useful in their families or even communities. They surmised they were probably still alive because they were not yet done with their life mission.

This result agreed with the previous study by Del Villar (2014) where majority of Filipino elders (455 or 57%) registered a high self-esteem, 300 or 37.7% rated moderate, while only 40 or 5% rated low.

The modified Self-esteem questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha and was found to have a moderately high reliability of  $r=.83$ .

### Happiness

The happiness mean score was 5.89 (SD=1.09) which indicated that, on the average, the elder respondents were happy. The highest possible score was 7 for very happy and the lowest was 1 for very unhappy. The biggest percentage (35.8%) or 292 rated 7 (very happy), followed by 259 (31.7%) who rated 6 (happy), 169 (20.7%) rated 5 (moderately happy), 66 (8.1%) rated 4 (neutral), 17 (2.1%) rated 3 (moderately unhappy), 4 (.5%) rated 2 (unhappy), and only 1 (.1%) rated very unhappy. This supported Siedlecki, et al's (2008) finding that the happiness level of elders tended to be higher than younger adults. They attributed this to the "developmental shifts" in meanings as people matured and that elders tended to develop a brighter and more buoyant general evaluation of life.

During the interviews, a number of respondents disclosed that compared to how they viewed life during their younger years, they were in a much better place now. Although there were still challenges (mainly about health, finances, and family), their perspectives have shifted and they were able to see life in a more positive light. Overall, they were happier.

### Correlations between the four cultural orientations and successful aging

#### High-power distance cultural orientation and successful aging

When high-power distance orientation (Mean=19.23, SD=3.71) was correlated with successful aging (Mean=13.43, SD=1.72), results showed there was a weak but significant relationship between the two ( $r=.075$ ,  $p=.034$ ). This illustrated that when elders perceived themselves as having a high-power distance orientation, they also experienced successful aging.

In the interviews conducted, it was quite evident that those who valued high-power distance (as shown in their scores) were the ones who seemed to benefit from successful aging. A number of elders admitted enjoying the high respect they received from their families, friends, and community in general. A few elders though disclosed that they did not receive deference from those around them. Some even felt that they were patronized or even disrespected.

The study's fifth hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between high-power distance and successful aging, was supported.

#### Collectivism and successful aging

When the elders' collectivism scores (Mean=17.96, SD=3.836) were correlated with their successful aging



scores (Mean=13.43, SD=1.727) results showed there was a weak ( $r=.168$ ,  $p=.000$ ) but significant relationship between the two. This proved that when elders rated high in collectivism, they also tended to experience successful aging.

This result was expected because the Filipino culture was collectivistic and as such people belonged to in-groups (families, communities) and looked after each other (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). People in in-groups put much importance on "fitting and belonging to their groups." In return for this kind of loyalty, they received protection and care from their co members. As Saleh and Gufwoli (1982) explained, accountability to the group members was emphasized, as well as agreement, teamwork, and mutual support.

The present findings also confirmed Casterline et al (1991)'s claim that the family support system was still very important and that there was not much change when it came to social positions (Ogena, 2006). The family still remained the most crucial when it came to elders' support system despite changes brought by modern living. Medina's (1991) argument that Filipino elders continued to enjoy a "special place of honor" and that they were seen as assets because of their experience and good judgment still held true in the present study.

Interviews among elders showed that they felt a sense of security around their families and communities. The Filipino culture generally expected the younger generation to take care of their elders and not rely on institutions for the aged. Although there were already quite a few such institutions, they were not as well received as those in western countries.

The study's sixth hypothesis, that there would be a positive correlation between collectivism and successful aging, was supported.

### **Masculinity and successful aging**

Results of the correlation test between masculinity (Mean=16.97, SD=3.53) and successful aging (Mean=13.43, SD=1.727) revealed no significant relationship ( $r=.017$ ,  $p=.621$ ). This showed that the masculinity orientation of the elders was no longer relevant to their successful aging. In this study, the elders rated only a Mean of 16.97 (SD=3.53) or moderate, unlike in the previous findings of Del Villar (2010, 2012b) where younger Filipinos rated very high in masculinity. This is understandable because the elder respondents in the present study no longer exemplified the characteristics of masculinity which placed much value on material things, competition, assertiveness, strength, and boldness. Instead, the elders have mellowed and shifted their focus on quality of life, relationships, and spirituality. They have become more feminine in quality.

When the masculinity scores of the males and females were compared, there was a small but significant Mean difference between the two (diff=.853,  $t=3.441$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Males had a higher mean masculinity score (17.447, SD=3.60) than females (16.59, SD=3.43). And when their successful aging scores were compared, females rated a Mean of 13.35 (SD=1.70) while males rated 13.53 (SD=1.75). There was a small mean difference of only .1789 which proved to be not significant at all ( $t=1.459$ ,  $p=.145$ ). This proved that although males rated slightly higher than females, the masculinity rating did not have any bearing on their successful aging. They both fell in the moderate masculinity category while rating high in successful aging. This further demonstrated that even if they were no longer highly masculine, they still experienced successful aging. Or perhaps, they both experienced successful aging because they were no longer highly masculine.

Observation of a group of male elders revealed a number of interesting explanations. This group, observed in the Del Villar 2014 study, was revisited. As usual, they would meet every afternoon to play doubles at the village tennis court. The Mean age of the group was 75. When asked if they were still as competitive, success oriented, and materialistic as they were during their career years, everyone admitted they have "already used up all their steam." They added that had they been as they were before they would have been miserable because their best efforts would no longer measure up to their old physical selves. Slowing down and mellowing were what were right for them now. Besides, they were now happier spending more time with their families and friends.

One female respondent, who still possessed highly masculine qualities, learned a sad lesson that because she was already of retirement age, she could no longer be employed. Aware that she had impressive qualifications, was still active, competitive, and healthy, she tried applying for a teaching position in a graduate institute and was frankly informed that they preferred younger faculty.

The study's seventh hypothesis, that there would be a positive correlation between masculinity and successful aging, was not supported.

### **Subjectivity to nature orientation and successful aging**

When subjectivity to nature (Mean=19.937, SD=3.75) was correlated with successful aging (Mean=13.43,  $p=1.727$ ), results showed a weak but significant correlation between the two variables ( $r=.209$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This proved that when elders rated high in subjectivity to nature orientation, they also experienced successful aging. It should be noted that the scores in the subjectivity to nature orientation was in the high category

**Table 6.** Correlation between Successful aging and the four.

	Cultural orientations			
	High-power distance	Collectivism	Masculinity	Subjectivity to nature
Successful aging	0.075	0.168	0.017	0.209
sig (2-tailed)	0.034*	0.00**	0.627	0.000**
N	816	816	816	816

\*\*Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 7.** Regression Analysis for variables predicting self-esteem (N=816).

	B	SE B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	10.995	0.466		23.583	0.000
High-power distance	3.91E-03	0.017	0.008	0.229	0.819
Collectivism	5.57E-02	0.016	0.123	3.416	0.001
Masculinity	-1.70E-02	0.017	-0.035	-0.989	0.323
Subjectivity to nature	8.28E-02	0.017	0.180	4.863	0.000

a. Dependent variable: Successful aging.

which illustrated that the respondents openly accepted that “the most powerful forces of life are outside their control...whether the force be a god, fate, or magic... (Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, 1960) (153).” And because the elders accepted that God was in control of everything, they found it easier to embrace their aging and everything that came with it.

The study’s eighth hypothesis, that there would be a positive correlation between subjectivity to nature and successful aging, was supported.

Table 6 shows the summary of the correlation tests conducted.

### Developing a model that could predict the elders’ successful aging

The four cultural orientations (high-power distance, collectivism, masculinity, and subjectivity to nature) were tested to determine if they could be used to predict the elders’ successful aging. Results revealed that the variables had a low but significant correlation ( $r=.242$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and that only .05% of the variability in the dependent variable (successful aging) could be explained by the independent variables (the four cultural orientations). The model was a good fit ( $p=.000$ ) but only two variables were found to be significant predictors of the elders’ successful aging (collectivism with a  $p$  value of .001 and subjectivity to nature with a  $p$  value of .000). This proved that, when all the variables were considered together, only the elders’ collectivism and subjectivity to nature scores could significantly predict their successful

aging. Below is the model derived from the Multiple Regression test:

Successful aging = 10.995 + collectivism (.0557) + subjectivity to nature (.0828)

This model explained that for every unit increase in collectivism score there would be an expected increase of .0557 in successful aging score; and for every unit increase in subjectivity to nature score, there would be an expected .0828 increase in successful aging score. In short, as collectivism and subjectivity to nature scores increased, successful aging also increased.

The last hypothesis, that the four cultural orientations would be significant predictors of successful aging, was only partially supported. Only the cultural orientations collectivism and subjectivity to nature were found to be significant predictors of successful aging.

Table 7 shows the summary statistics of the Multiple Regression test:

### Summary and Conclusion

The study sought to determine Filipino elders’ cultural orientations (high-power distance, collectivism, masculinity, and subjectivity to nature) and their possible correlation to their experience of successful aging. Results showed that the elders rated high in high-power distance ( $M=19.23$ ,  $SD=3.71$ ), moderate in collectivism ( $M=17.96$ ,  $SD=3.836$ ), moderate in masculinity ( $M=16.97$ ,  $SD=3.53$ ), and high in subjectivity to nature ( $M=19.937$ ,  $SD=3.75$ ). They also rated high in successful aging

( $M=13.43$ ,  $SD=1.72$ ). Results further revealed that, except for masculinity, all the other orientations correlated significantly with successful aging. Regression Analysis also proved that if the four cultural orientations were taken together, only collectivism ( $p=.001$ ) and subjectivity to nature (.000) were significant predictors of successful aging.

The present study's findings confirmed past research on the association between high-power distance and successful aging. The study's hypothesis that there would be a significant correlation between high-power distance orientation and successful aging was supported.

It was natural for the elders of a high-power distance culture like the Philippines to experience successful aging because, by nature, those in positions of power and authority (like grandparents) were respected and privileged. Filipino youth never addressed their elders by their first names. They were always addressed by their titles of respect (*lola* for grandmother and *lolo* for grandfather), even if they were not relatives. Respect was shown when speaking to elders in the form of language used exclusively for older adults or those in positions of authority. Another popular display of respect when greeting elders was by kissing their hand (*pagmamano*). This high-power distance orientation was deeply ingrained in what Hofstede (2010) referred to as the culture's "mental software" that started in the family, followed through in school, and the workplace; and as proven in this study, up to even the old age. This deep programming was what Jocano (1988) described as the traditional Filipino society being "organized on the basis of generation and concept of seniority which involved deference to and respect for older persons, regardless of gender (247)." Fernandez (1943) traced this custom of deep respect for the elders to the early history when age was linked to wisdom and was an important requirement of the highly respected position of *datu* or head of a village. So, being highly regarded by family and community was one reason why elders in the present study generally enjoyed well-being.

The present study's findings also confirmed past research findings on collectivism and successful aging. The study's hypothesis, that there would be a significant correlation between collectivism and successful aging, was supported.

The elders' collectivism score, although moderate, significantly correlated with successful aging. This demonstrated that the higher the score in collectivism, the higher the quality of successful aging. In the study, the collectivism score was in the moderate category, yet the successful aging score was in the high category. This result was expected because Filipino culture was still basically collectivistic and as such took care of its elders. There was still that feeling of loyalty and accountability, protection and care for its members. As was highlighted in the interviews, elders felt a sense of security around

their families and communities. It was the custom of families not only to nurture their young but also care for their elders. It was for this reason that institutions for the aged were not as well received as those in western countries. Families, where both husband and wife were employed, welcomed the presence of grandparents to help nurture their children and manage their household. On the other hand, some families have found it increasingly difficult to care for the very old. Among the problems faced by families with elders were: Increasing medical cost and specialized care and attention. Despite these challenges, many found ways to manage their homes and care for their elders. The strong influence of collectivism still pervaded the Filipino society making their elders feel more secure and cared for.

The study's findings did not confirm past research about masculinity and successful aging. The study's hypothesis, that there would be a significant correlation between the two variables, was not supported.

In the past years, the Philippines rated very high in masculinity orientation. In the present study, elders rated only moderately. This was understandable because quite a number of the elder respondents were no longer actively competing in the workforce and were therefore no longer concerned with competition, success, accomplishments, boldness and other indications of masculinity. Although their Mean score was in the moderate category, some of them individually scored in the high category. Those who scored high were the ones in the early 60s and were still actively employed. It should be noted that in Hofstede's research, the Filipinos surveyed were those active in the workplace, thus the high masculinity rating. It was the same case in the Del Villar studies (2010, 2012b) where younger Filipinos and those working in multinational corporations were the respondents.

The absence of significant correlation between masculinity and successful aging also proved that masculinity orientation was no longer as relevant to successful aging. What used to be the prime concerns during their younger years were no longer as highly valued. Instead, the elders have slowed down and shifted their focus on quality of relationships with family and friends.

They have developed more feminine values. This further demonstrated that the elders experienced successful aging even as they have become less masculine. Or perhaps, they experienced successful aging because they were no longer highly masculine.

The study's findings strongly supported the hypothesis that there would be a significant correlation between subjectivity to nature orientation and successful aging. This indicated that when the elders rated high in subjectivity to nature, they also experienced successful aging. As theorized by Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck (1960), cultures belonging to the Catholic religion readily

accepted that God was in control of everything and so they embraced their aging and everything that came with it.

The scores in both variables were in the high category which showed that the elder respondents openly accepted that there was an outside force – God or nature that predetermined all events that happened to them. And because of this belief they felt more secure knowing that God had reasons to allow them to go through the challenges of aging and in the end, when life on earth was over, there would be a reward in the afterlife. With this knowledge, they experienced successful aging.

The last hypothesis, that the four cultural orientations would be significant predictors of successful aging, was only partially supported. Only collectivism and subjectivity to nature were found to be significant predictors. Although the three cultural orientations (high-power, collectivism, and subjectivity to nature), when analyzed individually, proved to be correlated to successful aging, not all of them proved to be significant predictors when analyzed together. High-power distance, although highly correlated was not found to be a significant predictor. Masculinity was not correlated nor was it a significant predictor of successful aging.

This study showed that the three cultural orientations (high-power distance, collectivism, and subjectivity to nature) have remained deeply entrenched in the minds and hearts of Filipinos and became influential in their successful aging. As Hofstede (2010) theorized, the cultural programming started immediately at birth, nurtured in the family, cultivated in the next 20 years in school, and further developed by about 40 years at work; and as this study has demonstrated, the programming persisted through old age.

The fourth cultural orientation, masculinity, also remained embedded in the Filipino's life but weakened its influence when aging set in. The physical changes in the body forced the shift from power, ambition, material things (masculinity) to relationship, family, and spirituality (femininity). Perhaps this was nature's way of saying that it was time to change the direction and start preparing for the next phase of life.

At this point, a number of limitations of the study should be mentioned. One of which was the choice of purposive sampling over the more ideal non-probability sampling.

Conducting survey among the elderly posed some challenges. Among which were locating them and making sure that they were willing and able to accomplish the questionnaire. A number of accomplished questionnaires were discarded because the elder respondents refused to complete them. The instruments were already simplified, shortened, and piloted to make sure respondents would be able to accomplish them easily. But still, some respondents' behavior proved to be quite difficult to predict.

In the future, another area that should be looked into

should be the Filipino youths' perception of the elderly as well as their own aging. Would the Filipino cultural orientation be as deeply ingrained among the younger generation? Another interesting dimension would be the influence of psycho-demographic characteristics on the elders' successful aging. Also, would those in their advanced years (90 years or more) still behave the way the elder respondents in the present study did? These future research would add more layers of understanding of the Filipino elders.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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