

VOICES IN CAREER TRANSITIONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY TO
UNDERSTAND KOREAN ADULTS' CAREER CONSTRUCTION
IN POST-RETIREMENT

by

SEON JOO KIM

(Under the Direction of Laura L. Bierema)

ABSTRACT

A rapidly changing society, shaped by demographic changes and a global economy, has created different employment trends and work lives, which in turn require adults to adapt to changes in their careers. This is particularly the case for Korean middle-aged professionals. The combination of the demographic change and socio-economic development has created unprecedented social phenomena, denoting the extension of the working period. For many adults in Korea, this retirement transition presents permeable boundaries between cessation of full-time work and continuous commitment to the workforce. Retirement has become a career transition moving them to another career cycle in which individuals interact with different factors.

The purpose of the study was to examine the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals--who have retired from their primary career and in their post-retirement employment--by investigating their perspectives of the processes involved in their career transition and construction. This interpretative study was

guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults? (2) What contextual factors shape their career construction? (3) How do professionals interpret their career transition processes?

Criterion-based sampling was used to select participants for the study. Two female and five male Korean adults in their second careers who had already retired from their primary careers were interviewed for this study; their ages ranged from 48 to 65. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. The constructivist grounded theory method was used to analyze and interpret data.

Three broad categories of themes emerged from the data to address the research questions: (a) the career transition process, (b) contextual factors shaping career transition and construction, and (c) interpretation of career transitions and construction. The findings resulted in two major conclusions. First, career transition and construction was a process which entailed an appraisal of the threads linking person and context. Second, personal values created a balance between personal situations and societal environments and in turn enabled them to employ career adaptability. These conclusions led to implications for research and practice.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Education, Career Adaptability, Career Development, Career Transition Process, Personal Values, Post-retirement Employment, Retirement

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SEON JOO KIM

B.S., Yonsei University, South Korea, 2000

M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2008

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SEON JOO KIM

Major Professor: Laura L. Bierema

Committee: Talmadge C. Guy
Juanita Johnson-Bailey
Kathryn Roulston

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2011

DEDICATION

To my parents, Juhak and Bonim, for their unending support and love. Your love has given me confidence to pursue my passions and dreams, for which I am forever grateful. You are always my giants; standing on your shoulders makes me see farther.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We live in an era of unprecedented economic change and challenge in the world. At the macro level, these changes include increased globalization, advances in information and technology, and a rapidly increasing aging population. These significant and ubiquitous changes have challenged the extant organizational structure and individual workers' lives on multiple levels (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Corporations are experiencing fundamental changes, and if they fail to keep abreast of these changes they may fall behind in the competition or even be driven out of business. Greater competition and pressure for productivity have urged organizations to be flexible in managing the workforce by hiring more temporary employees and by reducing commitment to regular workers, particularly older workers.

For older workers, at the micro level, there are fewer opportunities for upward mobility, and frequent career changes or forced retirement driven by downsizing or rightsizing have made individuals more responsible for directing their personal career development (Amundson, 2005). Changes to the working life, triggered by societal changes, have increased the number of challenges individual workers face. Thus, we are in an era of "do-it-yourself career management" (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 6) in which individual workers are encouraged to be active in constructing and crafting their careers in a proactive, self-directed way driven, by personal values and evaluating career success based on subjective success criteria (Hall, 2002). Given this

phenomenon, what are the opportunities and challenges? How do workers adapt to those changes and challenges and construct their ongoing careers? Finally, what sociocultural factors hinder or foster their abilities to adapt to changes and construct their careers?

Background of the Study

As modern society has developed its own structure and institutions related to the economy, politics, and culture, particular employment patterns have affected contemporary life styles and vice versa. During the 20th century, lifelong or continuous employment provided security for employees during work and retirement (Watts, 1999). However, the 21st century workforce and employment look different from the past century, when the initial career development theories emerged (Bierema, 1998). A rapidly changing society, shaped by demographic changes and a global economy, has created different employment trends and work lives, which in turn require adults to adapt to changes in their careers. This is particularly the case for Korean middle-aged workers.

In South Korea, the “three-legged stool,” comprised of a rapidly increasing aging population, a longer life expectancy, and a globalized economy, has constructed and reconstructed employment patterns and subsequent changes in individual workers’ lives. First, South Korea will become the most aged society among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in 2050, when nearly four out of every ten Koreans will reach age 65 or over (Korean National Statistical Office (KNSO), 2007). The portion of the population that was over 65 in 2009 was 11 %. This percentage will grow to 38.2 % of Korea’s population in 2050, making it

the most aged country among the 30 member economies of the OECD, followed by Japan with 37.8 % and the U.S. with 21.6 %. The average life expectancy in Korea was 76.1 years for men and 82.7 for women, and the combined average was 79.6 in 2007. This situation reflects the rapid increase of the aging population.

With respect to retirement, among workers over 50, 48% retire from their primary jobs at 50-55 and 22% at 55-59, whereas 19% retire at 60-64 and 7% at 65-69 (Korean Labor & Income Panel Study, 2003). With respect to employment of older workers, for example, the report of the Korean Ministry of Labor (2008) stated that the portion of older workers (55+) employed in large companies that have over 300 employees was only 5.79% in 2007. Furthermore, the average initial-official retirement age in Korea is 57 (The Bank of Korea (BOK), 2009). Given that the average working period after the official retirement at the age of 60 is 16 years for men and 11 years for women (OECD, 2006), general Korean workers work for an additional 20 years if they retire at 55. Furthermore, research shows that the employment period after the official retirement is likely to be extended in the future (Park & Shim, 2010). Consequently, in Korea, early retirement from primary careers is a significant transition because workers must take responsibility for obtaining and constructing a second career. Finally, economic globalization has also changed the labor system in Korea. It has imposed the organizational culture from developed countries and has increased the cycle and speed of change. In light of globalization, companies and even public sectors have reduced core human resources and have made an effort to change traditional labor practices. They justify these actions by claiming a need for innovation. For example, the companies and the government

carried out large-scale labor restructuring following the financial crisis in the late 1990s in Korea. They began making the case for structural regulation and mergers on a regular basis. This rapid economic growth, driven by the government, has not allowed sufficient time to establish a social safety net for retirement built on institutions like Social Security or the Retirement Pension System at the national level. At the individual level, workers, who realize that they have the resources and capability for taking charge of their careers, act on their values and in turn can grow their potentials (Hall, 1976, 2002). Within this reality, Korean workers often retire from primary careers to second careers for various reasons that involve the process of the interpretation and evaluation of self, experiences, and career.

The field of career development has played an important role in addressing issues of career changes, career transitions, and career construction. A major concept that has influenced career development for adults is work-to-work transition based on the life span development perspective (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2002). Super (1957) initially developed an age-driven career theory called stage theory. With stable and predictable career mobility typical of employees in organizations in the 20th century, career development for adults could be articulated with Super's core concept of career maturity. This concept was useful in understanding the social structures individuals adhered to in the second half of the 20th century which rewarded employees for their investments in those structures (Watts, 1999). As a result of job proliferation, the social order offered individuals predetermined paths compatible with social norms and occupational careers (Savickas, 2000). However, the rapid increase in the number of older workers and its heterogeneous features of career construction require a

different articulation of career transitions, which is cyclical rather than linear and interwoven with changing contexts.

In other words, despite the importance of understanding the heterogeneity among workers in career transitions shaped by contextual factors, little is known about how they experience their career transition processes within the realm of career adaptation and construction. Drawn from the field of psychology, the way of understanding career transitions is mainly dependent on quantitative research, and the research subjects are young adults (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009; Ferreira, Santos, Fonseca, & Haase, 2007). Recently, attempts have been made to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies, yet few studies have employed qualitative methods to delve more deeply into the career transitions of older workers, particularly in multicultural contexts (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Savickas, 2002, 2005). In short, there are few insights into how adults interpret their career changes, and how they construct their careers and identify their future aspirations in conjunction with social changes and contexts, especially among workers living in a post-industrial society. Understanding how individuals reflect on their experiences and how they develop meaningful interpretations in their lives is critical in assisting workers with career transitions, because their careers are processes that they “intentionally engage in to acquire social meaning within the framework of their lives” (Young & Valach, 1996, p. 364).

My research is informed by the work of scholars who operate from the constructivist perspective. In particular, I draw on the theory of career construction (Savickas, 2002, 2005), an update to and expansion of Super’s (1957) theory of

vocational development, which addresses issues of career adaptability and narrative from a psychological perspective. As many careers do not correspond to the lockstep changes based on seniority or age-driven events assumed by Super's initial theory, that theory may not be sufficient to examine post-retirement career constriction, often driven by forced retirement or unexpected career transitions rather than by predictable forces and events. In the field of career development, career construction theory contends that "individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Thus the theory provides an appropriate lens through which to view and interpret the experiences of career transitions as a process. One of the core components of career construction, career adaptability (Goodman, 1994; Savickas, 2005; Super & Knasel, 1981) is understood as the readiness to change careers and to construct a future career. In a similar vein, the concept of protean career (Hall, 1976, 2002; Hall & Mirvis, 1995) is used to understand middle-aged workers' career construction. These concepts are utilized for understanding adults' career transition experiences in my study.

This study is also informed by the scholarship of transition theorists such as Bridges (Bridges, 2004, 2009), Ibarra (2003, 2007), and Schlossberg, Walters, and Goodman (1995). Their emphasis is on the process that Bridges (2004, 2009) labeled the *neutral zone*, Ibarra (2003, 2007) named the *in-between period*, and that Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) called the *Transition Process*. The transition process requires that the individual determine if he/she is moving in, through, or out of the transitions within this process. Taking stock of coping resources

provides a way to identify the potential resources adults have to cope with transitions. Ibarra (2003, 2007) emphasized the importance of the in-between period composed of psychological zones in which individuals are in between older and newer selves. In her model, a transition is a process which begins years before a specific alternative concretizes. This transitions process assumes “we oscillate between holding on to the past and embracing the future” (Ibarra, 2003, p. 46). Therefore, older workers in transitions seek to find resources that help with the transition process and “test and learn” possible alternatives that in turn make individuals take actions.

Finally, this study is informed by how contextual factors shape and affect middle-aged adults’ career transitions. With the goal of interpreting career development, Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) introduced the developmental-contextual approach focusing on the complexity of the process of development and change. One of the key concepts of the developmental-contextual approach involves viewing individuals’ career construction as “interacting with their changing context” (p. 77), which gives individuals a foundation for development. Most of all, they identified the three key elements in career development as the individuals, the context, and the relationship between the two. The mutually influential relations within which individuals are situated and within which they construct their careers, are closely investigated in career study (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Vondracek, Ferreira, & Santos, 2010). It is particularly important to see individuals as active purposeful agents in dynamic interactions with a constantly changing environment (Patton & McMahon, 2006). While the environment creates changes in individuals, the context is facilitated by these individual changes. The

ongoing interaction between the person and the environment is a key factor in the development of individuals' unique career construction.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of understanding the heterogeneity among workers in career transitions, little is known about how adults experience their career transition processes and how they (re)construct their careers by interacting with social factors. Emphasis on adaptive attitudes, skills, and decision making (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004; van Vianen, De Pater, & Preenen, 2009) tends to limit understanding of the interaction between social factors and career construction. In short, there are few insights into how they construct their careers and how they identify their future aspirations in the context of social changes, particularly among middle-aged adults living in a post-industrial society.

Korean middle-aged adults (48 to 65) are constructing their second careers after they retire from their primary careers. As they have been pioneers of social changes going through a compressed modernization in Korea, the meaning of work in their lives has become challenging but transformative. Therefore, in an effort to extend the dimension of career construction and understand the impact of social context on individuals' future career aspirations, this study sought to explore Korean middle-aged adults' understandings of their career construction in light of the many historical, social, and personal transitions they have experienced in Korea.

Purpose of the Study

This interpretive study aimed to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals who have retired from their primary career and

are in their post-retirement employment by investigating their perspectives of the processes involved in their career transition and construction. The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?
2. What contextual factors shape their career construction?
3. How do professionals interpret their career transition processes?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it extends our understanding of career development theory, particularly of career construction theory and the developmental-contextual approach to career development, and suggests practical applications of career construction shaped by career adaptability.

Significance of Theoretical Contribution

This study attempts to extend the knowledge of Savickas' (2002, 2005) career construction theory, particularly the concept of career adaptability. Savickas (2002, 2005) has elaborated the concept by introducing the four Cs (concern, confidence, curiosity, and control); yet most research on career adaptability has focused on career transitions and adaptation among young adults, and has mostly been driven by quantitative methodology (Creed et al., 2009; Ferreira et al., 2007). Despite the importance of understanding the diversity of adults' career transitions, little is known about how the concept of career adaptability can be used to address adult employees' career transitions (Ebberwein, Krieschok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004). This interpretive study is useful for extending the knowledge of career construction by shedding light

on how older professionals in non-Western contexts experience the career transition process and construct their careers.

Second, the developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek et al., 1986), which seeks to understand the interaction between the person and environment, can be further elaborated by examining Korean older professionals in their career transitions. It is significant to identify how Korean professionals, as individuals in context, become active purposeful agents in their career construction. In particular, the developmental-contextual framework is extended by understanding how contextual issues, such as organizational constraints and social changes, differentially encourage an individual's values, attitudes, and capacities and, in turn, translate them into a future career among Korean older professionals, thus offering insight into an under-researched population in a different context.

Significance of Practical Contribution

The field of career development has yet to develop sufficiently rigorous accounts that reflect the heterogeneity of individual workers in a constantly changing environment. Although the ways individual workers construct their careers has been considered a common developmental task, individuals-in-context (Vondracek et al., 2010) create different life themes, narratives, adaptive strategies, and future careers in dynamic interactions with the environment within which they are situated. The existing focus on career development for Western middle-class white males has provided limited understandings of career transitions and career construction among members of diverse populations who have experienced career transitions in specific cultures (Leong & Brown, 1995). Therefore, understanding the dynamic interaction

between the individual and environment in a society such as that of South Korea provides enhanced knowledge of career adaptability in its context, which may help career educators and improve career development programs for organizations.

Many scholars have argued the need for understanding career development within a cultural context (Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Leong & Brown, 1995; Leong & Gupta, 2008; Leong & Hartung, 1997). Because of its applicability on a global/international level, this qualitative study enriches the current theory and practice in career development by addressing salient issues for Korean adults.

Although it is rare for one study to affect both theory and practice directly, this study provides career educators with multidimensional understandings of career construction and of contextual impacts on individual workers' career transition in a rapidly changing society.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of the study aimed to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals who have retired from their primary career and are in their post-retirement employment by investigating their perspectives of the processes involved in their career transition and construction. The first section reviews retirement in adulthood and retirement as a career transition. Section two reviews and synthesizes the literature on career development theories, career construction theory, and the concepts of career adaptability and protean career. Section three reviews the literature on the transition models that provide a detailed explanation of the transition process.

Retirement in Adulthood

Retirement has been considered an event and transition in which many adults leave their full-time work. For instance, the sociocultural perspective on adult development addressed retirement within the scope of social roles and the timing of life events (Bee & Bjorklund, 2004). It assumes that those roles and stages are closely related to age and that they impact our development (Levinson & Levinson, 1996). However, as information technology and globalization increase, the rate of change in society and reaction to those changes present multifaceted realities. Traditional retirement based on age norms is unable to account for the multilayered view of retirement. Also, retirement in the 21st century is shaped by different societal factors

such as increasing life-expectancy, economic globalization, and changing employment patterns; this makes it hard to reduce retirement to a linear, stable, and predictable transition (Moen, 2005). In the following section, I address the brief history of retirement, retirement as a career transition, retirement context in Korea.

Retirement as an Institution

Retirement is a uniquely modern phenomenon which has a relatively short institutionalized history. Historically, growing older did not mean leaving the world of work. Retirement has become the natural phenomenon in the last quarter of the century (Goldberg, 2000). In the early 20th century, retirement was not a generalized expectation because many people faced their death while working. Retirement as a common transition was constructed from the goals of economic production and social protection (Schulz & Borowski, 2006). Embedded in collective social protection through a combination of social assistance and public/private pensions, for many individuals in industrialized countries, retirement is often viewed as their leaving the workforce and receiving their pension (Watts, 1999). However, in a world wherein different retirement features unfold, the contemporary retirement practices do not constitute simply retiring and just taking a pension benefit. This is further complicated by unstable employment that can cause insecurity in retirement and force continuous employment.

Retirement as a Career Transition

A major concept that has influenced career development for adults is work-to-work transition. With the current trend in downsizing, transfer, or career change, many adults have experienced the need to reevaluate their careers. As a result of

reevaluation, adults choose to learn new skills, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect the rapid change of corresponding employment trends, leading to career transition. For retirement transition, research has revealed that retirees seek employment after retirement such as bridge employment and want to work after retirement in either paid or unpaid work (Gobeski & Beehr, 2009; Schultz, 2003). Research reveals “a deep hunger for older Americans to use their experience and knowledge in important ways, and to continue learning and growing in the process” (Freedman, 1999, p. 23). The definition of retirement is changing due to workers’ continuous participation in the later part of their careers (Rix, 2002; Walker, 1996).

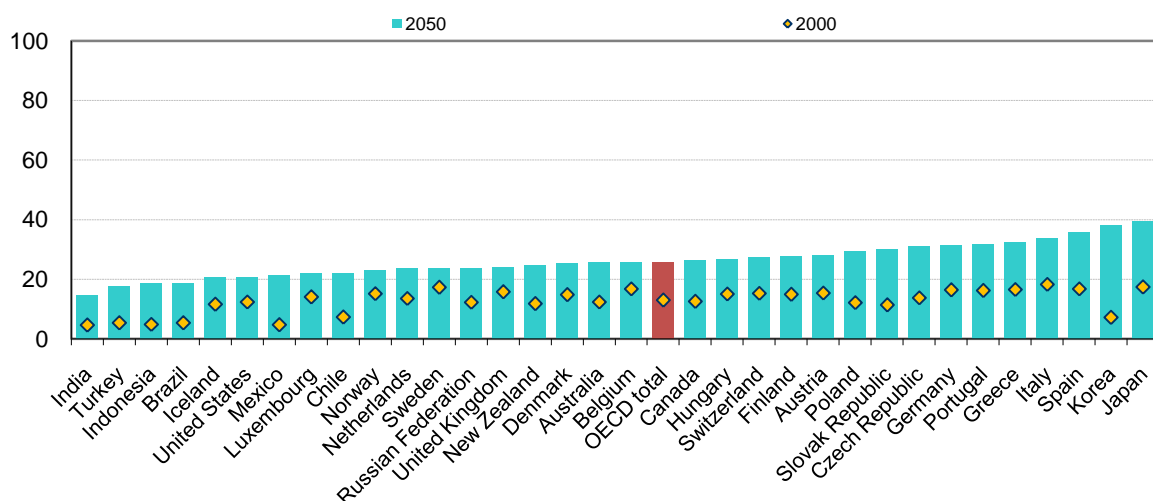
For a variety of economic, physiological, or psychological reasons, people are not ending their career with retirement. Retirement is not any more a paid vacation for the rest of one’s life. Retirement has become a career transition that moves them to another career cycle (Boulmetis, 1997). Planning a career transition in retirement requires that individuals interpret, evaluate, and reconstruct their experience, sociocultural context, and current situation, which complement the assumptions of constructivism (Young & Collin, 2004). For individuals, contemplating retirement might identify what aspects of their career they will maintain. Through this selection process, adults choose new careers or retirement activities that include more positive outlook in life.

Retirement in Korea

The institution of retirement in Korea was established in the 1960s, a time when economic development was driven by high productivity and low-wages. Retirement in Western developed countries is considered almost exclusively as

employment cessation followed by pension benefit (Schulz & Borowski, 2006), whereas in Korea and Japan it is viewed as a means of protecting employment until a certain age (Bang, 2008). As the older population increases in Korea and Japan, there have been growing efforts to increase the mandatory retirement age and extend employment. In order to understand this complex situation, it is useful to compare Korea to Japan in terms of the older population employment rate.

Figure 1. Employment Rates for Age Group 55-64



Source: This figure is based on data drawn from OECD Factbook (2009): Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics - ISBN 92-64-05604-1 - © OECD 2009.

As in Figure 1, the employment rate of age group 55-64 accounts for 17.4 % in 2000 and is expected to increase to 39.6% in 2050 in Japan. Although employment rates for older persons slightly declines (OECD, 2005), Japan is frequently remarked upon for its high labor force participation amongst older people and particularly older men (Casey, 2005). In 2000, nearly 95 % of men aged 55-59, nearly three quarters of aged 60-64 and one third of those ages 65 years were still economically active

(OECD, 2000). This high rate of employment can be articulated within different factors that affect the employment for older people in Japan (Williamson & Higo, 2007). Japanese older people have a strong desire to maintain their standard of living. According to the results of a survey by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (JMHLW, 2004), among Japanese workers aged 60 and over, 63.6 % responded that they remained in the labor force primarily for economic reasons (e.g., to maintain standard of living (57.4%), to raise living standard (4.9%), other (1.2%)). Comparing the rate of Korea with Japan, the big difference (7.2% in 2000 and 38.2% in 2050 in Korea) is due to no mandatory retirement policy in Korea whereas an official mandatory age 60 in Japan. It means that Korean workers retire early at average age of 57 (BOK, 2009) even including workers in public sectors. In some cases, the data include temporary and self-employed workers which increase the average retirement age of South Korea.

In Korea, the demographic change stemming from increased life-expectancy, medical advancement, and economic globalization have shaped retirement as a career transition. Just as the Western societies and Japan, which have experienced an increase of older population, emphasizing constantly the aging society as a national project such as The Third Age¹ (Laslett, 1996), South Korea has experienced a rapidly aging society. The average of life expectancy in Korea is 76.1 for men and 82.7 for women, and the total average is 79.6 years old in 2007. The fertility rate is

¹ Third age was initially used in the title of *Les Universités du Troisième Age* in France in the 1970s. The Third Age was founded at Cambridge, England in 1981 as a term to describe older people. The first age means an era of dependence, socialization, immaturity, and education; second an era of independence, maturity and responsibility, of earning and of saving; third an era of personal fulfillment where an individual can fulfill and pursue his/her personal goals and dreams; and fourth an era of final dependence, decrepitude and death. The age does not stretch of years, and the Third age could be lived simultaneously with the second age or the fourth age (Laslett, 1996, pp. 4-5).

1.26, which is the lowest all over the world. This situation reflects the rapid increase of the aging population. The aging population over 65 is 11% of the total in 2009 and it will occupy the 24.3% of the total population by 2030, and 38.2% by 2050 (Korea National Statistical Office (KNSO), 2007). The combination of the demographic change and socio-economic development has created unprecedented social phenomena, denoting the extension of the working period. For many adults in Korea, this retirement transition presents permeable boundaries between cessation of full-time work and continuous commitment to workforce.

Career Development in Traditional Theories

Career is an important part of personal identity. As Merriam and Clark (1991) pointed out, work is a major force that shapes individuals' lives and contributes to identity formation. Most of us discover and develop our identity through our work or career. One of the meaningful ways to examine the concept of career is to understand the traditional career development theories. In the following section, I encapsulate two career development theories of Super (Super, 1957; 1981) and Holland (1997) that have impacted the area of career development, and I address their relevance and limitations to the meaning of career in the 21th century.

Super's Career Development Theory

One of the most prominent career theorists, Super (1957), developed a career theory that is age-driven; in his book, *The Psychology and Careers*, it is called stage theory. The theory is based on life span development perspective. Super advanced the previous understanding of career development that was limited to young adulthood, to that could be applied to the entire life-span of an individual (Patton & McMahon,

2006). With stable and predictable career mobility in line with employing organizations in the 20th century, career development for adults could be articulated with Super's core concept of career maturity (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004). It emphasizes developmental indicators for decision making and coping with career tasks on the basis of age such as Growth (4 to 13 years), Exploration (14 to 24 years), Establishment (25 to 44 years), Maintenance (45 to 65 years), and Disengagement (65 years over) (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Career maturity through these stages has provided the order for society in which individuals tie themselves into social structures in the second half of the 20th century, rewarding them for their investment in those structures (Watts, 1999).

Super's early work is most associated with the developmental perspectives (1957; 1980), and his later work seeks to combine "life-stage psychology and social role theory to convey a comprehensive picture of multiple-role careers, together with their determinants and interactions" (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996, p. 126). His most significant contribution to career development is his life-span, life-space approach to career development that culminated in constructing an overarching framework of career development. The life-span represents the process of career development that is related to Super's vocational development stages, particularly associated with the concept of career maturity. The life-space represents the roles that an individual plays throughout life. He acknowledged the fact that a work role is one of the many roles individuals hold. This life-space approach brought an advance in the conceptualization of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2006). It also

provided an awareness of the relationship between individuals' major life roles and work roles, which Super described as the concept of role salience (Super, 1990).

Nonetheless, for adults, the stage of maintenance stemming from career maturity has become less applicable in a rapidly changing information-technology society in which frequent career transitions have been routinized and subsequently multifaceted. In accordance with economic development in industrialized societies, individuals have followed predetermined career paths based on ages and stages, such as in the transition from school to work. The emphasis on abilities and achievements combined with age and stages allowed career advisers to promote individual choice, encouraging individuals to select the particular ladder to climb and hierarchy to reach (Moen & Altobelli, 2006). In addition, the lack of concern about the interaction between roles and between an individual and contexts may restrict the understanding of contemporary career development, which requires continuous adaptation to changes.

Holland's Career Development Theory

Holland's career development theory (Holland, 1992; 1997) describes a person-environment perspective, and more emphasis is placed on career choice than other factors. His influential models of career choice, Holland's (1997) RIASEC (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional) model consists of trait complexes organized into types, offering a useful approach for appraising individual differences. The person-environment fit perspective addresses these three questions (Holland, 1992).

- What personal and environmental characteristics lead to satisfying career decision, involvement, and achievement, and what characteristics lead to indecision, dissatisfying decisions, or lack of accomplishment?
- What personal and environmental characteristics lead to stability or change in the kind of level and work a person performs over a lifetime?
- What are the most effective methods for providing assistance for people with career problems? (p. 1).

As Weinrach and Srebalus pointed out (1990), the underpinning assumption of the theory is that a vocational interest is “a description of the individual’s personality” (p. 39). Holland (1992) explained his typology as the structure for organizing information about jobs and people. These six types (RIASEC) make it possible to allocate individuals in a neat categorization that may help both individuals and organizations understand employees’ traits in relation to particular work roles. He also refined the person-environment fit theory by emphasizing an individual’s interactions with their environments such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Holland, 1992).

Despite of its significant contribution to career development theory, Holland’s theory provides “only a partial account of career development” (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 34). This model assumes that individuals’ choice can be matched well into their own abilities, aptitudes, and preferences. Despite its benefit as a useful tool for career consulting, examination of the six types described by Holland reveals that it is reductionist (Höpfl & Atkinson 2000), postulating that some people are more suited to certain occupations by measuring the characteristics of both individuals and

occupations without consideration of societal factors. Furthermore, as unprecedented changes transform careers at both global and local levels, it is critical to understand how external factors (e.g. increased job insecurity, demographic and labor market changes, and changing employment patterns) influence career development as well as an individual's perception of his or her career (Storey, 2000). Therefore, the fact that measurable characteristics are influenced and also shaped by environmental situations should be addressed in the realm of career choice.

The Changing Career Development

As aforementioned, the core concept of traditional career development theories are rooted in assumptions of stability in employment which connotes the linear movement toward maintenance and maturity (Super, 1980), and personal characteristics which can be discovered at any given time (Holland, 1992, 1997). In the next section, I review the changing concept of career from the constructivist perspective by addressing subjective career construction and the self and discuss career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) providing an explanation of its appropriateness for my study.

Changing Concept of Career

The traditional concept of career has assumed the order and progress of career within an organization or profession. This career provided individuals a secure basis for their lives. However, the 21st century workforce and employment look different from the past century when the initial career development theories emerged (Bierema, 1998). The rapid change in 21st century has created a new social arrangement of work, which is challenging the notion of stable job security. The diverse factors that

force career transitions, such as retirement, transfer, lay-off, and career changes increase the heterogeneity of individuals' career trajectories.

Also, the emphasis on abilities, achievements, and maintenance allows career advisers to promote individual choice based on the result of measurement and categorization in traditional career development areas. This approach is heavily front-loaded, which results in fragmenting career and disregarding the notion of career as a lifelong process (Savickas, 2000). The lack of concern for the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work is insufficient for addressing the changing concept of career in a rapidly changing information technology and aging society that urges individuals to continuously gain knowledge, adapt to change, and ultimately change themselves (Hall & Associates, 1996). As this change increases, individuals must "become lifelong learners who can use sophisticated technologies, embrace flexibility rather than stability, maintain employability, and create their own opportunities" (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 240). In this regard, retirement followed by career transition may be the exemplar connoting this reality.

Constructivist perspective on careers provides a useful framework in understanding careers in post-industrial society. It is an epistemological stance that emphasizes self-convincing, self-organizing, and proactive features of human knowing (Savickas, 2000). Constructivism's orientation to how individuals reflect on their experiences and how they develop meaningful interpretations in their lives is pivotal in assisting older workers to examine alternative ways in constructing their careers. From this perspective, career is a process that "people intentionally engage in to acquire social meaning within the framework of their lives" (Young & Valach,

1996, p. 364). Thus, career development involves the process of self-reflection about meaning and exploration/experimentation with observing and doing. In particular, the theory of career construction (Savickas, 2005) and its interpretive approach fits the post-industrialized information society, further advancing Super's theory (1957, 1990).

Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005) articulates the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals impose meaning and direction on their careers. It views careers from a contextualist perspective; in other words, individuals' careers are driven by adaptation to their environments. Within this perspective, "career do not unfold; they are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of work roles" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). The theory presents subjective career as a patterning of work experiences that impose personal meaning on past and present experiences, and future aspirations. The subjective definition used in career construction does not tend to discover preexisting facts but understand career as an active process of "meaning making." The same event such as retirement or career transition can be perceived in different ways by using a more subjective interpretation (Storey, 2000). For instance, the cessation of full-time work or the loss of job might be viewed positively and negatively by those affected: some may fear uncertainty and potential loss of income whereas others may interpret the opportunity as a way to change direction and expand into new fields. It is critical to examine the way in which people construct their careers in their "meaning making" activities, which express

their self-concept interwoven with their work roles, to understand career features in adulthood and retirement decision-making. The selected propositions of career construction theory as follows:

- A society and its institutions structure an individual's life course through social roles. The life structure of an individual, shaped by social process such as gendering, consists of core and peripheral roles. Balance among core roles such as work and family promotes stability whereas imbalances produce strain.
- People differ in vocational characteristics such as ability, personality traits, and self-concepts.
- Occupational success depends on the extent to which individuals find in their work roles adequate outlets for their prominent vocational characteristics.
- The process of career construction is essentially that of developing and implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles. Self-concepts develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the result of role playing meet with the approval of peers and supervisors.
- Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks of vocational development. The adaptive fitness of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies—the ABCs of career construction—increases along the developmental lines of concern, control, conception, and confidence.

- Career construction is prompted by vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas and then produced by responses to these life changes. (Savickas, 2005, pp. 45-46).

Career Adaptability

The critical component in career construction theory is adaptability: “the attitudes, competencies, and behaviors that individuals use in fitting themselves to work that suits them” (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). Savickas defines career adaptability as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas” (p. 51). Initially, in an effort to embrace career changes in adulthood beyond career maturity, Super and Knasel (1981) introduced “career adaptability.” They proposed it as an alternative to the redevelopment concept, maturity, emphasizing the interaction between individuals and environment and the need for adaptation. In the construct of career adaptability, adults—experiencing unprecedented challenges driven by a changing environment—should be able to “see [themselves] as behaving proactively” (p. 199). Since its inception, the concept of career adaptability has predominated in the career development literature (Creed et al., 2009; Savickas, 2000, 2005) and the term is used to refer to the balance that individuals make between personal situations and societal environment, particularly between different career stages (Goodman, 1994).

Adults learn how to anticipate and create changes proactively in an ever changing context, referred to as adaptability (Savickas et al., 2009). Understanding the different career layers in terms of adaptability enables us to “consider the

longevity of multiple meanings of career rather than limit our vision to a more immediate focus on contemporary changes” (Storey, 2000, p. 34). In the form of adaptability, generating new possibilities and experimentations allows adults to be active within uncertain situations shaping their career lives. Furthermore, by emphasizing individuals’ capabilities to adapt themselves not only to a changing societal environment but also to a novel situation, Savickas (2005) addresses individuals’ abilities to plan their future as a core dimension of adaptability. Adaptability functions as a self-regulating strategy that enables individuals to implement their self-concepts in their work roles. In the structural model of career adaptability in the Table 1, he presented the following dimensions of career adaptability, known as the four Cs:

Concern: Becoming concerned about their future as a worker.

Control: Increasing personal control over their vocational future.

Curiosity: Displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios.

Confidence: Strengthening the confidence to pursue their aspirations (p. 52).

Career adaptability increases along the four dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. The following table summarizes the discussion and comparison of the associated dimensions of career adaptability. The first column, Career Question, indicates what society prompts individuals to ask themselves. Career Problem indicates the reactions when individuals answer negatively to these questions. The third column indicates the adaptability dimension related to positive responses. The

next columns include the dispositions, competences, and coping behaviors associated with each dimension.

Table 1. Savickas' (2005) Career Adaptability Dimensions

Career Question	Career Problem	Adaptability Dimension	Attitudes & Beliefs	Competence	Coping Behaviors
Do I have a future?	Indifference	Concern	Planful	Planning	Aware/ Involved/ Preparatory
Who owns my future?	Indecision	Control	Decisive	Decision making	Assertive/ Disciplined/ Willful
What do I want to do in my future?	Unrealism	Curiosity	Inquisitive	Exploring	Experimenting/ Risk-taking/ Inquiring
Can I do it?	Inhibition	Confidence	Efficacious	Problem solving	Persistent/ Striving/ Industrious

Note. Cited from Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown and R. W. Lent (eds.) *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 42-70). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

In Savickas' (2005) 4Cs, the dimension of concern deals with individuals' concern about their professional future. This concern helps an individual remember his or her occupational past, present, and future. Control over an individual's professional future is the second dimension in career adaptability, and refers to the individual's belief that he or she has responsibility for chosen careers. A lack of career control causes career indecision. The third dimension, Curiosity, comes when an individual takes the initiative for learning about the desired career. It refers to "inquisitiveness about and exploration of the fit between self and the work world" (p.

55), A lack of curiosity leads to “naiveté about the work” (p. 55). Confidence, the fourth dimension, denotes a sense of self-efficacy that increase successful management in encountering challenges and obstacles. Problem solving and achieving goals are the main results of career confidence.

Despite its usefulness, the 4Cs have some limitations. The 4Cs, the combination of attitudes and behaviors that lead people to future aspirations, presumes that individuals have desires for the future. Yet, the assumption that readiness and planfulness can lead to optimal choices or successful adaptation to changes may restrict our understanding of dynamic features during the transitional process itself. In fact, to successfully adapt, individuals need to make critical decisions during their transition process, and doing so requires changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Decision making in career adaptability. Planning and planfulness as a core dimension of career adaptability can be facilitated by individuals’ decision making. In this vein, van Vianen, Pater, and Preenen (2009) expand career adaptability to include “malleable selves, mastery of different roles, and short-term decision making” (p.299). Considering planfulness a core dimension of adaptability, they view career adaptability as more persuasive when it embraces planfulness associated with “short-term foci” (p.306). People can be more adaptable if they focus on short-term decisions from which they expect positive outcomes rather than long-term decisions whose outcomes may be uncertain.

A continuing narrative of the self. Over-emphasis on future aspirations as a driving force for adaptation masks the importance of individuals’ incorporation of

their past and present into the future. Individuals living in post industrial society are not always stable and rational decision makers, particularly when they make choices for their own future careers. As Giddens (1991) stated, “a person’s identity is not to be found in behavior...., but in the capacity to *keep a particular narrative going*” (p. 54). The ability to continuously incorporate events that take place in the external world into their inner selves, thus creating ongoing stories about themselves, should be another core building block for career adaptability. As the authors of their selves and of their own biographies, individuals construct the present and a desired future through listening to meaningful voices in the continuum of the self. Their ongoing stories formed in real and imagined conversations with themselves and with others provide a space for constructing their identities (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Narrating their interpretation of their past experiences and present life in relation to their career provides a powerful tool that helps workers take advantage of career adaptability and construct their future careers in conjunction with their past and present experiences.

Relevant Study on Career Adaptability

Ebberwein, Krieschok, Ulven, and Prosser (2004) studied career transitions from a contextual perspective and examined career adaptability for coping with job loss. Their qualitative study aimed to develop theory in response to the question “What does adaptability look like in the face of involuntary career transition?” The study was conducted to focus on the interplay between the environment and the individual. The interview data from 18 individuals (nine women and nine men), with ages ranging from 30 to 61 years were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss’s (1967)

grounded theory method. The study went through two stages. After interviewing 10 participants and analyzing their transcripts, the authors named the primary themes and held discussions to clarify, expand, or eliminate themes based on the supported data. Then, they interviewed the next eight participants with the purpose of supporting or challenging the themes identified in the first 10 interviews. The results included adaptive responses, contextual challenges, and insights into the transition as summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Ebberwein et al's. (2004) Adaptive Dimensions in Career Transition

Dimensions	Emergent Themes
Adaptive Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach job loss with a healthy sense of urgency • Picture the details of your next career move—even when no transition in insight • Get ready to make changes when career transitions seem imminent • Treat decisions about stopgap employment cautiously • Set realistic goals and outline steps to achieve them
Contextual Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial resources, or the lack of them, strongly influence how one copes with job transition • Family life interacts significantly with work life • An employer can have a significant impact on the experience of the transition
Insights into the Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs and responsibilities sometimes conflict with the ideal occupation • Adults in transition want counselors who attend to the big picture • Personal transitions are rooted in significant changes in the world of work

Note. Cited from “Voices in transition: Lessons on career adaptability.” *Career Development Quarterly*, 52, 292-308. by Ebberwein, C. A., Kireschok, T. S., Ulven, J. C., & Prosser, E. C. (2004).

This study provides a significant understanding of people's experience of their career transitions and the benefits of career adaptability in coping with job loss. The participants emphasized the importance of individuals' initial reactions to the novel situation and acknowledged some contextual factors that had a positive or negative impact on the career transition process. Although the scope of this study is limited to involuntary job loss, significant concern belongs to the individuals themselves in a changing career; therefore, the self as a subject adapting to those changes, which includes intrapersonal and interpersonal reactions, brings career adaptability to the fore. In the following section, I address the concept of protean career (Hall, 1976, 2002) and the developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek et al., 1986) to provide additional understandings for my research.

Protean Career

Traditionally career researchers have focused on objective indicators of career success like organizational position or attained promotions (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). The protean career concept is about a psychological career orientation that implicitly gives rise to particular career behavior. The protean career metaphors convey the conditions of rapid technological, organizational, and social change (Hall & Moss, 1998). Because of the emphasis on individual agency over organizational structure as a basis for career development, the concept of protean career focuses on individual career actors' emancipation from the constraints of traditional careers. This new concept advocated initially individual adaptability and pro-activity in changing circumstances (Inkson, 2006).

In addition, the concept of protean career offers a valid approach to reflect contemporary careers in which an individual manages his or her career in a proactive, self-directed way driven by personal values and evaluating career success based on subjective success criteria (Hall, 2002). The term Protean is derived from Greek mythology. Proteus was the Greek God of Sea that could change forms in order to adapt to oncoming threats. Hall first noted the emergence of the protean career in 1976, as he saw the beginnings of a shift away from the organizational career to this new orientation. He contributed to suggesting the protean careers in which individuals adjust to changing circumstances by rapidly changing their shape (Inkson, 2006). He defined this orientation as:

The protean career is a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all of the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. The protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external. (Hall, 1976, p. 201)

The concept of protean career has been elaborated as a career development theory. In addition to the concept of adaptability, Hall and his colleagues add self-direction and identity to the initial concept of adaptability (Hall, 2004; Mirvis & Hall, 1994). This effort makes the protean career more complex and complete than the dictionary meaning of the word protean. Now the concept of protean means not only shape-shifting but a by-product of self-direction steered by personal identity and specific values (Inkson, 2006). The protean career focuses on achieving subjective career

success through self-directed vocational behavior. Additionally, the protean career emphasizes psychological success resulting from individual career management, as opposed to career development by the organization. A protean career involves greater mobility, a more whole-life perspective, and a developmental progression (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006).

Nonetheless, the conceptualization of the protean career as an attitude reflecting a feeling of personal agency suggests that this attitude will engage individuals in managing their own career. Even though the protean career concept has received widespread attention in the career literature, empirical research is in its early stages. The concept of protean career assumes that a protean career attitude is associated with career success, but empirical evidence is still insufficient (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Additionally, the concept of protean career has been criticized in that this theory seems to be relevant only for the elite professionals who truly have the power to be mobile or to change their career at will. In spite of different responses to this critique, however, the point is that some people do not understand the intricacies within this career concept that would allow them to identify according to their own or observed career stories (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). The necessity for redefining career is taken up further as a new generation of workers asks themselves questions about the meaning and purpose of work.

Some people are still very much oriented toward having a long career in a particular organization and are concerned with maximizing their chances for achieving promotions or higher pay. However, it is important to point out that the protean concept describes a particular individual orientation to one's career even

though not everyone has this orientation to the career. The concept of protean career describes a new form in which the individual takes responsibility for transforming their career path rather than the organization. Moreover, the individual can change himself or herself according to their own need that results in managing their multiple identities.

Developmental-Contextual Approach

Vondracek, Learner, and Schulenberg (1986) provided a new understanding of the complex process of career development and change. They pointed out the limit of a normative framework for career development from a step-driven approach. Instead, the developmental-contextual approach emphasizes the variability at both the individual and contextual levels of the process by determining that “people, by interacting with their changing context, provide a basis of their own development” (p. 77). They coined the term *contextual affordance* to describe the manner in which “the environment differentially inhibits or encourages an individual’s capacities to capitalize on personal characteristics and translate them into career futures” (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 89). The continuous interplay between an individual and the context is a foundation of the development of an individual’s career construction.

In addition to dynamic interaction, the important concept of embeddedness emphasizes the multiple levels at which individuals are situated such as physical, psychological, social contexts. It assumes that one change at any level can bring about another change. Another significant aspect of the developmental-contextual approach is to acknowledge the temporal component in which individuals respond to contextual changes (Vondracek et al., 1986; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2002). This

understanding provides a compelling integration to address the diverse features of career transitions and construction in a dynamic and rapidly changing world in which adults are interwoven within time, place, and contexts.

For my study, the developmental-contextual approach is employed in social settings. Every social setting arises “at the intersection of one or more *actors* engaging in one or more *activities* (behaviors) at a particular *time* in a specific *place*” (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006, p. 121). These four components (actors, activities, time, and place) are operationally used in an attempt to understand and analyze Korean adults’ career transition experiences. The first component, *actors*, is Korean middle-aged professionals in postretirement employment engaging in diverse work roles. The second component, *activities*, includes career construction resulting from different career transitions and encounters. The component *time* indicates those adults’ interpretations of their experiences of careers in a continuum of past, present, and future. The final component, *place*, is Korea, which constitutes social and cultural practices within which individuals construct their meanings of life and self. As shown in Figure 2, I situate Korean adults as individuals who have endured rapid economic growth and political democratization during the period of compressed modernization entailing different historical moments in 20th century in Korea. The individuals needed to negotiate among sociocultural contextual factors. They construct their own careers thorough making vocational changes or reacting to the changing situations while making sense of their careers.



Figure 2. Conceptualization of Career Construction for Adults in Korea

Section Summary

As Guy (1999) pointed out, “culture is omnipresent and is essential to human social life” (p. 7). As such culture also plays an essential role in shaping an individual’s career development in South Korea. Transition to a second career following retirement cannot be understood apart from the multilayered contexts in which people’s lives unfold. These contexts include individual biographies, families, workplaces, and the structures and cultures of broader societal arrangements that shape the transition process. As reviewed in the career development section, career development is the result of interactions between person and context (Shanahan & Porfelli, 2002) and individuals can construct their own careers by selecting and shaping the contexts of their life situations (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008) are overarching frameworks assist understanding of changing career development.

Transition Theory and Models

Transition theorists believe that we should examine the ways in which adults adapt to life experiences. They stated that all people deal with either anticipated or unanticipated life events and search for similarities and differences in the ways that people deal with them (Bridges, 2004, 2009; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Believing that there are many predictable, universal adult experiences and those transitions are more important than chronological age in understanding adult behavior, transition theorists offer models to predict, measure, and modify adults' reactions to change. In the following section, three transition models including Bridge's (2004, 2009), Schlossberg's (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg et al., 1995) and Ibarra's (2003, 2007) are reviewed. Finally, I identify important issues with each model with respect to its applicability to this study in the Korean context.

Transition as a Process

Transition is a process over time, although the onset of transition is initiated by one event or non-event, and every transition is unique. Transition launched by identifiable events takes time, and people's reactions require time to track the journey. The process of leaving one set of roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions takes a certain amount of time, and more significantly constructing new ones requires more time (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Within the transition process, people experience emotional, physical, and mental transitions (Bloch & Richmond, 1998; Schlossberg, 2007). The transition process also entails changes and continuity in different sociopsychological factors such as self-concept, identity, and role changes (Reitzes & Mutran, 2004). For instance, as people enter

retirement and career transition, their self-esteem and the positive evaluation of self may motivate them to be confident about their new experiences whereas the negative interpretations restrict the adaptation to change in this transition.

Within a developmental framework, transitions are considered turning points or as a period between two periods of stability (Goodman et al., 2006). Occurring between life phases, transition requires developing adaptive and successful adjustment. Moving through a transition calls for letting go of aspects of the self and previous roles, and learning new roles. Many people moving through this period take stock as they renegotiate these roles. Even transitions involving significant life events such as graduation from college, marriage, child birth, and retirement, provide opportunities for growth and transformation through addressing and evaluating these important life events over time (Bridges, 2004; Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Bridges' Transition Model

Bridges (2004, 2009) proposed a process model of transitions, providing tools for identifying a personal development arrangement as well as determining underlying processes of personal transition. Claiming that transitions adults experience differ from changes, he explains that changes are external and situational, but transitions are more internal and psychological. Change without a transition can be just a rearrangement of the old things because transitions involve a going through process, incorporating changes into your life through inner reorientation and self-redefinition.

Bridge's transition process composes three phases: ending (letting go), the neutral zone, and the new beginning (2004, 2009). The first step that begins the

transition process is endings, in which one may have to let go of assumptions, feelings, self-images, understandings, or views not just externally, but internally. By recognizing that letting go is an ambivalent experience, people can acquire new insights about transition, requiring new skills for negotiating the complex reality of older situations and the new. Learning to deal with endings is advantageous for understanding and facilitating transition process. The second step in Bridges' transition process is the "neutral zone." It is the period when one's old way of doing things is gone, but the new ways of doing things do not yet feel comfortable. He compares this phase of the transition process to being in a state of "limbo" (2009, p.8) between the old sense of identity and the new. He points out it is a crucial part of the process, using the words of American historian Henry Adam's "Chaos often breeds life, while order breeds habit" (p. 43). The third phase is the "new beginning," the time when the adult integrates the changes into a new way of life. Bridges emphasizes that these three phases are not separate stages with clear boundaries and sequential stages. Instead, he describes the three phases of transition as "curving, slanting, overlapping strata" (2009, p. 100).

The discussion of the neutral zone elaborates the transition process within Bridge's model. Even though the neutral zone, which is the in-between place of neutrality, can be painful, it is one's best chance for creativity, renewal, and development (Bridges, 2009). It is the time for innovation and revitalization, which is the core of the transition process. It is the time "when repatterning takes place: old and maladaptive habits are replaced with new ones that are better adapted to the world" (p. 9). In this regard, if adults do not expect the neutral zone, they may try to

rush through a transition and be discouraged when they cannot do so successfully. It is important for adults to understand it is normal to have difficulty at this point in the transition process. Furthermore, just as transitions begin with ending or letting go, they must also end with a beginning. Here, difficulties with new beginnings draw from difficulties with ending and neutral zones. He believes that new beginnings take place when an individual is ready to make the emotional commitment to do things a new way and see oneself as a new person. The transition process can be summarized with “endings and beginnings, with emptiness and germination in between” (Bridges, 2004, p.175).

Schlossberg's Transition Model

Every transition that people experience is unique, moving through a process with a beginning, middle, and usually an end. Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) used an analogy of a trip to explain the transition process. They compare moving into the transition as preparing for a trip, moving through the transition to the actual trip, and moving on past the transition to assimilate it into one's life as the aftermath of a trip. Reactions to life transitions change as the transition is integrated into one's life. For instance, feelings at the beginning of a trip differ from feelings later on in the trip. Therefore, the transition process must be examined in relation to the ways the individual reacts to and evaluates the situation over time.

In addition, Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) provides a systemic framework for understanding transitions that comprises three major elements. The first one is to identify transitions (Transition Identification). This identification requires adults to recognize the nature of the transition as anticipated, unanticipated,

or nonevent, and the context in relation to the setting in which the transition occurs. It also includes the transition's impact on the individual's life on relationships and roles. The second component, Transitions Process, requires the individual to determine where he/she is moving in, through, or out of the transition. Within this process, taking stock of coping resources provides a way to identify the potential resources adults have to cope with the transition. The third component of model, Taking Charge, requires adults to strengthen resources by demonstrating the use of new strategies. According to Schlossberg, Water, and Goodman (1995), as an individual undergoes a transition, he or she passes through a series of phases of assimilation that is a process of moving from the preoccupation with the transition to the integration of the transition into his or her life. They emphasize the coping resources that one has in order to determine the balance of present and possible assets and sources during the transition process. The resources vary according to the particular transition, the particular individual, and the particular environment.

The 4 S System. Schlossberg (1987), Schlossberg, Water, and Goodman (1995), Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) developed a systematic way (4 S system) to help adults analyze their strengths and weaknesses so they might better adapt.

Situation. People ask questions to answer the major question, what is happening? Situation variables can act as triggers that stimulate individuals to see themselves and their lives in a new way. Timing provides the barometers to judge whether the transition occurs in on time or off time. The control issue in Situation helps adults understand how an individual perceives control over his or her own

transition. Additionally, role change following transition is an important aspect in determining the impact of the transition. This query includes the following questions: What triggered the transition? Does the person see the transition as permanent or temporary, positive, negative, or benign, expected or unexpected, voluntary or imposed, gradual or sudden, desired or dreaded, “on time” or “off time?” Does the transition involve role change? Did the individual initiate the transition? Has the individual had previous experience with similar transitions, and if so, were they helpful or harmful?

Self. Individuals have both resources and deficits that they bring to the transition. The major question that needs to be addressed is to whom is the transition happening? What are the person’s personal and demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status, gender, age and stage of life, state of health, ethnicity? What are the person’s psychological resources such as optimism, self-efficacy, commitments, values, spirituality, and resilience? Is the person optimistic and able to deal with ambiguity? Is the person committed to this transition? Do they have a sense of meaning and purpose? Does the adult believe that personal effort will affect the outcome of a particular course of action?

Support. The types of support people receive are their sources they can get during the transition process: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and the institutions and/or communities of which the people are a part. Individuals need to discover what help is available within the variable of support. The relevant questions are as follows: What kinds of potential emotional and financial support are available? Does the person have a range of types of support—spouse or partner, other

close family or friends, coworkers, neighbors, organizations, or institutions? Does the individual feel the support system for this transition is a low or high resource?

Strategies. The major question in Strategies is how do I cope? Schlossberg discussed coping strategies by using Lazarus and Folkman's (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)(1984) two coping orientations: instrumental and problem-focused behavior for changing the situation, and palliative or emotion-focused behavior aimed at helping minimize emotional distress. The following questions help understand how people respond to transitions in terms of strategies. Does the person use several coping strategies or just one? Can one change the situation by negotiating or self-assertion? Can the person control the meaning of the problem to neutralize the threat through positive comparisons or selective ignoring? Is one able to manage the personal stress by meditation, exercise, or medication? Does one know how to seek out relevant information and direct or inhibit action to meet his or her goals?

Ibarra's Transition Model

Ibarra's model focusing on career transition provides a deeper understanding of how people experience the transition process from a different perspective. People in career transition reflect different views of the self and experience a change in identity. Because adaptation to career transition is accompanied by new roles that require new skills, new attitudes, behaviors, and new lifestyle patterns, it produces fundamental changes in an individual's self-definition (Rossiter, 2009). Ibarra (2003, 2007) presents the importance of the in-between period composed of psychological zones in which individuals are in between their selves. In her model, a transition is a process beginning years before a specific alternative concretizes. This transitional

process assumes “we oscillate between holding on to the past and embracing the future” (Ibarra, 2003, p. 46). According to Ibarra, the in-between period is often a long and crucial period in which we experiment with our possible selves during the transition process. The in-between period equates with Bridges’s “neutral zone,” meaning the time between ending and new beginning in which we are making tentative steps toward an uncertain new world.

During the between-identities period, we may wander in many different directions. The period is not a peaceful period, entailing a number of moments of reflection. Most of all, we encounter “a multitude of selves—old and new, desired and dreaded...[which] are coming to the surface, nosily coexisting.” (Ibarra, 2003, p. 57). In an effort to move through this period, many people seek to find appropriate advice and intervention. The counseling-oriented intervention deals with personal interests, values, and personality, and encourages people to plan properly and implement those plans in different ways. The typical planning and implementing approach to career transition encourages people to identify what skills you like to use, your areas of interest, your personality, and your values. In this vein, career transition process reduces its features to two elements: “analysis and execution” (p.32). It connotes that we can get answers that we can plan around, and take a step forward through implementation. The underlying assumption of the plan-and-implement approach is that there is a singular “true-self” (Rossiter, 2009, p. 63) that can be discovered.

Contrarily, the test-and-learn model for making change, which Ibarra (2003) proposes, is based on postulation that learning is iterative in which we take action and

respond to those actions that result in both learning and change. As an awareness of a problem gets profound, it is necessary to test possibilities rather than think or plan in mind. Getting started depends on how we try to test and evaluate possible alternatives to a large extent rather than questioning who we are. She describes the learning through trials approach as a method to learn “from direct experience to recombine old and new skills, interest, and way of thinking about oneself, and to create opportunities that correspond to that evolving self” (p.39). In her model, successful transition involves the process of testing and learning among the possible alternatives.

Section Summary

Within these three transition models, we can see the transition process in relation to the way an individual experiences role changes, self-negotiations, explorations, future aspirations, senses of agency, and reflections on experience. As in the Figure 3, a transition is a process that involves the process of moving in-through-out.

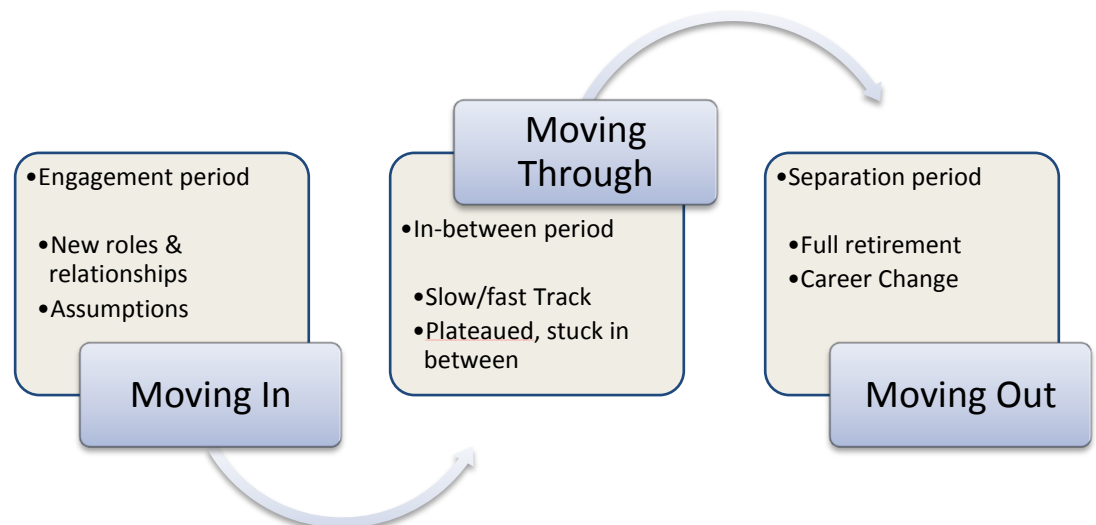


Figure 3. An Integrative Worklife Transition Model

Based on the belief that reactions to any transition change over time, the transition process requires the individual to determine whether he or she is moving in, through, or out of the transition. Within the transition process, taking stock of coping resources provides a way to identify the potential resources for managing the transition. My study endeavors to understand how individuals interact with sociocultural contexts while they move through this process. This Figure is a basic and preliminary output that I created as I progressed in the research process. Adding and refining the interactions within this Figure will be another goal as I continue through and move out of my academic journey.

Summary of the Chapter

This review of the literature addressed six areas of research related to the proposed study: (a) retirement in adulthood, (b) career development in traditional theories, (c) the changing career development in 21st society, and (d) transition theories and models. The literature on retirement in adulthood addresses the changing ways that retirement is no longer a paid vacation, but rather it is another opportunity to facilitate career transitions. The review on the traditional career development theories provides an understanding of the overarching concept of career through Super's life-span and life-space approach and Holland's person-environment fit approach to career. I addressed their relevance and limitations to the meaning of career and retirement in the 21th century. The literature on the changing career development in 21st century offers organizing frameworks or theories on career development that shape my study. Understanding the career construction theory and its core concept of career adaptability, and additional protean career model and the

developmental-contextual approach gives a compelling integration to address the diverse features of career transitions and construction in a dynamic and rapidly changing world in which adults are interwoven within time, place, and sociocultural contexts. Finally, the review of the transition theories enhances the understanding of the transition process that individuals go through during their lives. It offers models to predict, determine, and modify adults' reactions to changes and transitions. All people deal with either anticipated or unanticipated life events and search for similarities and differences in the ways that people deal with them (Bridges, 2004, 2009; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Believing that there are many predictable, universal adult experiences and those transitions are more important than chronological age in understanding adult behavior, transition theorists offer.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This interpretive study aimed to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals who have retired from their primary career and are in their post-retirement employment by investigating the important resources available to them, the interactions between these individuals and society, and the emerging patterns of their career construction. The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?
2. What contextual factors shape their career construction?
3. How do professionals interpret their career transition processes?

This chapter is divided into several sections. The first section describes the design of the study, and why this particular design is appropriate to answer my research questions. The second section explains the sample selection. The third and fourth sections describe data collection and analysis methods, respectively. The fifth section outlines the validity and reliability of qualitative research as it pertains to my study. Finally, the sixth section shares my biases and assumptions as a researcher.

Design of the Study

The conceptual power of the career concept connects the individual to the wider context, which includes the changing world. However, the prevalence of positivistic approaches to research restricts understanding of the more dynamic and

holistic dimensions of career (Cohen, Duberley, & Mallon, 2004). Given that the social world is not static or external to the individual, the context impacts individuals in deterministic ways and individuals themselves construct the society (LaPointe, 2010). Within this dynamic, individuals, as active agents who construct their careers through making meaning out of their experiences, and the interaction between individuals and the environment that constitutes their reality are the primary subject matter that I sought to understand.

Qualitative study aims to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 98). As the purpose of this study is to understand Korean middle-aged adults’ career transition process, a qualitative approach allows us to understand the meaning of how early retirees in their post retirement employment have constructed their careers and how they experience their transition process. In order to explore this phenomenon, my knowledge claim is based on constructivism, which focuses on meaning making and the construction of social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes (Young & Collin, 2004). The constructivist approach views an individual’s way of making sense of the world as valid and worthy. Although the emergence of constructivism in the career field partly stems from the widespread influence of cognitivism, it has been substantially promoted by career practitioners who seek to find approaches to everyday and work-related situations including career transitions (Bujold, 2004; Young & Collin, 2004). However, due to the critique of highly individual approaches that fail to consider social interaction or contexts that allow self-reflection, scholars have made an effort

to embrace the more social explanation suggested by social constructivists (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

Another theory that I adopt was a developmental-contextual approach that focuses on the complexity of the process of development and change (Vondracek et al., 2010; Vondracek et al., 1986). Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) identified the three key elements in career development as the individuals, the context, and the relationship between the two. The mutually influential relations within which individuals are situated and within which they construct their careers, are closely investigated in career study (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Vondracek et al., 2010). However, the major theories of career development address middle-class white males in Western society, and in turn provided limited understanding of career transitions and construction among members of diverse populations in specific cultures (Leong & Brown, 1995). Furthermore, how individuals in different contexts construct and develop their careers has not sufficiently been addressed in the field of career development (Shanahan & Porfelli, 2002). As an individual moves through a specific time and space, he or she constitutes a career in interaction with others (LaPointe, 2010; Savickas, 2005). In an attempt to understand the career transitions process and career construction by seeking intrapersonal interpretations of interactive relationships in society, I undertook a constructivist grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2008) that facilitates a construction of meaning and a meaningful reconstruction of their stories through the interaction between a researcher and a participant.

Grounded theory (GT) is an inductive and systematic qualitative approach built on the constant comparative method that involves simultaneous data collection and analysis. (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It consists of organized and flexible procedures for collecting and organizing qualitative data to generate concepts and construct theories grounded in the data. Introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Grounded theory method (GTM) claimed equivalent status to the methodological concept of empirical grounding derived from the quantitative orientation. This has since been seen as a weakness of GTM (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Kelle, 2005). From the Chicago school of pragmatism, Strauss viewed grounded theory as an open-ended method that emphasizes process, meaning, and actions, whereas Glaser's positivist approach has been imbued with rigorous codified methods that focus on empirical data (Charmaz, 2002, 2006). While Glaser and Strauss developed their own controversial interpretations of the original method (Kelle, 2005), there has been the "methodological fray" (Charmaz, 2006, p. xi) as researchers proposed their own grounded theory methods based on their own ontological/epistemological underpinnings. Gradually, GTM has evolved from objectivism to constructivism (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). In the field of career development, the research using grounded theory is mostly based on the Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original GT and often on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) view of grounded theory which were viewed as methods that fit "the objective of constructing a theory that helps to better understand the issue" (Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine, 2005, p. 358).

Unlike Glaser and Strauss (1967), who viewed theory as emerging from data and as separate from the researcher, Charmaz (2000, 2002, 2006) positioned herself as a constructivist grounded theorist and drew on symbolic interactionist perspectives. She makes the following assumptions: (a) multiple realities exist, (b) data reflect the researcher's and the research participants' mutual constructions, and (c) the researcher incompletely enters and is affected by the participants' worlds (Charmaz, 2002, p. 678). She points out that "we construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspective, and research practices" (2006, p. 10). Her approach is meaningful in that it fully positions grounded theory as "a flexible approach and not a strict methodology" (Seaman, 2008, p. 3). This shift encouraged many researchers to bring or start from "other vantage points" to use grounded theory including "varied fundamental assumptions, data gathering approaches, analytic emphases, and theoretical levels" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 511). Constructivist grounded theory researchers pay attention to what analytic sense we make of participants' accounts and actions. In addition, constructivist grounded theory promotes co-construction of knowledge through the interaction between socially involved researchers and participants (Babchuk, 2009). The constructivist grounded theory method combined with a keen eye and open mind provides a useful tool for "generating, mining, and making sense of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). In order to better understand *individuals-in-context* (Vondracek, Ferreira, & Santos, 2010) in the context of Korea, I sought for emergent concepts from the data that can generate a substantive theory, which may add new insights and practice to the field of career development. Based on these perspectives, my research integrated in-depth

one-on-one interviewing and document analysis to collect and analyze data about the career transition experiences of Korean early retirees in their post-retirement employment. A detailed explanation of data collection and analysis follows in the next sections.

Sample Selection

Sampling in qualitative research is purposeful (Patton, 2002); it is important to select a sample from which the most can be learned. Patton emphasizes that the power of purposeful sampling “lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues...to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) use the term criterion-based selection to describe a type of selection, which is comprehensive in addressing the issues of sampling. In criterion-based selection, the criteria include “a list of attributes” (p.70) important to the research. Sampling based on these criteria not only reflects the purpose of the study but also plays a role in providing information-rich cases for research.

My participants, Korean middle-aged professionals aged 45 to 65 were born before, during, and after the Korean War (1950-1953). For example, as a representative cohort of Korean middle-aged people, the baby boomers (aged 48 to 56) numbered about 7 million and accounted for 14.58% of the total population in 2010. With regard to educational attainment, 46.1% reported having a high school degree and 24.6% reported having a college degree (KNSO, 2006). The college degree ratio is higher than that of pre-baby boomers 8.9% (+ 60). The employment rate in 2010 was 74.6%, 88.5% for men and 60.3% for women (Korean Statistical Research

Institute (KSRI), 2010). In Korea, the average retirement age in 2009 was 57 (BOK, 2009), and research shows that the employment period after official retirement typically is lengthy, usually 20 years (Park & Shim, 2010). In this situation, early retirement no longer means a paid vacation; rather, it is a career transition toward another career, and early retirees construct their careers while they go through this transition. Post-retirement employment following early retirement is a relatively new phenomenon for Korean middle-aged adults and has not been studied. In my study, I chose Korean professionals in their post-retirement employment in that they could articulate the career transition experiences in a detailed manner.

Building upon the criterion-based sampling concept, I established the following criteria:

- 7 to 10 Korean middle-aged professionals aged 48 to 65 who are in their post-retirement employment following early retirement from both private and public organizations.
- They are either male or female and have experienced career transition within the past 3 to 7 years, the time frame necessary for a complete career transition process.
- The participants have experienced career transitions at least two or three times while working.

Adults who worked in professional and executive positions in organizations were purposefully chosen with the aim of understanding how they construct their careers in either similar or different ways. In order to recruit participants, I found initial informants through my own “personal networks” (Roulston, 2010, p. 98) in

Korea. I then asked that key person to provide some referrals. Once I had participants' personal contact information such as an email address or telephone number, I provided the outline of the research and arranged a meeting to inform each of them about the purpose and procedures of the research.

Data Collection

Interviewing is a useful method because it provides information which we cannot obtain through observation alone: participants' behavior, their emotions, and their interpretations of their context and lives (Merriam, 2009). As a data collection method, interviewing has become a general method used in qualitative research. According to deMarrais (2004), an interview is defined as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p.55). The researcher is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), who can be responsive and adaptive through verbal and nonverbal communication while collecting data. In addition, the benefit of the interview method is "to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

The epistemological stance of a researcher shapes the whole process from the design of the study to the data collection and analysis (Crotty, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Roulston, 2010). As a significant instrument for gathering and analyzing data, the individual researcher can design different types of research and acquire different kinds of data based on his or her epistemological and theoretical frameworks (Roulston, 2010). The metaphors of the interviewer as a miner and as a traveler (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) seem useful to grasp a researcher's epistemological

stance. These metaphors “illustrate the complex and contested conceptions of interview knowledge” (p. 49). The interviewer as a miner views interviewing as a process of *knowledge collection* assuming knowledge can be discovered. In contrast, the interviewer as a traveler understands interviewing as a process of *knowledge construction*. The significant difference between these two metaphors spans the nature of knowledge from the positivist to the interpretivist perspective (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

In my study, the interview process was not about acquiring knowledge that presumably is stable in the interviewees’ mind states; rather, it was about revealing and co-constructing their interpretations of the accumulated experiences gained from a long-term commitment to their careers and of their career transitions following retirement. The untold voices of Korean adults in their post-retirement about how they experience the career transitions and construct their careers were revealed and reconstructed during the interviews. My interviewing aimed to understand how adults make sense of their career transition experiences, which involved an interpretative process of the self, past experience, and future desires in the career realm. I see interviewing as a process of producing knowledge through the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee rather than discovering knowledge (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Thus, the interview is “a construction site of knowledge” (p. 301) in which the researcher and the informant produce knowledge together. Furthermore, the data elicited during the interview are co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee. The voices of Korean adults in their post-retirement about how they experience the career transitions and construct their careers were revealed and

reconstructed during the interviews. Given that the way individuals make sense of their career and their world is through “interpretation and subsequent construction of narratives and stories” (Collin & Young, 1992, p. 2), the interviews allow the participants’ to situate themselves at the intersection of several stories being recreated within the dynamics among the narrator (the interviewee) and the audience (the interviewer).

Constructivist grounded theory interviewing focuses on placing data into “the context of the individual’s life, and the contextual aspects of the study and research problem with the setting, society, and historical moment” (Charmaz, 2002, p. 679). In order to explore people’s experiences, grounded theory method advocates open-ended and in-depth interviewing, particularly concerning the balance between “flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing,” (p. 676) as a style of interviewing which fits grounded theory strategies for analysis. However, grounded theory interviewing emphasizes the interviewer’s need to narrow the scope of interviewing to collect data for developing the theoretical framework, an emphasis which differs from that found in in-depth interviewing . GTM gives researchers more control of their data collection and more analytic control over data, a benefit that can be maximized with a discerning ear and steady reflection on what is heard. Here, a researcher should be cautious not to force interview data into preconceived categories in grounded theory interviewing (Charmaz, 2006; Kelle, 2005). The researcher’s awareness is necessary to minimize problems while interviewing such as “using interview guide as a spoken survey, using of closed questions, providing possible responses in questions, and asking questions that include assumptions about

participants' life-worlds" (Roulston, 2011, p. 81). I strove to closely look at the interactions and interviews of the initial interview data and to write reflective journals that facilitate constructive changes.

As for the question of how many participants are enough for this study, I interviewed seven Korean participants who work at private/public organizations or who are self-employed. Single interviews may limit the opportunities to correct earlier mistakes and to probe questions that explore theoretical issues (Charmaz, 2002). Thus, I first conducted face-to-face interviews in Korea and then did second interviews with five participants by the phone or in person while I was still in Korea.

Documents and Artifacts

Documents are rich and fertile resources to a qualitative researcher in addition to interviews (Merriam, 2009). Despite the usefulness of documents, documents have been less used in qualitative research because researchers may prefer to procure their own data and to avoid "uncertainty about the potential of documents for yielding knowledge and insights" (Merriam, 2009, p. 153). In addition to the grounded theory interviewing, documents were used as the data to understand Korean adults' career transitions. A document is defined as "a symbolic representation that can be recorded and retrieved for description and analysis" (Altheide, Coyle, Devriese, & Schneider, 2008, p. 127). Merriam (2009) refers to documents as "written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (p. 139). Artifacts that represent some form of communication such as things, objects, and "symbolic materials" are considered documents (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 216). In my study, I examined personal documents and artifacts that reflect the participants' meanings of career and

analyzed how certain documents affect their career transitions. One way to judge the value of data is if the document can offer information or insights relevant to research questions (Merriam, 2009) and help the theoretical framework for analysis in my study. After testing the authenticity and defining the nature of documents or artifacts, I decided which codes or categories to adopt.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research begins during data collection. The initial rudimentary analysis plays a role both in refining the way of asking questions to gather the data of most interest and of eliciting descriptions that lead to generating codes and thematic representations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The initial transcript of my first interview, the first field notes, and the personal documents in the interview were critical sources to capture my reflections, tentative ideas, and things to pursue in the second interview. By assessing which questions are relevant and which ones should be reformulated, I aimed to generate data that inform my area of interest. This rudimentary analysis, which consists of refining questions, writing journals, and reflecting on the initial data, provides an opportunity to generate high quality data, as “data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 2009, p. 171).

The full range of collected data requires a more elaborate understanding of transcription. Transcribing interviews is another vehicle to generate insights and hunches concerning what are going on in my data. According to Roulston (2010), while listening to interviews again for transcription, interviewers “review the topics discussed, and begin the process of interpreting interview data and generating

preliminary analyses...just as asking a follow-up question within interview” (p. 105). In this sense, all information obtained from interviewees is selected by the interviewer. Therefore, while transcribing and rereading the transcripts, a researcher should maintain an open-mind and seek what emerges as important without making hasty judgments; this process is another interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Constructivist Grounded Theory Method Coding

The interviews were analyzed using the grounded theory method proposed by Charmaz (2006), as this method allowed me to explore how Korean middle-aged adults who were professionals experience their career transition to second careers after retirement. The first analytic step in grounded theory is qualitative coding, which is a process of defining data (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is the “pivotal line between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (p. 48). In constructivist grounded theory coding, a researcher creates his or her codes by defining what he or she see. Through this active coding, researchers interact with the data again and again and ask many different questions of them. The full interview data were coded in three separate phases: (1) line-by-line coding, (2) focused and axial coding, and (3) theoretical coding.

Line-by-line coding. First, the initial phase consists of line-by-line coding that names each line of the written data from the interviews using gerunds (usually words ending in “ing”). Studying the data through line-by-line coding facilitates looking at the data with new eyes in that the researcher’s preconceived notions on the data could be corrected (Charmaz, 2006, 2008). In particular, initial coding helps a

researcher separate data into categories by providing an opportunity to analytically examine process. Line-by-line coding enables me to ask myself questions about my data, and these questions help me “see actions and to identify significant process” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51). *In vivo* codes, which are essential to maintain and deliver the participants’ words and meanings, are useful in this phase of analysis. Beyond being catchy, these codes need to make implicit meanings and actions clear, and function to make comparisons between data and with the emerging categories (p. 55). Thus, the great advantage of the initial coding was to spur a researcher (me) to look at the data in new ways that may stem from the research participants’ interpretations.

Accordingly, I analyzed the data using the constant comparative method (Stauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006) states that constant comparative methods are used to “establish analytic distinctions and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work” (p. 54). Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that the constant comparative method allows for the generation of the maximum number of descriptive categories and their properties directly from the data from each transcript. For initial codes, each code was constantly compared to all other codes to identify similarities, differences, and general patterns.

Focused and axial coding. The second phase of the analysis includes a combination of both focused coding and an axial coding (Charmaz, 2006) that places the line-by-line codes from the first phase in a higher category. Focused coding involves decisions about which initial codes are most significant to categorize the data. In a similar vein, axial coding requires closely examining the properties of categories by answering when, where, why, how, and in what consequences questions

about the open and initial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), however, the clear distinction between open coding and axial coding is “artificial” and is needed for “explanatory purposes only” (p. 198) because a researcher has already identified concepts in the data while he or she broke the data apart such as doing initial coding. Nonetheless, axial coding seems meaningful in linking categories with subcategories and closely questioning how they are related by reexamining the initial codes with the view of when, how, and why the participants change their earlier accounts.

Axial coding may restrict the researcher from learning what the studied worlds are, by forcing them to “apply an analytic frame to the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 62). Although the advantage of axial coding is still controversial (Charmaz, 2006; Kelle, 2005), it seems helpful in clarifying the emerging data in that it provides an opportunity to link categories and elaborate them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 199). In particular, by drawing on the ideas of Charmaz’s axial coding (2006, p. 62), I looked more closely at these aspects: (1) biographical and interactional contexts of participants’ career transition, (2) social and experiential conditions affecting the transition, (3) participants’ stated intentions of career transitions.

Theoretical coding. The third phase of analysis is a theoretical coding, which is an advanced level of coding used to integrate the codes constructed during the focused coding and axial coding. The theoretical codes are integrative in that they “not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also move your analytic story in a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). In order to make my analysis coherent and comprehensible, I can create a coding family during the

analysis process. For example, I can find temporal or structural ordering and discover participants' strategies dealing with issues in their career transitions. Throughout the analysis process, one main concern was on how the data support my assertions. The critical approach was to "define what is happening in your data first" (p. 63). In addition, making constant comparisons between data was one of the best ways not to force the data into my preconceived categories and in turn strengthens my assertions and meanings.

Memo Writing

Memo writing is a conversation with myself that promotes new ideas and insights on the research I conduct. "Memo writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). It provides a chance to revisit the data to examine luminal cues and nuanced statements. Writing memos helps catch your fleeting ideas about the code and probe the data, which in turn advances your thinking (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It also helps you avoid forcing your data into extant concepts and theories, and it also helps you discover gaps in your data collection. I began memo writing with titling the memo, and then defining a category by "explicating its properties and characteristics" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 82). In memo writing, how to tolerate ambiguity is an important aspect I need to consider. One way to help you to move forward with a critical and tolerant eye to ambiguity is clustering and freewriting (Charmaz, 2006, 2008). In clustering, a researcher creates a diagram of relationships among central ideas and categories. Freewriting engages you

maintain an open mind. Using both clustering and freewriting in memo writing yields conceptual categories for the analytic frameworks as a narrative form.

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is “a method of data collection based on concepts/themes derived from data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 143). The main purpose of theoretical sampling is to refine the categories and develop concepts that constitute your substantive theory. Theoretical sampling is more than “following up on intriguing earlier codes” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 107), and provides “a pivotal self-correcting step into the analytic process” (Charmaz, 2002, p. 689). Conducting theoretical sampling is encouraged after researchers have tentatively conceptualized ideas that already indicate the areas to probe with more data. Through theoretical sampling, researchers can elaborate the meaning of categories, find variation with them, and define gaps among categories that rely on comparative methods for finding these concerns. In particular, variation may be clear while conducting theoretical sampling. For example, my participants’ may show considerable variations in how they experience career transitions drawn from promotions, transfers, and retirements. The individuals may create positive impetus, minimize negative impacts, or reconcile themselves to unexpected transitions. Not only may career transitions differ among people, but also they may differ over time with the same individual. By focusing variations on certain actions, experiences, events, or issues, “not on individual per se” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 109), theoretical sampling ensures me to pay attention between subsequent data collection and analytic memo writing. After I decided which categories best explain the participants’ experiences, I treated those categories as

concepts. When no new categories are emerging—once saturation is reached, I put the categories into larger themes that capture the essence of those categories. Based on those larger themes, I developed the middle-range theoretical model, ACFC (Appraising, Connecting, Reflecting, and Committing) of career transition, that arises from the entire data.

Translation

Translation issues need to be addressed because they could affect my data collection and analysis processes. A qualitative researcher is considered an instrument of research who engages in a research process while striving to eliminate bias (Temple & Young, 2004). From this perspective, translation and interpretation issues concern “the validity in terms of correct interpretation” (p. 163). The researcher’s language translation methods are important in order to meet the expectation that a qualitative researcher should aim for the unbiased representation of interviewees’ beliefs, voices, and behaviors through research. I interviewed the participants in Korean and wrote field notes in Korean. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed from Korean. I translated the Korean data which are relevant to the findings of my study into English.

According to Esposito (2001), translation is defined as “the transfer of meaning from a source language (SL) [such as Korean] to a target language (TL)[such as English]” (p.570). The translator is actually an interpreter who understands both the language structure and the cultural context of the source language, Korean. In an effort to minimize distortions in translating everyday Korean into English, I asked a bilingual Korean-American graduate student and several

Americans to help me clarify the excerpts and utterances. In fact, translation was not a matter of synonyms or syntax (Spivak, 1992, p. 179). I frequently had to make decisions about cultural meanings which language and words convey in translation Korean in English. It was rather an understanding of language that is closely connected to one's realities and identities (Simon, 1996). For example, the word *ya-in* carries the meaning of a free and wild person who has no interest in worldly or political issues. The Korean word ended up being translated into *free-spirited man* after several attempts (e.g., wild-man, free-man, wild and free man, man who lives freely).

Trustworthiness of the Study

One of the goals of social science research is an attempt to produce valid and reliable knowledge. Validity and reliability refer to the extent to which a research is carried out in a rigorous and ethical manner (Merriam, 2009). Validity is concerned with whether a researcher has successfully measured what the research or study claims to measure, and reliability refers to the extent to which a particular measurement process produces the same results whenever and wherever it is conducted (Wolcott, 2005). Because the terms validity and reliability are drawn from a quantitative perspective, there have been diverse alternative ways to parallel the terms such as trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, etc. (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

For example, Seale (1999) emphasizes the trustworthiness as a core element of increasing the quality of the study by stating that "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p.

467). In other words, demonstrating rigor in qualitative research involves the enhancement of quality (Roulston, 2010). How can we know if our research results are trustworthy and rigorous? One of the answers is that the research results may convince us that we can act on their implications and establish social policies based on them (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In this section, I address the strategies I choose to increase the quality of the research such as an audit trail, a theoretical and methodological triangulation, and subjectivity statement.

Reliability

Traditionally, reliability is concerned with whether research findings can be replicated. However, the notion is problematic in that “human behavior is never static, nor is what many experiences necessarily more reliable than one person experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term “dependability” (p. 300) that corresponds to the notion of reliability in qualitative study. One way to ensure reliability is through the careful documentation of the entire research process, sometimes called an audit trail (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of the audit trail is to help different researchers understand the entire research process. Given that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, I kept a research log that includes accounts of the steps in my research process, reflections, and insights on the process that provide the audience with information about my research process.

Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the findings successfully describe reality. In particular, internal validity deals with how the findings are congruent with reality.

However, given that one assumption in qualitative study is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and changing, validity is “a goal rather than a product” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105). The validity of the study is addressed primarily through triangulation and accounting for researcher bias in qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009). In order to provide high quality research, triangulation has been adopted in the field qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002; Roulston, 2010). The notion of triangulation includes four different methods to improve the quality of qualitative research: (1) data triangulation is composed of multiple data sources, across people, settings, places, and times within the same method, (2) investigator triangulation is a means by which multiple researchers investigate the same topic, (3) theoretical triangulation is a means by which multiple perspectives are used to interpret data, and (4) methodological triangulation is a means by which different data sources such as individual interviews, focus groups, observations, or documents are combined to yield quality research (Roulston, 2010, p. 84). In my research, I employed theoretical and methodological triangulation. As mentioned in the previous section, I adopted methodological triangulation by using interview and documents alongside data collection and analysis by examining personal and public documents or artifacts that reflect the participants’ meaning of career and how certain documents affect their career transitions.

With regard to theoretical triangulation, different epistemological stances or theoretical orientations for qualitative inquiry generate different criteria for judging quality and credibility (Patton, 2002). For example, traditional scientific research seeks to create objective and predictable knowledge, whereas research based on postmodernism strives to deconstruct truth. I use a constructivist and social

constructionist approach to understand phenomena and analyze their dynamics. An interpretive-constructivist perspective, which is one of my epistemological stances, suggests different concepts to discern the degree of quality within qualitative research. This paradigm assumes that people construct their perceptions of the world, and “no one perception is ‘right’ or more ‘real’ than another” (Glesne, 2006, p. 6). The constructivist perspective is more interested in deeply understanding specific cases at any given time and within a particular context (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, it tightly embraces people’s subjective aspects as a pathway to the understanding of human behaviors and beliefs.

When I interpret data, the social constructionist perspective is useful to analyze how sociocultural factors affect the participants’ career transition experiences. The developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek et al., 1986) drawn from social constructionism, which seeks to understand the interaction between the person and environment, is particularly appropriate for examining Korean adults in their career transitions. By examining the mutually influential relations within which individuals are situated and within which they construct their careers, the interaction between an individual and society can be closely investigated. (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Vondracek et al., 2010). It is particularly important to see individuals as active purposeful agents in dynamic interactions with a constantly changing environment (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Despite the benefit of providing deep and rich data through triangulation, the researcher should consider that the different kinds of data that result from triangulation do not necessarily yield the same result (Patton, 2002).

Understanding inconsistencies in data and findings does not diminish credibility but could help researchers develop multilayered insights into research.

The final way to demonstrate the quality of the study is to explain the researcher's position and subjectivity including theoretical perspectives and positions related to research participants (Roulston, 2010). The subjectivity statement is useful in helping a researcher to consider the issues to be solved and the research questions to be answered when she designs and conducts a research project. The detailed subjectivity statement is presented in the following section.

Subjectivity

Reflexivity enjoins researchers to situate their work in various epistemological and disciplinary/theoretical perspectives, and one way to demonstrate one's reflexivity is to examine one's subjectivity (Roulston, 2010). Theoretical position informs how researchers locate themselves within a social theory and how they design, conduct, and analyze the immediate research being conducted. Although many qualitative researchers are already aware of their subjectivity, Peshkin (1988) urges researchers to have "enhanced awareness that should result from a formal, systematic monitoring of the self" (p. 20). While designing the study, my initial assumption about the theoretical perspective was drawn from constructivism (Savickas, 2005; Young & Collin, 2004). As a constructivist, I find myself seeking to help people to reflect on their perspectives, assisting them to develop self-awareness and perhaps to examine alternative views of reality. This epistemological stance corresponds to my interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed and the interactions between individuals and society. In other words, this epistemological

position may facilitate or hinder the study during data collection, analysis, and writing up the results. Furthermore, a researcher is uniquely immersed in the time, place, and the context to which he or she belongs (Mruck & Mey, 2007). Thus, I have urged myself to ask introspective questions such as “Why this study?”, “What is my role as a researcher?” (Finlay, 2002). The answers are closely interwoven with time, space, and the context while constructing my subjectivity.

With respect to my personal experience, after I graduated from college, I started my career journey as a high school teacher in Seoul, South Korea in 2001. Being a teacher at the time ensured seniority and legitimate leave in an economy which continued to suffer from the 1997 financial crisis in Asia. Although I was successful in my teaching career, the desire for studying Lifelong Education, which is called Adult Education and Human Resource Development in the U. S., had occupied my thoughts and some parts of my life as I worked. Actually, the turning point had happened when I was a senior undergraduate student taking Lifelong Education in Post-modernity. That class was new to me and the learning experience was innovative and eventually liberatory, which changed my paradigm on education, learning, and life in some ways and which in turn sowed the seeds for my desire to study Adult Education. In addition to this aspiration, my observation of teachers who allowed themselves to stagnate in stability and my awareness of the importance of career development for teachers made me highly-motivated. When I decided to change my career from a teacher to a full-time graduate student, I asked myself many times the reason why I wanted to study Adult Education and how I would create my career profile. As far as I remember, people around me did not understand why I quit the so-

called secure job for a Korean woman. The transition process was very long and still continues. This career transition has offered me the opportunity to reflect on my values, interests, attitudes, and my career journey. This career change is a process that constructs my self-identity and also my career. Once a social studies teacher, I now dream of being a researcher and an expert in my area, Career Development. What does this mean to me? How is this process/experience meaningful to me? How do I go through this process? These personal questions are fundamental in my quest to find my research topic and participants.

The contemporary history of Korea is slightly over 60 years since its establishment of modern government in 1945 after its independence from Japan. South Korea has experienced a short modernization process that includes rapid industrialization and the establishment of a democratic government. Its remarkable development is a rare example of success among many developing countries. However, the compressed modernization process did not provide sufficient time to pay attention to social problems that took place in Korean society during the modernization. One of the most significant issues is the aging population in Korea. Korea is anticipated to have the world's largest aging population in 2030, and one statistic shows that the median age of the population of South Korea in 2050 will be 50.2 (cf. U.S. will be 39.2) (UN, 2004, p. 231). There have been many conversations and controversies about the employability of the aging population in Korea. Personally, my reaction to this phenomenon is well associated with the idea of Ulrich Beck's idea of *Risk Society* (Beck, 1992, 1999). Beck has a keen eye for analyzing and evaluating the development of modernization and addressing significant pitfalls

that globalization has yielded. He pointed out that individuals no longer remain stable subjects as they age; rather, they become fictive decision makers or authors of their own biographies (Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003). Many Korean middle-aged adults have gone through many different economic, political, and cultural upheavals in 20th century and they still work in 21st century. How do they construct their careers even if they retire?

Drawing on both my personal transition experience and my concern for the aging society and adults' career development, I became interested in Korean adults who have endured compressed modernization. In particular, I plan to study how Korean adults have experienced their career transition processes; how they interact with society; and how they construct their careers. These personal and cultural backgrounds increase my passion for pursuing research relative to recent career development among Korean adults.

As Kelle (2005) pointed out, "qualitative researchers who investigate a different form of social life always bring with them their own lenses and conceptual networks. They cannot drop them, for in this case they would not be able to perceive, observe and describe meaningful events any longer" (para, 5). I recognize that research is a culturally co-constructed account and "a joint product of the participants, researcher, and their relationship....[in which] meanings are negotiated with particular social context" (Finlay, 2002, p. 212). In particular, while doing my research using the constructivist grounded theory method, reflection on the interaction between the researcher and the participant is an important element of conducting the study (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Mills et al., 2006). I

facilitated my introspection by writing a research journal that includes my reflections and ideas throughout the iterative research process. This was a valuable springboard that launched and completed this study's data collection and analysis.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I described the methodology of conducting this qualitative research that seeks to understand Korean middle-aged adults' career transition experiences and how they interact in a variety of sociocultural contexts. This chapter first described the details of the research design of the study including the constructivist epistemology, the theoretical perspectives of developmental-contextual approach to career development, and the methodology of grounded theory. Second, in the sample selection section, I described the strategies of purposeful sampling, criteria for sampling, and procedures of sampling. Third, in the data collection section, I addressed interviewing method and strategies that I employed during the interviewing process. Fourth, in the data analysis section, I addressed grounded theory and the process of my analysis of the data including coding, memo writing, theoretical sampling, and translation. Fifth, I mentioned the strategies that I used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, I described my subjectivities that I need to acknowledge in conducting this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This interpretive study aimed to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals who have retired from their primary career and are in their post-retirement employment by investigating their perspectives of the processes involved in their career transition and construction. The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?
2. What contextual factors shape their career construction?
3. How do professionals interpret their career transition processes?

The design of the study was qualitative, using interviews as the primary method of data collection. For the study, I interviewed seven Korean adults in their second career who had retired from their primary careers. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed using constructivist grounded theory in the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). In all, 135 single-spaced pages were generated through the transcription process for analysis. I collected and analyzed the data in Korean and translated the excerpts that contain meaningful information and interpretations for the study. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents a description of each of the seven research participants. The second section presents themes from the data collected during the study.

The Participants

Two female and five male professionals in post-retirement employment were interviewed for this study. The participants were purposefully sampled using criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Nominees were selected for participation based on the following criteria: they were (a) middle-aged professionals aged 48 to 65 in post retirement employment from professional and executive positions in either private or public organizations and were self-employed; (b) had experienced a career transition within the past one to seven years; (c) had experienced career transitions at least two or three times while working before retirement.

In order to recruit participants, I found initial informants through my own “personal networks” (Roulston, 2010, p. 98) in Korea. I then asked those key informants to provide some referrals, who then referred my participants to me. Once I had participants’ personal contact information such as an email address or telephone number, I provided the outline of the research by phone, email, or face-to-face meeting to inform them about the purpose and procedures of the research.

Participant Profiles

The following Table 3 summarizes the key characteristics of the participants of this study. Given the purpose of this study, it is important to acknowledge the participants and provide a more complete picture of each. Each of the seven participants is described in more detail in the section that follows.

Table 3. Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education -al attainment	Primary career	Current career	Years in current career
Seungho	Male	55	Ph. D.	Professor	Advisor to governmental institute	1 year
Hyunmin	Male	53	Pursuing Ph. D.	High level civil servant	Director of leadership center	3 years
Suji	Female	65	M. Ed.	Educational civil servant	Congress woman/ Member of Korean parliament	5 years
Heejin	Female	57	Ph. D.	Cofounder/ Director of NGO	Professor	2 years
Jihoon	Male	48	B. A.	Fund manger	Restaurateur	5 years
Dongil	Male	62	B. A.	CEO/ Vice governor ²	Advisor to a large corporation	2 years
Jaeyoung	Male	63	Ph. D.	PR Specialist/ Advisor to management	Vice director of an opera company	3 years

Seungho

Seungho is an advisor to a governmental institute that deals with international relations. He studied law for his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Korea and

² Once a governor is elected as the governor for a province, he or she can designate one person as a vice governor in Korea. At the governor's own discretion, the governor selects his or her own vice-governor. The vice governor assists a governor by dealing with comprehensive work that requires more relevant expertise, including economic, cultural, or social issues. The vice-governors would be like the lieutenant governors in the U. S., except that lieutenant governors are elected just like the governors.

graduated with a Ph. D. in public administration in the U. S. in 1991. Throughout the 27 years that he worked as a professor in a local university in Korea, he was a researcher, teacher, and director of civil movement organizations between 1992 and 2010. Seungho voluntarily retired from the university where he had worked for 27 years in February, 2010. He took a break to enjoy his retirement doing jogging, traveling, and delivering guest lectures intermittently for three months. An acquaintance, whom Seungho respected, in a government institute, invited him to work as an advisor in policy development. Seungho accepted the work and he has been in charge of reforming a government organization as an advisor since June, 2010.

Hyunmin

Hyunmin is the director of a leadership development center, a form of alternative school. Hyunmin studied economics for his Bachelor's and public administration for his Master's in Korea. He is pursuing a Ph. D. in education. He passed the highest level exam for civil servants in his senior year in 1979 in Korea. Hyunmin served as a military officer after he married and came back to work in several governmental departments from 1985 to 1997. The departments or organizations that he had worked in include Welfare Ministry, Police Agency, and Institute of Finance and Economics. After Hyunmin left the public sector, he worked as an advisory executive in KM Corporation until 2006. While working in the private sector, he joined the foundation of the alternative school with his friends, and this opportunity extended his continuous career in developing educational programs. Hyunmin's interest in education drew from his quest for human dignity and social justice since he was young. He has developed leadership programs, delivered lectures,

and conducted research on self leadership as a director of a leadership center since 2008.

Suji

Suji is the oldest participant in this study at 65. Originally elected as a member of the National Assembly via proportional representation in 2004, Suji has been a member of the Korean parliament for several years. She spent her childhood in the middle of the Korean War and pursued her dream of being a teacher since childhood. Suji started her career as an elementary school teacher and worked as a vice principal, principal, and educational supervisor through her long commitment to education in South Korea. Once she was promoted to an educational supervisor, Suji had been in the front line of educational changes and development in which rapid economic development and social changes took place in South Korea since the 1970s . Working as a female educational civil servant provided different opportunities to face challenges and experience accomplishments. Based on her colleagues' recommendation, she changed her career to be a parliament member in 2004. Suji is a member of a number of committees within the Korean National Assembly. With her education, she pursued her Master's degree while working as a teacher and finished the course work for a Ph.D. in education, but she did not complete the degree.

Heejin

Heejin is a female non-tenure track faculty member at a university. She completed her Bachelor's in mathematics in 1978 and started her career as a math teacher at a high school in Seoul. Her college life was highly affected by Korean context in which President Park's dictatorship had last for 17 years, and resistance to

the reign had been rapidly reaching the flashpoint at the moment. Her initial interest in social movements naturally caused her to become a social activist, particularly with kinship to her friends and colleagues. Her first career as a math teacher did not continue due to her involvement in social activism. After she was fired from the school because of her husband's social activism, Heejin joined the establishment of social activism organizations with her friends and acquaintances. She co-founded a non-governmental organization that works for women's rights and built her career in the organization over more than 20 years. With respect to her educational attainment, Heejin acquired her Master's while working in 2000 and extended her career to develop culture centers in the community. Heejin earned her Ph. D. in education and left the NGO in 2008, and she has worked as a faculty member in education since 2009.

Jihoon

Jihoon runs his own chain of restaurants that feature traditional Korean food. He studied business administration for his Bachelor's and started his career as a broker-dealer in 1990. Thereafter, Jihoon became a professional fund manager working in several stock companies. When the financial market became open to foreigners in late 1990s, drawn from a financial crisis in Korea, Jihoon moved around different investment companies. The performance-based wage system led him to be a free-lancer broker. He created his own team of brokers and worked with companies that provided opportunities to meet many executives. A highly competitive and demanding job environment led him to lose his interest in managing assets and making money. When a job offer from a foreign stock company was cancelled, he

decided to retire from his primary career as a broker without a clear plan in 2002.

While exploring new careers, Jihoon joined a food franchise business with his friend who had worked in that area. His passion for creating a food company had been focused while experiencing several trials and errors. Jihoon has been in his second career as a restaurateur since 2007.

Dongil

Dongil is an external advisor to a large corporation. He studied international relations for his Bachelor's and started his career at a public company owned by the Korean government in 1972. He moved to S Corporation where he was quickly promoted to the position of CEO (Chief Executive Officer) after he successfully accomplished the Merge and Acquisitions of two sister companies between 1999 and 2002. While working as a CEO, he was invited to become a vice president of C Construction Corporation and worked there between 2004 and 2006. His attitude of enjoying challenges had paid off in which he brought up solutions for difficult issues that the company needed to solve. At the end of his employment period in C Corporation, Dongil was selected as a vice governor of a Korean province in 2006 and retired from the job in 2008. He has worked as an external advisor for B Company since 2009.

Jaeyoung

Jaeyoung is a vice director of an opera company. After he studied journalism at college for his Bachelor's and Master's, Jaeyoung spent seven years in a broadcasting company in the second city of Korea, Busan. His effort to move to the headquarters in Seoul failed several times because historical incidents such as the

assassination of President Park and subsequent turmoil delayed and changed his career path. Jaeyoung was invited to a government project related to social infrastructure construction as a PR specialist so he left the profession in a broadcasting company in 1980s. His successful career as a PR specialist in construction opened an opportunity to work in S Construction Company. He worked in the company as an advisor. Most of all, his lifelong interest in music since childhood led him to have a dream of working in music-related area in the future. In fact, Jaeyoung's passion for music made him to create musical activities while working in his different companies such as creating choral and music appreciation activities. His wife's career in music affected his career change to an opera company. Jaeyoung retired from the advisory work in 2008, whereupon he joined the opera company.

Themes of the Study

This section is divided into three parts to answer the research questions that guided the study. The first part examines how the participants experience their career transition process and how they construct their second career. The second part focuses on how contextual factors, including professional context, family and culture, and historical moments, affect their career transition and construction. The third part presents the themes introduced by the participants' interpretations of their career transition and construction processes, including career construction informed by personal values and the desire for autonomy and independence.

The focus of this section is on reporting the themes and the highly related categories that emerged. My goal as I report these findings is to place a heavy

emphasis on allowing the reader to hear the voices of the participants of the study through excerpted quotes from the interview transcripts. In order to understand the participants' career transition and construction experiences that were considered new phenomena, I kept focusing on bracketing and maintaining the distance from my preconceived assumptions based on the Charmaz's grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2008). One strategy for becoming immersed in the data was not to incorporate the literature into the data analysis and the presentation of the findings. I have chosen representative quotations from a variety of participants rather than provide quotations from every participant on each theme. Slightly different perspectives on a topic were provided to enhance the understanding of the theme or categories. Excerpts from actual interviews are presented in the left-indented paragraphs. Table 4 provides an overview of all the major themes and categories that emerged from the collected and analyzed data.

Table 4. Overview of the Findings of the Study

Research Question 1	Themes	Categories
What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?	Experiencing disequilibrium in a previous career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enduring challenging situations
	Reflecting on self and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting long-held dreams • Desiring independence and autonomy • Appraising the fit between person and context
	Making new professional connections and changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving vertically or laterally within sector/organization • Branching outside organization • Experiencing/participating alternative careers
	Committing themselves to the new career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting career or career transition • Expanding independence and autonomy • Seeking for meaning of life/Ongoing self-appraisal
Research Question 2	Themes	Categories
What contextual factors shape the career transition and construction?	Professional contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational Constraints • Roles and Responsibility
	Family and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting spouse's career • Struggling with patriarchal culture
	Historical moments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with military hires appointed by dictatorship • Financial crisis—highly competitive market, performance-based wage, frequent outsourcing • Becoming first-generation social activist under dictatorship
Research Question 3	Themes	Categories

How do they interpret their career transition and construction?	Constructing career informed by personal values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuing personal growth • Helping others grow and contributing to society
	Seeking empowerment, independence, and achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing others • Maintaining a sense of accomplishment

Identifying Career Transition Processes

This section discusses the themes based on the first research question. The findings for the first research question concern the process by which Korean adults experience career transitions and build their careers. The answers to this question are based on the participants' career transition experiences, including significant events, break time between careers, and career mobility within or outside organizations. The data yielded five themes that are associated with career transitions. The process of career transition from primary career to post-retirement employment was an obvious theme leading participants to engage in (a) experiencing disequilibrium in a previous career, (b) reflecting on self and context, (c) making new professional connections and changes, and (d) committing themselves to the new career. Table 5 provides an overview of the major themes and categories that emerged from the collected and analyzed data.

Table 5. Career Transition Process

Research Question	Themes	Categories
What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?	Experiencing disequilibrium in a previous career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing/enduring challenging situations
	Reflecting on self and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting long-held dreams • Desiring independence and autonomy • Appraising the fit between person and context
	Making new professional connections and changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving vertically or laterally within sector/organization • Branching outside organization • Experiencing/participating alternative careers
	Committing themselves to the current career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting career or career transition • Expanding independence and autonomy • Seeking for meaning of life/Ongoing self-appraisal

Experiencing disequilibrium in a previous career

The first theme of the career transition process is experiencing disequilibrium in previous careers and jobs in which individuals experienced unexpected events or situations. Encountering unplanned situations in the work environment facilitated the transitional processes of individuals because the challenges they faced exceeded their levels of tolerance. The participants recalled and told their experiences on this disequilibrium derived from the organizational culture, task-related constraints, and relationships with colleagues. Their experiences of disequilibrium took different forms in that they were not merely challenges that the participants could have made

an effort to overcome or deal with. Disequilibrium was more related to the culture of organization or tasks. The participants had to adapt themselves to the situation regardless of their intentions. For example, working in the public sector limited flexibility in initiating different projects, particularly in the beginning of one's employment. Under the constantly changing job environment, the individuals felt powerless and underpowered in which they solely followed the inflexible cultures in the organization. In addition, the desire for working in an influential organization, working in a highly competitive environment, and relationships with colleagues were other factors that affected dissatisfaction and disequilibrium in their workplace. In other words, the participants' experiences were closely associated with contextual constraints in which they worked. The participants viewed the contextual constraints as major reasons for the change in their careers, although the career transition took a while from the onset of their experiences. This theme is discussed in the category of enduring challenging situations.

Enduring challenging situations. Four participants out of seven indicated that they had experienced dissatisfaction or challenges in their organizations derived from both the organizational culture and task-related constraints.

Seungho's situation. Seungho's long relationship with G University provided opportunities for accomplishments and to engage in various tasks and challenges for 27 years. He was one of the faculty members who initiated and developed innovations that resulted in significant success at the college. However, he observed that the leadership began to lack direction and the organization had begun to lose its focus on development and innovation. He kept his distance from organizational matters and

instead focused on research, publication, teaching, and outreach programs. The organizational decline also catalyzed his increasing dissatisfaction with the system and organization at the college. He explained,

The thing I didn't like about the system or the organization was when I went to G University...when I came back from the states and went there, but? I became the assistant director of the faculty committee and basically brought G University up on a level...democratized the university. It's all in the books about organizational policy that if you don't like the policy, you get disappointment...I didn't like the policy, but it wasn't only that...got tired of the repetitive pattern every day, loved the students a lot. Professors in the same department were alright, but you know that feeling of the school going backwards and declining all over again that way. When universities far from the capital...just go down or decline...and...the idea that perhaps the university is not worth as much as I would want to stay in it; not enough to have an influential role.

Though he was highly dissatisfied, he continued to work, knowing that his sabbatical time would soon arrive. Once he was on his one-year sabbatical, freed from his normal routines, he reflected on his situation and on his desire to escape it.

Jihoon's situation. Jihoon indicated that his career as a freelance fund manager placed a great deal of pressure and stress on him as he managed the financial assets of clients and continually built relationships with new people in the business. He felt that he was becoming only a money-making machine, so he kept thinking that he needed to quit his job. He said,

And so, freelancers began to earn a lot of money. The work is hard and it's not rooted down in a certain company. You just become a money-making machine. That was hard. Every day is like living on a rollercoaster for brokers. The continuing ups and downs are repetitive, and it just makes life itself unstable; it's like living a life that's almost like gambling.

His mentioning of being "a money-making machine" several times during the interview suggests he did not like the nature of working in brokerage because it placed a great deal of pressure on him. He felt alienated from the product of his work, although he was still successful at making money. Jihoon received a job offer from a foreign company, but the offer was rescinded while he was wrapping things up with his subordinates and colleagues. Though there was no longer a job offer, Jihoon still thought it was a good time to quit, and he decided to leave his brokerage job.

Hyunmin's situation. Hyunmin had a long career as a civil servant in several governmental organizations. However, the top-down red-tape culture hindered him from initiating new projects, and the difficulties with funding approval aggravated the situation. The conflicts between his team and the internal audit department team demoralized him. He explained,

Whenever I made a policy or started something new, there was always an audit. If I didn't start something new, I didn't get any inspections whatsoever, but there was always an inspection whenever I worked on something big. And if I got an inspection, the inspectors always picked on these insignificant details because they had to leave a mark to prove that they did something.

Now this went on time after time, and naturally, I reached the point where I didn't take any more risks. I didn't want to work on something big.

Hyunmin's experiences working in a job environment characterized by red-tape was a primary factor in the immense dissatisfaction that made him seek a different career. He endured his career in the public sector for 15 years despite his dissatisfaction with not being able to take the initiative in new projects.

Heejin's situation. Heejin explained that she experienced challenges in her relationships with people in the organization. She needed to persevere because her colleagues did not acknowledge her hard work. Some of them even took credit for her achievements and built their success on her hard work. She explained,

I did all the work, but there were many seniors who would take credit for it and go public with that, too. I had this superior in my junior and senior years. I can say that I was the one who initiated all of it. I emphasized the need to make those laws, and held the public hearings—I started it all. That person stayed put until the timing seemed just right, and then, just seized the moment and the opportunity to make the laws, and took credit for all of it. It's like I built those people up to where they wanted to go, but those people used me and sucked out the juicy parts of my work. They ended up becoming a member of the national assembly, but didn't really help me develop my career. I went through that kind of experience.

Heejin experienced disequilibrium resulting from the feeling of being used by other colleagues, who reaped the rewards of her hard work. In her case, although she loved

her work as a social activist promoting women's rights, her perception that she was being exploited was a significant obstacle in maintaining her career.

The career transition of the other two participants, Suji and Dongil, was ignited by job offers from acquaintances. Suji and Dongil viewed the challenges they faced as opportunities to enhance their abilities. When they had new tasks and jobs, Suji and Dongil were successful in taking actions to make them complete, which gave them promotions. The other participant, Jaeyoung's lifelong interest in music and his wife's career in music created an environment to propel his career toward a music company.

In sum, the four cases, Seungho, Jihoon, Hyunmin, and Heejin, offer clear illustrations of the experience of disequilibrium in jobs in which they experienced organizational and task-relevant constraints as well as challenges in their individual relationships with others in their respective organization. They indicated the conditions under which they worked, what they valued or did not value about the work, and what motivated them to think about leaving their high-paying or well-respected jobs, although these experiences did not immediately lead to job changes. Their situations raised questions that planted the seeds of career transition in conjunction with certain themes to be discussed in the next section.

Reflecting on self and context

Reflection on self and context is the second theme derived from the transition process described by the participants. The experiences of disequilibrium were accompanied by their reflections on the self and situations before they take some actions to change or direct their career paths. Every participant took part in a self-

assessment and self-reflection process that provided a time to revisit their early dreams/life-longings, which entailed an appraisal of the threads linking person and context. This reflection on self is a situation-specific appraisal embedded in the workplace, peer group, or societal context. The participants in the study described their appraisal process that had an impact on their second career construction and provided an opportunity to extend their career toward different areas. The self-assessment process was interwoven with one's job environment and an individual's appraisal of the fit between context and person.

Hyunmin's appraisal process while working on different tasks reflected his desire for self-development. The job environment in the public sector did not challenge him or allow him to engage in new projects, and he assumed that the diverse challenges in the private sector would satisfy his unfulfilled desires. His need for self-development illustrated maturity and self-determination. He said,

I went to the private firm because I got tired of the public sector. But then I got tired of the private firm because there was no self-development. I had that desire to grow into a mature being in a general sense, and thought that this was not the right path. As a person, I wasn't growing more mature; rather, I had that feeling that I was letting time just pass by. It felt like I wasn't doing the things that I wanted to do, and was just watching time pass by.

Hyunmin sought out actual experiences in the private sector that might enhance self-development and provided intellectual challenges. He assumed that working in the private sector would provide more opportunities for self-development. Clearly,

working as an executive in K Corporation did not meet Hyunmin's expectations, and his comments suggest a desire for a change in direction.

It was Seungho, who was a full professor at G University and currently an advisor of a governmental institute, who emphasized the importance of the organizational influence on the society and the self as well. He expressed negative feelings about working in an organization that he described as being in decline. In particular, a one-year sabbatical provided a time to reevaluate his career and life that resulted in his decision to leave the organization. He found, while on sabbatical, that he wanted to live more freely by leaving his position as a professor. He explained,

I went to the U. S. and enjoyed my one year sabbatical there. I also realized that living a free life would be better than going on as a professor. I had published more than 80 articles. I wrote a lot. I think I get recognized anywhere I go. People are mostly surprised and wonder why I would give up at the height of my time...but I can say that I quit at my peak. I had a lot of desire and thoughts about living freely since I was young, but I thought I wouldn't be able to live that way when I grew older than 65. I guess I can be seen as something of an "outlier"? It's not a normal idea, is it?

When experiencing disequilibrium in her career in social activism, Heejin's self-appraisal was ignited by the relationships with colleagues. Heejin was a first generation female Korean social movement leader and one of the founders of the social movement organization for women's rights while the Park dictatorship was still in control in the 1970s. She experienced both economic and physical hardships while working as a social activist for 20 years. Her long career was interspersed with

intermittent new activities in the continuum of social movements that gave her time to reflect on her life. Nonetheless, she became skeptical of the motives of some of her colleagues and wanted to move to an arena where she could help other people through women's education. She explained,

The role of a director in a women's rights organization is very political by nature, and because of that nature, there are many members of the national assembly who are from our organization. About 4 people...so it implies that I have to set my career in that way, too. When I really look into myself—I believe politicians are people who think highly of themselves, and like to put themselves out there—when I look at myself, I enjoy giving the right care for someone else, coaching them, rather than setting myself out there. I recognized that in my personal relationships, also. I found myself happy whenever I helped people grow and saw them achieve success, and so I thought this sort of work fits me. That's why I set out in the direction towards women's education, and started my Ph.D. I didn't really think that I had to plan out my career in a systemized way; rather, I just thought it was the road meant for me.

This excerpt indicates how Heejin reflected on what made her happy—causing her to make professional changes that led to a new career path that she anticipated would be more personally fulfilling, even though she was unclear where that path would take her.

Jihoon's reflection was more related to the nature of his tasks as he became disappointed with the task. Jihoon appraised his life style as unstable, a roller coaster

between good and bad, while working as a professional broker. Beyond this lifestyle, he started to become concerned about other people who might lose their assets. He investigated the nature of the work that kept him on the treadmill and felt the need for his own system. Jihoon explained,

Nothing is free in this world. The more money you make, the more someone else loses. There are many things that work this way. I get skeptical and all full of doubt when I witness those cases. I've experienced those losses myself and made others lose, too. The very rhythm of my daily life revolved around making money, and that was what I didn't like. Others might like it because they think that's what defines a specialist. But, specialists can't make money if they cease to move, while normal company employees or public employees have a steady flow of paychecks, and they just stay in their jobs. Of course, specialists have to work even when they're sick or anything. When they can't find work, they have no choice but to rest. You can't live like that your whole life. Even if I run a small mom-and-pop store, I thought I needed to build a system to run it.

This excerpt indicates Jihoon's reflections on what made him want to leave his brokerage job. Going beyond leaving his job, his reflection involved the process of finding and affirming what he had envisioned in creating his own system. Building his own system will be further addressed in the next section.

The process of reflection on self and context described by the other two participants, Suji and Dongil, was based on their successful accomplishments in their previous careers. Their appraisals made them confident that they could launch into

another career. Suji, a parliamentary member of Korea, commented that the first female “OO” followed her long career while working as an educational civil servant. She had been a pioneering woman in her over 30-year career. When an official in one of the Korean (political) parties suggested that she stand for the National Assembly, she refused it. She finally accepted the second offer because she viewed herself as one who had been in the front line in Korean educational policy and practice. She said,

I also had spent quite some time at the frontlines in the educational field. I thought that I needed to go to the national assembly to set the policies right and set the laws. The principals signed a petition to recommend me as a candidate. That’s why I thought it’s alright even if I don’t get elected. There are these people who trust me and recommend me, and I wanted to be the window that let their voices be heard.

Suji reflected on what it meant typically being the first female civil servant having responsibility for many high-level projects, resulting in rapid promotion due to her success. Her own accomplishments and her high reputation among colleagues made her confident, leading to quick professional changes that she did not anticipate.

Another participant who had success in his career, Dongil defined himself as a person who enjoyed confronting challenges and meeting them successfully. Dongil had advanced in several companies and was promoted quickly to executive positions. While solving diverse problems in companies such as negotiating with labor unions, developing human resources, and creating high ROI (Return On Investment), he accumulated on-the-job training and had a deep knowledge of the field. He indicated,

I find immense pleasure when I am confronted with a difficult task or work that makes me recognize the potential that I have. If you observe those people who are relatively more acknowledged, get chosen and grow big, they all have that tendency to confront challenges or difficulties rather than to avoid them, and they obsess a bit about performance.

In Dongil's case, he rarely mentioned experiencing disequilibrium in his previous careers. Rather, he mostly confronted challenges and made those challenges opportunities to find a sense of achievement that allowed for the positive self-appraisal.

Jaeyoung constantly revisited his lifelong interest in music. Rather than experiencing frequent disequilibrium in his previous career, he sought for his long-held desire for music through his career changes. He refused a job offer to work as a consultant (advisor) to a construction company right before he committed himself to a music company. He believed that pursuing the dream that he had wanted long before was important to his life. He explained,

I felt I could be happy if I could have at least a small piece of my dream come true, to go back to the way I thought when I dreamed about becoming a 'music president,' the dream I had since I was a child; to do something related to music as I wrap up my career. Music was what let me find such things ingrained in my life-like the unwavering dream I have? Or things like Faith? Responsibility?

The excerpt indicates how Jaeyoung reflected on wanting to become a music president, a long-held dream that seriously affected his life. As he entered his later

life, he reflected on how he could realize the unfulfilled dream by actively engaging in the music field.

In sum, these self-reflection excerpts demonstrate the participants' self-conscious decision making that they each described as having taken place after a period of reflection on their past career accomplishments, childhood dreams, and future aspirations. For some participants, experiencing disequilibrium in their previous career played a catalytic role in considering career changes and reflecting on self and context. Others revisited their lifelong dream or confirmed their career direction through self-assessment between the work and the self. Reflecting on the self was not a one-time event; rather, the participants' reflection processes took place while or after working in their previous careers. The participants continued to find different ways either to mitigate disequilibrium in their career or to take actions to change their career directions during the self-assessment process. Having chosen to launch into a different career path, the participants described a process of making new professional connections and changes, a topic to which I now turn.

Making new professional connections and changes

Making new professional connections includes negotiating career options and experiencing alternative careers until the career transition is fully completed. Whereas self-reflection is a hidden process that does not require visible actions, making new professional connections and changes is an external and visible process that functions as an important bridgehead for second careers. However, not every professional connection leads to success or satisfaction. For some, making professional connections and changes provided the opportunity to enhance a sense of

accomplishment, and for others it increased the imperative to make a change to another career. The theme comprises three main aspects—moving vertically or laterally within the sector or organization, branching outside the organization, experiencing/participating an alternative career.

Mobility within organizational dimensions. Hyunmin, Dongil, and Suji illustrated that their career transitions were characterized by several trials moving within and outside the organizations. Hyunmin as a civil servant sought different tasks in another department in a governmental sector as it provided new responsibilities and fresh challenges. Hyunmin's exploration started within the governmental organizations, such as the Welfare Department and Police Department, and branched out to the private sector. He worked for L Company as an economic advisor for 10 years. While working at the company, he was informed by his friends that they intended to establish an alternative school, and Hyunmin became a founding member of the school. He explained,

If I give it some thought, I had that sort of nature...I became a police officer because I had this image about holding a public position there, and I can't just let things like people spitting on the streets pass by. I wanted to teach those kinds of people a lesson in ways that were legal. In other words, building a just society? Something like that, maybe. But, things were different from what I had in mind when I started the real work. I heard that my high school colleagues were starting an alternative school. I looked at the program and it wasn't too bad. I had a tough time bringing up my own kids, the program was good, and so I joined in that effort. But even with that, I'm confronted with

the question of how to keep up with what we envisioned in the first place, because our financials aren't really strong right now.

Suji's and Dongil's mobility within and outside organizations was driven by job offers from affiliated organizations rather than their intention to move up or outside. Their movement was more a result of their success in their careers than the result of a deliberate attempt to change. Suji explained,

I was the first woman to be in charge of managing personnel for the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education in those days when the HR (Human Resources) department was not known to hire women. My work involved assigning personnel to teaching positions and awarding outstanding performance. Working overtime was the norm, but I was determined to "experience everything I hadn't before," and kept on working. Working as a public officer in education at the Education Ministry, and as the first woman to work there, I felt more of the responsibility than the honor that came with my position.

Dongil's professional mobility was driven by his successful performance in his lifelong career in a private sector. Dongil rarely commented on challenges as the reasons for career changes, instead he was eager to successfully accomplish difficult assignments, which ensued professional changes. So, his career transition was in the continuum of his success. He said, "When I became the vice president of E Company, Governor K was very persistent in offering me the vice governor position. I set out a few conditions. Within the overall time frame of 2 years and a half, I fulfilled that task."

In sum, these excerpts indicate how the participants moved within their organizations or sectors vertically or laterally before they experienced full career transitions. These experiences of mobility were related to both external factors such as job promotions and internal factors such as individual efforts to change tasks or departments. Before they arrived at their current positions within their respective organizations, they kept moving to find out how their aspirations could be met or how their accomplishments could be more fulfilling. However, Hyumin's case was more individually driven in that he initiated his mobility, whereas Suji's and Dongil's mobility was driven by external factors such as promotion and scouting. Despite the differences among the three, their efforts to extend professional connections and roles were key precedents for their career transitions.

Branching outside organizations

Within the theme of making professional connections and changes, the category branching outside organizations presents the participants' mobility outside the organization before they reached full career transition. Three participants, Seungho, Heejin, and Jaeyoung, experienced new tasks while they still maintained their own job titles by expanding their professional roles. The goal of branching outside organizations was to explore alternative works that could promote job satisfaction or intellectual challenges. It seemed that the process of branching outside was another trial and error effort to confirm how they fit with their careers. Yet, success outside their organizations did not cause them to change their jobs. After a certain amount of time, they went back to their primary jobs or the aspirations that they pursued.

Seungho expanded his career by working as an external director of a social movement organization and a couple of newspaper companies. His main job role, however, was still teaching and doing research as a professor. He viewed work in the civil organization as meaningful. He explained,

I also worked in an NGO for 15 years. So I criticized the authorities, politics and such. It's an important part of my life. Since I lived as a professor and did social (NGO) work at the same time, I tried to keep things honest in my criticisms. I tried not to be stained by politics...But, then when I see places like A organization and B organization from a viewpoint based on their outcomes and performance, their core areas aren't really managed well, and it's actually going the opposite way from moving forward. These kinds of organizations lead the social issues these days...so I don't even go into that social area anymore. I once got involved in progressive newspapers, too, but I just stopped going there altogether. They take the facts, process it, and show it in a subjective light. It isn't objective...The civil society, the media has to grow more mature. And so, I don't go there anymore.

This excerpt describes how Seungho expanded his professional roles by engaging with civil organizations and a radical newspaper company. Although he mentioned that his work experiences with civil organizations was important, Seungho did not continue his involvement because of his disappointment with the sector. He chose work areas that fit his personal values. His propensity to criticize injustice seemed to fit the work of civil organizations. However, even working as a director for an NGO did not generate desirable outcomes because the sector as a whole could not satisfy

his expectations and did not move in the direction that he desired. The fit between his personal values and positions he held was critical in his career construction process.

It was Heejin's response that exemplified how to branch outside the organization. Heejin's expansion of her interests into another career provided an opportunity for continual growth and experimentation between jobs. During her temporary leave from the organization for which she had worked for 20 years, Heejin worked as an adult educator for programs offered by a newspaper company. Heejin created culture centers in the community, opened an environment-friendly food shop, and engaged in other social movement activities. She said,

When I took a break from the women's rights organization, I did some other things. I worked on an education program with a broadcasting company, made money there and had a steady inflow of normal monthly payments. It felt good and stable. And what else... The point where things met my preferences was when I established a culture center in our town, taught women there; and it just went with what I liked doing, and it helped my husband's work at the same time, so I ended up making a sort of compromise. Since I was doing environmental education, I opened an environmentally-friendly shop, or a green shop, that sells environmentally-friendly food... both were successful.

As indicated, this excerpt provides an example of how she explored new activities in the continuum of her long career as a social activist. Her efforts to branch out offered a sense of accomplishment in helping the community and educating women as well as the secure feeling of having a steady income. While working as a founding member of an organization dedicated to women's rights, she was not able to earn regular

income. When she came back the organization, Heejin again applied her experiences to her primary career.

To sum up, in their experiences and excerpts, Seungho and Heejin indicated that they continued to pursue things that they were passionate about, while maintaining their previous careers. Examples of individuals' branching outside the organizations demonstrate that the individuals initiated this exploration leading to career development. By actively experimenting with different activities, they were able to either discover or adjust their career aspirations.

Experiencing alternative careers

Whereas the category of branching outside the organization means that the participants still maintain their positions while experimenting with different career activities, the category of experiencing alternative careers includes a participant's leaving an organization completely and taking a new position somewhere. Jihoon left his brokerage job and tried out brand new careers, including developing a tool which assists with reading and working as a real estate agent. Jihoon indicated that he explored new careers after leaving brokerage before he engaged with his current career. The experimentation, which he experienced in different occupations for two years, helped him completely lose his affinity with being a broker and lead him to find new career. Jihoon said,

As soon as I left the company, I was crazy about getting a patent for about 3 months. I kept on switching over days with nights as I focused on that, and I did get a patent. Then, I took my family to Youngjong Island, and for about 3 years, I worked as a real estate agent. For about 2 years, you can't forget those

times working at the company. But when 3 years passed by, I totally forgot about life as a white-collar worker. I lost my touch and that vision or plans I held for my career...I decided not to go back to a workplace like a company. Right before what I do now, I had a university colleague who made a huge success out of franchising. He was at the top of the nation. I stuck next to him and started a business chain that went out of business within 6 months. I lost a lot of money. I started to think that I couldn't manage a business chain if I didn't know it in detail.

Jihoon tried out a couple of options before he committed himself to his current career. Based on his earlier excerpt, his desire to build his own working "system" was partially tried and tested during the certain period of time after he left his brokerage job because he did not have to belong to any organization. In his case, he completely left his previous career as a broker and tried out others such as a patent developer, realtor, or franchise broker, leading him to learn new sides of the new careers. Through this trial and error drawn from alternative but temporary careers, he made a decision to learn how to run his own food franchise business.

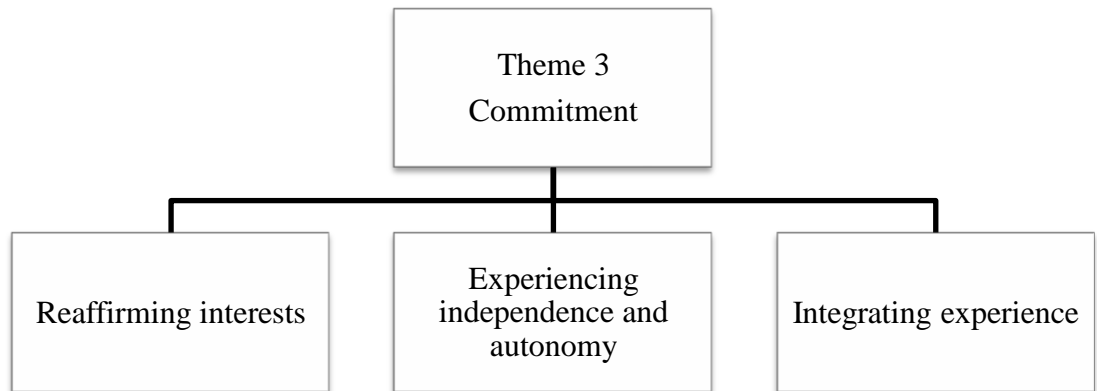
To sum up, all participants tried out different options and made new professional connections and changes, rather than biding their time for a perfect opportunity before pursuing another career. While constantly testing the fit between their work environment and personal aspirations, the participants explored and made changes in their professional context. Although the result of their effort did not lead them to retire or change careers right away, the participants experienced a sense of accomplishment that they had made sure what they wanted or did not want to do in

their future. Looking back their career paths during the interview, the participants tried to find the connections between the previous careers and new careers following retirement. With the exception of two participants, Suji and Dongil, who had successful career ensuing promotions, the other participants revisited their experiences in previous careers that gave legitimate reasons for the career transition. Before they fully committed themselves to new careers, these experiences provided platforms to move them forward regardless of their success or failure during this process. Experiencing disequilibrium, reflection, and making professional changes were altogether interconnected with each other by providing legitimacy for launching new careers in post-retirement that resulted in committing themselves to new careers.

Committing themselves to their new career

After a series of professional experiences, the participants transitioned from their primary career to their post-retirement employment. All participants were voluntary retirees, which means that they chose to retire and launch another career after early retirement. The theme of committing themselves to the new career was not a one-time event. Their career paths consisted of different inputs and reactions to their organizational and individual context. It was a process in which they made different decisions, reaffirmations, and interpretations based upon their interests, experiences, and lives. Each experience should not be regarded as separate, but rather as combined in a pattern unique to the specific career situation and the individual. The participants shared their experiences of how they committed themselves to their new careers, involving the processes of reaffirming their interests, experiencing independence and autonomy, and integrating prior experiences as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The Theme of Committing Themselves to the New Career



Reaffirming interest. The participants' commitment to their new careers first comprised an important component of reaffirming interest. The series of professional experimentations were opportunities to confirm or reaffirm what they really wanted to do. In order to commit themselves to new careers, the participants sought to incorporate their professional and personal experiences with the interpretations on those experiences. This process often involved changes in their career journey. It was Heejin that reaffirmed her interest in helping adults learn and grow throughout her career. Although she assessed her frequent career changes as unhelpful in building a successful career, Heejin understood what kind of work she enjoys and where she needs to go. She said,

I'm teaching adults attending college right now. This is both by serendipity and destiny. I teach the normal, young undergraduates as well, but I find

myself fonder of the adult students. I can communicate with these people and we get along well. I enjoy it and want to help because I can see that they are trying to study when their situation makes it hard for them to do so. I think this comes naturally to me. I think I'm just following my heart.

According to Heejin, her contentment in her career came from helping adult college students. By "following my [her] heart," she found joy in talking to the students and helping them.

An individual's lifelong interest was also reaffirmed through committing to new careers. Jaeyoung had a lifelong interest in music and actually developed a number of informal music programs while working in a couple of organizations. His transition from an advisor to a company to a director of an opera company was a way of realizing a lifelong dream. He viewed making people happy through music as meaningful work to both himself and others. Jaeyoung explained,

I've met so many different types of people in different kinds of relationships, and I suppose I myself have gone through a wide variety of experiences over my life as well. Wherever I went, I did work related to music. What I'm doing now, the opera, is music. That's what I wanted to do ever since I was a child. I'm making at least a part of that dream come true. I have a bigger interest in music these days.

The excerpt indicates that he was making his lifelong dream come true by doing something related to music. Working at an opera company seemed obviously to be an expression of his childhood dream of doing music. His reaffirmation of his interest in music made him commit to his work at an opera company.

Hyunmin, a director of a leadership center, found his interests in enhancing the leadership abilities of other people and helping others grow. He viewed leadership development as a job to which he was committed. He explained,

I think college education is focused mainly on skills. It's something like--the core is missing from that process of bringing up a promising, adventurous leader for the society? I have been thinking along that line a lot. If we had received education that enabled us to build our capacities by enhancing our leadership, nobody would have had to take the long way around like me from the start. That's my wish. I want to bring myself up, and now I have become more interested in helping other people grow as well. This is what I love to do.

According to Hyunmin, he had a long-held interest in personal development. He eventually identified his new career goal of facilitating self-development. He thought that finding his own calling took too long, and he hoped for others to find what they wanted more easily and quickly, possibly helping them grow. He clearly stated that helping others was his interest, and that was the reason he was now in charge of a leadership development program.

Experiencing independence and autonomy. The two participants, Seungho and Jihoon, indicated that their interests in their current positions were related to experiencing independence and autonomy in managing new tasks and to making their work experiences influential. They had a strong desire for independence and autonomy mentioning the words, "own system," during the interview. Recognizing the importance of the organizational role and the nature of the tasks, these two participants indicated that working with autonomy is critical in new careers. They

viewed their challenging tasks as opportunities to enhance their abilities and to enjoy new experiences.

Seungho, as an advisor for a governmental institute, believed that a career corresponds to an individual's capability to take and accomplish work. After retiring, Seungho was curious about the possibility of bringing his knowledge and experiences to new challenges. He accepted a new job offer from a director whom Seungho respected and for whom he would be inspired to work hard. The director acknowledged and appreciated Seungho's ability to develop the organization by allowing him a great deal of autonomy and independence to exercise in his new work. He viewed himself as the one who has an influential power to change the organizational culture or increase performance. The former professor who was dissatisfied with working in an organization in decline indicated a feeling of empowerment, independence, and influence. The empowerment and decision-making roles were a driving force in committing himself to his current challenging work. He explained,

I don't think there is a meaning in a mere label on a career-something like "a professor." There has to be the capability, skills that go along with it to make the work experience mean something. After I retired, I held some special lectures, got my pension, and enjoyed my life like that for about 4 months before coming here. Came here because I was curious, I am curious about a lot of things—like a cat. And I especially like and respect the chairman of the board here. This organization had its former chairman resign when it was ranked the lowest because performance management wasn't in place. The

work is so hard. It's the hardest time in my life. Other people work in companies and then go on to become a professor; but I was a professor before, and after that, I'm working in a company when I'm old. But it's rewarding when I see some changes and development here. The chairman also gave empowerment to work in my own ways. That's important.

Experiencing autonomy and independence also was presented as a form of creating one's own organization. Jihoon experienced trials and errors in the early stages of starting his own business. Facing challenges as a result of becoming an employer led him to transform his past experiences in new ways. Growing together and having his own company in the future provided new perspectives on the world and the people around him, which made him commit to the new career. He explained,

The system I'm making right now is not an easy thing to do; the process is difficult. It's hard, but if I do it, I think the result will be much better. If I have the system in place, whoever gets it, the benefits would come to us. What we're going with is a restaurant, resembling the characteristics of a firm, which sells traditional Korean food. The employees must become shareholders, and the business needs to be developed into a food company.

Jihoon indicates that he was proud of and ambitious for his traditional Korean food business and the system he created. Although the process was hard, he envisioned the system would benefit many people. His "system" could refer to both his restaurant that he invested his energy, money, and passion into, and his food company in which every employee will be a shareholder in the future. One of his dissatisfactions with his previous career as a broker was the fact that he worked under someone else's

system, even as a freelancer. He envisioned his future as a successful builder of a system that benefits many people.

Integrating knowledge and experience. The two participants, Suji and Dongil, committed themselves to their current careers by seeking to integrate their knowledge and experience. Their efforts to contribute to society and their respective organizations were more at the general level than at the individual level. For example, Suji's lifetime career in the educational public sector led her to a broader concern of combining her experiences with policies that shape people and the country. She explained,

Now, I think that I have to participate and volunteer in work that helps the nation. As one of the senior members in our society, I want to give back to the society as a guide, a senior, and a companion. We are all leaders of the society. Especially, in my case, I taught for quite a while, and have even drafted policies, so the two connect well. The country (government) is responsible for providing sufficient resources for citizens to make a living, and for education that leads to happiness for our children; And in this, I find meaning worth working for.

Dongil also indicated that sharing his professional knowledge and experiences was one of the most important reasons that he has committed to his current work. He explained, "It's meaningful when I contribute through my work, using the experience I've accumulated in public positions and work in private firms. My ideal kind of work is the work where I can use my knowledge and experience."

To sum up, these excerpts indicate how Suji and Dongil want to give back from their lifetime knowledge and experiences to benefit people on a broader level such as a nation and corporation. These are the two oldest people among the participants. In addition, they were highly successful in their primary career journey, reaching the peak of the hierarchical organization. What is noticeable from these two excerpts is that they emphasized that a meaningful career to them is one to which they can contribute their knowledge and experiences. Unlike other participants, they did not mention the importance of autonomy or independence in their present career. They kept focusing on the meaning of a career in which they can manifest their abilities and in turn develop the society or organization.

Identifying Contextual Factors

This section answers the second research question, which concerns the contextual factors that shaped their career transitions and construction throughout the participants' career journey. The answers to this question are based on the participants' experiences in professional contexts, socio-cultural contexts, and historical moments. In addition, the answers are derived from their interpretations of experiences, events, and career transitions. Table 6 provides an overview of the major themes and categories. A total of seven major categories were identified and divided into three themes—professional contexts, family and culture, and historical moments. The categories for professional contexts include organizational constraints and roles and responsibilities related to tasks. The family and culture include supporting spouse's career and struggling with patriarchal culture. The theme of historical

moments that affected their career construction is presented. Each theme, category, and its derivative subcategories are addressed below.

Table 6. Contextual Factors

Research Question	Themes	Categories
What contextual factors shape the career transition and construction?	Professional contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational Constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization in decline ○ Inflexibility of organization ○ Slow promotion • Roles and Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working without empowerment ○ Decreasing autonomy resulted in a sense of declining prestige ○ Zero sum game: successful but unfulfilling career ○ Successful experience in career as a platform and launching pad
	Family and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting spouse's career • Struggling with patriarchal culture
	Historical moments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with military hires appointed by dictatorship • Financial crisis—highly competitive market, performance-based wage, frequent outsourcing • Becoming first-generation social activist under dictatorship

Professional contexts

Participants all discussed the professional contexts in which their career transitions took place. The theme of professional contexts included both the nature of the organization and task. Three categories comprised the organizational constraints and the roles and responsibilities that affected participants' career transitions. The category of organizational constraints includes an organization in decline, inflexibility

of the organization, and slow promotion. Seungho and Hyunmin frequently mentioned the professional context that created dissatisfaction and negative impacts on continuing their careers. These two categories are not mutually exclusive with other categories, such as the historical moments, interchangeably affecting each other. Changes in an organizational level and job environment were obviously affected by a macro level of context such as economic, political, and social changes in the country.

Organizational constraints. Data showed that organizational constraints were primarily identified as professional contexts in which the participants described experiencing intense dissatisfaction. These constraints included organizational decline in Seungho's case and inflexibility and slow promotions in Hyunmin's case. For example, Seungho strongly indicated that he experienced organizational decline derived from the absence of or incompetence of leadership. He decided to leave the University where he had worked for 27 years, because he was not able to find any reasons to stay, saying "I divorced the organization." Seungho explained,

The organization I've spent my 27 years in was headed in a bizarre direction, without the proper management or research functions. I was never content with it, and I thought leaving the organization was the right thing to do.

However small an organization may be, the organization has to have the proper management and policies in place, but if the leaders keep things in disarray, you would want to leave even if they give you a lot of money and all. So, I divorced that organization. Leaving with nothing but some money. There seemed to be no hope in it, so I left the school.

Seungho described the organization as having deserted its key missions, and since he saw no hope for improvement, he decided that leaving was “the right thing to do.”

Another organizational constraint indicated by Hyunmin was more related to the organizational culture. For Hyunmin, working under inflexible circumstances deteriorated Hyunmin’s passion to work proactively. In addition to the inflexible and strict culture represented by frequent financial inspections, slow promotion in the public sector led to personnel congestion and ensued in low morale. As economic growth is driven by the private sector in Korea, he observed that the public sector began to lose its prestige and power in national developments. Hyunmin explained,

In our days, promotion was so stuck to the degree that we couldn’t be sure whether we’d be promoted to the mid-level (3rd level) officer. The concept of “private-led (development)” started being used, and from then on, national development acquired a pattern where the main roles were taken by the media and private companies instead of the public officials, and the public officials were often seen more as a hindrance to all that. We were low-paid and weren’t promoted even after 10 years of serving at the entry level.

The inflexible job environment deprived Hyunmin of his passion for the work. The strict top-down and red-tape culture in the public sector did not allow him to feel connected with the organization. Moreover, he worked during the time that South Korea experienced both political and economic upheavals. The government-driven approach to national development was often criticized as an obstacle to finding solutions for societal issues. These combined factors inevitably fueled a situation where he pondered what he really wanted to do.

Role and responsibility. The category of role and responsibility indicates task relevant hardships and achievements of participants while working in their previous careers. Three participants, Hyunmin, Jihoon, and Seungho, shared situations that made them resign or continue their careers. The subcategories were comprised of decreasing discretion and autonomy, resulting in a sense of declining prestige, working without empowerment, and working in a successful but unfulfilling career. Nonetheless, two participants, Jihoon and Seungho emphasized their accomplishments in their previous careers as platforms and launching pads for their current career.

Hyunmin's case. Hyunmin felt as if he lacked influence or prestige even though he had worked for about ten years in a governmental organization. The nature of Hyunmin's job in mid-level management changed from a high-prestige position to one requiring him to perform a lower-level work. He explained,

When I became an officer, they called me the mid-level manager (Kye-jang). As the project manager, I would stamp approvals for projects, had some authority, but the tasks given to the project managers changed drastically into those of a practitioner at a lower, assistant level as time passed. The differences after 6 months, a year, were huge. The changes were fast and hard to ignore. And with these changes, the merits of holding a career in the public sector are growing less and less. When I look at friends who work in higher ed (education) or private companies, they seem to live better lives financially and socially. That is, they are socially recognized and treated much better. The

public officer is an increasingly popular job these days because of the poor job market, but in those times, public officers were poorly-paid.

As mentioned by Hyunmin, his role and responsibility had been changed to a lower level which included an increased work-load. Although he passed the governmental service exam that required a huge amount of time and energy, his position in a society began to lose its prestige as time passed by. Hyunmin recognized that his position both within the organization and in society became less publicly esteemed, leading him to feel his expectations were unmet. In his case, the changes in roles and responsibility to a lower or less-prestigious level kept preventing him from his commitment to his previous work in the public sector.

Jihoon's case. Jihoon's work as a broker was highly competitive and led to a zero sum game situation in which one person's gain and loss is exactly balanced by losses and gains of others. His many encounters with chief executives in the workplace made him have a desire for creating his own company. He said,

If I make a lot, that means someone else loses that much and suffers that much. A lot of people in other companies lost their jobs because of me. What I mean by the other companies are those that our company dealt with. Wouldn't you also assume that this would happen? Someone would have to lose as much as I gain. And depending on how much that person lost, she or he would find herself or himself without a job sooner or later. Even when they have a family to support. I was a freelancer. Someone who signs a contract and works for a company—except for my first job. I would usually meet the

executives, CEOs of the companies we dealt with. And I started to have ideas about creating an organization of my own.

This excerpt indicates how his responsibility to make money for someone affected his career change. At the point that he almost quit his job, he became concerned about the nature of his work, which could be illustrated as a zero-sum game. Despite his success in brokerage, he started to consider others' losses and to think about the hidden side of his success. He was sick of working as a freelance broker and he aspired to have his own organization like executives he had worked with.

Seungho's case. Seungho's dissatisfaction with his past employer was contrasted to his satisfaction with his current job and employer. Trust and empowerment by the director of the organization was the main reason he has committed to his current career. He explained,

What meaning is there when I feel insignificant, when I'm around people who fight over keeping or scrapping trivial issues or the ideas that aren't very important or not being able to have any influence on what's happening in the world? After I came here, because I studied Public Administration, the director was supportive in what I wanted to do. The director would fully support my projects, and the great thing was to have that empowerment to actually do those things. And because this place is an important government institution practicing people-to-people diplomacy in a global context, there's that high esteem working here. Working in a decent organization, being able to implement your very own ideas with a director who supports it—this is what makes my job great.

The most noticeable point is that Seungho focused on empowerment and independence in his professional role as an important factor that affected his current career. Having initiatives for changing and developing the organization with the support of the president was critical in making him feel empowered and influential. Moreover, working in an influential government institution dealing with diplomatic issues in the world seemed to play a significant role because he was dissatisfied with his previous career working at a university that did not contribute to society or affect others in positive ways.

Successful experience in the previous career. Jihoon and Seungho also mentioned their successful experiences in previous careers became a platform for enduring challenging moments in their careers. Jihoon's success as a top fund raiser in Korea was a driving force of confidence in confronting upcoming challenges when he experienced difficulties in his career change. He explained,

When I worked at J Bank, I was scouted and moved to the investment trust headquarters. At that time, the four of us collected 1.2 trillion Korean Won (KRW) [about 1.12 billion USD]...that's a lot of money. For a year, we got 1% of that, so we earned 3.6 billion KRW [about 3.6 million USD]. I worked like mad in those days. At that time, we were the best ones at that job. Tens of billions of KRW would pour in each day from government institutions, big companies. It might be hard for you to imagine several tens of billions in KRW. There is such a thing as a first place in life. It was great getting that first place because I had been to both the bottom and the top. There's that special feeling when you win first place. That feeling that you're the best, and

that belief that you could come back to be the best again even if you fall. Of course, there are those difficult moments in life, but I kept in mind the thought that there will always be the opportunity.

In this excerpt Jihoon reprised his great success in his career as a broker, and related how this former success helped him during the hard times when he experienced failures and challenges in doing his restaurant and food business.

Seunho experienced a deep sense of achievement after completing his Ph. D. degree in the U. S. He also viewed that his writing and publishing over 80 articles in his professor career was rewarding and fulfilling. He explained,

The best time of my life was when I was getting that Ph.D. in New York. That time when I was studying for the Ph.D. with my kids when they were just one or two years old. I sold my house to go studying. I went and used all of the money I got by selling everything I had, but I think that the most meaningful period of my life was that time when I built my skills studying there. I believe I accumulated a lot of the intellectual knowledge I have while I was there. That quest for intellectual knowledge continuously motivated me to study, and I pursued my studies with confidence because of that motive. I wrote 80 articles, and although I don't have all of my work now, they are my assets and the history that I've built up. Others referred to and cited my work, 10 of my articles were chosen as outstanding articles and published in a separate book, and I've been invited to contribute in discussions because of my work. And this is all very meaningful to me.

In brief, in these excerpts, participants Jihoon and Seungho describe multiple successful points in their careers such as being a top in the brokerage business by gathering huge amount of investing assets and publishing lifetime research into a book reviewed by an eminent academic association. These kinds of descriptions indicate that reflecting on earlier success not only gave them a sense of achievement but also provided a launching pad for another career. Whether or not their earlier success was directly relevant to their current jobs, the participants viewed their own success as the outcomes that they produced during their career journeys and as the confidence that they had gained from being able to be successful again.

Family and culture

The theme of family and culture includes supporting a spouse's career and struggling with patriarchal culture. Jaeyoung mentioned that working in an opera company was critical for both his personal long-held dream and for his desire to support his wife in the company. He explained,

Working on an opera is such a difficult task. Directing operas is something too hard for a woman to do alone. Helping my wife on this....The people around me say that the things can only be balanced in a marriage when the husband has his own work and is pursuing that. They don't see it as right for the husband to sacrifice everything for his wife. Despite all this, my love of music sustained me through all my difficult decisions...and my experience of directly witnessing how difficult working for an opera was just added to my conviction. And so, I'd say it's worth emphasizing how amazing the people working in operas are.

This excerpt indicates how Jaeyoung's career transition was affected by not only his personal interest in music but also by his spouse's job in an opera company. His wife had a career as a faculty member at a music college and then became an opera company executive. In his case, Jaeyoung made a clear decision in committing himself to the company in order to help his wife. He viewed the opera job as highly demanding for a woman to do by herself, and this understanding of her challenges and duties led him to join her work.

In Heejin's case, the spouse's career affected her career transition. Heejin was fired from her first career as a math teacher because the private school discovered that her husband was a social activist against the government. This event served as a catalyst for her to go back to her initial interest in working for women's rights in an NGO. She explained,

I attended sessions on women's studies in my club when I was an undergraduate. It was in 1975, the international year of women, that the movement for women's rights began in our country. Since that year, there have been many books published on this topic. The late '70s was the experimental stage for my graduate school's regarding women's studies, and that was when they started offering courses on women's studies. After I graduated from college, I became a math teacher and remained interested in the women's rights movements. And along the way, I met my husband. My husband was involved in the student movements when I met him, and that time was when resistance movements against the government erupted all over

the nation. Once my relationship with him was disclosed, I was fired. And so, I joined the effort to create a group advocating women's rights.

As shown in the excerpt, Heejin's husband's career changes greatly affected her own career, including her early job transitions. Her early career as a non-tenured math teacher at a high school did not continue because her husband became involved in an anti-government movement in the late 1970s, resulting in her dismissal. This event played a significant role in her choice to work for an NGO for women's rights. This meant that she needed to give up her regularly paid job and enter the field of social activism, which did not provide stable income.

Another female participant, Suji, indicted the discriminating patriarchal culture in the public sector. Suji's struggle with patriarchal culture in an educational organization made her work harder than her male counterparts because she did not want to be disparaged because of her gender. She explained,

I experienced a lot of discrimination. During my 40 years in the field of education, I didn't have a single opportunity to go abroad on a (short-term) government-funded overseas training program. Even those at the lower grade levels, those who were younger than me, had all studied abroad before with that national fellowship. So I went up and asked, "Why am I not being sent this time?" The response I got then was "We decided to send a man because we thought that it would be hard for a woman to leave her family and her house to go out of the country for more than several days." Since I was the only woman, they would have to arrange a separate room for me. That would cost twice as much, so that's what I assume was the reason. If you have two or

three men, they could all share a room together. When I had to work overtime, they told me to leave when it was 9 p.m., but I stayed until 12 a.m., 1 a.m.

Suji's career progressed within organizations dominated by patriarchal culture. While working in the front line in educational development in South Korea as a woman, the gender discrimination functioned as a catalyst for pushing her to work harder and take more responsibility. Suji was soft spoken in her voice and character in explaining her experiences of gender discrimination. She completely committed herself into the male-dominated organizational culture, assuming two or three roles normally performed by one male officer.

To sum up, what is noticeable across these three excerpts is the focus that participants expressed on how family and culture affected their career development. Their spouse's career changed the direction of Jaeyoung and Heejin's career. In line with the cultural and social situation in which she worked, Heejin had to make a decision for her own career development when she was fired as a math teacher. For Suji, working in a male-dominated organization, such as the public sector at the moment, was significantly challenging. Ironically, her working environment motivated her to work hard and in turn to perform well. These family and culture factors were interwoven in historical moments by enhancing or detracting career changes, which I address in the following section.

Historical moments

The theme of historical moments was related to the primary events that triggered career dissatisfaction, hindered seniority in an organization, and involved the participants in social issues. The participants were all college students during the

period of dictatorship of President Park in 1970s and worked in an organization while many consequences of the dictatorship still operated in 1980s. The financial crisis in the late 1990s was another historical moments that shaped their careers in both hidden and visible ways. Responding and reacting to historical events in different times, three participants out of the seven particularly indicated the historical moments that had an impact on the organization and individual as well. Hyunmin and Jihoon were forced to experience unexpected disruptions and frequent changes in workplace. Heejin was caught up in the social movements that swept South Korea in the last few decades of the twentieth century. I present in the following section the data analysis chronologically.

Attending college under the severe dictatorship in the late 1970s was sufficient to provide an opportunity to join social movements. Heejin viewed her life commitment to social movements as a consequence of living under a dictatorship. Heejin explained that the 18-year dictatorship and consequent assassination were critical events that directed her college life and made her work in the area of social movements. She considered herself a product of her environment. Had she lived in less troubled times, her life might have taken a different course. She explained,

President Park was assassinated in October of '79, so the time I was in college was right before the assassination, and the political resistance at that time was at its peak. So, all of the orders and emergency measures came out then. When we were demonstrating in college, the dean would be standing in front of the school as we were marching out of campus. The same president had been in the office for a long period of 18 years, and nobody would think this is alright.

The situation was that bad, and that was why I joined the movement. This decision is all about the values you have, but on top of that, this was a special situation. If it was after that period, I wouldn't have joined that movement at all. If things were peaceful just as things are now. This wouldn't have become a problem of values, and I would have looked at things that fit my preferences, things that make me curious, things that were the right fit for my own skills when dealing with matters regarding my own career and future.

According to Heejin, living her life and attending a college in the time of dictatorship and upheaval was critical in shaping her career journey and her life as well. Living in “a bad situation” made her naturally join social activism. As she mentioned, “if it was after that period, I wouldn't have joined that movement at all.” As she interpreted her experiences, living in a bad situation destined her to become a social activist.

For Hyunmin, working in the public sector after the assassination of President Park (1917-1979) and the ensuing military regime ruled by President Chun (born in 1931, age 80) entailed severe changes in the organization. Hyunmin needed to work with unqualified military hires in his initial work period in a governmental organization. The civil servants in his organization started their career after passing public examinations, whereas military were employed without any open tests. President Chun in the 1980s, another military dictator who followed President Park, sought to maintain his regime by hiring more military for the public sector. He explained,

The year that President Park was assassinated, I passed the government test. There was a special preference for military academy graduates that allowed

them to enter the government without taking the test. Once you had graduated from the military academy as a captain and had about 5 years of work experience there in the government, you could become an officer thanks to that preference policy. It was part of the military regime's effort to fill in government positions with military academy graduates by increasing the number recruited every year. It was their intent to recruit them almost to the level where the ratio would equal or even top that of those who entered through the normal government entrance exam so that the regime could stay in power for a long time. There was a lot going on inside me; I had conflicting thoughts about it, and the overall atmosphere around me was like that, too.

This excerpt indicates how the historical context affected Hyunmin's workplace and his work roles. Becoming a civil servant by passing the exam was considered a way to acquire power and prestige in the country at that time. However, prolonged dictatorship ruined the fair competitive system to become a high-level civil servant, and that situation frustrated him greatly. This situation made him reconsider his work, particularly for Hyunmin, who was interested in building a society in which justice prevailed.

Jihoon worked as a broker while the country endured the financial crisis of the late 1990s. While taking the IMF (International Monetary Fund) loan, a number of government-owned financial companies in Korea went through privatization, which led to many mergers and acquisitions. As a result, he moved from company to company. This situation also made the merit-based wage system routine in the private

sector, and he became a freelancer who worked based on his performance. He explained,

At the time, the top three investment trust companies were run by the government, but all of them were merged once they all became privatized after the IMF. So I transferred to D investment bank. Trust banking became a generalized practice, and a lot of new investment banks were established. And so, I went to H, and R investment banks, and ended up retiring from G. Investment banks began to absorb the professionals who worked in investment trust companies, so that's why I was scouted to that area. Everything shifted to a reward system based on performance, once things changed to a contract-based system with the opening of the capital market and foreigners came in and all.

What is noticeable about this excerpt is how another historical moment had an influence on the job environment changes and individual work patterns. Amid frequent mergers and acquisitions, Jihoon moved around several companies and ended up being a freelance broker. He was capable of managing his career because most changes came from scouting, which possibly exposed him to a more competitive brokerage business environment.

In sum, these three excerpts indicate how historical moments can affect people's careers. These incidents triggered a series of changes at an individual, organizational, and social level. For these participants, they experienced inner conflicts or job changes. For Hyunmin and Jihoon, different historical events ignited the organizational changes that led them to think about working in those contexts and

played a catalytic role in shaping their career paths. Heejin viewed herself as having been swept in the vortex of the historical and social stream at the moment. Otherwise, as she interpreted, her career might have been different if she had been someone who lived in today's context. The participants in the study repeatedly delivered their interpretations of the decisions they made and careers they chose at a certain period of time. Now I turn to their interpretations of their career transitions and development.

Identifying the Participants' Interpretation of their Career Transition and Construction

This section answers the third research question that concerns how the participants interpret their career transition and construction experiences. Their interpretations were identified and divided into two themes: constructing careers informed by personal values and seeking empowerment, independence, and achievement. Some of these themes have been already partially analyzed in the section on committing themselves to the present career because career commitment entailed an interpretation on life, self, and the whole career transition process. In an effort to better understand how the participants interpret their career transition and construction, I identified the themes and categories below. Table 7 provides an overview of the major themes and categories that emerged from the collected and analyzed data.

Table 7. Interpretation of Career Transition and Construction

Research Question	Themes	Categories
How do they interpret their career transition and construction?	Constructing career informed by personal values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuing personal growth • Helping others grow and contributing to society
	Seeking empowerment independence, and achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing others • Maintaining a sense of accomplishment

Constructing career informed by personal values

The theme of career construction informed by personal values indicates that the participant's interpretation of their career transition and construction is driven by their personal values. The pattern was examined through the participants' interpretations of their career transition experiences. The theme includes pursuing personal growth and helping them to grow/contributing to society.

Pursuing personal growth. The five participants, Hyunmin, Jaeyoung, Heejin, Seungho, and Jihoon, interpreted their career transition as a process of pursuing personal growth. Hyunmin indicated his career transition was a process of learning and finding what he wanted to do and what he wanted to commit himself to. Furthermore, he expanded his interest in building a better society in which everyone respects each other. He explained that it was natural to take a long time to find the career to which he could devote himself. Hyunmin viewed himself as wandering around seeking a meaningful life and exploring where he needed to go. Through education and leadership development, he hoped to help people save time and energy in finding meaningful lives. He explained,

You might think my work experience is widely varied when you hear it, but it's actually very simple. It's actually just the result of my wandering around when I was young because I didn't know what I really wanted to do. Now, I've figured that out. I found I was interested in education. In my case, it was not about teaching someone, but things like developing leadership programs and research.....I was raised in a rural area, so I had this vague idea about the public sector, and this longing to work in the public service, had my parent's expectations—these things really had an effect on me so I went to work in the public sector. I myself was somewhat 'oriented' toward that sector. I didn't really give much thought to what I really wanted to do when I was young. The career I built up was something I had no choice but to go with, since I didn't really know what I wanted to do. What was meaningful in the past were the worldly values, succeeding with a career, landing a high position somewhere, making money, and supporting yourself and your family. You can't ignore that. My ambitions were a bit more than that. In addition to the worldly values, I shifted my focus on building a more humane and dignified society.

The excerpt indicates how Hyunmin became aware of his career path and strove to find his way. His early career as a civil servant began with expectations from his parents and his vague orientation toward the public sector. At that time, passing the public exam was a kind of short-cut to acquire high status and prestige in Korea. Many parents aspired for their sons to become high-level civil servants. The exam corresponded to approximately 15 years of experience in the sector compared to the person who started at the lowest level. As he worked for the public sector, he

struggled with finding what he wanted to do, and he also pondered how his life could be and what he valued in his life. As he indicated, the “worldly values,” began to lose its charm to him.

Jaeyoung interpreted his career transition as reaffirming his long-held dream to work in the field of music. He viewed his current career in music as a responsibility that he needed to fulfill. He expressed his dual goals of making people happy through his music and of living his life to the fullest. Jaeyoung realized his lifelong dream of pursuing music. As “music is part of me [him],” he sought meaningful work related to music, particularly combining it with his dream of helping others. He indicated he was not interested in material values such as wealth or power. His understanding of success was to help others, preferably through music. Jaeyoung explained,

Doing something related to music is because of this dream that has stayed with me. In a way, it could be faith. A responsibility, even, that I live up to. Music is the dream that I have had since I was a child thinking about the best way to live my life. It may be that these are just the things that are deeply embedded in my life. They are part of me, absorbed into my being. Isn't success about doing what you want whenever you can? Just because you make lots of money doesn't mean that you've succeeded. It's the same with power--you take it, and it's taken away; wealth is something that you cannot keep forever. If you define success as something you've done to help others, then that just might be the best way.

It was Heejin who mentioned internal growth as an important aspect of career construction. She viewed her career construction as a process of internal growth to understand others and to enrich her inner world. She explained her desire to live in harmony with others to provide opportunities to help people reflect on their lives and experiences, particularly, for women's learning. Although she expressed a sense of frustration that she was not able to develop her career continuously, she reflected on her career journey as a process that made her capable of "seeing the world from a broader and deeper perspective" and in turn increased her care for others. She found meaning in the level of personal growth that she achieved on her career path, not simply in acquiring an advanced position. She explained,

On the one hand, I had lingering, wistful thoughts about not being able to develop my career all the way. But in the end, I did everything that I wanted to do. I was able to achieve my personal growth by doing all that I wanted to do and all that I came across. When I went to college, the motto I followed was "to grow," but then, growth was different from developing a career.

Growth is about reaching a certain advanced level through self-discipline. A Buddhist monk matures, though not in the worldly sense, while he stays in the temple for 20 years. I think I had enough of that kind of growth. To my heart's content. It's not a kind of growth that I would have been able to achieve if I had been very successful in society and had developed my career to an advanced level. And so, I became capable of seeing the world from a broader and deeper perspective and gained a deeper understanding of many others.

Another participant, Seungho, his long-held dream of living freely since his young adulthood was partially actualized while working as a professor. He viewed himself as a free-spirited man capable of giving up his stable position as a professor in order to create his own life style. Below in his expression of emptying the glass, he described his efforts to restructure the way he led his life and to grow from within. He explained,

The fact that I changed my job is not that much of a big issue because I knew when it was enough. It seems that it's not easy for other people to let go of what they have. I emptied half of my glass. People believe that I've emptied the whole glass by giving up being a professor, but I only emptied half of it. So, I was happy. But my glass filled back up to its 3/4 when I came here. Greed, I assume. I have to empty it again.

Seungho described himself as one living by his own rules, capable of seeking a free life style and taking an initiative in his life. He showed no interest in material rewards. He was always motivated by the desire to live his life freely. He said,

When the knowledge I have as a specialist is sought for, that's when work experience is meaningful. They say, "I worked as a professor for X number of years. I worked as a public servant for X number of years." The society picks people based on these things, so that's why our society has so many problems. I don't regret giving up my career as a professor. I graduated from law school, but I didn't do well in studying for the bar exam and wasn't good at sitting in small, cramped places. Being a professor, I enjoyed a relatively free lifestyle, like Siddhartha, in Hermann Hesse's novel, who likes freedom. I liked such

free spirits and wanted to be like them. I live by my own rules. I guess I was more of a free-spirited man.

Jihoon interpreted his career transition as a process of changing his ideas about people and the world. What matters to him was transforming himself through his career change, which played a role in fulfilling his dream. He explained,

I don't think changing your job is the important issue; looking back, I think it's changing your thoughts which really matters the most. Changing your thoughts is the easiest way. The world doesn't change. I think it took at least a few years to change myself. Money is what matters most to most people working in companies. But, there is something more important than money.

You have to have a dream, and you have to give shape to that dream to fulfill it.

Jihoon also indicates that he was not motivated by material gains in his career and life anymore. He changed his viewpoint of the world and he focused on fulfilling his dream.

In sum, these five excerpts contain important interpretations of how the participants placed their personal values at the center of their career transition and development experiences. During the process, they assessed the results of their decisions, and became aware of constraints and opportunities. The participants found better ways to implement their values and beliefs and advanced their life projects despite barriers to career adaptation. In fact, they did not see deficits in the situations but tried to confront challenges by confirming their values and meanings of life. Although they differ in professional characteristics such as ability, personal traits, and

self-concepts, the participants interpreted their career in post-retirement as development grounded in individual and social practice.

Helping others grow and contributing to society. Career construction informed by personal values also comprises a desire to help other grow and contribute to society based on their personal experiences of trials and errors in their career journey. The category is deeply associated with the desire for personal growth that I addressed above. The participants emphasized the importance of considering other people's growth through their accumulated knowledge and experiences.

Heejin, a non-tenure track faculty, had a long career in social movements for women's rights. This excerpt indicates how she became concerned about individual growth through her work. Her career has shifted toward providing women with reflective opportunities to think about the self rather than simply offering training programs. As an educator, she explained she wants to help women be more reflective about their lives through educational programs. Her awareness of systemic problems in developing women's careers led her to commit herself to her current career in educating women. Heejin places more emphasis on providing women in need of opportunities to reflect on their lives and selves. She was able to combine her passion for helping women with her career. She explained,

So what if you were raised with love and care, fairly treated by everyone in your family? There is discrimination everywhere in society and in any system, so providing career education for women cannot be restricted to the simple matter of running skill assessments at a superficial level, and based on that, suggesting some guidelines for their career. The government programs

that supposedly let women utilize their old careers and jump back into the society seem to me all superficial. They just provide job training and get jobs for them, and that's it. In reality, you have to give that person a chance to reflect upon her life and herself. Helping them that way is what I am to do in the future, and what I want to do as well.

It was Suji who brought a “big picture” to thinking about how to change society by helping women. She kept showing her desire to give back her knowledge and experiences to society. Suji viewed her mission as giving her professional knowledge back to society. Based on her experiences, she wants to contribute to the success of other women and the field of education at a national level. She explained, “I have worked for education throughout my entire life. I've done some politics, too, so I want to continue working in areas that need improvement within the field of women and education. I want to keep working to the extent that I can manage to do so, in any way possible. I've always lived my life by being a pioneer in various fields, so I need to give back a lot living that way.”

Jihoon transformed his viewpoint about the nature of work. His transition from work in a highly competitive situation to his own business opened an opportunity to consider other people and concentrate more on giving instead of gaining. He mentioned he experienced joy when he helped others and did favors for people around him. He explained,

Well, I didn't really have the chance to think about such things while I was working. I worked hard to just take things from others. The other person has to die so that I don't have to. Because when I won, everything was mine. It

was actually very stressful. But as I began running my own business, I ended up going bankrupt right away with that way of doing things. Most people who dedicate themselves to only the businesses they run become self-centered no matter what they do. I, too, didn't think about other people for about 2 years. Because I felt like I could make things work by doing it this way. It takes time to apply the knowledge you have, but I did that fast—in the blink of an eye. When the others weren't ready for it. Not even my wife who lives with me. I was like that in the beginning. I did everything strictly in the way I was taught, as I had learned in my prior workplace, and so I failed a lot in the initial stages. You have to think of others including employees. You don't know how happy you could be by giving to others. The person who receives gets a great deal of happiness even from just a little bit that you give. And really, I find myself happier when I give. I'm in the position to hire people now. A position has to be one where you can give to others. I think that life isn't good if you're in the position to always take from others. I think the better way to live is by giving. The trick to living well seems to be in giving others consideration, sharing with them throughout your life. Whether they become your employees or become your friends, in the end, they are your treasures.

In this excerpt, Jihoon encapsulates how his viewpoint changed towards bringing “giving to others” to the fore. His previous brokerage job was represented as “taking things from others” and his current career was captured in the quote “I think that life isn't good if you're in the position to always take from others. I think the better way

to live is by giving.” His eager interest in considering others seemed like an obvious stimulus to guide his career in a new way.

A director of a leadership center, Hyunmin identified his goal as to help others define and lead their meaningful lives through his leadership development programs. Hyunmin found that his lifelong quest for finding human dignity was becoming more and more a real part of his career. He explained,

I wanted to do something that would help build a society that can be more human in nature or a society with more respect. It’s directly related to what I’m doing right now [leadership development]. Not about teaching someone, but rather suggesting we find it together. It was the road I discovered late, but one that I liked very much. But then, it’s not something you can find when you’re still young. Come to think about it now, that’s life. I couldn’t see it when I myself was young. And so, I wandered around until I found it.

In this excerpt, Hyunmin speaks with great passion for “build[ing] a society.” He pursued his goal of constructing humane society through his leadership development work.

Seeking empowerment, independence, and achievement

The three participants, Seungho, Dongil, and Jihoon, strongly expressed their willingness to have more autonomy, intellectual challenges, and a sense of achievement while working as decision-makers in the organization for which they worked. Their possible selves were embedded in the desirable careers that they want to continue to construct. Seungho emphasized that a sense of achievement comes from empowerment in the organization, although he indicated his final dream is to

move to the country-side for a peaceful life. He also expressed his desire for a position with a high degree of autonomy so that he could initiate and make decisions.

He explained,

A sense of achievement? When it comes to my interests, it's about this organization using people-to-people diplomacy with the whole world; the biggest thing is that I get 'empowerment' by the idea that what I do here actually impacts the organization itself. I am in charge of managing the organization, and the chairman trusts whatever I do and supports my work. When the members understand what I'm saying and follow that, and I can see the organization changing little by little, that's when I feel that sense of achievement. I'm going to leave here after 2-3 years. I want to go back to my hometown and build a house to live in, but if I get a lot of offers from many other places, I want to go join an organization other than this place. I want to go as a head of some department in a new place. After working here, I find that there is not much meaning in becoming the "second man." You have to be the first, the head, so that you make the decisions and can emphasize your aspirations and plans. The second man has just an advisory role, assisting the chairman of the board who is the smart one doing everything right; the second man does just the little parts that the heads don't know. If I do change my job, I don't want to have a monotonous job—I want to work as a head or something like that for a change. A lot of responsibility would come along with it, though.

In this excerpt, Seungho indicates his ideas and aspirations to work with a sense of empowerment and achievement. It also contains a desire for upward mobility towards a more autonomous and independent position.

An advisor to a corporation, Dongil, interpreted that his career transition was based on his long commitment to the private sector and his recent experiences in the public sector. He found that a meaningful career comes from giving back his experiences and knowledge and accordingly feeling a sense of accomplishment. He explained,

I don't know if it's because my position got higher, but in my case, work that would enhance the performance and outcome of the entire organization was the kind of work that challenged me and motivated me. When the job boundaries stretch out, the mutual or supplementary relationships that characterize it or related problems become complex, so it could be both challenging and difficult. But, I find that such work has as much significant influence on others, and the work gives you a sense of achievement as you do it. That's why I find my job meaningful, and want to continue my job of providing consulting services in a way that lets me draw upon my experience without stressing me out. Leading the organization to change and grow is my role.

This excerpt indicates Dongil's interest in contributing to society and corporations through his lifetime knowledge and experiences and in maintaining "significant influence on others....a sense of achievement" as he continues to work.

Another participant, Jihoon, indicated his desire for developing a company that has a solid system that his professional experiences and knowledge contribute to. His interest in maintaining Korean traditional food has been concretized in developing a food company in which every employee can be a shareholder. He said,

But, I have to make a proper living. Like I said before, I need to make the system myself for whatever it may be—something small, a big conglomerate, a small or mid-size company, mom and pop store. Right? I need to be a specialist to accomplish this. It's exactly like a company. The food business is not just about serving tasty dishes. You have to deal with the tax, administration, HR management, personnel management, sales, everything. You have to do everything just as they do in companies. The type of restaurant I'm thinking of is a company-type restaurant. I'm going to make it large in size, give employees shares of the restaurant so that they become shareholders. That way, the system will work all by itself. My wish is having this grow into a thriving traditional Korean food company.

This excerpt indicates Jihoon's longing to build a system such as a food company that "work[s] all by itself." His concern to benefit many people through his organization was captured in the idea of a thriving traditional food company. Based on his experiences and knowledge, he envisioned his own system that would bring him a sense of accomplishment and autonomy.

To sum up, one of the prevailing motivations for seeking independent careers was to be able to influence others in more concrete and positive ways. Influencing others in these excerpts was associated with feeling empowered, gaining a sense of

achievement, and building a system that benefits others. These perceptions were additional driving forces to guide their career aspirations. As a result, the participants structured the story of their own work embedded in their lifetime and future career. Through their career stories, the participants showed how they manage their careers in post-retirement. The participants engaged in their career construction by adapting themselves to their transitions and by creating new developmental tasks such as pursuing personal growth, helping others, seeking independence and empowerment.

Identifying Documents and Figures in Career Construction

Responding to the question of what documents, artifacts, or other things were meaningful to them during their career journey, the six participants shared their accomplishments in their previous and current careers. The participants indicated that different things were meaningful to them including a published book, a constructed building, collected magazines, a certificate and opera brochures, and thank you notes from customers. Only one participant, Hyunmin, brought up his everyday journals to reflect on himself and his life. Two themes were identified including gaining a sense of accomplishment and promoting self-reflection.

Gaining a sense of accomplishment

The participants identified a variety of artifacts and documents that were meaningful during their career journey. These meaningful documents and artifacts provided them a sense of accomplishment for the six participants except one. Seungho brought up a book he had in 2010 about minority policies in Korea. The book was selected as the 2010 book of the year by an academic association. It includes ten research articles that he and his students worked on together and

published in peer-reviewed journals. He showed me a preface written by a former Minister in the Education Department in Korea and his name as a professor emeritus, Seungho, in the book. He explained, “I was the first to write about Korean policies on minorities in the study of Korean Public Administration. It was designated as one of the books to be reviewed by an academic organization, so it had a big meaning in my life. It’s a book I wrote after I quit..see how it says on there; professor emeritus? All 10 articles in this book came out in the journal. It was a big accomplishment.”

Heejin indicated a constructed building of the NGO during her lifetime career in social activism. Responding to the question about the documents or things that were meaningful to her career, Heejin indicated her most rewarding output was the building of the organization to which she had committed before she left the organization. Regardless of others’ appreciation, she was proud of her dedication in initiating and constructing the building. She explained,

I was rewarded the achievement awards from the organization, awards that are given to a women's rights activist. It’s just a small thing to acknowledge my work. When I left the position as a director of the organization in 2008, I constructed a building for that organization. That brought out my contributions for everyone to see. I started it, and when I finished, I left a finished building. It took a lot of pain and effort constructing that building. You have to raise the funds, clear out the legal matters...it’s too much to say. And it’s an idea that nobody else came up with. Some might say women’s rights activists should just make and join movements, and they would question

the need for a building. But, I went through with what nobody else suggested doing.

As shown in these two excerpts, the two participants proudly indicate the things that came from their lifetime commitment to their previous career. Seungho's book and Heejin's building symbolized dedication to their careers and also the visible outcomes of their commitment.

The other two participants, Dongil and Jaeyoung indicated news magazines and a diploma as the thing that helped their professional development. Dongil identified his lifelong commitment to reading English materials as meaningful in his career journey. Dongil indicated the magazines and books that he had read throughout his life. He viewed them as windows to the world. He commented, "I keep reading the newspapers, news magazines like *Fortune* and *Times*. Those two things I keep on reading, and they seem to be the documents that are most meaningful in a sense. It seems to keep me in the loop with the world out there." Jaeyoung appreciated his passion for learning and professional development. He indicated that an important document for him was a diploma he earned for a one-year program about public relations. He recalled his enthusiasm in studying the area while working at a company. He explained, "I studied PR for a year as part of the 1st wave of the IAAA program. Now that I think of it, it was nothing except for the fact that I got a diploma—a sheet of paper, but I really studied hard even when I was so busy. English tests, International Relations. I did everything."

Suji shared some articles in newspapers about her position as the first female educational supervisor and the article and photo about her work of conducting

parliamentary inspection of government offices. She explained, “There was that occasion I was in the newspapers when I became the first woman to become the head of the office of education. My picture and an article were out in the press again when the congressional audits were taking place, and I had the idea that the media was very attentive and working hard to convey what they found.”

The documents that Jihoon indicted were more related to career in post-retirement. He showed thank you notes from the customers visiting his Korean traditional food restaurant. Although he had different celebrities’ comments and broadcasting materials, Jihoon showed many thank you notes from average customers in his restaurant and added, “The president, Lee, came to our restaurant and we have his signature and all. We were broadcasted on all of the 3 main channels, channels like Arirang, too. But now, it’s the compliments we get from customers. There’s nothing that gives us a boost more than when customers tell us, as they leave, that they enjoyed the delicious, good food.”

Promoting ongoing self-reflection

Unlike other participants, Hyunmin indicated his everyday journals as meaningful for reflecting on himself. His lifelong interest in a humane and dignified society made him reflect on his life and himself through writing journals. He explained,

I do have a big award, the president’s award, but that’s not what really is important. I now write in my journal every day. I’ve been trying to find a foundation to establish the dignity of humans, so I have to keep on reflecting

upon myself as part of that effort. Even now...I used to write once or twice a week in the past, but now, I write every day.

The excerpt indicates that journaling is a crucial tool for promoting ongoing self-reflection. He viewed the awards as less significant than his process of reflecting on the self. Through journaling, he reexamined his goals throughout his career journey.

In sum, these diverse excerpts indicate how the participants gave meanings and interpretations to documents or things that they collected in their previous and current careers. As shown above, these ranged from books, articles, diplomas, and everyday journals to a constructed building. The participants reflected on the efforts that they made in a difficult situation and on the achievement that derived from lifelong commitment to their career. The sense of accomplishment was embedded in this variety of documents and things and reinterpreted their experiences. This sense was not related to material accomplishment or worldly renown, but instead to personal assessments of these things' meanings. The documents and things created during their career journey played a meaningful role in giving a sense of accomplishment and also an ongoing appraisal of their actions and values.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the major findings of this study. The chapter began by providing an overview of the seven research participants. The profiles of the seven Korean adults who participated in this study were presented in random order. Next, nine themes and numerous highly related subthemes/categories were shared as they related to the three research questions.

The first research question dealt with the process of career transition and construction. The data collected from the participants in their post-retirement employment in this study revealed four stages of career transition process (a) experiencing disequilibrium within the previous career, (b) reflecting on self and context, (c) making new professional connections, and (d) committing themselves to the present career. The second research question was related to contextual factors that affected and facilitated their career transition and construction throughout their career journey: (a) professional context, (b) family and culture, and (c) historical moments. Finally, the third research question dealt with the participants' interpretations of their experiences in their career transitions and construction. Although some part of the answers to this question overlapped with the fourth theme of the first research question, committing themselves to the new career, there were two primary themes of the participants' interpretations of their career transition experiences: (a) constructing a career informed by personal values and (b) seeking empowerment and independence. With respect to documents and tangible items, two major themes, gaining a sense of achievement and promoting self-reflection, were identified as meaningful in their careers.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged professionals who have retired from their primary careers and are in post-retirement employment by investigating the interactions between these individuals and society and the emerging patterns of their career construction. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the process of career transition for Korean middle-aged adults?
2. What contextual factors shape their career construction?
3. How do professionals interpret their career transition processes?

This chapter presents a summary of the study, a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the data analysis; implications for research, theory, and practice; and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

An interpretive qualitative research design was selected for this study because it allowed for deeper understanding of how these Korean middle-aged adults experienced their career transitions and construction from early retirement to post-retirement employment. This study was informed by the career construction theory, which provided an appropriate lens through which to view and interpret the experiences of career transitions as a process (Savickas, 2002, 2005). One of the core components of career construction, career adaptability (Goodman, 1994; Savickas, 2005; Super & Knasel, 1981) was used to understand the readiness to change careers and to construct

a future career. In addition, the study was informed by Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg's (1986) developmental-contextual approach, focusing on the complexity of the process of development and change. The mutually influential relations within which individuals are situated and within which construct that their careers were closely investigated in the study.

For this study, two female and five male Korean adults in their second careers who had retired from their primary careers were interviewed for this study; their ages ranged from 48 to 65. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. The interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the participants and lasted between 75 minutes and 140 minutes. All interviews were conducted by the researcher, and all interviews except the first were transcribed by a hired transcriptionist within one week of the time the interview was held (The first interview was transcribed by the researcher). Data were analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory method in the constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Using this method for data analysis, I strove to "see actions and to identify significant processes" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51) in which the participants experienced career transition and construction. The line-by-line coding, focused coding, and category generation while writing memos resulted in a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the data.

Three research foci were identified from the data to address the research questions: (a) the career transition process, (b) contextual factors shaping career transition and construction, and (c) interpretation of career transitions and construction. The first finding demonstrated that the career transition process

comprises experiencing disequilibrium within the previous career, reflection on self and context, making new professional connections and changes, and committing to the new career. The second findings explored three themes—professional context, family and culture, and historical moments—as contextual factors that affected career transition and construction. Finally, participants’ interpretations of their career transitions and construction were identified and divided into two themes: constructing careers informed by personal values and seeking empowerment, independence, and achievement. Some themes overlapped in the question on career transition process because the participants interpreted and sought to give meaning to their career changes throughout the transition process. Thus, I incorporated the findings answering to contextual factors into the theme of career transition process, leading to the presentation of two findings in the following section.

Conclusions and Discussion

This section discusses the major conclusions drawn from this study. The results of the study suggest two conclusions. The first conclusion concerns career transition as a process involving ongoing interpretation of the self and context. The contextual factors that affected the career transition and process were embedded in this first conclusion. The second conclusion examines personal values that provide a platform for career adaptability. Each conclusion is discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

Conclusion 1: Career Transition is a Process that Involves an Ongoing Interpretation of the Self and Context

The first conclusion of the study is that career transition and construction is a process shaped by an array of complex interacting factors. Although the literature has addressed the process of career transition (Ebberwein et al., 2004; Nuss & Schroeder, 2002; Rossiter, 2009; Rudisill & Edwards, 2002), little is known about how middle-aged adults experience career transitions and construction in their post-retirement. In particular, employment following early retirement is a new phenomenon as the aging population rapidly increases in the 21st century. In this study, the career transition process consists of four different phases—experiencing disequilibrium, reflecting on the self and context, making new professional connections and changes, and committing to the new career. None of the phases are linear processes that people follow in a lock-step manner; rather each is an iterative process that requires disruptions at each step. The findings support the idea that adults construct their careers by continuously interpreting the self and the context within which they are interwoven. When participants experienced disequilibrium and endured challenges in their work place, they reflected on the self in context and decided how they could move forward to a better situation. The participants were active, purposeful agents in dynamic interactions within a constantly changing environment (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

The transition process was aligned with the effort to make new professional connections and changes within or outside organizations. People sought to move vertically or laterally within the organization or branched outside the organization in order to discover if they fit better with those environments. Experiencing alternative jobs before they found what they wanted to do was another way to experiment with

the fit between person and context. They tried out alternative and possible positions and jobs involving new skills, new attitudes, and new lifestyle patterns. The transition toward post-retirement employment involved the integration of their lifelong career journey experiences.

In addition, historical moments as unexpected circumstances played an important role in catalyzing participants' career changes. Under the dictatorship of the two presidents Park and Chun, Hyunmin struggled with observing his organization being filled with military hires, and Heejin was swept into social movements without consideration of prior career perceptions and plans. The late 1990s financial crisis led Jihoon to become a freelance broker and be immersed in a highly competitive work environment. Participants identified these historical moments as significant in both positive and negative ways. They interpreted those historical moments as milestones that affected their current career transitions and construction by hindering or accelerating the process. The participants' understanding of the incidents refers to how they learned and changed through experiences. They placed "a new meaning on the world and events" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 17) through incidental learning. Most of all, the participants sought to integrate their experiences into a changed person who writes a new biography. They simply did not follow the flow of time but linked the thread between 'I' and context through iterative learning process.

Therefore, this study improves the understanding of the developmental-contextual approach in the field of career development, specifically where it concerns the close interactions between person and environment. The developmental-contextual approach to career development views the dynamic interaction of the

developing individual with various contexts as the paradigm that accounts for the complexity of occupational careers including antecedents, unfolding, and consequences (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008). Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) pointed out the limitations of a normative framework for career development from a step-driven approach. Instead, the developmental-contextual approach emphasizes the variability of the process at both the individual and contextual levels by determining that “people, by interacting with their changing context, provide a basis of their own development” (p. 77). The literature emphasizes the importance of the interactions that shape or affect people’s career development through the experiences of one’s parents (Hartung et al., 2005) and through learning from the media (Patton & Porfeli, 2007), and the loss of legitimacy of the idea of disengagement from work at retirement (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2009). However, there is a lack of literature describing the interaction between the person and context in adult career transitions.

In this study, I closely examined the career transition processes of Korean adults in their post-retirement employment. I focused on the actions and processes in their career journey in an attempt to understand the interactions between the individual and context. The findings of the study identified two important types of interactions (a) between the individuals and their professional contexts, and (b) between the individuals and the historical context. Participants all discussed the professional contexts in which their career transitions took place. Experiencing disequilibrium in the workplace and appraising the self and context led them to

explore other professional options within their primary careers before making a full career transition.

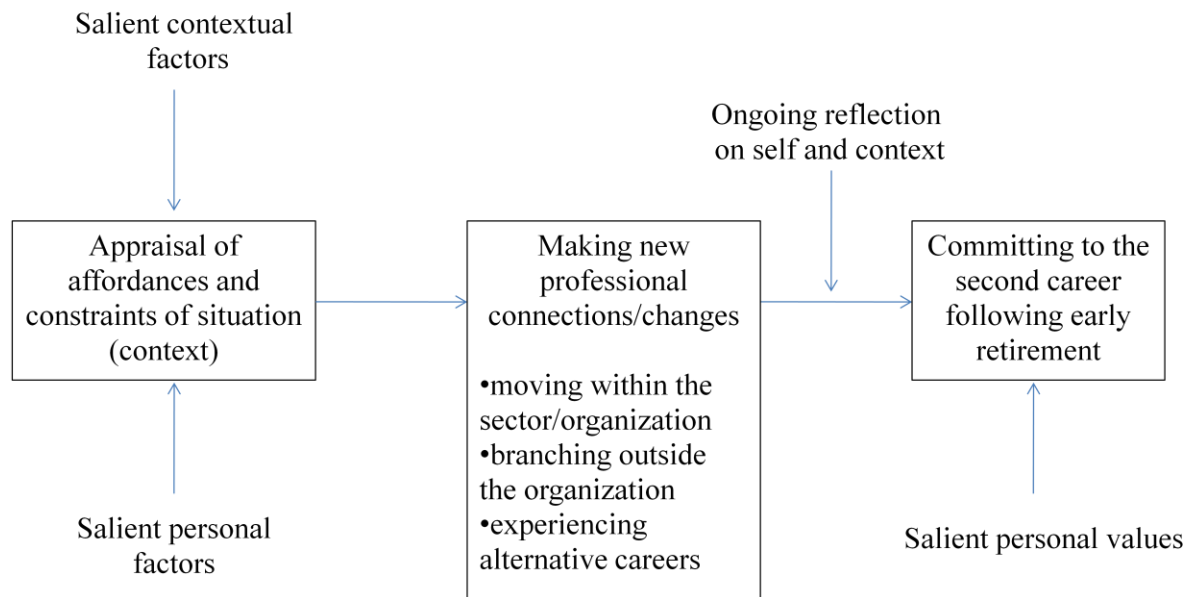
Developmental contextualism conceives of humans as complex multi-level systems that engage in, move between, and are embedded within multiple contexts (Vondracek & Fouad, 1994). Individuals in the study took action to find connections in their professional contexts rather than stagnating by responding obsequiously to authority or disregarding their sense of unfulfillment. Hyunmin made an effort to move out to a department that provided new challenges, and Seungho branched out to outside organizations, for example from a college to a civil organization, to expand his interests. Heejin also extended her scope of work from one organization to a community by developing different community programs aligned with her primary work. Jihhoon, a former broker, tried out alternative careers such as real estate agent and patent developer before he made the full transition to restaurateur. In accordance with the developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek et al., 1986), I found that there are dynamic interactions reflecting the mutual impact of the individual on context and context on the individual. The participants tried out different work and engaged in trial and error to find the best fit between the self and context.

During this process of interaction, the most noticeable factors were ongoing reflection on the self and context and appraisal of the situation based on their individual values. The participants in my study were agents of their own development while interacting, appraising, and in turn altering their ideas and actions toward new careers. After the participants experimented with making professional connections and changes within and outside organizations, they had different lengths of between-

time (Ibarra, 2003) or neutral zone (Bridges, 2009) before they committed themselves to their new careers. Some participants had break time to reflect on life and self with temporary engagement in work, and others kept experimenting with alternative careers. At the point that they committed themselves to the new career, they constantly reflected on what career means to them, sought to make meaning of their lives and did ongoing self-appraisal. These reflections were inextricably linked with their future aspirations and desired selves.

According to Savickas (2005), “careers do not unfold; they are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of work roles” (p. 43). Career construction and transition processes involve the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals impose meaning and direction on their careers (Collin & Young, 2000; Ebberwein et al., 2004). The participants committed themselves to the second career as a result of the interactions with society and adaptation to an environment. Based on the findings, as shown in Figure 5, I developed the ACFC model illustrating the career transition and construction process.

Figure 5. ACFC Model of Career Transition (Appraising, Connecting, Reflecting, and Committing)



To sum up, career transition for the participants was a process that involved multiple interactions between person and context. These four phases—experiencing disequilibrium, reflecting on the self and context, making new professional connections and changes, and committing to the new career—were explored and identified in the study. Individuals imposed meanings on past and present experiences and future aspirations embedded in a transition process (Rossiter, 2009). The career transition from retirement to post-retirement employment was not a one-time event that took place around the retirement point. Each participant brought up a long storyline of the career journey that explained his or her new career. The process obviously included different dynamics between the individual and organization and involved affirmation of their career choices. Based on the findings of the study and the literature, there was no doubt that the career did not simply unfold. It was a

complex and dynamic process that individuals needed to adapt, detour from, or construct throughout their journey (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2009; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008). Experiencing disruptions in career, self-reflections, different professional trials, and commitment to the present career were building blocks that comprised individuals' career transitions and construction.

Conclusion 2: Personal Values Provide a Platform for Career Adaptability

The second conclusion of the study is based on the findings related to how individuals interpret the career transition and construction. In this study, I situated Korean adults as individuals who have experienced Korea's time-compressed modernization and its accompanying rapid economic growth and political democratization in the 20th century. During this period, they negotiated among sociocultural contextual factors such as self-values, family concerns, future aspirations, etc. Because they already experienced career transition from voluntary retirement to their post-retirement employment, the participants provided substantial data on how they experienced the transition and their career journey as well. The findings of this study indicate that personal values informed the participants' construction of their careers. Their interpretations of their choices and motivations include pursuing personal growth and helping others to grow and contribute to society.

The participants did not view making a lot of money or reaching higher positions as indications of a successful career. They initiated their career construction while negotiating and interacting with their changing context. Ongoing appraisals on their selves and lives were at the center of their interpretations of their career journeys. Their values played a self-regulating role in the appraisal process by offering

validation for what to do and reasonable standards for a successful career. The concept of protean career (Hall, 1976; Hall & Moss, 1998) provides a better understanding of how the participants construct their careers based on their choices and values. As Hall (1976) stated, “The protean person’s own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external” (p. 201). The shape-shifting implied by the term indicates the changes in self resulting from self-direction steered by personal identity and specific values (Inkson, 2006). In my study, the participants displayed the protean attitude that connotes a new form of career development in which the individual rather than the organization takes responsibility for transforming the career path. They fostered career adaptability by listening to their inner voices that comprise values, belief, and future aspirations.

With respect to career adaptability, Savickas (2002, 2005) addressed its dimensions with the “4 Cs” (Concern, Control, Curiosity, and Confidence). In order to complete successful transitions between career stages, people need to have high levels of 4 Cs. Career adaptability is defined as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, occupational transitions and personal traumas” (p. 51). Career adaptability functions as “self-regulation strategies” (p. 51); thus, career adaptability enables individuals to effectively implement their self-concepts in occupational roles, thus creating their work lives and building their careers. Most studies on career adaptability in the existing literature have focused on young adults and have mostly been driven by quantitative methodology (Creed et al., 2009;

Ferreira et al., 2007). Although Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, and Prosser's study (2004) was a notable exception, this lacks an articulation of how personal values affect individuals' careers. As the findings of this study showed, individuals were proactive when they pursued values and when they synthesized their values in work roles.

The participants reflected on their career journeys and how they experienced career transition from the primary career to the second career. Unlike other professionals, the participants left their primary careers, with no pressure placed on them to retire. This pattern of change in retirement in which early retirement was another career transition event involved many reflections and interpretations of their career journey. The participants continually emphasized that career construction was informed by personal values. For example, Hyunmin indicated that "worldly values" such as "succeeding with a career, landing a high position somewhere, and making money" were no longer meaningful. He became more interested in building a humane society by helping others grow. The other participants, Heejin and Jihoon, also emphasized their lack of interest in materialistic values in building their careers. Their interactions with the environment and society entailed learning within society. This learning process served as "the personal integration in communities and society" (Illeris, 2004, p. 83) in which they became recognized others' contributions to their growth. Once they engaged in their new careers, they kept seeking meaning in their work and confirmation of their values embedded in the career. The cases in the study indicated that individuals' values were integrative composites of self-assessment, past

experiences, and future aspirations that facilitated career adaptability and career construction on the whole.

The fundamental assumption of predictability of career stages based on stability, mostly addressed by Super (1957, 1990), does not correspond to experiences of the participants' career transition and construction. For the participants, post-retirement employment is placed in the continuum of one's lifelong career, and it integrates one's life experiences, knowledge, and values with future aspirations in different ways. Those individuals lived in a time of rapid modernization in South Korea and committed themselves to their first career according to societal needs and norms. In their post-retirement, however, they now commit themselves to personal growth, nonmaterial interest, contribution to society, and helping others in their own ways. In this vein, professional success can be defined in relation to one's work values or work aspect preferences (Pryor, 1981). Their strategies were giving meaning to their career journey and finding their own values that they employed through ongoing reflections. These strategies helped them develop their career adaptability by anticipating changes and initiating their own future in changing contexts.

In sum, in this study, I found that their ongoing interpretations of their career and the self were crucial for adaptation to their second careers. Their personal values created a balance between personal situations and societal environments and in turn enabled them to employ career adaptability. Individuals held multiple meanings between different career stages and unfolded their interpretations in line with specific values. Thus, their interpretations of their career journeys played a role in initiating

career construction that led individuals to be proactive in precarious situations. Enforced with personal values as psychological resources, participants revealed that career adaptability promoted a sense of control and confidence in their present and future career. Adding one more dimension to the concept of career adaptability (Savickas, 2002, 2005) that functions as a self-regulating strategy was a valuable outcome of the study.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

This qualitative study of how Korean middle-aged adults in their post-retirement employment experience their career transitions and career construction adds to the understanding of adults' career transition process, contextual factors that affect career transition and construction, and their interpretations of career transitions and construction. Findings from the study bring to light several implications for research, theory, and practice in the areas of career development, aging study, and human resources development. The implications based on theory, research, and practice are addressed in the following sections.

Implications for Theory and Research

There are two major implications for theory and research. First, this study extends the career construction theory, particularly the concept of career adaptability. Second, this study enriches the developmental-contextual approach in the field of career development by providing a better understanding of how adults interact with their context.

Extend the concept of career adaptability by including personal values.

This study helps foster a better understanding of career adaptability in the theory of

career construction by revealing the role of personal values in increasing individuals' career adaptability. Introduced by Super and Knasel (1981), career adaptability emphasizes “being forward looking, allowing us to see the individual as behaving proactively” (p. 199). The stages and developmental tasks of Super's (1990) theory was a feature of career adaptability across the lifespan. The stages—growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement—comprise a maxicycle across an individual's career based on chronological ages in general. Savickas (2005) pointed out this cycle could become minicycles “around each of the many transitions from school to work, from job to job, and from occupation to occupation” (p. 50), as people expect to change jobs often and make frequent transitions across their lifespans. Each career stage contains its own developmental tasks, and the stages represent a structural account of career adaptability (Patton & McMahon, 2006). This study confirms the extension of the stage of management, rather than the shift to disengagement, in which adults continue to engage in their post-retirement employment.

Given that career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005) addresses the whole life-span career development, career stages for adults account for maintenance (Super, 1981), management (Savickas, 2002) and disengagement. In this theory, disengagement is a normal stage that individuals experience around age 65 following retirement in the theory. The post-retirement activities of the participants indicated a different manner of career adaptability in this study. First, the participants prolonged the stage of management regardless of their chronological ages, ranging from 48 to 65. Their career construction agrees with the postulation that “coping with change and

managing transitions involves re-exploration and re-establishment” (Savickas, 2002, p. 181) rather than disengagement.

The close link between career stages and career adaptability in career construction theory does not sufficiently articulate how and why individuals move to another career rather than disengage. Although the concept of the minicycle could be one way to understand launching new careers after retirement, this study extended the core element of the theory, career adaptability, by adding the importance of personal values to the dimension for adults, which I call *cultivating personal values*, as another C. If the overarching idea of career construction theory is that individuals build their careers by imposing meaning on vocational behavior (Savickas, 2002, 2005), then for adults who consider post-retirement employment, having them cultivate personal values in extending the management stage will be helpful for successful career transition and ongoing construction.

Advance the developmental-contextual approach by understanding career transition processes. A developmental-contextual approach postulates the optimistic human potential and the ability of individuals to shape “their own development by selecting and shaping the contexts within which they operate and by making choices that optimize their chances of living rewarding and successful lives” (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008, p. 221). The statement does not guarantee that individuals are inherently optimistic and capable of building their careers in the way they design. There are many contextual factors that interrupt or facilitate their plans and desires. The key goal of this study in refining the developmental-contextual

approach was to enrich the understanding of how individuals are competent or optimistic in the contexts within which they operate.

The findings from this study were that individuals first managed the hindering or facilitating factors by making professional connections and changes. They engaged in trial and error to extend their area of work while maintaining their primary career. The participants were then able to interpret their experiences and form future aspirations throughout their career transition process. Adults' career transitions and construction comprise four phases such as experiencing disequilibrium in career, self-reflections, different professional trials, and commitment to the present career within dynamic interactions between individual and context.

Implications for Practice

This study makes several practical contributions to both career guidance and policies for career development. While this research does not claim to provide a recipe for career practitioners to follow in order to promote successful career transitions, it does provide a deep analysis of how adults in post-retirement employment successfully build their second careers and capitalize on personal values as active individuals. Based on the findings, the following implications may help both adult educators and career guidance practitioners determine a useful course of career guidance programs to facilitate successful transition among adults.

Increase awareness of changing rituals of retirement. Career practitioners need to be familiar with the broader changes that take place in society to provide relevant career guidance for adults (Herr, 2001). As changes in the world of work become more widespread, it is useful to consider the work of career development

practitioners in local and global contexts, particularly with regard to retirement.

Research has revealed that retirees seek employment such as bridge employment and want to work after retirement, doing either paid or unpaid work (Gobeski & Beehr, 2009; Shultz, 2003). The definition of retirement has extended its boundaries due to workers' continuous participation in the workforce in post-retirement. Retirement is a uniquely modern phenomenon that has a relatively short institutionalized history. Retirement has become a natural phenomenon only in the last quarter of the 20th century (Goldberg, 2000). However, in a world wherein different retirement features unfold, contemporary retirement practices do not constitute simply retiring and receiving a pension benefit. The findings of the study identified how contemporary retirement takes different forms such as career transition while individuals implement their self-concept and future aspirations.

As this study indicated, adults in their post-retirement employment showed a high desire to help others and to contribute to society using their lifelong knowledge and experiences. Their satisfaction and subjective experiences of success were not determined by the whole of their experiences in the work setting, but also in relation to their families, their communities, and society. Maintaining career stages-based approaches, which correspond to chronological ages, may limit adults' lifelong career construction. With increasing life expectancy, medical advances, and the desire for engagement with society, adults continue to work regardless of their retirement. Therefore, career practitioners should be prepared to respond to adults with more information and resources.

Develop a proactive policy model for career guidance from a holistic perspective. In South Korea, there have been various efforts to increase the quality of later life by expanding employment opportunities for the aged. Available services in public employment and in the private and voluntary sectors are increasing. However, such services are mostly reactive programs, designed to help unemployed people return to work as quickly as possible. Such services are geared toward solving particular problems. This approach is far from promoting adults' lifelong career development. Within the context of lifelong learning, career guidance services need to be available "at times and in forms which will encourage all individuals to continue to develop their skills and competencies throughout their lives"(Watts, 2008, p. 348).

For example, one of the major public employment services since 2006 is the Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS), an affiliate of the Ministry of Labor. This organization has provided diverse programs to people aged 50 and older to promote labor force participation, allowing the nation to benefit from the knowledge and skills of older Korean workers. KEIS also serves to develop and provide vocational programs, including the Sung-Sil Program in 20 centers out of 87 nationwide employment support centers in Korea. The target population of the program is those who have been unemployed for over 6 months, who want to change their vocations and who hope to learn practical skills related to job seeking and interviewing. Such sub-systems increasingly use a problem-solving approach, which may not ensure effective outcomes to provide individuals with long-term career development opportunities.

In order to address the role of career guidance in relation to public policy, I contend that policy-makers need to understand the nature of adults' career development and the potentially important role of career guidance services. As Watt (2000) pointed out, career guidance is “soft work” rather than “hard” policy intervention. The findings from this study showed how individuals seek to find the right way on their own, often detouring and experiencing disruptions but holding on to their initiative. Adults as career designers and architects are active individuals. The notion of active individuals needs to be placed at the center of career guidance by encouraging individuals to determine their role in, and their contributions to, the society of which they are a part. With this overarching concept of active individuals, policy-makers and government program developers could increase the scope of those programs and invite different populations who want to construct their careers in meaningful ways. In particular, career practitioners in government programs should consider the individuals' subjective experience of career success in career guidance programs.

Consider employees' values at an organizational level. One way to understand career development is to view it as an extended version of the development of Training and Development within organizations (Swanson & Holton, 2009). It is important to understand how adults develop and construct their careers because one of the primary tasks of HRD is to facilitate “adult progression through work roles” (p. 331). Given the increase in post-retirement employment, HR practitioners are more likely to face adult workers in the midst of career transitions. Hiring second or third career workers at different development stages, including

retirees, may require diverse strategies because their experiences and future aspirations affect their competencies for tasks. As shown in this study, adults tried out different professional changes in order to test the fit between themselves and the organization. During this process, individuals seek to find meaningful values that play a critical role in engaging them in their work roles and organization. Thus, HR practitioners should pay particular attention to individuals' values since there is a strong connection between these values and developing competences for work. Organizational effectiveness cannot be separated from individual values, well-being, and development. Particularly, given that HRD means "a process of increasing the capacity of the human resource through development" (McLagan, 1989, p. 52), the developmental interactions between individuals and organizations are building blocks that lead to successful adaptation both for individuals and organizations. Organizational changes will be successful if individuals are willing to change, develop, and grow.

In addition, one of the significant roles of HRD is to promote individual development, not just competence of specific tasks (Yang, 2003). Many individuals experiencing frequent career transitions could become valuable resources if organizations are able to help them achieve their fullest potential through their career adaptation and construction. The overall growth of individuals begins with the recognition that "this growth will have an effect on the organizational system" (Bierema, 1996, p. 25). Contingencies and consequences in career transitions reflect the interchanges between an organization and an individual. Thus, careers are not trajectories that institutions have created; rather, they serve to construct the

organizational structure. As Barley (1989) stated, “although a person’s life might have little meaning outside the context of institutional patterns, institutions could have no reality independent of the lives they shaped.” (p. 51). HRD has a responsibility to help individuals develop to their full potential through work, which in turn leads to more growth for both individuals and organizations.

Help adults narrate career transition stories. Career practitioners must discuss with adults “how to do,” not “what to do.” Information and content-oriented career guidance is important yet insufficient considering that heterogeneous career stories unfold among adults. As showed in this study, throughout the transition process, the individuals became more reflective, especially about the self and context. The changing and changed self were “explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change” (Giddens, 1991, p. 33). For the participants, leaving stable jobs and launching new employment following retirement required psychological support for pursuing something different from typical cultural expectations. They found and developed their psychological resources by creating career stories containing the self and context.

Thus, I recommend that career development practitioners focus on helping adults in career transition narrate their career stories. Throughout the career journey, adults’ reflective self-awareness develops their self-concept, and self-description comprises its content. The adult should be encouraged to “explore the life theaters in which the different roles may be performed and use the results of this exploration in the self-construction process. All roles and environments relevant to the person should become part of the intervention that constructs career stories and build lives”

(Savickas et al., 2009, p. 244). In narrating their career stories, adults continue to match the self and situations and attune their inner world to the outer world. They design their lives in their career transition and construction stories accordingly. As Giddens (1991) stated, “a person’s identity is not to be found in behavior... but in the capacity to *keep a particular narrative going*” (p. 54). The ability of adults to continuously incorporate events that take place in the external world into their inner selves, thus creating ongoing stories about themselves, should be another core building block that career practitioners need to incorporate into their guidance.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include language barriers in presenting the findings of the study of Korean adults’ experiences of career transition. Although I was able to collect deep and rich data in Korean, presenting the data analysis in English may limit the true meanings that the participants intended. In order to minimize distortions in translating everyday Korean into English, a bilingual Korean-American graduate student and several Americans helped me clarify the utterances. Yet, there are still some possible mismatches to the extent to which the presentation is dependent on an English second language speaker (myself). I needed to constantly make decisions about nuances and cultural meanings that Korean words contain. The word *ya-in* denotes the meaning of a free and wild person who has no interest in worldly or political issues. The Korean word ended up being translated into *free-spirited man* after several attempts (e.g., *wild-man*, *free-man*, *wild and free man*, *man who lives freely*). As this example shows, translation involved a process of reconstructing values (Simon, 1996) rather than finding and matching correct or

accurate terms. The fact that the study was designed in English, the data were collected and analyzed in Korean, and the findings were presented in English matters and opens room for further discussions.

In addition, because of the limitations on my time and budget, the data collection period was relatively short. Although I scheduled every interview before I left for Korea from the U.S. and wrote notes immediately each interview, different interviews at different times may increase the trustworthiness of the study and deeper theoretical concept generation. This study also focused on professionals' career transition experiences to post-retirement employment. The findings might have been different had I studied different populations. The issues of gender, socioeconomic status, and involuntary retirements were not within the scope of the study.

Considering these limitations, I now turn to the recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of the study lead to three recommendations for future research. This study was an exploratory study to understand how Korean middle-aged adults experience their career transitions and construction from primary to second careers. First, I recommend that future study use narrative analysis for understanding experiences. In this method, the participants construct self-defining life stories that expand on some of their cherished or complex ideas (experiences) developed in the context of Korea. They share career stories and the social world within which the story is made and told. McAdams (2006) calls these "psychosocial constructions" (p. 95) in which life stories continue to change as the narrator's social worlds change and as new stories replace old ones. Within career accounts, people are involved in

interpretation and meaning-making in ways that go beyond just recalling specific facts. Individuals, in their narratives, talk about episodes and events through their present reality and future aspirations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cohen et al., 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). In this sense, choosing a narrative approach to the participants' career path allows us a better understating of their career transition experiences by 1) listening to the participants' voices, 2) understanding how participants make sense of their career transitions, and 3) identifying a means of analyzing the character of their stories.

Second, this study only includes the perspectives of participants who were white-collar professionals and voluntary retirees from their primary careers in South Korea. Given the influence of geographical and cultural differences, the findings likely would have been different if the study had been conducted, for example, in the U.S. (or still in Korea) with participants of different socio-economic status, from the working class, and laid off. Future study should undertake a closer examination of the perspectives of those in different positions including working class workers, female workers and involuntary retirees in their post-retirement employment. In addition, Confucian culture in Korea should be considered in the understanding of career transition to post-retirement employment. A deeper examination of the cultural influences on career development will extend and enrich the understanding of Korean adults' career construction. Although the way individual workers construct their careers has been considered a common developmental task, individuals-in-context (Vondracek, Ferreira, & Santos, 2010) create different life themes, narratives, adaptive strategies, and future careers in dynamic interactions with the environment

within which they are situated. More studies of diverse populations obviously are warranted.

Third, the findings of the study suggest that further research is needed on the relationship between career construction and age/aging from a sociological viewpoint. Changes in age-related passages such as retirement and transformations in role structures are distinctly separate. The concept of structural lag (Riley, Kahn, & Foner, 1994) in the field of sociology may enrich different aspects of the phenomenon of retirees' career transition and construction. According to Riley, aging patterns in people's lives are affected by changes in social structures, and as people play out their roles in the structures, they bring about pressure for structural changes. Any social system, particularly with regard to retirement, has its own normative structure that indicates what is acceptable and possible in the diverse roles within society. However, as shown in the study, the boundary between retirement and employment has become more permeable. The roles stratified by age, which used to be norms and properties of the social system, become properties of individuals. In order to develop a satisfactory basis for researching the later parts of adulthood, longitudinal studies of career construction following retirement should further investigate age and aging in relation to career and the social changes created by the mismatch between person and social roles.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented a summary of the research study, discussion of conclusions, implications for research, theory, and practice, and recommendations for future research. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews, seven participants

shared their career transition and construction experiences in post-retirement employment in Korea. Data were analyzed using Charmaz's (2000, 2002, 2006) constructivist grounded theory method based on the constant comparative method.

The findings resulted in two conclusions: (a) career transition is a process that involves ongoing interpretations of the self and context in which contextual factors shape individuals' career transition and construction, and (b) personal values provide a platform for career adaptability. Career transition and construction was a dynamic rather than a linear process in which the participants constantly tested the fit between the self and context while experiencing disequilibrium within workplaces. They responded to unexpected or challenging situations by making professional connections. Some tried out different departments by moving vertically or laterally within the sector, while others branched out outside of organizations or experienced temporary alternative careers before making full career transitions. Within this trial and error approach, individuals' personal values created balance between personal situations and societal environment and in turn enabled the individuals to develop career adaptability. Individuals found multiple meanings in their different career stages and unfolded their interpretations in line with specific values. They persisted in their own quests for a new career and future. Thus, their own interpretations of their career journeys played a role in both initiating career construction and being proactive within precarious situations.

In this study, retirement as age-related ritual no longer creates a lock-step transition from work to disengagement. As society continually establishes its norms, these individuals construct new rituals by initiating meaningful changes and career

transitions in their adulthood. This new phenomenon embedded in individuals' careers contains enormous potential for further investigation. This study could be a watershed in understanding how new rituals arise and how the individual and context interact, hindering or accelerating the phenomenon.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Main Questions

- Tell me about your career history.
- How did you come to your current career?
- What did you have to consider when choosing your career?
- What were the major decision points that influenced your choice?
- What were your priorities in your decision making?
- If you look back at your life and at things that have happened locally and globally, what would you say has influenced you the most or had the greatest impact on you?
- What kind of advice would you give to someone in a similar situation?
- How is your career transition affecting your life?
- What kind of support have you had through all of this?
- Tell me about your future career goals.
- Are there any other things about your career transition that I haven't asked that you would like to tell me about?

Possible Probes

- How would you describe yourself as you're going through the process?
- Could you describe what your initial reaction was to changing jobs?

- Looking back at the entire process, could you describe your attitude and emotions you experienced?
- Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
- You mentioned OOO what would they be? Could you give me an example of that?

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "EXPEIRENCE OF CAREER TRANSITION IN MIDDLE-ADULTHOOD" conducted by SeonJoo Kim the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy (LEAP) at The University of Georgia (706-410-4017) under the direction of Dr. Laura Bierema, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia (706-542-6174). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the study aims to understand the career transition experiences of Korean middle-aged workers who are in their post-retirement employment by investigating the interactions between these individuals and society and the emerging patterns of their career construction.

I understand that my participation will involve participating in a 1–1.5 hour audio-taped interview and is voluntary. I may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. The results of the research study may be published, but my name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. My identity will not be associated with my responses in any published format. The audio recordings will not be publicly disseminated. They will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer in SeonJoo Kim's office for a period of one year during which analysis will take place. They will be destroyed at the end of that time period. No one other than SeonJoo Kim will have access to these audiofiles.

No risk or discomfort is expected as a result of my participation in this study. I can stop or decline to answer any question at any time. There are no direct benefits to me other than sharing my experiences of my career transitions. The study's potential benefits include a better understanding of how self and society interact and how individuals construct their career in their life. I understand that if Ms. Kim has follow up questions, she may contact me for clarifications.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
Telephone: _____		
Email: _____		

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu