

The Meaning of Korean Women's Career-Leaving Experience

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to
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ABSTRACT

What is the meaning of Korean women's career-leaving experience? To answer this question, this study adopted a hermeneutic phenomenology approach. My intention was to search for the deeper meaning of Korean women's career-leaving experience from their perspective.

Ten Korean women who had left their careers due to their domestic roles in their families were selected and interviewed. Tentative themes were drawn from the analysis of the first interviews, and 12 themes under four thematic categories were confirmed after follow-up interviews: Theme Group 1: Being a Woman is a Handicap at Work. 1-1) Glass Ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work. 1-2) The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood. Theme Group 2: Leaving Work Was to Become a Better Mother. 2-1) I needed to protect my pregnancy away from the stress of work. 2-2) It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child. Theme Group 3: Work after Career Leaving Becomes Being a Full-time Housewife. 3-1) Being at home is difficult. 3-2) Housework and childrearing are much more difficult. 3-3) I feel a loss of myself. Subtheme 3-3-1) I do not have time for myself. Subtheme 3-3-2) I do not have my own money. Subtheme 3-3-3) I do not have my own individuality. Theme Group 4: I Am Rethinking Myself and My Career. 4-1) The previous work experience was a good experience. 4-2) Getting credentials is the way to women's careers. 4-3) Career leaving could be a chance for a career change. 4-4) I design my own career path. 4-5) I am waiting for my time to come.

The themes were then discussed through a post-analysis literature review, and recommendations for policy and future research were made.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is problematic that many Korean women do not continue their working life after marriage. Many researchers and policy makers have raised this as a critical issue, not only for married women in Korea and their families, but also for their organizations and the nation, because of the loss of their expertise. It is also a problem because it is an underutilization of education and training of women. The Korean government worries that this will create a vicious circle of women's unemployment. Employers can not trust women workers and sustain their investment in them, and it diminishes women workers' motivation and self-efficacy at work. People accuse women who quit their work and return home of irresponsibility and unreliability as a worker. Behind their backs, people say that it is the reason why investing in women's education does not provide a profitable return. Some people suspect that women get education and get a job just to improve their chances of finding a good marriage partner (Ahn, H., Son, M., Lee, K., & Kim, H., 2002).

However, Korean women often decide to leave their careers to solve other problems in their lives, not expecting to create new ones, because people tend to make life choices with the expectation that the choices will work better for them.

Initially, my interest was in what work means to Korean women in general. However, before long, I realized that understanding something in general is not easy. I wanted to hear the collective voices of women about their working life. And I have heard many Korean women's individual anecdotal experiences. Each one has been full of interesting and unique personal stories.

When I was young, I really enjoyed doing collages, creating a picture by patching torn-pieces of magazines or colored paper on a master sheet. I loved it because each piece from different materials came together to form a new kind of art. I would like to use this analogy to understand the phenomenon of Korean working women. Each voice in an individual's experience comes from different values of colors and context. When they are arranged through the researcher's understanding about each piece, women can contribute their own experiences to a new collage about the phenomenon of women at work in Korea.

In the beginning of my research, it was very hard to extinguish my desire to understand Korean women's working lives at a specific time in their working life. I tried to find an explanation that contains the whole picture of Korean women's working lives in a definitive study. I could not find an existing good resource. I would like to embark on a long scholarly journey of creating my own research on understanding Korean women in the workplace. This study will fill out one part of the collage on Korean women's career leaving. I envision the collage to be a collaborative work that I cannot complete by myself. How do you eat an elephant? The answer is, "One bite at a time." How do you understand Korean women and work? The answer is, "One phenomenon at a time."

The purpose of this research was not to propose a solution to the problem or suggest a way to prevent women's career leaving. I wanted to go deep into the lives of Korean working women who are leaving the workforce for marriage or childrearing to explore their inner realities. I wanted to see and hear their real experiences. I wanted to

hear Korean women's voices, not the outcome of surveys that are stated as numbers and percentages. I wanted the readers to meet their experiences through my research.

Marriage and/or childbearing/childrearing are regarded as significant life events considerably affecting women's participation in the Korean labor market. Korean women's labor market participation rate is M-shaped, peaking at an age between 25-29 and dropping when they get married and have children, then gradually increasing as they reach their 40's and 50's. Many developed countries, such as the U.S. and countries in Europe, had a similar M-shaped women's labor market participation rate in the 1970's and 1980's; more recently they have reshaped it into a plateau-shape through various proactive employment strategies (Kim, T., 2000).

According to Kim, T. (1997), while in many other countries women exit the labor market with the birth of the first child, Korean women tend to exit with marriage. Among Korean married women, 32.8% work periodically after marriage; 28.0% permanently quit their careers after marriage; 16.7% begin their careers after marriage; only 11.4% continue working after marriage, and 11.1% never work outside the home (Kim, T., 1998). This statistic shows that more than half of Korean working women leave the labor market upon marriage. Depending on their life situations, some may return to the labor market, while others never will. College-graduated women have a particularly higher rate of leaving the labor market for good than high-school graduates (Kim, T., 1998). What is this phenomenon? Several quantitative studies, such as surveys (Kim, T., 1998, 2000; Moon, Y., 1998), have tried to answer this question. The results of these surveys have shown that women will leave their career and stay at home when their labor wage per hour for domestic labor is higher than their labor wage per hour for market labor.

Furthermore, they concluded that a career interruption such as this makes reentry into the labor market more difficult. The reason for this difficulty is that career interruptions often lead to women's decreased wages due to depreciation of their skills during this interruption. In the same vein, women's career interruption can be a major obstacle for their careers in a very hierarchical and seniority-based promotion system as found in Korean corporate organizations. Women's average working years will be shortened, thus leading to statistical discrimination when it comes to selection, promotion, and training and development in the workplace. It is believed that this negative impact of women's career interruption will accelerate as industrial technologies advance (Kim, T., 1998). Therefore, the Korean government is aware that it is necessary to make efforts to re-shape women's labor market participation rate from an M-shape to a plateau-shape by establishing more systematic strategies considering society, family structure, and population changes. Research has emphasized that childrearing should be shared by governmental assistance at a national level; some have said that more egalitarian husbands were needed to help out with domestic chores and childrearing; others have said that women's self-efficacy should be raised through education and self-reflection (Kim, M., 1984; Kim, T., 1996; 2000; Park, J., 2000).

At this moment, many Korean women are leaving their careers when they get married or have children. Statistically, it is very easy to find women who will leave their careers or have already left their careers in any neighborhood in Korea. Many working Korean women plan ahead to quit their jobs for family responsibilities. Some, however, fear this upcoming career interruption.

Even as a Korean woman who is planning on a professional career, I may or may not experience interruptions in my career because life is an unexpectedly evolving process. I have already witnessed many friends in Korea who have left their workplaces or careers upon marriage and childbearing. Moreover, many of them do not have clear ideas regarding their future careers, either. They have had very mixed feelings about leaving their careers. Starting from a personal interest in women's career leaving/interruption, I wanted to understand the meaning of their experiences in leaving their careers. Initially, my question was, "Is it also a problem from their point of view?" "Does leaving their career resonate with such women as a problem?" Then, if they do, "How are they going to step into the problem area to deal with or act upon it?" If not, "What do they think about career leaving and how they went through it?" Thus, in order to answer all of these questions and more, I formed the following research question: What is it like for a Korean woman to leave her career?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand the meaning of Korean woman's career-leaving experience. This study aimed to reveal and unravel the structure, logic, and interrelationships that reside in women's experiences of leaving their careers.

Most existing information about women's career leaving has been acquired from quantitative assessments. This information does not include the actual values, beliefs, assumptions, or attitudes of women leaving their careers. It is essential to reflect on the empirical reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) from the perspective of women who have left their career to understand this phenomenon deeply.

Women's Career-Leaving Experience and HRD

The fact that a considerable number of Korean women have undergone career leaving brings the realization that their career-leaving decision will inevitably affect the workplace, family structure, neighborhoods, and communities. Additionally, the nation will be affected because women who leave careers will be or already are mothers who are considered to be the roots of humanity, according to Korean thought (Cho, S., 2002).

Therefore, as the researcher's understanding of Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals' roles is congruent with the definition of McLean and McLean (2001), understanding the experience of Korean women's career leaving is an important question for HRD professionals. McLean and McLean's definition is:

Human resource development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity. (p. 322)

According to this definition, Korean women's career-leaving experiences is an important issue for HRD professionals in organizations, the community, and the national realm. In the organizational realm, HRD professionals in organizations where female workers' turnover rates are high can benefit from this study if they want to retain their female employees. HRD professionals in organizations also play a role as career counselors who can help prevent female workers from leaving their careers for good when they truly understand female workers' psychology and perspectives. They can

additionally help female employees by trying to accommodate their specific needs through effectively enhancing organizations' family-friendly policies.

Through these research findings, HRD professionals can learn to view their organization's culture from female workers' points-of-view. Moreover, HRD professionals help dispel the negative stereotypes of women workers who want to obtain a job after a career interruption.

At the national HRD level, understanding women's career leaving experiences is important because Korea is expecting a shortage of skilled labor due to its decreasing birth rate and rapidly aging population. As of 2008, Korea's birth rate ranked the second from the bottom in the world—1.20 (UNFPA, 2008). Concerned policymakers have concluded that increasing affordable, dependable childcare services could change women's minds to have more children, which could pull women back to work (Hwang, S., 2002; Jang, H., Lee, M., Kim, K., & Kim, Y., 2004; Lee, S., 2001). This conclusion is partly true, but the decision to have children is as complex as women's individual life choices and is greatly affected by women's career leaving or interruption. It is worthwhile for policymakers and policy implementers to listen to women's own stories in order to glean more accurate insights involving female participation in the Korean workforce.

At the community level, career counselors who offer services at regional community centers would also benefit from this study when guiding women who want to re-enter the workforce after a career interruption.

Women's Career Leaving in Japan and the USA

In Japan, women's labor participation curve forms an M-shape curve similar to that of Korea. In other words, it is almost the same pattern as Korea's. Women in their 20's-30's show the first peak in the curve; as they reach marriage and childbirth, however, many Japanese women exit the labor market to devote themselves to domestic responsibilities. Then, as women reach their late 40's or early 50's, they reappear in the labor market. Therefore, career interruption and job discontinuity have long been phenomena of the Japanese female labor force (Kodera, 1994; Moon, S., 2000).

Japan hit a 1.57 birth rate in 1987; as a result, it was called the "1.57 shock" (Imada & Ikeda, 2007, p. 139) The Japanese government concluded that women were not having children because of the difficulties balancing work and childcare. Thus, the Japanese government increased financial support to private companies, encouraging them to accommodate women's balancing of work and childcare. Despite expanded childcare support systems, the birth rate continued to drop. In 2001, 67.4% of Japanese women who had had a job a year before their childbirth did not maintain their job six months after childbirth (Imada & Ikeda, 2007). In contrast, in the U.S., a majority (approximately 59%) of mothers of infants are in the labor force by the end of the first year post-birth (Han, Ruhm, Waldfogel, & Washbrook, 2008).

Unlike Korea and Japan, U.S. women's labor participation curve forms an upside-down U-shape, indicating greater work participation of married women versus their Japanese or Korean counterparts. Initially, in the mid 20th century, the U.S. had the strong norm that mothers of young children should stay home as full-time homemakers. Since then, however, there has been a strong trend toward higher levels of labor force

participation of married women with young children. Married women's labor force participation increased rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s (Roberts, 2003). According to Current Population Survey's 2008 Databook about Women in the labor Force (Statistics Korea, 2008), from 1975 to 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47% to a peak of 73%. This rate decreased to 71% by 2004 and remained through 2007. Unlike the decreasing fertility rates of Japan and Korea, a stable fertility rate in the U.S. was accompanied by this increased participation rate of married women since the 1970s.

My Personal Biography

Not like my mother: My mother obtained a Bachelor's degree in sociology in the same women's university as mine (Ewha). After college, she worked as an administrative assistant for four years until getting married at the age of 28. She has been a full-time homemaker since then. She never had to work outside the home as my father took charge of bringing home the family income. My mother seemed to be happy being a full-time homemaker. However, one day when I was in high school, I remember my mother confessing to me that she had always had some fear about how she could raise me and my brother if my father unexpectedly passed away or went bankrupt. She said that she would not be able to do anything, even housemaid work. Moreover, she told me that she did not want me to have the same kind of fear in the future. Her confession was a kind of shock to me. I was reminded of her facial expression and uneasiness whenever my father's business was not doing well in the past. I realized that her seemingly peaceful homemaker life was based on insecurity as a financial dependent. I really did not want the same thing to happen to me, either.

No role model: My mother's life was the norm in her generation. I have twelve aunts from both my father's and mother's sides of the family. They are all college-educated women, and all became homemakers upon marriage after a few years of work experience.

By the time my own generation reached college age, women's life patterns had not seemed to change much. All of my female cousins who were older than me stopped working upon marriage.

I went to a women's university that had been well known for educating and cultivating women leaders in Korea. Ironically, it was also well known that the graduates were very desirable bridal candidates to become "hyun-mo-yang-cho," meaning wise mothers and good wives in Korean. My university was the center of feminism in Korea, and its women's studies program was a leading force in academia. However, at the same time, it was reported that many alumnae's husbands became leaders in many areas of Korean society. There was chapel time once a week for the entire student body when students listened to inspiring messages from various speakers from inside and outside the university. I remember that the main message I received from chapel time for four years was that I could become an independent woman. Many speakers said that things were changing, and that it was time for women to work outside the home and to establish independent identities. When college friends got together, there was no one claiming to be a full-time homemaker in the future. We all believed that there would certainly be enough changes in society so that we could successfully balance work and family.

After graduating from college, I went to the U.S. to get a Master's degree in HRD. I was always interested in women's career development and organizational efforts

to accommodate dual-income families. Whenever I had the chance to meet classmates who were married working women in the US, I would ask them about their life and work. I asked them how they managed to balance work and family. What I discovered from listening to many women in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, was that their life (career) paths were much more varied, with more options, than I had experienced in Korea. I also studied the history of women working in the U.S. and Korea.

While I was studying in the US, many of my friends in Korea worked, got married, and left the workplace, just like my mother's generation. I heard their stories by phone and the Internet. I found out that they were all puzzled and disappointed by the fact that they had to leave their career and become a housewife after all the years of hoping and dreaming. Even though I was by then pursuing a doctoral degree in the U.S. to become a professional woman, which gave me some security that I would not be like them, I still had some fear that I might make the same choice if my life choices, too, were limited.

I returned to Korea after data collection and had to experience a return-home culture shock. I was again reminded that Korean people are very competitive in almost every area of life because of scarce natural resources and a relatively large population, especially in Seoul. The economy had gotten worse ever since the economic crisis in the late 1990s hand in hand with the shrinking global economy. Therefore, people put more value in financial stability in making life choices. Many more single men were looking for women who would bring in an income when married. Single women with a stable job would have an advantage in the couple-matching market. I could hear many voices of

married women who wanted to continue working after childbirth leave, and who wanted to get a job after career interruption.

Even though the Korean government has paid steady attention to these women's needs and has been studying and developing strategies to increase married women's labor force participation rate, there has still been a lack of comfort and uneasiness in the gap between an identity as a stay-at-home mother and the identity as a working mother. It seems that everyone is doubting and questioning each step of his/her life. Nobody seems to be certain about being right or wrong.

At the time of finishing this study, I am still a single woman in my late 30s and still hoping to have a family of my own and still hoping to get a stable job that can give me the work I have wanted to do and the income of the work's worth. I was not able to experience career leaving personally in Korea during the research period, but ten women sharing their experiences through this research has given me a much deeper understanding.

Summary

This chapter is an introduction to the research on Korean women's career-leaving experience. I described how the research question was identified out of my interest in women's work life. Similar to Japan, but unlike the U.S., many college educated women quit their work upon marriage and childbirth in Korea and do not return to the labor force for many reasons, but primarily because of pressure from the culture and from the employer. This is a loss of education, training, and expertise of female human resources. I believe that a deeper understanding of women who left their career would benefit Human

Resource Development practices in the organization, community, and national levels. I have also shared my personal story that led me to have an interest in this topic.

CHAPTER 2

PRE-ANALYSIS LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a pre-analysis literature review. The goal of a pre-analysis literature review in qualitative research is to explain the path of the researcher in pursuing the research to the point of deciding on a research question. The choice of the topic, in this case, came from my personal interest. This chapter addresses what I knew about the topic before launching the data collection and data analysis process. It is not a comprehensive literature review, so as not to burden me additionally with the viewpoints of the literature. Such a detailed literature review will follow the presentation of the findings of the research. Updated references and statistics will also be included in that chapter.

First, work, job, occupation, and career, the primary concepts used in this study, are defined. Second, women's career development is briefly addressed regarding women's career interruption or career leaving. Finally, this chapter addresses what other research has been conducted about Korean women's career interruption. In addition, the cultural and historical background about women and work in Korea are presented. The phenomenon of Korean women leaving the labor force influences, and is influenced by, family, work, and community. Because this dissertation is written for readers who may not know much about women and work in the Korean culture, and who, therefore, may not understand much about the phenomenon of Korean women leaving the workforce, this chapter establishes a foundation for understanding Korean women in the realm of work and family in the past and the present Korean society.

Definition of Terms

Just as *work* and *job* are often used interchangeably, so are the terms *position*, *job*, *occupation*, and *career* (Isaacson & Brown, 1997). According to Herr and Cramer (1996), careers are unique to each person and dynamic throughout his/her life. Careers unfold by what one chooses or does not choose. They include not only occupations, but also pre-vocational and post-vocational concerns and integrate work with other roles: family, community, and leisure.

Career

The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (1989) defined “career” as 1) an individual’s course of progress through life (or a distinct portion of life) and 2) a course of professional life or employment that affords opportunity for progress or advancement in the world.

In this study, the word “career,” “job,” and “work” were intentionally used interchangeably during the interview with participants, leaving the exact definition of career open and undefined. For laypeople in Korea, the words “career,” “work,” and “job” are easily used interchangeably without any confusion. Also, as one of the research goals was to determine how the participants perceived their career/job/work in their life, it was not important to draw a boundary between definitions of career/job/work. However, it was clearly specified that the interview participants’ selection criteria were “a woman who had worked full-time in a paid job position for at least two consecutive years.”

Career Leaving

In this study, “career leaving” refers to a voluntary act of leaving one’s career, work, or job. It is voluntary when one resigns by one’s own volition, as opposed to being fired by one’s employer. Also, career leaving does not specify whether it is a temporary or permanent action of leaving from the labor market because the research participants may not have intended to exit the labor market permanently upon their career leaving. However, the participants’ career-leaving in this study did not signify maternity leave, which is a planned leave policy for women. In addition, I did not choose to use the term “career interruption,” as such a term assumes reentry to work later.

Career Development for Women

Career concerns cannot be separated from life concerns. Helms and Cook (1999) stated that many women may find their life meaning in a relational or collective sphere of life rather than in an individualistic sphere. Betz (2002) contended that women’s career development may not be explained or understood via previously found assumptions for male-oriented societies that include linear and aggressive career development based on the values of individualism and autonomy. Those assumptions are: (a) work is the most important part of people’s lives; (b) career decisions can and should be based on a rational matching of the individual’s traits and features to the characteristics of occupations; (c) career development should progress upward along a rational path leading to greater responsibility, job complexity, and financial rewards; and (d) talent and hard work are to be rewarded after all.

However, because of socially and culturally based world views or the juggling and balancing of their multiple role responsibilities, many women may also be unable to

plan for and carry out an orderly, rational career trajectory as commonly recommended by career planning experts (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002).

Women's career patterns are diverse and flexible due to women's decisions to accommodate their career with their traditional female responsibilities at home. Depending on individual, social, cultural, and economic background, some women lead a continuous career path with no interruption just as men do; some women interrupt their career once or several times and resume at their own timing to balance work and family; some exit their career path for good to devote themselves solely to their domestic responsibilities.

Women's career interruptions have been viewed as abnormal, disadvantageous, unbeneficial, and problematic in a human capital perspective because women's career interruptions have limited opportunities for women's promotion, training and development opportunities, and even reentering the workplace (Bae, S., 2002).

From this point of view, much individual, organizational, and societal effort has been devised and applied to accommodate women's juggling multiple roles. Examples are flextime, part-time work, telecommuting, home-based work, entrepreneur opportunities, in-house daycare facilities in the workplace, parental leave, and so on. Nonetheless, women's career interruption is still a common career behavior for women. In this regard, Schneer and Reitman (1995) suggested that career interruptions should be included as a normal phase within the career development process if it could lead to successful balancing of work and family roles for women.

The Past and Present of Working Women in Korea

Until the Chosun Dynasty (the last dynasty before modernization, 1392-1910 AD), the social structure of the Four Classes still existed: aristocrats, farmers, artisans, and tradesmen. Physical labor was not valued. Yangban, the aristocratic class, owned their slaves, Nobi, or hired middle class people (Pyungmin: commoners) to do physical labor for them. People who belonged to the Yangban class were respected and envied for their privilege of not having to work. In the meantime, women's work played important roles in every class. Chosun's main industry was agriculture. Women were as major a part of the labor force as men on the farms in the traditional agricultural society. They worked at handicrafts to produce garments and art. They also worked in commerce as peddlers or small business owners. At that time, Korean women were excluded from politics, but their economic participation and contributions were readily acknowledged (Kim, S., 2002; Kang, Y., & Shin, K., 2001).

During the past five decades, since the Korean War, Korea has undergone major social and economic changes. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and unprecedented economic expansion have occurred. The per capita GNP of \$12,030 in 2003 ranked 50th in the world and compared with \$79 in 1960, a few years after the Korean War (The Bank of Korea, 2003).

An agrarian economy has been replaced by an industrial economic base characterized by export-led industries that depended, initially, on a comparative advantage of low-wage labor as a result of massive rural-to-urban migration, but now it benefits from a highly educated, productive, high-quality workforce enhanced by the Confucian value of educating human resources (Haggard, Kim, B., & Moon, C., 1991).

But the traditional active economic role of Korean women continued in this process of capitalistic industrialization in the 1960s. At the beginning of industrialization, the main industrial areas were labor intensive, such as textiles and electronics, and they relied heavily on young women workers' lower wages and their sweat and toll in poor work surroundings. Since the 1980s, female office workers have increased in numbers as the tertiary industry (service industry) expanded, such as finance, insurance, and distribution. Since the mid-1990s, more women have been advancing in professional and technology areas (Kim, O., 2002).

Despite the fast economic and social changes and women's economic participation and educational gain, the Korean society still displays a strong, patriarchal character that male superiority inherited from their Confucian past. A familial religion, Confucianism has embedded in the Korean family institutionalized family ancestor worship rituals, and the head of the male lineage inherited the master role of performing the rituals of worshipping family ancestors. In the traditional family, the father was in charge, and the mother was his obedient assistant. Sons took precedence over daughters in meals, clothing, and education because the traditional Confucian family put much more value on sons as pillars of the family. Even today son preference remains a persisting value in the Korean family. The rule of Three Obediences--of daughters to their fathers, of wives to their husbands, and of mothers to their sons in later years—has been considered as virtues of women in Korean society to maintain the ideal of male superiority and the patriarchal lineage of Confucianism. There is an old saying that, “when a hen crows, the family will collapse,” which infers that Korean women's

traditional role in society is to be subordinate and denies women's leading role (Kang, Y., & Shin, K., 2001; Park, I., & Cho, L, 1995).

In the patriarchal family, labor is divided based on gender. The husband makes all decisions and has primary responsibility for the family's economic well-being, while the wife takes sole responsibility of childrearing and household chores. The Korean word, *Anae*, for wife, is rooted in two combined letters meaning a person who is inside the house (Kim, S., 2002; Park, I., & Cho, L, 1995).

The labor force participation rate of Korean women has been gradually increasing to 49.8% as of 2003, an increase from 42.8% in 1980 (Statistics Korea, 2005). Compared with 60% in the developed countries, it is still a low participation rate (Lee, O., 2002). Half of the female population of Korea is in the labor force. However, labor force statistics and data on women's labor force participation from other sources (Keum, J., Kim, J., Jang, J., & Cho, J., 2001) have revealed that Korean women still have a long way to go in their struggle for equality in work status. Many middle- and upper-class women with college degrees are inactive at home after marriage, often against their wishes (Keum et al., 2001; Park, S., 2002). In the workplace, discriminatory practices against women in hiring, pay, and promotion remain strong; few reach supervisory, managerial, or administrative positions (Kim, T., 2001). Upon marrying, many working women are expected to retire from most corporate-sector jobs.

Women are the major source (75.8%) of unpaid family work on farms and in city factories. Cho (1989) found that 42.9% of working women participating in the labor force were unpaid family laborers, whereas only 1.6% were employers. Almost 80% of unpaid female workers were employed in agriculture. Thus, the gender division of labor has

changed little since Korea began to modernize; most rural women continue to work as unpaid family laborers on farms owned by their families and managed by the men.

The Korean Women Development Center's report in 1997 drew a sample of 3,638 Korean women and analyzed the characteristics of women who are in the labor force, women labor force structure, and the characteristics of their jobs. In this sample, 44.4% (1,614) were in the labor force, 52.8% (1,920) were not in the labor force, and 2.8% were unemployed but in the labor force (Kim, T., 1997). The labor force participation rate of women is determined by the portion of economically active women in the Korean population of the age 15 years and above. Economically active women are those who are able to work and willing to work more than one hour a week. Full-time housewives who are taking care of family are considered economically inactive (Statistics Korea, 2002).

Based on marriage status, unmarried women's labor force participation rate was 48.4%, which was slightly higher than that of married women, 46.9% (Kim, T., 1997). The labor force participation rate of female heads of household in 1997 was 72.3%, whereas that of female non-heads of households was 44.6%. That is, the labor force participation rate of female heads of household who are solely responsible for income was equal to their male counterparts (Kim, T., 1998).

According to educational levels, 26.4% of the female labor force were elementary school graduates, 15.7% were middle high school graduates, 38.3% were high school graduates, and 19.1% were college graduates (Kim, T., 1998). The lower the educational level, the greater the participation rate of elderly women. The higher the educational level of women, the greater is the participation rate of younger women in the labor force. Due to the high educational level of the younger generation of women, there are more highly

educated, young women in the labor force. Further, the highly-educated women job holders are employed mostly as wage-earners, but many of them leave their jobs upon marriage or child-birth (Kim, T., 1998). Women with a lower education level, on the other hand, keep working even after marriage or childbirth because they work as unpaid family supporters or are self-employed. Women with higher education tend to value childrearing more, and they come back to work only if their wages are higher than their internal value of being a stay-at-home mother (Kim, O., 2002).

Most female high school and college graduates both participate in the labor market before marriage. However, most high school graduates exit the labor market upon marriage, whereas college graduates exit the labor market evenly at the event of marriage, first childbirth, and birth of their youngest child; 65.1% of female college graduates work before marriage. Half of these women exit the labor market upon marriage, and the remaining half continue leaving the labor force until it hits the lowest point of 21%. Only 21% stay working after the birth of their youngest child (Kim, T., 1998). Therefore, the labor force participation rate of college-graduated Korean women forms an L-shaped curve, while that of high school-graduated Korean women is M-shaped (Kim, O., 2002; Park, S., 2002).

The M-shaped labor force participation rate of Korean women across ages shows (Figure 1) that marriage and childrearing still cause women to have career interruption (Keum et al., 2001; Kim, Y., 2002; Park, S., 2002). This career interruption discontinues training on the job and has a negative effect on promotion in the seniority-based Korean employment structure (Kim, T., 1998).

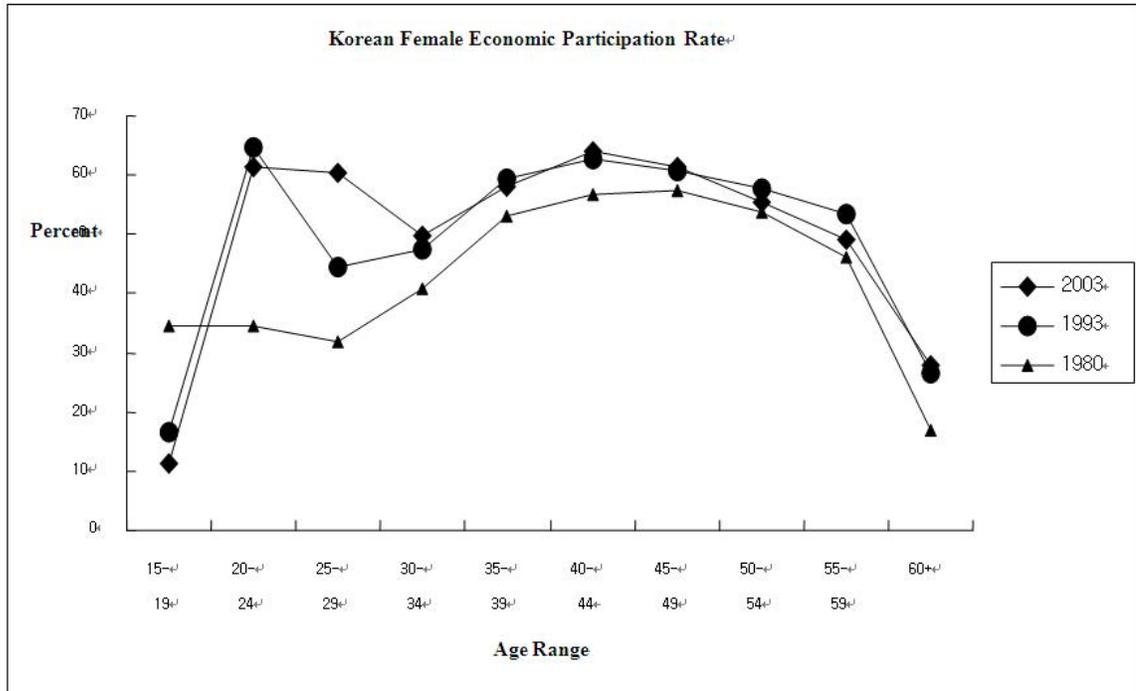


Figure 1. Korean Female Economic Participation Rate, Part-time and Full-time

Therefore, the employment structure is very different for married women and single women. Most single women are employed as full-time employees, such as clerical workers, professionals or paraprofessionals, and so on. Married women, on the other hand, are more likely to work part-time or temporarily in service sectors, sales, trades, or agricultural industry, be self-employed, or as non-paid family workers. Korean industry is taking advantage of women's labor based on women's marriage status (Kim, O., 2002; Kim, T., 2000; Kim, W., Lee, I., & Kwon, H., 2001). Having children aged 6 and younger, notably and negatively affects women's labor market participation. Having a husband and other family members' incomes has a negative impact on women's labor force participation in Korea (Kim, T., 2000, 2001).

Women who had frequent turnovers in the past are more likely to leave the labor force upon life events such as marriage or childbearing. The longer women stay employed, the less likely they tend to be to leave the labor force based on life events. The longer the past unemployment period women have, the more difficult it is for them to come back to the labor force afterwards (Kim, T., 1998).

Women's occupations play an important role in women's employment stability. Women with professional occupations show a lower rate of leaving the labor force than those with semi-professional, clerical, sales, or manufacturing occupations (Kim, T., 1998).

Women who exit the labor market due to women's traditional domestic roles, such as marriage or birth, stay out of the labor force longer and show a lower rate of returning to the labor market. However, after they pass through childbirth and rearing periods, they tend gradually to come back to the labor market (Kim, T., 1998).

When women reenter the labor market after the interruption, it occurs sporadically at various times. Their re-entering the paid labor force spreads out over 20 years after marriage. The average returning time is after 10.1 years since they left the labor market due to marriage--11.8% of women returned to the labor force within one year after marriage, 30.7% within five years; and 56.9% within 10 years (Kim, T., 1998).

Having continuous past work experience has a positive relationship with the rate of return to the labor force. And the educational level of Korean women has a negative relation to women's continuous labor force participation contrary to human capital theory (Kim, T., 2000).

Summary

In this chapter, the primary concepts of career and career leaving for this study were defined. Although the dictionary definition of *career* was presented as: “1) an individual’s course of progress through life (or a distinct portion of life) and 2) a course of professional life or employment that affords opportunity for progress or advancement in the world” (The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 1989); *career*, *work*, and *job* were used interchangeably in this study. The reason for doing so is because career, work, and job are words easily used interchangeably by laypeople in Korea, and one of the goals of this study was to determine how the participants perceived their careers/work/jobs through their career leaving experiences. I defined *career leaving* as a voluntary act of leaving one’s career, work or job. The term *career interruption* was not used during interviews with the participants because it assumes reentry to work later on.

Women’s career paths have been shown to be more diverse and flexible than men’s and may not be understood within the traditional male-oriented career trajectory, which is linear and aggressive, due to socially and culturally imposed women’s multiple family role responsibilities. Women’s career interruptions have been viewed as problematic and disadvantageous for women in promotions, training, and future career opportunities. Additionally, there have been many efforts made to help women accommodate their multiple roles without career interruption. Nonetheless, women’s career interruption continues to be a common career behavior for Korean women.

Women’s career interruption occurring in Korea and its impact on the family, work, community, and country is explained by the context of Korean culture and history. Korea is a traditionally male-oriented patriarchic society, based on Confucian culture,

which has been inherited from the Chosun Dynasty period. Male and female work roles were clearly separated; men were designated as the main earners of family income, while women were to be the family/household caretakers, including taking responsibility for childrearing. Even though female labor force participation increased to approximately 50% in the late 1990s through modernization and industrialization after the Korean War, many women work as unpaid family workers on farms or in city factories, or they are self-employed.

Marriage and childrearing are considered to be the main reason for Korean women's career interruption. If women have children aged 6 years or younger, and if they have income from a husband or other family member, it has a negative impact on women's labor force participation in. The higher the turnover rate women have had in past employment, the more likely that they will experience career leaving. The longer women stayed at work before career interruption, the more likely it is that they will return to the workforce afterwards. An interesting factor in female labor force participation in Korea is education level. Highly educated women are mostly employed as wage earners, but the education level of women has a negative relationship to continuous labor force participation, contrary to human capital theory.

This chapter attempted to establish the foundation for understanding Korean women in the realm of work and family in past and current Korean society. A detailed literature review will follow in Chapter 8 after identifying themes emerging from the analysis, and it will also include updated references and statistics.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In Chapter 3, the methodology and methods chosen for this research are explained. Because individual career-interrupted women have different backgrounds and contexts, it is important to understand the essence of the experience of a career leaving caused by women's domestic roles. A qualitative investigation using hermeneutic phenomenology was undertaken.

Among several qualitative approaches, phenomenological research emphasizes the meaning of lived experience; in addition, it examines how human beings construct and give meaning to concrete social situations (Creswell, 1998). The focal point of phenomenological research is to borrow other people's experiences and their reflections on their experience for better understanding of the deeper meaning or context of the whole human experience (van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Methodology

The research object is to understand the lifeworld of and find meaning in Korean women leaving their careers. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the best way to uncover hidden meanings and answer "what is it like to be" questions. Unlike Husserl's (1970a) descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is not preoccupied with only describing "what it appears" as purely as possible by bracketing pre-conceptions, but rather focusing on interpreting the meaning of what the subject (participant) has made of their experiences using all of the senses and even the intuition of the researcher (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology describes how one orients to his or her lived experiences, and hermeneutics describes how one interprets the texts of life (van Manen, 1990). According to van Manen (1990), hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that studies persons (van Manen, 1990). In other words, it is the phenomenological and hermeneutical study of human existence-- phenomenology because it is the descriptive study of lived experience (phenomena) as things show themselves to us to enrich lived experience by getting to the core of its meaning; hermeneutics because it is the interpretive study of the expressions and objectifications of lived experiences to determine the meaning contained and even hidden in them (van Manen, 1990).

Assumptions of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research

As it is important to understand the philosophical foundation of hermeneutic phenomenology before undertaking empirical research analysis, some shared assumptions about hermeneutical phenomenological study are presented.

Lifeworld

It is important for phenomenology and for hermeneutics to understand the concept of lifeworld. The lifeworld is the world of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). The term and theory of lifeworld was first introduced by Husserl (1916), and Heidegger (1962) developed the lifeworld concept into “being in the world” (p. 149). Afterwards, Merleau-Ponty (1995), Gadamer (1995), and others expressed similar views in understanding humans as living wholes (Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2001). Lifeworld is the everyday world of human that is experienced by humans. The lifeworld perspective emphasizes that humans’ experiences are truly understood only when they are linked to and

embedded in the subjective world, which includes social, cultural, and political contexts (Dahlberg et al., 2001). Thus, in hermeneutic phenomenology, it is essential to interpret the narratives of research participants in relation to various contexts of their lifeworld (Lopez & Willis, 2004), and this approach helps the researcher to grasp the research participants' own understanding of themselves, their lived experience, and the meaning that their lifeworld holds for them (Dahlberg et al., 2001).

Pre-understanding

There is no understanding without pre-understanding (Gadamer, 1995). Although pre-understanding always limits complete openness, one's pre-understanding should be appreciated and recognized in the search for truth in hermeneutic phenomenology research (Dahlberg et al., 2001). While descriptive phenomenologists, such as Husserl (1970b), have asserted that researchers need to be free from presuppositions or pre-understanding or background knowledge as much as possible through bracketing, hermeneutic phenomenologists, such as Heidegger (1962), have stated that bracketing is not plausible nor necessary (van Manen, 1990). Rather, the personal knowledge of the researcher that led to the research topic is a valuable guide to inquiry that makes the inquiry meaningful. Nevertheless, a researcher's preconceptions and pre-understanding need to be recognized, stated explicitly, and be reflected on regarding their influence on the research in order to induce new understanding (the otherness) (Dahlberg et al., 2001; Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1990).

Openness

Doing phenomenology requires engagement in openness to the phenomenon under inquiry, as well as to the research informants (participants). It means that the researcher should be open and sensitive to the things being studied as the phenomena present themselves. Openness is a research attitude that is not easily acquired but should be eagerly pursued and practiced throughout the phenomenological inquiry. A researcher equipped with an open attitude is truly willing to listen, see, and understand a phenomenon with respect, humility, sensitivity, and flexibility on behalf of the phenomena (Dahlberg et al., 2001).

Also, openness is applied to the researcher's willingness to be self-disclosing and self-revealing to research participants in order to mitigate the possible power imbalance between the researcher and the participants. With this open attitude, a researcher can be open and share some of her or his personal experience related to the research topic before or during the interview. In this way, the researcher may be considered genuine and trustworthy, thus helping the participants to relax and talk (Dahlberg et al., 2001). Yet, the researcher should be aware of intersubjective influence on the inquiry in favor of the participants so that the researcher's pre-understanding might not overrule the participants' grasp of the phenomena (van Manen, 1990).

Methods

In this section, the research design for the study is presented. Participant recruitment, research context, data collection (interview process) techniques, and analysis methods are discussed.

In phenomenological research, it is commonly believed that there are no pre-fixed, established methods. Gadamer (1995), Rorty (1979), and van Manen (1990) asserted that there is no method set for phenomenology or hermeneutics. Keen (1975) stated that, “unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a ‘cookbook’ set of instructions” (p. 41). Yet van Manen (1990) emphasized that phenomenological scholarship itself can be a set of guides developed in tradition. The researcher is given freedom to modify or optimize the approach or procedures to reach findings and interpretation. However, the method chosen needs to be congruent with the philosophical underpinnings of the research methodology, in this case, hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990).

Not as a fixed procedure, but as a practical guide, I chose van Manen’s (1990) six methodological themes for doing hermeneutic phenomenological human science research. He recommended that the researcher select or invent appropriate research methods, techniques, and procedures for a particular problem or question by using the researcher’s insight (van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) stressed that these six research activities do not necessarily unfold as a linear, step-by-step procedure, but, rather, as “a dynamic interplay among six research activities” (p. 30). These six steps follow (van Manen, 1990, p. 30):

1. Turn to a phenomenon which seriously interests and commits us to the world (Research question formation).
2. Investigate experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (Data collection).

3. Reflect on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon (Conducting thematic analysis).
4. Describe the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting (Narrating themes).
5. Maintain a strong orientation on the fundamental question.
6. Balance the research context by considering parts and whole.

Van Manen's six guides for doing hermeneutic phenomenology research were helpful in my study of Korean women's experiences of career leaving.

Participant Selection

The participants were selected using four criteria: 1) the participants should be at least two-year college graduates; 2) the participants should have at least two years of job experience before their career leaving; 3) the participants should have left their careers for family responsibilities; and 4) the participants should have stayed at home longer than half a year in order to make sure that there is enough time for sufficient reflection on their career leaving experience.

The participants were selected through my personal contacts in Korea. Ten participants were chosen; a reasonable number of participants (or subjects) in a phenomenological study varies from 3 to 10 (Creswell, 1998; Dukes, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1989). I considered ten participants to be enough to describe the meaning of the phenomenon in this study. Demographics of the ten participants and their individual story in brief have been added at the end of this chapter.

Subject Payment

Each participant was given a \$40 (USD equivalent) department store gift certificate for participating in the interview for this study. This amount was assumed to be enough to attract and encourage participants in the study and provide some recognition for the necessity of daycare for most of the participants. This payment was sanctioned by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Minnesota.

Informed Consent

Participants were verbally informed of their rights and the procedures of the study. (See Appendix A for a copy of the script in English and in Korean; only the Korean form was used.) They were informed that there were no known risks for those participating in the study, and the possible benefits from participation were enhanced self-reflection and self-understanding. The researcher explained to them that the interview would be like chatting with friends about their experience of leaving their career, and the goal of the interview would be to understand better the individual participant's lived experience of leaving a career. Participants also were given an opportunity to ask any questions before agreeing in the interview. They were then asked to sign a written consent form (Appendix A—in English and Korean; subjects were asked to sign only the Korean form) before the interview, and I also signed the form. During the interview, I used a consent procedure by asking one of the following questions: "Is it okay for me to ask further about this issue?" or, "If you feel uneasy with this issue, you don't need to answer this question."

Interviews

After the Human Subjects Committee (IRB) approved this study (Appendix B), data were collected through active interviews with the Korean women participants. An active interview regards the interviewee as a source of knowledge and their responses as knowledge-in-the-making, with the interviewer helping to activate different stocks of knowledge (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The interview questions were open-ended and unstructured. The phenomenological interview is conceived of as a discourse or conversation (Mishler, 1986; van Manen, 1990). The first interview with each participant was conducted as a face-to-face interview in Korea. The duration of each interview time ranged from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours.

The following were used as main interview questions:

- Describe your experience of career leaving in as much detail as possible.
(Participants were told to consider career leaving as meaning their voluntary decision to quit their job for childbearing, childrearing, or marriage.)
- Were there any incidents that made you think about leaving your career and staying at home? If so, please describe them in detail.

At the beginning of the interview, I shared with the participants how I became personally interested in the research topic in order to break the conversational ice for the interview. Some of the participants worried that their interview might not be of much value to the research results; consequently, I had to convince them that each participant's unique life story and experience had its own value for the research, and that generalization was not a goal of this study. The researcher also briefly explained the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods. It was important to

build positive rapport between me and each participant during the interviews; otherwise, the participants might have become defensive and may have not been willing to share their stories candidly. To build this positive rapport, I shared my own story first--how I became interested in the research topic, how easily I encountered women who had left their careers, and how much I wanted to understand that experience, as I was single. I tried as much as possible not to sound overly scholastic, academic, or professional; instead, I tried to look like a typical single Korean woman who was curious about the participants' career leaving experiences.

I had to make use of several strategies to guide participants gently toward the interview topic of the individual career leaving experience. First, I asked informational questions such as: 1) the participant's age; 2) education and college major; 3) what kind of job she had; 4) how many years she had worked; 5) how long she had stayed home after leaving her career; 6) age of the participant's child(ren); and 7) socio-economic status level (subjectively perceived) (see Table 2 on page 53). With these questions answered, I could become more involved in the individual participant's story and could naturally begin the conversational interview.

Because the research question was intended to understand Korean women's career-leaving experience, I wanted to find a proper question that could gradually lead to the research topic rather than to ask the participants directly, "Could you tell me about your career-leaving experience?" The opening questions that I asked were related to answers to the informational questions, such as: "Your major in college and the job you chose seem unrelated. How did you choose your job?" or, "Could you explain more in detail about your work there?" or, "How did you like your job as a (name of position)?"

Because I wanted to understand the lived experience of Korean women's career leaving independent of time, it was not necessary to set a time boundary on their experiences. I was not only interested in the day of the participants leaving their workplace, but also in how they felt and what they thought, before and after that day. I did not want to know only about the reasons why they made their career-leaving choice. Additionally, I did not want to know only about whether the participants would return to work in the future. Therefore, I left the direction of meaning-making journey open to the participants and let the participants share anything related to their career-leaving experience and let them set the stage for their own story. To avoid digressing from the research question, however, I kept going back to the research question and reminded the participants that the interview should be oriented toward their career-leaving experience.

After the first several interviews with different participants, I discovered that all of the participants wanted to talk about their past, present, and future, even though their career-leaving experience might have been considered as only a past life event.

I asked the participants for an uninterrupted two hours of interview time at a convenient location of their choice. Eight participants preferred their home as an interview location, and the remaining two had interviews at cafés near their homes.

During the interviews, I took notes of the participants' tone of voice, drastic changes of emotions, and body language when they were perceived as important in the context of the interview.

Each interview was recorded with a digital recorder, as written in the consent form, and was converted into a sound file for storage in my computer. After each interview, I listened to the recorded interview with the participant's information and

interview notes to gain a holistic view of the participant's experience. I then transcribed all of the interview content in Korean verbatim. By transcribing the interviews, I had an opportunity to pay closer and more detailed attention to the participants' comments that might have gone unnoticed during the actual interview. By listening to the participants and transcribing their speech word for word, I could more easily visualize myself in the participants' shoes, which definitely helped me to understand the participants' lived experiences. The transcribed texts were created in Word documents with margins for note-taking.

Data Analysis Process

I read the interview texts several times in order to gain a sense of flow and cohesion. I listened to the recorded interview while reading the texts whenever necessary. After gaining a holistic sense of each participant's interview text, I divided it into many units and wrote what I thought the participant meant in the right margin of the text document next to each unit. At this stage, each unit was described by using the words that the participants had used in the interview as much as possible. These meaning units played a role as a label in finding themes for the next stage. Therefore, after transcribing and reading the whole text several times, I could easily regain the entire picture of each participant's lived experience by getting through the meaning units. After forming meaning units in each participant's text, I briefly described each participant's story, as shown at the end of this chapter.

Identifying Tentative Themes

After briefly describing each participant's story, I continued to find tentative themes for the follow-up interview. I listened to the interview tapes several times and

read several times the interview texts that were divided into many meaning units to dwell on the participants' lived experience. Throughout the process of finding themes, I tried to stay in a hermeneutic circle, whole-part-whole approach. Van Manen (1990) described themes as

knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes we can navigate and explore such universes. (p. 90)

Van Manen (1990) stated that we could take three approaches to uncover or isolate themes out of lived-experience descriptions: 1) the wholistic or sententious approach, (2) the selective or highlighting approach, and (3) the detailed or line-by-line approach. I used a mixture of these three approaches in developing appropriate descriptions as the descriptions from the interview were fairly large in volume and diverse in expression.

A theme was drawn from meaning units that at least three participants mentioned as having the same meaning. Meaning units that were selected for a theme were copied from interview texts and pasted into an Excel document. An Excel document can have as many spreadsheets as needed, and each spreadsheet represented a theme with meaning units from different participants. This process was helpful in identifying and organizing themes. Key phrases or sentences in meaning units were highlighted in bold.

Identifying themes was not a one-way, step-by-step process. Rather, it was like making a molding with clay that would fairly suit the participants' experiences. During the whole process of finding themes, themes would merge or come apart as my reflection

and interpretation led to new perspectives in forming a molding of the participants' experiences.

Through this process, 22 tentative themes were identified. These tentative themes were listed and described in a form of full sentences for the follow-up interview with the research participants. The 22 tentative themes are shown in Table 1 listed in the order of time of participant's experience and not yet structured.

Table 1

Tentative Themes of Korean Women's Career-Leaving Experience

1	Participants experienced that their workplace didn't welcome their marriage. Participant's marriage worked negatively in the workplace.
2	Participants experienced a glass ceiling or glass partition at the workplace. Major work responsibility was not assigned to them. The vision at work was limited for female workers.
3	Participants considered career leaving as taking a break from psychological and physical burnout, boredom, fatigue, and stress that had accumulated at work.
4	Pregnancy was such a big burden to working women physically and psychologically. Working while being pregnant was a challenge to them.
5	Balancing work and family was not an easy task. Working and managing a family cannot be done perfectly at the same time.
6	The first priority is my child. Best thing I can do for my child is being there for them. The opportunity of staying with my child cannot return. A child is best raised by mother. It is a privilege for a mother to raise her child by herself.

7	When deciding to leave work, decreased income was not considered a big problem.
8	After leaving the workplace, housework and child-raising were much more difficult than expected. A full-time homemaker's job was as hard as working outside home.
9	As a full-time mother, participants felt negative feelings, such as depression, falling behind, being tied down, being constrained, and lacking freedom.
10	After becoming a full-time homemaker, participants had less and less time for themselves.
11	After leaving work, participants miss the money that they earned and that they could do whatever they wanted with at their own disposal.
12	Participants felt the need to be recognized by other people than their family.
13	At first participants were hesitant to become a part of 'Ajooma' community (full-time mother community in neighborhood). Participants perceive themselves as different from Ajoomas.
14	Someday when situations allow, they will definitely find something to do other than full-time housewife work. They are waiting now.
15	There certainly is something satisfying as a full-time mother that a working mother cannot experience. There must be a difference in a full-time mother raising children from a working mother raising a child.
16	When leaving work, participants had positive thoughts that they could go back to work. However, as time went by, they became doubtful about it.

17	My decision to quit work to raise my child was my sacrifice.
18	For women to work, any kind of license is necessary.
19	Participants have a yearning to work again. Good memories of working experience haunt them.
20	The meaning of career itself varied individually and changed as time went by.
21	Participant's working experience was perceived as positive for their life.
22	As time went by, participants put more value on their family. As participants' children grow, participants put more hope and expectation on their children.

Follow-up Interviews

I conducted the follow-up interviews four and a half years after the first interview. Such a longitudinal research design had not been initially considered. After the first interviews were completed and transcribed, the researcher read the transcribed interview text over several times to identify emergent themes from the participants' narratives. In the process of capturing tentative themes from Korean women who had left their careers, it made sense to allow a time gap between the first and the follow-up interviews so as to reveal a fuller depth of the meanings of these women's experiences. Such an approach also better fit my life situation.

The purpose of the follow-up interview was twofold. First, the 22 tentative themes I had identified with the first interview text were shared and confirmed with the participants. Second, because there was a four plus year time gap between the first and the follow-up interview, I asked if there had been any changes in their perceptions of their career leaving experience since the first interview.

I contacted each participant via telephone, and all ten agreed to participate. I emailed them a copy of the tentative themes. Under each theme, I placed the participants' interview extracts related to that theme so that participants could contribute to the verification of the emerged themes with a reminder of their responses. I informed them ahead of the interview how the follow-up interview would unfold. Interviews took place several days after participants received a copy of the themes, allowing them time to ponder the themes.

Like the first interviews, the follow-up interview was open-ended and conversational, except that this time I had presented them the tentative themes that had emerged from the first interview. First, I focused on themes that the interviewee had contributed. I asked, "Do you agree with this theme?" "Is it really what you felt or experienced four years ago?" "What do you think about this theme after four years?" Secondly, I moved to the themes that the interviewee had not contributed but others had. I asked, "These are some themes other participants expressed that they had gone through. What do you think? Do you agree? If you do, please tell me more of your story on that theme." Each interview lasted an average of one hour. Telephone interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the participants' agreement, for further analysis and interpretation.

Restructuring Themes

Through further analysis and interpretation after the follow-up interviews, I reconstructed the themes. The follow-up interviews presented new insights and dimensions on the 22 tentative themes. The restructuring resulted in four theme

categories (groups), 12 main themes, and 3 sub-themes. The restructured themes are presented next; each theme group will be discussed in the next four chapters (4-7).

Theme Group One: Being a Woman is a Handicap at Work

1-1. Glass Ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work.

1-2. The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood.

Theme Group Two: Leaving Work Was to Become a Better Mother

2-1. I needed to protect my pregnancy away from the stress of work.

2-2. It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full
commitment to my child

Theme Group Three: Work after Career Leaving Becomes Being a Full-time Housewife

3-1. Being at home is difficult.

3-2. Housework and childrearing are much more difficult.

3-3. I feel a loss of myself.

Subtheme 3-3-1: I do not have time for myself.

Subtheme 3-3-2: I do not have my own money.

Subtheme 3-3-3: I do not have my own individuality.

Theme Group Four: I Am Rethinking Myself and My Career

4-1. The previous work experience was a good experience.

4-2. Getting credentials is the way to women's careers.

4-3. Career leaving could be a chance for a career change.

4-4. I design my own career path.

4-5. I am waiting for my time to come.

Language Translation

After the 22 tentative themes emerged, I translated all of the transcripts from the interviews under each theme into English. For more precise translation to convey a meaning as close as possible to the interviewees' narratives, a bilingual speaker validated my translation. This person is a Korean-Canadian who has English as a mother tongue and Korean as a second language (less fluent than English), whereas my mother tongue is Korean with English as a second language (less fluent than Korean). After I translated the transcripts, she read both Korean and English transcripts sentence by sentence, while I explained the context of the interview transcript. Through discussion and consultation, we improved the translation.

Participants' Stories in Brief

All of the participants' brief stories during the first interview and in the follow-up interview are presented to help the reader further understand each participant's situation.

1) YL's story

<1st interview>

YL left her job upon marriage. Due to the stressful workload, her health was not good. She had a liver infection that required full rest. She thought she could obtain a job when she recovered after getting married. She became pregnant soon thereafter but went through a miscarriage when she worked as a temporary secretary at her friend's company. Due to the shock of miscarriage, her husband became very protective of YL and did not want her to work, even after having a baby. After becoming a full-time housewife, YL did not find herself fitting into the typical housewife role; in fact, she did not do housework well and did not like it at all. She soon became depressed. Through her friend's help, she began to sell jewelry through the Internet as a hobby.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

YL had more time since her son started going to kindergarten. Even though on a small scale, she continues doing her home-based jewelry business for pocket money. It keeps her in contact with people other than family members. She feels nervous about sending her son to elementary school next year because there are many things that a mother must do to prepare their children for first grade. Still the priority in her life is her son's upbringing. She mentioned about a job opportunity she had to give up due to the objection of her husband and parents-in-law. She regretted the lost opportunity.

2) YY's story

<1st interview>

When the first interview took place, YY had been a full-time housewife for three-and-a-half years. At college, her major was mathematics. She obtained a job in the R&D department at one of the big telecommunications companies in Korea. She was the only female research worker in her department. She thought it would be her lifelong workplace. YY had been employed for four years when she left the workplace.

During the four years she had been working, she gradually realized that there was a limit as to how far she could go in her company. She thought the workplace rules were designed for men, so the female workers were expected to adjust or leave. After having a daughter, she experienced difficulties balancing work and family, and she could not find a future in her work position. She failed to see any expertise or job skills accumulating in her job. She felt minor, both at work and at home. She finally decided to leave her job and stay home full-time to take care of her daughter. At first she was happy to be able to

enjoy her free time doing whatever she wanted. She seemed to be busy being a full-time mother.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

YY had a son in 2003, and her first daughter is in 3rd grade. She became even busier after her daughter entered elementary school. When her son was a baby, she could not stay with her son all day to take care of her daughter's education, so she hired a full-time nanny. YY seemed to be determined to take full responsibility for being a stay-at-home mother. She believed that no one could replace her role as a full-time mother. She expected to have more time to herself when her son reaches 3rd or 4th grade. She then wants to learn something just for fun.

3) JK's story

<1st interview>

JK is a very energetic person. After graduating from college, she obtained a teaching job in a government-owned kindergarten. At that time, in the early 1990s, the kindergarten did not allow married women to work; marriage was meant as an exit. When JK married, she had to give up all of the benefits of being a full-time teacher and received only half of her former salary while working the same hours. Before long, she became pregnant and left her kindergarten teaching job. After she had two sons only one year apart, she endured the difficulty of raising two boys alone. Only when her two sons started going to daycare centers could JK find free time. She used her free time to learn useful things for herself and her sons (e.g., learning English, culinary, and book-reading skills). She was very enthusiastic about her sons' education. She made pocket money by teaching neighborhood children how to read books.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

Since the first interview, JK entered a master's degree graduate program majoring in nutrition. In the third semester, she went to the US with her two sons so that they could learn English. She took some classes at a community college while taking care of her two sons' studies. She was satisfied that her two sons learned English successfully and was happy that she could overcome her fear of English. Her original plan was to come back to Korea after one year, but she began to think that she might stay longer for her sons' further education in the US. Her sons are both in elementary school, and JK believed that this time of their lives was such an important period that her full attention should be solely on them. She said that she may be relieved after her second son enters the 5th or 6th grade, when a mother's supervision is not as critical, and a child's self-control begins to take place.

4) JM's story

<1st interview>

JM met her husband at work as a client. When they married, she had to move to another company because the company did not want its employees married to their clients. She found a new job, but it was less satisfying than her former one. JM left her job when she became pregnant. She was not satisfied with her role in the company and felt manipulated. She also needed to finish her dissertation for her master's degree. After giving birth to a daughter, she became a full-time mother. Yet she felt something was missing in her life. After three years of staying at home, she studied accounting and tried to get an AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license, but failed. At the time of the first interview, she seemed disappointed by her failure. She emphasized

her need to be recognized by people other than her family. She thought that the opportunity to obtain an AICPA license would not come again because she felt obligated to her family's well-being, too.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

JM and her family moved to Singapore one year after the first interview because her husband became an expatriate manager for the Singapore branch of his company. JM had a son 2.5 years after moving to Singapore. She is busy taking care of her family in a foreign country. She says that her husband really likes working in Singapore, and they may live there much longer than they had expected in the beginning—until their children go to college.

5) YP's story

<1st interview>

At the time of the first interview, YP had been a full-time mother for one-and-a-half years. Previously, she had worked at an international pharmaceutical company for three years as an assistant director. Due to the high stress levels at her work, she left the company and obtained a pharmacy job at a local drugstore as she had a pharmacy license. However, she had to quit her job when she had her baby as the local drugstore could not afford to pay for her maternity leave. She thought that her leave would be only temporary. She put first priority on raising her child at this moment. Because of her pharmacy license, she was sure that she could get hired whenever she wanted. She was determined to get back to work someday after having some quality time raising her son for a couple of years.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

YP had a second son two years after the first interview and raised two boys as a full-time mother. Five months before the second interview, YP started working full-time as a pharmacist at a local drugstore. She stayed at home for a total of 4.5 years and returned to work full-time. Among the ten research participants, she was the only one who could re-enter the labor market as a full-time worker after a career interruption. She admitted that she had gone through depression while staying at home. Additionally, YP felt lucky to find a job without difficulty because of her pharmacist's license. She felt much happier working 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at a drugstore. Nevertheless, at the same time, she felt guilty about her children when she came back home.

6) RY's story

<1st interview>

RY decided to leave her job as a manager at a publishing company when she had had a hard time becoming pregnant. She wanted to raise her child herself for at least the first two years. Her dream was to be a children's book writer, and she considered leaving a full-time job as a good chance to switch careers. RY tried to have her own time to read and write in the midst of raising her son. RY thought that, by being a full-time mother, she could exercise more self-control in her life.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

In 2004, RY adopted a baby boy. Her first son goes to kindergarten. Her adopted boy is four years old. In the midst of her busy day, she continues to translate or write children's books at home. She is happy to have made her dream come true but admits that balancing childrearing and writing is physically tiring. RY did not demand too much of herself with respect to perfect housekeeping. Even though the money she makes from

writing children's books is less than US\$10,000 a year, she feels fortunate to have been able to keep track of pursuing her dream.

7) JL's story

<1st interview>

JL was a librarian at a broadcasting company. Her job was not challenging to her any more, so she wanted to make a change. JL left her job when she had a baby. She wanted to be with her child at least until her baby became three years old. Staying home and raising her son was not an easy job, however. Raising her son herself appeared as a once-in-a-lifetime chance. She felt a great responsibility once she became a mother. She believed that a full-time mother would make a major difference in raising a child compared with being a working mother.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

JL obtained a full-time job again when her son was 28 months, and she worked for two years. JL became pregnant with a second child and had to quit her job due to poor health condition. Through this experience, she realized that she does not have any desire left to work outside the home anymore. She says that she is happy to be a full-time mother. Her family is planning to go to the US because her husband is planning to study for a master's degree there.

8) SL's story

<1st interview>

SL was an administrator at a dental office. After four years of working there, she married, got pregnant, and quit her job. Contrary to her expectations, being a full-time

mother was not easy. She had two children, and she stated that she was ready to find a job only if she could find a decent daycare facility.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

Months before the follow-up interview, she acquired a certificate to teach children mathematics with a commercialized math learning kit. She had tried to find a part-time teaching job at a local private children's math learning center but had to give it up because the teaching hours were mostly in the evening, which meant she would not be able to take care of her children after school. She felt the need to make money because it was getting more expensive to educate their children. Fortunately, she has located a learning center that could offer her a flexible part-time teaching job (10 hours a week).

9) YJ's story

<1st interview>

After having a baby, YJ decided to work at home on a part-time basis. Throughout the interview, she stressed that she had not been interested in promotions in her career. She did not like responsibility too much at work and did not like having to go to work every day from 9 to 5. YJ was raised by her grandmother because her mother was a full-time teacher. YJ did not want the same thing to happen to her own son. She wanted to be there with her son every day and remember every moment of her son's childhood. She worked for only a week a month, but it meant a great deal to her. Her mother took care of her son while she was working. She felt liberated and freed while working.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

YJ was still a full-time mother. After the first interview, she acquired a second-level certificate in interpreting Japanese. From time to time, she makes pocket money

translating Japanese documents. She does not do computer work at home because the company that gave her work went out of business, and her computer skills are no longer updated. She knows that the education competition of her son has started ever since he became an elementary student, but she is still hesitant in fully devoting herself to competing with other children's parents in the education fever marathon.

10) HH's story

<1st interview>

HH graduated from a two-year college and was hired as an administrator at a cement manufacturing company in the southern province of Korea. She had worked for five years and quit her job when she got married. The company had the expectation that female workers would stop working as soon as they got married. Female employees were considered as temporary workers, while male workers worked continually. After marriage, HH moved to Seoul and raised a daughter. She had a strong desire to get a job again to make money. Being a full-time mother was very stressful for her.

<2nd interview--4.5 years since the first interview>

Soon after the first interview, HH had a second daughter. She said that her first daughter helped her a great deal by taking care of her baby sister. HH learned how to do origami (folding paper) and obtained a license to become an origami instructor. She teaches 3-4 teams of children how to do origami at home, and from time to time, she teaches at a nearby elementary school as an extracurricular activity lesson. She feels proud of the origami license that has made her a teacher.

Table 2

Participants' Information at the Time of the First Interview

Name	Age	Perceived SES	Education/Major	Years of working before career leaving	Years of staying home	Years of marriage	Child & Age
YL	31	Middle	4-year college/ Office administration	4 years (an office administrator)	3.3 years	3.3years	a son (11 months)
YY	30	High	4-year college/ Mathematics	2.5 years (a researcher)	4 years	6 years	a daughter (6 years)
JK	37	Middle	4-year college/ Child education	4 years (a kindergarten teacher)	9 years	10 years	two sons (9 and 7 years)
JM	32	Middle	Master' degree/ Office administration	5 years (an office administrator)	2.5 years	3 years	a daughter (3 years)
YP	34	Middle	Master's degree/ Pharmacy	6.5 years (Marketing, etc)	1.5 year	1.3 years	a daughter (3 months)
RY	33	Middle	4-year college/ Child education	8 years (Book publishing)	1.8 years	5.4 years	a son (12 months)
JL	30	Middle	4-year college/ Library & Information science	6 years (a librarian)	1.5 years	3 years	a son (20 months)
SL	33	Middle	4-year college/ Tourism	5 years (a clinic administrator)	5 years	6 years	a daughter (5 years), a son (3 years)
YJ	33	Middle	Master's degree/ Marketing	6 years (a web tester)	2.5 years	4 years	a son (3 years)
HH	30	Low	2-year college/ Food & nutrition	5 years (an office administrator)	3.5 years	3.5 years	a daughter (3 years)

NOTE: At the time of the first and second interviews, all participants were married.

Summary

To understand the lived experience of Korean women's career leaving influenced by their domestic roles, I undertook a qualitative investigation using hermeneutic phenomenology.

Three philosophical assumptions of hermeneutic phenomenology were explained: *lifeworld*, *pre-understanding*, and *openness*. *Lifeworld* refers to the world of lived experience; it is the everyday world of human beings that they experience. Therefore, with respect to the lifeworld, it is important to emphasize the subjective world that includes the social, cultural, and political contexts of the research participants to help in understanding their narratives (interview text) through meaning-making of their own lifeworlds. The *pre-understanding* of the researcher should be recognized, stated, and reflected on in the research rather than criticized and avoided as a prejudice blocking complete openness to new understanding. *Openness* is a research attitude required throughout the phenomenological inquiry, including the interview process, with research participants. A researcher with an open attitude will be willing to listen, see, and understand phenomena with respect, humility, sensitivity, and flexibility, as the phenomena present themselves.

In the methods section, the research design for the study was presented. Although there is no pre-fixed, established research method for hermeneutic phenomenological research, I attempted to follow phenomenological scholarship tradition and also used van Manen's (1990) six methodological themes as a practical guide within the researcher's freedom to modify or optimize the research procedures.

I interviewed ten Korean women who had left their careers due to their domestic roles in their families, who were willing to share their career-leaving experience. The participants were selected through my personal contacts in Korea. During the interviews, I tried to establish positive rapport with the participants by sharing my own story and keeping the interview conversational with an open attitude. I had the participants unfold their stories without any confines or set structures; yet, I led the participants back to the research questions when there were considerable digressions. Interviews were recorded with permission and were then transcribed verbatim in Korean for text analysis.

For data analysis strategies, I dwelled on participants' interviews by listening to and reading them many times. I then constructed meaning units to grasp emerging tentative themes. To identify and isolate significant themes, van Manen's three approaches were of great help. Above all, I tried to stay within a hermeneutic circle (back and forth) and a whole-part-whole approach throughout the analysis process. After twenty-two tentative themes were identified, the follow-up interviews were conducted 4.5 years after the first ones. I asked the participants if the 22 tentative themes resonated with their career-leaving experiences, and if there were any change of opinion since the first interview. Through the confirmation process and further exploration in the follow-up interviews, I restructured the themes into four categories with twelve themes and three sub-themes. Each category of themes is presented in the following four chapters (4-7). All of the quotes provided were translated from Korean into English by me while consulting with a native English speaker.

CHAPTER 4

BEING A WOMAN IS A HANDICAP AT WORK

The first theme category to emerge from the analysis was the notion that *Being a woman is a handicap at work*. This theme category dealt with how the participants unfavorably and unfairly experienced the working world as a woman before leaving their career. They revealed that working as a woman was not as glitzy or as easy as they had anticipated before entering the workforce. Within this theme category, two themes emerged: 1) *Glass ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work*, and 2) *The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood*.

The first theme, *Glass ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work*, concerned participants being faced with a horizontal partition between men's and women's roles and tasks at work from the beginning, regardless of their marriage status. For this reason, it is evident why the participants perceived experiencing a glass partition horizontally, even before encountering a glass ceiling.

The second theme, *The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood*, emerged when participants felt that their most celebrated major life events--getting married and becoming a mother--were not considered as desirable or favorable outcomes at work.

Glass Ceiling? There Was a Glass Partition (or Shield) for Women at Work

At work, the participants soon realized that their roles in the workplace were limited and different from male workers. Being female seemed to follow the participants everywhere, like shadows, so the participants consciously and unconsciously experienced confirmation of their expected roles as female workers, including supporting and caring

for the male workers behind the spotlight. Many participants realized that their roles at work were replaceable at any time, and they did not have as much potential growth opportunity compared with male workers who were assigned critical tasks and who were promoted accordingly. The participants became disappointed and frustrated with their limited roles. One participant stated,

HH: Even if women worked for a long time at the company, they still left as the same administrative worker. I only heard of one case where a woman got promoted. Women were rarely promoted. It felt bad....Even though I was a female administrative worker, it wasn't nice being looked down upon....Even if they are promoted, it's not a lifetime job, but it will usually last only until marriage.

Another participant talked about her previous workplace, which separated men's tasks and women's tasks, even within the same team. She noted the following,

YJ: My work at the trading company seemed to be work that I would quit after marriage. I was a trading assistant, which was considered woman's work at my company. I didn't even like it, and it wasn't something that I could improve on to do something on my own later on or get a promotion. Trading assistants and salespeople were a team, but the salesmen asked us (assistants) to do their unwanted trivial work, as if we were their secretaries. But trading assistants' work was different from secretaries' work. So the female workers were frustrated.

Another participant who was an office administrative assistant expressed how lowly she felt about her job.

YL: I thought that people looked down on me like a maid behind my back, which means that, from their standards, my job would seem like a meaningless and low-paying job.

Another participant believed that there were different lifestyles and ways of processing tasks at work between men and married women. She thought that it would be difficult to work together in teams unless she compromised and sacrificed her family. She said,

YY: I was missing out on social relationships with co-workers, which could only be built by having similar work patterns as those of men. Men have different lifestyles. You can't say it's actually gender discrimination. Rather, it has to do with different lifestyles between men and women.... I was the only female in my team with 7-8 men. As my mother was taking care of my baby at that time, I wanted to work hard and finish my work as soon as possible during the work hour, and I wanted to go back home to help my mother (cleaning and cooking), whereas my male coworkers frequently took coffee breaks, saying that they were sleepy in the afternoon and smoking...just fooling around.

The above participant also shared that she would be neglected by male clients when she was exercising a leading role in the tasks and believed that there existed a limit for female workers who were allowed to go up. She stated,

YY: There were development team meetings with other companies. I was there representing my development team and directors or managers from venture companies there. They would not listen to what I was saying. I could not communicate with them. They just said their own views. Even though everyone

knew that he was wrong, he said to me, “How dare you! Bring your boss!” I would experience a similar situation. There is a limit, . . . a limit to how high a woman can reach.

Another participant said that she could not work in the sales department (which was the core business section), and she stayed in the supporting department because she could not serve potential clients with overnight drinking and could not be more like her male co-workers. She said,

YP: Before I worked in a pharmacy, I had worked for an international pharmaceutical company. Even though I was assigned important tasks at work, when I had to work with the government office, I faced limitations as a woman. For example, when we had to treat government officers for a drink, I joined them, but I could not stay with them and keep drinking until 3-4 a.m. like the men. Usually, the women tend to leave by midnight.

Another participant talked about sexual harassment, which is often not regulated or punished properly in small workplaces. Female workers tend to be few in number, and their voices tend to be neglected. This was one of the reasons one of the participants left her workplace. She noted,

YJ: Sexual harassment was not an issue at all for the company because it was a very small company. To think back, there was certainly sexual harassment, but it was not prohibited or regulated legally or publicly. The CEO wasn't even able to control it. When we discussed it with other men, they would take sides with the men and tell us to just ignore it when it's done by older men. I guess there was more sexual harassment because it was a small company.

The Workplace Did Not Welcome My Marriage or Motherhood

Many participants found themselves having to adjust to the unfair customs that existed at the workplace for women workers. The participants revealed how negatively their workplace had perceived their marriage and motherhood. Their workplace and co-workers implicitly and explicitly expressed the message that female workers were not welcome there after marriage. Many of the female employees felt that this mentality was unfair to women. Some fought back, while others complied with the unfair custom by leaving the workplace. Many participants said that they could partly understand why the unfair custom was sustained—married women might not appeal to employers because married female workers' first priority would be their families, and they might not devote enough time and energy as when they were single. Therefore, the participants already knew that they had to leave the workplace upon marriage or childbirth. One participant described the stress she went through at her company.

HH: I worked for about five years, and my company had all of the basic policies allowing women to return back to work after childbirth.... pregnancy, childbirth, maternity leave, and things like that....The policies were there, but no female employees had ever really benefited from them, and, somehow, we felt that we should not enjoy these benefits. Male employees asked, “When are you planning to marry?” “Do you have a man to marry?” or “Isn't it about time for you to get married?” Even though they asked it as a joke, the female employees felt stressed. Most of the employees assumed that women would leave their jobs after marriage. The policies were all there, but realistically, it was different. If we do come back to work, people find it harder to work with married women. They

don't want to deal with mothers who have to leave early because of their babies and things like that. I guess this is the reason. For superiors, it's easier to work with single women.

Another participant recollected the moment her boss asked her to leave just before her wedding.

SL: Just before my marriage, my boss told me to quit, but I said I couldn't leave. Just before my wedding day, my boss told me seriously that he could not manage the clinic with me. It was getting close to my wedding. He said, "You have made a big decision. Since you're getting married, why don't you stop coming to work?" I said I couldn't do that and continued going to work until I got pregnant. However, my feelings were badly hurt. I remember I cried and cried.

Another participant had her salary cut in half after her marriage, and she left work after having a baby. She said,

JK: The bad part about my workplace was that female teachers had to quit after marriage without any choice. However, after a new supervisor came, female workers could continue working after marriage, but under a contract basis that cut the previous salary by more than half, and I was the first person to undergo this cut. There were no benefits or bonuses for contract workers like me, even if the workload remained the same. With the only reason that I was married, I was put under an unfair contract basis. I think that this shows how negatively our society views married female workers. In addition, even if you were a head teacher, you had to leave your position upon marriage. Still, even if female workers could

continue working after marriage, they were implicitly expected to leave work after having a child.

Summary

This chapter unfolded the first theme category, *Being a woman is a handicap at work*. When the participants recalled their work experiences before career leaving, every participant believed that being a woman was a handicap for them at work. Regardless of their individual talents and performance, there was an implicit set of customs for women to follow.

The first of two themes in this major theme was, *Glass ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work*. Participants shared their story of limited promotion for women at work, being assigned only assistance tasks to male employees, people looking down on female assistants, the difficulty of working with men due to different work patterns, not being respected by male clients, being excluded from core business relationships, and not being protected from sexual harassment.

The second theme is, *The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood*. Participants lamented that women's marriage was considered as a change of their position, from a woman worker to a married woman worker, which sometimes led to disadvantages at work and, eventually, to career leaving. In the workplace, participants' believed that their marriage or motherhood was not welcomed.

CHAPTER 5

LEAVING WORK WAS TO BECOME A BETTER MOTHER

The second theme category, *Leaving work was to become a better mother*, consists of two themes related to the main motive of the participants' career leaving--motherhood. All of the participants stated that they chose to leave work because of their children. Some of the participants left work to take a break or to conceive a baby. Other participants left work to raise their children by themselves. Some did so to take on the full-time mother role more seriously. Even though the timing of their leave varied, their purpose in common was solely on behalf of their children.

The first theme, *I needed to protect my pregnancy from the stress of work*, concerned participants' prioritizing their preparation for conceiving a baby and taking good care of themselves as a future mother during pregnancy, even at the expense of career leaving. The second theme, *It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child*, revealed that, when participants became a mother, they willingly took on the main caregiver role for their babies--a full-time stay-at-home mother--by giving up their full-time paid jobs at work.

I Needed to Protect My Pregnancy from the Stress of Work

The participants began thinking of themselves as mothers even before having a baby or even conceiving one. Three participants left work to prepare their health condition in order to become pregnant. They explained that their health had become bad after years of hard work, and they needed a break from work to recuperate in order to conceive a healthy baby. One participant found out that her liver had an infection due to high levels of stress from work, and she required full rest after marriage. Another

participant (YP) left the workplace, which gave her too much stress, and found a less-stressful job in order to have a healthy baby. She said,

YP: My company had just started, so I had to be involved in almost everything. After about three years of working hard, my health was beginning to deteriorate. I was losing a lot of hair due to stress, and I felt much weaker, and my vision decreased. I also had insomnia at night. I used to go back home late at around 11 p.m. due to my heavy workload. I thought I couldn't help but leave this company to have a family.

Another participant (RY) described a similar situation.

RY: During the eight years that I worked, there were good and bad times. The last year of my work experience in a publishing company was the most difficult. My relationships with my co-workers got uncomfortable and became very stressful. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to quit. I was seeing an Oriental medicine doctor because my health was very weak, and I wasn't able to get pregnant partly due to work stress. The doctor told me that my health was bad, so I thought that it was time to quit. The only way to avoid the trouble of the company was to quit. Also, my husband kept telling me to quit. So I made up my mind to quit. After quitting, I stayed at my parents' house for a while to get some rest, and eventually I gained some weight. By doing so, I finally got pregnant. I was lucky; the timing was good.

The following narratives are of participants who left work after they became pregnant. Pregnancy itself had a significant impact on them, both physically and psychologically. They felt uncomfortable working with their sensitive pregnant bodies.

With morning sickness, they felt vulnerable. The next four participants shared similar stories of what they had experienced when they became pregnant while going to work. They all left work after experiencing the hardship of going to work with a pregnant body. They did not want to jeopardize the wellbeing of their unborn baby.

JL: When I was pregnant, it was very difficult. Because it was my first pregnancy, I had a hard time, mentally and physically. I felt my strength had been pushed to the limit. Commuting was not easy. Also, I was anxious about raising a child having had no experience. I speculated that child-raising would be very difficult. I thought it would be too difficult for me to raise a child while I was working. I was not fully prepared to have a baby. I accepted my pregnancy with great joy, but I was not able to plan ahead on how to get through it. Starting from morning sickness and getting sleepy at work, ...I was sleepy to the extent to which people talked about how frequently I fell asleep at work. It was not terrible, but it was harder than I had imagined.

JK: After I got pregnant, my doctor warned me to be careful as there was a chance for me to have a miscarriage. So in order to avoid having a miscarriage, I stopped working in the middle of a semester. I should have quit my job after a semester or at the end of the year, but, as it was an emergency, I just quit. As I hadn't been able to have a baby for three years after marriage, having a child was my first priority, and I didn't have a choice.

SL: After I got pregnant, things were tiring. I got stressed out and got so sensitive to the things that I would have been able to manage easily beforehand. Being pregnant made many things seem different. It took one hour from home to

commute one way by subway, and it seemed much longer and much farther. My body got easily exhausted, and because I became so sensitive, work seemed more difficult. So I thought I should quit. I wanted to quit before the boss told me to.

YJ: When I got pregnant, my work required me to be a very detail-oriented and hard working employee. But I kept making mistakes, as if I had lost half of my mind once I had gotten pregnant. It was odd...really....It drove me crazy. My boss would blame me and say, “What happened to you after you got pregnant?” I was not like that before I got pregnant. My mind seemed to belong to someone else who was very hectic. it was like you tend to forget something when you are extremely busy. I still couldn’t catch my errors, even after a final review. Such stress was huge.

It Is My Job to Raise My Child by Myself; I Feel First-hand Responsibility and Full Commitment to My Child

The participants willingly took the role of main caretaker of their child. All of the participants put their child as their number one priority. To become a mother meant being a full-time mother who would be there for their child 24-7. One participant (JK) described how she mentally accepted her role of mother that society had given her.

JK: I left my job not because I didn’t have the ability to work or because I didn’t like my job, but because somebody had to take care of my children, and people say that a mother should be the one doing this. The norm of the traditional Korean society tells women, “You should give yourself up to raise your child because that’s your job. There is no one to take care of your children but you.” Eventually, I followed the norm feeling that I had no choice.

Another participant (JL) explained that she left her job with the belief that the first three years of her child's life were crucial for the baby's development, and she needed to be with her child at least during that time. She stated,

JL: In my opinion, the basic things would be established by the age of three. I'm not sure of the official age, but I have heard that babies' brains are fully developed by the age of three. And after three years, children should be given more opportunities to meet with other people. So I thought I could look for a job then and feel less guilty. I guess I am too concerned about my child.

An additional participant (SL) became pregnant after nervously waiting for nine months after marriage, and she left work when she was six months pregnant. All of her focus shifted to her child. She stated,

SL: I did feel somewhat sad (when I left work)...but the idea of being pregnant was so wonderful that my first priority was to raise my child well. In addition, I felt tired and wanted to take a break from work. I made up my mind to have a baby and put all of my effort in raising a child. Since we had a lot of difficulty in conceiving a baby, we went to see a doctor. Finally, after nine months of marriage, I got pregnant. Therefore, when I raised my first son, I focused only on raising him in the best way. There was no room to think about working. The day after I left work, I felt so free. I didn't think much about it. I just wanted to take good care of myself. I only thought of one thing--setting up my mind and heart right so that I could have a healthy baby.

Another participant (YP) decided to stay home to raise her son so as not to miss the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be with her baby.

YP: These days the birthrate is very low. My husband wanted only one baby, and I wanted at least two. Either way, the time I can spend together with my baby is only once in a lifetime. I could not miss it. If you go to work, you have to have someone else come home and take care of the baby. I could not trust my baby with anyone else.

One of the participants (YJ) left work to see her son grow and to remember every moment raising her son. Her mother could not remember her childhood in detail because her mother had to work full time. Thus, she did not want the same thing to happen to her son. She gave great meaning to her experience of raising her son by herself. She said,

YJ: Yet, when I looked at my baby, I wanted to take care of my baby by myself, at least as long as he was an infant, and then I could look for a job later. I wanted to see my baby grow. My mother didn't raise me or my brother when we were babies because my mom was a full-time teacher. So, since I was young, I made up my mind to raise my child by myself. (Talking to her son) "Mom wanted to raise you. Mom wanted to hold you in her arms and raise you..." (Looking back at interviewer) My mother said that she didn't remember how I was as a baby. I didn't want to repeat that for my son. I wanted to remember...what my son did as a baby, how he started to crawl, and things like that. At least until he first said "mommy." I wanted to be there with him. But as time passed, and I grew more attached to him, I couldn't go to work. To be honest, I was so sad that my mother doesn't remember how we had grown up. She didn't remember anything. I remember everything about my son. That really meant something to me. Why should I have another person raise my own child?

Another of the participants (RY) shared her change of focus after having a child. She centered her life around her family instead of herself and took her role in the family as a mother and a wife more seriously.

RY: After I had a child, I began to center my life around my child and husband rather than centering it around myself first. I seemed to change by thinking more of others. Many people told me so. Once I had a child, it became so natural to say “our family.” When I was just with my husband, I said, “we” or “our,” not “our family.” After I had a child, I thought in terms of “our family” or “our three family members should live a healthy life,” or “We should be healthy so that our child can live a better life.” Therefore, I began to pay attention to what we ate, even though it meant more work.

Summary

The second theme category, *Leaving work was to become a better mother*, is related to the main motive of the participants’ career leaving--becoming a mother. All of the participants wanted to be as good mothers as they could possibly be, given their life situations. This theme category had two themes. In the first theme, *I needed to protect my pregnancy from the stress of work*, some participants revealed that they had left work to protect and take care of their bodies, before and after pregnancy. The stress caused by years of work was considered to be harmful for having a healthy baby. Moreover, the physical and psychological changes during pregnancy made some participants particularly vulnerable.

Within the second theme, *It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child*, the participants expressed their innermost

desires and felt responsibility as a mother to raise their children by themselves and to be always there for their children. They always put their first priority on raising their children.

CHAPTER 6

WORK AFTER CAREER LEAVING BECOMES BEING A FULL-TIME HOUSEWIFE

The third theme category, *Work after career leaving becomes being a full-time housewife*, involved what participants experienced in terms of adjusting to becoming a full-time housewife/mother after career leaving. After they had said goodbye to their full-time paid jobs, participants started living as full-time housewives with some anticipation of a new life. Almost all participants believed that quitting their job had been the right decision, and they were initially relieved by the thought of not having to go back to the harsh world of work every day. However, they soon realized that their hopeful anticipation was different from the reality they had to carry out as a full-time housewife/mother.

This theme category had three themes and three sub-themes. The first theme, *Being at home is difficult*, dealt with the participants' expression of negative emotions about being at home. Participants found that it was much more difficult to stay home all day alone than they had initially expected. The second theme, *Housework and childrearing are much more difficult*, concerned participants' experiences of learning and performing everyday homemaking and childrearing tasks. Unlike what they had imagined about full-time housewives' self-regulating, autonomous, and lower stressed lifestyle, their days were occupied with endless and repetitive chores of taking care of their families. The third theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, consisted of three sub-themes: *I do not have my own time*, *I do not have my own money*, and *I do not have my own individuality*. In fact, the participants felt that, as full-time housewives/mothers, they lost the presence

of being themselves and positioned their families at the center of their lives after leaving their careers. Compared to the time when they had worked before, they felt that they no longer had ownership of their own time, money or individuality.

Being at Home Is Difficult

Participants experienced psychological difficulties being at home after they had left work. The participants expressed their negative emotions and feelings as “feeling down,” “feeling behind,” “depressed,” “tied down,” “lonely,” “becoming a prisoner,” and “dissatisfied” when they became a full-time housewife. Spatially, participants felt home-bound when they became a full-time housewife. When they worked, participants had a workplace to go to and a home to come back for rest. As a housewife, their home became their workplace and a place for rest, as well. Participants felt isolated and shut down from the world outside. In a social aspect, a housewife’s social interaction was limited to mainly family members and neighbors at best. And their social interactions with family members were not as various as the social interactions they had to deal with when they worked outside the home. Similar days seem to repeat themselves. Participants thought their value was degraded as time went by, whereas other working women continued upgrading their value by participating in the society. The participants felt these negative feelings more intensely when their children were too young to go to daycare or preschool, or the participants were the only caretakers of their children.

One participant (JK) felt depressed while adjusting to a full-time mother’s life after quitting her job as a kindergarten teacher.

JK: After I quit my job, I felt very stressed at home. I suffered from depression after having my first son because I had never stayed home before. Staying home,

in and of itself, was very stressful. For the first several months at home, I would imagine what would be going on at the kindergarten where I used to work.

One of the other participants (HH) became much weaker physically after giving birth to her baby, and she felt depressed, tied down, frustrated, and isolated at home to the extent that she wanted to escape from her situation. She described in detail the following,

HH: After giving birth to my child, I became weaker in health. I didn't pay attention before to what other mothers said about them getting weaker after childbirth, and that became me. I was not so weak when I was single, and it makes me angry. Why did I ever get married? Why did I ever have a baby at the expense of my own health? Why had I done that?...At times like this, I wished I weren't a woman. I regretted very much being born a woman, thinking that I wouldn't have to go through all of these things if I were a man. I got tied down as one man's wife and a child's mother. I wanted to run away from the situation. When I fell into depression, I felt everything was bad and just wanted to go somewhere else. I could not escape from the titles of mother and wife. I fell into such a severe depression. I hated the feeling of being bound. I could not meet other people but only took care of my child. Even though my husband helped me after work, days seemed to repeat themselves over and over, which I hated so much. When I was single, I was able to do anything I wanted, but not anymore, due to my child. I guess it's a common thing other women also go through. After having a child, women easily get depressed. Sometimes you get depressed to the extent that you want to get out of your situation. I was there, too. My husband was the only person I could talk to then. It was very difficult to feed my child at night

while not being able to sleep well. When I stay home, I am alone with no one to talk with, just taking care of my child. I think a person can release their frustrations by chatting with others. When I was tied down and stressed out by my child, my frustrations got even worse. So I think I need to work on certain aspects besides just raising a child.

The next three participants also expressed similar feelings.

YP: After a while being at home, I felt socially isolated and strongly felt that I was falling behind compared with people who were currently working. I felt trapped being at home, only taking care of my child. Many times it's a great joy to raise a child, but sometimes it weighs heavily upon me.

RY: A housewife's life is the same, and it made me very depressed. To escape from the depression, I made sure to have time to myself, even while my child took a nap. Otherwise, the depression wouldn't go away.

JM: I took a step back from my career. I think I looked down on housewives subconsciously. Housewives....I might not have appreciated housewives.

Unknowingly, I was not able to value my role as a housewife. Whenever I was doing my housework, I never thought I was contributing to society, and I felt that I was continually falling behind.

Housework and Childrearing Are Much More Difficult

The participants had regarded childrearing as an easy task before they had left the workplace. Once they jumped into it, however, they felt that they were not as good at homemaking and childrearing as they expected to be. When the participants were actually faced with the reality of being a full-time housewife with a child to take care of, they

became overwhelmed with tasks that they had to manage. The participants left work, ideally to stay with their child, but the everyday life of being a stay-at-home mother was occupied with a multitude of tasks to accomplish by themselves.

In the second interviews, the participants all agreed with the above-mentioned theme. Some participants were still trying to do their best at being a superlative stay-at-home mother, while other participants gave up trying to be good at it and were satisfied with what they could do now.

JL described the confusion she felt at the beginning of staying home in the following narrative.

JL: As my life changed by 180 degrees, my lifestyle also got very, very tough. Life as a housewife didn't fit me 100%. There were lots of trials and errors. In the beginning, when it started, I persistently thought, "I am not a person who is cut out to be a housewife or suited for homemaking or childrearing..." The change was enormous, and it confused me. At first, I even became doubtful about the fact that I should bring up my child by myself.

Another participant (JM) expressed how challenging the work of a full-time mother was to her.

JM: Well, I didn't feel like sacrificing myself anymore. Actually, you cannot say it is a sacrifice. Homemaking could be considered as learning. But I am just not tailored to it. Homemaking ...sometimes I work hard to make several side dishes in an hour-and-a-half, and when I hear my husband say it's delicious, it makes me feel great. But I don't like to wash dishes afterwards. (laughs) What I am saying is that I am not the kind of person who feels great satisfaction after cleaning the

house. Some women do. It is very difficult to be a good mother. When you are with your child all day, it is even harder to be a good mother. How challenging it is not to be irritated by your child, to teach them well, and to discipline them well. Do you think everybody can do that? Definitely not. Therefore,...I can't help the situation. Anyway, having a child and raising a child is tough, and marriage is tough, too.

Another participant (HH) complained that her life became much harder after marriage and childbirth compared to the time when she was single and living with her mother, who had done many things for her. After leaving work and getting married, housework and childrearing burdened her so much to the extent of her wanting to go back to work again to escape the hard housework and childrearing. Housework and childrearing were physically hard and not very rewarding to her. She stated in the following narrative.

HH: Now I have to do all of the housework by myself, whereas my mom did everything when I lived with her before marriage. It was really difficult. It was not as easy as I thought. Everywhere I look, I find things to clean and pick up. My husband usually says that he doesn't see much to be done in the house. That is what husbands usually say. I see many things to clean and arrange, and feel that it is all my job. "Is it possible not to do it at all? I really hate to do it..." Then my husband says, "Then don't do it!" I know that's just talk. My husband helps me as much as he can. But in the morning I have to do all of the housework. It is stressful. I got paid when I worked for a company. But I don't get paid to do housework. Housework is not making money. That means I have to sacrifice

myself. Because I have to do what a mom should do, work itself is hard for me. My husband asks me to massage him after work, saying he is very tired, and asks what I have done all day. Housekeeping seems like nothing, but it requires hard physical labor. For example, if my daughter spills juice on the floor, I have to wipe it off with a cloth, and who is going to wash that cloth? I have to wash it with soap and hang it on the clothesline. Whenever I see dust, I have to clean it, which is also stressful. When you compare going to work and raising children at home, childrearing at home is much more difficult.

One participant (SL) stressed the difficulties of childrearing that she had not imagined before. She believed that childrearing was the most stressful job. She stated, SL: I never knew the difficulties of raising a child until I actually had one. I just thought that I would only be happy having and raising a baby. I didn't know that I had to give up my job to go through all of those difficulties. I get stressed out a lot. My husband is so busy and comes back home at 11 p.m. every day. So I have to deal with my two children almost all day, even though my daughter goes to kindergarten. They don't let me go anywhere, holding and dragging my pants. They won't let me lie down a moment, while asking me to read books to them. They won't even let me sit down for a moment, asking me for a lot of things. They ask too many things. When they watch a cartoon video, they don't want to watch it by themselves. "Sit down with me, Mom!" they say. Then I have to watch it together, although it is not interesting to me at all, for example. Nothing can be compared with the stress of raising children. I don't think I can find a more

stressful workplace or job than raising children. That makes me really want to put my children in daycare or something, or hire a babysitter.

Another participant (RY) experienced postpartum depression, followed by stress and hardship caused by childrearing and housework. Her days were fully devoted to taking care of her child, non-stop. She stated,

RY: The workplace and home are very different worlds. Being busy at work and home is totally different. At the workplace, my task was clearly defined. And I could move on to the next assigned task after completing a task. But taking care of a child is not like that. It's hard to describe it, though. Work at home and childrearing are endless, whereas there is an end in the workplace. It was not easy, at all... Of course, I adore my child as I have waited to have her for such a long time. I love her so much. But at the same time, it's very difficult and stressful. I didn't think that I would suffer from postpartum depression as I had longed to have a baby for such a long time. But I had depression, serious depression. It was difficult and sad. When I saw my baby for the first time, it was nice and strange at the same time. When I first held her in my arms, she didn't seem to recognize me as a mother, which gave me a strange feeling. My baby didn't appear to like me as a mom, and she cried out loudly all the time, which made it difficult. Even these days, there are many moments of difficulty. Childrearing stress cannot be disregarded. It is quite different from the stress caused by work in that it does not provide any break. There is no such thing as a sick day. Childrearing requires you to pay consistent and continual attention to the child. I have to cook to feed my baby, though I can starve. When the baby started crawling, I had to vacuum and

do the laundry every day. I separated the baby's laundry from our laundry.

Sometimes I sanitize clothes by boiling...chores keep piling up. I have to cook something for her. There is no time for me to sit still. Because my child doesn't take a nap, only after when she fell asleep at night was I able to do my own work. Before she fell asleep, I had to multitask while taking care of her. That is why it was difficult. Even to read anything was a challenge.

A participant (YL) described the changes in her life after leaving work when she got married. She thought that her life would become easier after leaving work, but she found that adjusting to married life and housework was more tiring. She explained,

YL: I thought about getting a job again after getting married, but marriage was not so easy. After getting married, there were many things new to me, such as a sex life, lack of sleep, cooking, and housekeeping....It was physically difficult, and it still is. When I cleaned up my apartment, it took almost all day, and I got stressed out a lot. That's why I once applied for a job interview to get a job again. Honestly, I expected that my life would get easier after marriage, but I was wrong, I guess. I entered a tiger's cave to run away from a fox. Every day I had to wipe dust off, clean, do laundry, iron clothes, and so on. To cook for my husband, I had to decide what to cook, buy food at the grocery store, prepare ingredients, follow the recipe, cook the food, and make sure it tasted good. It was not a break at all. It seemed that it was meaningless and unfair for me to quit working and do these things. And I don't have any desire to be recognized by anyone for being good at housekeeping....Before getting married, I thought my housekeeping skills would improve only if I took time off from work and concentrated on

housekeeping. However, even after a long time, I didn't enjoy housekeeping, and I even didn't do it well. I cannot have personal time to do things at home, such as reading a book. I don't feel relaxed at home because everything surrounding me is chores to finish. When I visit someone's home, I feel more comfortable there. Even though their house is messy, it is not my work to do. At home, whenever I see stuff to arrange, clothes to fold, spots to clean, everything seems to be my work. Therefore, home doesn't seem to be a place of comfort, except for when I am asleep.

One participant (YJ) described the difficulty of taking care of her son full-time at home. YJ had said that she left work to raise her son by herself, and that she wanted to capture every moment of her son's childhood. However, after several years went by, she realized that it was not easy to raise, teach, and play with her son all by herself. She freed herself from the belief that she must stay with her son always and was looking forward to the time coming soon when her son would go to kindergarten. She said,

YJ: My son, JJ, has grown too big for me to play with him now. I think there is a limit in teaching him myself. Also, there is a limit to playing with him as he is a boy, and I have to play a lot of physical activities with him. Some mothers are really good at playing with their kids, according to their time schedule. I am not.... I spend most of my energy feeding him three meals a day. When my son goes to kindergarten in a few years, they will provide two meals a day, and my son will play with other kids. Then I will have more energy. I am desperately waiting for that time. In the past, I thought I would cry when I started sending him to kindergarten. Now I think, why would I cry? I will send him even if he cries

anyway. (laughs) He even won't need time to adjust. He will just go. That is it. At first, your baby is so adorable, but it doesn't last long. If you stay with your baby all of the time, all day long, that baby doesn't seem so adorable anymore. By the evening, I get very irritated by my son. I don't even want to talk to him, and when my husband comes home, I have my husband take care of him. It is not always the best for a mother to teach a child by herself. I am kind of a care-free mother. Even though I stay with my son all of the time, it's not that I hold him in my arms all day. Whenever I get tired, I also let him play by himself. It might be better to hire a part-time babysitter because they can concentrate on taking care of my son during certain hours.

Another participant (JL) was herself wondering why she still felt dissatisfied while performing her responsibility as a full-time mother. She said,

JL: Other people would say that I am immature. That is what I hear from my mom all of the time, telling me that I am not satisfied with my situation, and that I still try to think of time for myself. I wonder why I still have a hard time, as if I were doing someone else's work when it should be my responsibility. I have these feelings. People take it for granted that a housewife should do certain things.

I Feel a Loss of Myself

When the participants left work and stayed home to raise their child, they sooner or later realized that they put themselves in the last priority in their life. When their days are scheduled and occupied according to the child's and family's needs first, there is little time and energy left only for themselves. They felt that they lost ownership of their time, money, and individuality.

This theme is divided into three sub-themes. This theme can be summed up with a narrative that one of the participants made: “I have more and more of a desire for money, and less and less interests other than my family, and less and less time for myself.”

I Don't Have Time for Myself

The participants felt the need to have some time assigned only for themselves. As a full-time mother raising their child, especially when their child is young (under 3-4 years old), it is difficult to find and enjoy time only for themselves. It doesn't matter what they would do with the time for themselves. Some of them would do internet surfing, some would read books, some would go shopping, some would chat on the phone with their friends, and some would just daydream.

SL: I think time for me is very important. Even a small amount of help from my husband would make it better. I know a woman who once was hospitalized due to depression. Mothers would say that they feel less depressed with just an hour of window shopping at a department store or at a market. If I had time for me, I could spend time more on my appearance, exercise, or read books, and what else? Or I could have a hobby. Including these, now I cannot do even the smallest things for myself, such as getting together with my friends. It has been about five years of not having seen my friends. I found that I was not the only one. There is no chance for self-actualization. There is absolutely no time for me. I spend all of my time with my children or my husband if any remains.

The next participant, RY, already knows what she needs to prevent depression; finding time for herself.

RY: A child gradually changes. You cannot notice their daily changes. Only after looking back can we realize how fast they have grown. Day after day, it seems the same. Even though there are changes in their behavior, their daily life stays exactly the same. A housewife's life is the same, and it made me very depressed. To overcome the depression, I made sure to have time for myself, even while my child took a nap. Otherwise, the depression wouldn't go away. My stress is relieved when I have time for myself, such as time for reading books, writing something, or being creative. And I can have a fresh start with my child again. If I couldn't make the most of that time, the next day I would feel very tired, troubled, and irritated by my child. Time only for myself....I think that is the most efficient way of getting rid of stress.

YL: These days, I only have time for myself when my son is taking a nap. Around three hours? I can have one or two more hours when he goes to sleep earlier at night. During that time, I want to do personal things or clean the house, but I usually fall asleep, also. After having a child, I haven't had a deep sound sleep for more than three hours at one time. Thus, I consider it a sacrifice as I don't even have allotted time to read a long book, not to mention having time to study something professional. What I meant by "allotted time" is uninterrupted four to five hours of my own time. At home, I get interrupted so frequently from my baby, phone calls from real estate agents, the water filter company, and so on. [I have] less and less time for myself.

JL: I seem to have the desire to have more of my own time. There are things that I have to do with my child, and there are things that I have to do as a homemaker.

It's true that I should do these things, but I think my time is the time excluding the period I spend as a homemaker, because I think my time is when I do what I want to do something, such as reading a book, searching for something on the Internet or watching a TV program whenever I want. It feels that time for myself is only when I do what I want to do only for myself. Even if it's only one or two hours before going to bed, it is the time I long for.

I Do Not Have My Own Money

After the participants became a full-time mother, they mostly made a living with the income their husbands made. They logically know that they contribute financially to their house income by raising children by themselves and homemaking. They believe in the added value to their family that they create as a full-time mother. However, they found themselves feeling uncomfortable spending the money their husbands bring in at their will. They expressed the need to have their own money to spend on their own without considering others' opinions.

JM: If I make money and spend money on my husband, I think I would feel more powerful. There is such a thing as a power game between me and my husband. There truly is such a thing. Suppose that I make 30,000,000 won a year and buy my husband a car for 25,000,000 won, and I pay for the car. He would look at me in a different way, as it's nice. Even if I cooked for him every day with great effort, he would just point out that I always don't clean the house. Would you like to hear such a thing? No, you wouldn't.

HH: The point is that I would be able to make money [if I get a job again]. If I had my own professional career, I could make money as well as develop myself

professionally. It is like killing two birds with one stone. But, as I am not a professional, making money is what matters most. After I got married, I thought more about my parents than my in-laws. But when my husband gave his parents a monthly allowance, I thought he should also give my parents the same amount of money. If I had worked and made money, I would be able to give my parents as much money as I would have liked to. As I understand how hard my husband worked to bring home money, it was not easy to tell him to give money to my parents as well. I know that my parents-in-law deserve money from their son whom they had brought up, and in the same way, I believe that my parents deserve it, too, because they had brought me up. Even though I don't make money and am only doing housework, I think it is fair. I support him at home to help him make that amount of income. So I asked him openly to treat his parents and mine equally. If I could have made a lot of money, I wouldn't have necessarily had to ask him about it. Even though my husband and I are pretty open on this issue, I still feel very sorry inside when I give money to my parents. I feel sorry because my parents are given the money from my husband and not from me, the money that my husband worked for. I want to work to make my own money so I can spend it freely, as much as I want. My own money spent would be giving an allowance to my parents and my daughter.

SL: If I had kept working, I could have been recognized in a certain area, and financially I would be making money. Raising my children could be just like making my own money, but not in cash. It is not visible, so in that way it is not a profit. It is like making money yourself...to the extent of saving money.

Increasing profit...To raise children, the money my husband makes is not enough. There are so many things I want to provide for them. This is why I think a lot about wanting to work. It is quite different to make money myself. If I want to spend money my husband brings home, it is my money, but at the same time, it is not exactly my money. I have to ask for his opinion about how to spend it. People have their own styles of financing, but somehow I feel restrained. If I had a job, I would not have to get the consent of my husband about how to spend my money.

YP: When a woman doesn't have a job and doesn't make money and spends her husband's money, she feels relatively small before him psychologically. The budget to spend on my family with my husband's salary is tight, so it is not easy to spend money for myself, such as on cultural events, or for my own education. For example, before I left the workplace, I would buy expensive clothes for work. But I cannot do that now. The situation is quite different, which makes me feel psychologically small. The critical thing is finance. Because two incomes were drastically cut down to one, it often gets financially tight.

I Don't Have My Own Individuality

Participants described their own individuality with various expressions, such as my own life, my own individual life, my own world, my own desire, my heart, and my name. In the dictionary, individuality is defined as: 1) total character particular to and distinguishing an individual from others and 2) separate or distinct existence (Merriam-Webster Online, 2009).

When participants quit their work and became a full-time housewife, they felt as if they had lost their own territory as a career woman or her world of work where she

could maintain her own color as an individual, even when at home where they could be free to be themselves and could be respected as an individual. Participants felt that their life was shared and run by family, for family, and with family. They felt that they had little ownership for their life.

YP stated, "My life is a common denominator with someone else," and "My life is all about my family." She missed her individual life that she had when she worked. She thought her husband had his own life because he had a career.

YP: Later my child would have friends and someone to love and would someday leave me. My husband also has his own career and life. Now, however, I don't have my own life while taking care of my children. My children and I; that's it. A small portion can be my husband. My life is all about my family. I don't have my own individual life. Every part of my life is a common denominator with someone else. It's necessary to have my own life.

As a part-time children's story writer, RY already figured out how important it was to satisfy her own desire by having her own world. In her case, her way to her own world was writing everyday.

RY: Well, as my son slept for a longer time at night, I could write something while he was asleep, and I felt so good the next day. I realized how wonderful I felt after I had done what I wanted. I think it was also good for my son, and I wasn't quick tempered with my husband anymore. I try to sit in front of a computer to write even for half or one hour to go into my own world. I can only release stress by doing something creative and productive. Not that raising

children is not productive. It is different. I mean that it has to be something that can satisfy my own desire.

JM said, "my heart seems empty and blank. I, myself, am disappearing." She sensed something was missing in her heart when she said, "I, myself, am disappearing. There is no one who calls me my name." JM's identity as an individual was losing its place, and she found her roles only in the relationship with her family inside and outside of the home:

JM: My daughter is so adorable, and she is a source of meaning and happiness.

Also, I feel very fortunate having a husband, thinking that it would be much more helpful to live with him in this tough world than to live alone. On the other hand, my heart seems empty and blank. I, myself, am disappearing. There is no one who calls me my name, "JM," anymore. People call me "P's mom."

An additional participant (YL) described how she was feeling while raising her infant son.

YL: I wish to live a global life and to get to know a lot about the world. But I feel down and very dissatisfied that I am tied down with childrearing, housekeeping, and the role as a first daughter-in-law. It seems that I didn't peak yet in life. I feel like I want to stretch my wings and try anything out. Leaving the workplace meant that my wings had been tied up. It felt as if day after day the feathers from my wings were falling out. It felt like my dreams and potential were getting smaller. It means that I wouldn't be able to dream again, and it felt as if a part of my body was rotting, and I was losing my mind. I feel robbed, like a disabled person whose fingers or toes were cut off in an accident while working in a

factory. I could live without a finger or a toe, but it won't feel the same as before. It seems that I miss it. I feel robbed because it is not what I expected to happen.

Summary

This theme category, *Work after career leaving becomes being a full-time housewife*, contained three themes and three subthemes related to participants' experiences when they adjusted to a new role as a full-time housewife and mother. The first theme, *Being at home is difficult*, is about participants' psychological uneasiness that they felt when they had to stay at home. The second theme, *Housework and childrearing is much more difficult*, is about role and task changes that they went through when they became a full-time housewife and mother. Many participants thought that the tasks of housewife would be easy to learn and do, but the repetition and endless tasks of homemaking and childrearing became challenging work, psychologically and physically. The third theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, is related to participants' experiences of losing their centeredness. When they were positioned as a full-time housewife and mother, it was not easy to find ownership of their own time, money, and individuality.

CHAPTER 7

I AM RETHINKING MYSELF AND MY CAREER

The fourth theme category, *I am rethinking of myself and my career*, is about what the participants' careers meant in the past, mean now, and will mean in the future. This theme category has five themes.

The first theme, *The previous work experience was a good experience*, was drawn when participants positively expressed things they liked and enjoyed while they were working. Participants expressed yearning and longing for the social life they enjoyed with co-workers and the lifestyle of a working woman. They also considered their working experience as helpful in better understanding how the society functioned and the experiences of their husbands working in the society.

The second theme, *Getting credentials is the way to women's careers*, is summed up by participants expressing their wish to get a license or professional credentials for the world of work. They believed that obtaining a license would give extra benefit for women workers to stay at work and reenter work after career interruption.

The third theme, *Career leaving could be a chance for a career change*, emerged when the participants showed some hope, wishes, or desire to plan a new career path after leaving their workplace. For some participants, career leaving was a relief from the work they did not like. Some participants planned to do part-time work while staying at home. Some had plans in mind of entering graduate school in a different area when their children grow. Some wanted to get a certificate or license in the area of their interests to get a new job later. This theme is directly connected to the second and fifth themes in that the participants desired to work again after equipping themselves with further

qualifications. Participants anticipated their full-time housewife period as a platform or a buffering zone to the next career phase.

The fourth theme, *I design my own career path*, depicts how variously participants view their career. As the researcher did not define career to participants before the interviews on purpose, the width of their own definition of career varied. Some participants equated career with their life path. Some viewed career as a vertical ladder that one has to climb. Some related career with the accomplishment of tasks at work. Some with no hesitation included their full-time homemaker role in their notion of career. Participants' notions of career were subjective and creative.

The fifth theme, *I am waiting for my time to come*, represents participants' desire to get a job or get back to a career someday soon. When they were asked when it would be, the answers varied. Some said, after their child turns 3 or 4 years old. Some said, after their children go to elementary school. Some said, they were not sure of the exact time yet.

The Previous Work Experience Was a Good Experience

This theme emerged when participants positively mentioned their work experience. Even though they chose to leave their workplace, good memories related to work sometimes came to them. The participants came to appreciate their work experience in that they got to understand better male-ruled society and to understand their husbands' working life to make a living for the family. One participant cherished her various activities in women's workers' association in her company. And other participants missed the after-work hours they had socializing with their co-workers, drinking and chatting.

Some participants missed the tension they maintained at work, wearing suits and walking on the street as a part of the commuting population every day.

Even though JM had lots of stress from work, the fun part at work for her was socializing with co-workers after work. When working, she felt alive and felt that she was a part of society hanging out with co-workers. She misses and cherished those times after leaving work.

JM: (When I worked), I was able to feel alive, and I somehow felt that I was a part of society. I was able to feel such subtle feelings. It was fun. What I liked about it was....Though I was not a heavy drinker, I really liked the atmosphere where people got together to drink. Getting together with people, chatting, drinking, getting a little tipsy....I liked that atmosphere. It was so fun to socialize with people at work. On the other hand, though I got a lot of stress from work, I still miss those times when I think back. It is fun to live that way. With people, drinking, listening to other people's life stories, going to a bar in a crowded and busy street, having a drink and talking, planning to travel, backpacking together.... I want to do all these things again, but I have too many restrictions now. I cannot travel because I have a child, and I have to iron my husband's dress shirts as I have a husband. I am frustrated about that.

HH remembered having enjoyed being a part of an in-house interest group. She could exercise her power through the women's workers' association.

HH: One good thing about working was that there was a Women's Workers' Association in the company. In the association, we elected a spokesperson and gathered our opinions, voices, or complaints at the regular meetings to appeal to

the company. And we used to go on picnics or trips or social gathering in groups we chose to form. It was what I liked about the association. If I had not worked, I would not have experienced the women's association. Because of the women's association, I was able to voice my opinions and complain about the company, and I could enjoy going on a picnic with them. It was because I worked that I was able to experience such activities. Yes, we were able to become unified through the women's workers' association.

HH: I prefer going to work as then I can escape from this place. If I went to work, I would be able to socialize with people, make jokes, work together, chat during lunch. When I stay home, I am alone with no one to talk with, just taking care of my child. I think a person can release their frustrations through chatting with others. When I was tied down and stressed out by my child, my frustrations got even worse. So I think I need to work to a certain degree besides just raising a child.

In the narrative above, HH expressed her need to work outside the home and to socialize with people. For HH, working meant communicating and socializing with people other than her family and that was what HH longed for.

YL felt sorry that she had to let go of her professional skills that she had gained while working as a secretary as these job skills needed to be built through years of experience, and she was proud of having owned them. One other reason why YL yearned for work was that she could then live in healthy tension outside of the home. In the workplace, YL had to behave and dress herself in proper ways to be accepted, which is quite different from the ways of a full-time homemaker. At home, there is no one for you

to be evaluated by about your attitude or appearance. Home is your private zone where you can unwind and relax after being exposed to other people at the workplace; but for a full-time homemaker/mother, there is no boundary of tensing and easing yourself. After getting done with such hard work as done by a full-time mother, there is no place to be released.

YL: Self-employment such as I do selling jewelry via the Internet requires brain work every day for me, and sales are also unstable. You know, my parents supported my education until college. I don't think my parents sent me to college so that I could sell jewelry. I envy people who have a 9-5 job. I miss wearing formal suits and making 30 million won a year....I feel as if my years of work that I got used to have gone to waste. Professionals such as medical doctors or lawyers study professional skills for a long time, and other people can not obtain those skills easily. When I was a secretary, nobody taught me at first how to work efficiently. Through the years of work, I taught myself, and I was able to manage tasks routinely without having to think about it too much. It was not something that anyone could just do. Once I became an expert, it was easy, though the people changed. I often miss things like that at times. And another thing I miss is this. When I went to work, I dressed nicely. But now I became careless of my appearance from being only at home. Though I try, as you know, there is a difference in your attitude between work and home. People who work are alert and dressed up nicely, whereas I am totally careless and lazy at home. When I see a woman going home from work, I become envious of her. I miss the time when I

used to dress up nicely and stopped by a bar for a bottle of beer and to chat with my co-workers on my way home.

Getting Credentials is the Way to Women's Careers

Most participants stressed the importance of having a license or certificate for pursuing a professional career for women. After experiencing an unfair and harsh workplace for a female worker, the participants thought that having a credential would be the key to a stable career. A professional career is considered ideal for women because professional women are almost guaranteed to be able to go back to work, even after a long period of maternity leave. A license (a type of credential) had several meanings for the participants. First, for some participants, getting a license meant easier re-entry to work after staying at home. One participant (HH) wanted to obtain a credential as a future backup when she needed to get a job to make money. She thought that a credential could make workplace re-entry easier after a long period of staying home. She stated,

HH: I think I need to get a certificate or a license in order to make money. If a person was good at school or went to a prestigious college, or if one's major was promising, it would be easier to get a job. But since I lack any of these things, a license would be nice as a back-up in case I had to make money under dire situations. That's why I think I need a license. If my children grow up and tell me not to bother them anymore, and my husband asks me what I have done so far, I won't have much to say. I would be nowhere. It won't be that easy to get a job then. Few workplaces would hire me. A license would prevent this from happening. As I said earlier, people who have a good major or education get hired at a job right away. If I had a license, I would be able to make money in the areas

of my license. Actually, the primary reason for this is money. I can buy a house and provide a lot of things for my children, but only if I make money. Therefore, I think I have to make money. In order to make money, I need to get a license as a future backup.

One of the participants is a licensed pharmacist, and she could easily get a job as a pharmacist after 4.5 years of staying home. She credited her pharmacist's license for her possibility to return to the workplace.

YP: First, I feel that I am a professional worker, and an expert. With that in mind, I have confidence that I can get a job whenever I want. Generally, women have difficulty re-entering the workplace after having left the workplace due to child-rearing. If one is already employed, one might even give up childrearing and choose to work. But in my case, I have some confidence that I can go back to work whenever I want, even after years of childrearing. And even though I don't work now, I want to show my husband that I can go back to work any time.

Another participant also commented about reentry with a credential:

YL: The most crucial thing about being a professional is that it seems easy to return to work, even after a long break of childrearing. Who would question a doctor's qualifications when she comes back to work after a break from having a child? An accountant could come back to work after having a child any time because the accounting business doesn't change a lot. Therefore, I still want to get an AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license or a Gemologist license.

JM: When I was losing interest in an administrative job and was getting tired of trivial tasks, I thought about the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license, which was familiar to my work field and seemed possible for me to obtain. I thought that the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license would become the key for me to find a job again....So what I realized was that an ideal career for women would be a professional one; a professor, for example. Even though it's not a high-paying job, one starts as an instructor and ends up as a professor. There must be a reason why it is many women's dream to have a professional career. I guess it is the easiest way to balance a career and family.

Secondly, the participants thought that getting credentials could free them from gender bias at work by empowering them and giving them credentials.

YY: I think that, in Korea, if women want to get a job, it is meaningless unless she is a specialist. That applies to me, also. For example, once you obtain your own license, a proven license, after a long period of job preparation, people will view you according to your license. People will recognize your profession first, and then they will notice you as a woman. You are not seen as just a female, but as a professional who is a woman. Otherwise, it is very hard for a working woman to survive in Korea. Otherwise, it is meaningless. When people choose a dentist, they don't care whether the dentist is male or female. They think the dentist just happens to be a woman.

After years of staying home, the participants lost confidence in finding a job again. One participant stated that she might feel more powerful and confident to other people if she were to obtain a credential.

YL: I think I have to work hard while I am still young. There is still room to develop my abilities. I realize that, unless I make a great effort and work hard for the next three or four years to develop my abilities, the next 40 to 50 years might end up as a difficult and meaningless life, since I am now replaceable. A license can be a foot-in-the-door to certain careers. People may now think of me as just a mother who once had a job after college. I think that, if I went to graduate school, people may look at me differently. I feel powerless, so I still feel that I should do something further. Suppose I acquired an AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license after three or five years of studying hard; it would last 60 to 70 years or until I die. It would show others that I have made an effort to acquire something rare and difficult. But more importantly, I don't want people to see me as a powerless and unimportant person. People would view me differently if I had some kind of license. I think I would be able to go through a job interview with more confidence, being aware that my potential is evident to others, and I would be able to socialize with other people more positively and confidently.

When the participants said license or certificate, that had a variety of meanings. Specifically, the participants meant licenses, such as teaching origami (folding papers), teaching math for children, teaching reading skills for children, gemologist, a certified public accountant, a Japanese language proficiency certificate, and a pharmacist license. These licenses (credentials) vary in terms of difficulties of obtaining, of vocational merit

in the labor market, or in job stability. In the strict meaning of the word, not all of these would be licenses (i.e., required by the state before working in that profession). Nevertheless, it is the term often used to represent a credential that would enhance employment opportunities.

Career Leaving Could Be a Chance for a Career Change

Particularly when participants did not like their job or work, they positively considered leaving the workplace as an opportunity of later changing their career path. Even though participants did not have in mind a specific direction or plan to change their career path, they were holding out some kind of hope or wish or desire for what they would like to do later after or while raising children.

When JL's work no longer challenged her and it became monotonous, she considered leaving the workplace as an opportunity for a change.

JL: When I first started working, because there was nothing already established at work, I had to collect a lot of data. For the first three years, I had to establish the foundation, and there were a lot of things to learn as there was a big gap between what I had learned at school and the actual work I had to do. I was very busy doing that for the first three years, and it was good to socialize with the people at work. But the next three years felt so monotonous that I began wanting to do something different. People agree that after six years of working at the same place, they think about a different life. I understood what it meant in the last three years at work. So I got married and quit work. At that moment, it may have looked as if I gave up my job to escape the monotony at work, but it seemed to me that I could move on from a boring routine to a brand new career. I could

improve my English more and take up translation work or something related to that. Or I could find a different job related to the librarian skills that I had. It might have been difficult if I insisted on building my career on one specific job, but I thought it could be a chance to have a different experience. By leaving the job, I thought I could have a chance to raise my child myself and have a chance to make a career change.

JM also left her job after getting married because she did not like the office administrative job she had. JM finished her master's degree after leaving her work and wanted to find a job later in a new field of work related to her graduate study. Another participant (RY) also left her nine-to-six job and wanted to become a free-lance writer while raising her child at home.

I Design My Own Career Path.

In this research, participants had their own perceptions of career. Participants considered career as related to life, work, experiences, success, making money, happiness, or something to concentrate on.

Participants had their own definitions for a career. For some participants, a career was just a way to make money. Some participants had not had deep thoughts about their career. For some participants, a career meant a social ladder that one has to climb up at work. Even their individual definitions of a career and the meaning of work changed with time and situations. Before being hired, YL thought that she would stay working in her first workplace until retirement as if she stayed married to her husband, but her thoughts changed as time went by.

Therefore, when participants were asked about their career leaving experiences, no participants meant that they had permanently left the labor market and become a full-time housewife forever. Depending on individual perception of career, when participants left their career to fulfill domestic roles, some participants believed that they were now out of the traditional career track, while some thought that they were just pausing their full-time work for a while for childrearing. Some wanted to embrace their full-time housewife experience into their career.

JL flexibly and autonomously defined “my own career” as “a person’s path in life,” that is not limited to socially agreed-upon career success but is more focused on doing her best in working at a workplace or at home--anywhere in her life path.

JL: After all, a career is a person’s path in life; it would certainly be nice if I accomplished a certain social status or position, but I also think I can have my own career if I went to work and then raised a child and later found other work based on my past experience. Well, recently I have come to think that I might as well consider that my life to come would itself be my career. There are housewives who are well known for their excellent homemaking talents. Through them I realized that anyone can be successful anywhere if they worked hard.

Success, which is defined in only certain forms, was my limited point of view. I found out that, if people did their best in any situation, there must be ways of being recognized as a successful person.

Contrary to JL, YJ separated career and work. Career to her was a social ladder to climb up progressively in authority and importance, and she was not interested in building a career. She considered her work at her previous company as a mere job and

thought of work as doing something of her own besides homemaking. Even after becoming a full-time housewife, she tried to work part-time at home as a web designer even a few days a month.

YJ: I regard a career as a social ladder one climbs up. Looking at someone's career, you can guess how high one has climbed, what authority one has built up, how important one is there. However, my work was not like that. Mine was just one of those common jobs. So I didn't feel like climbing up high. Working for a company would be a step-by-step process upward to the top. Work is different from a career. Work is just something you can concentrate on. Of course, it is partly to make money, but it is also to have something of my own, something that I can do besides homemaking. I can be satisfied with that meaning of work.

YP was clear about what she wanted from working. Using her pharmacist license, she would work as a pharmacist in local drugstores on and off through her career path. She worked to make money in order to do what she desired to do in her life, such as traveling. Even when she worked as an assistant director at a pharmaceutical company, she did not have much desire to be promoted. At the time of the follow-up interview, however, YP said that her perception about working had changed. Now that she had two sons, her work had more meaning in saving money for her sons' education.

YP: In general, I didn't have a desire to get a promotion or such things at work. I used to go to work to make money in order to pursue my own happiness and to do the things I desire. My professor worked hard for her own personal and social success. She used to emphasize success to students. Despite her own success, she later was not able to have the chance to raise her child herself. As she taught and

did research even during the weekends, she could not be with her daughter every day. Her daughter used to call her and complain about it. (After a while she was diagnosed with cancer) What she most regretted and was sad about was that she was not able to spend much time with her daughter. Her story influenced me to value family and happiness more than my individual success. And, therefore, I didn't have a great desire to get a promotion to be a director or vice president, though I always tried my best at work, I didn't desire to be successful.

I Am Waiting for My Time to Come

Many participants thought that their leave would be temporary. Even though no one expected or wanted to go back to their previous workplace, most thought that they would get another job after spending some period of time with their family when they left their work. No one left their work thinking that one was staying home permanently.

JM: At first, I didn't worry about it. I didn't think of the possibility that I might not be able to get a job again. Why wouldn't I be able to find a job only because I am married? Of course I would be able to! That's what I thought. However, someone like Ms. K (JM's ex-coworker) who could speak English and Japanese fluently and a married woman like her could get a job anywhere. However, it wasn't a common case.

During the interviews with participants, all participants stated that, even though they were a full-time housewife, they would definitely get back to their own track someday by finding a full-time or part-time job or getting further education or devoting themselves to what really interested them, like a hobby. When they were asked when it would be, the answers varied. Some said it would be when their child reaches 3 or 4 years

old. Some said it would be after their child goes to kindergarten or elementary school. One participant said she would look for a job right away only if she could find someone to take care of her children.

One participant showed her will to develop her unused abilities before it was too late. As a way to do that, she was willing to make efforts to obtain a license.

YL: I think I have to work hard while I am still young. There is still room to develop my abilities. I realized that, unless I made great effort and worked hard for the next three or four years to develop my abilities, the next 40-50 years might end up as a difficult and meaningless life as I am now replaceable. A license can be a foot in the door to a certain career.

JL expressed her fear of becoming permanent *Ajooma* (Korean for a full-time housewife) without trying to give herself more time and new opportunities.

JL: Frankly, I still didn't give up hope of trying out new things later. I don't feel that I am satisfied and settled with being a housewife. So I try to get new ideas and information. I am afraid that I could be too involved in the *Ajoomma* community. Currently, I still feel that there is something missing as a housewife, and I have thought of trying new things. But it seems that opportunities have not yet come my way. It is not easy to pinpoint it, but I guess it is partly that I still don't want to go down to an *Ajoomma* or don't want to admit to the fact that I am an *Ajoomma*. When I chat with other *Ajoommas* or when my son is asleep, I have a strong urge to do something more meaningful. The urge to have more time to myself....I believe other mothers have difficulty to find their own time, too.

JM has tried to obtain an AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) license after months of studying but failed. She expressed the disappointment of her failure, as well as having failed to accomplish her desire to do something more than just being a full-time mother.

JM: I think most other women who left their work live peacefully in a stable lifestyle. I believe it's hard to find a woman like me who gets stressed from just thinking that I have to do something more, and thinking that I cannot be wasted at home. There probably won't be a woman like me who thinks of themselves so highly and surrounding themselves with an illusion of oneself. Now, when I try to do something for myself, I get discouraged when it doesn't work out, and it's getting more and more difficult. If I hadn't even tried anything, I wouldn't have felt unhappy. But I keep trying. Even if I didn't get a job, it is not a big deal financially. Nobody is forcing me to get a job. Other people can't understand me because I am not trying to get a job in order to buy a house or something. It's a personal issue. Nobody would understand the thoughts that are deep inside of me.

Participants YL and HH also were afraid that they might be confined in the roles of housewife and might have to let go of their desire to try something new for their life dream.

YL: As, however, I couldn't accomplish any of those now, I always have a desire to do something. I wish to live a global life and to get to know a lot about the world. But I feel very dissatisfied that I am tied down with childrearing, housekeeping, and the role as a first daughter-in-law. It seems that I didn't peak yet in life. I feel like I want to stretch my wings and try anything out.

HH: Until recently, I wondered whether I would remain as just a mother of a child for the rest of my life. I had many inner struggles and came up with many desires to try something new.

JK also strongly expressed recurring dissatisfaction as a full-time housewife and a strong will to find work of her own someday.

JK: It is hard for me to be satisfied staying home because I have strong desire for work. Therefore, dissatisfaction always resides in me, and it's hard to resolve it. Instead, I tend to focus more on educating my sons perfectly. My sons feel stressed by that, but their school performance is much better than others. I have in mind that I will sometime find work of my own. Whether it would be a professional job or just a small business, I have to prepare myself for that by educating myself. I don't want people to consider me as over the hill.

SL throughout the first interview expressed her desire to find a job outside the home someday. The only obstacle for her desire to come true was that it was hard to find a trustworthy daycare center for her three year-old son.

SL: My wish is to start working again right away even beginning next month but only if I could find someone trustworthy enough to take care of my son. I mean any kind of work....I definitely think I will work again someday. And I believe I can do it. But I am not sure when that will be....Now, I am very concerned about my son. I would feel sorry for him because it seems that I would be neglecting him. I am worried that he might not be able to adjust to it. Actually, there are many good daycare centers, but it's not so easy to find a perfect one that a mom would be fully satisfied with.

Summary

This chapter presents the fourth theme category, *I am rethinking of myself and my career*; it contained five themes: 1) *The previous work experience was a good experience*; 2) *Getting credentials is the way to women's careers*; 3) *Career leaving could be a chance for a career change*; 4) *I design my own career paths*; and 5) *I am waiting for my time to come*.

These themes emerged throughout the entire interview, regardless of the order of the participants' experiencing their career leaving. I put together these themes under the theme category, *I am rethinking of myself and my career*, because these themes revealed that participants tried to make sense out of what they had believed, realized, and learned about themselves and their careers throughout their career leaving experiences.

The participants recalled what they had enjoyed about their past work experience and regarded it as a valuable experience, although their workplaces were not women friendly, as stated in the first theme category. To overcome the handicap as a woman, they believed that becoming equipped with a vocational/professional license was essential for women's careers. When the participants decided to leave their careers, no one thought they would leave the workforce permanently. They positively thought that their career leaving would be a good chance for a career change. In addition, the participants' definition of *career* varied as they lived their lives, and they perceived it with much flexibility.

CHAPTER 8

POST-ANALYSIS LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a post-analysis literature review and to discuss the emergent themes from the analysis within the context of related literature.

Being a Woman Is a Handicap at Work

In this theme category, *Being a woman is a handicap at work*, the participants revealed that their workplaces before career leaving were not woman friendly. Being a woman, in and of itself, felt disadvantageous in the working world in many ways.

Glass Ceiling? There Was a Glass Partition (or Shield) for Women at Work.

Participants in this study experienced the glass partition (or shield or wall), even before experiencing the glass ceiling. They experienced being assigned to segregated tasks, low positions with low pay, perceived disrespect from male workers, uncompromising (different) work patterns, and sexual harassment.

The Korea Ministry of Labor (2008) surveyed 1,000 adults about Koreans' perceptions about equal employment opportunities for men and women. Of all respondents, both male and female, 54.9% thought that gender discrimination at work was a serious problem, while 40.1% thought it was not serious. The areas in which gender discrimination was perceived to happen most were, in order: 1) wages (27.6%), 2) promotion opportunities (25.3%), 3) recruitment/selection process (13.5%), and 4) dispositioning or reassignment (9.5%).

A survey of women officials in Korea showed that 64.6% had experienced gender discrimination, and 58.1% said that they received fewer opportunities for promotion ("Higher Government Posts," 2000). Confirming the existence of a glass wall or glass

partition, Kim Kyung-hee of the Gender Equality Office noted that women are assigned unimportant responsibilities and are provided with less training than men. Consequently, women have less chance to prepare for future opportunities ("Higher Government Posts," 2000).

In 2004, the Ministry of Labor in Korea conducted a survey of 2,347 employees on their perceptions about gender discrimination at work; 60.8% of female respondents agreed that they have been placed in lower positions than their male colleagues who entered the workplace at the same time; 58.3% of female workers answered that female workers' promotions were limited to a certain level or position; 73.2% of female employees and 42.9% of male employees answered that it took longer for female employees to get promoted than male employees; and 79.9% of female (64.1% of male) respondents said that employers recruited female and male employees separately, and that during the recruiting interviews, female employees were asked about their marriage and childbearing plans (10.9%), the possibility of working after marriage and childbirth (9.9%), and their willingness to work in serving tasks (such as serving coffee) (6.3%). Regarding performance appraisals, 45.8% of female (25.8% of male) employees reported that female employees have distinct disadvantages (Korea Ministry of Labor, 2004). Under the Act on Equal Employment and Support for Work-Family Reconciliation (Korea Ministry of Labor, 2007), all of these gender discrimination actions of employers are illegal and should be penalized by fines or imprisonment. However, there are still many employers who simply disregard the law but go unpunished.

The Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2008) surveyed over 500 companies about their female workers. Most of the companies gave 84 points out of 100

in satisfaction. Meanwhile, 39% of the companies felt female workers were risky because of job discontinuity due to childbirth or childrearing, and 28.5% felt restricted in having female workers work the overnight shift or go on business trips.

The Workplace Didn't Welcome My Marriage or Motherhood

Eight participants perceived that their marriage or motherhood were not welcome at the workplaces. It was suggested to five participants, implicitly or explicitly, that they quit work upon marriage by their employers and co-workers. Three participants felt that their pregnancy and childbirth would not be accommodated in the workplace and felt that their motherhood might be bothersome to co-workers.

As the Korean population is getting old due to a low fertility rate, the utilization of the female workforce has become one of the key solutions in preparing the country for the results of its low-fertility and aging population. Maternity protection legislation is regarded as one of the ambitious family-friendly labor policies in Korea to prevent female workers from quitting work upon childbirth and from avoiding having babies. Since the amendment to the Maternity Protection legislation in 2001, maternity leaves have been extended to 90 days from the previous 60-day protection. Parents of children under 12 months can use paid childcare leave. The Employment Insurance covers the cost for childcare, and the employee on leave is paid 300,000 won per month (approximately \$250 U.S.).

In spite of Korean government efforts to establish a family-friendly workplace, many female workers experience discrimination against married female workers in the workplace in Korea. The Bureau of Aging Society and Population Policy in Korea (2007) conducted a survey of 568 female workers who had babies during the previous year

(2005. Mar~2006. Feb) in 212 companies about the use of maternity leaves before and after childbirth. Of the 568 female workers in the survey, 342 female workers (60.2%) left the company after childbirth. Of these, 43% left the company without using any maternity leave, and 52% left the company after using only a part of the 90-day maternity leave; they left involuntarily due to company pressure to leave. Of those who went back to work after 90 days of maternity leave, 30.9% were considering leaving the company involuntarily due to company pressure for them to leave. When asked about discrimination against pregnant workers, 51.6% of returned female workers and 61.1% of those who left work answered that it was present.

In 2005, a private recruiting agency, Saramin, conducted a survey of 346 married female office workers asking if they were pressured by the company, spouse, or parents-in-law to quit work after having a child. Fifty percent answered yes. Pressure to quit came from the company (53%), followed by parents-in-law (11.6%), husband (6.1%), and parents (3.4%). This survey showed that female workers receive more pressure to leave a job after childbirth than before childbirth (Moon, Y., 2005).

A career consulting company in Korea conducted a survey of 982 office workers in 2008 regarding parental leave, and 90% responded that they had not used any parental leave. The reason for not having used parental leave was because of: 1) potential disadvantage on promotion (26.6%), 2) not knowing about the policies (15.5%), 3) not wanting to burden other co-workers (13.9%), 4) employer's disapproval (9.4%), 5) not enough subsidy from government (7.4%), and 6) potential disadvantage for future salary negotiations (Song, K., 2008).

A similar survey was conducted by the Ministry of Labor in Korea (2004). Female employees were asked about maternity leave before and after childbirth; only 19.2 % responded that they could apply for it without restriction; 52.3% said that they would feel sorry for their employers and co-workers; 15.9% said that they would get fired; and 12.5 % answered that there might be repercussions with respect to appraisals. As for childcare leave, only 11.5% of female employees said that they could apply for it without restriction.

Leaving Work Was to Become a Better Mother

Nine participants mentioned that they placed their motherhood as a top priority, even at the expense of their career leaving. All of the participants wanted to raise their children by themselves.

Oh, E., Kim, J., Kim, N., Lee, S., and Kim, J. (2008) conducted a survey of 715 college-graduated Korean women who had left their careers and wanted to re-enter the labor force sooner or later. As for the duration of their career interruptions, women with less than one year of career interruption made up 9.1%; 1-3 years made up 28.3%; 3-5 years made up 13.6%; and longer than 5 years made up 49.1% of the sample. The most commonly cited reason for having left their work was marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth. The second most commonly cited reason was their valuing childrearing and their children's education more than their careers, and the third reason was their low wages (lower than their expectations). As for the time of their career leaving, 35.7% had left work right before or after marriage, and 28.3% had left work right before or after their first childbirth. The most commonly cited reason by far as to why women wanted to obtain a job again was to make money.

I Needed to Protect My Pregnancy Away from the Stress of Work

As the title reveals, six participants left work before or after becoming pregnant when they thought that their bodies were under stress at work. As women in other countries do, Korean women try to get their body set to be in as good a condition as possible before conceiving their baby. *Taegyo* is Korean for the beliefs, behaviors, and self care of pregnant women for herself and her fetus (Kang, D., 2002). Based on Oriental folk medicine of Korea, *Taegyo* is believed to be desirable, effective, and healthy behavior by most Korean pregnant women (Chang, S., Park, Y., Choi, Y., & Chung, C., 1996). Howard and Berbigilia (1997) defined *Taegyo* as a system of pregnancy rituals and taboos in Korea, as well as caring for childbearing Korean women. *Taegyo* starts even before conception, and, when women get pregnant, *mom-man-dul-ki* means forming a body that will conceive a baby in the best condition.

The book, *Taegyo-Shin-Ki*, was written in 1739 during the Cho-Sun Dynasty by a noble class woman. It appears to be the first book in the world written about prenatal training for women. The first chapter says that the first 10 years' education after a baby is born is not as important as the 10 months' prenatal training in the mother's womb, and the 10 months' prenatal training is not as important as the right state of mind of the parents-to-be when conceiving a baby (Choi, H., 2008; Kang, D., 2002). In Korea, counting a person's age traditionally starts as soon as the person is conceived, so a baby is already one year old when she/he is born. This tradition agrees with the emphasis on *Taegyo*.

This emphasizes the importance of physical and mental preparation even before getting pregnant. Whether it is wisdom from tradition or medically recommended, there

are many tips and much information for building women's body to be in the best condition for conceiving a baby. For example, some of the tips for women before getting pregnant include: 1) get away from psychological and physical stress, 2) keep your body warm, 3) eat nutritious food, and 4) exercise for good blood circulation (Chang et al., 1996; Kang, D., 2002).

After conceiving a baby, there are dos and don'ts an expectant mother should observe in order to give her unborn child the best environment during pregnancy. For example, when a pregnant woman tries to be careful, prudent in speech and action, keeps distance from evil thoughts, eats only good-shaped food, and avoids watching violent movies, it is believed that it affects the unborn child in good ways (Choi, H., 2008; Howard & Berbigilia, 1997). Chang et al. (1996) clustered the component of *Taegyo* into five factors: fetus' psychological stability, fetus' personality development, maternal-fetal interaction, fetus' intellectual development, and physical health promotion. However, expectant mothers report increasing levels of fatigue, especially morning fatigue, as pregnancy progress (Elek, Hudson, & Fleck, 1997).

As *Taegyo* recommended avoiding stress during pregnancy, there have been studies about the negative effects of stress on a fetus (University of Kentucky Medical Center, 1999). Maternal stress and anxiety throughout pregnancy can cause behavioral, emotional, and cognitive difficulties in the child, including increased levels of anxiety and reduced attention spans (The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2007; "Work 'can cause stress' during pregnancy," 2007).

It is My Job to Raise My Child by Myself; I Feel First-hand Responsibility and Full Commitment to My Child

The title of this theme, *It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child*, cannot explain better how participants felt after having a child. The participants believed that it was their job to raise their children by themselves and felt first-hand responsibility and full commitment to their children. Their focus of life shifted to raising their child and being there for them 24-7 in the critical years of their children's childhood.

When it comes to answering, *Is mothering really mother's work?* there are various perspectives. From the point of view of psychology, some believe that women are more attached and devoted to mothering because women are the ones who physically bear a baby for nine months and deliver a baby (Bowlby, 1960, 1969). However, this view has been less valid since the early 1980s. From the viewpoint of sociology, mothering behaviors have been learned and internalized by socialization in gender roles by divided social structures (Walker, 1992). Additionally, feminism views the mothering role as socially learned and imposed on women. The feminist perspective (Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991) has emphasized the need to define mothering from women's experiences and to value their opinions, not simply to accept the biological or social functioning of women (Lee, S., 2005).

The Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (2005) asked Korean employed single women (20-44 years) if they would want to leave work after pregnancy or childbirth and the reason for doing so. They answered that they would like to raise children by themselves (79.8%); that there would not be a proper daycare facility or

caregiver for their child (1.9%); and that there would not be enough time for both family and work (4.8%).

Lee, O. (2002) conducted a survey of 286 Korean women (87.1% of them were married, and 15% of them were employed) on their employment needs. Among unemployed women, 54.9% wanted to work outside the home some day, whereas 39.5% did not want to obtain a job. Those who did not want to seek work justified their reasons: 1) simply not wanting to work outside the home (33.3%); and 2) getting a job might impede their childrearing and their children's education (32.3%). Kim, Y. (2007) stated that highly educated Korean women's employment motivation was diminished because they put more emphasis on their children's education, and their children's education was mainly seen as the mother's responsibility.

Mothering and caregiving of the family have been traditionally considered as essential to women's roles in most societies, including Korea's. Traditionally, people have considered raising children as a private realm of life, associating mothering with unconditional love and the labor of love (Cho, S. 2002). In the patriarchal tradition, a mother is regarded as the most important psychological parent (Russo, 1979) and as the best caretaker for the child, at least until going to school (Oppenheim-Mason & Kuhlthau, 1989).

Mothering ideology has mystified mothers as being noble and great, emphasizing that a mother is the most important figure for a child, but mothering requires lots of psychological and physical hard labor. Many Korean women think that they must become a mother and take it for granted that mothers can be truly happy as a mother, despite all of the sacrifice required in raising children. Therefore, Korean society takes a negative

view of women who do not want to become a mother, women who do not feel happy raising children, women who put self-actualization ahead of childrearing, and women who are not good at raising children (Lee, S., 2005). In Korean culture, in which the mother's role is given special importance and is highly valued, childrearing by others outside the family is considered to be dangerous (Lee, S. & Keith, 1999).

Stone and Lovejoy (2004) indicated that many women left their professional jobs in response to the belief system that mothers should be at home with their children, if at all possible. Medina and Magnuson (2009) conducted a study of 43 U.S. full-time mothers who had resigned from their professional jobs. Results showed that 72% of these mothers reported that caring for their children was their main reason for resigning, and 66% reported that their husbands influenced their decision. Eighty-six percent of the participants reported that workplace inflexibility, or a maternal wall (employers' expectations that motherhood would impede women's professional lives) contributed to their decision to resign from employment (Medina & Magnuson, 2009).

With regard to employed women's voluntary decision to leave work to be stay-at-home mothers, Williams (2000) argued that their choice to quit working was not made merely in private and personal realms but was influenced by social and political pressure to conform to societal standards (Medina & Magnuson, 2009).

Work after Career Leaving Becomes Being a Full-time Housewife

In the third theme category, *Work after career leaving becomes being a full-time housewife*, the participants shared how they went through the changes from being a full-time paid worker to a full-time housewife/stay-at-home mother. Being at home all day, in and of itself, was psychologically difficult for them. They felt lonely, isolated, and

depressed at home, even with their family. In addition, a housewife's job, doing housework and childrearing, weighed heavily upon them. While working for their family, they realized that they were losing a sense of themselves. They were not the center of their lives anymore; their family was.

Being at Home Is Difficult

In this theme, *Being at home is difficult*, the participants poured out their negative emotions and feelings about being at home as a full-time housewife/mother. They felt depressed, fallen behind, isolated, and tied down at home, in contrast to their positive anticipation about raising their children by themselves and having a new lifestyle.

Careers provide a link between the inner world of self and the outer world of society (Parker, 2002). When participants in this study began staying at home full-time, that meant losing the link to the outer world of society. Staying at home all day, housewives do not have much time to interact with other adults as most of them have nuclear family systems with parents and their children in a family. While a husband goes to work, housewives' social interaction at home is often confined to only their children. When they compare the days when they worked outside of the home, they felt more lonely and isolated.

Jang, S. and Merriam (2004) conducted a qualitative study to ascertain Korean college-graduated full-time housewives' motivations to return to higher education. In their study, they also found that, no matter why women stopped working and became housewives, the result was that they experienced discontent, depression, conflict, and struggles as housewives. Jang and Merriam claimed that negative social conceptions about housewives contribute to their discontent. This study perfectly agrees with my

findings. Also, several participants said they had degraded full-time housewives (*Ajooma*).

Gove and Geerken (1977) explained that role restrictions imposed on women, the frustration and low prestige linked to housekeeping, and the unstructured role of being a housewife contribute to the great differences in rates of mental disorders found between women and men. A study by Brown and Harris (1978) found that women who had more than two children under the age of 14 were significantly more depressed than women who had fewer than two children. Women with a supportive relationship with their husband were not influenced by the number of children. And women who worked were less depressed than those who did not. Merely working outside the home reduced by 50% the incidence of depression among women who did not have a supportive relationship with a husband. The housewife is generally more at risk of developing depression and mental disorders than her husband or a woman who works (Spendlove, Gavelek, & MacMurray, 1981).

Through a critical review of the literature concerning depression, Piccinelli and Wilkinson (2000) concluded that gender differences in depression were genuine. Although the determinants of such differences have not currently been established, adverse experiences in childhood, depression and anxiety disorders in childhood and adolescence, socio-cultural roles with related adverse experiences, and psychological attributes associated with vulnerability to adverse life events and coping skills are likely to be involved in these gender differences. However, Piccinelli and Wilkinson found that genetic and biological factors, as well as poor social support, have few or no effects in the gender differences of depression.

Martz, Handley, and Eisler (1995) also state that females are more vulnerable to cultural influence because of the higher stress related to their gender role and their weaker power in a patriarchal society. They found that appetite disturbances, a major symptom of depression, are more likely to affect females who have a negative concept about the female role in society. Females more often reported depression symptoms, such as appetite disturbances, sleep problems, fatigue, and somatic anxiety (Frank, Carpenter, & Kupfer, 1988; Silverstein, 1999; Young et al., 1990).

Many of the participants said they were depressed when they stayed at home after leaving work. During or after pregnancy, women often suffer from postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is different from just having the “baby blues” right after giving birth. Depression may occur even during pregnancy and may last longer than a year after giving birth (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2009). As many of the participants left work during pregnancy or after having a baby, this depressed feeling may have been influenced by postpartum depression.

Studies on how the employment of married women influences their psychological and physical health have shown results based on two opposite hypotheses. One is a scarcity hypothesis, and the other is an enhancement/expansion or role-accumulative hypothesis (Kim, H., 1997; Korabik, McDonald, & Rosin, 1993).

The scarcity hypothesis states that married women’s employment has negative effects on their well-being because the multiple roles of working mothers impose too much stress, role conflicts, and role overload on women with limited energy. Several research studies have reported that working mothers experience more psychological and

physical difficulties than non-working mothers (Goldberg, Greenberg, Hamill, & O'Neil, 1992; Hemmelgarn & Laing, 1991; Houston, Cates, & Kelly, 1992; Snapp, 1992).

On the other hand, the enhancement/expansion or role-accumulative hypothesis claims that working women maintain more sound mental health (Kessler & McRae, 1982), less role overload (Lee, S., 1990), and higher life satisfaction (Maynard, 1993) because working women's multiple roles expand their energy resource through enhancing individual self-esteem, self-identity, and social status (Kim, H., 1997).

Also, there have been studies that have taken neither side of the above hypotheses, claiming that there is no relationship between women's employment and women's well-being (Kim, H., 1997), and there are more complex factors underneath women's well-being.

Kim, H. (1997) conducted a very interesting study involving married Korean (employed and unemployed) women and their psychological well-being with regard to their socio-structural factors, gender-role attitudes, and role quality. The results showed that the only socio-structural factor affecting unemployed married women's psychological well-being was the presence of a son, whereas employed married women's psychological well-being was not affected by the same factor. Kim speculated that unemployed women might be more exposed to patriarchal family values, especially with respect to the conservative son-preference value, while employed women's vocational identity made them more liberal minded. Another result regarding gender-role attitudes was that employed married women had higher psychological well-being when they held liberal (equal) gender-role attitudes, whereas unemployed married women had higher psychological well-being when they had conservative (traditional) gender-role attitudes.

Finally, both employed and unemployed married women's role quality (satisfaction and rewards from their roles) affected their psychological well-being more than the quantity (number) of their roles in life. Interestingly, for employed married women, role quality as a wife affected their psychological well-being, whereas for unemployed married women, role quality both as a wife and a mother affected their psychological well-being.

Housework and Childrearing Are Much More Difficult

When the participants became full-time housewives and stay-at-home mothers after career leaving, the pressure and stress from performing housework and childrearing all day was heavy for them.

As of 2007, the estimated number of full-time housewives in Korea was 6,600,000 (approximately 27% of the female population). These women have the same occupation, performing similar tasks in their households: housework. Many people think that housework is just housework and say someone is just a housewife or just a stay-at-home mother. Housework is popularly characterized as tedious, boring, and unsatisfying labor, and those who do it have been underappreciated socially (Friedan, 1963; Hartmann, 1981). Housework is degraded in that people judge housework as so easy that everybody can do it well naturally. Housework is perceived as women's work; some even believe that women are inherently more suited to housework than men (Kang, Y. & Shin, K., 2001).

However, doing housework requires a set of complex skills and practices. Housework is not simply a list of tasks at home. Rather, housework consists of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual tasks that maintain one's household and one's daily life (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). Housework can be thought of as the sum of crisis

management, conflict resolution, maintaining contact with kin and friends, providing emotional support, planning/managing/organizing work, and adding a spiritual dimension, all of which require mental, emotional, and spiritual tasks, in addition to repetitive physical tasks (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). In a similar view, Kemps (1993) also stated that domestic labor is the sum of household, support, status production, and care work. Nevertheless, full-time housewives with years of repeatedly doing housework are not considered as professional.

The desirable satisfaction level of both quality and quantity of one's housework varies individually. Some may be satisfied after two hours of house cleaning, whereas others may be happy with 30 minutes of cleaning. This variation indicates that there are no standards for housework performance, nor do rewards and assessment exist. Therefore, housework is not easily recognized, rewarded, or acknowledged by others, even by housewives themselves (Kang, Y. & Shin, K., 2001). Interestingly, Shaw (1988) revealed that women were significantly more likely than men to say that they evaluated themselves based on how well they accomplished various household tasks.

Most women say that housework is work you cannot recognize when it is done, yet very noticeable when it is not done. Housework (including childrearing) has no beginning or end of work time-wise, and housewives' workplace is at home, so their place to rest is home. Thus, there is no boundary for housewives between the workplace and going home to rest (Park, H., 1995).

There are many quotations regarding housework, many more negative than positive. The following are some negative quotations regarding housework:

--“Housework is what a woman does that nobody notices unless she hasn’t done it (Esar, 1995, p. 397).”

--“Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present (de Beauvoir, 1989, p. 451).”

--“Housework is work directly opposed to the possibility of human self-actualization (Oakley, A., 1974, p. 19).”

As people acknowledge that housework is inevitably important work for human survival and well-being, why is housework considered to be an obstacle for women to overcome and a subject of complaint and dissatisfaction? In the Korean context, Kang, Y. and Shin, K. (2001) claimed that such a sentiment was due to prevailing perceptions and prejudices about housework in Korean society, where capitalism and the patriarchal system coexist: 1) housework is not productive work; 2) housework is women’s work; and 3) housework is done out of housewives’ love for the family, and not by housewives’ labor.

Some participants shared their difficulties of childrearing as stay-at-home mothers. Full-time childrearing can be boring, dirty, and exhausting (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Even for stay-at-home mothers, childrearing expectations may be impossible to attain (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Yet, in contrast, in a hermeneutic phenomenological study of stay-at-home mothers (Nash, 2002), these mothers reported sensing a profound intimacy and belonging with their children, feeling rewarded by living in the day-to-day intentional presence of their children.

Robinson and Milke (1998) claimed that the assumption of domestic labor as universally boring, unrewarding, and unsatisfying needed to be studied in its proper context. Perceptions of domestic labor are complex, depending on the particular activity and particular individual. Domestic labor may be fun and fulfilling, while at the same time, exhausting and boring (Berheide, 1984; DeVault, 1991; Shaw, 1988). Chae, O. and Song, B. (2006) stated that we can not simply presume what the housework preferences are of housewives because there are too many complex factors to consider before making any assumptions.

What, then, possibly made the participants in this study feel that it was difficult for them to do domestic labor? In a qualitative study using ethnography (Kim, S. & Lee, K., 2006), results showed that full-time housewives' husbands were exempt from housework duties, whereas employed housewives' husbands tried to share housework in various ways. In another study, it was reported that, regardless of women's employment, wives took the main responsibility of doing the housework, including the childrearing (Lee, Y. & Lee, S., 2007).

Some studies have stated that housewives (employed or unemployed) tend to believe that their share of housework is fair, in spite of objectively larger amounts of housework they do, compared with their husbands (Baxter & Western 1998; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). This finding was explained by the notion that: 1) women tend to accept their gender role ideology; and 2) social exchange theory states that women feel parity when they have no alternative to marriage, and when they have fewer resources (Jang, H. & Kim, Y., 2000). Lennon and Rosefield (1994) found that women who

perceive an unequal share of housework as unfair experience lower psychological well-being.

I Feel a Loss of Myself

The participants felt that they were not the center of their own lives. While they put their family as their first priority, a sense of ownership of their time, money, and individuality that they had before career leaving was slipping away. Thus, this main theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, has three sub-themes: 1) *I do not have my own time*, 2) *I do not have my own money*, and 3) *I do not have my own individuality*.

I do not have my own time. All participants said that they did not have enough time for themselves and that time for themselves was essential for them. They said that what they did in their own time was not considered as important. Some activities they reported doing for themselves included taking naps, surfing on the Internet, reading books, writing, window shopping, learning something interesting to them, and meeting friends, among other activities. They wanted some time psychologically and physically away from their household duties.

There have been studies estimating full-time housewives' working hours (Lee, Y. & Lee, S., 2007; Too, 1995). For example, in 1995, stay-at-home housewives spent 4.7 hours a day on household management and housework, and 2.7 hours on childrearing (Jang, H. & Kim, Y., 2000). The younger the housewives were, the more hours they spent on childrearing. The older the housewives were, however, the more hours they spent on social and leisure activities. The more educated they were, the more time they spent on childrearing and leisure activities. The higher social and educational status they had, the more time they spent on childrearing. In terms of life-cycle, the younger the youngest

child was, the less time housewives spent on themselves and leisure activities, and the more time they dedicated to childrearing (Too, 1995). However, the participants of Too's study were full-time housewives with junior and high school children.

According to Lee, Y. and Lee, S. (2007), as of 2004, full-time housewives with children under preschool years spent 6 hours and 42 minutes on household management, whereas husbands spent 31 minutes daily. With respect to childcare, housewives spent 2 hours and 26 minutes, whereas their husbands spent 16 minutes daily. In this way, they calculated that full-time housewives' average time spent on home-based tasks was 9 hours and 8 minutes. Household management included meal preparation, clothing care, cleaning and arrangement, purchasing household goods, managing family members, and childcare, including washing children, feeding them, reading them books, playing with them, and taking care of them when sick, among many other responsibilities.

In a survey of Korean housewives in their 30s, on average, full-time housewives' hours of housework was 7.1 hours, whereas employed housewives' was 4.9 hours, showing a significantly different amount of time between the two groups (Chae, O. & Song, B., 2006).

In Jang, H. and Kim, Y.'s (2000) survey of 859 full-time housewives in Seoul, Korea, it was found that the younger the youngest child was, the longer the time for childrearing and the shorter the time they allocated for themselves, social activities, or leisure activities. Also, housewives with an infant child felt more difficulties in their role as a mother and housewife. This result is similar with the findings of Pittman and Blanchard (1996) in that there is an inverse correlation between the age of the youngest child and the hours of housework.

I do not have my own money. No studies were identified concerning women's psychological changes after they leave their career and lose their financial independence. However, there are studies involving how housewives manage household budgets. Additionally, there were studies showing that many women want to get a job later, mostly for financial reasons (Lee, O., 2002).

A relatively old study, conducted in 1986, of employed housewives' financial management behaviors found that there were not many differences between employed and unemployed housewives, except that employed housewives were more active and willing to manage their money to enhance the quality of their individual life than were unemployed full-time housewives. This interest in individual life quality increased as housewives' education and income increased (Kim, H., Park, M., Son, Y., Oh, Y., Wang, S., Lee, M., Ha, S., & Ham, H., 1986). This study showed that 50% of housewives took charge of the household budget. More husbands of full-time housewives took control of household budget spending than that of employed housewives. That is, employed housewives had a more independent attitude about spending. In addition, the higher the education level of the housewives, the more likely it was for them to control spending of the budget. In terms of long-term budget planning, employed housewives put more value in leisure and cultural activities, whereas unemployed housewives put more value on their children's educational planning.

In Son, S.'s (1998) study, personal money management profiles were shown to be different, according to education, age, household income, and assets. Housewives' employment had no effect on personal money management behaviors. Moon, O., (1996)

showed that, as of 1996, 76.5% of Korean urban middle-class housewives took charge of the household budget.

There were studies (Kim, S. & Lee, K., 2004, 2006) stating that, although many full-time housewives took control of the household budget, they were just exercising limited authority assigned by their husbands, who earned the income in a gender-segregated activity. They said that full-time housewives would like to obtain a job when they strongly feel the limits of authority. In addition, full-time housewives experience inner conflict when they spend money for themselves because they have the desire to keep their individual identity; at the same time, they feel responsible for the household budget.

I do not have my own individuality. When working, women have a work identity that their jobs provided, but they lose their work identity as paid workers after they leave the workplace and become full-time housewives. Not everyone feels that it is easy to make the change from having a work identity as a paid worker to a self-identity as a housewife. When working, women have several identities--as a worker, a wife, a mother, and as a daughter-in-law. At least at work, women can focus solely on themselves as workers not interrupted by the housewife's role.

However, after leaving the workplace, women are expected to find their self-identity as a full-time housewife, which is all about their family and the household. At this point, women may feel a profound loss of themselves. According to Kim, S. and Lee, K. (2004), a person's identity can be viewed at three levels: individual identity, family-related identity, and social identity. Individual identity consists of nationality, race, education, gender, sexuality, age, religion, hometown, and other related factors. Family-

related identity forms in relation with cross-generational roles, such as child, parent, relative, and homemaker roles. Social identity is formed upon various social relationships through working (employment), group activities, or social gatherings. By viewing the identity of housewives, the family-related identity is the main identity, while the individual identity is subsumed under the family-related identity.

Due to the limited female labor market and the strong mother ideology, it is not easy for a housewife to exhibit (vent, express) her individual identity. In addition, the social identity of housewives can be established indirectly through family members or via social gatherings.

According to related studies (Noh, Y., 1998; Shin, K., 1997; Song, H., 2002; Yoon, T., 2001), full-time housewives' identity is centered mainly on the mother role (motherhood, maternity), as well as the wife role, homemaker role, and relative relations manager role. These studies stated that living as a full-time housewife entailed focusing on the mother role, which made it difficult to maintain an individual identity and isolated women from maintaining a social identity, such as a work identity.

I Am Rethinking Myself and My Career

Five themes emerged in this theme category: *I am rethinking myself and my career*: 1) *The previous work experience was a good experience*, 2) *Getting credentials is the way to women's careers*, 3) *Career-leaving could be a chance for a career change*, 4) *I design my own career path*, and 5) *I am waiting for my time to come*. Throughout the interviews, the participants reflected on how their thinking about work and themselves evolved throughout their lived experience of career leaving.

The Previous Work Experience was a Good Experience

Participants in this study reflected on what they liked about working before career leaving. Although they felt handicapped as women at work, such as in the first theme category, the things they had enjoyed, yet had taken for granted while working, still lingered in their minds, and they found value in those things. They also considered their working experience as helpful in better understanding how the society functions and the experiences of their husbands working in the society. Some participants believed that there should be a difference in the social lives between housewives with work experience and without.

There were several identified studies concerning how women's past work experience affects women's attitudes and behaviors. Pai and Barrett (2007) stated that previous research findings about the relationship between paid work and women's mental health have not been consistent. Studies arguing that paid work negatively affects women's mental health found a close connection to women's experiences with gender inequality in the labor force, which consisted of low-status and low-paying jobs. Additionally, these less desirable jobs tended to lead to limited autonomy, lower job satisfaction, and higher psychological distress (Lennon, 1994; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1992; Sears & Galambos, 1993; Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner, & Wan, 1991).

On the other hand, some studies have argued that participating in paid work is highly beneficial for women because work might improve women's mental health through a number of mechanisms, including: 1) the provision of income that helps meet economic needs, 2) the development of social connections outside home, and 3) the fostering of a health-enhancing sense of self in a culture that values individual achievement and independence (Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Barnett, Marshall, & Singer,

1992; Bird & Fremont, 1991; Crosby, 1991; Moen, Dempster-McClain, & Williams, 1992). Moreover, DeGarmo and Ktson (1996) argued that the positive effect of women's work experience on psychological well-being could last for a long period, even with relatively few years of full-time work experience, and even during earlier periods in life. This phenomenon was labeled as *lingering identity*, meaning that women with work experience might continue to identify to some degree with the paid worker role after they had stopped working.

Getting Credentials Is the Way to Women's Careers

All of the participants, in either the first or second interview, felt the need to obtain a vocational/professional credential, either a license or certification, as a way to achieve women's careers. After having experienced the harsh reality of the workplace for women and some discrimination against them at work without any license or certificate, the participants regretted that they were not fully prepared or equipped to succeed in their careers. They believed that a credential would act like a weapon and shield that would help them re-enter the workforce and would protect them from discrimination. Five participants attempted to obtain a license while working as a full-time housewife for future insurance, and three succeeded in doing so.

Kim, Y.'s (2007) in-depth interview analysis of 15 cases of Korean women who were job-seeking after years of career interruption also found that participants wanted to equip themselves by obtaining licenses or certificates for more stable and continuous jobs for their next career paths. Jang, S. (2008) conducted a qualitative study to understand the re-entry process to the job market of highly-educated Korean women with discontinued careers. In her study, research participants who succeeded in re-entering the workplace

after career leaving reported that they had enrolled in educational programs in order to obtain some degree of expertise or certificate in the field of their interest, with the hope that this would help them to get a quality job.

Professional qualifications provide objective standards and signal the value of labor and human resources in the labor market (Teese, Lamb, Mavies, & Keating, 2003). There were a few studies showing the wage effect and employment effect of licenses, in general; however, there were few identified studies on wages and the employment effect of licenses on re-entry women.

Lee, M. (2008) argued that, in Korea, professional qualifications had not exactly reflected the demand of the labor market, nor had they provided applicability or flexibility. As a result, they did not effectively link educational institutes with industrial demands. However, his study reported that the possession of professional qualifications helped individuals to get jobs, and that the people with professional qualifications were performing their duties in line with their educational and technical levels. This finding also showed that the possession of professional qualifications had a positive impact on the wage rates and employment of wage workers.

Among seven research studies on the wage effect of having professional/vocational licenses (Choi, Y., 2007; Kim, A. & Kang, S., 2004; Kim, J. & Park, M., 2006; Lee, B., Kim, J., Park, S., & Rye, J., 2004; Lee, D. & Kim, D., 2001; Lee, D. & Kim, S., 2005; Lee, D., Kim, H., Kim, D., Cho, J., & Kim, H., 2006), only three studies showed a positive impact on wage rates. Four studies showed a positive employment effect of having professional/vocational licenses (Kim, A. & Kang, S., 2004; Lee, B., Kim, J., Park, S., & Rye, J., 2004; Lee, D. & Kim, D., 2001; Lee, D., Kim, H.,

Kim, D., Cho, J., & Kim, H., 2006). However, there were few studies regarding wage effect and employment effect of re-entry women's license and qualification acquisition.

Career Leaving Could Be a Chance for a Career Change

At the time of a career leaving, the participants did not consider their career leaving as a dead-end in their career paths. No one thought that they would stay home forever. Yet nobody wanted to go back to their previous workplace. They positively regarded their career leaving as a chance for a career or job change, which they hoped would lead to work more suited to their interest, or work with more flexibility and better working conditions.

Cabrera (2007) agreed with the participants in this study:

...It is possible that knowing-why may be enhanced when women voluntarily leave work, allowing them the opportunity to reassess what it is they really want from a career. Women may take advantage of the time spent away from work to explore what is truly important to them or to pursue a new career that more closely matches their values or the motives that are primary at that point in their lives. (p. 223)

However, there are many research studies that have shown the negative effect of women's career interruption, such as lowered earnings, losses in terms of salary and benefits, and fewer advancement opportunities (Eby, 2001; Reitman & Schneer, 2005; Valcour & Tolbert, 2003).

In fact, the re-entry rate after the career interruption of Korean college-graduated women is only 40 % of their high school graduated counterparts. Because most college-graduated women with career interruption wish to obtain more competitive white-collar

office jobs or (semi-)professional jobs, many of them tend to give up re-entering the workforce and exit the labor force forever after failing to find work (Jang, S., Oh, M., Eun, H., & Choi, M., 2007). The re-entry rate for college-educated Korean women is also low because the reservation wages (wages that they hope to receive) of college-educated women are higher than those of low-paying jobs (Hwang, S., 2003).

For Korean women, education affected women's first employment in a positive manner before career interruption. However, after career interruption, education did not play a significant role as a human capital resource in women's re-entry into the workforce. Additionally, previous working years and type of previous occupation did not affect women's re-entering the workforce (Kim, Y., 2002; Park, S., 2003)

Hwang, S. (2003) reported that Korean women with career interruption preferred traditionally female-dominant occupations, in which 70% of the labor force was female, when they re-entered the workforce because they rationally chose occupations that might not strictly penalize any loss of skills or expertise caused by their career interruption. By doing so, this situation led to a more gender-segregated labor force market.

I Design My Own Career Path

The participants had their own perceptions of their careers, and the meaning of work for them changed with time and life situations. Many were not interested in pursuing the traditional career ladder from the beginning. The participants sometimes perceived *career* and *work* interchangeably. They were flexible, subjective, and creative in sharing what career and work meant to them. They seemed not to care about how their careers should be.

This theme, *I design my own career path*, agrees with many career development scholars who have argued that we must integrate alternative concepts of career and work in understanding people's careers in our ever-changing world. Hanson (1995) and Hopfl and Atkinson (2000) argued that the women's perspective on the meaning and value of work should be reflected because women's careers may face more inevitable discontinuity and ambivalence due to childbearing and childrearing. Hopfl and Atkinson (2000) stressed the need to pay attention to people's language of everyday experience in order to theorize the future concept of career, as life experiences are much messier and are not necessarily always guided by rational patterns. They further suggested that the meaning of success in life should be challenged by women's input. This viewpoint agrees with Berger and Luckman (1966), who said that reality was socially constructed through the conversations that people had with one another and the agreed-upon meanings that were determined through interactions. In addition, another career theorist, Peavy (1997) suggested that the gap between *life* and *career* be eliminated, and more holistic perspectives be incorporated through an ongoing dialogue between an individual's context and the self.

This theme also resonates with Richardson (1993), who advocated examining the holistic concept of *work* in people's lives rather than focusing on the concept of *career*. James (1990) studied the effect of three different employment patterns on the psychological well-being of women in midlife and found no significant differences in the psychological well-being of women with either continuous, interrupted but resumed, or unresumed career patterns. This result suggests that career success and fulfillment are

obtainable through a variety of career patterns other than the male-oriented linear career pattern.

I Am Waiting for My Time to Come

The participants in this study recognized that it was not their time yet. No one expected that their life would be all about family forever. As shown in the theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, their center of life became their family/children after their career leaving. They were devoted as full-time housewives taking care of children at the time. However, they were afraid that they might stay as *Ajooma* permanently without giving themselves another opportunity to try something different for themselves. They were waiting for the time to regain a sense of themselves and the time when they can find themselves.

Although they were not specific about when and how they were going to make this desire and hope come true, most of the participants were vaguely thinking about working outside the home full-time or part-time when situations allowed for the opportunity.

I tried to determine what the closest concept to their desire to find themselves would be. There were a plethora of human needs theories by many scholars with different philosophies (Huitt, 2004). The human needs closest to this theme may be, to name a few, Maslow's (1954) self-esteem (to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition) and self-actualization (growth and fulfillment of one's potential); Alderfer's (1972) growth; Ryan and Deci's (2000) autonomy and competence; expression and freedom of the Institute for Management Excellence (2001).

Riffle, Yoho, and Sams (1989) and Action and Malathum (2000) argued that social support should precede self-actualization; that is, it is difficult to reach self-actualization without social support. In a Korean study on the factors influencing middle-

aged women's self-actualization (Kim, S., Jeon, E., Kim, G., & Seo, Y., 2002), social support, motivation for achievement, and self-esteem accounted for 38.1% of the variance in their self-actualization.

Although the participants in this study were waiting for their time to come, there are many Korean women with the same desire. According to a 2007 survey (Oh, E., Kim, J., Kim, N., Lee, S., & Kim, J., 2008) of Korean college-graduated housewives (837 women) who wished to get a job, 85.4% had previous work experience before their career leaving, and 14.6% had no previous work experience. Considering that the employment rate of college-graduated women in 2005 was only 58.5%, this finding implies that more college-graduated women with previous work experience wanted to re-enter the workforce than those without previous work experience. Of the 837 women in the survey, 43.4% wanted to obtain a job within one year, but only 23.5% had initiated any job-seeking activities. The reasons for not having conducted any job-seeking activities were, in order: 1) housework, 2) a lack of confidence, and 3) childrearing and their children's education.

As supporting literature for the theme, *I am waiting for my time to come*, Jang, S. and Merriam (2004) showed that there has been an unprecedented rapidly increasing number of re-entry women (27 years and older) seeking higher education in formal and informal adult learning programs offered by universities in Korea. These researchers stated that these re-entry women want to reclaim their identities as independent individuals and make an acceptable escape from the boring and isolated life of being full-time housewives in Korean culture, which respects scholarship.

Summary

The aim of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was not to generalize but, rather, to provide a better understanding of Korean women's career-leaving experience. This post-analysis literature review explored the literature to determine whether there were corroborating streams of literature that might resonate with the meanings of the participants' lived experiences of their career leaving. There was also the possibility that the literature may have disagreed in some respects with their meaning-making; it also had the possibility of presenting new perspectives to the field of career development and human resource development.

It appeared that every theme that emerged in this study found support from the literature, to varying degrees. When I isolated the themes, one by one, out of the holistic meaning of Korean women's career-leaving phenomena, it was not difficult to find literature supporting or disagreeing with each theme in somewhat different contexts: either working women or full-time housewives. The participants in this study were somewhere between being working women and housewives. However, there was a dearth of literature regarding each theme in the context of women who became full-time housewives after career leaving. Nevertheless, the post-analysis literature review enriched my understanding of the meaning of Korean women's career-leaving experience.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I review the research study that I conducted on Korean women's career leaving experience. I briefly review the themes that emerged from this study. Further, I offer recommendations to the Korean government, corporations, NGOs and women—working and full-time housewives/mothers. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for further study related to the experiences of women who leave their careers for domestic duties.

Research Summary

The research question stemmed from my personal and academic interest in women and work. I was intrigued by active working women in the U.S. when I came to the University of Minnesota for my doctoral program. I witnessed many U.S. female graduate students who successfully balanced work and family, while sometimes also pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees. Unlike the U.S. women I met, many of my female friends and relatives in Korea who had worked after graduating from college decided to leave their careers to raise their children after marriage or childbirth—just like my mother's generation. Indeed, the labor force participation rate of college-graduated women in Korea forms an L-shaped curve, indicating that many of them exit the labor market for good. It definitely seemed to be a waste of female human resources, from both human capital theory and HRD perspectives. There exist many quantitative studies explaining the phenomenon of women's career leaving, but I wanted to know the deeper meaning of career leaving from the women's own personal perspectives. I believe that this research study can benefit the Korean government in developing female human

resources at a time of low fertility and an aging population. Additionally, this study can benefit HRD professionals in corporations, career counselors in local women's centers and other NGOs, and women themselves—both working women and stay-at-home housewives in Korea. When I compared the phenomenon of women's career leaving in Japan and the U.S., Japan had a very similar situation to Korea's. However, in the U.S., the majority of women tend to return to work within one year of taking maternity leave (Han, W., Ruhm, C. J., Waldfogel, J. & Washbrook, E., 2008).

My personal biography was included in Chapter 1 in order to share my personal story, which led me to this research question. This study adopted a qualitative methodology (hermeneutic phenomenology), and I, as the researcher, was an instrument throughout the research process. Thus, it was meaningful for readers to understand how I came to form an interest in women and work, and how I was intrigued by the question topic within my own personal context.

Pre-analysis Literature Review

The aim of the pre-analysis literature review was to show the path of the researcher in leading and designing the research, to the point of deciding on the research question—what the researcher was eager to understand and what would be beneficial for others, as well. The pre-analysis literature review was not comprehensive; rather, it served more as foundational, providing information that I knew before embarking on the research process. In doing so, I did not become too burdened by additional viewpoints in the previous literature. The definitions of the terms, *career* and *career leaving*, were presented. *Career* was used interchangeably with work or job in this study. *Career leaving* was defined as a voluntary act of leaving one's career, work, or job.

Next, I reviewed how women's career leaving or career interruption was viewed in the context of career development. Many scholars now argue that women's career paths are more flexible and diverse than men's traditionally linear and aggressive career model. Even though career interruptions are regarded as problematic and unbeneficial with respect to human capital theory, there is an alternative opinion arguing that we should regard career leaving/career interruption as a normal and common career phase requiring further understanding about the career leave experience.

Korean people's values are deeply rooted in Confucianism, with more than five hundred years of tradition under the Chosun Dynasty. Traditional Korean society was strict and rigid division into four classes of social structure and distinctive gender-role segregation under patriarchal dogma. Women mostly worked only for the family. However, ever since the Korean War, when capitalistic industrialization, democracy, and modernization began to rule Korea, women began to work outside the home, participating in the labor market, mostly in labor-intensive manufacturing factories. The Korean women's labor market participation rate gradually increased to approximately 50% in 2000, along with increased women's education levels and more women in white and pink collar jobs. Yet, marriage and childbirth have still been a main cause of women's career leave, which has created an M-shaped labor-market participation curve. Interestingly, the less educated women were, the more likely it is that they work. Particularly, many college-graduated Korea women tend to leave work upon marriage or childbirth and do not re-enter the workforce for good, which forms an L-shaped labor force participation curve. There are certain factors related to women's career leaving, such as income from one's husband or other family members, having children aged 6 years or younger, the

individual's previous job turnover rate, and the duration of previous work experience, among other factors.

Methodology and Methods

To understand Korean women's career-leaving experience better, I decided to undertake a qualitative investigation using hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a way of investigating other people's experiences and reflections on their experiences in order to understand better the deeper meaning or context of the whole human experience (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is different from purely descriptive phenomenology: indeed, hermeneutic phenomenology attempts to uncover hidden meanings and answers "what is it like to be" questions, whereas descriptive phenomenology only describes "what it appears" as purely as possible through thoroughly bracketing a researcher's pre-understanding. Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology describes how the researcher interprets the participants' texts of lived experience.

I chose three salient assumptions of hermeneutic phenomenological research: *lifeworld*, *pre-understanding*, and *openness*. I believed that these three assumptions were very important in pursuing hermeneutic phenomenological research, along with its scholarship tradition. *Lifeworld* refers to the world of lived experience; it is the everyday world of human beings that they experience. Therefore, with respect to the lifeworld, it is important to emphasize the subjective world, which includes the social, cultural, and political contexts of the research participants. It will help in understanding their narratives (interview texts) through meaning-making of their own lifeworlds. The *pre-understanding* of the researcher should be recognized, stated, and reflected upon in the

research rather than put aside or avoided, so as to promote openness to a new understanding. This *openness* should be embedded in a researcher's attitude. A researcher with an attitude of openness will listen, see, and understand research participants' lived experience with respect, humility, sensitivity, and flexibility.

There is no pre-fixed, established research method to follow for hermeneutic phenomenological research. It is recommended that a researcher follow the phenomenological scholarship tradition. Yet, as a practical guide, I referred to van Manen's (1990) six methodological themes within my freedom to modify or optimize the research procedures.

I interviewed ten Korean women who had left their careers due to their domestic roles in their families. They were selected through my personal contacts and were willing to share their career leaving experience. The interviews were unstructured, open-ended, and conversational, with this main question: describe your experience of career leaving and the following probing questions. Interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and were then transcribed verbatim in Korean for textual analysis.

I focused on the participants' interviews by listening to and reading them many times. Constructing meaning units was of much help in grasping emerging tentative themes. To identify and isolate significant themes, van Manen's three approaches were of great help along with a whole-part-whole approach within a hermeneutic circle.

After 22 tentative themes were identified, follow-up interviews were conducted 4.5 years after the first interviews. This time gap between the first interviews and the follow-up data added value in identifying and restructuring the themes. I shared the descriptions of the 22 tentative themes, along with their interview quotes under each

tentative theme and gave them a few days before the follow-up interviews to have them reflect on the material. Through confirmation and further exploration in the follow-up interviews, I was able to reconstruct the themes into four theme categories, 12 themes, and 3 sub-themes. To help the reader better understand the participants' context, at the end of Chapter 3, I included the participants' information during the first interviews and a brief story of each participant during the first and follow-up interviews.

Review of Themes

The first theme category, *Being a woman is a handicap at work*, had two themes: 1) *Glass ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work*; and 2) *The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood*. The participants reflected on their work experience and recalled that their workplaces were not women-friendly. There were unfair customs for women workers to abide by implicitly and explicitly at work, and, as a result, they became discouraged.

The theme, *Glass ceiling? There was a glass partition (or shield) for women at work*, emerged when the participants faced a horizontal glass wall that limited their career potential and opportunities by being treated differently from male co-workers in obvious or subtle ways.

The literature concurred with this theme in that there are still an undeniable percent of female employees who experience and perceive gender discrimination at work—glass partitions and glass ceilings—such as in wages, recruiting/selection, promotion opportunities, speed of promotion, and performance appraisals. A survey of employers regarding their perceptions female employees supported the notion that there

still exist many heads of companies who felt it was risky and to work with women. As a result, many employers are still uneasy about hiring them.

In the second theme, *The workplace did not welcome my marriage or motherhood*, the participants perceived a change of their position, from a single female worker to a married worker or a mother worker, which eventually led to their career leaving. They perceived that their two major life events, marriage and childbirth, were considered as something burdensome to accommodate in the workplace.

In spite of the Korean government's efforts to establish a family-friendly workplace, the research shows that there exists discrimination against married women during motherhood—pregnancy or after childbirth. Therefore, the literature concurs with this theme. It was not easy for the women workers in this study to apply for parental or maternity leave. In addition, many of these women felt the pressure to leave their jobs after becoming pregnant.

The second theme category, *Leaving work was to become a better mother*, is related to the main motive of the participants' career leaving—to be there for their children. All of the participants stated that they chose to leave work because of their children. They took their mother's role very seriously, even before childbirth, and wanted to raise their children by themselves full-time.

The first theme in this category was *I needed to protect my pregnancy away from the stress of work*. The participants left work before or after becoming pregnant when they thought that the stress from work might harm their pregnancy. They experienced psychological and physical changes during pregnancy and prioritized taking care of themselves and their future baby.

Taegyo, the Korean belief, behaviors, and self-care for pregnant women and her fetus, starts even before conceiving a baby. The participants wanted to prepare their bodies in the best condition before conceiving a baby, similar to other women. As pregnancy progresses, the level of fatigue increases, and maternal stress and anxiety can have a negative effect on the fetus. The literature supports the participants' concerns about their pregnant bodies and their fetuses.

The second theme in this category was *It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child*. The participants believed that it was their job to raise their children by themselves and felt first-hand responsibility and full commitment to their children. Their focus of life shifted to raising their child, and being there for them 24-7 in the critical years of their children's infancy and toddler stages.

The literature discusses three perspectives of women's motherly role: psychology, sociology and feminism. In particular traditions, the mothering ideology mystified mothers as the best caretaker of children, providing them with unconditional love; as a result, special importance and value was placed on the mother role in childrearing. Several studies show that childrearing and children's education are the main reasons for why women (Korea and the US) decide to leave their careers and stay at home. There is also a voice, however, claiming that women's "voluntary" choice to quit working may be influenced by societal and political pressures.

The next theme category, *Work after career leaving becomes being a full-time housewife*, contained three themes and three subthemes related to the participants'

experiences when they made a transition to a new career as full-time housewives and mothers.

The first theme, *Being at home is difficult*, dealt with the participants' expression of negative emotions about being at home. Participants found that it was much more difficult to stay home all day alone than they had initially anticipated from their new lifestyle. They felt disconnected, depressed, isolated, and fallen behind their peers. Several studies report a link between being a housewife and depression, asserting that housewives are more depressed than husbands or working women.

Studies on how the employment of married women influences their psychological and physical health have shown three difference standpoints: 1) there is a negative relationship; 2) there is a positive relationship; and 3) there is no relationship.

A study on Korean married women's psychological well-being showed that unemployed married women's psychological well-being was higher when they have a son, when their gender-role attitudes are conservative, and when their role quality as a wife and mother was high.

The second theme, *Housework and childrearing are much more difficult*, dealt with how the participants perceived their new job as full-time mothers/ housewives—housework and childrearing. They felt that working as full-time mothers at home was much harder than what they had expected before career leaving. They found the repetitive and endless tasks of homemaking and childrearing challenging, both psychologically and physically.

Housework and childrearing are perceived as women's work. Housework is considered as a list of easy and repetitive tasks at home. However, many studies claim

that housework consists of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks that require skills and practice. There are many negative adjectives associated with housework, such as *unrewarding*, *unsatisfying*, and *boring*, and positive adjectives such as *fulfilling* and *fun*. The perceptions of domestic labor are complex: negative, positive or neutral, depending on particular situations. Women tend to accept an unequal share of housework as fair.

The third theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, consisted of three sub-themes: *I do not have my own time*; *I do not have my own money*; and *I do not have my own individuality*. The participants felt that, as full-time housewives/mothers, they lost a sense of being themselves and positioned their families as a first priority over themselves after leaving their careers. Compared to the time when they had worked before, they felt that they no longer had ownership of their own time, money or individuality.

I do not have my own time. Several studies have reported that the younger housewives are, the more hours they spend on childrearing. Similarly, the younger the youngest child is, the less time they spend on themselves and leisure or social activities, and the more time they spend on childrearing.

I do not have my own money. There were no studies identified that relate to women's psychological changes after career leaving and losing their financial independence. Several studies in the literature on housewives and financial management behaviors report that there is not much difference between employed and unemployed housewives. More than 50% of housewives in this study took control of the household budget. However, the literature shows that housewives oftentimes have the desire to work

outside the home when they feel restricted in the financial authority assigned by their husbands.

I do not have my own individuality. The literature reports that full-time housewives' identity is focused on the mother role, which makes it difficult for them to express an individual identity and maintain a social identity.

Five themes emerged in the theme category: *I am rethinking myself and my career*; 1) *The previous work experience was a good experience*; 2) *Getting credentials is the way to women's careers*; 3) *Career leaving could be a chance for a career change*; 4) *I design my own career path*; and 5) *I am waiting for my time to come*.

The first theme was, *The previous work experience was a good experience*. Participants in this study reflected on what they liked about working before career leaving. Although they felt handicapped as women at work, the things they had enjoyed while working still lingered their minds, and they put value in those things. Some participants believed that there should be a difference in the lives between housewives with work experience and without.

Participants shared many things that they realized later they had enjoyed and appreciated about working: socializing with others, feeling as a part of society, having their own name cards, tensions and structures they had to maintain at work, feeling mastery of job skills, wearing professional-looking suits, and understanding how men work, among other aspects.

The literature reports that the previous research findings regarding the relationship between paid work and women's mental health are inconsistent. The negative effect of paid work on women may be related to women's experience of gender inequality,

whereas the positive effect may be due to 1) women's income; 2) social connections; and 3) a good well-defined sense of self from individual achievement and independence.

With respect to women's work experience before career leaving, the literature reports that women with work experience may continue to identify with the paid worker role, even long after they have stopped working.

The second theme in this category was *Getting credentials is the way to women's careers*. All of the participants felt the need to obtain a vocational/professional credential, either a license or certification, as a way to achieving and securing women's careers. After having experienced the discriminative workplace for women without any license or certificate, the participants regretted that they were not fully prepared or equipped to succeed in their careers. They believed that licenses or certificates would help them re-enter the workforce and would protect them from discrimination.

The literature concurred with this theme in that women who want to re-enter the workforce want to gain licensing, qualifications, or related training. According to the literature, the wage effect of licensing was not consistent, whereas the employment effect of licensing was positive. However, there were few identified studies on the wage and employment effects of re-entry women's license acquisition.

The third theme was *Career leaving could be a chance for a career change*. At the time of a career leaving, the participants did not regard their career leaving as a dead-end in their career paths at the time of their career leaving. No one thought that they would stay home forever. They positively thought of their career leaving as a chance for a career or job change, which they hoped would lead to work they really like, or work more suited to their interest, or work with more flexibility and better working conditions.

Participants anticipated their full-time housewife period as a platform or a buffering zone to the next career phase.

There is a voice in the literature articulating that women's voluntary leave from their careers may allow them the opportunity to reassess what they really want from career, which is congruent with this theme, *Career leaving could be a chance for a career change*. However, in fact, many college-graduated women who wish to obtain a job after career interruption tend to give up and exit the labor market forever when they fail to obtain a desirable job, such as white-collar jobs or semi-professional jobs. Additionally, studies report that women's education, previous working years and the type of previous occupation did not affect women's re-entry potential to the workforce.

The fourth theme in this category was *I design my own career path*. The participants had their own notions of their careers, and the meaning of work for them changed with time and life situations. Many denied or were not interested in following up the traditional career ladder from the beginning. The participants sometimes perceived *career* and *work* interchangeably. They were flexible, subjective and creative in sharing what career and work meant to them.

There were quite a few studies in the literature that concurred with the theme, *I design my own career path*, stating that the alternative concept of career needs to be integrated in understanding people's lives in an ever-changing world. Women's meaning and value of work need to be reflected within the context of discontinuity and ambivalence of women's careers. Some studies claim that a more holistic perspective eliminating the gap between career, work, and life needs to be developed when studying women's lives.

The final theme in this category was *I am waiting for my time to come*. The participants in this study recognized that it was not their time yet. No one expected that their life would be all about family forever. As shown in the theme, *I feel a loss of myself*, their center of life became their family/children after their career leaving. They were waiting for the time to regain a sense of themselves and the time when they can find themselves. Although they were not certain about when and how they were going to make this desire and hope come true, most of the participants were vaguely thinking about working outside the home full-time or part-time or going to higher education when situations allowed for the opportunity.

The literature presents several concepts of human needs that are close to the participants' desires in the theme, *I am waiting for my time to come*: self-actualization, self-esteem, growth, autonomy and competence, expression and freedom. Additionally, factors related to self-actualization included social support, motivation for achievement, and self-esteem. One study showed that more college-graduated housewives who had previous working experience felt the desire to re-enter the workplace than those who had never worked outside the home. Another stream of literature indicates a rapidly increasing number of re-entry women seeking higher education or adult learning programs in Korea. This fact supports the desire of the women in this study to achieve their own self-actualization.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

In this section, several recommendations for practice and policy are proposed for the Korean government, corporations, NGOs, working women, and housewives/ mothers, based on the findings of this study.

Government

The Korean government has looked for a more effective way of implementing its Maternity Protection Law, knowing that there are still many employers who do not observe this policy, using budgetary constraints as an excuse for noncompliance. Since the Equal Employment Act was first enacted in 1987, the Korean government has continuously amended it several times (in 2001, 2005, and 2007) to ensure equal opportunity in the workplace, to protect maternity, to promote women's employment, and to provide support for family-work balance. Even though the offenders of this law are to be penalized by a fine of 3-30 million won (2,500-25,000 USD) or imprisonment, in reality, there are still many employers who neglect the laws and go unpunished. I recommend that the Korean Government develop more regulatory agencies to listen to discriminated employees and enforce the law more stringently against law-violating employers. In addition to penalties, it may be more effective to endow various kinds of financial support, rewards, or benefits to those employers who comply with the law.

Another idea to monitor the companies who keep violating the Equal Employment Law is to require employers to report the turnover rates of female employees. Agents from the Korean government may then audit the workplace to determine whether they are observing the law. However, this alternative may be less

dependable, in that companies may manipulate their numbers so as to show artificially low female turnover rates or agents may be subjected to corruption.

One of the themes in this study, *It is my job to raise my child by myself; I feel first-hand responsibility and full commitment to my child*, came from women's belief that the main care provider for a baby is the mother. Many Korean women believe that it is essential for a child's psychological and physical development to raise a child by his or her mother. Whether or not this belief stems from a biological perspective or whether it was socially constructed, it might lead to a mother's distress because they feel solely responsible for a child's upbringing. Just as there is the saying, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," raising a child may be better if it is a shared responsibility with a husband, other family members, the community, and a country in a larger context, when it is systematically well coordinated. To embrace the fathers' role in childrearing, particularly, long working hours might be considered as an obstacle to overcome.

The above-mentioned ideas do not imply that it is wrong for a woman to desire to raise a child herself. Indeed, these women's needs need to be respected, as well. The ideal picture would be that women could be guaranteed a return to the workplace after a maternity leave, for as long a period as they want to have away from the workforce. National policy makers might build a system that accommodates employed mothers' needs.

Many Korean women who want to re-enter the workplace think of getting credentials (licenses or certifications of qualification) as the key to employment, with the handicap of career interruption as a housewife. There are many kinds of licenses and certifications of qualification available that may be necessary or unnecessary for

employment. Some professional licenses take a long time to acquire and are very difficult to obtain because they are competitive. Other certificates of qualification are very easy to obtain but are not effective in proving the certificate holders' qualifications. In short, licenses and certificates are not a panacea by any means. In order to control the quality of licensing and certificate training institutions, the government may play an instrumental role in regulation and recommending the value of licenses or certificates.

A concern of most mothers was the lack of available, safe daycare facilities. The government may need to develop a policy to provide subsidies for daycare centers or for mothers to be able to afford daycare facilities.

Corporations

Gender discrimination at work, which was named as the glass ceiling or glass wall, was witnessed and experienced by the participants in this study, and from this, they felt discouraged. Any gender difference in wages/promotion/ training noticed by female workers may have discouraged them. Gender equity education at work, including sexual harassment education, may be executed by HR or HRD professionals.

It is recommended that the Motherhood Protection Law be observed in every organization. A female employee's pregnancy needs to be protected with organizational effort. Workload delegation to co-workers may be systematically planned beforehand. Additionally, it is important to create a family-friendly organization so that female employees are not afraid of announcing their pregnancy to others at work, due to potential disadvantages so that they feel compelled to leave. Given the needs for retaining top talents and the potential problems in recruitment based on demographic changes in

Korea, retaining females in the workforce may become essential for corporate competitive advantage.

HRD professionals may foster a company culture to accommodate pregnant employees' needs, as well. When informed of an employee's pregnancy, HRD managers or her boss may provide necessary information about working during pregnancy, such as maternity leave policy, workload sharing plan, and other necessary information. These should also be spelled out carefully in a company policy manual that is available to all employees.

There are many individual differences in how women feel about their pregnant bodies. Some suffer from severe morning sickness or fatigue; some oversleep or lose concentration, whereas some feel as normal as before. What is important is that these individual differences be respected, with greater allowance made for the consequences of these bodily reactions.

Women in this study were waiting for a time to “stretch their wings” some day. Employers may give fair credit to housewives’ experience of managing a household and raising children when women want to re-enter the labor market. This initiative may be supported by the government via giving financial benefits to employers who hire re-entry women who are housewives. Recruiting personnel may develop an objective method of measuring re-entry housewives’ potential capabilities.

NGOs

Even though there still are not many career counselors available for Korean women, local women’s centers are increasing the number of career counselors for working women and women who want to re-enter the workplace after career interruption.

It is important that career counselors advise working women to be fully aware of the maternity protection law and The Equal Employment Law before they search for jobs.

The participants in this study desired their own time, but they did not have help in sharing their housework/childrearing duties. It is recommended that local women's centers be equipped with free or low-priced daycare services that mothers may use; in addition, these women's centers may be used for networking, learning, and just for a short respite from the daily chores of housework.

More non-profit organizations aiming to support gender equity in the workplace will provide inexpensive counseling and legal assistance concerning female rights with respect to the law. In this way, female employees can sue their employers for violating their rights and be protected by law.

There may be a need in Korea for the formation of neighborhood support groups for pre-natal and post-natal women, similar to the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) in the United States. Not only will this help to clarify expectations, but it will also provide peer-based suggestions of how to improve their life circumstances. Such groups in the U.S. also receive government support.

Working Women

In this study, the participants mentioned that the glass partition was not something they had anticipated before entering the workplace. It is recommended that female employees examine the organizational culture in terms of gender discrimination and family friendliness before being hired. Female workers may check if it is allowed to continue working after marriage or childbirth, if any glass ceiling or glass wall exists in the organization, if female workers' roles are limited only to certain tasks, or if there is an

in-house female employees' association to protect female workers' rights in cases such as sexual harassment. Even when there are few female workers, they may band together to protect themselves with collective power. Female employees may be well aware of whether or not the workplace is observing the Maternity Protection Law, and they may be free to obtain as much support as possible from the workplace.

The participants in this study left work due to psychological and physical stress from working before and after pregnancy. It is important to point out that it is possible for women to work during pregnancy without trouble if they are aligned with proper employer support and self-management. Health tips for pregnant working women are not much different from pregnant women who stay at home. They are to: 1) rest frequently; 2) eat frequently for a steady blood sugar level; 3) avoid lifting heavy objects; 4) share the workload with co-workers; and 5) Avoid standing up for too long.

Pregnant working women might sometimes feel guilty that they cannot provide proper prenatal education (*Taegyo*) for their baby. New and proper notions of prenatal education need to be established for working women. Prenatal education is not merely a matter of resting in a bed, listening to Mozart all day long. However, it is recommended that pregnant women stay away from psychological and physical stress as much as possible.

In order not to be overwhelmed by pregnancy while working, women are recommended to plan pregnancy in advance and to take care of their physical and mental condition in order to be prepared for a healthy pregnancy.

Housewives and Full-time Mothers

The participants in this study fantasized and anticipated life as a full-time stay-at-home mother. Some participants expected that their lives would become easier and that they could relax without having to commute every day and work for someone else. Indeed, they thought that they could use their time for themselves. Furthermore, they thought that they could become good housewives naturally because their mothers did, as well. However, as theme category three shows, women had difficulty adjusting to the life of housewife and full-time mother. Women who wanted to leave their careers and stay home as housewives may have better understood what it would be like to live as full-time housewives and how well they would adjust to such a role. Reflecting theme group three, women who wanted to be a full-time housewife may have planned ahead on how to manage the change of their time, money, and identity. Full-time mothers were likely to lose themselves in the midst of serving other family members and were likely to feel as if their individual needs are not a priority. These women felt that it was easy to feel isolated by staying at home all the time. However, networking with other housewives in the community would be a good way for them to form a social network outside family members.

As for money, it was easy for the participants to feel constrained psychologically, as they had to depend on their husbands' income, even if they knew that they significantly contributed to the family with their housework and childcare. It is important to plan together with one's husband on how to manage a household budget; it is evident that a wife who is in charge of a family budget may feel more secure and content as a housewife by doing so. Most Korean housewives manage the household budget.

Husbands may frequently recognize their wives' value and contribution to the family's well-being. In addition, having a part-time job for pocket money may give women more independence to spend for their own sake.

Developing an area of interest can also be a good way to keep a housewife's self-identity intact as an individual; for example, it could be a hobby or self-development through learning and studying. It is essential to have one's own world not shared with other family members. To achieve this end, local social education centers may be a good place to provide a good quality of learning opportunity at reasonable expense.

Recommendations for Future Research

The participants in this study left their careers even before they reached the glass ceiling because had they left due to marriage or childrearing. A phenomenological study about Korean women who had to leave the workplace after failing to break the glass ceiling after a long period of work would provide a deeper understanding for many working women in Korea.

When the participants in this study became mothers, they were protective of their children even before giving birth. They wanted to do their best to provide for their children. They had the belief that staying with their children was the best they could offer them as a mother and that children who were raised by a full-time stay-at-home mother would be better than children with a working mother. This belief would be worthy of testing through research. Such a study might find that the opposite is true because the same belief may also put stress on working mothers and may make them feel guilty. Likewise, mothers who work may be more psychologically sound, allowing for the better development of their children.

According to this study, the women participants who became full-time housewives and stay-at-home mothers experienced feelings of disconnectedness, and self-loss; in addition, they felt burdened with new responsibilities. Is this unique to this study's participants, or is it more generally experienced? Do these feelings stay or fade out? How long do these feelings last? If they change, what substitutes for these feelings?

It has been stated that the longer the prior work experience a woman has, the more likely that a woman is to re-enter the workplace after career leaving due to childbirth/childrearing. Is this because of better capabilities or higher self-efficacy of women with longer prior work experience? Or is it related to employers' prejudices about work experience? It would be an interesting study to find out if there is a correlation between prior work experience and the likelihood of re-entry and why.

In this study, the participants wanted to look for different career areas for when they return to work later. Is this just wishful thinking? Or can women with career interruption really change their field of work? If so, how do they carry out this career transition? A study about career change after women's career leaving would be interesting.

In this study, the participants wanted to find their own world some day. Some said their time would happen three years later. Some said it would be when their children went to elementary school. Others said they did not know yet. A study about when and how women make this transition in finding time for themselves would be helpful, perhaps even through another interview with these ten women five years after the second interview. That time would signal that women were going to detach their identity from their families.

The women in this study who left their careers all agreed that they would earn a license or a certificate of qualification in any work field if they were to re-enter the labor market. One question to ask is how they will decide on the kind of license or certificate of qualification. What resources must they have before making up one's mind about obtaining a license? Does a license or certificate really make a difference? Are there differences among the types of licenses or certificates? Such a study would be helpful, as obtaining a license or a certificate of qualification may take a great deal time and energy.

In this study, the meaning of work and career changed as time went by and as life events passed by. An in-depth qualitative study about the changing meaning of work for women throughout their lifetime would provide insights for career counselors and women themselves.

Not all women desire to get married or have children, or they are unable to conceive. Another interesting study would be to interview women who remain single or who remain childless to see how well they fare in the workplace. Perhaps such discrimination as reported in this study really has nothing to do with marriage or childcare but is simply discrimination against women.

Longitudinal research on the same participants every five years would result in an interesting study. I would ask them questions based on the twelve themes found in this research, particularly concerning the fourth theme category, *I am rethinking myself and my career*.

The participants in this research were all from Seoul, middle class in socio-economic status, and all above a college-graduated educational level. Replicating this research with different regions of Korea, different socio-economic statuses, different

education levels, and different occupations would be of help in better understanding Korean women's career-leaving experience. It would also be interesting to see which themes from this research appear once again and which new themes might emerge.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

The Meaning of Women's Career-Leaving Experience

You are invited to be in a research study of understanding the women's experience of career leaving. You were selected as a possible participant because you have a career-leaving experience. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Yu-Jin Lee, a doctoral student at University of Minnesota, Department of Work, Community and Family Education. Yu-Jin Lee is specializing in Human Resource Development

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of women's career-leaving phenomenon. I would like to understand how you make a decision to leave your career and how that experience affected you and what that means to you. The focusing questions for the interview will be "Describe your experience of career leaving in as much detail as possible." Probing questions will be added to help you expand on and clarify your responses as much as possible.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: During the 1-2 hour interview, I would need to tape record your descriptions of your experience, but would make special efforts to protect your privacy. I will listen to you in order to understand your perspectives and will only ask clarifying questions. I will not give opinions, advice, or information about previously-conducted interviews. You will not be pressured to talk about anything you do not want to discuss. If you agree to be in study, I would like you to first sign this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose and procedures of the study as well as the protections I will provide for your privacy and the freedom you have to withdraw at any time. If these conditions are agreeable to you, then I would like to schedule an interview when you would be able to talk for about 1-2 hours. Some interviews may take longer. And for the follow-up interview I will need to call you and ask some further questions and the previous interview for 20-30 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no direct benefits or serious risks to you if you participate in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose what you talk about. You will not be pressured in any way. You will be free to stop the tape recorder at any time and to stop the interview at any time.

You will receive a 40,000 Won department store certificate as a token of my appreciation for your participation in the study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only researchers will have access to the records. Interview audio tapes will be erased after they have been transcribed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation should be entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Yu-Jin Lee. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 651-489-0127 (home) or 651-624-3297 (work) or leex0566@umn.edu. You may also contact Dr. Gary McLean, my adviser, on email mclea002@umn.edu. The researcher's phone number in Korea is 016-626-88XX or 031-70X-12XX.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact Research Subjects' Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Date _____

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• • • • • 651-489-0127 (•)
• • 651-624-3297 (• • •) • • • • • leex0566@umn.edu • • • • •
• • • • • Mclea002@umn.edu.
• • • • • 016-626-88XX • • 031-70X-12XX • • • • •

• • • • • Research Subjects'
Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455;
telephone (612) 625-16XX • • • • •

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APPENDIX B

Human Subjects Committee IRB Letter

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Research Subjects' Protection Programs

*Institutional Review Board: Human Subjects Committee (IRB)
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)*

*Mayo Mail Code 820
D-528 Mayo Memorial Building
420 Delaware Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455*

*612-626-5654
Fax: 612-626-6061
irb@umn.edu
iacuc@umn.edu
<http://www.research.umn.edu/subjects.htm>*

June 13, 2002

Yu-Jin Lee
1179 California Dr. #103
Saint Paul MN 55108

Re: "The Meaning of Korean Women's Career Leaving"

Human Subjects Code Number: **0206E26321**

Dear Dr. Lee:

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

The code number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

Sincerely,



Cynthia McGill
Executive Assistant

CLM/gc

CC: Gary McLean