

SUH YOUNG JANG

How University Attendance Affects the Personal Development of Highly-educated
Middle Class Korean Reentry Women

(Under the direction of SHARAN B. MERRIAM)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. The constant comparative method of data analysis was applied to person to person in-depth interviews of 13 Korean middle class full-time housewives aged 25 to 45 who already had a Bachelor's degree and who enrolled as students at a four-year university, a graduate school, or an university-affiliated lifelong education center. Four research questions were examined: 1) What motivates them to return to school? 2) What makes the experience of returning to school meaningful? 3) How have they changed as the result of the experience? and 4) How has the social and cultural context in Korea influenced their returning to school?

The findings of the study were that reentry women returned to school in order to get a job, have their own meaningful activity, pursue an interest in learning, and escape from the state of being a full-time housewife. The experience of returning to school was meaningful for them in that they re-established themselves as independent individuals, gained structure in their everyday lives, gained recognition from others, obtained a sense of accomplishment, enlarged their living area and met new people, and felt the joy of learning. From their returning experiences, they began to enjoy happiness and satisfaction with their lives, dreamed of new possibilities and hope for the future, and gained a new identity which included enhanced self-confidence, improved self-esteem, and heightened critical consciousness. Being forced to be full-time housewives within

the Korean social and cultural context, they sought a “breakthrough” from the unsatisfying state of full-time housewives. Respect for scholarship in Korean society made their return to school the acceptable escape.

Three conclusions were drawn from this study. First, the restoration of a personal identity underlies the multiple motivations for returning to school. Second, returning to school has a significant impact on the personal development of reentry women. Third, the Korean context both precipitates and shapes the experience of returning to school.

INDEX WORDS: Adult students, Adult and continuing education, Reentry women, Reentry student, Returning student, University, Highly-educated, Middle class, Korean women, Motivations, Educational experience, Change, Social context, Motherhood, Conflict, Personal development, Adult development, Adult learning

HOW UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE AFFECTS THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
OF HIGHLY-EDUCATED MIDDLE CLASS KOREAN REENTRY WOMEN

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord, who always loves me so much.

Lord, please make me one who is pleasing you.

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CAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The demographic patterns of college participation in the U. S. have changed dramatically over the last fifty years. The number of adult learners has rapidly increased and they now account for a significant portion of the college population. The number of adult learners age 25 and over increased by 32% between 1980 and 1990, and this growth continued by 11.4% between 1990 and 1998 (Thompson, 1994; Gaquin & DeBrandt, 2000). Now nearly one-half of all postsecondary credit students are adults over age 25 (Kasworm, Sandman, & Sissel, 2000).

Particularly, the growth of women adult learners who return to school after 25 years of age is noticeable. Women adult learners comparatively increased 326.8% for the last twenty years (Kasworm, et al, 2000). Women ages 25 years old and older accounted for 42.2% of female students in colleges in 1998 (Gaquin & DeBrandt, 2000) and 81.5% of female students in graduate schools in 1995 (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1998). Reentry women experience profound personal changes and growth from their learning experiences in addition to acquiring practical knowledge.

A similar trend has appeared in Korea since the 1980s. As universities began to provide formal and informal programs for adult learners, the number of women who return to higher education has increased tremendously in both regular universities and special universities for adult learners, such as the Korean National Open University,

Industrial Universities, and university-affiliated Lifelong Education Centers (Baik, Lee, Kee, & Park, 2000; Kim & Joo, 1999; Ministry of Education, 1998; Son, 1997; Yoon, 1997).

Changes in Korean Adult Women's Roles and Status

In order to understand why many Korean women return to school and why the number increased rapidly in the 1980s and the 1990s, it is important to first consider the role of women in Korean society. Korean women's lives can be understood only when Confucianism is examined because it is one of the factors that has strongly influenced and determined Korean women's lives since the Yi-dynasty established it as its foundational ruling ideology in the fourteenth century. The philosophy of Confucianism emphasized a strict hierarchical order of human relationships based on age, sex, and inherited social status (Choi, 1994), and thus treated women as inferior to men. Moreover, Confucianism completely distinguished women's and men's roles and confined women's role to inside the home (Yu, 1987). As the result of this social code, Korean women traditionally considered themselves as the provider of support for men (fathers, husbands, and sons) and regarded activities in the public society (from getting a job to political matters) as men's territory.

These roles and the status of Korean women began to change as Korean society faced political, economical, and cultural changes in 1990s. The concept of equality between sexes was formally introduced in the 1948 Constitution (Choi, 1994). Educational and employment opportunities for women were expanded as Korean society developed economically. Industrialization and urbanization also caused young adults to leave their hometowns and resulted in changes from the extended family system to the

nuclear family system. As a result of these economic and social changes, Korean women became highly educated, and more women participated in economic activities.

However, despite these outer changes, Confucianism still strongly dominates Koreans' ways of thinking and limits women's lives. The gender role division was fortified by industrialization and thus domestic work is still considered women's primary role even though women's participation in the labor force has increased (Cho, 1994). The belief that women should support men and that giving birth is the married women's inevitable duty are also still widespread, so married women still define themselves as a mother and a wife first (Park, 1993). In addition, the change to the nuclear family system is superficial, as the Korean family actually has many properties of the extended family system in its substance (Leepark, 1999). That is, Korean married women have the responsibility to maintain a close relationship with their husband's family and to do a great deal of work as daughter-in-law. Korean women suffer from this gap between the modern social structure, and unchanged traditional ways of thinking regarding women.

Women's Movement in Korea

The women's movement in Korea first began as the part of the national liberation struggle against the Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. In order for national independence, many women's societies launched campaigns for the redemption of the national debt, and many housewives participated in the campaigns by saving rice, making meals simpler, and selling personal ornaments in order to raise funds to pay off foreign loans. They expected that this campaign would lead to not only national independence but also equal rights between men and women by showing women's power through the campaign (Choi, 1987).

In addition, there were many women's patriotic underground organizations, including the 'Korean Patriotic Women Society.' Women in the organizations raised and delivered funds for the Korean provisional government in Shanghai, China. Their activity influenced the Korea provisional government to insert the statement that "all Koreans are equal regardless of their gender, richness, or nobility" into its constitution (Choi, 1987). In addition to this indirect support for national independence, some women actually participated in the army and fought in the war of independence.

Another women's movement in this period was the patriotic enlightenment campaign led by highly-educated women. Thinking that women who are in charge of children's education should be educated, women leaders of this campaign concentrated on emphasizing the necessity of women's education, establishing schools for girls and women, and promoting women's education (Shin, 1995).

The women's movement in this period also addressed women's problems and liberation for women. Centered on professional career women who were educated, the women's liberation movement opposed early marriage and concubinage, encouraged free dating and love marriage, and promoted women's education for consciousness raising regarding women's issues (Shin, 1995). In particular, Kun-Woo-Hoe, formed in 1927 as the unified women's association, worked for abolition of social and legal discrimination against women, breaking of feudal superstitions and conventionalities, ending of early marriage, eradication of licensed prostitution, support for economic benefits of rural women, elimination of discrimination in women's wages, provision of maternity leaves and benefits, and abolition of hazardous or night work of women and minor employees (Choi, 1987; Shin, 1995). The women liberation movement was closely related to the

national liberation struggle because they thought that women's liberation should be achieved only when restoring national independence. In other words, during Japanese colonial rule, women's problems existed as part of the nation's problems without being treated separately (Park, 1984), and the women's movement was based on participation in the national liberation movement with male partners (Park, 1984).

After the division of Korea in 1945 and the Korean War, the women's movement in Korea stagnated. Under the military dictatorial government that stressed anti-communism ideology and economic development, the women's movement was degraded as nothing more than social meetings of conservative and elitist women's organizations (Shin, 1995). Women's organizations in this period were religious or professional organizations, such as Chosun Science Women's Association, Korea Midwives Society, Korea Women Pharmacist Association, and Korea Mother's Association (Shin, 1995). These women's organizations suggested that the good mother and wise wife was the ideal. On the other hand, the women's movement in this period also played a role in maintaining the status-quo of the government, stressing women's loyalty and service to the nation (Korea Resource and Information Center, 1991).

The second women's movement in Korea developed in the 1970's by working class young women. Since the division of Korea, South Korean society was rapidly industrialized and achieved enormous economic development. For economic development, the Korean government fostered on an export-led industry that was based on a low-wage and low-grain price policy. This generated harsh and systematic exploitation of workers and farmers. Protesting the exploitation and repression, young women workers who made up the majority of the labor force in the leading export

industries, struggled for worker's rights, such as raise in wages, improvement of working condition, eight-hour work days, and forming democratic labor unions. Moreover, women workers also struggled for women's unique requests, such as abolishment of the policy of forcing women workers to quit their jobs after marriage, abolishment of discriminated women's wage, support for 60-day maternal leaves, promotion of women workers, menstruation leaves, and daycare centers (Lee, 1999).

On the other hand, many women's societies that were composed of highly educated women launched campaigns for reforming family law in order to gain sexual equality in inheritance of property and to abolish the male headship of a family (Kim, 1992). Women's societies also began Anti-Miss Korea campaigns and anti-prostitute tourism campaigns opposing making women's bodies as goods (Shin, 1995). In addition, theories of women liberation in the United States and Latin America were introduced in the late 1970s, and women's studies courses first offered in universities in 1977. Women's studies courses facilitated many women researchers to study about sexual inequalities and women's problems based on the Korean context.

As military dictatorship continued even after collapse of Park Jung Hee's dictatorial regime, the attention of the women's movement shifted to the democratization of society. In 1983, young educated women formed the "Women Equal Friend Association" with the purpose of reforming the patriarchal sexual discriminatory culture and developing a democratic unified society (Lee, 1999). Because they understood that women's problems and sexual discrimination could not be separated from the social context of military dictatorship, they proclaimed that the women's movement should pursue both women's liberation and national democratization. Based on this principle,

many progressive and grassroots women's organizations were instituted throughout the country, and they worked for diverse issues, such as peace and national reunification, arms reduction, anti-pollution, environment, family movement for democratization, family-law reform, equal employment and payment, against sexual violence, and movement for Korean Comfort Women (Korea Resource and Information Center, 1991; Lee, 1999).

As Korean society began to be democratized in the 1990's, the women's movement focused more on women's problems and worked toward reforming patriarchal culture, reforming discriminating laws, and consciousness raising. As a result of these efforts, a number of laws regarding women were enacted in this period, such as the Nursery School Law for Infant and Child in 1991, the Special Law for Sexual Violence in 1992, the Law for Women's Development in 1995, and the Prevention Law for Domestic Violence in 1997 (Lee, 1999).

Like other countries in the Third World, the women's movement in Korea has evolved within a social context of colonial history, worker exploitation in an export-oriented industry, and military dictatorship. That is, in the larger framework, the women's movement was intertwined with social issues of national liberation, social justice in economy, national democratization, and reunification. Thus, the movement for women's rights was treated as a secondary issue. Moreover, the concerns of the women's movement were limited to reforming laws or to women in the public sphere such as employed women, prostitutes, and women victims of sexual violence. In other words, because of basic philosophy of women's movement in Korea that emphasizes women's equal participation in society, concerns of housewives have been neglected for a long

time by the women's movement and have begun to be considered recently (Moon, 1997). Discourse regarding "mother" in women's movement also has been limited to "education for mother" and "protection for mother." The discourse of mothering as a choice or the rights of refusing to be mother has not been developed in women's movement in Korea (Moon, 1999).

Highly-Educated and Middle Class Women in Korea

Korean women face different problems depending on their socio-economic status. Lower class women who must work outside the home due to economic necessity, struggle with multiple jobs and receive lower pay than men for the same work. Middle class women suffer from an identity crisis. They are educated through junior college, college, or graduate school with sufficient financial and psychological support from their parents. After graduation, they expect to participate in the workforce. According to Chang's (1993) survey of 700 female university students, 96.9% of them wanted to get a job and 85.2% of them wanted lifelong jobs. The middle class women criticize the traditional model of wise mother and good wife and despise being a full-time housewife (Cho, 2000). They think that women should achieve self-actualization and financial independence through their work like men do, and want to work through their whole lives (Cho, 2000; Lim & Chung, 1996). That is, they perceive having a job as a way of escaping from being housewives as well as to pursue self-actualization.

Highly-educated middle class women in Korea are optimistic about getting a job because they believe from their school experiences that success depends on their personal efforts. However, in Korean society where the family and labor market have been slower than school in achieving gender equality, they experience severe gender discrimination in

getting a job (Lee, 1996). Even though the number of women in the workforce has continuously increased in Korea (almost one-half of adult women entered the labor market in 1997), most of them are low-educated women who are employed as sales or service “pink caller” workers, operators, or laborers. Among women at different levels of education, the employment rate of two-year college graduate or over is the lowest (Shin, 1999). According to a McKinsey Report (2001), only 54% of university graduated women participated in the workforce while 93% of male counterparts did, and the employment rate of university graduate women was lowest among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

In this situation, some of university graduated women fail to enter the workforce, and thus, they become full-time housewives by marrying. Some who succeed in finding a job face formal and customary gender discrimination in their workforce in hiring, assignment to departments, training and education, promotion, and salary (Cho, 1999). As they perform only marginal, supportive, and simply repetitive work without any possibility of promotion, they are frustrated. Unlike their expectations, they find that they do not feel self-actualization or self-development through their jobs. According to Cho (1999), a woman who works as a clerk in a higher education institution said,

I can't say that I do self-actualization through my job. At least, self-actualization means to work at what I want and like. And to work at something from which I get a challenge and learn more. However, what I am doing now is neither what I like nor what results in my development. In the beginning, it was new and interesting to learn computer, but after some time, the work I do is all the same. There's nothing new. (p. 128)

In the long run, the frustration that comes from having no future vision in their career and from dissatisfaction with their work results in university graduate women not surviving in the discriminatory atmosphere of their companies; many quit their job easily. This is well represented in their short length of continuous work; More than half (60%) of university graduate women worked for one to four years in 1995 (Chung, 1997).

In addition to gender discrimination, they face conflicts at home. They suffer from double work. Most of all, they feel guilty not spending much time with their children. Except for a few women in professional jobs who hire housemaids, women are exhausted from the conflicts and pressured by their husbands or other relatives to quit their jobs. In particular, the pressure is higher when their husband's income is enough to manage their household or they have younger children, usually pre-school children (Cho, 1999). According to a survey of 37,000 women about the obstacles for keeping their jobs, more than half cited two issues: childcare (31%) and housework (13%) (McKinsey, 2001, cited from report of social statistics, 1998). Therefore, the rate of university-graduate women declined as they get older like a L shape. That is, their employment rate peaked between ages 20 to 24 and declined as they got married and had children (Kim, 2000).

In short, many of highly educated middle class Korean women quit their jobs as they marry or give birth to children and live as full-time housewives who are entirely responsible for childcare, supporting their husbands, and housework, thinking that these are women's responsibilities. Suffering from double work, feeling guilty about their children, and negative attitudes of family members drive highly-educated women to finally give up their jobs to be full-time housewives. In other words, whether failing to

get a job or quitting a job, many highly-educated middle class women in Korea are forced to live as full-time housewives by concentrating on the roles of mother and wife after all.

However, highly-educated middle class women in Korea give birth to a small number of children, so their childcare period finishes in their late 30s or early 40s as the last child attends formal school. As a result, they are isolated in the home with much extra time, and thus they feel boredom and the necessity to find something to fill the time. Among middle-aged married women, 47.4% responded, “sometimes yes” to the statement, “housework is boring,” and 12.5% responded “frequently yes,” and “very frequently yes” (Association for Women, 1999).

Moreover, the changed characteristics of housework in an industrialized society make them dissatisfied. In a capitalistic society, housework is no longer perceived as a productive or profitable activity. Rather, housework that is composed of consumption and simple and repetitive physical work is devalued. Thus, it is almost impossible for them to feel pride as housewives or a sense of accomplishment from housework. The results of my pilot study (Jang, 2000) confirm the full-time housewives’ negative perception about housework. The interviewees mentioned that the work inside the home is “nothing” and, by attending school, they wanted to show that they could do productive and valuable work like their husbands do outside the home. That is, for the interviewees, attending school was the symbol of “doing something” that was recognized by society. By attending school, doing homework, reading an assignment, sharing what they learned with their husbands, or even teaching the meaning of an English word that their husbands did not know, they felt that they are “doing something.”

Most of all, being highly educated prompts a desire for self-actualization. Unlike former generations of Korean women who identified themselves with their husbands and children (especially sons), Korean women presently separate themselves from their family and have a sense of independent identity (Shin, 1999). They consider that their husbands or children cannot substitute for their lives, and look for their own work beyond their duties so that they can construct the rest of their lives meaningfully. This sense of identity conflicts with their roles as mothers. They think that they should stay at home for their children, but they do not feel satisfied with performing only the role as mothers. They feel that they have a desire to do something for themselves in addition to their roles as mothers. Thus, most of unemployed university graduated women (69.6%) reported that they want to have a job for the development of their abilities and for making use of spare time wisely (Choi & Chung, 1996).

The results of my pilot study (Jang, 2000) support the sense of independent identity. Korean reentry women I interviewed mentioned dissatisfaction about living as full-time housewives as the first reason for returning to school. They described their lives before going to school as “meaningless” and “something missed.” They said that a full-time housewife’s life was very busy, but all the work they did was for only their family members and was given to them as the duty of mother and wife. There was no work or time for themselves. Because of this, they perceived that “there is no self-satisfaction” in their lives. This dissatisfaction led them to desire to “do something beyond what they do” and “something meaningful and more important.” That is, they wanted to “do something for themselves” or “their development” by having “their own work.”

In short, extra time, the need for a sense of accomplishment and for socially recognized valuable work, and a desire for self-actualization, drive them to look for the opportunity to work outside the home. They thought that getting a job was the way to attain self-actualization and to escape from the economic dependence on their husbands (Shin, 1999). According to Shin (1999, p. 403), employed married women reported that getting a job means “to get my own life,” or “to recover my name.” However, in Korean society in which the employment rate of highly-educated women is low, it is especially hard for married middle-aged women who stay at home for a certain amount of time to return to the workforce regardless of their former work experience (Kim, 2000; Lee, 1996). Not only are they “rusty” but they are also no longer a “flower” in an office. All they can do is just hard temporal physical work, such as being a housemaid or a saleswoman. Understanding this barrier, they then turn their attention to education in order to solve their desire for self-development.

Reentry Women in Universities in Korea

For Koreans, attending universities means more than having a higher educational opportunity. The university in Korean society is not only regarded as academia, but rather as a powerful means of social mobility; to have a better life, to have white-collar or professional jobs, and to marry an able man. In other words, a university diploma is the necessary ticket for middle-class living. Therefore, whether interested in learning or not, Koreans have strong aspirations to attend higher education. However, only a small portion of high school graduates who pass the severely competitive entrance examination, can enter universities. Thus, until the early 1970s, universities in Korea were a traditional closed system that provided higher education for a small number of 20 to 24-

year-old high school graduate elites. Overwhelmed by the excessive demands of high school graduates, universities in Korea were not concerned with non-traditional adult learners, and the presence of non-traditional adult learners in universities was very rare. This meant that in Korean society, it has been almost impossible for adults who failed to enter universities once, to receive higher education later.

In order to resolve the problem of admission competition to universities and expand the higher education opportunities to adults who wish to enter universities, the Korean government began to establish several universities for adults. In 1972, as the first adult higher education institute, the Korea National Open University was established with the purpose of providing higher education opportunities to adults who had lost the opportunity in their early 20's due to economic, academic, or geographic reasons.

The Korean National Open University admits adult students based on their high school academic record without the entrance examination, and teaches them using distance education methods, such as radio, TV, video and audiotapes. As a result, in the university, adults age 25 and over accounted for 86.4% (270,121) of total enrollments in 2000 (Ministry of Education, 2000), 85% of students are employed, and 74.0% of total students entered the university in the six years after high school graduation (Lee, 2000). In particular, the number of transfer students who graduated from other junior colleges or universities increased in recent times, and they accounted for almost 50% of total freshmen in 1999 (Ministry of Education, 2000). The transfer students reported acquiring professional knowledge as the most reason to attend, and almost one-fifth of them are graduates from four-year universities (Ministry of Education, 2000). This shows that the

Korean National Open University plays a role as recurrent lifelong learning institute as well as providing higher education opportunities for unprivileged adult learners.

Industrial Universities (or Polytechnic Universities) were established in 1982 in order to provide continuing education opportunities for workers and to develop human resources in the industrial sector. The industrial universities did not require the entrance examination but did require that students have worked for at least 18 months after graduating from high school (Baik, Lee, Kee, & Park, 1999). The industrial universities also allow part-time students in evening classes, and summer and winter courses.

However, as the number of applicants of traditional high school graduates without job experiences increased, industrial universities have changed their admission policy into less stringent requirement of work experience in industrial sectors. By 1983, Industrial Universities did not require work experiences for transferring students from regular universities. In 1990, Industrial Universities permitted those who had a high school diploma or the equivalent to apply while they preferred those who had industrial work experience. That is, work experience was preferred, not mandatorily required for admission (Lee, 2000). Finally, in 1997, Industrial Universities gave credits for work experience only in special cases and began selecting students in the same way as a regular university (Baik, Lee, Kee, & Park, 1999). As a result, in 1998, students under age 23 made up 73.3% of total enrollment, and unemployed full-time students were 67.7% of total enrollment (Ministry of Education, 1998). Due to this change, the instructional methods in Industrial Universities also mainly became dependent on class attendance. That is, Industrial Universities do not function as higher education institutes for adults any more.

In addition to expanding degree courses for adults, universities in Korea began to provide non-degree and informal courses for adult learners by establishing lifelong education centers. Since the law of non-formal education was enacted in 1982, universities in Korea have begun to establish lifelong education centers (Lim, 1994; Yoon, 1997). These university-affiliated lifelong education centers mainly provided general hobby or cultural programs for personal enrichment in the form of non-credit courses (Cho, 1988; Kim, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 1995; Lee, 1993; Rho, Choi, Chung, 1996; Son, 1997; Yoon, 1997).

As the educational demands of adults expanded, the number of university-affiliated lifelong education centers had mushroomed by the first half of the 1990s. In 1995, New Education System required every university to provide lifelong education programs for adults (Rho, Choi, Chung, 1996; Cho, 1997; Son, 1997) and the Ministry of Education began to count the lifelong education centers as one of the factors for university evaluation (Kang, 1997 cited by Yoon, 1997). This accelerated many universities in Korea to establish lifelong education centers in the mid 1990s, so the number of newly instituted centers per year peaked at 25 in 1995 and 32 in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1998; Yoon, 1997). In 2000, the centers were spread all over Korea, and 279 lifelong education centers offered 5,956 programs to 291,835 adult learners enrolled in the centers (Ministry of education, 2000).

Lifelong education centers issue certificates. However, the certificates are not recognized as the same as the degree of the mother university, and the credits of lifelong education centers cannot be transferred to the credits or degree of the mother-university (Lee, 1993; Lim, 1994; Yoon, 1997). Because of this characteristic, the university-

affiliated lifelong education centers are perceived as informal adult education centers rather than formal schools, and as a secondary and marginal part of the mother-university (Yoon, 1997).

The establishment of Korean National Open University, Industrial Universities, and Lifelong Education Centers succeeded in helping many non-traditional adult learners to attend universities. However, even though these independent universities for adult learners provide higher education opportunities for non-traditional students, they were not enough to accept all of Korean's demands for higher education. In addition, despite increased enrollment, university-affiliated lifelong education centers could not satisfy Korean's desire to have a degree that is socially recognized. In order to solve this problem, the Korean government created a new open learning system in the form of Bachelor's Degree Examination Program for the Self-educated, Part-Time Registration, and the Credit Bank System.

The Bachelor's Degree Examination Program for the Self-educated (BDEPS) was created in 1988 with the purpose of solving the problems of many who fail to university entrance examination by diversifying the opportunity of getting a Bachelor's degree. In BDEPS, applicants get a Bachelor's degree by studying compulsory and elective subjects in self-directed learning and then passing a four-stage examination: the qualifying examination for liberal arts courses, the qualifying examination for major-basic courses, the qualifying examination for major-advanced courses, and a comprehensive examination.

BDEPS has an examination exemption policy. Those who satisfy the exemption policy requirement can pass the first to third examinations without taking them. The

exemption requirement are for those who have passed the national examinations approved by the Education Law, those who have held a qualified vocational license or certificate, those who have taken certain credit hours at traditional colleges or universities, and those who have completed an exemption course at a college, or at an affiliated college or at a private training centers. Because of this policy, more than 60% of applicants take the exemption courses in universities and take only the fourth level examination in order to get a Bachelor's degree (Baik, Lee, Kee, Park, 1999).

Anyone who has a high school diploma or equivalent academic status can apply for BDEPS regardless of one's age, sex, or social status. However, BDEPS restricts those who have a college or university diploma. Since the examinations first conducted in 1990, the number of degree holders of BDEPS reached 4,875 in 1999 (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Part-Time Registration was introduced in universities in 1997 according to the Ministry of Education's policy. Universities allow 10% of their enrollment to be part-time students based on their high school academic record. The part-time students can register for less than one half of the credits that full-time students register for and get a degree when completing certain amounts of credits required to be graduated. In 1998, 3,661 students registered as part-time students, and 66.7% of them were adults who return to school after five years and more from high school graduation (Ministry of Education, 1998).

Finally, the Credit Bank System was institutionalized in 1998 for open learning and lifelong education. The Credit Bank System recognizes both formal education and the diverse learning outside of formal education institutes as university credits, and grants

Bachelor degree to those who accumulated credits up to required amounts by taking courses from formal and non-formal educational institutes. Therefore, applicants to the Credit Bank System can get university credits from various educational institutes, such as university-affiliated lifelong education centers, private educational institutions, vocational and training institutions, advanced technical training schools or special schools with relevant departments, mass media agencies, part-time registration in university or college, certificate acquisition, subjects passed by the Bachelor's Degree Examination Program for the Self-educated (Baik, Lee, Kee, & Park, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2000). That is, the Credit Bank System provides alternative ways of achieving a Bachelor's degree without attending universities to nontraditional adult learners who want higher education or who want to further learning in specific professional areas after university graduation.

Anyone who has a high school diploma or an equivalent educational background can apply for the Credit Bank System, and unlike BDEPS, the graduates of college or university also can apply. Since its inception in 1998, 279 students got Bachelor's degrees and 775 students have received Senior College degree (Ministry of Education, 2000). According to a Lee's survey of 1193 students (2000), 50% of them were non-school aged adults (23 years old and over) and 79.6% were high school graduates while 20.4% were two year college or university graduates.

As shown above, the number of adult learners in universities in Korea rapidly increased after introducing open learning systems in Korean universities. Among the adult learners, reentry women are a significant percent of the population. In 1999, female students accounted for 60.3% of the students, and female students aged 25 and over

accounted for 70.1% of the total female students in the National Open University (Kim & Joo, 1999; Hong & Lyu, 1999). In the Credit Bank System in which 50% are non-school age adults, 45.2% females registered in 2000 (Lee, 2000). In Part-Time Registration, housewives accounted for 11.6% of total enrollment in 1998 (Ministry of Education, 1998). In particular, among the learners in university-affiliated lifelong education centers, the majority of them are reentry women. The ratio of reentry women in the lifelong education centers differs depending on research, but adult women accounts for from 69% to 88.3% of learners in the centers (Lee, 1992; Lee, 1993; Lim1994). In particular, in some case of lifelong education centers that are affiliated with women's universities, all the learners are adult women (Cho, 1988; Cho, 1997; Son, 1997).

However, research about these Korean adult reentry women is heavily limited to those who attend university-affiliated lifelong education centers. They are highly-educated and range in age from the 20s to the 50s, with the majority in their 30s and 40s (Lim, 1994). Almost all of them (93.6%) graduated from high school or higher (Lim, 1994) and belong to the middle class or higher, as assessed by their income (Lee, 1992; Son, 1997). They reported that their primary reason to return to the lifelong education centers was personal improvement (Cho, 1988), personal enrichment (Son, 1997), promoting culture or enjoying leisure life (Kwon, 1997; Lee, 1992). Personal enrichment was also reported as the most significant change that they experienced after studying in the university-affiliated lifelong education centers (Son, 1997). It is expected that reentry women in universities bring the same motivation as the reentry women in lifelong education centers. Despite personal development being a significant motivation for reentry women in Korea, there is an absolute lack of information about the impact of

university attendance on personal development or how the experience has changed their lives. Only when the concept of personal development is examined, can program planners and school administrators develop programs that satisfy the needs of these reentry women.

Statement of the Problem

Since the economic development and industrialization of the 1960s, Korean society has faced tremendous changes in its economy and culture. These social changes in turn have affected the status of Korean women. As a result of an increased educational level, expanded working opportunities for women, the rise in income per household, and the fewer number of children in nuclear families, the number of highly educated middle class women have increased in Korea (Yoon, 2001), and they began to have more sense of identity as an independent being (Shin, 1999). Awakening of the sense of identity has caused them to seek employment in order to achieve personal development in addition to their major duties as mothers and wives. However, in Korean society, there are few opportunities for highly-educated married women, who interrupt their career for childcare, to get jobs that are suited to their education. Therefore, many instead turn to education with the expectation that education will satisfy their personal development needs and at the same time help them become more competitive in the job market (Jang, 2000).

Under these circumstances, many Korean women who already have Bachelor's degrees are returning to various educational institutions, formal and informal, national and private (Kim & Joo, 1999; Kwon, 1997; Son, 1997), and they have become a significant population in post-secondary institutions in Korea. Even though many studies

addressed that their primary motivation was personal development, little is known about what personal development means for Korean reentry women. Further, researcher is needed on how they achieve personal development through their educational experiences, and how the results of the experiences impact their lives.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. What motivates them to return to school?
2. What makes the experience of returning to school meaningful?
3. How have they changed as a result of the experience?
4. How has the social and cultural context in Korea influenced their returning to school?

Statement of Significance

There are a number of reasons why it is important to study how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women who completed undergraduate degrees in their 20s and enroll in university again in mid life. Theoretically, this study generated a knowledge base about Korean reentry women. In particular, this study produced knowledge about their motivations for returning to school, experiences of returning to school, and changes as a result of the experiences in relation to adult women's education.

This study addressed the knowledge gap in the existing literature of reentry women in the U. S.. Most of the research regarding reentry women focuses

predominantly on Western White middle-class undergraduate students in universities, and they are represented as the typical reentry women students in the literature (Padula, 1994). This distinguishes concerns and experiences of other racial and ethnic reentry women groups (Johnson-Bailey, 1998). Therefore, it is important to study how other racial and ethnic reentry women are different from the White reentry women. This study contributed to a different perspective regarding reentry women by adding another cultural group of reentry women in Korea to the literature. Moreover, by analyzing Korean reentry women's motivation as a case, this study also showed how learning is shaped by culture and how people make meaning within their cultural context.

From a practical standpoint, this study was the first step in understanding Korean reentry women. This study investigated their motivation for returning to school, their experiences of returning to school, the impact on their lives, and finally the meaning of personal development for them. These findings, then, can be the grounds for further study and practice about Korean reentry women. For example, this study can help program planners in universities to better serve Korean reentry women by developing programs and instructional methodology that meet the needs of Korean reentry women. Also, this study can help practitioners and administrators in universities to provide appropriate institutional support for adult women learners and to develop policies that promote the interest of adult women learners including addressing their employment needs.

Moreover, this study contributed to making highly-educated middle class Korean women's concerns visible in Korean society. Even though personal development is a significant matter among Korean women, it is not recognized by Korean society, or less

has not even been the focus of the women's movement in Korea. By discovering how the personal development issue influences lives of highly-educated middle class Korean women, this study contributed to providing new insights and direction to the Korean women's movement.

In addition, this study can promote change in the general perception regarding reentry women's schooling. The unfavorable belief about adult women's learning still exists in Korean society. Because most Korean reentry women are middle class, their return to school is often misunderstood or criticized as useless social activity of privileged women who suffer from "happy" problems caused by "enough" money and time. Therefore, by identifying their conflicts between their socially prescribed role and their desire to maintain their identity, this study can improve Korean people's understanding about continuing education, especially for adult women.

Further, by demonstrating that Korean reentry women gain practical and personal benefits from their schooling, this study can potentially cause more Korean adult women to participate in learning and to improve the quality of their lives by accomplishing personal development through their learning.

Definition

Several key terms are used throughout this study. The following definitions are provided to explain what the terms mean in the context of this dissertation.

Personal Development – Growth and enrichment of the individual as a person and improvement of the quality of one's life by realizing one's potential and cultivating talents and abilities for the betterment or welfare of others, or by increasing intellectual

riches from the study of the arts, humanities, or liberal education. It is used interchangeably with self-development, personal enrichment, personal improvement, or self-actualization.

Reentry Women – Adult female students who are 25 years old or older and who have chosen to enter or return to a higher educational institution after a couple of years break in their formal education. Age 23 is the general age of graduation from a university in Korea. It is used interchangeably with returning women.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As universities in Korea opened their systems to non-traditional adult learners by diversifying their admission policies, adult women returned to universities in greater numbers. These reentry women are motivated by personal development. The purpose of this study is to examine the learning experiences of highly-educated and middle class Korean reentry women and their changes and growth that are derived from their learning. I will first approach Korean reentry women's issue as one of the cases of reentry women as a whole, and then reveal how these reentry women are different and unique as another cultural group of reentry women.

For this study, I will review literature composed of three major areas. In the first section, I will review literature related to motivations, experiences, and changes as a result of learning of reentry women in both the United States and Korea. The second section will first deal with literature related to the relationship between learning and adult development in general and then development of adult women learners in particular. The third section will cover the changes in Korean women's ways of thinking regarding an occupation that is caused by changes in the family system in Korea. In particular, I will examine why current Korean women dislike being a housewife and want to pursue their career within the context of social and cultural changes in Korea.

Reentry Women

This portion of literature review will first deal with research about motivations and changes after learning of reentry women in the U. S. Next, the same topics of reentry women in Korea will be reviewed.

Motivations of Reentry Women in the U. S.

As reentry women have been a topic in academia since the late 1960's, many researchers conducted studies regarding them. In particular, the efforts of understanding reentry women's motivations, needs, and interests began relatively early, and quite a lot of research findings have accumulated.

As one of the forerunners, Astin (1976) reviewed existing literature regarding women learners in continuing education programs for women (CEW) and divided them into two large groups: "those whose ultimate goal is a career" and "those whose goal is further education or a degree but not seeking employment" (p. 56). According to her, career-oriented group was composed of several subgroups, and largest subgroup were women "whose family demands have lessened and who not find work a viable and appealing opportunity" (Astin, 1976a, p. 50). The non-career-oriented group was made up women who "find they are bored; their husbands are busy, their children are in school or grown up, and volunteer activities no longer seem satisfying." The non-career-oriented group also included women who "take refuge from marital and family problems," or women who "left college to work or marry and now find that they can complete their degree" (Astin, 1976a, p. 50-51).

Badenhoop and Johansen (1980) surveyed the reasons for going to school of eighty-two undergraduate female students in California State University, Hayward. They

divided the participants into two groups of reentry women and nonreentry women and compared the results of those groups. According to the results of their survey, better employment, independence/identity, and dissatisfaction with job were important reasons for returning to school (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980). While Astin showed that lessened home responsibilities, boredom, and marital and family problems significantly influenced women to return to school, Badenhoop and Johansen showed that those were unimportant reasons in their decision to attend school. This result was supported later by other researchers, such as Sands and Richardson (1984) and Clayton and Smith (1987).

In order to know “what general motives underlie specific reasons given by reentry women for returning to college,” Clayton and Smith (1987, p. 90) conducted a survey of one hundred reentry women students over 25 years of age who were attending college to pursue an undergraduate degree. For data collection, they used the 70-item Continuing Education Women Motives Questionnaire that was developed by Maslin and analyzed the results by factor analysis (Clayton & Smith, 1987). From the analysis, Clayton and Smith (1987) generated a motivational typology composed of eight distinct motives; self-improvement (a desire to make personal changes leading to self-improvement or to gain esteem from others), self-actualization (a need for self-exploration, self-assessment, and self-actualization), vocational, role (a need to reexamine roles and responsibilities), family (a desire to pursue further education in order to enhance the family economic status), social, humanitarian (a need for ability to contribute to the betterment of society), and knowledge (a need for better understanding of the world and what life is about). They also found that the vocational motive was most important and the role motive was least important.

This finding suggested that “previous research which identified reasons reentry women return to college in terms of only a few motives (e.g., self-fulfillment, career preparation, or escape from boredom) may be inaccurate and descriptive of only a small portion of the reentry women population” (Clayton, & Smith, 1987, p. 102). They also challenged the stereotype that most reentry women are ‘empty-nest’ older women who return to school in order to pursue self-fulfillment.

However, the finding that the vocational motive is most important should be considered in terms of characteristics of the research subjects. According to Clayton and Smith (1987), all the subjects were undergraduate or community college students, and 41% of them were working full or part-time outside the home. Their median age was 32. In particular, 28% of them were divorced. These characteristics of the subjects may have influenced rating the vocational motive as first.

St. Pierre (1989) also supported the findings of Badenhoop and Johenson, and Clayton and Smith. From her literature review, she showed that the motivations of reentry women were directly related to employment situations and economic factors such as career training and job advancement. She also reported that many researchers, such as Brandenburg (1974), Clayton and Smith (1987), Betz (1982) Lamb-Porterfield, Jones and McDaniel (1987) found self-actualization, personal fulfillment, or personal enrichment to be a paramount reason for adult women to return to academia.

Padula (1994) also reviewed the research regarding reentry women for 1980 to 1990 and discussed various factors related to reentry women, including reasons for reentry. In all of the studies reviewed, a vocational motivation was found to be a primary reason for educational reentry. The vocational reasons included the desire to have a new

career and to become self-supporting; extrinsic job satisfaction; job dissatisfaction, better employment, or changing jobs; and the desire to work. According to her review, the second primary reason for returning to school is family. The family motive included children entering school or growing up; family difficulties; increased ability to contribute to the family, both financially and experientially; and a need to reexamine marriage and family roles. Availability of financial resources, increasing knowledge, self-actualization, self-improvement, and social and humanitarian motives were also identified as the reason for returning to college in her review.

Rifenbary (1995) interviewed a group of 17 culturally diverse nontraditional female students who were educational assistants and returned to school with the help of a special scholarship in order to complete their undergraduate degree. All the women of this group concluded their goal was to complete their undergraduate degrees and to obtain their teaching certificates. For them, getting the undergraduate degree meant achieving their unfulfilled dream. Therefore, they mentioned that their primary motivation was “a sense of achievement” and “completing a long-range goal” (p. 4). Among the interviewees, this motivation was the same despite the differences in their ethnicity, marital status, and age.

To find out what motivates women to return to school, what factors precipitate their decision to do so, and to explore the effect of life events on motivation, Scheifele (1996) conducted both qualitative and quantitative research. She sent questionnaires to 51 currently enrolled adult women students and interviewed 12 of them. From her study, she found that reasons for returning to school were connected to personal as well as professional development. Specific professional reasons for return were vocational, such

as the desire to increase career options and earning potential, career change, or job dissatisfaction. However, the quest for knowledge in order to foster self-enhancement and inner growth were motivational factors found to be as important as career advancement and planning for the future. Based on the finding that women's commitment to work was not exclusively related to their economic condition and that women ascribe the distinctive meaning to their work, she pointed out that internal factors were predominant in the women's decision to return to school.

Ford (1998) also examined the factors that influence adult women at the undergraduate level to return to school. She surveyed 76 adult women ages 25 to 48 enrolled in the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS) in the College of Applied Professional Sciences of The University of South Carolina. She also interviewed eight of them. Her study revealed that the number one motivation for returning to school was "the desire to have a degree." Almost one-third of the respondents reported the motivation as the most important one. "Desire to learn" and "career change" were reported as other motivations to return to school. From the interviews, she found that they all felt getting their degree would help their career, and that the motivation to have a degree was important to the interviewees, too. She also found that self-satisfaction is another theme that was revealed in the interviews. The self-satisfaction is expressed as "to do something for myself" or "to make myself complete."

Unlike previous researchers, Johnson-Bailey (1998) focused her study on Black reentry women in higher education. Criticizing the conclusions about reentry women is being based on "generic learners" who are White, middle-aged, middle class, and whose concerns and experiences are similar across the sub-group of reentry women, she found

the motivations of Black reentry women were different from those of typical reentry women. She mentioned that Black reentry women did not go back to school in response to an empty nest, for self-actualization, or to further their careers. Because they knew that the world was not being fair to Black women even though they achieved an advanced degree with the hope that it would help them with their careers, they were pessimistic about education. Rather, they went to school in an attempt to better their lives and possibly the lives of their children.

Changes through Learning Experiences of Reentry Women in the U. S.

Fortunato (1994) studied how adult learners perceived themselves to have changed as the result of their participation in a degree program in the liberal arts. Findings indicated that the learners perceive themselves to have profoundly changed. Their learning was experienced holistically, leaving the learners with the sense that their entire lives had deeper meaning as the result of the learning experience. Some changes cited by the adult learners were: alternative ways of viewing the world around them, independence, and enhanced self-esteem. The attitude of joyousness was demonstrated by all the learners as they described their experiences.

Wall (1992) researched the significant learning of eight women who had completed or were about to complete a graduate program at the University of New Brunswick. She asked them to identify and describe significant learning during their graduate programs and to explain the meaning of these experiences. She found that significant learning was the learning that was subjectively valued by the individual and the learning that personally affected her in some way. She also found that the

participants placed the self at the center of a frame of reference from which they described their significant learning during graduate study.

Desmond (1982) analyzed the relationship of returning to school and changes in attitudes and behaviors. For her study, she interviewed 40 women (aged 27 to 48) full-time students pursuing a bachelor's degree. Her study revealed that the women in her study returned to college in conjunction with other life changes. It was also found that the college experience fostered attitude change related to sex-roles, assertiveness, and economic independence. Greater attitude change was positively related to husband's support, which was related to his educational level. Speer and Dorfman (1986) investigated factors related to personal and professional development in 109 mature (age 35 and over) reentry women graduates of baccalaureate degree programs of eight liberal arts colleges in Iowa. They defined "personal development" as the perceived expansion of one's personal capabilities and "professional development" as the perceived expansion of one's professional or career capabilities. They concluded that supports from classmates and desire for intellectual stimulation were equally good predictors of perceived personal development, and that desire for a career identity was the only predictor of perceived professional development.

Karen (1990) examined the relationship between personal choice and the social-historical context of individual lives in women enrolled in a college program for returning women. In her study, she asked four research questions, and one of them was "Has the course of formal education as adults been itself meaningful to the women in influencing personal change?" She found that the reentry women shared an increased

sense of competence and personal power, as measured by their new ownership of knowledge.

D'ortona (1991) explored the transitional nature of reentry women's collegiate experience through the application of adult development theory. According her interview and survey with twenty-nine community college reentry women, the reentry women experienced continual transition as they journey through their collegiate experience. She derived three major processes of transition from her study. First, community college reentry women suffered from a lack of self-confidence at reentry. They doubted their academic capabilities and felt they were not in control of their lives when they enrolled in college as freshmen. But after the education, they experienced restored self-confidence as a result of their collegiate experience, a confidence reflected in an altered self-perception. Their self-esteem was enhanced after realization of the advantages to being a mature, purposeful, and directed student. Their confidence was renewed when they were able to share information and skills newly learned in college by tutoring their own children or serving as a museum tour guide for their parents. Their new confidence enabled them to manage their lives better than before they had returned to college. Their restored confidence led them to view themselves to be more assertive, self-confident, and empowered.

Benson (1992) examines how returning to postsecondary education affected the life transition of divorce in one segment of the population of returning women—displaced homemakers. She found that the experience of returning to school provided the twelve women the stepping stone to help make the transition from being “displaced” to becoming independent. She also found that an improved understanding of the

transformational potential of education and the way in which women's definition of self was affected by educational participation. In her study, she concluded that it is clear that the educational experience does not leave women who are returning to higher education programs unchanged, and she assumed that the two largest areas of impact seem to be self and families.

Rifenbary (1995) interviewed seventeen reentry women who participated in a support group she facilitated. The reentry women reported that they acquired increased confidence, self-fulfillment, and self-worth which helped them maintain high levels of motivation to learn. One of them said, "I think I'm growing on a lot of different levels and in a lot of ways that I haven't even considered before. ... I never really had high self esteem." Another change the reentry women had as the result of their learning is their changed perception about themselves. They found that their happiness affected their families and that they could serve as successful role models for their children. One of them said, "I'm a better role model for my kids now than what they used to see me as, and that's real important to me. They're happier, I'm happier. I'm trying to teach them that if you really want to do something with your life it's possible. But it has to be you that wants it. It's motivating to do that." In addition to sharing study time with their children instead of coaxing them to study, the reentry women reported that they had the practical knowledge to help their children with homework, having refreshed once rusty math and English skills. One of them, a mother with teenage children, said, "Now I don't try to make them do their homework. They just know we have to do this. And that's been some real important lessons for them. So I've been real pleased with that."

Motivations and Changes through Learning Experiences of Reentry Women in Korea

Most studies regarding Korean reentry women's motivations have focused on adult women who attend university-affiliated lifelong education centers. Cho (1988)'s study was one of the earliest about adult women learners in the lifelong education centers. She surveyed 260 women who attended general cultural programs in five university-affiliated lifelong education centers in metropolitan cities for the purpose of examining their responses about the content and method of their education. According to her findings, the majority of respondents were in their 30s and 40s, married, and graduated from high school or more. Their highest motivation was found to be for self-development or for being a more cultured person.

Lee (1992) also surveyed 315 adult learners who participated in six university-affiliated lifelong education centers in metropolitan cities. According to the results of his survey, almost all respondents were female, 20's to 40's, and high school graduates and university graduates or more. Their jobs were various. While 42.5% of the respondents had professional jobs or office and management jobs, 18.4% were housewives and 28.6% had no job. He found that the sake of learning was the most frequently reported motivation. Increasing culture, solving currently faced problems, and participating in social activities followed. The respondents also mentioned internal satisfaction as the greatest benefit from their learning. Help for domestic life, improvement of human relationship, and utilization of leisure time followed.

Son (1997) also examined adult women learners' perceived motivations and barriers associated with participation of adult and continuing education programs in Korea in hope of providing better access to educational opportunity for Korean women.

For her study, she surveyed 248 Korean adult women learners in Duksung Women's University School of Lifelong Education Program in Seoul, Korea. According to results of socioeconomic characteristics, 58.1% of respondents were single, and 41.9% of them were married. The mean of age of respondents was 28.71 years old. The youngest respondent in the sample was 18 years old while the oldest respondent was 53 years old. The mean length of marriage for married respondents was 8.7 years with a minimum of two months and maximum of twenty-five years.

Less than 20% of the respondents had professional jobs, 29.4% were housewives, 11.7% were salaried woman, 2.4% owned trade businesses, 1.6% had enterprises, and 35.1% had part-time jobs, were students, were unemployed, or were members of the armed forces. The educational level of respondents in the program was very high. Only 0.4% respondent had less than high school education, 63.0% had finished high school, 14.2% had graduated from a two-year college, 20.3% had graduated from a 4-year university, and 2.0% had studied or graduated from graduate school.

In her study, the most frequently chosen reason for entering the continuing education program was "to become better informed and for personal enrichment (73.4%)," followed by "to help get a new job or to advance in a present job (54.4%)," and "to meet requirements of their employer or get certification or licensing (49.8%)." In her study, she divided her subjects into three groups: those in a general cultural courses; those in a training program for certification for teachers in a childcare center or nursery school; and those in a course for certification for a qualifying examination for the B. A. degree. It is notable that respondents in all three groups and all respondents at any age

level chose “to become better informed for personal enrichment” as the most important reason for entering the lifelong education centers.

In her study, most respondents indicated that entering a continuing education program had either a positive or negative impact on their lifestyle. The majority of respondents (74.6%) reported that their lives were changed actively and affirmatively after entering programs. The most frequently reported changes were “having personal enjoyment and enrichment,” “becoming a more active person,” “becoming a better wife and mother,” and “having self-esteem.” However, some respondents (20 out of 210) indicated that they had negative changes after entering programs, such as “having not enough time for taking care of child,” “having high stress from study and home responsibility,” and “feeling too tired to go to school everyday.”

Unlike above studies that focused on female learners in university-affiliated lifelong education centers, Choi (1991) conducted a general survey of 771 female residents aged from 20’s to 60’s in a city in order to know their perception about lifetime education. According to his findings, the majority of respondents responded that lifelong education for women were very needed (40.8%) or needed (20.8%). However, only 36.8% of respondents had participated in lifelong education, and 63.2% of them had not participated in lifelong education. It was found that education level had a positive relation to rate of participation in lifelong education. Among 284 respondents who had experience in lifelong education, “to utilize leisure time” was reported as the main reason for participating (33.8%). “For hobby”(30.0%) or “for social life and human relationship”(21.4%) were chosen as other reasons. In contrast, “for getting a job” was one of the least chosen reasons.

Summary

The literature regarding motivations and changes through learning experiences of reentry women in both the U. S. and Korea was reviewed. For reentry women in the U. S., a vocational reason was the primary motivation for returning to school. It was followed by family, self-actualization, and self-improvement. That is, reentry women in the U. S. seemed to put professional reasons first in making a decision to return to school with the second reason personal and internal factors. However, this result cannot be generalized to all reentry women because their motivations vary depending on their characteristics. For example, low-educated working class reentry women frequently mentioned getting a degree as the first motivation, and getting a degree means for them to achieve unfulfilled dreams and to have a sense of achievement. African American reentry women also have different motivations for their attending to school. The literature shows that reentry women should not be treated as a homogeneous and generic group.

The literature review also shows that reentry women experience profound personal changes from their educational experiences. In addition to acquired practical knowledge from their learning, their perceptions about themselves also changed. The changes can be divided into the following five categories. First, reentry women experience restored self-confidence. That is, they have an increased sense of competence and personal power. They become more assertive. Second, their self-esteem is enhanced. They recognize their self-worth is higher and find that they can be good role models for their children. Third, by participating in education they achieve the sense of self-fulfillment. Fourth, their perception about sex-roles changes, and women's

definition of self is modified. Finally, they feel that their economic independence has increased.

Literature reviews regarding reentry women in Korea, another different cultural subgroup among reentry women, show that their motivations are quite different from their counterparts in the U. S. They counted personal development as the first reason for returning to school while vocational reasons were the least chosen. For all ages, the personal development motivation was the primary reason whether they enrolled in general cultural courses, a training program for teachers, or courses for getting a B. A. degree.

Learning and Development

In this section, I will first examine three representative writers who explore the relationship between adult learning and development: Daloz, Kegan, and Mezirow. Then, since my study focuses on adult women learners, I will review literature regarding learning and development of adult women learners: how adult women have changed through learning experiences, how learning impacts on development, and how the development leads them to look for learning again.

Learning and Adult Development

Daloz uses the metaphor of a journey for development. Taking a journey means to leave one's home and head for unknown new worlds. Like this, Daloz (1999) asserts that adult development is to move from their "old world" to the unknown "new world." According to him, the "old world" is a world having the assumption that it possesses the sole truth and outsiders are wrong. To maintain this assumption, the world "erects a wall between itself and the outside world" (Daloz, 1988a, p.236) and ignores knowledge of

other truths or conflicting information. To criticize the existing authority of this world is also regarded as standing against it. Thus, people in this world do not think about why and instead simply believe given traditions (Daloz, 1988a).

On the other hand, the “new world” is a very complex and rapidly shifting one. This world assumes that various multiple truths can exist simultaneously according to their contexts. In other words, all people in the world “have myths, and those myths are a special form of truth” (1988a, p.240). Thus, the world maintained by the conscious choice and responsibility of its member unlike the old world is held by external bonds. These characteristics of the new world require its people “to redefine the boundary between self and other, to reconstruct the meaning of legitimate, recognizing that those who differ from us may have valid reason for doing so” (1988a, p.237). In order to do that, people are encouraged to ask “Why?”

According to Daloz who sees development as crossing over into this new world, development means to “let go of old ways of seeing,” to embrace new understandings, and finally to “reframe and understand in a radically new way the meaning of the world they once knew” (Daloz, 1999 p. 27). Daloz (1999) describes this shift as transformational process of breaking down and rebuilding. By passing through this transformational process, adults can “become better learners, to think more clearly, to understand a complex world more appropriately, and to risk committing themselves despite genuine doubts and pervasive uncertainty” (Daloz, 1988b, p. 4).

Based on this definition of development, Daloz (1988a, p. 241) suggests that the role of learning is to introduce learners to the new world and help them cross over into the world so that they are “capable of dealing effectively with the complex,

interdependent and diverse world in which we live.” That is, the most significant role of leaning is to “challenge learners to examine their conceptions of self and the world and to formulate a new, more developed perspective” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 332). Specifically, he maintains the adult educator should facilitate adult learners to distance themselves from their upbringing, to ask questions about the givens of their culture, and to view the world from different perspectives by seeing their values in a broader context. For this, he suggests three principles: renaming the good (to help learners see the internal logic of each differing perspective); renaming the true (to help learners recognize that truth is constructed, not found, and construct their own truths from constantly shifting perspectives and differing realities); and renaming the beautiful (to help learners discuss aesthetic properties intelligently across cultures) (Daloz, 1988a).

Daloz especially emphasizes that adult educators should be mentors who maintain a special kind of relationship with their learners. According to him, a mentor is a person who serves as a guide for his/her learners’ developmental journey (Daloz, 1999). As mentors, adult educators should challenge their learners’ transformation, offer supports, and provide visions (Clark, 1993). By doing this, mentors can help their learners’ journey be less frightening and risky.

In conclusion, Daloz understands development as a qualitative improvement that is resulted by “distinct and recognizable leaps - in a series of spiraling plateaus, rather than a smooth slope” (Daloz, 1999, p. 23). He also thinks that the major role of adult educators is to foster this personal development of learners by challenging them, rather than improving competencies or just passing the given values of a culture.

Kegan (1982) explains human development as perspective transformation: the transformation of how we see ourselves in relation to others. According to him, as human beings develop, they have different and more complex lens from which to view the world, so their understanding about others and themselves are changed as the lens are changed. Kegan believes that reality does not exist objectively, rather, our reality is created by our perceptions. Therefore, for Kegan, development refers to constructing a larger and more complex reality by acquiring higher-leveled lens of view (Taylor, 1995a) and the highest capacity is dialectical thinking. Based on this assumption of development, he proposes the constructive development model which is composed of five developmental orders of consciousness: impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional, and interindividual (Kegan, 1982). At each stage, human beings have a particular perspective that determines the ways of seeing about their world, such as their beliefs, values, and relationship to others and themselves (Taylor & Marienau, 1995).

Among the five orders, according to Kegan, the third to fifth orders of consciousness are achieved in adulthood. The third order, interpersonal stage, is characterized by “mutually reciprocal one-to-one relationship” (Kegan, 1982, p. 191). In this stage, “psychological surround,” such as parents, teachers, social expectations and imperatives is the most critical criterion in making decisions. People in this stage think, believe and act based on how psychological surround expects and wants them to act. They do not have their own thought or feelings. They think or feel as expected by others. That is, their identity is formed not by themselves, but by the voice of others. Their identity is reflected onto them, constructed from all the “identities” that others create for them (Taylor, 1995b). They do not distinguish what they want from what others want

them to be. They never imagine the existence of a self who is in conflict with voice of their psychological surround.

The fourth order, institutional stage of development, is marked by “culture of identity or self-authorship” (Kegan, 1982, p. 191). In this stage, people separate themselves from their “context of interpersonalism” and find out “a sense of self” (Kegan, 1982, p. 100). By questioning the construction of their psychological surround, they gain “the perspective on their reactions, beliefs, experiences, values, and relationships,” and distinguish what they want from what they should do or what others want them to do (Taylor, 1995b, p. 85). In addition, to find out their own feelings or thoughts that comes from inside of themselves, they realize that their feelings are the result of their perception of viewing the world. This results in the finding that they do not cause other’s feelings and thus, they do not have to take responsibility for how others feel. Finally, “they separate their loyalty to and feelings for friends, co-workers, or loved ones from their beliefs, values, or actions with which they may not agree” (Taylor, 1995b, p. 85).

On the other hand, Kegan (1994) assumes that the “hidden curriculum” of this contemporary culture makes “mental demands” on adults in their private and public lives. That is, adults in the postmodern society are pressed by the complex set of tasks and expectations, such as parenting, partnering, working, dealing with differences, healing, and learning (Kegan, 1994). In order to deal with these mental demands effectively, he asserts, adults should move toward the fourth order of consciousness because the fourth-order organizing principle of agency, authority and autonomy is suited for dealing with the demands. However, he asserts that adults rarely arrive at the fourth order of

consciousness until their forties or fifties (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Therefore, he mentions that adult education should assist adults to “create the order of consciousness the modern world demands” (Kegan, 1994, p. 287). That is, Kegan views the fourth order of consciousness as the final destination that most adults should arrive at, and asserts the importance of the role of learning as helping adults to move towards the stage.

Mezirow assumes that adult lives are filled with meaning-making activity. Adults have faced diverse life experiences in their lives, and they have a need to understand these experiences in order to make sense of what happens in their lives (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Therefore, they interpret their experiences and make meaning from them with their meaning perspectives. According to Mezirow (1990b), there are two dimensions of meaning making: meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Meaning schemes refer to “the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation” and meaning perspectives refers to “broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations” (Mezirow, 1994, P. 223). This meaning perspective is formed by the way that adults grow up, the culture they live in, and what they have previously learned (Cranton, 1994).

These meaning structures function as a lens or filters by which adults interpret their world. Therefore, Mezirow defines adult development as the process of acquiring higher level meaning perspectives. For him, the superior perspective is “a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective” because the perspective helps adults to “better understand the meaning of their experience,” and “making

decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings” (1990b, p.14). In short, Mezirow insists that adult development is perspective transformation.

According to Mezirow, the changes of meaning perspectives are initiated by adults’ life experiences (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). When adults face new experiences that cannot be resolved by their existing meaning perspective, they feel conflicting crisis between them. Trying to solve this “disorienting dilemma,” they examine their assumptions and find the assumptions are distorted and invalid (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Mezirow called this process critical reflection. Through the critical reflection process, adults seek an alternative meaning perspective and integrate new experiences based on their transformed perspectives. That is, by experiencing their perspective transformed, adults can be free from their former beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings that limit their interpretation and have new understanding about their world through their more functional perspectives.

These transformed perspectives are verified by discourse, “a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). The discourse can occur in various settings, such as one-to-one relationships, in groups, and in formal educational settings (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The validated new perspectives through discourse finally lead learners to seek and perform appropriate actions in particular situations to implement change.

Based on this definition of adult development, Mezirow (1990b, p. 1) views learning as “process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action,” not just

adding new knowledge or skills. Therefore, he asserts that adult educators should facilitate and support the perspective transformation of adult learners by fostering critical reflection and transformative learning for emancipatory education (Mezirow, 1990a). For this educational goal, Mezirow provides various strategies that adult educators should use. First, adult educators should help adult learners be aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. Second, they should assist adult learners to fully participate in discourse in order to "arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief" (Mezirow, 1997, p.10). They also should give information about alternatives and provide emotional support when learners undergo the process of transformation (Mezirow, 1990a). Mezirow also asserts that education should be "learner-oriented, participatory, and interactive" and involve "group deliberation and group problem solving" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10).

How Adult Women Change Through Learning Experiences

Usually, adult women learners have a negative identity as learners. Learner identity is mostly formed by former schooling experiences, and it is obvious that curriculum, interpersonal interactions between teachers and students, and institutional culture of formal school are gender biased and reproduce stereotypical roles and images of women (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Affected by this explicit and implicit "text" against women in formal school, adult women learners doubt their ability to study and show lack of self-confidence. In particular, reentry women suffer from uncertainty about their study abilities because they think that the years away from an academic setting makes their academic ability rusty. This negative identity as learners significantly influences their

general sense of self-esteem and their other identities (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Thus, adult women usually have negative identity as learners.

However, as adult women join in learning activities and their learning progresses, their identity as learners changes (Hayes & Flannery, 1997). Through the success of their school work, they discover that they are intelligent and they are valuable and worthwhile members of their academic communities. This leads them to have an increased sense of competence, personal power, and self-confidence, (Karen, 1990; D'ortona, 1991; Rifken, 1995).

Women learners also report their sense of self-discovery. Women learners who studied theories of adult women's development report in a course on Women's Psychological Development six themes of how they develop through their learning experiences: knowing oneself, accepting oneself, connecting with others, changing perspectives, empowering oneself, and seeking growth and development (Marienau, 1995). In addition, women learners often find their own voice as the result of their learning experiences. They describe this as "I learned that I had something to say;" "My voice got stronger;" "I learned to speak in my own voice, not the voice of others" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 91). By finding their inner voice, women learners give new meaning to their previous experiences, make their new identity, and recognize that they have been suppressed in order to conform the "female goodness" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 95).

How Learning Impacts on Development of Adult Women Learners

It has been found that traditional mainstream literature regarding adult development misses women's unique ways of development by assuming adult

development as a universal phenomenon and generalizing research results derived from male subjects to females (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). Asserting that women develop in ways specifically different from the ways in which men develop, many researchers, such as Gilligan, Bateson, Hancock, and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule have tried to discover the distinctive characteristics of women's development.

In her work on women's moral development, Gilligan proposes that women's development is characterized by relatedness, connection, and care for others. According to her, women define themselves in relation with others, and thus women's identity is formed in the process of connection with others (Taylor, 1999). Thus, as they develop, women maintain "the balance of self-nurturance and care for others" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 61). Based on the theory of Gilligan, the relational model appears as the alternative development model (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997, p 3) also insist that women's "voice" and "quest for self" are central to the development of women's knowledge and propose "five different perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority:" silence, received knowing, subjective knowing, procedural knowing, and constructed knowing.

Silent women are characterized by absence of voice and disbelief in their intellectual capacity for knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997). They are expressed as deaf "because they assume they could not learn from the words of others" and as dumb "because they felt so voiceless" (Belenky et al., 1997, p.24). They believe that knowledge is possessed by others in authority, such as teachers, employers, and spouses (Carfagna, 1995). Thus, when authorities say what is right, they believe it without

question of “why.” Silent women neither describe the self nor describe the changes that would occur in the future.

Received knowers learn by listening. They believe that the origin of truth is in others, especially those in authority, and thus, they carefully listen others’ ideas and thoughts and store them inside themselves (Belenky et al., 1997). Consequently, their thoughts are a repetition of what they heard, and their concept of self is understood in terms of other’s approval or affirmation (Carfagna, 1995). They are dependant on “what they are expected to do-what they are responsible for” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 42).

Received knowers are intolerant of ambiguity and understand the world with a dichotomous view. They think there is only one right answer, and thus the opposite one is automatically a wrong answer.

Subjective knowers believe that knowledge and truth are personal, private, and subjective. They are aware of “the existence of inner resources for knowing and valuing” and find self-truth inside them, so they rely on their own authority, not external authorities (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 54). That is, the discovery of their inner power changes their perspectives about others. For them, authorities are not those whom they follow and obey any more. Rather, they rely on their own experiences and intuitions and follow “what feels comfortable” to them when making decision (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 69). They also do not try to satisfy the expectations or responsibilities that are defined by others. Rather, they make an effort to find their “still small voice” and their newly discovered self (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 68). They intentionally ignore outer voices in order to develop their own inner voice. In this process, they deny others’ realities.

Procedural knowers are interested in the “ways of looking” (Belenky et al., 1997). They believe that each individual views her or his world differently through different lens, so they come to have different opinions. So procedural knowers try to understand the process of how others form their own ideas. They make an effort to develop the procedure for understanding how others can have their own opinions and how they can communicate with the others (Belenky et al. 1997). In other words, based on the recognition that each individual can have a different opinion, procedural knowers try to understand others’ perspectives by communicating with them even though they do not agree with others’ opinions. Therefore, procedural knowers pay attention to objects in the external world with the harmony of their inner voices. They understand knowledge from a variety of perspectives, and they value experiences that are different from their own (Carfagna, 1995).

Constructed knowers understand that all knowledge is constructed, and they generate knowledge in concert with others. They integrate their own subjective knowledge and objective knowledge that they learned from others (Carfagna, 1995). They accomplish this integration through the process of self-reflection and self-analysis. Through this reasoned reflection process, they construct “a way of thinking about knowledge, truth, and self that guides the person’s intellectual and moral life and personal commitments” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 136). Constructed knowers tolerate conflicts and ambiguity. They recognize the inevitability of conflict and try to live with the conflict. That is, they understand themselves and their world with holistic views.

Caffarella and Olson (1993) reviewed literature regarding psychological development for women and found three major themes about development for women.

First, women's development reflects a diverse and non-linear pattern. Second, intimacy and identity are key issues throughout adult women's life. Third, the importance of interpersonal relationships and a sense of connectedness are central factors in women's development.

These theories about women's development raises questions about the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and has led to the development of an alternative teaching approach for women learners. That is, based on women's centrality of relationship, it is suggested to use collaborative interaction, foster a climate for learning where learners and instructors support each other, use a cooperative communication style, and facilitate learners to share their feelings (Caffarella, 1996; Hayes, 1989). That identity and intimacy are most important themes in women's development results in the suggestion that instructors should recognize that their learners may be struggling with their identity. Instructors can encourage learners to find their "authentic self" or their voice, and serve as role models in helping learners share their changing sense of selves (Caffarella, 1996). Derived from that diverse pattern of adult women's development, it is suggested that instructors should acknowledge the diverse patterns of life and that transitions can be powerful motivators for women's learning. They should modify the instruction in order for the women learners to connect learning activities with their life stage (Caffarella, 1996; Fisher, 1993). Experiential learning, integrating women's experiences with the content they learn, and designing classroom activities and assignments related to their experiences, are also suggested as appropriate methods for women's development (Fisher, 1993).

In order to help women learners to develop new perspectives, a series of teaching methods for transformation is suggested; to help learners to surface their existing ideas and beliefs, to help learners to reflect them with frameworks of analysis, and finally to help learners to construct new meaning (Taylor, 1999). In addition, various teaching methods, such as narrative, journal writing, teaching learners models or theories of adult women's development are recommended in order that women learners discover their voices (Marienau, 1995; Rossiter, 1999; Walden, 1995). Many adult educators apply these alternative approaches that are designed for women learners, and it is reported that these alternative teaching methods facilitate women to achieve growth and development through their learning experiences.

In addition, learning itself causes adult women's development. For many adult women learners, participating in learning means stepping into a new world (Daloiz, 1999). During interaction with new people in the new world, such as instructors and classmates, they find people who live differently having different values. This realization stimulates them to examine their lives with different perspectives, challenge their attitudes or ways of thinking, and finally change their lives. For example, in my pilot study, a Korean reentry women found that, unlike her, other classmates completed homework by doing it all night long. Shocked by this, she had an opportunity to reflect about herself. She raised a question, "Why can't I do it as others do?" and thought, "I will do it." She also came to know one of her classmates who lived very diligently and actively, following her rigid time schedules. Surprised by her "strong will and power of execution," and impressed by her way of life, she came to find the absence of future goals in her life

unacceptable and thought “I should do something in my future.” That is, adult women can experience their development by encountering new worlds through their learning.

How Development Leads to Learning

For adult women learners, achieving development through learning experiences is a revolutionary change. As examined above, adult women learners come to have a positive identity and to restore self-esteem and self-confidence. They also discover their authentic voice, that is, who they are. These changes lead them to pursue what they really want to do. In other words, forsaking their roles required by their culture, they develop new goals in life. These goals create new educational needs in turn. Thus, they begin to participate in further learning in order to achieve their new goals. For example, in my pilot study, a Korean reentry woman, who gained a new perspective to interpret her life differently and who gained confidence in her academic ability, finally reopened her old dream of being a kindergarten teacher and decided to fulfill the dream. This new goal led her to make new learning plan: to return to college in order to get a kindergarten teacher certificate. As the beginning stage of the plan, she is now preparing for the graduate school entrance exam by attending English classes.

In addition, development sometimes causes conflict between newly changed adult women learners and people surrounding them (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Through experiencing development, adult women learners face dramatic changes. They become new; however, their context is still the same. For example, their family members or colleagues expect the same subordinate roles for them, but they no longer accept these roles once having new perspectives. This causes conflicts, and some adult women solve these conflicts by ceasing the relationships, such as divorce or quitting their jobs (Hays &

Flannery, 2000). Of course, this solution generates new educational needs to adapt to their new situation. For example, divorced women face the need to make them more marketable for financial independence, so they go back to school. In conclusion, learning leads adult women learners to the new world, and the new world provides them new educational needs by promoting their growth. These new needs motivate them to learn further. Therefore, it is clear that learning and development are interrelated and reciprocal.

Social Context Influencing Changes of Korean Women's Ways of Thinking

Learning, a phenomenon in a society, is closely related with its social context, and shaped by its culture. Therefore, the personal development motivation of Korean reentry women should be studied with the understanding of the Korean social context. In order to understand why personal development is a significant agenda for Korean reentry women, in this section, I will examine changes of Korean women's ways of thinking in accordance with the economic, political, and cultural changes in Korean society.

Familial Changes in Accordance with Social Changes in Korea

In the history of Korea, the 1900s was the period that most severe political, economical, and cultural changes occurred. In 1910, with the invasion of Japan, the Chosen Dynasty came to an end. From 1910 to 1945, Korea became a colony of Japan and was governed by the Japanese. After World War II, Korea faced the difficulty of liquidating colonial conditions and suffered from ideological conflicts. In this time of confusion, Korea was under the trusteeship of the U.S. (south) and the U.S.S.R. (north) from 1945 to 1948, and this divided military occupation reinforced the conflict of political ideology. In 1948, in South Korea, a president was elected by representatives,

the republican government was established, and democracy began for the first time in Korean history. In 1950, the Korean War broke out. When the war ceased in 1953, Korea was explicitly divided into North Korea and South Korea according to the armistice agreement.

Since the late 1960s when president Park implemented labor-intensive and export-oriented industry and intended modernization, South Korea accomplished rapid industrialization and economic development in only three decades. The rate of urbanization raised 8% in 1940 to 83% in 1990, and the GNP increased from \$82 in 1960 to \$6,500 in 1990 (Koo, 1995). While the employees in industry of the agricultural, livestock, fisheries, and mining decreased from 81% in 1940 to 17% in 1990, those in the service industry increased 15% to 55% during the same period (Koo, 1995). In addition, modernization has been oriented toward westernization and signifies an extinction of the past, thus, it also stimulated changes of meanings, values, and norms among Koreans (Kim, 2000).

These rapid social and cultural changes consequently reshaped family structure and roles in particular ways. Most of all, in the industrialized society, the nuclear family became the most desirable family form and rapidly increased to almost 80% in 1995 (Kim & Joo, 1999). In addition, the birth rate fell from 4.8 persons in 1966 to 1.7 persons in 1995, and this caused the average number of family members to be reduced from 5.5 persons to 3.4 persons in the same period (Chang & Kim, 2000). That is, the Korean family in contemporary industrialized society transformed to a couple centered nuclear family.

This nuclearization and reduced family size did not mean only the decline of coresidence of elderly parents with their married adult children. It also meant cultural changes regarding elderly parents. As the nuclear family became a norm and individualism expanded, the traditional familism of devoting oneself to parents and depending on grown-up children has largely decreased (Koo, 1995). According to Byun's (1992) survey of residents in Seoul, only 45% of women answered, "it is natural to care for old parents" (p.11). Most Korean women in current society want their parents to be independent, so they agree more with the idea that they would care "when the parents cannot care for themselves" (Byun, 1992, p. 11).

While the idea of old parents-oriented family was weakened, children become a center in the nuclear family. Parents paid much attention to their children. They considered providing extensive education for their children as one of their responsibilities and devote much time and money to this goal. Byun (1992)'s survey underscored this child-centered familism in current society. For the question of when parents' responsibilities for children are complete, about 50% of Seoul people said until the child gets married or until the child finishes his/her final education year, and about 20% thought that the responsibilities of parents for their child cannot be limited. About half of respondents in the survey answered that they wanted to rely on their spouse in their old age, while only 30% said on their children or grandchildren (Byun, 1992).

As industrialized society created the demands for highly specialized personnel, levels of both women's education and married women's labor force participation have increased. The average length of schooling of females increased from 6.63 years in 1980 to 9.37 in 1995 (Kim & Joo, 1999). While 10.8% of women were educated in high

school, or postsecondary institutions in 1975, the rate increased to 47.9% in 1995 (Kim & Joo, 1999). In 1999, 96.8% of females were enrolled in high school, and 52.2% in college and university. In view of the fact that the illiteracy rate for women was 89.5% in the 1930's, the education for women was tremendously expanded in a short period (Association for Women, 1999). In the workforce, a similar trend appeared. The employment rate for women increased 37.0% in 1963, 39.3% in 1970, 42.8% in 1980, 47.0% in 1990, and 48.3% in 1995 (Choi and Jung, 1997). The employment of married women also increased from 40.0% in 1980 to 47.3% in 1998 (Kim and Joo, 1999).

As the number of women who get jobs and achieve economic independence rises, at first marriage and divorce rates also increased. The rise of average age at marriage and life expectancy resulted in a shorter childcare period and extension of the empty nest period, a period after the last child leaves. This change influenced women to be released from the burden of childcare, and to have much time for themselves. This caused the problems of how to use increased leisure time for middle class women (Kim, 1984).

Industrialization impacted on the function of family, too, as labor moved to the workforce, and consumption remained in the home. A number of specialized institutions, such as schools, hospitals, banks, firms, a variety of market for financial instruments and goods, the social security system, and the welfare state also replaced family traditional roles (Mason, Tsuya, & Choe, 1998). Therefore, in contemporary industrialized society, the Korean family functions to provide emotional support and rest to husbands, who are exhausted from the excessive work outside the home, to socialize children, to express affection, and to maintain the relationship with relatives (You, 1989, cited by Kim, 1994). Industrialization also fostered the division into public and private domain, and further

sexual labor division: into breadwinner husband and homemaker wives. In particular, the number of full-time housewives in middle class rapidly increased, as the industrialization which is paralleled with economic development caused the growth of middle class in Korean society (Moon, 1997).

Changes of Korean Women's Ways of Thinking Regarding Occupation

The rapid and intense social and familial transformation resulted in that different generations of Korean women have lived in different social contexts and have had different lives. They are approximately divided into three generations: women in pre-industrialized society, women during industrialization, and women in an affluent and stable economy. They lived in different family structures, and consequently, their roles as housewives and mothers became quite different.

Korean women in traditional society held inferior positions in relation to their husbands within the Confucian family hierarchy, and were segregated from men's public sphere. However, they had a mutually cooperative relationship with men by performing home production. Called the "master of inner house," they carried much of the work inside the home, including the production of handicrafts, weaving, tilling the soil, managing stored grains, and managing household matters. Those works required a great deal of training and expertise, so their ability to master these essential tasks provided them with the source of status and prestige within the household (Hart, 1990). Based on the Confucian's ideology of respecting the elderly, their status become higher as they grew older. Mother-in-laws had strong power and were recognized for their authority as persons who handed down a family tradition to daughters-in-law. Cho (1987) described one women's life in traditional society who managed a large household as the wife of the

eldest son. She developed her potential and mastered strategies to achieve what she wanted through her works. That is, many Korean women in traditional society have developed high achievement-oriented personalities despite their “obedient and self-sacrificing image” (Cho, 1987, p. 33).

Women’s lives during industrialization were quite different from those of the previous generation. They were the first generation who went through formal education without interruption and lived in a nuclear family. However, despite nuclearization in family, individuals were still considered as a member of a family, not an independent human being, and family was a minimum unit in society (Kim, 1997). A husband represented the head of a family, and his duty as a head was to support his family by succeeding in public sectors. On the other hand, the role of a wife was to take complete charge of work in the private sector in order that her husband could concentrate on his career (Kim, 1997). That is, wives provided “rest place” for husbands who struggled in competitive society. They perceived this as role division between husband and wife. They think that their social status is from their husbands’ status and this status as full-time housewives is higher than the status most Korean employed women can have (Moon, 1997). They also want to get a job because of high social status, not economic necessity (Moon, 1997).

In the nuclear family structure which redefined home from a unit of productive activity into a unit of consumption, women’s major roles shrank to providing personalized services for family members, reproducing quality workers, and socializing future workers for the further development of industrial capitalism (Kim, 1995). These activities were performed by consuming goods of the capital market. Therefore, they

were called “*jubu*” (housewives) whose role is “derived almost exclusively from market forces arising from Korea’s economic development and who bases her identity and activities upon those forces” (Hart, 2000, p. 10).

This condition consequently resulted in women’s economic dependence on their husbands. Because husbands are solely responsible for production, wives have to rely on the money that their husbands earn in order to purchase commodities. Because of this, Chung (1986, cited by Hart, 1990) asserted that “A *jubu* assumes a modern home, which in turn assumes an employed husband; hence a *jubu* is a woman whose social identity is established and maintained by her husband’s position. By herself she is “socially recognized as nothing.” This condition that married women exchange unpaid domestic work for economic security provided Korean women, especially middle class women, with frustration and humiliation. About women suffering from these feelings (Hart, 2000),

Doctors and social workers alike concluded that these negative emotions stem from an underlying economic dependence coupled with the burden of responsibility for the home. Phenomena such as “education fever,” feelings of being isolated at home, husbands who chronically come home late, sexual frustration, and infidelity by their husbands were cited prominently. Such emotional problems were a trend among middle class women in their 30s and 40s which increased significantly during the 1980s. (p. 42)

In addition, unlike the previous generation who had been recognized for their authority and fully supported by their grown-up children, Korean women during

industrialization faced decline of elderly status in a family precipitated by the appearance of the nuclear family. They lived following the Confucian idea of devoting oneself to parents, and relying on grown-up children. But when they were older, what they faced was that the Confucian idea has largely decreased and that they could not expect what they did to their parents from their children and they should find different ways of living as elderly from the previous generation. In addition, they could not enjoy the high status their previous generation had. That is, they were a sandwich generation. This situation made them regret sacrificing themselves for their family members. In particular, in an atmosphere of the modern society whose idea of self-satisfaction, individualism, and material fulfillment were idealized, their regret was more amplified.

The regret and resentment that they felt about their past lives as mothers and wives generated new expectations for their daughters: They desired their daughters to have a job and achieve economical independence. One of the interviewees in Cho's study (1987, p. 59) said, "I am raising my daughter to pursue whatever she wants to do. I don't mind at all if she is not good at what women are supposed to do." Another interviewee also expressed a similar opinion: "I want my daughter to be an active and positive woman who can develop a life of her own." With this expectation, they actively supported their daughters' education and paid attention to their daughter's academic achievement as they did for their sons.

Women in affluent society who were the beneficiaries of Korean economic development were raised in this environment. While observing how their mother's lives were miserable, they recognized the false image of "wise mothers and good wives" at an early age. This caused them to assert, "I won't live like my mother. I will be a career

woman, not a housewife.” That is, they despised full-time housewives and perceived being a career woman as the way to avoid being housewives. The role models of career women, even though the number was small, also influenced them. Thus, they not only perceived career to be a definite option, but also wanted to have lifelong careers (Chang, 1993; Cho, 1987). In addition, the introduction of women’s studies in Korea in the late 1970s promoted their consciousness raising. Women’s studies provided them with new eyes regarding gender inequality that spread in society, including unequal power relationship between husband and wife. Mass media also played an active role in making women learn of the world-wide feminist movement (Cho, 1987). In short, this generation of women neither identify themselves as wives nor regard their husbands’ successes as theirs. Rather, they think of themselves as individuals and pursue their own success. They express this desire as personal development.

However, they are not completely freed from deep-rooted Confucian values of married women’s primary responsibility to serve the family, in particular, children (Kim, 1995). They still think children should be taken care of by their own mother or blood-related women, otherwise they would be emotionally harmed (Byun, 1992). Thus, they suffer from guilty feelings that they do not spend enough time with their children. The conflicts between housework and career have also deteriorated by their husband’s unchanged traditional attitudes of low participation in housework even though they were found in favor of wives working (Moon & Joo, 2000). In short, childcare and double burdens between housework and career are the biggest problems that this generation of career women face. Experiencing this conflict, many middle class women quit their jobs.

This unwanted condition makes their inner conflicts more intense due to their dissatisfied personal development need.

Summary

This study approaches Korean reentry women as a cultural subgroup among many reentry women. Thus, this literature review puts this study in the context of literature regarding reentry women in the U. S. and to women's development as learners. Considering the cultural influences to this certain type of reentry women, this literature review also provides information about Korean social changes that occurred after WWII. The first section details why reentry women in the U. S. return to school after years outside the educational settings and what they experience from their schooling. Comparing these findings, Korean reentry women's motivations are described. This literature review shows how reentry women in the U. S. and those in Korea have different motivations in general. It also shows the lack of studies related to Korean reentry women's experiences and changes from their schooling.

The second section discusses how learning leads to development of adult learners. Theories of three major researchers, Daloz, Kegan, and Mezirow, who understand learning as a transformation, are reviewed. In particular, the issues of adult women learners' development are focused on in this section. This section specifically reviews how adult women learners change through learning experiences, how learning impacts on the development of adult women learners, and how development leads to learning again. This section provides the theoretical background about reentry women's personal and internal development.

In the final section, the social context that influences changes in Korean women's ways of thinking are discussed. It is mentioned how Korean society and family system have rapidly changed due to the national implementation for industrialization and modernization. Then, it is described how these changes have caused changes in women's lives, roles as mothers and wives, and their ways of thinking. In particular, the trends were examined by comparing three generations' lives: women in pre-industrialized society, women during industrialization, and women in affluent society. By doing this, this literature review explains why Korean women in current society detach themselves from their husbands or their children, unlike the former generation, and desire to pursue personal development for themselves.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Korean society achieved rapid and intense industrialization and modernization during the decades since the late 1960s. This dramatic social transformation precipitated changes in Korea women's ways of thinking. Unlike the former generation who sacrificed themselves for their family, many highly-educated middle class Korea women in contemporary society perceive themselves as independent human beings who want to pursue personal development. With this desire, many of them return to school. However, there is no understanding about Korean reentry women's personal development in relation to their educational experiences in school. The purpose of this study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. In this chapter, I will describe how I conducted my study in order to accomplish the purpose. I will explain the design of the study, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, variability and reliability, and researcher's biases and assumptions. I will also tell the findings of my pilot study.

Design of the Study

I used a generic qualitative research design in this study. Qualitative research is interpretive and views education as a process, and school as a lived experience. It is assumed that knowledge consists of understanding the meaning of the process or experience, and an inductive, hypothesis, or theory generating mode of inquiry is utilized.

Qualitative researchers believe that realities are multiple and constructed socially by individuals (Merriam, 1998).

Rooted in this paradigm, qualitative research has unique assumptions or characteristics, and these are well delineated by many researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 1994; Merriam 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The first characteristic of qualitative research is that reality is constructed by individuals in the process of interacting with their social worlds rather than that there is a singular reality which exists apart from people, is objective, static, and universal (Merriam, 1998). Thus, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed in their worlds. In other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with how different people make sense of their lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Therefore, qualitative researchers attempt to get the participants' or insiders' perspectives (emic) to understand their meaning making (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

When examining this characteristic in relation to my study, it was clear that using qualitative research methods would provide more useful information. The purpose of my study was to understand the nature, process, and impact of personal development experienced by highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. I investigated the meaning of personal development from the perspectives of the women; how *they* understood and defined the concept of personal development. This question came from the assumption that reality is multiple, subjective, and constructed by people. I assumed that the reality of personal development can be understood and mean different things to different people in different contexts. Among the diverse realities about personal development, I wanted to know highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women's

reality of personal development. I also wanted to know how they gained personal development through their educational experiences and how the personal development they achieved brought about changes and growth. I wanted to understand how Korean reentry women made meaning in their lives with their educational experiences.

This interest in meaning making in qualitative research causes researchers to be interested in process that lead to particular outcomes, and not just the outcomes or products themselves (Merriam, 1998). In other words, qualitative researchers ask “how” questions rather than “whether” or “what.” This is the second characteristic of qualitative research. This characteristic fits the purpose of my study. I was interested in the process by which education impacted the rest of the participants’ lives. That is, I was interested in the process of growth through educational experiences rather than the growth, as an outcome, itself.

Another characteristic of qualitative research is the assumption that knowledge can be drawn from the interaction between the researcher and those being researched (Creswell, 1994). Therefore, unlike quantitative research where the researcher is separated from being researched by using the inanimate methods of experiment, test, or survey, and artificially manipulated circumstances in order to maintain objectivity, qualitative researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and conducts fieldwork trying to lessen the distance between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). That is, in order to understand how people make sense of their lives and worlds, the researcher goes to people, sites, or institutions; spends time in the natural settings, and uses multiple interactive and humanistic methods,

such as talking with people, listening to them, observing their behaviors, and reading written documents about them (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

I also believed that the knowledge about highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women's personal enrichment could be best gained by interacting with them because the knowledge was inside of them. In particular, their perceptions or perspectives regarding personal development could be drawn out by the humanistic interaction. Therefore, the best way for me to collect data was to talk and listen to them and read their personal documents, if available.

The fourth characteristic of qualitative research is that the process of qualitative research is inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Unlike quantitative research that sets up a hypothesis before conducting the study and attempts to test it by the data gathered, the qualitative researcher attempts to build abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories from detailed data. This is what I ultimately wanted to do by conducting my research. I wanted to build the knowledge about highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women's changes and growth derived from their educational experiences. Therefore, qualitative research whose process is inductive was best for my study.

Finally, qualitative research produces rich and thick description as a result (Merriam, 1998). The description is composed of words and pictures rather than numbers. In addition, in qualitative research, that the language of research may be more informal and personal (Creswell, 1994). Thus, the description often includes direct quotations of interviewees or narratives. Since I was most interested in the women's reality and meaning making, I thought that these could be best portrayed by their own voices and narratives that support the findings and interpretation of my research.

There are many commonalities between characteristic of qualitative research and my research interest, methods, process, findings, and the final objective of my study. Therefore, it was concluded that qualitative research was the best tool to provide the information that I wanted to know.

Sample Selection

I employed a purposeful sampling strategy in order to learn the most about the meaning of personal development of highly-educated Korean reentry women, how they gained personal development through their educational experiences, and how the personal development they achieved brought about changes and growth. Purposeful sampling “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). A purposeful sample is designed to “illuminate the questions under study” and aids in selecting “information-rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 1990, p.169). In purposeful sampling, it is important to create criteria, “a list of attributes essential” to the study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, cited by Merriam, 1998, p.61).

In selecting the purposeful sample, I used several criteria to guide the sample selection based on the purpose of my research. “Highly-educated,” and “middle class” are quite vague words, so I limited “highly-educated” women to university graduates. Almost all Koreans strongly aspire to a Bachelor’s degree, but only a few can enter universities passing competitive entrance examinations. In this context, it is obvious that for high school graduates, personal development means to achieve their dream and get social recognition by attaining a Bachelor’s degree. I chose to explore the meaning of personal development of university-graduated reentry women. In particular, I was most

interested in why women like myself who already have a Bachelor's degree enroll in universities again.

There are several ways to determine “middle class.” But in this study, I defined “middle class” Korean women as those who could manage their household with only their husbands' income, and thus were not forced to work outside the home. This criteria would ensure that they were motivated by personal development rather than financial needs.

Regarding the school the women reentered, I actually limited it to the four-year university. However, in the data collecting process, I found that more reentry women who had a Bachelor's degree returned to a graduate school rather than to a four-year university. Because I thought that it was meaningful to investigate the popular phenomenon in Korean society, I extended the definition of “university” in my study to four-year universities, graduate schools, and university-affiliated lifelong education centers.

According to my literature review, Korean women aged 25 to 45 belong to the generation who were raised in an affluent society. That is, they are characterized as having independent identity while detaching themselves from their husbands or children and as having a strong desire for self-actualization. These characteristics distinguish them from previous generations. Therefore, I assumed that reentry women aged from 25 to 45 were motivated by personal development needs.

I also selected Korean reentry women who were full-time housewives when enrolled as a student because, according to my literature review, experience as full-time housewives was one of the fundamental factors leading to the desire for personal

development. Therefore, for my sample, I selected full-time housewives aged 25 to 45 who enrolled as students at a four-year university, a graduate school, or university-affiliated lifelong education center and who already had a Bachelor's degree.

In order to get this sample, I planned that I would first use my informal networking and expanded the number of interviewees with the method of snowball sampling. That is, I expected to begin to interview reentry women I knew, then to ask them to recommend other persons who were appropriate for the study. However, once I began collecting data, I found among people who I knew that only one other reentry woman met the criteria of my study, and she could introduce me to only one reentry woman. In addition, during the process of data collection, I found that the fields of study of reentry women were closely related to their motivations. So, for the validity, I tried to select reentry women in diverse fields of study. It also made it difficult to find interviewees of this study from the method of snowball sampling.

Thus, I tried many strategies to get the reentry women. First, I visited the administrators of universities and asked to be introduced to reentry women attending the university. However, they did not give any information, mentioning they could not provide private information without permission. I also visited a university campus and directly contacted people who looked like Korean reentry women. I introduced myself and my study to them, but they did not want to participate. They seemed guarded with me, an unfamiliar person. Eventually, I got most of the participants in this study from the informal networking. I advertised my study to whomever I knew, especially my friends, family, and relatives and some of them introduced me to reentry women whom they

knew. Because the reentry women could check me out with our mutual acquaintances, they willingly accepted to be interviewed.

In addition, I got a few reentry women from some special ways. I posted an advertisement on several websites, and one woman voluntarily contacted me to be interviewed. I also found a woman who met the criteria of my study from one of the internet sites for Korean married women. There, I saw an interview with her about returning to school, and I asked the manager of the internet site to contact her for me. She willingly agreed to participate in my study. Further, I also found a participant when watching a documentary TV program whose topic was depression of full-time housewives in Korea. The program introduced several women's cases, and one of them was the person I looked for. On the program, I saw the school and department to which she returned, so I called the department to know her contact information. She was also willing to have an interview with me. Using these various strategies for six months, I finally selected 13 reentry women for my sample.

In the process of selecting my sample, of course, I took precautions to insure that the participants were treated in an ethical manner. I selected my sample based on their willingness to participate in my study. I fully informed them of the purpose and audience for my study, and what the study entails, and I gained their agreement through the informed consent form. I informed them that they could withdraw at any time without any penalty if they chose to do so. I also protected the participant's privacy using pseudonyms and kept secret their identities and specific roles.

Data Collection

Qualitative data “consist of ‘direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge,’ obtained through interviews; ‘detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, and actions,’ recorded in observations; and ‘excerpts, quotations, or entire passages’ extracted from various types of documents” (Patton, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 69.) In order to collect these data, I primarily used interviewing.

First, I conducted person to person in-depth interviews with each participant. A research interview is defined as a “conversation with a purpose” and is designed to gather descriptive data that will enhance understanding of the respondent’s perspective (Dexter, as cited in Merriam, 1998, P. 71). The interview’s purpose is “to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1996, p. 6). This interview is “necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people observe the world around them” (Merriam, 1998, p.72.) Interviews are also helpful in acquiring historical information from informants (Creswell, 1994.) In my study, it was essential to get descriptive data of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women’s perceptions about the nature, process, and impact of personal development that they experience through their learning. It was also important to know their historical background that had caused them to return to school and their changed behavior or attitude based on their past history. Therefore, the interview was the most appropriate method for my research.

There are various interview types, from the highly structured interview to the unstructured interview (Merriam, 1998). I used a semistructured interview, in which the

interview is “guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74.) Semistructured interviews are based on the assumption that individual participants define the world in unique ways. A semistructured interview contains suggested questions and a sequence of themes to be covered, but at the same time, “there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects” (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Thus, semistructured interviews allow the researcher to respond to the situation at hand and to pursue a participant’s insights and issues not anticipated when the interview was constructed (Thompson, 1994).

There were five general areas for which I asked specific questions. Those five areas were 1) life history and major roles before returning to school, 2) motivations or expectations for returning to school, 3) learning experience, 4) the changes and growth resulting from learning experiences, and 5) perception about the factors or conditions that propelled their changes. A list of interview questions for each of these types can be found in Appendix A.

Interviews were conducted at various places. Seven interviews were conducted at the participants’ home, three interviews at the participants’ school or workplace, two interviews at my home, and two interviews at the church the participants attended. Each interview usually took more than three hours. Many participants welcomed the opportunity to talk “about their innermost feelings” and poured out what their struggles. One participant even thanked me for listening to her. In addition, two participants let me spend more time with them even after the interview, and we discussed shared concerns as reentry women and mothers in Korea, staying at their home for more several hours.

Interviews were conducted in Korean. Follow up interviews were done with five participants. The interviews were tape recorded, and then transcribed in Korean.

Because the transcripts totaled over 1000 pages, I translated only what I wanted to quote after analyzing the data. In order to verify the translation accuracy, part of the transcript was checked and corrected by another bilingual translator.

Another data source I expected to use was documents. Documents refer to printed and other materials relevant to a study and include public records, personal documents, and physical materials. Documents enable the researchers to obtain the informants' language and words and can be assessed at a time convenient to researcher. In particular, documents are produced in context, so they provide data about participants' experiences, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives about certain matters, and their view of the world (Merriam, 1998).

As for the documents in my study, I planned to use any type of personal documents that participants were willing to share with me, such as journals, diaries, letters, home videos, photo albums, or school papers that reflected participants' ways of thinking. But actually, I failed to get enough documents from the participants in this study. None of them wrote in a diary, and most of them did not keep letters or other kinds of writings. Thus, I just gained from four participants an interview transcript that had been posted on an internet site, two school papers, a biography, and a letter. The data that is drawn from these documents did not provide something new that was not found from interviews and just confirmed what I learned from interviewing the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of “making sense” or “making meaning” out of the data (Merriem, 1998, p. 178). The process involves systematically “searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157). About data analysis in qualitative research, Patton (1990, p. 372) wrote that “the challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals.” In qualitative research, data analysis is begun simultaneously with data collection and intensifies as the data collection progresses (Merriam, 1998). Among the variety of ways to analyze data in qualitative research, I used the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) for my study.

Constant comparative method was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of analysis in grounded theory research. “Because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research,” this method has been used in all kinds of qualitative research as a whole regardless of whether the researcher is building a grounded theory (Merriam, 1998, p. 159.) The constant comparative method is a systematic procedure for analyzing data that involves constantly comparing incidents in data to develop categories (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, as Merriam (1998, p. 159) explains, “the basic strategy of the method is to do just what its name implies – constantly compare.”

First, researchers immerse themselves in an interview, field notes, or document looking for particular incidents that meaningfully address to the question of the study. Then, the researcher compares the incident with another incident in the same set of data or in another set to distinguish similarities and differences. Through this comparison, the researcher identifies categories. That is, the incidents are grouped that have something in common, and each group is labeled and then becomes a category (Merriam, 1998). These categories reflect recurrent regularities and patterns throughout the data. Other incidents are continuously compared and coded into the existing or new categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process continues throughout the entire data analysis until all data have been tentatively assigned in central categories.

After the researcher identifies initial categories, she compares them each other in order to determine a relationship between the categories. The categories “would be fairly comprehensive classes,” which could be subdivided into properties by further comparisons (Merriam, 1998, p. 180). Establishing a relationship between several categories provides a thorough picture of the phenomenon being investigated. Through the process of constant comparison, researchers identify and develop themes inductively. Then, the themes are refined and integrated to construct final themes of the study.

For the data analysis of this study, I first prepared data. I typed the transcripts, leaving a right margin for coding notations. Then, I read the first transcripts thoroughly while jotting down notes in the right margins of the statements. When I made the notes, I tried to write broad terms that were relevant to the research questions rather than specific terms. I also wrote my impressions and questions on the margin. After reading the first

transcript, I went back to my notes and sorted those that seemed to go together. By doing this, I got a very rough list of grouped codes of the first transcript.

Then, I proceeded to the second transcript. Again, I carefully read it and made notes on the right margin of the statement. In order to distinguish similarities and differences between the first and the second list, I then read and grouped the notes, while keeping in mind the list of the first transcript. Of course, in this process, I found the common codes present in both lists and unique codes present in only one list. I repeated the same steps for each transcript. By the seventh transcript, I had a set of tentative categories, and the categories became clearer as I constantly compared other transcripts. As I interviewed further, I found that the results of the analysis of new interviews confirmed the existing themes I developed rather than giving new insights. So, I finished my interview with the thirteenth participant, feeling that the data were saturated. And at that moment, I had several tentative categories whose labels were “previous school experiences,” “working experiences,” “full-time housewives,” “motivation,” “experiences of returning to school,” “changes as a result,” “meaning of study and school,” “meaning of job and money,” and “personal development.” In determining the categories, I was concerned that the categories should reflect the purpose of my study, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, be sensitizing, and be conceptually congruent (Merriam, 1998).

After completing data collection with several tentative categories, I went back to the original transcripts and read them again while marking the transcript with different colors according to the established categories. For example, I marked all the statements that belonged to the “motivation” category in yellow; all the statements that belonged to

“full-time housewives” in pink; all the statements that belonged to “job experiences” in purple; and all statements that belonged to “meaning of study and school” in green.

Then, I created computer files for each of the categories, and I pulled together the same colored statements in each file by cutting and pasting them. Then I printed a hard copy of the contents of each file.

Then, I analyzed each category specifically by repeating the same procedure in developing categories. That is, I read it carefully while jotting notes on the right margin of the statement and highlighting key words of the sentences with different colors for different concepts. I then grouped those that went together by cutting and pasting, and I labeled them. I identified several groups. Carefully examining the several groups in a category based on the research questions, I integrated two groups into one group, or discarded some groups that were not relevant to the purpose of this study. Throughout this process, I identified properties of each category.

Finally, I moved back and examined the relationship between categories in light of the research questions. I wrote the purpose of this study and the research questions on a paper. Then I looked for the categories that could be answers to each research question and wrote the name of the category under the each question. I also went back to chapter one and two in order to figure out how the results of my study reflected previous literature and the Korean social context. These strategy helped me to gain a big picture.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in March, 2000. For the study, I selected two Korean reentry women who were enrolled in an informal English program that is provided by Clarke County in Athens. I selected my sample from the reentry women attending

informal educational programs because, at that time, I planned to study Korean reentry women who enroll in informal educational programs provided by lifelong education centers affiliated by universities. Hee Su was a 33-year-old full-time housewife with two children and returned to school about eight years after her graduation from a university. Hye Joung was a 26-year-old full-time housewife with one child. After graduation from a teacher's university, she had worked for two years as a high school teacher. Both participants came to the U. S. for her husband's doctoral study and were supposed to stay in the U. S. while their husbands completed their study. I collected data through person-to-person in-depth interviews and documents.

The most representative motivation for returning to school that the interviewees mentioned was dissatisfaction about living as a full-time housewife. They described their lives before going to school as "meaningless" and as "missing something." They said that full-time housewife's life was very busy, but all the work they did was for their family members. Therefore, even though they did a large amount of work, there was no work or time for themselves in their lives. This resulted in no self-satisfaction in their lives. This dissatisfaction led them to desire to "do something beyond" what was given to them as duty. They wanted to "do something for themselves" or "their development" by having "their own work" and "their own time." From this, I assumed that the meaning of personal development for them is to have their own work and do something for themselves in order to live meaningful lives.

The first experience the interviewees faced in their school was the difficulty of studying because they had not studied for a long time and they studied in English. However, the negative experiences - difficulty of studying and lack of confidence – that

the interviewees had at first faded away as time passed. And other positive attitudes were replaced in their mind as they met new experiences in their school. I classified the new experiences that helped them enjoy their study as three factors: classmates, freedom from the role of mother and housewife, and recognition from society.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, internal validity, called credibility, refers to how congruent one's findings are with reality that is constructed, multidimensional and ever changing (Merriam, 1995.) Therefore, qualitative researchers assume that there are interpretations of reality and that researchers offer their interpretation (etic) of someone else's interpretation (emic) of reality (Merriam, 1995.) In order to ensure for internal validity, I used the following strategies. The first strategy was a member check. I showed my tentative interpretation drawn from collected data to all the participants to confirm that my interpretation exactly captured what they meant. The second one is peer or colleague examination. I asked my major professor to comment about the plausibility of the emerging findings. Moreover, I shared the tentative findings of my study with many Korean women, such as my sister, friends, and church members, and listened to their responses about them. Most of them fully understood and agreed with what the participants in my study felt and thought, and it sometimes led them to share their similar concerns with me. Because of this reason, they showed strong interest in my study and most of them asked me for a copy of my completed dissertation. As the final strategy, I stated my experience, assumption, and biases as a researcher so that readers understand better in which manner the data are interpreted.

Reliability refers “to the extent to which research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 1998, p.205). This concept of reliability “is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results” (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). However, qualitative research assumes that reality is multiple and constructed within a context. In addition, human behavior is too dynamic to have the same result when repeating the same study. Thus, reliability in qualitative research, called dependability, refers to whether the results of the study are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1995). In order to enhance the reliability, I used two strategies. First, I used peer examination by asking my major professor to examine whether the emerging findings seemed to be consistent with the collected data. Second, I also used investigator’s position. That is, I informed readers about my orientation to the research, my assumptions and biases.

Qualitative research is intended to understand the particular in-depth, rather than findings that can be generalized to many (Merriam, 1995). Therefore, external validity in qualitative research refers to how the study is useful to other situations and is called transferability (Merriam, 1995). Several alternative concepts of external validity are employed in qualitative research (Creswell, 1997; Merriam, 1995). That is, qualitative researchers are concerned with situation-specific conditions of a particular context and thus generate working hypotheses, not conclusions. Concrete universals, another alternative concept, means that qualitative researchers apply what they learned in a particular situation to similar situations subsequently encountered. The concept of reader or user generalizability puts the responsibility of generalization on readers, not the researcher. That is, the generalizability of a study is determined by readers when they

compare their situation with the research context. Thus, researchers should be expected to provide enough detailed information about the phenomenon under study to allow readers or users to determine if findings can be applied to their situation (Merriam, 1995).

In order to enhance the external validity in this study, I used *rich, thick description*, describing in detail about the phenomena of my study in order that the readers can determine whether the findings of my study are applicable to their situation. I also employed *multisite design or maximizing variation* in the purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). I selected participants in diverse majors including English literature, English education, reading education, early childhood education, adult education, Korean history, psychology, textiles, music, veterinary medicine and women's studies. Further, I selected participants in diverse forms of school such a traditional school with day classes, a school with evening classes, an open university, and a seasonal university that offers classes in only summer and winter break.

Research Bias and Assumptions

Qualitative research is built on the basic assumption that reality is constructed by the individual, is subjective, multiple and ever-changing. Based on this assumption, the qualitative researcher tries to uncover the participants' interpretation of their world. Therefore, qualitative research acknowledges the existence of researchers' biases in collecting and interpreting the data. Peshkin (1988) states that researchers should "systematically seek out their subjectivity while their research is actively in progress" in order to "be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes" (p. 17).

I am a 34-year-old Korean married woman and a mother of four-year-old daughter. I was born in the middle class family as the first child in Seoul, Korea. My family was a typical nuclear family in a capitalistic society. That is, my father is a high-level manager in a company as breadwinner, and my mother is a full-time housewife taking care of three children. Even though my parents never discriminated against me for being a girl, as the first daughter, I had very close relationship with my mother and it led me to be sensitive to my mother's sorrow derived from the unequal relationship between my father and mother. Observing her life, I concluded that her sufferings were based on her financial dependency on her husband and that spending a husband's income required obedience of the wife. So I thought that I had to get a job and earn money by myself in order to keep an equal relationship with my spouse.

My mother's life fortified this decision more. Like other women of my mother's generation, she married my father in her early twenties and spent her young adulthood by rearing three children never imagining that there were other ways women could live. After her children were grown up, however, she suddenly felt empty and suffered from loneliness. Watching her, I learned that I had to have my own activities that I would enjoy my whole life. This lesson strengthened the necessity of my job, too. Because of this reason, I decided to study further in the U. S. to get a professional job. And the reason made me keep studying in any difficult situation: being separated from my husband for each one's study and taking care of my daughter as a single mother.

As a female researcher who believes that women are oppressed in a male privileged society and who works for women's liberation, I assumed that Korean adult women are not satisfied with their socially prescribed role of mother and wife. Of

course, I acknowledged that many women enjoy mothering and wifing, and those works are really valuable and precious. However, what concerns me is that we (women in Korea) are never in the situation to choose what we really want. We do not have options to select whether we work outside the home (working women) or inside the home (full-time housewives). We are just forced to take care of family members first, and many times, it requires us to be full-time housewives. Because I believe that happiness is absolutely subjective, I think only the people who choose their work can be happy and be satisfied with their lives regardless of what work they do. Therefore, unless we are free from the social code regarding married women, it is easy for us to ignore our inner voices and follow the code, confusing what we want with what we should do. This assumption will no doubt influence my understanding of Korean reentry women's experiences. However, I will try to be open-minded and understand interviewees' perceptions as they describe them.

On the other hand, the fact that I, as a researcher, am a Korean would improve the quality of my research. In qualitative research, it is assumed that meaning making occurs in the interaction between people and their society. This assumption leads to the belief that people's meaning making can be best understood in relation to their contexts. Thus, the qualitative researcher is much concerned with contexts, and with having a holistic view about a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). As a Korean, I am very familiar with the context that Korean women face, and this familiarity will improve the understanding about Korean reentry women. In particular, I belong to the group of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women of this study. Thus, I am very acquainted with how their sense of identity conflicts with Korean social norms that

regulate women's roles, what causes them to return to school, and what they are really looking for through participating in education. Actually, I am one of the women who has felt this kind of conflict. My choice of returning to school in the U. S was the attempt to escape from the conflicts, and my research interest and passion about reentry women was also derived from my own experiences. I feel that my knowledge of the Korean context and the experiences of Korean reentry women will help me gain an in-depth understanding of the personal development of Korean reentry women.

CHAPTER IV

PATICIPANTS PROFILES

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What motivates them to return to school?
2. What makes the experience of returning to school meaningful?
3. How have they changed as a result of the experience?
4. How are their perceptions of personal development and their changed ways of thinking related to the social and cultural context in Korea?

Thirteen highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women agreed to participate in this study. The interview was held between June, 2001, and November 2001. An average of three hour were spent for each interview, with some lasting up to five hours. All the thirteen interviews were conducted in person. Seven interviews were performed in the participants' house, three interviews in participants' school or working place, two interviews in church, and one interviews in my house.

All of the participants had graduated from four-year universities when they were in their early 20s. Four returned to undergraduate school, seven entered a master's program, and two attended a university-affiliated lifelong education center. One participant had a master's degree before she returned to school for a second master's

degree. The term between their original graduation and their reentry ranged from four to thirteen years. The participants in their second schooling have diverse majors including English literature, English education, reading education, early childhood education, adult education, Korean history, psychology, textiles, music, veterinary medicine, and women's studies. They also attend various forms of school such as a traditional school with day classes, a school with evening classes, an open university, and a seasonal university that offers classes during summer and winter breaks only. Length of their reentry studies ranges from one semester to graduation, and one participant in a university-affiliated lifelong education center has been there almost five years. Their ages span 14 years; one participant is in her late 20s, eleven are in their 30s, and one is in her early 40s. All participants have children. Twelve participants live in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, and one lives in southern Korea. Table 1 provides a summary of information regarding the individual participants.

Jeawon

Jeawon is a 32-year-old mother of two daughter, aged 6 and 3. She is an undergraduate student studying in the department of English Literature. She majored in home management at her first university and married at 26 years old. Actually, she “did not think of getting a job or studying further.” Instead, she “really wanted to get married.” Thus, after graduation, she stayed at home, but some time later, she worked as an announcer for a department store in order to escape boredom. However, after less than one year, she quit the job because she felt bored of the job. She said,

What I did was just sit in a broadcast room, announce someone lost her purse or someone lost her child, and between the announcements, keep

Table 1. Summary of Participant Information

Participant	Age	Previous education	Current Education	Current Major	Years between previous and current education	Age of Child(ren)
Jaewon	32	B. A.	Undergraduate	English Literature	9	6, 3
Soshin	34	B. S.	Undergraduate	Veterinary Medicine	11	6
Yoosun	32	B. A.	Undergraduate	Music	7	2
Jookyung	29	B. S.	Undergraduate	Textiles	4	3
Meejin	36	B. S.	Master's	Textiles	11	3
Inea	35	B. A.	Lifelong education center	Reading education	11	10, 7
Dahee	36	B. A.	Master's	English education	11	8, 6
Hyunsoo	36	B. A.	Master's	Early childhood education	6	8, 5
Heajong	43	B. A.	Lifelong education center	Korean history	13	18, 16
Song-eun	34	B. A.	Master's	Adult education	9	6, 4
Yunoo	36	B. S.	Master's	Psychology	11	8
Youngran	35	Master's degree	Master's	Psychology	7	10, 6
Hana	32	B. A.	Master's	Women's studies	6 1/2	4

chatting with my other two colleagues. After one year, I didn't like it as much as I did at first. I lost interest in it, because there was no work. If the work had required my creativity, it might have been new for me everyday. But it was always the same.

After marriage, Jeawon had a very hard time adjusting to her married life. She had to move to an unfamiliar area where her family-in-law lived and suffered from conflicts with parents-in-law. She felt she “was out of place, being the only stranger surrounded by my in-laws” and “longed to go” to her own family. In addition, she became unexpectedly pregnant just one month into the marriage. Surrounded by a husband who always came home late at night and with a mother-in-law who took care of only the children of her husband’s sister, she lived an “exiled life, bringing up her children alone. She described her life, as follows:

I was continuously engaged in a rewardless job. I could find some satisfaction when my child took the first steps or started to crawl. These those things, however, are not what I can take full credit for. Children, naturally flip over or walk in due time. I couldn’t find full satisfaction. What am I? What am I there for? Am I just a nanny who feeds or changes diapers for the baby all the time? I felt constantly depressed....I thought, “Do I have to sacrifice myself to this extent for my child?”

During that period, her depression became so severe that she even visited a psychiatrist.

[About the question what she want] Freedom. The freedom that I don’t have to take care of my children....I am the primary person responsible for raising my children. However, my husband doesn’t have to care whether he meets his friends or drinks alcohol. He can do whatever he wants. I can’t do that. I don’t have that kind of freedom. I’ve lived without the freedom....Unlike my husband, I am always restricted by my children, and it made me feel suffocated.

Jeawon continued living that life until she “could pause for some breath” as her second child grew somewhat. Then she started thinking, “I have to do something meaningful in order to find my identity,” but she found that “nothing but studying is possible. At that time, her elder sister, who is a single career woman and attended an open university, suggested that she would join her. Discovering that “the open university is not for only high school graduates, but also for highly-educated adults who want to study their new interests,” she applied to the school.

Jeawon’s student life was quite different from that of traditional young students. She was reading textbooks at home during a whole semester and took tests three times per semester. She did so because she had to stay at home with her children. This is another reason why she chose the Open University. Studying while her children went out to a playground to play or slept at night, Jeawon enjoyed the satisfaction of “doing something meaningful now.”

As the first interviewee, Jeawon gave me a strong impression. She actively participated in my study (she called me after seeing the advertisement that I placed on the internet) and wanted to help married female students like her. After the interview, she let me spend more time at her home, and we shared many stories beyond the interview. When I left her home, I was surprised to realize I had been there for more than 7 hours. Maybe, she, in her “exiled life,” needed someone with whom she could share her thoughts and feelings, and I was willing to be her friend. Since the interview, we have kept in touch by meeting (before I returned to the U. S.) or exchanging emails.

About six month later I interviewed her, I had received an email from her informing me that she decided to quit school. While memorizing English words that

“never would be used,” such as a palatal, a frictional, and a plosive, she said that she became skeptical about her study. In addition, she thought that she showed her ability to people around her by getting good grades and a scholarship at the end of her first semester. Thus, she felt she accomplished part of what she had pursued through her study.

Soshin

Soshin is a 34 year old freshman in the department of veterinary medicine and a mother of a 6 year old daughter. She is a really energetic and outgoing person and loves mountain climbing. She is also the only participant in my study who retook the national college entrance examination, which is extremely difficult for even the traditional young students in Korea.

When she was a middle school student, Soshin was a good student and always maintained top grades. But as she was assigned to a high school she did not want, she lost her interest in studying. (In Korea, most middle and high school students are assigned to their schools by the government.)

It (my school) is located in the center of the downtown in Seoul. I hated to see drunken people on my way home and to see what somebody vomited the night before on the way to school. In addition, as a Catholic school, it had a very authoritative and strict atmosphere. Rigid rules and unkind teachers made me feel restricted. I’ve always hated to feel suppressed in a closed space. The school was exactly like that.

As the result of this, Soshin did not get a satisfactory score on the college entrance examination. Thinking that “I did not show my genuine ability due to the bad

environment,” she wanted to retake the examination in the following year. But she gave up because her parents could not afford it. She then chose to study nursing science based on her exam score even though she did not like nursing science. She shared, “Now I think that it was not right. I should not have done it. But at that time, there were no teachers to advise me that I must not choose my major according to the grade.”

Soshin enjoyed her college student life, joining the mountain climbing club and also studied well because she “liked learning itself, even though I was not interested in nursing.” However, through the experience of an internship at a hospital, she found that she was not fit to be a nurse. She said,

I was not meticulous, so I was not confident in dealing with human life. I was afraid of making any mistake that would result in a critical damage to a patient. I did not like the gloomy atmosphere of hospitals, either. I wanted to live laughing brightly. I also did not want to commute to only one place for my whole life because I really liked going around and seeing the world.

Thus, Soshin considered to looking for another job and finally applied for a position as a stewardess, thinking that “it could make me live merrily and brightly while going around many countries.” However, once she worked as a stewardess, she found that the thought was “too naïve and superficial.” She explained:

Stewardesses need the skill of making good relationship with customers, but in fact I was not confident about that. I think I am poor at it. Thus, I thought it was not the job in which I could develop my natural aptitude or my potential. I always thought, “This is not the place for me.” Rather, my

talent was in studying. Whenever I took the examination for promotion in my company, I got the top score.

Even though Soshin was thinking, “I am wasting my life,” she could not quit her job easily because she was frightened about the uncertainty after quitting the job. She said, “it was not easy for a female in her late 20’s to be employed in a new job. I was worried about the failure when I tried to do something new.” Thus, instead of finding a new job, she got married.

However, as her salary was curtailed drastically due to the Korean economic crisis of International Monetary Fund, she finally quit her job and began to prepare for the university entrance examination in order to find a job that fit her natural aptitudes in which she could work passionately. She assured herself that “my natural aptitude is not a service job, but a professional job that requires me to put professional knowledge to practical use.”

For her study, Soshin had to move to her parent’s house so that her mother could take care of her daughter while she lived separately from her husband. She studied hard on weekdays and did housework for her husband on the weekends. She continued this life for two years, making a secret of it to her parents-in-law. She described the life,

It was really really hard. I always suffered from the shortage of sleep and time....In addition, I couldn’t stop asking myself, “Am I right?” “Isn’t it too selfish?” “Maybe I am stealing the time that I should invest for my daughter.” I was suffering from guilt. I was wondering if I was doing something wrong, and worried if it would negatively influence my daughter.

Despite the conflicts, Soshin kept studying, thinking “If I don’t study, I have to be a full-time housewife,” and finally she got a high score on the examination. Now she began to take the first step toward her dream of being a veterinarian, while studying with classmates 10 years younger than her.

Yoosun

Yoosun is a 32-year-old college junior student who is majoring in violin and a mother of 2-year-old son. Among the participants, she is the only person who lives in a small town in southern Korea. Actually she majored in industrial design when she was in her early 20’s, but talented in both music and art, she also joined in orchestra of her university and learned violin and flute a little. Because she performed well in her department, even before graduation, she was recommended by a professor for a job in the department of public relations in one of the big companies in Korea. It was an advertising position, and she took the job. She loved the work and enjoyed the relationship with her other colleagues. However, she was very stressed from the fact that she was in a temporary position. Actually, the supervisor who hired her asked the main company to offer her the position, but it took more time than he had expected. Thus, Yoosun, who entered the company without knowing it, had to wait for permission from the main company while keeping her position as a temporary worker. “Exhausted after waiting for two years,” she quit her job and opened a private art academy for children in her hometown.

Because the academy was the only one in the town, Yoosun had lots of students. However, as she managed the academy for two years, she found she was deficient in art education for children. She was also disappointed that the mothers of her students

requested her to teach more than art, like a kindergarten. Because she wanted to teach only arts, she thought, “there is no vision in managing an academy.” In addition, she began to “feel bored in dealing with only children, isolated from the world.” Thus, in order to escape from the boredom, she began to learn violin, a musical instrument she had wanted to play for a long time. She said,

I started as a hobby at first. I took private lesson two times a week. It was so delightful. I loved learning the violin. It really fit me. It is the first thing I ever learned with the joy. Maybe I didn’t have the joy even when learning art. Yes, I was crazy about it.

As she had the lesson for one year, she began to think about learning violin more professionally by going to school. Also, she wanted work related to the violin later. She said, “I found what I love to, violin, and while learning it, I became to have dreams to be a member of an orchestra and to work related to music. In order to do that, I need a degree from music school.” Thus, she applied to a university near her hometown as a transfer student. Now she studies as a senior and works as a member of an orchestra with the support of her aunt, who takes care of her son.

Jookyung

As the youngest participant in this study and the mother of 3-year-old son, Jookyung is a 29-year-old undergraduate student in the department of textiles. She majored in computer science in her first university and shortly after graduation, entered the department of computer software development in one of the big companies in Korea. She applied to the department because she “wanted to creatively develop something new and to feel a sense of accomplishment from it.” But once she started working, she found

that most work of the department was to import machines from other foreign countries and modify it to Korean requirements after testing it. Thus, she “couldn’t have any interest” in her work and “just felt bored.”

In addition, as she worked further, she discovered the informal custom in her company in which male employees were privileged and female employees were marginalized. She said, “The informal relationships formed while drinking alcohol together after work is so important to survive. However, it is not easy for female employees to join. Customarily, they have not welcomed women.” With another custom that “head of a division or department should stay at work till late at night regardless of whether they have work to do or not,” she found that no female head of a department has existed so far. The one female head of a division was among about a hundred males, and she was single.

In this environment, she began to consider “how long can I keep working here?” She shared,

Men can go home late because their role is head of the household. They are never pressured to come home early. Comparing myself to them, I concluded that I could not work as they do. In addition, if I can be promoted, I won’t focus on only work, sacrificing my family, and I am not a career oriented woman who considered not getting married. Then, I figured I could work here for ten years at longest to seven or eight years at shortest.

Considering that even the seven to eight years of working experience would not help her to transfer to another company or to do something by herself as a freelancer, she concluded “there is no vision” and married and quit her job after two and a half years.

After she got married, she was soon pregnant and took care of her son as a full-time housewife. At that time, her husband just began his business, going out of 8 a.m. and returning home around 10 p.m. everyday. Thus, she stayed at home all day long while taking care of an infant. “Naturally disliking housework,” Jookyung had a very hard time without any help to give her a break from childcare:

It was really hard for me to stay alone at home all day long, taking care of my son. Because of him, I couldn’t do anything freely, like meet my friends, go shopping, or watch movies. It was really hard, boring, tedious, and restricted because I couldn’t do anything freely outside the home.

Thinking that, “if I live like this for a couple of years more, I will be crazy,” Jookyung decided to “not to stay at home any more only watching a baby” and looked for “a way to get out of the house.” Among few alternatives to have her own time, such as going to a company or running a business, she most wanted to go back to school because she had felt pleasure in studying. She said, “I am interested in reading books and continuously leaning new knowledge. In particular, I wanted to learn professionally about one specific area.” In addition, she regretted her first time as a student because she was not able to enter a university that she liked. Consequently, she “did not have any love” for her school and spent her time “as an outsider.” When she was ready to reenter school, she wanted to make up for that lost time by studying “eagerly, enthusiastically, and with passion.”

For these reasons, she transferred to the department of textiles in a university as a junior, and now she has studied for three semesters. When she started school, she moved near her mother's house, and she divided the childcare between her mother and a childcare center. She thinks that returning to school has solved all the problems she had before and is very satisfied with her student life, saying, "I am enjoying happiness as much as I can in my condition." She plans to study further by going to a graduate school, and if possible, she wants to get her doctorate.

Meejin

Meejin is a 36 year old master's program student in the department of textiles. She has a 3-year-old son. She majored in textiles at one of the best universities in Korea and worked for a dress designer for about 8 years. During that time, her career was interrupted twice, once for her husband and a second of the birth of her son.

The first interruption happened when Meejin's husband went to the U. S. for his one-year overseas training. Even though she had a better job offer from another company, she closed her six year career and followed her husband who "took it for granted" that she would go with him. At that time, many people around her advised to have a baby while she was off, but "worried about not getting a job again," she did not follow that advice.

Then, after coming back to Korea, Meejin entered a company again. The working conditions in the second company were worse than the first. The designers in the company "were sometimes required to work till midnight or stay up all night, and if not, the designer was seen as having no ability or zeal as a designer." As she starting feeling

pressure, because of her age, to have a child, she noticed how another female colleague who had a child was managing her family and her work. She said,

Watching her stay at the employee supper meeting that was held late at night, I asked her, “who is taking care of your child?” Then, she answered, “I’ve given it up.” She said that her mother who lived the same apartment complex took her son and slept with him, and she just saw her child on Sunday or on some days when she came back home early.

Watching her, I thought I couldn’t do that, and my husband would never let me do that, either.

Disappointed that she could not stay with the company without giving up motherhood, she quit her job after a year and a half in order to get pregnant. Then, she gave every her effort in getting pregnant because she “couldn’t put up with staying at home without having a baby.”

After giving birth, Meejin was troubled again about “what should I do now” while being relieved in “solving” one of her problems. She explained,

If I can’t work due to my child, I want to develop myself by doing something different. I don’t want to stay the same....Even though housework is valuable, nobody thinks I’m developing myself when I do it.

Thus, I am looking for a kind of breakthrough.

Realizing that she could go to school and take care of her son at the same time, she finally decided to go to graduate school as an alternative to getting job, even though she knew it wouldn’t help her much to return to work. She said,

Companies don't recognize the master's degree acquired in Korea. I came to school even though I knew that, in fact. I came to school with the miserable excuse. There is no place to go, if I don't make an opportunity to go out. However, if I attend school, I can leave my son in someone else's care and go out justifiably as a student. When I imagined only taking care of my child at home, I felt suffocated.

Thus, Meejin moved near her mother so that her mother could take care of her son while she was in school and began to go to school. While attending school, she found a new dream for her development: studying for a doctorate in a foreign country and becoming a professor. (She wanted to study in the U. S., because she knew that a Ph. D acquired in Korea was not as valuable in the job market.) This dream met lots of objections from her husband who said, "In Korea, there are many people with Ph.D degree who are out of work. Can you guarantee that you won't be like those?" or mocking, "Can you study anything with your stupid head?" In the face of these objections, she began to lose confidence in herself. She shared,

When he says, "Can you be something even though you get a doctorate?," I am frustrated. I can't say, "I am sure I will succeed. I can prove it." I am thinking to myself, "I would already be doing something great, if I were so excellent." I am really frustrated. So far, my life flown away from what I want even though I tried to follow it. Now I think that I am not so excellent and there is no guarantee (that I can be a professor). Now I've lost my confidence. I am thinking, "Can I do the difficult study while doing housework? No, I may not be able to do it."

She evaluated her life as a “continuous compromise.” She poured out,

I have compromised so far, following “Because we married, you should have a baby,” and “because you have a baby, you should take care of him.” I don’t want to blame my husband. Maybe he requested a very normal thing. But for the ten years since I married, I’ve lost my ability to work as a result of the compromises.... Then, should I not have gotten married? Is the life that I wanted possible only if I’m not married?

Meejin’s story so touched my heart that I sometimes could not keep interviewing. During the interview, I had to make so much effort not to ask the question, “Why did you marry that kind of man? Didn’t you know about him before marriage?” Also, I understood why she was eager to meet me when she heard about my project. She wanted to know about my life as a doctoral student in the U. S. Thus, after the interview, I explained all about studying in the U. S., answered her questions, and encouraged her, reminding her how she had been excellent and smart enough to go to one of the best universities in Korea. Then about 4 months later, she sent an email informing me that she temporarily gave up the dream, though not absolutely, and was planning to run a children’s clothing shop.

Inea

Inea is a 35-year-old full-time housewife who is attending an English class in a culture center and studying reading education in a university-affiliated lifelong education center three times a week. Her family is composed of two sons, who are 10 and 7 years old, and a husband, who is a stockbroker. She majored in German literature as an undergraduate, and worked in reservations in a condominium company for about three

years. She quit her job right after finishing her maternity leave because neither her mother nor her mother-in-law could take care of her son. In addition, she was informally forced to quit by her company. She explained,

It was not a job for married women to do for a long time. Because most female employees did assistant work, they quit the job after marriage. At that time, some married female employees began to keep working, and soon male colleagues joked, “Why don’t you quit?” I also heard the rumor that I would quit my job when I was on maternity leave.

Inea then lived as a full-time housewife while bringing up her two sons as well as the son of her younger sister, who was a career women. She volunteered to raise the nephew because she “was proud that somebody needed her” and thought that she “could contribute to society by enabling her sister to keep her job.” In the “simply repeated life with children who could not be conversation partners,” she felt that she “needed someone to listen” to her. Because her sister moved to the same apartment building she lived, she anticipated “having more adults to have conversation with.” However, unlike her expectation, all the three adults, her husband, her sister, and her sister’s husband, were so busy in their work that “they always wanted to rest at home.” As she was totally exhausted, she stopped taking care of her nephew when he started school, and her sister hired a person to care for him after school.

As her second son began to go to kindergarten, Inea finally “got out from” her children and had her free time in the morning. She acquired a driver’s license. She explained, “it was the first thing I did for myself.” The next year, she furthered her

adventure by taking an English course in a culture center that was offered in the morning two times a week, and she is still attending it. She shared,

I wanted to do something for myself, not related to my children. I had always met the world through my children, my husband, or my old friends. I wanted to meet a new world”.... By attending the class, my goal was to make a place where I could go regularly rather than to speak English very well.

As she wanted, Inea met the new world in the class. She described,

It was my own time and world. In the world, I was called my name, not somebody’s mother. (In Korea, a mother is usually called by her child’s name.) I was so happy about that. I was so glad of the fact itself that I was called my name. ... I also loved having different content in conversation. All I had talked about before was not about myself. It was about only my children, my husband, other family members, or my past memories. There was no talking about who I am now....Always I am the center of conversation. This is a different world.

Finding this joy, the next year, Inea tried to take “her own time all day long once a week” by leaving her children with the person who took care of her nephew in the afternoon. With her neighbor, she began to attend a reading education class that was offered in a university-affiliated lifelong education center. Now she is planning to take another class after completing the reading education class, which is the one-year course.

Dahee

Dahee is a 36 year old graduate student majoring in English education, living with two daughters, 8 and 6, and a husband. When I met her for the first interview, she had been off for two semesters, but when I met her again for the second interview about four months later, she had come back to school and was writing her thesis. In about five hours of interviews with her, two themes clearly emerged. First, for her, her children are the most important thing. Second, she always thinks that she, not her husband or her children, should be responsible for her life. Her life can be described as maintaining a balance between these two points.

Dahee was a very good student in high school, and went to one of the best universities in Korea, majoring in English literature, one of the popular majors for female students in Korea. Even before she graduated, she worked for an English institute for eight months. When she took a job with a foreign airline, to the envy and admiration of others, she was responsible for the air cargo transportation. For the first six months, she was busy learning her job and really interested in it. However, she began to feel bored with her “simple, repeated tasks.” She said,

The work is too simple and the same. Just repeat and repeat. The same problems came up, the same solutions were needed, and the same English was used. It was too comfortable for me....I spent a lot of time reading a novel in my office because there was no work to do. I was full of energy at that time, but...[my work could not satisfy it].

Thinking that “it is much better to do what I want at home than doing this meaningless work,” after two years, she quit her job “without any regret” when she got married .

Then, Dahee, who basically thought that she “needed to do something” in order to be responsible for her life, for a long time kept searching for what she wanted. With the thought of “having a lifelong job ” and “a job that preserves my own area,” she first studied for a certificate of a real estate appraiser. She studied very hard, sitting at the desk from 10 to even 13 hours a day. As a result, she passed the first examination, but she got back pain. Giving it up, then, she learned facial massage that high school graduates usually do because she “was bored in something related to study” and wanted some “creative work that was done by physical labor.” Disappointed that the training was more focused on selling cosmetics, however, she stopped it after one month. Then, she did private English tutoring for elementary, middle, and high school students. For her, it was really interesting. She enjoyed learning as she taught. She explained,

Certainly, I have the desire to learn. But I could neither make time for my study nor did I want to go out to study, leaving my children at home. I thought the private tutoring was the answer to the conflict. By tutoring, I could study and earn money to hire a housemaid so that I was exempted from cleaning the house. Of course, it wasn’t good for my children to be separated from me, but it was just a short time.

Even though she enjoyed the private tutoring, she suffered from the instability of it. Thus, in order to have a stable job, she worked for an English instructor in an elementary school. But being sick of young children, she quit it after one year, and went

to the department of English education as a graduate student in order to get the English teaching certificate for middle and high school that is issued by the Ministry of Education. However, through an internship, she found that it was harder to deal with middle school students. On the other hand, through her study in the graduate school, she restored her confidence in getting a job she wanted. Thus, now she has changed her future plans again to do private tutoring.

Hyunsoo

Hyunsoo is a 36-year-old full-time housewife with two daughters, aged 8 and 5. When I interviewed her, she had just completed her three-year master's program in early childhood education. She thoughtfully prepared a one-page list of answers to the questions I had sent her. (I emailed the interview questions to all the participants in advance in order to give them time to think about that.) Also, she loved my research topic and encouraged me, mentioning that my research is most appropriate for and needed in current Korean society.

Hyunsoo was raised as the fourth child among five in the southern part of Korea and thus, when she was a high school student, her parents, who were financially supporting her sister and brother's university education, made her go to a two-year college. Majoring in early childhood education, she worked as a kindergarten teacher after graduation, but three years later, she quit the job and transferred to a four-year university because she "couldn't be proud of" her education. At that time, there was no opening in the department of early childhood education, so she transferred to the department of Korean literature "with the purpose of getting B.A. degree."

Considering getting a job as a transition toward getting married, Hyunsoo “dreamed to marry an able man, manage a sweet home, and raise children well.” However, she did not get pregnant for some time after marriage, so she worked as a kindergarten teacher again. After about one year, she was pregnant and quit her job according to the doctor’s advice that she needed rest in order to prevent a miscarriage.

Hyunsoo then lived as a full-time housewife, raising two daughters. However, as she observed her college friend, who had not done as well in school, but who had maintained their career, became a full-time teacher, she began to doubt her way of life. She shared,

When I was a college student, I studied very well. But a classmate who didn’t do anything, such as study, art, or piano, is more successful than me now. She was promoted to a full-time teacher from an instructor. So her social status is higher than that of a full-time housewife. Even though I think I am better than she is, she becomes better than me now while I stay at home. There are many classmates like her around me. Watching them, I get angry and think that the life that I have dreamed of may be wrong.

Stimulated by her friends, Hyunsoo decided to work again. (Being a kindergarten teacher or managing a daycare center is one of the few jobs in Korea to which highly-educated married women with career interruption can easily return.) However, because she thought “a mother should be with her children when they’re young,” she wanted to postpone going back to work until her children grew somewhat and during that time, “prepare for” her career by studying further. Thus, she began to study early childhood education in a seasonal graduate school that provided courses in the summer and winter

break for non-traditional adult learners. While studying, she was offered a new opportunity to be an instructor in a college. Thus, having just completed her master's program, now she is considering two options: opening a daycare center or working as an instructor.

Heajong

A 43-year-old full-time housewife with two daughters aged 18 and 16 and the oldest participant in this study, Heajong has attended a university-affiliated lifelong education center for about five years. When she was a high school student, she dreamed of becoming a journalist and thus hoped to study mass communication in a university. However, on the day she applied, intimidated by the high competition for the department of mass communication, she changed her mind and applied to the department of psychology, with less competition, even though she was not interested in it.

After spending four years with disinterest in her major, Heajong was hired as a kindergarten teacher, but she soon felt that teaching children “did not fit my aptitudes.” Thus, she moved to the stock exchange, but there, she disliked dealing with numbers. When she got engaged to her husband, her in-laws objected to her working after marriage, so she quit her job at that time and began her life as a full-time housewife.

Bringing up her two children, she lived a busy life, but sometimes she was depressed, asking, “Who am I? Why am I doing this?” One of her high school classmates, who was working as a network reporter in a broadcasting company, caused her to be depressed more. She shared,

When I watch a TV news, feeding my first child, she [the classmate] come on the news as a reporter. My heart was fallen. I am really sad. I said to

myself, “She accomplished something, but I am nothing.” I had very hard time for a while.

Whenever she felt depressed, she thought, “I will do something only when my children go to school.” She spent her 30s, pressing her desire to do something for herself and waiting for her children to go to school. When the time came for them to go to school, however, she found that she could not do what she had expected due to two reasons. First, she could not accept that her children might return home in the rain while other children were with their mothers who brought umbrellas. Second, because her second daughter attended the afternoon class while her first daughter returned home in the afternoon, she could not work even as a part-timer in the afternoon. (For those days, the number of elementary students was too many. So elementary schools in Seoul had double sessions: morning classes and afternoon classes.) Finding her expectation “to do something for my development” had vanished, she was frustrated. But because she thought “the most important thing is my children,” she decided to stay at home.

The depression came out again in her 40s. At that time, her children were attending high school and middle school, and she had enough free time. But she knew that she could not get a job any more. She said,

Because of my age, it was impossible for me to be employed in a company. What I could do was a waitress in a restaurant, a housemaid, or a volunteer....A friend of mine is joking, “Even a restaurant does not hire us, but young people. We aren’t strong enough to carry dishes. We aren’t smart enough to operate calculator. The only thing we can do is washing dishes hiding in a kitchen. Thus, we have to cling to our husband. There

is no place we can go.” Even though it is a joking, that is our situation.

There is no place.

Giving up getting a job, she turned her eyes toward education in order to utilize “her own time,” and began to attend a university-affiliated lifelong education center. First, she registered for a two-year computer course “in order to follow the fast moving society.” While attending there, she enjoyed “having a place to go regularly while being dressed up.” Thus, after completing the course, she registered for another two-year Korean history course. After finishing the course, she took a ceramic course. Now she is taking a course in Korean cultural history, and working as an member of student organization in the university-affiliated lifelong education center.

Song-eun

Song-eun, a mother of two children aged 6 and 4, is a 34-year-old graduate student majoring in adult education. I got to know her from one of the internet sites for Korean married women. There, I saw an interview with her about returning to school, and I asked the manager of the internet site to give me her contact information. Knowing why I wanted to meet her, she willingly agreed to participate in my study, and we met in her house. She was the same age as me, and we were studying the same thing! Soon, we become good friends and shared our stories.

Song-eun’s story began in high school. The high school she attended was “a college entrance exam preparation institute,” rather than a school as she described it. Bringing three lunch boxes, the students were at school from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. Teachers taught about “only what would be on the exam,” and “never talked about what is valuable or where your life should be headed.” Rather, they always said, “This is the

time to endure. You can do everything when you go to the university.” Also, corporal punishment was pervasive, so even getting a low score was reason for punishment. Frightened by the violence and suffocated by the oppressive atmosphere, she used to think, “I would be happy if I hadn’t gotten this kind of education.” This conflict finally made her run away from the school in her second year. She recalls,

One day morning when my mother gave me some money, on that particular day, I felt strongly that I couldn’t go to school. Without any definite plan, I went to the express bus terminal and went to the farthest place from the school that I could think of.

Not adjusting to her school, Song-eun’s grade began to drop, even though she entered the school as the top student, and consequently she had to go to a university she did not like. However, when she joined the university broadcasting club, she began to enjoy her college life, and in her senior year, she decided to apply to a broadcasting company, thinking, “I’m happiest when I’m doing that.” However, she could not get a job with any of the companies, and then she was hired by the labor union in a broadcasting company as a union manager. (She was the first labor union manager in a broadcasting company in Korea.) “Experiencing the limitation of working for the labor union with the status of a non-union member,” after four and a half years, she transferred to a position as a documentary writer, which she had been interested in since her college period.

Song-eun loved the work and her ability was regarded so highly that she was promoted as a main writer after only six months. But then she got married and got pregnant a month later and quit the job in order to take care of her child. She explained,

Because I lived with my mother-in-law, I thought in my mind she would bring him up. However, when I came out from the hospital, holding my baby, she said, “babies should be taken care of by their mothers. I can’t rear him, so quit your job.” She runs a restaurant. There was no one at home but my baby and I. I couldn’t do anything. There was no one who could take care of my baby, and also, I wasn’t permitted to leave him in someone else’s care.

Nevertheless, Song-eun visited her company in order to return at the time of program revision. (Documentary writers were not hired as permanent employees, thus they, as freelancers, made a six-month working contract whenever the program revision was implemented.) However, she was refused because of the fact that she was “*ajumma*.” (*Ajumma* is a term in Korea signifying motherhood or married women. “Today *ajumma* denotes a negative image of femininity in a patriarchal consumer society and is also a symbol of a non-sexual being. Society has created and enforced a negative image and meaning for *ajumma* and a respectable image for mother. A mother symbolizes sacrifice for her children and family while *ajumma* is a symbol of self-neglect as the cost of paid caring for her children” (Lee, 1999, p. 76-77).) She said,

[When I said that I wanted to return,] what they first mentioned was, “Then, who will take care of your child?” They added, “Why do you want to do a difficult job, instead of raising a child and managing a home, just receiving money from your husband?” And they said that there was no work for an *ajumma* to do. One Producer said, “You know we don’t hire *ajumma* who can’t stay up all night.

Forced to be a full-time housewife, she suffered from severe depression. She explained,

[It makes me so depressed] that there is no work for me to do. I have lived very busy life, pursuing my work, but since I had a baby, everything has changed a lot. I have to only watch my baby....Losing my job means losing myself. I can't accept myself as a person who doesn't work....People who were my assistants become main writers. While they're doing well, I am just preparing lunch for my mother-in-law. My baby was pretty, but when I think about who I am and what I am doing now, I feel so depressed. It was so severe that I considered committing suicide.

After "living in a cell" for about four years, Song-eun finally moved out from her mother-in-law's house in order to live separately and started the life she had wanted. She sent her children to a daycare center and read books in a library, thinking, "what kind of work I can do?" Concluding that "it is not easy to be a member of society right now," she decided to study further in order to prepare to return to society. Interested in alternatives to formal middle and high school education in Korea, she took a course in alternative education offered by a cultural center, and then worked for another cultural center, leaving her children in a daycare center from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. However, she found soon that it was impossible to work and do childcare, so she gave it up after two months. From this experience, she realized, "what I can do most in this situation is study" and then began to study adult education in a graduate school. Now she is in her second year and works for a project of educational programs for teenagers outside the school.

Yunoo

A mother of an 8-year old daughter, Yunoo is a 36-year-old graduate student in the department of psychology. She majored in physical education in her early 20's and, after graduation, did private tutoring for several years until her marriage. Then she began to live an ordinary full-time housewife's life. While staying in the U. S. with her husband who studied for an MBA there, she took care of her husband and raised her daughter. The same life continued after she came back to Korea until she returned to school.

Even though Yunoo filled the role of full-time housewife for eight years, she never enjoyed her work. She shared,

I dislike housework so much. When I do housework, I think it's the work that I'm least suited for. It is so boring. Others enjoy decorating the home, but I don't like it. Others say that they feel satisfaction after cleaning the house, even though they dislike it. But I never feel it.

Rather, I just think how long I have to do this.

Although she disliked the housework, she "was attached to" her husband and daughter very much. She "took care of everything" for them. To help her husband get ready for work, she even brought socks to him, pushed the elevator buttons of her apartment building, and drove him to his office in order to keep him from being late. For her daughter who was in a kindergarten, she ironed every piece of clothing, even T-shirts, and decided what she would wear, fighting with her daughter when she didn't agree.

Even though she thought she "did it for them," they "considered it excessive interference and were tired of it." People around her also advised her not to do it and

take an interest in something else. Saddened, she reluctantly decided to follow the advice, but soon it result her in serious depression. She said,

Hearing it [the advice] so many times, I tried not to do so much, but I haven't changed easily. Even my daughter fell short of my expectation. Because she did so, I thought if I make them tired, I don't have to do that and stopped. Then, there is nothing I can do. Before, I went shopping in order to buy something good for my daughter, but it isn't interesting any more. Shopping used to be a joy, but it isn't any more....There is no meaning in anything. Because I draw back my mind from them, there is no meaning in housework.

Suffering from a feeling of helplessness, she just “kept staying at home and doing nothing” for about six months. Then, one day, she realized the seriousness of her situation when she found herself worrying, “what can I do tomorrow.” Surprised by her symptom, she decided to “do something” in order to escape from it. Thus, she took the examination for elementary school physical instructor, but she failed. At that time, her older sister who was managing a psychology research center recommended that she major in psychology. She then prepared for the entrance examination of a graduate school in psychology. When she was studying, she enjoyed the fact that she “was immersed in something.” Accepted by a graduate school, her student life has been happy. Now she is writing her thesis with the expectation of working for a research center after graduation.

Youngran

A 35-year-old mother of two children, aged 10 and 6, Youngran is the only participant who, having acquired an M.A. degree in her 20s, had returned to another

master's program in her 30s. When I met her, she had just finished her second master's program in the department of psychology and was working as an intern in clinical psychology at a hospital. Actually, she is my senior at our university, and we were singers together in a Christian singing club in college. When I met her three years ago, she was a full-time housewife, but these days, she has changed to a career women. In addition, she shows a different attitude; she is lively and is full of confidence in herself. She was willing to participate in my study, and I could hear the story that I had never heard before from her.

Youngran majored in psychology in college. Interested in clinical psychology, she applied to graduate school but was rejected. "Wanting to study further and to be a professor," she applied to graduate school in early childhood education, which was an easier field to become a professor in because of the great demands for it in Korea. Entering the school with a top score, she kept an excellent GPA and was recognized by professors.

However, Youngran was unexpectedly pregnant right after her marriage in her last semester, and it totally changed her life. Even though she had many good job offers, including a position as a college instructor that would lead to a professorship, she rejected everything in order to bring up her child well. She said,

I thought about what I should prioritize. Even though I got pregnant, I have to be responsible for her and take care of her well. Then, do I forsake my child for my own benefit? Considering this, I began to think that my child is first. The education I have had influences me powerfully. I heard many times that children should be taken care of by their mothers

until they are three years old. Based on Freud, I might be brainwashed by psychology and early childhood education to think that the first six years of a child's life is so important in forming the concept of self, so mothers should take care of their children until they become six years old. So I didn't have the courage to forsake my child for myself. Yes, for my child, I will be with her even though I can't have my work.

While she decided to stay at home for her child, she also suffered from severe conflicts, too. She shared,

[I am asking to myself] Can I give up myself? Even though I study at a graduate school and a guaranteed way is provided to me, can I give up everything? Sometimes, I reproached my child. Without her, I could go anywhere and do anything. I reproached her a lot, in fact.

Pressing the conflicts, she raised her daughter until she was three years old, and then tried to find her work. Giving up getting a job related to her major, she prepared for the examination for government service. But she soon stopped it because she found that it was too hard to study while staying with her daughter, and that she forgot how to study. Disappointed, she gave up getting her job and had her second child.

One day when her second child was about three years old, Youngran heard that there was a new certificate of clinical psychologist and that anybody who had a B.A. degree in psychology and one year of intern experience could take the examination for the certificate. The news invoked her unfulfilled dream, and thus, she was encouraged to meet with a doctor who had taught her as an instructor before. The doctor was puzzled at first, but promised to give her the opportunity of an internship after she worked for her

for one year. Filled with joy, she accepted the suggestion and waited for one year while helping her. However, the doctor couldn't keep her promise due to her moving out of her hospital.

Back to the starting point, Youngran was in situation that she had to choose whether to go back to home again or to pursue her dream of being a clinical psychologist, by attending graduate school. She explained,

As the promised is broken, I am seriously troubled about what to do next.

The important thing is that I can't live as a housewife anymore, only raising children and doing housework. It [housework] is never constructive work. There is nothing left. Just going back to the beginning. It is so meaningless to me, because nothing is left to me. Even though it is meaningful to dedicate myself to my family, it is meaningless to me.

In addition, Youngran already found the necessity to do something, realizing that she just watched TV or slept while her children went to a part-time childcare center. Thinking that "the time when my children are at school will be longer, and I have to prepare for it," she finally chose to go to a graduate school. She studied hard for the entrance examination and was admitted. The fact that she got an admission, competing with younger students, made her recover the confidence in herself. She entered her school, studied hard, thrilled that "I finally study what I had wanted." Soon, she was recognized by professors and her classmates and was chosen as an intern through high competitions with her classmates. Now she is in the three-year intern course for a clinical

psychologist and after completing it, she plans to go on for a doctorate while working as a psychologist.

Hana

Hana is a 32-year-old graduate student majoring in women's studies and a mother of a 4 year-old daughter. I got to know her from a documentary TV program about depression of full-time housewives. She appeared there as a case of the depressed full-time housewife, and she was the one who returned to school to overcome it. On the program, I saw the department and school she returned, and then I called the department to contact her. Receiving my phone call, she was willing to have interview with me. She so enjoyed telling her story that her interview continued for about five hours in one meeting.

Hana entered one of the best universities in Korea and majored in history education in her early 20's with the dream of being teacher. In her senior year, she took the employment examination of public middle and high school teacher that was very competitive, and she failed. After graduation, she entered a company that developed software programs in education. Even though she was highly regarded and promoted, she could not give up her dream. So she quit her job after one year and worked as an instructor in high schools while preparing for the employment examination again. While teaching high school students, she was assured that "teaching is the happiest job" for her. Thus, she was more eager to find a teaching job.

At that time, Hana got a job offer from a private high school. The principal of the school suggested that he would give a full-time teacher position after she worked for one year as an instructor. She accepted it and worked there for one year. But the principal

did not keep his promise even though she worked more than one year. Finding no possibility to be a full-time teacher in the school, she looked for other high schools, and finally found a school that needed a full-time teacher in history in the next semester. She met with the principal of the school and finally got an oral agreement to hire her. But one week before her first attendance, she was suddenly informed by the principal that he hired a male teacher instead of her. Shocked and frustrated, she then looked for other jobs, even non-teaching jobs, but she could not get a job with any of the schools and companies. Because she was pregnant at that time, her getting a job was more difficult. After all, she had to stay at home waiting for the baby. She described the “never-want-to-remember-time”:

I read lots of novels because I didn't have work to do. I read newspapers thoroughly without losing one word. By doing that, I thought I could be a member of society. I thought, “even though you rejected me, I am a member of society by knowing how society is going on.”...My husband criticized me why I read the useless novels so much. About the question, I shouted, “Do you know how much I feel that I am isolated from society? Don't you know this is my struggle? How can you understand this is the only thing I can do in this helpless situation?”

She had thought housework should be shared with her husband and had done so since her marriage. Thus, she also suffered as she became the only person who was responsible for the housework. She shared,

As I was at home, all housework became my duty, and I couldn't resist about it because I didn't earn money. I couldn't bear that I couldn't insist

my husband do his share of housework. I suffered from the thought, “I am an incompetent, and I am parasitic to my husband.”

Her depression became more severe after she gave birth to her child. She described,

At that time, I lived in a very small apartment. I felt that here is the only space for me in this large earth. I thought a lot, “Here is a cell, and I am confined in this cell.” Before, I could go out even though society refused me, but after giving birth, I couldn’t go anywhere because of her....[What made it more difficult was] there was no possibility to be hired, because I became a mother and an *Ajumma*.

However, she found nobody whom she could share her inner thoughts and feelings with. Nobody, even other full-time housewives around her did not understand or sympathize with her, but rather criticized saying, “you are lacking motherhood.” Feeling isolated, she tried to meet someone who had the similar thought with her, and thus she decided to study women’s studies, thinking that “going to the women’s studies is the only way to solve my problem.”

In addition, she wanted to do something for her daughter. Actually, she was not happy to have a daughter, because she thought that she faced her unwanted situation because she was a woman. Thus, she wanted to give better conditions for her daughter, and she thought, for this, she could take the first step by learning women’s studies. Thus, she applied to the department of women’s studies in spite of strong objections of her husband and in-laws. Now she is in her second year and is preparing for her thesis whose

topic is regarding grandmothers who take care of their grandchildren for their daughters' career.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. Four research questions were guided this study. The questions were:

- 1) What motivates them to return to school?
- 2) What makes the experience of returning to school meaningful?
- 3) How have they changed as the result of the experience?
- 4) How has the social and cultural context in Korea influenced their returning to school?

This study employed a qualitative design. Thirteen Korean reentry women were selected purposely in Korea between May, 2001 to November, 2001. I interviewed them using person to person in-depth interview for two and a half to four hours. Seven interviews were conducted at the participants' home, two interviews at my home, three interviews at the participants' school or workplace, and two interviews at the church participants attended. I did person to person in-depth follow up interviews with five participants. The interviews were conducted in Korean. I tape-recorded and transcribed all the interviews. After data analysis, only what I wanted to quote was translated in English. I analyzed data by using constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In this chapter, I will present the findings derived from the data analysis. Based on the research questions, I will present findings of this study in four sections: motivations for returning to school, meaning of the experiences of returning to school, changes resulting from the experiences, and the social and cultural context that influenced their returning to school.

I identified four categories from data analysis regarding why highly-educated and middle class Korean female adults returned to school. They reported that they returned to school in order to get employed, to have their own meaningful activity, to pursue the interest in learning, and to escape from the state of being a full-time housewife.

I identified six categories regarding their meaningful experiences of returning to school. They indicated that they re-established themselves as independent individuals, structured their everyday lives, gained recognition from others, obtained sense of accomplishment, enlarged living area and meet new people, and had joy of studying.

Analysis revealed three categories related to their changes as the result of their experiences. They mentioned that they were happy and satisfied with themselves and their lives, were more positive with new possibilities and hope for the future, and gained new identity. Specifically, they enhanced their self-confidence, improved their self-esteem, and heightened their critical consciousness.

Finally, I identified two categories regarding how Korean social and cultural context influenced their returning to school: Forced to be full-time housewives and study as an acceptable escape. The categories of findings and their properties are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories and Properties

A. Motivations for Return to School

1. Getting a job
2. Having own meaningful activity
3. Pursuing interest in learning
4. Escaping from state of being a full-time housewife

B. Meaning of the Experience of Returning to School

1. Re-establishing self as independent individual
2. Structuring everyday life
3. Gaining recognition from others
4. Obtaining sense of accomplishment
5. Enlarging living area and meet new people
6. Joy of learning

C. Changes Resulting from the Experience

1. Happiness and satisfaction with themselves and their lives
2. New possibilities and hope for the future
3. New identity
 - a) Enhanced self-confidence
 - b) Improved self-esteem
 - c) Heightened critical consciousness

D. Social and Cultural Context of Returning to School

1. Forced to be full-time housewives
2. Study as an acceptable escape

Motivation for Return to School

Participants described several reasons for returning to school, and the reasons centered on four distinct themes: getting employed, having their own meaningful activity, pursuing an interest in learning, and escaping from state of being a full-time housewife.

Getting Employed

Almost two thirds of the participants stated their primary reason to return to the university was to get a job by making themselves more marketable. Many participants experienced career interruption due to childcare responsibilities and could not return to the job they had obtained before. Therefore, they needed to find new jobs, and thus they went back to school to prepare themselves for a new profession.

Song-eun, who was rejected by her company for being a mother who could not work at night after she had her child, entered a graduate school in order to get a job in the field of adult education. She said, “I had a very clear objective [for going to school.] To study further and be employed again. Although it wasn’t clear which job I may be able to have, I was determined to be employed again.” Hana, who lived as a full-time housewife for two years rearing her infant after failing to be hired as a teacher, also went to a graduate school of women’s studies with the expectation “of getting a job as well as solving the problem that I face.” Yunoo also went to a graduate school to study psychology, a field very new to her, because she wanted to work as a counselor after becoming specialized in this field. She described, “It [psychology] is what I was interested in, but I didn’t know anything about it. So I realized that I had to learn more in-depth knowledge.” Youngran, who gave up her dream of being a professor in early

childhood education after her unexpected pregnancy, also decided to return to a graduate school in order to get a working opportunity in clinical psychology. She considered going to school as “taking courses to get a job.”

On the other hand, for Meejin and Hyunsoo, going to school was a way of staying current in their field. Meejin, who reluctantly quit her job to take care of her child, entered graduate school “in order to stay in my career despite not working.” She explained, “[After studying,] It will be good to me to enter the Ph.D. program or get a job again with Master’s degree. If it [studying] could be a transition to my future career, I thought, I would be willing to study.” Hyunsoo, who had worked as a kindergarten teacher and quit her job after her pregnancy, also planned to manage a childcare center after her children had grown somewhat. Thus, she went to a graduate school to update her knowledge while brining up her children. She said,

I had been thinking to study further because I didn’t want to stay at home all my life. I always thought I would have a career after my children had grown up a little bit. So I wanted to ready to get a job [by studying] while my children were growing up.

Soshin and Dahee’s motivations were related to job transfer. They returned to school because that was the only way to make a desired career change. Soshin, who had worked for several years as a stewardess but found it was not suited to her aptitudes, returned to an undergraduate school to become a veterinarian. She said, “Unless I go back to school for another degree, I can’t begin a new career [because] it is really hard for women in their late 20s to move to a different career.” Dahee also sought a career change. She had been a private English tutor for a long time but felt unstable with it. So

she entered the department of English Education as a graduate student in order to get a certificate to be a middle or high school teacher. She said,

“I thought that it [teaching at school] was the only decent job that I could get. I wanted to work, and becoming a teacher was the only opportunity I had at my age. As long as you are under the age of 40, you are qualified to apply for the employment examination of public middle and high school teacher. I couldn’t consider applying for other jobs or general companies at my age.

Many of the participants in my study expressed the desire to get a job after graduation, but interestingly, they did not perceive having a job as just a means of making money. They all pointed out that earning money was not their primary reason for working. Rather, for them, getting a job had much greater significance.

The most frequently mentioned meaning of having a job was to have their own work. Soshin distinguished her job from housework and childcare, and described her job as “a work that only I have, a job of my own.” Hyunsoo, too, used the same expression to describe her work: “I think I can have some time of my own and a job of my own after having raised my children.” Meejin also explained, “I feel I’m doing something meaningful only if I work,” and thus, she wanted “to have a job of my own besides to taking care of the household chores.” Youngran echoed this perspective on having a job, explaining her feelings during the period she was a full-time housewife: “I needed my own work, my own professional work.” For her, getting a job meant “recovering” herself. Dahee also shared that she loved working outside the home because “It gave me a chance to breathe the free air outside my home” escaping from housework and “to have

some time of my own.” Likewise, Song-eun explained being employed as “having something to concentrate on, regardless of my children, husband, and housework” and “making a place for myself in this world, and not a place in my home.”

The eagerness to have their own work and time came from their realization of the fact that “I have to be responsible for my own life,” as Dahee mentioned. She continued,

It seems that one needs self-accomplishment and self-satisfaction, and these, I think, are one’s personal area. In order to achieve that, one has to help oneself. It isn’t something that can be achieved by the help of others....People say only men have that kind of desire, but I think women do, too. [Women also have the desire to satisfy] Self-esteem. Publicly recognized self-esteem.

Similarly, Song-eun emphasized that there is a portion of her life that only she, alone, can deal with:

Although a mother’s role is very important, I have my own share of my life. Thus, I think it is important to live a life with a portion just for my own self. Like men have a world of their own through work, I also feel the need to have a career of my own regardless of money I make.

Also, the eagerness was increased by the realization of the reality of a full-time housewife’s life. Dahee said,

Through observing the lives of other women [housewives], I realized their lives were full of boredom. Watching them, I thought that in order not to sigh at my own life, I have to take responsibility of my own life. In order to avoid my life from becoming boring and tedious, I thought, I had to get

a career. It didn't seem to be a problem my husband could solve for me.

For some time, I expected my husband to do this job for me. So we quarreled a lot. However, now I know that I was wrong. I realized that everyone should be responsible for his or her own life, even in a husband and wife relationship.

Participants also saw having a job as a means of self-development. They understood that housework was to serve the needs of their family members, but it did not bring about their personal development. Explaining the reason she decided to get a job, Youngran said, "I never wanted to stay at home, and always wanted to do something for my own development," so she was eager to get a job in which she "would utilize her high education" and pursue her development. She described why she thought she could not achieve self-development through housework:

Housework is never constructive. It hardly has visual results. It is no lasting results. The house just returns to its original state. Doing laundry and dishes are things you have to do over and over again. Cooking doesn't last. Even after working hard on something, it never seemed to show. It is so meaningless for me because I don't get left with anything. Of course, working for the sake of my family can be worthwhile, but it was really meaningless for myself. There was no sense of accomplishment.

Hyunsoo also wanted to work for her own self-development. While she lived as a full-time housewife, she experienced that she sometimes did not understand some English words or computer terminology which were in use, such as "millennium age" or "dot

com.” Whenever she faced this problem, she had to ask her husband, and as it occurred repeatedly, she began to “hate to get answers from my husband, instead of being able to understand them by myself.” This caused her to lose confidence in herself, and she suffered from the thought that “I am the only person in the world who doesn’t know this.” She thought that it was all because she “stayed home all the time and was left behind.” According to her, “housework is important for my children, but it doesn’t result in my own development because it is simply a continuous repeat of the same work.” She said, “When living as a full-time housewife, it isn’t easy nor necessary to be concerned about myself.” Therefore, by working outside the home, she wanted to escape from the “still water” and “get to know the fast changing society and float along with those changes.”

Dahee also differentiated housework from outside work as informal from formal relationships. She emphasized the limitation of housework in terms of housewives’ development by mentioning the benefits of working outside the home. She asserted,

Working outside the home helps me to know more about the world, to be wise, to be open-minded, and to make better judgments in certain circumstances. In particular, it requires a very formal and strict evaluation. Once you succeed in a strict evaluation, the confidence you gain through it is absolutely different from the confidence you get from being a housewife.

Meejin also mentioned she has “the ability to work in my job in addition to the ability to take care of the housework” and understood her job as “a means to develop the ability to work.” Thus, she regretted “losing the ability that composes one part of me”

when forced to quit her job. Otherwise, Soshin described her development in respect to cultivating her natural aptitudes by having a job that utilizes them.

While most participants agreed that earning money was a secondary reason for getting a job, some participants clearly indicated that they wanted to work for the money. They emphasized the importance of money because it guarantees them that they can “live as an independent and autonomous being who acts freely” as Soshin asserted. She described, “Money is the basic foundation of self-respect. Only with economic ability can one be independent. In addition, if I can earn money and support myself, I can make decisions freely. I don’t have to be restricted by others.” Dahee also said, “I think it is important that women make some money, even if it’s a small amount” because “money plays a significant role in raising one’s self-esteem.” Also, she said, “Money helps me enlarge my activity area and to live my own life.”

The participants also underscore how earning money is closely related to having an equal relationship with their husbands. Meejin explained how earning money affected her relationship:

Simply speaking, because the husband makes a living, the wife, in return, should be in charge of the housework. Why do you think the wife should be the sole person taking care of housework? If a wife earns money, it is reasonable to share housework with her husband. However, it wouldn’t be fair if the wife doesn’t take care of the housework when the husband works outside the home. That’s why a wife has no other choice. Therefore, only when the wife has economic ability similar to the

husband's, can housework be equally shared. That way, the wife can ask the husband for his share of the housework.

Hana, the only participant who wished to earn a lot of money, mentioned she wanted to earn more or the equal amount of money as her husband. She said, "I would have to do more housework unless I earn at least as much as my husband does." Because of this rationale, Meejin, Hana, and Soshin hated to be dependent on their husbands' money, and felt that if they also earned money they could face their husbands as equals.

In addition, Hana's concern on money is also a matter of equal treatment between her male college classmates. She described,

I have to earn as much as they [male classmates] earn. I studied as much as they did, and I even studied better and harder than they did, [so I have to be treated equally.] I think if I have the same ability, which is required by our society, then, the society has to place me on the same footing with them.

In conclusion, many participants returned to school to get a job, and through working outside the home, they wanted to have their own work and pursue their development. Moreover, by earning money, they expected to have power that enabled them to live as independent and autonomous individuals who don't have to listen to others against their own will and to have a basis for requesting that their husbands share the housework.

Having Own Meaningful Activity

Five participants, Jaewon, Jookyung, Inea, Heajong, and Hana, described that they returned to the universities to have their own meaningful activity, their own time, and their own world. (Hana mentioned both motivations, "getting a job" and "having

own meaningful activity” at the same time.) This motivation came from their dissatisfaction with their lives as full-time housewives that the “career-oriented” participants experienced. They were dissatisfied with having no personal time or activity, and with losing themselves by simply doing the task of serving the demands of their family members.

Jaewon, who has been a full-time housewife for 6 years with two children, described why she was disappointed with her life.

I came to wonder, “ who am I?” My husband finds reward by being promoted or by getting compliments from his supervisor. However, unlike him, I have worked in vain. I may could my life worthwhile when my child begins to crawl or walk. However, that is not something I can take full credit for. Every child crawls or walks when time comes. Therefore, I couldn’t find much meaning, and that’s why I was more dissatisfied with my life.

Realizing the need “to find something to do for her own self-development” from her unsatisfied life, she returned to school.

Jookyung also complained about her life as full-time housewife with an infant. She “didn’t have her own time” while taking care of her child as a full-time housewife, and it caused her to “be irritated” with her life. She said, “I wasn’t satisfied with just taking care of housework and childcare. I didn’t feel happy because I felt my life was closing in on me.” Thus, she returned to school to have her own meaningful activity that she could do the rest of her life. She said, “I’d like to participate in something beyond housework. I wanted to take part in my own activity, and not just remain at home.”

Likewise, Inea complained about “the constant everyday life similar to a hamster going round and round on a wheel” with three children who “couldn’t be conversational partners who listen to” her concerns. So, as her children grew enough to go to school and she could have her free time, she returned to school. Inea stated, “I wanted to do something that gives benefits for myself, not just work related to my children.” She emphasized, “I earnestly wanted to have my own time and meet a new world, not the world that exists through my children or my husband.”

Heajong, a full-time housewife with two daughters aged 18 and 16, had sometimes asked “Who am I? What am I doing now?” in the midst of busy life of bringing up her children. Whenever the questions came up, she thought, “I’ll do something only when my children go to school.” When she finally had her own time after a long wait, however, she found that she could not get a job anymore at her age. Thus, she returned to school to “utilize my own time by taking part in doing my own activity.”

In particular, they distinguished themselves from their children and considered childcare as a sacrifice for their children. This thought increased their need to have some activity of their own. Jaewon showed this perception of separation vividly: “I understand that my children are precious to me. However, even though they are precious, strictly speaking, it is I who is the most important one. I began to wonder why I had to live the life I was living, sacrificing myself for them.” Inea also shared how she perceived her husband and children in her own terms.

The satisfaction that you get through your husband or your children seems somewhat empty....Depending on others for satisfaction seems to bring a

sense of emptiness. Of course, I should do a good job of bringing up my children because it is my responsibility. However, how much satisfaction would I feel through them when they are grown up? Their lives aren't mine. And my husband's life isn't mine, either.

Similarly, Heajong divided her life into two parts, life for herself and life for her children, and she struggled between them: "I have to have my own work" and "my children are the most important thing for me." She actually wanted to get a job "to utilize her high education and to cultivate herself," but she "lost the opportunity to do my work because of my children." She said,

I wanted to do something for myself, but my children were in the way. So I waited for them to get old enough to go to school. I thought, "Once they go to school, I will do what I want." I wanted to have some time of my own even though I wasn't clear of what it was I wanted to do. I wanted to do something productive.

Because of this reason, she finally evaluated she "didn't live the life that I had expected." Hana had a more extreme thought: "What made it more difficult for me was that I didn't know why I had to do this [housework.] People talk about mother's sacrifice, or something like that. I don't want to sacrifice myself, but why do I need to sacrifice in the name of mother?"

In short, they found that the role of full-time housewife did not satisfy their needs having their own activity so that they exist as an independent individual in addition to being a mother or a wife. That is, they felt the same dissatisfaction that the participants whose motivation is "getting employed" pointed out. However, unlike the "career-

oriented” participants, they either did not want to get a job or gave up getting employed, and this is the reason why they turned their eyes to university.

Inea envied professional career women for a long time and regretted that she had not made the effort to become one as an undergraduate student. She shared, “In order to get the jobs and positions that I envy, I would have had to make the efforts when I was young. I think it is too late.” Because of this reason, she gave up getting a job and chose to attend school to have her own meaningful activity. Heajong shared the same thought with Inea. She said,

It was almost impossible to be employed at my age. Only the jobs that even high school graduates could handle were available for me. But I was too proud to that. I wanted to find a job in my professional field, but a research center required a master’s or doctoral degree. It was also impossible to be a member of a private company because I didn’t have any work experience. There is hardly any opportunities in this country. I could only get a job as a waitress, a housemaid, or a volunteer.

Jookyung also pointed out the uncertainty of getting a job. She said,

Even though I wish to be a professor after studying further, it might not be possible because I’m not single anymore. I understand that because I’m married, I have to put my husband and my child into consideration. Even if I wish it, it has to go with the circumstances of my family.

Unlike these three participants, Jaewon had never been interested in getting a job even before marriage, and did not want to get employed. She wanted to be a good mother for

her children and perceived that career women work for the money, not just self-actualization.

While Jaewon, Jookyung, Inea and Heajong did not have clear ideas about their own meaningful activity even though they wanted to have it, Hana, who wanted to be a teacher but finally failed, had a very concrete idea of her own meaningful activity that she expected to achieve by attending the university. After failing to be employed even though all her male classmates in her department succeeded in getting a job, she came to think “this only happened because of the fact that I am a woman,” and thus she began to get interested in Women’s Studies. In addition, during the time when she felt desperate in her role of full-time housewife, she thought that nobody understood or sympathized with her inner feelings and thoughts, and this made her be so lonely. Thus, by choosing to study in Women’s Studies, she wanted to solve “my problem that I was facing, one I went through because I am a woman.” She said,

Living as a woman, the most difficult thing for me was being a full-time housewife. I thought the only way of solving this problem was to go there [Department of Women’s Studies]. Nobody agreed with me, so I wished to share my thoughts with others who shared similar thoughts and to make a passage through it.

In addition to solving her problem, Hana wanted to be the proud mother to her daughter and make her better life for her. And she thought studying women’s studies was the first step to do it. She described,

I didn’t want to be the passive mother who says to her daughter, “Don’t you live like me.” I wanted to say to my daughter later, “When I faced

this hardship, I went through it well with the hope that you wouldn't have to go through the same thing. Thus, you just walk firmly through the paths which I will have paved for you, and you meet other difficulties. I knew somebody had to do it, and I, myself, wanted to be that person, especially for my daughter. I really wanted to make her way towards her career less tough for her. I truly wanted it done for her.

Pursuing Interests in learning

Yoosun is the only participant who reported pursuing her interests in learning as her *primary* motivation. While managing a private art institute, she began to learn violin in order to overcome boredom. As the learning proceeded, however, she became obsessed with learning violin. With the thought that "this is what I have to do," she finally decided to enter a the university "to study it further and professionally." Realizing that managing the art institute did not fit her aptitude also provoked her returning to school. She stated, 'I really really wanted to go back to school. I wanted to learn violin there because I love it.'

Other participants mentioned their interest in learning as their secondary motivation. Soshin, who returned to a university to make a career change, said that she has always thought to study again someday, and that thought had motivated her to return to school. This thought originated with the regret that she had not studied hard in high school. Because she was assigned to a high school that she did not like, she did not study as hard as she could have, and that resulted in a college entrance examination score that she was not satisfied with. Thus, she always felt sorry that "I missed what I could have done well in my life." In addition, through the experiences that she always won the first

in examinations in her workplace, she was assured that she had an aptitude for studying. With a combination of regret and assurance, she finally decided to return to school in order “to do what I could do well” and “to prove I could study well.”

Jookyung shared a similar regret. She entered a university that she did not want to enter, and due to not being able to adapt properly, she spent time as “an outsider” and did not study hard. Therefore, she desired another opportunity. She said, “I had always thought that if I could be a student again, I wanted to study eagerly and enthusiastically....I wanted to study willingly, not being forced by others.”

Escaping from the State of Being a Full-Time Housewife

Interestingly, many participants reported that they returned to school in order to escape from the state of being a full-time housewife. As I mentioned above, all participants in my study were dissatisfied with the life of the full-time housewife, and some of them used going to school as a way of escaping that role. Jookyung, who suffered from the isolation of being inside the home all day while taking care of her infant, began to think, “I can’t live like this any more. I have to look for some breakthrough.” By way of finding a breakthrough, she finally decided to enter a university: “I thought I won’t stay at home anymore. I decided I’m not going to stay at home all day nursing my baby. That’s why I went out.” She added, “I went back to school in order for me to get a quick start at whatever it was out there. Anything except a full-time housewife.” Meejin shared the same motivation: “Let’s hurry and register at school, and get out of this [life of being a full-time housewife.] If I become more involved it, I wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

While Jookyung and Meejin returned to school to escape from the unsatisfying life of being a full-time housewife, Soshin and Yoosun, who had worked for a long time, went to school in order to avoid becoming full-time housewives. Even though they had a very short experience as a being full-time housewives, they were aware of the social perceptions of full-time housewives and the problems they faced. So they never wanted to be a full-time housewives, and it strongly influenced them to return to school as soon as they had lost a job or had needed a job transfer. Soshin explained why she does not want to be a full-time housewife:

I know the perception of full-time housewives. It has never been positive. When people say ‘full-time housewife,’ it refers to a person who doesn’t know much about things like stocks or the internet, and one who is able to do simple chores but is unable to deal with complicated works. However, the job of full-time housewives is really hard, indeed. I realized this after experiencing it myself. It is harder than working outside the home for me....Considering the work load, the dedication to their family, they hardly gain recognition. So it is too sad a job to have it. I know many full-time housewives who are very good at their job. I really respect them. But their efforts are hardly recognized. How much do their husbands and in-laws recognize their efforts? They take it for granted. But nothing should be taken for granted, should it? I, as a woman, think it is too unfair....I think this is a sacrifice, sacrifice without rewards. I can’t do it willingly although you may think I’m selfish. I can’t do it willingly.

Because of this negative perception of full-time housewives, Soshin never wanted to be a full-time housewife. She thus underwent the difficult preparation period for the college entrance examination. She said, “If I don’t study, I can’t help but be a full-time housewife. Because I know the value of being a full-time housewife,...I certainly have to study.”

For some participants, attending a school could be a good justification to escape from forced childcare, in particular. Meejin, who reluctantly quit her job due to her childcare responsibilities, explained, “If I go to school, I can leave my child in a someone else’s care and leave out with the justification of being a student.” Hana also shared a similar story that going to school was a way of acquiring her own time and escaping from childcare. “Though he [her husband] desperately opposes it [sending her daughter to daycare center], he has no choice but to do it when I go to school. I knew I could spend that time studying.”

Jeawon’s intent to escape from state of the full-time housewives was quite different from other participants. Even though she was dissatisfied with the lives of full-time housewife, she accepted her duty for taking care of her children and wanted to be a full-time mother. However, the disdain about full-time housewives in Korean society made her uneasy to be a full-time housewife. Thus, she wanted to escape the negative perception regarding full-time housewives by studying, something recognized by society. She believed that by studying, she could distinguish herself from other ordinary full-time housewife. This is the reason why she emphasized she “wanted to boast to her husband” by doing “something.” She shared,

I wanted to show my husband that I was doing “something,” too. I wanted to show him that I was not stupid and that if I really wanted to, I could achieve something, too. I just wanted to show him that my head hadn’t rested yet, and that I wasn’t plain woman, that I was an extraordinary lady.

I wanted to be recognized. I wanted my value to be raised.

That is, she returned to school in order to escape from the negative image of a full-time housewife, and she quit her study when she got good grades, feeling that she accomplished her mission to show her ability to others.

Meaning of the Experience of Returning to School

So far, I have examined why the participants in this study returned to school. Next, I will discuss what the participant indeed experienced attending university and what the participants perceived as meaningful experiences. Six themes emerged: Re-establishing themselves as independent individuals, structuring everyday life, gaining recognition from others, obtaining sense of accomplishment, enlarging living area and meeting new people, and the joy of learning.

Re-Establishing Oneself as an Independent Individual

The participants in this study indicated that re-establishing themselves as independent individuals was the primary meaningful experience of attending university. Before, they were dissatisfied with not having their own activity or job to do, and this was the major motivation for returning to school. Therefore, they most frequently described that in addition to the roles of full-time housewives, they had their own work, time, and world attending school and that gave them the most joy. That is, they considered studying as their own activity which they did for themselves.

Jaewon, Hyunsoo, Youngran and Hana were very pleased that they were studying because for them, studying indicated that they had their own activity and time for themselves, freeing from the responsibility for their family members. Jeawon, questioning her identity while distressing about her role of full-time housewife, said studying is the activity that no one else can do for her and frequently mentioned, “I am most delighted that I have my own activity, the activity only I can do. I am so satisfied that I have something to do and I am doing it now.” Thus, she thought much of her study time because it is the time when she can concentrate on her own activity.

While Jeawon referred to “my own activity,” Jookyung described it as “my own area.” She said, “I am so happy that I have built my own area because I didn’t have it before when I took care of my kid.” Heajong, who longed for her own activity but did not know what it was specifically, also pointed out that she finally found her own activity by studying something she was interested in and working as a member of a student organization at a university-affiliated lifelong education center. Song-eun, too, underscored the joy of doing her own activity:

I am so delighted to write a paper or read a textbook at night after putting my children to sleep. It is quite different from reading a newspaper or watching TV, because it is to do my own study. While reading a newspaper or watching TV is just getting information, doing my study is what only I can do, and the time to study is my own time. Because of that, I am delighted. I am delighted with the fact that I have something to do for myself.

Likewise, Yunoo, who was depressed because there was nothing to do after her attachment to her family members was rejected, enjoyed getting “another thing to do for herself” in addition to the role of housewife. She said, “I was really pleased that I am concentrating on something and working hard.” Thus, she evaluated her studying as “the time to use only for myself.”

Hana explained that having her own activity meant to “restore who I was originally” because when she was studying, she was not performing the roles of mother or wife any more. For her, studying is using her time for only herself. Thus, for her, studying is “what makes me live as an independent being” and thus she felt joy to study late at night even though she was so tired and sleepy. Inea, who attended a university-affiliated lifelong education center once a week, described going to school as having “my own independent time and world.”

Other participants enjoyed by going to school, having “their own independent worlds” and spending time with “their own friends” there. Inea said that in the world, her mind was relieved of household matters and thus, her identity changed from housewife and mother to an individual.

They said the outside world was quite different from the limited environment they inhabited as housewives. First, they mentioned that their names were being called in the world. Inea underscored that her name was recovered in her new world and that meant a lot to her. She described, “My name is called. I am called as “Inea,” not someone’s mother. It makes me so happy. I am really really happy that I have the time to be called ‘Inea.’” Hyunsoo also pointed out that being called by her name or with honorific words by her professors and classmates changed her perception about herself. She said, “When

I was at home, I thought I was nobody. But at school, I find out myself treated as somebody – someone who deserves others’ respect.” Song-eun, too, was satisfied submitting papers with her name and placing her name on the list of students, and shared that it relieved the distress of losing herself that she had felt before. Calling by her name, Yunoo also felt that she had her area in which she could act in her name.

These women existed as individuals, not someone’s mother or wife, in the world of their schools, and their conversation with their peers was about themselves. Inea said she could talk about herself and her development with her classmates in her English class and described why she was so delighted to have different conversation topics:

[Before,] conversation was never about myself. Rather, it was about my children, husband, and family, and my past memories. There was no conversation about what I am now. But here, it is different. Here, we talk about what are the effective ways to learn English, things like that.

Therefore, the center of the conversation is always myself.

The participants were also pleased that the world waited for and needed them. Inea said, “Now there is another world, apart from my children, that waits for me. When I miss class, my classmates call me and ask why I was absent. That is my pleasure, too. [I’m so happy] The fact that somebody looks forward to seeing me.” Heajong, who has attended a university-affiliated lifelong education center for a couple of years and worked for a student organization, enjoyed participating in the organization. She said, “They need me even though what I am doing isn’t great.”

In addition, the participants gained their voices in the world. Song-eun underscored that she could speak her thoughts and opinions in front of others in her class,

and it satisfied her desire to restore the identity she lost after marriage. Yunoo also pointed out that she had a place in which she could assert her opinions, and she considered this a significant change when comparing with her position at home where she just followed the opinions of her husband and parents-in-law.

The impact of having their own activity, time, and world was quite significant for the participants in re-establishing themselves as independent individuals. First, their own activity gave them self-satisfaction. Jeawon said, “[I get from doing my own work] satisfaction, satisfaction with myself. It is a great satisfaction for me not to think any more that I am the one of no value and have nothing to do.” Youngran also shared that she was pleased that “I am doing something meaningful.” Inea and Youngran also shared that the activity helped them to get “the feeling of being alive” from doing their own activity. In addition, many participants enjoyed their development through doing their own work. Jookyung said, “I feel myself growing.” Dahee also described, “This is the feeling that I am getting enlarged. In learning new knowledge and theories, I feel I am getting enlarged as if my dormant consciousness is awakened.” Heajong was also satisfied that her “eyes are widened” by listening to diverse people’s perspectives from lectures.

Structuring Everyday Life

The participants in this study also indicated that they got structure in their everyday life as they attended university, and they agreed that this is one of the meaningful things for them. Before going to university, their lives were composed of the same, simple, and repeated tasks, such as sending children to school, cleaning, laundering clothes, washing the dishes, cooking, helping their children to study and so on. They

described this life with similar expressions: “Every day in a year is the same,” “just repeated daily life,” and “a continuous repeat of the same kind of life.”

In addition, the participants’ lives were characterized by having no work to do in a specific time. Even though there were many chores to do as full-time housewives, they could delay them somewhat, and it sometimes resulted in life without regularity. Jeawon described this clearly:

Housework is like this, indeed. I can delay cleaning house a little bit. If my house is so messed up, I say “I can do it after lunch.” Then, after lunch and a nap, I say, “I can do it after supper. My husband will be late anyway.” Then, at night, I say “I can do it tomorrow morning. It will get messed up again anyway.”

Moreover, for some participants whose children were school-goers, the ennui increased in their lives. As the time when their children stayed at school was longer, the length of their ennui was also extended. They did not know how to spend the time and “just killed the time” by reading bestsellers, watching TV, listening to music, chatting on the phone, or sleeping, as Inea and Youngran mentioned.

However, after starting school, they had something to do and objectives to accomplish. This change helped a structure take place in their lives. Jeawon described, Since I started school, I’ve come to think I have to study. So when the house is messed up, I think, “I’ll clean and cook quickly so that I can make time to study. This way, rhythm and regularity take place in my life. Because of this change, she became “lively” and “full of desire to act.” Inea also agreed with Jeawon. She underscored,

I have made the time to prepare for Friday [the day of going to school] in a week. Reading books and writing a paper, something like this. So I have become busy...and more diligent. My life has become not loose but tighter. It makes me feel lively.

By having activity that she allotted her time to in a day, she decreased the time of ennui and had “the concept of a time plan” as she placed her time for the housework and her study into a daily schedule. Hyunsoo, too, shared that having a place to go and activity to do made her diligent.

Heajong also had structure in her life since going to the university. As she found the field that interested her and began to work as a member of a student organization, her week became full of activities to do, such as taking classes on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; participating in the student organization on Thursday; attending a Bible study on Friday; spending time with her family on Saturday; and going to church on Sunday.

Yoosun, who was bored in managing a private art institute, also said her life was not boring any more after she set an objective to go to the university. After setting the objective, she had to consider various things, such as “Which university I can attend? What kind of examination they required? and How can I prepare for it?” While dealing with those matters, she found that “time passed swiftly.” Yunoo, who worried before what to do tomorrow, was also pleased with escaping from the eunni. She said,

Time flew so fast after I started to study. I often found out that a lot of time had already gone even when I studied only a little. I felt as if I used one hundred percent of the given time, which filled my heart with pride.

Gaining Recognition from Others

Almost all participants in this study pointed out that gaining recognition from others was a considerably meaningful experience derived from their education. This was important for them because when they were full-time housewives they had not had the opportunity. They perceived that they were not recognized as individuals by others, and thus they were distressed by a sense of inferiority, as Jaewon and Inea mentioned. They were fully aware that, nowadays, the Korean society regards career women but look down on full-time housewives. Thus, no matter how much they agreed with the social values, they could not have self-esteem as full-time housewives and envied career women. Inea said,

Our society thinks housework can be done by anybody. That way of thinking seems so pervasive in my mind, too. “I am doing the work anybody can do.” So I envy the women who do the work that normal people can’t do, such as women having a professional job.... They seem to do housework too in addition to their jobs whether they do housework well or not. But I am only doing housework.

In addition to Inea, most participants shared the same feeling that “I looked so humiliated” or “they [career women] accomplished something while I did nothing” when comparing themselves to career women who had professional jobs. Song-eun agreed with the point that “housework or childcare isn’t socially recognized” even though “giving birth to children and raising them are needed for this society, not just family succession.” And she asked in return, “Who wants to raise children unless the society recognizes women’s childcare like men’s military service?” She shared, “my position as

a full-time housewife that isn't socially and formally recognized made me suffer from a sense of self-humiliation.” Therefore, what she was most thrilled about while she attended university was “to do something that is formally acknowledged, in addition to housework.”

Because of this reason, the participants were so much impressed by gaining recognition. From the moment that they felt “recognized as an individual again,” their self-perception changed from an attitude of “I can't do anything” to an attitude of self-confidence. They also realized that “I am the person who can get recognized as an individual human being.”

The participants gained various kinds of recognition from family members, classmates, professors, their neighbors and society. First, they gained recognition for their abilities to study and their attitudes toward studying. Song-eun got a scholarship after her first semester, and it caused her classmates to appreciate her academic ability. She was also proud of proving even an *ajumma* could do well. Jookyung, Soshin, Inea, and Youngran also gained recognition from other classmates and professors when they did good performance in submitting papers, took examinations, or made presentations. Heajong was recognized for her passion for her field, so her professor repeatedly mentioned that she was the “best disciple.” Yunoo was also recognized for good performances, and heard from her family members, “Yes, I've always known that you are a person who do what you resolve to do.” From these experiences, the participants were thrilled by the recognition they received as individuals, not only as mothers and wives.

They also won recognition about that they committed what other full-time housewives could not do easily. Youngran heard many times from her neighbors, “Wow,

you are so great! How did you, a woman over thirty, dare to consider coming out [toward society]?” Jookyung also received a similar exclamation: “An *ajumma* did something brave, not stayed on at home.” In addition to their daring, they were also recognized for managing housework and schoolwork at the same time. In particular, Hana, who kept studying in spite of the opposition of her family, was recognized for studying despite that opposition. This exclamation and recognition caused them to feel pride in themselves.

In particular, for the participants who attended graduate schools, their degrees or the fact itself that they were attending graduate schools made them be recognized by others. Dahee, who majored in English education, found that others considered that her going to graduate school in her 30s proved her ability to teach English. It also made others evaluate her former informal private tutoring as more credible. Thus, she got lots of opportunities to teach English as a private tutor from many parents and institutes. Hyunsoo, who had majored in early childhood education in her undergraduate days and studied it further in graduate school, found that since starting graduate school, her neighbors more frequently requested counseling about their children’s matters and trusted her advice more than when she was a full-time housewife. This kind of recognition from others significantly helped the participants restore self-respect.

Obtaining the Sense of Accomplishment

The participants in this study indicated that obtaining a sense of accomplishment through their schooling was another way in which the experience was meaningful. When they lived as full-time housewives, they were frustrated because their simple and endlessly repeated work produced nothing. Youngran explained the frustration:

Housework is never constructive. It does have any lasting effects. The house just returns to its original state. Laundering clothes and washing dishes are just things you have to do over again. Cooking doesn't last. I worked hard at something, but the results are all the same. It is so meaningless for me because nothing is left. Of course, it is worthwhile to dedicate myself to my family, but it is really meaningless to me. There is no sense of accomplishment.

While repeating the same work everyday for several years, they "were tired of it," "felt bored," "felt everything has always gone back to the starting point," and felt "something was missing in my mind." Referring to simply repeated housework, Dahee evaluated, "the lives of full-time housewives were so boring as to be miserable." Therefore, they yearned to do something that would enable them to be fruitful and were thrilled when they felt a sense of accomplishment from their schooling.

School provided various opportunities for the participants to obtain a sense of accomplishment. The first was getting admission from their school. Soshin, who took the college entrance examination again, said she obtained a sense of accomplishment after getting high enough score to go to a veterinary school, one of the competitive schools in Korea. She said, "I passed one of the hurdle I had to go through." Yoosun was also proud of returning to school. She stated, "Going to school means achieving a goal that I've dreamed of for several years. From this, [I had] a sense of accomplishment." Youngran, who went to one of the more prestigious graduate schools, said how getting admission influenced her; "I felt a big sense of accomplishment when I

won in the competition with young students even though I had stayed at home for about 8 or 9 years.”

Challenging opportunities at school, such as taking examinations or making presentations, also helped the participants to obtain a sense of accomplishment. Inea, who majors in reading education, shared that narrating children’s storybooks in her class was “the best time” in her school experiences. She said,

Doing an oral narration brought me a sense of accomplishment even though I felt much stress when preparing it...It was the most meaningful for me to obtain a sense of accomplishment after my presentation. Since I married, I hadn’t had the opportunity to present something in front of many people and to be recognized by them.

Jeawon, who complained that she could not find fruitfulness in her housework and childcare, underscored that she obtained a sense of accomplishment after getting good grades on her examinations. She described,

I got a good grade on my mid-term, and it made me so happy. When I went out the classroom after taking the exam, I found myself so happy....As I filled in the blank spaces completely in the essay typed questions, later I couldn’t write more because my arm was so sore. It made me so proud. I had never ever written that much at once.

That is, Jeawon considered that good grades were an indication of her sincere efforts for certain work that was acknowledged as valuable in this society and thus, she felt that she accomplished something in taking her examinations. This is the reason why she studied so hard even though she did not want to get a job after graduation. As she said, for her,

good grades gave “self-satisfaction” because they were the results of her efforts. Her following statement shows how she understood good grades:

It [good grade] is the result of my efforts, the result of what I study.

Because I want to be fruitful,...I’m so pleased when I get good results as much as I study. By getting good grades, I could feel productive.

Yunoo agreed with Jaewon’s perception of good grades. She said, “[Unlike housework] study guarantees a gain from my efforts. The results are equal to my efforts. From that, I felt satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.”

In addition, getting improvement through schooling helped the participants obtain a sense of accomplishment. Like many participants, Hyunsoo did not know anything about computers and did not even know how to type. So it was hard for her to type papers, and she spent so much time typing them in the first period of her schooling. However, later, she became familiar with finding information by surfing the internet, and her typing ability improved enough for her to write her thesis by herself. This improvement resulted in her gaining a sense of accomplishment. Yunoo also shared the joy of learning quickly what she had not known before. Inea, too, has studied English for several years, and this helped her to have a sense of accomplishment. She said, “I am proud of my perseverance [even though many classmates who began with me dropped out the class,] regardless of how well I can speak English. I felt a sense of accomplishment from it.”

Enlarging Living Area and Meeting New People

The participants in this study considered that attending university was also meaningful for them in enlarging their living area and giving them the chance to meet

new people. Before they returned to school, they were confined within the home due to childcare and dealt with a limited array people while working as only a mother and wife. Thus, their living area was very limited and they felt they were “segregated from society.” Inea’s description well delineated the condition of full-time housewives: “The only world I knew was through my children, husband, family, and old friends.”

As this kind of life continued, the full-time housewives lost their connections to people outside their families, and then they finally fell into the situation that “all they can do is just shop when their children go to school,” as Soshin observed. Or they killed their time while chatting with other full-time housewives during the time when their children went to school, as Yunoo, Youngran, and Inea shared. Soshin evaluated, “It [The life of a full-time housewives] is too blocked. For full time housewives, many things are blocked and they are isolated.” Therefore, for the participants, attending university was to break out of their confinement or isolation and to take their first step into the world outside the home.

Jeawon’s experience showed clearly how attending university could lead to the participation in society. As she attended her university, she came to see what other young students dressed. Realizing her clothes were too much out of fashion and strange, she tried to follow the current fashion. She bought clothes, shoes, and hats that the young students wore. However, for her, it was not just a matter of fashion. Rather, she perceived this as a matter of participating in the current society. She said,

I seem to enlarge myself [by] trying to imitate them in order to follow these days....I am just pleased with knowing what to dress these days. To know what others [other full-time housewives in her neighborhood] don’t

know well....I am happy that I am living with the world together. Before, I didn't have that kind of life.

That is, attending university gave Jeawon the opportunity to see how current society goes, and for her, following the current fashion was to connect to and participate in society. Yunoo also enjoyed going to cafes or bars with young classmates. For her, it was meaningful because those were things that she did not experience as a full-time housewife. Heajong commented that, through attending school, she "extended her activity boundary" by "going out into society."

In addition, attending university provided the participants the opportunity to get acquainted with new people. As mentioned above, when the participants were full-time housewives, their husbands were the only adults with whom they could have conversation and share their concerns. Thus, their expectations of their husbands were very high. However, their husbands, who suffered from an excessive work load, "didn't have the extra energy" to listen to them and "just wanted to take a rest at home," as Inea mentioned. Therefore, it was really meaningful for them to get to know new people by attending university and to escape from their depression. Inea said,

We [full-time housewives] always want to vent our stresses and find satisfaction through our family members, but people who work outside the home are busy and can't accept it. Thus it causes conflicts....Before, my family was the only people I could vent to. But now I am venting it outside in a positive way....As the number of people who I can deal with increases, my dissatisfaction with my husband decreases even though he doesn't take care of me.

Song-eun also underscored that going to the university provided relationships with new people that she could not have before. She said,

Full-time housewives were the only people I could meet when I was a full-time housewife. But when I went to school, I met various people.... When I was a full-time housewife, I longed for people and felt lonely. But after I started school, I could have new relationships with people that I couldn't have as a full-time housewife.

For Heajong, too, school extended the boundaries of her relationships with people. While she was taking a computer course, she found that there was no place for women on the internet. So she organized the 'housewives internet association' online. Later, when she entered her 40s, she also organized another online club for people in midlife and had meetings with them on and off line. These activities helped her to extend the range of her relationships with people, even to men. She was proud of meeting males openly at her age. She said,

How large do you think is the extent of men with whom I have conversation? Who else could I talk with except a laundryman, a fishseller, and a storekeeper? However, through the internet, I can converse with a wide range of people.... I like communicating [with male members] on the internet openly and squarely. I can talk [about these men] to my husband without any hesitation, and he also willingly gives me phone calls [from the male members.] We don't communicate under cover. I like having a the sound relationship [between men and women.]

Moreover, the participants met people at school who had similar interests, and the people sometimes acted as role models to them. Song-eun met a female professor who had studied in graduate school while taking care of children like she did. Finding the professor's personal experiences and feminist perspective were similar to hers, she shared her personal problems as housewife student with the professor as well as receiving guidance her education. She said,

At first, I was so chaotic. During the first semester, both taking care of children and studying were hard. Once I began to study, I wanted to study well, but when I was staying with my children, I couldn't do anything. So – Ah, I couldn't know how to divide my mind and time between my study and children. Under these circumstances, I met the professor and learned how to appropriately allot my time and energy.

For her, the professor was the “respected senior [of life]” and “role model” and she “was pleased with and stimulated by the role model.” She also came to know other housewife students at school.

Furthermore, by going to school, the participants encountered various people and learned from them various ways of life, and this led them to be open minded and flexible. Jookyung, Inea, Heajong, and Song-eun underscored how the various ways of thinking and experiences of their classmates influenced them. Jookyung, who attended an undergraduate school, shared, “Because I hang out with young people, I meet with ways of thinking of them, which enlarges my ways of thinking. Inea also said,

Even though all classmates read the same book, our interpretations and feelings about it are quite different from one another, and the others point

out what I never think. I realized that I felt that what I think is right isn't only thing to be right. So I try to accept other's point of views.

In particular, Song-eun experienced that her professors' human oriented and community oriented depositions influenced her to be more human and less work-oriented.

Jeawon also observed non-traditional students like her on campus. She said, "When I sometimes see people who look my age, I just like them without any specific reason. I think, 'Ah, I am not the only one. They study like me. Let's study harder.'" Yoosun is acquainted with many non-traditional students, such as housewives and pastors who study in their midlife, and has learned from them different life styles. She said, "Each person has a different way of life. [I found that] while I have lived this way, they live other ways. I come to favor the different ways of life and to think differently."

Most of all, while attending university, the participants met people that sympathized with them and encouraged their thoughts and way of life. Before returning to school, many of them often found themselves thinking differently from other full-time housewives, and it made them feel, "I may be too odd" or "I am a strange person." Therefore, for them, meeting people who understood them and gaining support significantly aided in restoring a positive self-image. Hana described how she was alienated and how school solved this:

Nobody understood there is myself, Hana Lee, inside me, in addition to a mother and a wife. [They said] "That is the *ajumma*'s life. After marriage, everybody lives like this. How much do you think you are peculiar?" But I met many of those peculiar people at school.

That is, She enjoyed “meeting and talking with the people who have the same thoughts as me,” and she actually got help from them when she decided to have an abortion. She said,

When I thought about abortion, they didn’t say, “do this,” or “do that.”

They talked about both possibilities and said, “You are the person who has to make the decision, and the decision should be made based on what will make you the happiest.” It made me stronger to know that people who gave advice in this way are always with me.

Through continuous interaction with them, she finally considered them as her support foundation. She said,

[It is important that] I am not struggling all by myself anymore, but I have people who are always with me....I have the people who always support me. I can find out some people who can help me even though I don’t know or am not related with right now. If I have a problem, I can ask help from somebody in my department who works for the feminist movement about the matter. They are my strength and enable me to be confident.

Song-eun repeated,

It is really important to meet friends and seniors who accept my way of life and the conflicts in my mind as they are and sympathize with them, because I’ve been lonely so far. Before, I seemed too small and poor. And I was a strange person like “the ugly duckling” among my neighbors. I was a strange person, but they accepted the strangeness and supported me by saying that my choice could be a valid choice....Well, I say, I meet

many people who understand non-mainstreamers in our society? It is the most important thing to meet many people who agree with different choices from those of mainstreamers. It helps me a lot.

Dahee, who also had found her attitudes different from those of majority of other full-time housewives, found support in educational theory. For example, she had thought that schooling itself reproduced the structure of capitalism, but she could not say that because she was not sure her idea was right. However, from her classes, she found that this idea was already the theory of famous scholars. This finding assured her and gave her confidence. She said, “Ah, what I have thought is right. I have understood correctly the big current of this world....Now I am comfortable. I’m not strange. I don’t have to follow others’ thoughts. I can trust my judgment whenever something happens.” Hana, who majors in women’s studies, also learned the theories that supported her ideas about women’s matters, and thus, she could validate her own ideas and accept her difference from others as something positive. She said,

Before, when my friends didn’t agree with my opinion, I thought I have a problem and couldn’t insist further. I wasn’t confident about my opinion. But now if my friends say I have a problem, I say, “what’s the problem? Some people can think like this and others can think like that.” I understand that there are various ways of thinking and don’t attempt to make them accept my opinion.

The Joy of Learning

One of the experiences of returning to school that participants considered meaningful was the joy of learning. Most of all, they pointed out their changed attitude

toward learning. Jeawon's explanation exemplified many other participants' attitudes about going to college. She said,

I went to college because it was what I had to do. How many people do you think go to college with a passion to study? We just went to college choosing our school and major according to our [entrance examination] score....I went to college without any specific thought because I had to go there. I had to go there because my parents were pleased with it. I had to go there because I would marry a good guy. I went to school because of those kinds of reasons. I knew about my major only after starting college. I didn't choose it knowing what it was.

In Korean society, where educational level is highly emphasized, getting a B.A. degree is the minimum requirement for belonging to the privileged class and also the means to social mobility. Thus, most youths prioritize a university's prestige over the field that they study. In this atmosphere, the participants understood going to university in their 20's as the necessary course that they had to follow, and consequently, they had no desire to study, nor in many cases, even interest in their field of study.

Therefore, for many participants, returning to school as non-traditional students was the first voluntary choice to study. So this choice changed their attitudes toward study and they perceived this as very meaningful to them. Jeawon said, "It's the feeling of being a freshman full of discretion. Unlike my first time in college, I went to school in this time with the strong need to study hard." Jookyung also pointed out her active attitude toward study that she had not had before. She said,

It is quite different. Before I was absent from school so many times, but now I am never absent...I myself started to study and I myself wanted to do it. So I become very active in studying and study very hard.

Their voluntary choice to study helped them to study hard. Yoosun, who entered to school with the primary motivation of studying the violin further, studied more energetically. In order to get more lessons from professors, she registered for more credits than were required. Dahee also participated in many extra-curricular courses, such as special lectures, thinking “I will acquire as much as I can while I attend school”

For some participants, the condition of being housewife students also caused them to study hard. Youngran and Soshin realized they did not have enough time to study at home due to their roles as housewives. So Youngran pursued the maximum benefit of the time she had at school. Soshin also tried her best to concentrate on her classes.

In addition to studying harder and more actively, the participants’ goals had also changed. Before, they prioritized getting a degree, but now they studied for the sake of learning. Thus, many of them underscored the joy of learning itself. Jookyung, Meejin, Dahee, Heajong, and Song-eun shared similar opinions, such as, “I just like studying itself. I like learning what I didn’t know before;” “I’m just happy to learn. I’m so pleased with learning something new;” “I have the pleasure to get to know about the history and culture of Korea;” “I began to study to get a professional job, but now I’m studying because of the joy of studying.”

The joy they found in of learning led them to be self-directed learners. Jookyung was the representative example of it. As she studied, she discovered an interest in dye-making. So throughout the semester that she took the dyeing course, she conducted

experiments in a laboratory by herself in order to satisfy her curiosity beyond the course requirement, and she finally acquired tremendous results. She remembered this as the happiest time in her study. She said,

Ah, I am studying this because of the joy of studying what I want to study.

When I think this, I become so happy.... This is not studying for getting a job or a degree. Rather, this is studying for the sake of learning something new.

Yunoo, too, mentioned her changed attitude toward studying: "I went to school with the intention of studying hard this time, so I voluntarily look for what I want to know rather than studying only for good grades." With this attitude, Yoosun, who majors in music, also was not stressed by her mistakes in her performances or bothered by comparing herself with other younger classmates. Rather, she was satisfied with the fact that she completed her performance or was pleased when improved.

Moreover, the participants pointed out the pleasure in studying what they had wanted to study as one of their meaningful experiences. Yoosun frequently mentioned, "I am happy to study violin, what I like," and "I am so satisfied with studying what I wanted to study." Jookyung also shared, "I feel interest in studying what I wanted to do." Hyunsoo followed them, too: "Even though it is hard to study, I enjoy it because I am doing what I was eager to do. In particular, Youngran, who had failed to study clinical psychology once and had an opportunity to study it later, said, "I feel ecstasy while I am studying. Ah, I longed to study this and finally I am studying what I wanted to study." They shared that they could endure the difficulty in studying because of this joy.

Changes Resulting from the Experience

In the previous sections, I examined why the participants in this study returned to school and what made their experiences of returning to school meaningful. Next, I will discuss how they have changed as a result of their experiences. Three themes emerged: Happiness and satisfaction with their lives, new possibilities and hope for the future, and new identity.

Happiness and Satisfaction with Their Lives

Most of participants in this study indicated happiness and satisfaction with their lives as the primary change they experienced since returning to school. They said, “I live more pleasantly;” “I become cheerful;” “My husband says I’m getting better. [He says] I laugh more frequently;” “I am so satisfied with my life and myself;” “I’m so happy. I feel the real joy of living, something like this;” “I love this life. I’m so satisfied with it. I can’t return [to the life I had before;] “I’m getting better. I feel much more desire to live than before. My mind is overflowing with joy.”

The happiness and increased satisfaction with their lives stem from the fact that the participants began to engage in the life they wanted to lead. The participants were dissatisfied with their lives as full-time housewives and yearned to restore themselves as independent beings. Considering returning to school as a breakthrough from their dissatisfaction, they went to school and experienced acting as individuals at school. Therefore, they were pleased with being able to restore themselves as individuals. Song-eun, who was delighted with having her own activity in addition to housework after returning to school, said that the activity made her a more pleasant person. She said, “[I am glad that] I’m making an effort to be different from the full-time housewives. I’m

satisfied that I make progress....Umm-, [I am proud that] I am preparing for my future specifically.”

Yunoo, who never enjoyed housework and thought it was what she was the least suited for, also shared, “Because I didn’t like being a full-time housewife, having something else to do makes me satisfied.” Jookyung, who returned to school in order to find her own lifelong activity, also said that she was pleased with having her own activity and an escape from childcare.

Soshin, who never wanted to live as a full-time housewife because in her mind a housewife was financially dependent and thus could not live as she wanted, explained what made her so happy: “I can endure no matter how hard it [life of housewife student] is because I’m glad. When I think about being financially independent in my future while working at a job I like, I can endure sleeping less. That is nothing for me.” Youngran also stated the joy of pursuing what she gave up for her children: “The most important thing is the sense of being alive, the sense that I am restoring myself. To bring back the dream I gave up, the study I stopped, and the job I sacrificed makes me feel I’m alive.”

Hana also shared her satisfaction with her improved attitude toward her husband. She explained what caused this change in her mind:

The most important thing is I am not in the situation [any more] that I don’t want to be in....He [my husband] was the very person who made me fell in the unwanted situation. So I strongly thought that he had to be responsible for making me happy. But now, my situation is what I make.

I make it according to my desire and my will even though it is hard. And I'm doing what I want.

For some participants, the happiness and satisfaction with their lives were based on the fact that they finally accomplished what they had dreamed. Yoosun said,

When I began to learn the violin in adulthood, I vaguely dreamed to go to school [to study it.] And one day, I found myself going to school. Then, I dreamed to be a member of an orchestra, and I found myself playing the violin sitting in the orchestra...I've accomplished what I had dreamed!

That's the reason why I'm so glad.

Youngran also said that she achieved her dream after returning to school: "Being a clinical psychologist was my dream, and it was accomplished. I love it so much."

Heajong, whose dream was "to be a member of a team in a company and work on a project actively and creatively" also stated,

I am achieving my dream little by little now. Working as a member of the student organization, I do research and make a plan, representing my opinions....Now in this organization, I'm working vigorously and coming up with something."

Likewise, Soshin, who desired to find the job that fit her aptitudes and to work energetically, underscored the joy of starting off her old dream: "I am so glad that I've finally found what I can do well and have embarked on it." She added, "I'm happy that I am implementing what I have planned for a long time in my life, thinking I will do it [study] someday."

New Possibilities and Hope for the Future

Almost all participants in this study agreed that having new possibilities and hope for their future was the representative change they experienced since returning to school. They had vague future plans or dreams before returning to school, and the plans and dreams became concrete and clear through their schooling. Hyunsoo, who majored in early child education with the plan to manage a childcare center some day, had many classmates who were teachers and principals of kindergartens and gained important and substantial information from them, such as how to manage a kindergarten, the activities that receive a good response from children and their parents, the points to consider when starting a kindergarten, the effective way to manage tuition and so on. This helped her to make concrete her dream of managing a daycare center. She said,

Because they are incumbent teachers, I can get the ‘effects of current teaching’ from them even though I don’t teach. I wanted to build a model of my work based on what I heard from them, and there are many role models for me to set a future plan.

Youngran, who came to school with the dream of working as clinical psychologist, mentioned her dream “was very vague before going to school.” At that time, she just wished to be a clinical psychologist, but she knew neither how to begin nor where she could do it. After staying at home for several years as a full-time housewife, she lost confidence in her ability. However, once she started school, she gained confidence after receiving good grades and recognition from professors. In particular, she met a person at school who helped her dream become more concrete and feasible. While she worked as a representative of master’s students, she came to know a representative of doctoral

students who was a clinical psychologist in a hospital. Recognizing her, the psychologist provided her various opportunities to accumulate actual experiences in her field, and finally helped her to be hired as an intern in her hospital. That is, for her, school was the place to network with people in the field she was interested in. About this, she mentioned, “Before once I started school, I was so vague. But once going to school, I could meet many people. And as I met them, my way became clear.” This process consequently made her vague dream of being a clinical psychologist “more concrete and feasible.” The process also helped her to “be sure about her future career.”

Hana, who majors in women’s studies, also had a vague expectation of employment when going to school. She thought, “Going to school will be better for my chances of employment than staying at home.” So when she found after going to school that the possibility was much lower than her expectation, she was very disappointed. But when she joined a consciousness-raising group for full-time housewives which addressed their problems and difficulties and sought solutions, she began to open new eyes to a promising future career. She said,

I’m confident I can do something later even though I’m not sure what it is now. Now we’re thinking about developing an educational program and selling it....For example, we’re developing educational program for parents. We don’t have to do all the lectures, but arrange guest speakers. Also, we’re developing a sex education program, or program for the divorced or the children of the divorced. [We say] let’s make and sell this.

Likewise, even though she had a clear objective to be employed again, Song-eun did not have specific job in mind when she returned to school. She thought she might work for alternative education for teenagers outside school. She said,

The form of re-employment was very open for me. I didn't think I have to be hired only at a company or school, something like this. Rather, I thought I might work at something related to my concerns, alternative education....So I didn't have a fixed frame about re-employment. I thought I could work for something meaningful and valuable, and something that I could concentrate on.

Once she returned to school, she could network with other housewife students who had the same interests. With them, she could discuss their shared concerns, such as the interests in education of youth and the possibilities of getting jobs, and finally they had the opportunity to work on a project together about alternative education for teenagers outside the school. Thus, she perceived her acquaintance with these people as “the light” that would get rid of the “darkness” in her mind and shine toward her future career. She said,

Meeting people is also a light [because] this [adult education] is a new field that I haven't worked in. I think it is a light to meet people who work in this field, listen to them, and network with them....Knowing this kind of person is a light for me.

Working on the project provided her the opportunity to contact the students outside school, and then she found that the students were emotionally further from her than she expected. For example, the students were not comfortable with her, a married

woman in her mid-thirties and were more fond of single young undergraduate students. She also did not understand the words they used with one another. Discovering this, her interest began to expand toward education for women who wanted to be re-employed or restore themselves as she did. She explained, “Through the process of working on the project, I could objectively examine how much my interest in them [teenagers outside the school] was feasible, and it made me think that I might better work for education for women.”

In addition, some participants indicated that they gained new objectives for their future through their schooling and this made their future more hopeful. In their previous lives as full-time housewives, they did not have future plans or specific objectives in their lives. When they imagined their future, they just found that their future lives would not be very different from their current lives, except their children would grow. However, when they started school, their obscure objectives become clearer and more concrete, and in the process, they also gained new objectives or visions of what they might be. The existence of new goals in their lives challenged them and made them hopeful about their prospects. In other words, they found their lives were quite different from their previous lives. Before, their lives were aimless without a specific direction. But, now they actively directed their lives toward pursuing specific objectives, and thus they felt they were developing and alive.

Yoosun, who went to school to study violin, said that she had a new objective, being a member of a municipal orchestra, and it helped her be hopeful about her future. She said,

Once I achieved my objective [going to school,] I set an objective again of being a member of the orchestra.... When I set an objective, I also have hope to attain it someday.... I gain an objective and hope for my future. Also I'm hopeful that if I manage a music institute after graduation, it would be better than managing the art institute before.

Hyunsoo also increased her employability by getting a master's degree. She actually returned to school with the plan to manage a day care center. But after graduation, she was offered a professorship at a university. So she was considering two possibilities. By returning to school, she could get a job opportunity that she had never imagined before. Jookyung, who returned to an undergraduate school, found a specialization in her field that she was interested in, and she planned to study further. With this plan, she was admitted to graduate school, and she also aimed to complete a doctorate.

Youngran, who just got her master's degree and was doing a three-year internship course in order to be certified as a clinical psychologist, also said that she had "a vision." She said,

I'm in the first year of the internship and I've already made an agreement with a hospital where I will work next year. Even though I'm not sure where I can work in the third year, I am now on the course anyway. Then, I can get the certificate. I have this vision.

Accepting others' suggestion that a doctoral degree would help her get a job, she also gained another objective to get a doctoral degree. She said, "I've changed a lot. I have a very obvious objective. Before, I didn't. At that time, I just did housework like an

ordinary housewife and spent time talking with other housewives. Now I've changed a lot."

While Youngran was assured by her internship, Dahee modified her plan to be a middle or high school teacher after her internship experience. While working as an intern, she discovered the poor working conditions of teachers and the low rewards that came to the teachers in spite of their hard work. So she decided not to become a teacher, and she instead discovered a new possibility for her future. Actually she had done private tutoring for a long time, but she thought "it was neither stable nor recognized as a job in this society." So she looked for a formal job that could guarantee stability, and school teacher was the only job she could apply for at her age and degree of experience.

Because she thought "there was no way but this [school teacher]," she returned to school.

But as she attended school, she found that many English institutes and parents acknowledged her academic career and favored her as a private tutor. From this, her perception about private tutoring changed. She began to be confident that she could do private tutoring continuously as long as she wanted. She said, "Now I think that I can work continuously even though I don't teach at school. I think I may get job offer [from an English institute or parents.]" As she turned her focus to private tutoring again, she also found a high demand for private tutors who studied TESOL. Realizing that studying for a TESOL degree would make her more marketable, she set a new goal for herself—studying in a TESOL program. She said, "I'm thinking to study TESOL in two years or so when I may get tired of my daily life again." In conclusion, through her schooling, she changed her career plan after examining the real world of school teaching, found a new career possibility, and had a new objective to pursue for her career.

Unlike the above participants, Inea did not acquire any specific objective or plan for her career through schooling. In spite of this, her satisfaction and hope regarding her future were as high as other participants'. According to her, studying reading education prepared her to do many things, such as volunteer in a children's library, manage a children's bookstore, manage a 'home library,' or even be a good grandmother who reads books well to her grandchildren. She said that these increased possibilities of her future made her happy even though she was not sure if she would do any of them. She said, "I don't know exactly what to do among them in my future, but [it makes me happy that] what I can do or what I want to do has become concrete and my options have expanded." She added, "Even though I don't have an obvious objective, hope grows in my mind as I learn bit by bit. [I hope that] maybe I can do something at some time in my life."

In conclusion, experiencing that their vague objectives became concrete and they acquired new goals to pursue, the participants could have new possibilities and hope for their future since returning to school. When they lived as full-time housewives, they could not expect their future to be different. Once they quit their jobs and lived as full-time housewives, they could not dream of any other way of life except that of full-time housewife even though they wanted to escape from the life of full-time housewives. Thus, they considered that their previous lives were "darkness." After returning school, they were exhilarated by the fact that they could dream of a better future and have hope based on the fact they might have the life that they wanted. Hana explained this very clearly. She said, "Before, I didn't have a future. But now I have one....Now I don't think any more, 'it'll never be possible for me to be hired.' I'm pleased with having the possibility." Song-eun also said, "Before returning to school, I was in darkness. But now

I can see a light. I can work at something later....I can see the possibility to work at something after studying.”

Inea’s hope about her future also should be understood in the relation with her situation as full-time housewife. She explained,

Now I give up that I have to go into society, and I make much effort to be satisfied with and seek fruitfulness from being inside home. So it is my pleasure that I make myself a mother or grandmother who can read books well, not an ordinary housewife....I give up. I’m giving up what I envy of them [professional career women] little by little. Of course, I still envy of them. But I’m giving it up little by little, and [instead] I’m learning something new in order to find what I can do, protecting my home simultaneously. After completing reading education, I will study something else....Even though I haven’t decided what to study yet, I want to study what I don’t know one by one. I’m so pleased with my thought itself that I want to study something.

That is, what she considered happiness and hope was to have more possibilities to construct herself. Before returning to school, she was dissatisfied that she was just a full-time housewife. But “there was no work to do” and she “didn’t have courage and ability to work” at that time. Thus, she just regretted that she had not prepared to be a professional career women in her twenties, and her dissatisfaction about herself become severe. In this helpless situation, her schooling provided her “a breakthrough” from her helplessness and suggested possibilities for her future. This is the reason why she was happy just to have a vision for her future regardless of the feasibility of it.

New Identity

The participants in this study underscored that their educational experiences influenced them to construct a new identity. This “new identity” has three dimensions which can be characterized as enhanced self-confidence, improved self-esteem, and heightened critical consciousness.

Enhanced self-confidence. Most participants indicated that restoring self-confidence was the one of the most significant changes they experience as a result of returning to school. Before returning to school, the participants in this study doubted their academic ability. However, as mentioned in the “experiences” section, most participants in this study enjoyed the new opportunity to study and studied hard and actively. Consequently, they got good results from hard work. Some ranked at the top of their class, and some received scholarships as a result of their high grades. The participants were thrilled that they did better than younger students, thinking, “I’m still able to study,” “I’m not rusty yet,” “I can still study well,” “At least, I’m not behind them [younger classmates].” “I can do well if I study hard.” That is, with high achievement, they began to restore their confidence in their academic ability and in themselves as well. Youngran, who had lost confidence even though she had gotten a master’s degree and studied very well in her 20s, exemplified the position of the other participants. She said,

I lost confidence after almost ten years of housewife’s life. But, once I started going to school and achieving to some extent, I came to have confidence, ‘Ah, I’m able and I can do anything if I make up my mind to do.’ [Because I’m older and married women with children,] I may have bad situation [to work as a clinical psychologist]. But now I’m confident

to do as much as others [classmates] do even though I'm older than they are and have children.

Dahee, who majors in English education, also mentioned that she gained self-confidence from her experiences at school. She found at school that she "already had potential ability in English and the ability was cultivated by going to school." Thus, now she thought, "I can do very well if I intend to." She said,

Before, I vaguely thought that I had to study hard. But now I know that I have capability, and the ability will improved a lot more if I study abroad later. Then, after that, I'm sure that another job opportunity will wait for me.

In addition, some participants gained confidence in their future lives after going to school. Soshin, who was finally working towards a career in which she could cultivate her abilities, shared how it influenced her to recover confidence in her economic ability.

Because I earned money working at a job that I didn't like and I didn't want to do for the rest of my life, I couldn't be sure how long I could do it. So I couldn't be confident in my economic ability before....But now I can earn money by doing the job I want. So I can do it my whole life. Thus, I can have confidence in my life that I will do this job and earn money for the rest of my life.

Thus, she was proud that she "can take care of my family's basic financial needs," and "I can be responsible for my life by myself, not depending on my husband or my parents-in-law." This confidence based on her economic ability changed her attitude regarding her

parents-in-law. Before, she just obeyed the opinions of her parents-in-law even though she did not agree with them because of the instability of her job. She said,

Because I was working at a job that I didn't want to do the rest of my life, I might have had to depend on them [parents-in-law] later if something serious happened but I quit my job. So I couldn't insist on my opinion against them....But now I'm confident in being able to make a living. So I don't follow whatever they want, but keep doing on what I want.

Actually, her going to school was her first opposition to her parents-in-law. She prepared for the college entrance examination secretly and told them she was going to school only after being admitted. They strongly objected to it, but because of her confidence, she insisted on returning to school. She said, "Because of the thought that I could make my own living after graduation, I could be courageous [to insist on what I want.]"

Dahee, who found herself in high demand as a private tutor and was assured she could work as long as she wanted to, also acquired confidence about her future life. She said,

I'm not afraid of my future anymore. I'm confident that I can overcome any troubles....If I face the very economically difficult situation, I can make a living. And I can live proudly following the way of my life, whether others agree my choices or not.

At school, she found that her unique thoughts were supported by theories in her field, and this made her trust herself, thinking, "My thoughts aren't basically strange." She mentioned how her perception of herself changed:

I think I am a person of basically good quality and I am well prepared. ...

When thinking objectively, I am the person who strives very hard. Also I am smart and sincere....I think those are the most important to things [to succeed,] and I found at school that I have those.

In turn, the trust in herself strongly influenced her to “be brave, enterprising, and challenging” and “not to fear the world any more.” She said,

Now I worry less about the possibility of failure. If I run a small restaurant, I may lose all the money I invest and close it. In spite of that, the idea that I can do it successfully overwhelms me. Before, I couldn’t think this, being frightened. But now I’m thinking that no matter what I do, whether I run a restaurant or something else, I can do it well.

Song-eun also shared that she thought, “Going to school was a good decision because it helped me to recover confidence.” By getting pregnant unexpectedly, she fell into the situation of being a full-time housewife and lost the opportunity to return to her workplace. In this situation, she was frustrated by the limited possibilities to return to the workforce. Mentioning “If I stayed as a full-time housewife continuously, I would be really hopeless,” she explained about her confidence:

[I gained the confidence that] I can go into the world again. [The

confidence is that] I can have the place to go outside the home. Um...

How can I say? I gained the confidence that] I can make my position in the world outside the home, not inside the home [or] I can make a position for myself in this society.

That is, as mentioned in the “motivation” section, she understood getting a job as having a place in society where she could act as an individual and she was eager to have it. Thus, returning to school provided her better employability, and it helped her to gain self-confidence.

Hana also mentioned she “gained the strength to live” after seriously considering divorce. When she decided to go to school, her husband and in-laws strongly objected to it, but she confronted the objection and pushed on. Because of this, during her second semester, her husband requested a divorce, and she seriously considered it. In this situation, having classmates who listened to her and supported her helped her make a decision, and she finally gained the self-confidence that “now I know how to overcome any difficulties no matter what situation I will face.” Pointing out that full-time housewives usually did not pursue what they wanted when facing objection from their family members and they gave up as soon as they anticipated the objection, she explained the strength she gained.

I gained the strength to keep doing what I want to do even though they [her husband and in-laws] don’t like it. It doesn’t mean I will insist on what I want, ignoring whether they agree or not. Rather, it is the strength that I won’t be influenced by them and, if possible, I can make them like what I like. Even though I try to persuade them to like what I like, but if they still don’t, I will give them up and just pursue what I want.

While most participants in this study reported that they restored self-confidence through the experience of schooling, Meejin complained about losing her confidence. According to her, she had to compromise her desires in order to be faithful to the roles of

wife and mother. In order to be with her husband who went abroad for his one-year training, she quit her job. Then, in order to have and raise her child, she quit her job again and went to school as an alternative. While attending school, she found a new possibility for her future: to study further for a doctorate and be a professor. But her husband strongly objected to her new career plan, wanting her to be an ordinary housewife. Through this compromising process, she found herself turning away from what she really is and in turn, and she lost the confidence to overcome the objection. She said,

Now I'm frustrated a lot with myself. Even though I tried to pursue what I wanted, nothing has gone well so far. 'Yes, [as he said,] I'm not smart enough to study. If I was smart, I would already have achieved something great. And there is no guarantee of being a professor after getting a doctorate. When I think about these things, I lose my confidence.

Feeling sorry about losing her confidence, she mentioned, "my marriage made me lose confidence. [While adjusting to the condition,] I finally lost confidence in myself."

Improved self-esteem. One of the most representative changes the participants faced after returning to the university was that they improved self-respect by possessing the identity of student and felt a sense of belonging. Interestingly, Jeawon, who attended the open university and thus mostly studied by herself, felt a sense of belonging as well as other participants who physically attended school. She described how she it happened:

In addition to going to school to take the exams, I felt a sense of belonging when seeing my student card, seeing my textbooks in the room, and receiving a school newspaper once a week. Before, I just received a credit

care statement, but now receiving the newspaper, I thought, “there is a letter to me which my name printed on it.” From this, I felt a sense of belonging.

And from the identity and sense of belonging, they felt pride in themselves. Song-eun mentioned,

[It is meaningful for me] to have a sense of belonging. [It is meaningful for me that] I’m not a just mother of Jinsu [name of her son], and I have my organization and belong to it. When I register for a club on the internet, for example, I’m more proud of filling in ‘student’ in the blank of occupation, not ‘housewife.’

Meejin and Hana also shared the same feeling. Meejin said, “When I fill out a form, I can write ‘student.’ When I go to a meeting with my husband, I can say proudly, ‘I’m studying in graduate school.’” Yunoo, too, underscored the importance of “acquiring a sense of belonging” and “getting the title of student” since going to school.

Song-eun explained why she felt pride in her sense of belonging. She said, Our society devalues the period that I lived as full-time housewife and the behaviors that I had as full-time housewife. So it was easier for me to find a place where I can formally belong rather than to overcome the devaluation in this social circumstance.

As mentioned before, most participants in this study perceived that as full-time housewives, they were looked down on in society, and thus, they felt inferior, comparing themselves to professional career women. Therefore, when they became students and belonged something outside the home like career women, this negative perception about

themselves disappeared, and they became proud of themselves, thinking “I’m not a full-time housewife any more.” Youngran’s following description supported this:

Attending one of the prestigious graduate schools itself makes me feel proud. When I get together with other full-time housewives, I think, ‘You are just doing housework at home, but I study. I’m different from you. I’m studying in graduate school.’ I always have this thought...It’s like the feeling that I am very distinguished and I’m so able.

Thus, she “became full of pride, the pride that career women have.” Jeawon also shared this feeling. When she came across one of her neighbors, and the neighbor asked her to have a coffee at her home, she refused on the pretext of studying, feeling conceited. She thought, “I’m different from you. You will spend idle hours at home watching TV, but I will study.”

Just as they were proud of themselves because being a student meant they were no longer full-time housewives, when they graduated, they felt sorry to go back to being full-time housewives. Yunoo, who was in her final semester and hoped to work as a volunteer in a research center, revealed this feeling:

Once I graduate, I seem to feel emptiness. Even though I graduate, it isn’t for me to get the professional job that I want right away. Then, the sense of belonging will disappear, and I will be a housewife again in the long run....After passing the defense, I seem to feel emptiness.

In addition, the fact of studying itself helped the participants to have a positive self-perception and raise their self-esteem. Yunoo counted breaking out of her depression as the most significant change that she experienced since returning school.

She suffered from depression because she thought she could do neither housework well nor childcare, even though those were her only jobs. The thought that she did not do anything well and in spite of it, she did not have the ability to escape that role made her suffer from “self-hatred.” But now she said that she had “an excuse” not to be a good housewife. She explained, “Because I study, I can neglect doing housework somewhat. Because I study, I less feel sorry not to do everything perfectly for my child.

Hyunsoo also shared that restoring her self-respect was the most meaningful change for her. Because she first went to a two-year college and then transferred to a four-year college, she could not feel proud about her education. Thus, getting a graduate degree enabled her to be proud of her education. She said, “Before, I had to mention the names of two colleges, but now I can say only one.” She also began to evaluate herself positively, thinking, “I accomplished my thesis and get a master’s degree. I am the person who is able to do these things.” These thoughts helped her to “be full of pride” about herself. Her raised self-respect resulted in overcoming the “disheartened life” she had lived before. Before returning to school, she had very low self-esteem. She said, “When I was a full-time housewife, I thought that I was the only person who didn’t know things.” So, for example, when her husband commented about something she did not know, she perceived that only she did not know what he was talking about and thus got disheartened. But now she understands that everybody does not know everything. So, she accepts other’s comments without shame for her ignorance and also proudly says what she knows to others, too. Inea mentioned that her studying helped her to think, “I don’t live a silly life.” She said, “I’m studying something even though it isn’t great....It is much better than reading magazines.” That is, perceiving studying as “accumulating

knowledge,” she was satisfied with the fact that she was doing something valuable, and this raised her self-esteem.

As a result of improved their self-respect and self-esteem, the participants began to spend money on themselves. Jeawon mentioned that having the desire to spend money on herself was a significant change for her. Before returning to school, she spent money only for her family members, thinking “If I don’t buy it [for myself,] I can teach my children one more thing [with the money.]” However, after going to school, she gained the identity as student, and this identity justified her spending money on herself. She said,

I don’t think anymore it is wasteful to spend money on myself. I must not think buying textbooks is wasteful because I am a student....Now I willingly invest money in buying what I need to study and go to school, such as clothes, bags, or accessories. It is a very bold investment for me because I never did that before.

Youngran also shared her poor perception about herself related to spending money. She said,

Before, I only existed to sacrifice. It was my role to never spend money on myself....[I thought that] my husband were deserved to spend money because he earned money, but I didn’t have the right even though I managed the money.

Thus, like Jeawon, she managed her finances only for her husband and children. However, after going to school, her opinion changed completely, and spending money on herself became a natural thing for her. She explained how her opinion changed.

I am one member of my family and I work enough to spend money for myself, in fact. So, as my husband uses money for himself, I am qualified to use money for myself...Even though my husband earns money, I have the right to spend money.

She evaluated this changed: “Before, I got so disheartened that I couldn’t buy even a pair of panties for myself. But now I think that I don’t have to live like that. And I’m more proud of myself, and I take care of myself.”

Heightened critical consciousness. As a result of their experiences at school, the participants in this study became more critical thinkers. First of all, some participants experienced that by having their activities, they segregated themselves from their family members and the focus of their main concerns changed from their family members to themselves. Yunoo was the representative case. Before returning to school, she identified herself with her family members and took care of them in every detail, thinking that was the way to be a faithful housewife. For example, she chose what her daughter wore every morning and she drove her husband to his office because she did not like him to be late. However, after having her own activity since beginning her schooling, she began to separate herself from her family and to loosen her control of her husband and daughter’s lives. She showed how her perspective about her daughter had changed when she analyzed a fight they had had over her daughter’s clothing: “I tried to make her do as I wanted, not recognizing her as another individual....Now I’m wondering why I insisted on my way against her, not letting her wear the clothes as she wanted.” Heajong also mentioned having a better relationship with her children caused by shifting her concerns to herself. She said, “Before, the core of my life was my children, so I demanded many

things of them, such as ‘Study more.’...But as I go out, my demands are decreasing and I fight with them less.” Yunoo shared that her attitude toward her husband also changed as a result of returning to school. She said,

[Before,] I pointed out his problem and expected him to correct them. But he didn’t, and my dissatisfactions accumulated. But now I neither say anything about it nor have time to notice it. And it occurred to me that it isn’t as important as I thought before. He has his work to do, and I have my work to do. Even though he doesn’t do his work, I don’t mind because it is his responsibility, and I will take care of mine.

Hana, too, stated her relationship to her husband changed. She said,

Before, because I wanted him to follow me, I was displeased with his weak will. But after I accepted that his life is something separate from my life and that we partly share each other’s life, I became generous about his weakness and rather turned my eyes to his strengths.

That is, she began to understand the relationship between couples as “sharing life” between two independent individuals. As a result of this changed attitude regarding her husband, his relationship to her changed from “the person who I wanted to rely on” to “a friend.” She pointed out that her enlarging understanding about others through her studying gave her a new perspective on her husband. She said, “When I see my husband objectively as a human being, I can surely understand him and even sympathize with him.”

In addition, some participants reported that their experiences in school gave them a new perception of full-time housewives. In her thirties, Heajong was distressed that she

did nothing except housework whereas her career women friends achieved something meaningful. While managing an internet club for housewives whose motto was “awakening housewives and forward-thinking housewives,” however, she discovered that many full-time housewives suffered from the same problem she had. She stated, “Many of them said that they were inferior when comparing themselves with career women.... They suffered from the loss of their identity, as I did.” Because she belonged to an older group in the community, she gave advice to them, saying “I experienced the same trouble as you. You must not let yourself feel inferior. And this process of advising them influenced her to have a new perception of them. She explained,

Listening to the sufferings of full-time housewives, I awakened a lot.

“Ah, there are many people who think like me.”...Because I already experienced that and I’m older than them, I advised them, “Don’t neglect your work because it isn’t paid. Don’t think your husband’s salary is the result of only his work. Think that 70% of it is the result of your contribution in working at home.”...In advising them, my opinion [about full-time housewives] was firmly established.

The participants developed a more positive view of full-time housewives than they had held before. For example, Hana had thought that she was good at studying, and thus, she was very disappointed and felt inferior when finding that she could not compete with young single students. And she was furious when realizing that being a housewife was the cause of her low achievement. Thus, in the beginning of her schooling, she considered her housewife state very negatively. However, in participating in a

consciousness group for housewives, she discovered that the experience of being a housewife could be a benefit to her in other ways. She explained,

I always say we [housewives] have to approach things in a different way. While young single students achieve by studying hard, we have to achieve by making a different paradigm that connects our study and our life experiences as housewives....For example, when making a car, people usually make it based on the size of the adult male. But if we make it, we can consider the female and children and making a better car for them.

She added, “[I can’t compete with single students in studying.] But instead I have experiences that they don’t know because they aren’t married. I’m so confident in having the knowledge I have.”

In addition to solving the personal conflicts and problems that they faced because they were women, some participants began to understand women’s problems as a matter of social structure. Hyunsoo mentioned that she realized after returning to school that the childcare centers were scarce in society. Because she attended a seasonal university, she attended only one week per semester. Even though the period of attending was very short, she found that many classmates were busy finding someone to take care of their children. Watching that they sent their children to their parents’ or sisters’ home driving several hours, she found, “The childcare centers that parents can send their children to with trust are absolutely limited” and “women in this society face a very hard environment to work outside the home.” That is, she felt keenly, “the necessity of the social structure that solves the childcare problems of career women.”

Hana also mentioned her awareness of social structure that oppresses women, observing that her brother-in-law's student life was absolutely different from hers. In the hostile atmosphere of her husband and parents-in-law, she had to come home no later than five in the afternoon and could not study until her daughter fell asleep. In contrast, he came from school to home late at night everyday and bragged to his wife, saying, "You don't know how hard this is for me!" Observing these differences and finding that she made good grades in the course that she invested much time in, she realized that her low achievement in her study was caused by the social structure that prohibited her from studying as much as her male counterparts, not her inability. She said,

Realizing that I could study well if my circumstances supported me, I'm so furious. The social structure that keeps me from studying well and that lowers my ability makes me so angry....[In spite of the different circumstances,] people evaluate me without considering the circumstances. Without considering them, they compare me and my brother-in-law, and compare me with single female students.

She also began to understand her husband's patriarchal attitude in the relation to the social structure. As a normal man in Korea, her husband believed that taking care of children was the basic role of women, and thus, he did not agree to send his daughter to a daycare center in order for his wife to attend school. For her, at that time, her husband was "the bad guy who did bad things to me." Thus, she "neither could nor wanted to understand him." However, now she understood that "I might do as he did if I were placed in his circumstances." That is, she discovered the patriarchal social system surrounding him, a male in Korea, and this finding changed her perception of her

husband. She said, “After understanding it [the social system,] I don’t expect him to act differently. Rather, I try to change his surroundings so that he can act differently.”

Moreover, some participants in this study reported their changed ways of thinking as the result of their schooling. Inea shared that after returning to school, she was somewhat freed from the fixed idea of happiness. For a long time, she was dissatisfied with her status as full-time housewife and envied of the recognition that career women gained from society. However, after finding pleasure from studying even though the study was not highly recognized by society, she began to build a new definition of happiness. She described,

Now I’m thinking that happiness isn’t necessarily achieved only when many people recognize me. Happiness can be gained when I’m satisfied with myself....Now I’m not studying in order to get the recognition from others. I think it is enough that I recognize myself, feel pleasure in myself, and am satisfied with myself.

That is, by her schooling, she quit her inner fight with herself,— why didn’t I prepare for being a career woman when I was college student – and began to reconcile with her present life.

Hana also revealed her “changed standard regarding success in society.” She said, “I found that I’m freed from the social standards that manipulate what men and women generally have to do or have to accomplish at certain ages.” According to her, she was influenced by social standards and followed them even though the standards were against her. However, now she had strength to persist in what she really wanted regardless of whether it fit the social code or not. She said,

[If I follow the social standard,] I have to play the roles of the good daughter-in-law and good wife. But now I'm thinking, "Why should it be a problem for me to be insulted by others because I don't follow them?"

Jookyung also mentioned that she was aware of the myth of childcare that was pervasive in Korea, the myth that only mothers should take care of their children. At first, she also believed this, but she soon found the difference between the belief and her real experience. She said,

It is usually said that it is good for babies always to be with their mother.

However, [the reason I came to think] it may not be true is that I sometimes disliked him and lost my temper with him unconsciously, when I stayed with my child all day long.

After experiencing this, she began to doubt the belief and thought, "Having my own time [separating from him] may be good for even him as well as me." In addition, like many Koreans, she did not want to send her son to a daycare center because she "felt uneasy to leave him in someone else's care." So when she began to go to school, she moved near her mother so that her mother could take care of him. However, she found that her son liked to go out and play with other children of his age. Thus, she tried sending him to a daycare center and found he was really happy to go there. From these experiences, her revised opinion regarding childcare was finally established. She said, "Now I think that I will send my child to a childcare center even though I'll live as full-time housewife later. I will send him there because by doing so, both of us can be happy."

Song-eun also shared that her ways of thinking changed from "product-oriented" to "human-oriented" since returning to school. According to her, she "was influenced a

lot by her father who was a worker in industrial society,” and when she got a job, she actually worked in “the competitive climate.” Thus, she “prioritized producing good results and getting good evaluations.” However, combined with her experiences of having children, her study helped her to concentrate on “people” and accepted “human-oriented” work as a higher level than “product oriented” work. She explained how her schooling caused this change: “My field of study centers on human, not competition....It is the study to serve for human’s basic desire of learning....Here, I’ve met the community in which people encourage one another, and I experienced how the encouragement brings better results.” As a result of this, her thought changed from “I have to fight and win” in her 20s to “That kind of fight is too short. I have to be enlightened first regarding human nature.”

Social and Cultural Context in Korea influencing Korean Reentry Women

So far, based on the interviews of the participants in this study, I have examined their motivations for returning to school, the meaning of the experiences they had after returning to school, and the significant changes that were caused by their experiences at school. In this section, I will discuss how the Korean social and cultural context influenced the above three factors – motivations, experiences, and changes. In other words, metaphorically speaking, the previous sections in this chapter were descriptions of each tree in a forest, and in this section, I will move back my focus and describe the forest itself.

Forced to be Full-Time Housewives

In chapter one, I introduced the characteristics of university-graduate women in Korea, which all the participants in this study shared. First, the participants attended

college or graduate school with sufficient financial and psychological support from their parents. After graduation, all the participants except Jeawon wanted to participate in the workforce, and they got jobs. But many of them quit their jobs around the time of their marriage or childbirth. Heajong left her job when she married because her in-laws objected to her working. Yunoo also quit her private tutoring when she married because her husband was supposed to study abroad. Inea and Song-eun reluctantly stopped working because there was no one to take care of their children. Meejin also left her job in order to have a child. Hyunsoo and Youngran voluntarily gave up their jobs in order to take care of their children. Whether they reluctantly or voluntarily stopped working, they lost their jobs because of the pervasive belief in Korea that children should be taken care of by their mothers.

For participants who quit their jobs for non family-related reasons, leaving their job was related to their perception of having a job. As university-graduated women in Korea generally thought, they perceived having a job as a way of cultivating their natural aptitudes, and thus they expected to pursue self-actualization through working. Soshin was the representative case. She worked as a stewardess, but she couldn't enjoy it because in her opinion, the work did not fit her natural aptitudes. She explained,

[From my working experiences,] I came to believe in the existence of aptitudes that are naturally inherited. If I can't find my aptitudes and just work whether I can do it well or not, killing time and receiving a salary, I think it is a waste of my life. Because of this idea, I was frequently anxious.

Yoosun, who managed a private art institute, was also frustrated when finding that most parents wanted her to teach music, dance, and language like other kindergartens, and thus she finally closed the institute, thinking that “there is no vision.” She mentioned, “[I closed the art institute because] it didn’t fit my aptitudes to manage it like a kindergarten. I didn’t like to do it. I wanted to teach only art.” Heajong, who worked as a kindergarten teacher, also quit her job for the same reason. She said, “While working at the kindergarten, I thought, ‘this didn’t fit my aptitudes. I have to do something else.’” She felt the same problem when she worked for a stock exchange, saying, “It didn’t fit my aptitude. I didn’t like dealing with numbers.” Because they perceived that a job was meaningful only when they cultivated their aptitudes and potentiality through it, when their job did not satisfy that requirement, they thought that doing that kind of job was “meaningless,” and they easily quit the job.

In addition, some participants left their jobs when they got tired of simple and repeated tasks. Dahee was the representative case. After graduation, she took a job with a foreign airline, but after six months, she found herself bored with her task. She said, “The work is too simple and the same. Just repeat and repeat. The same problems came up, the same solutions were needed, and the same English was used.” Tired of it, she concluded, “It is better to stay at home doing what I want to do than to do this meaningless work,” and “without any regret,” she quit her job when she got married. Jookyung, who worked in a department of computer software development, reported the same dissatisfaction. She expected to “feel a sense of accomplishment through doing creative and autonomous work,” but her job did not satisfy her expectation. “Being bored

with the work itself,” she finally quit her job. She explained what she expected from her job:

I love to feel the sense of accomplishment after developing something new....I expected it from the job, but I couldn't find any from it. If I could have overflowing joy after developing something or if I could have learned what I didn't know through the process of solving problems, I would have loved it. But because none of that happened, I wasn't interested in the work.

Jeawon, who worked as an announcer for a department store, also left her job after less than one year because she was “tired of” the work that “was monotonous and boring.” Announcing what somebody lost and chatting with other colleagues between the announcements, she was tired of the fact that “there was no work, and I wasn't busy.” She explained, “It might have been new for me everyday if the work had required my creativity.”

In conclusion, the participants who left their jobs for non-family-related reasons, perceived that a job should be creative and productive in order for them to get accomplishment and to develop themselves through working. The simple and repeated work was the critical factor that made them quit their jobs. Jookyung explained why she thought that she should quit her job even though the job provided relatively high pay and good working conditions:

If I had to earn money for my living, my job was quite an easy task.

However, at that time, I was young and frankly speaking, because I am a

woman, I could rely on my husband. So I strongly thought I had to do the work I wanted to do....So I decided to quit the job.

Another factor that influenced the participants to leave their jobs was gender discrimination against female workers in workplaces. Jookyung pointed out the lack of promotion possibility in her workforce as one of her reasons for quitting her job. She found that there was no precedent for a female department head and that only one unmarried female division head existed among about one hundred male division heads in her company. She also realized that division heads customarily stayed in their office until late at night regardless of whether they had work or not. Observing this, she concluded that she couldn't compete with the male workers who were fully supported by their wives in order to concentrate on their work, while she had to divide her time and energy between her family and work. She said,

Men can go home late because their role is head of the household. They are never pressured to come home early. Comparing myself to them, I concluded that I could not work as they do. In addition, if I can be promoted, I won't focus on only work, sacrificing my family, and I am not a career oriented woman who considered not getting married. Then, I figured I could work here for ten years at the most to seven or eight years at the least.

Thus, she concluded there was no vision in the job and quit it in order to find another job or activity that she could do for the rest of her life.

Inea also mentioned the atmosphere in which "married female workers could not work long" in her company. She explained about the atmosphere: "Because female

workers in my company usually did auxiliary work, most of them quit their job some time after they married.” In addition, male workers joked about married women who wanted to work further, saying, “Why don’t you quit your job and keep house?” So when she took maternity leave after having her first child, she heard the rumor that she would quit. This expectation regarding married female workers influenced her to resign.

Song-eun also experienced discrimination toward married female workers. Even though she wanted to return to her workplace after childbirth, she was refused with the reason that she was *ajumma*. She described,

[When I said that I wanted to return,] what they first mentioned was, “Then, who will take care of your child?” They added, “Why do you want to do a difficult job, instead of raising a child and managing a home, just receiving money from your husband?” And they said that there was no work for an *ajumma* to do. One producer said, “You know we don’t hire *ajumma* who can’t stay up all night.”

In conclusion, about two thirds of the participants in this study left their jobs because of their role as mothers and customary gender discrimination. In other words, they had to quit their jobs after having their first child because there was no one to take care of their children and, as Song-eun pointed out, there was no workplace that they could return to. Their resignation was based on the social code for married women, not on their own will. Because of that, they suffered from the conflict between their role as a mother and their desire to be an individual. Youngran, for example, voluntarily rejected every job offer in order to be responsible for her child and live as a full-time housewife. But she regretted that decision for a long time. She said,

[I was asking myself] “Can I give up myself? Even though I have a graduate degree and my career path is guaranteed, can I give up everything?” Sometimes, I reproached my child. Without her, I could go anywhere and do anything. I reproached her a lot, in fact.

After she lost her job, Song-eun also experienced the same suffering which was so severe that she even considered suicide. She explained,

Losing my job means losing myself. I can’t accept myself as a person who doesn’t work....People who were my assistants become main writers. While they’re doing well, I am just preparing lunch for my mother-in-law. My baby was pretty, but when I think about who I am and what I am doing now, I feel so depressed.

Hana, too, did not accept her imposed roles: “What made it more difficult for me was why I have to do this [housework.] People say mother’s sacrifice, something like that. I don’t want to sacrifice so, why do I need to sacrifice in the name of mother?” Meejin also complained about her husband who demanded that she live as a full-time housewife. She said,

Who acknowledges me when I give it [my career] up for my family members?...He never considers what I will be....Why do I have to focus on only my child, denying myself? Why does nobody recognize my life as valuable?

That is, Korean society forces women to be full-time mother and prescribes the lives of full-time housewives: they are to exist only as mother and

wives, repressing their desire to exist as individuals. Hana clearly described what this social restriction meant to her. She said,

Before I married, I was a daughter, a teacher, and a member of an organization that I joined, and people evaluated me, all of them. However, after I became a full-time housewife, people looked at me as a person who does only housework and ignores other things that compose myself. Even though I am more than a full-time housewife, they absolutely ignore my thoughts and my existence. When I compare myself with my husband, he has various dreams and thoughts, and those are not necessarily connected with his family. However, people evaluate me only based on my housework and childcare and evaluate me a bad mother and wife when I think of other things....There are basic rights that a human being has, such as the freedom to go out, freedom to read books, or freedom to say what I want to say. These basic rights are lost once [a woman] becomes a full-time housewife. It is not permitted for full-time housewives to be concerned with other things except housework and childcare....Society entirely determines the life of a full-time housewife, in particular, a full-time housewife with children, as the life of doing housework and taking care of children. Even though there are many things that make up my identity besides the roles of mother and wife, society binds them regardless of my will....The life of the *ajumma* is fully determined. Nobody understands I am Hana Lee, more than a mother and a wife.

What made it more difficult for the participants was the fact that the mother's role does not last. They stayed at home now in order to take care of their children, but within ten years, their children would not need their mothers as they do now. Therefore, they felt the necessity to prepare for that time, but they also knew that there was nothing for highly-educated and middle-aged full-time housewives to do. Many participants mentioned that their children would not need them after some time. In particular, Song-eun urgently felt the necessity from her mother's life. Her mother spent all her life taking care of her family members and in-laws. But when she entered her late forties, she became severely depressed and told her daughter, "I've lived for others, husband, sister-in-law, brothers-in-law, parents-in-law, and children so far. But nobody needs me any more.... Even though I've overworked, I lost myself. You should never live like me." Seeing her mother, Song-eun thought that her mother was the only person who could find what she lost. She said,

Observing my mother's suffering, I thought I should not live like that, and if so, I had to hold something of my own. Even though my family is important, if I cling to only them, they will feel me as a burden when they don't need me.

Jookyung also shared the same necessity of "preparing for the future in advance." She said, "I observed that it isn't easy for many mothers, who have only taken care of family members, to begin something professional for themselves when their family members leave them."

In short, not only were they dissatisfied with being full-time mothers faced to sacrifice themselves, but also, they knew that they could not be full-time mothers forever.

Therefore, they began to look for a “breakthrough” from the unsatisfying state of full-time housewives, and the breakthrough they found was returning to school.

Study as an Acceptable Escape

As mentioned above, Korean society prescribes the only way of life for married women: to be a mother and sacrifice their identity. In this situation in Korean society, returning to school is the easiest way for the full-time housewives to escape from their imposed roles. There are two reasons for this. First, in Korean society, there are few options for full-time housewives to choose from in order to restore their identity.

Youngran was clearly aware of the social structure that pushed married women to stay at home. She said, “This society doesn’t accept that full-time housewives do something [except their imposed roles.] It is said, ‘Why do *ajummas* try to do something outside the home? Just do housework.’” Thus, many participants in this study mentioned that returning to school was the “only possible way” for them. A couple of years later living as a full-time housewife, Song-eun tried to look for a job, and finally succeeded in getting a job. But she had to quit after only two months because she could not manage her life. Because the workplace was about two hours from her house, she left her home at about 7 a.m. and came back at 9 p.m., while leaving her children in a daycare center during that time. But her children could not endure that life. She said, “I couldn’t manage that life. After two months, I entirely gave up. At that time, I realized that what I can do best right now is study. I can’t work until my children grow.” Hana also mentioned returning to school was “the only way to break through” from the state of being a full-time housewife. Even though she wanted to get a job, her husband and in-laws neither understood her nor permitted her to send her child to a daycare center. She said, “I couldn’t even look for

jobs. In order to look for jobs, I had to go around to companies, but it was impossible to do that, bringing an infant. So I gave it up.” For Jeawon, who did not want to work, returning to school was also only possible way to avoid being a full-time housewife. She said,

Even though I wanted to find something of my own, there was nothing to do but study. I neither can nor want to work. I didn’t want to learn some hobby at a cultural center, either. I didn’t like physical exercise, so I didn’t want to do swimming or aerobics, either. Then, what could I do? Nothing but study.

The participants in this study showed interest in and confidence about studying, and the interest and confidence seemed to come from their high education. Hana mentioned that she “originally liked to study.”

In addition, the respect for scholarship in Korea society made returning to school the easiest breakthrough for full-time housewives. In Korean society, the scholar was traditionally respected more than farmers, engineers, or businessmen, and this social concept was strengthened as high education became the major way of social mobility during the social changes. The social concept that highly evaluates study was also represented in the comments of the participants. Jeawon, who called her desire to study as “the desire to scholarly learning,” described how she perceived study: “Studying is something honorable. Studying is recognized highly in this country. So studying can be considered something honorable. At least, it is more honorable than chatting.” Because of this perception regarding studying, that was the only thing that motivated her. She said, “What I’m interested in at least is to read books like scholars. That’s the reason

why I study. There is nothing but learning that I am interested in. Nothing but learning motivates me.” Heajong also perceived her studying as “scholarly learning” and was proud of having a “scholarly” field trip, distinguishing it from an ordinary trip. She mentioned,

At that time [when I began to return to school,] handcrafts were popular.

But I didn’t want to make something. I wanted to learn something scholarly....I wanted to listen to a scholarly lecture on philosophy, something like this.

Meejin, too, mentioned “reading books is something valuable,” and thus she liked “scholarly learning.” Inea also defined studying as “accumulating professional knowledge” and distinguished it from “just reading magazines.” Thus, she got more satisfaction from studying than doing physical exercise. She said, “Other physical exercise, such as golf or swimming, couldn’t give pleasure to me. Because I have yearning or envy for professional career women, I prefer intellectual and mental satisfaction.”

As the participants perceived studying as “scholarly learning,” for them, school, unlike a private institute, such as a cultural center at a department store or private English institute, was where scholarly learning took place. Jookyung mentioned she chose school, not a private institute, because at school, she could acquire “professional and approved knowledge.” She also thought that only at school, could she begin “scholarly learning in a formal way” and could learn about her field of study from “the foundation.” Jeawon also said that professors were quite different from instructors in an institute and described professors as the people whom “I can trust and respect the depth of their

scholarly knowledge.” Thus, she considered her professors as “people who accompany my scholarly learning.”

This social perception of studying also helped the participants to get approval from their family members. Jeawon’s mother and sister actively encouraged her to return to school, and her husband willingly took care of the children so that she could study when the examinations were near. She said, “I was reading books when my husband came home late at night. Then, he really liked it, saying that the wife who was reading a book was really beautiful.” Dahee and Yunoo also found that their husbands were very pleased that they were admitted to graduate school. Song-eun’s mother-in-law also accepted her schooling because she understood learning as valuable. Because of this social perception regarding study, Song-eun could say to her husband when she told him about going to graduate school, “It is better than indulging in dance or buying stocks.”

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. In order to understand the personal development that the Korean reentry women achieved, it is necessary to examine first what motivated them to return to school. The findings of this study revealed four categories of their motivations: getting a job, having their own meaningful activity, pursuing interest in learning, and escaping from state of being a full-time housewife.

Among their experiences of returning to school, the reentry women pointed out six experiences as meaningful. According to them, they re-established themselves as independent individuals, structured everyday life, gained recognition from others,

obtained a sense of accomplishment, enlarged their living area and met new people, and experienced the joy of learning.

These meaningful experiences transformed them from their former selves. As a result of their university attendance, they felt happiness and satisfaction with their current lives. They were also glad to have new possibilities and hope for the future. Most of all, they acquired a new identity; They enhanced their self-confidence, improved their self-esteem, and heightened their critical consciousness.

Finally, this study examined these three factors - motivation, experiences, and changes – of returning to school in relation to the Korean social context, revealing that the three factors are closely related to the reentry women's life experiences as full-time housewives. They were deeply frustrated by their lives as full-time housewives, and experienced a conflict between the socially prescribed role of mother and their independent identity. Thus, they returned to school in order to look for a way to solve this conflict. Respect for scholarly learning in Korean society enabled their returning to school as the socially legitimated breakthrough for the reentry women.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand how university attendance affects the personal development of highly-educated and middle class Korean reentry women. The constant comparative method of data analysis was applied to interviews conducted with 13 Korean middle class full-time housewives aged 25 to 45 who already had a Bachelor's degree and who enrolled as students at universities. In the previous chapter, I presented four categories of findings and their properties.

In the first category, the motivations of the participants for returning to school were addressed. These were grouped under four headings: getting a job, having their own meaningful activity, pursuing their interest in learning, and escaping from the state of being a full-time housewife.

The second category presented the meaning of the experiences that the participants had of returning to school. Among many experiences that they had after returning to school, they perceived the following six experiences as meaningful: Re-establishing themselves as independent individuals, structuring their everyday life, gaining recognition from others, obtaining a sense of accomplishment, enlarging their living area and meeting new people, and having the joy of learning.

The third category involved how the participants changed as a result of their experiences. First, happiness and satisfaction and their lives were raised after returning

to school. Second, they became more positive about their future by having new possibilities and hope for the future. Third, they established a new identity. Specifically, they enhanced their self-confidence, improved their self-esteem, and heightened their critical consciousness.

In the final category, the participants' return to school was examined in relation to the Korean social context. Being forced to be full-time housewives within social and cultural context in Korea, they sought a "breakthrough" from the unsatisfying state of being full-time housewives. And respect for studying in Korean society made their return to school as the acceptable escape.

Conclusions and Discussion of the Findings

In this chapter, I will present three primary conclusions based on the findings identified in Chapter Five, and then I will discuss the findings in light of the literature and research reviewed in Chapter 2. Finally, this chapter includes the implication for practice and the recommendations for future study. The three conclusions are as follows:

1. The restoration of a personal identity underlies the multiple motivations for returning to school.
2. Returning to school has a significant impact on the personal development of reentry women.
3. The Korean context both precipitates and shapes the experience of returning to school.

Conclusion One: The Restoration of Personal Identity Underlies the Multiple Motivations for Returning to School.

The participants in this study returned to the university for multiple reasons. In terms of their motivation, they were largely divided into two groups: a career-oriented group and a non-career-oriented group. About two thirds of the participants belonged to the “career-oriented group,” and they mentioned that they returned to school in order to be employed or to change careers. The other four participants belonged to a “non-career-oriented” group, and they reported that they wanted to have their own meaningful activity by returning to school.

When examining both motivations specifically, the participants in the career-oriented group considered getting a job as a way of having their own work in addition to their roles of mothers and wives. From their own experiences or observation of the lives of their mother’s generation, they found that a full-time housewife’s life is exclusively devoted to serving the family members’ needs as mother and wife, and they were fully aware that there was no room for them to exist as an independent human being. Thus, they felt conflicts between their prescribed duties and their inner desire for their development as a full human person, and finally they returned to school in order to get a job outside the home. This is the reason why they perceived having a job as obtaining their own work, their own time, and their own place. Therefore, the motivation of getting a job can be understood as the desire for development as a full human being.

This rationale is exactly the same as Betty Friedan’s “problem that has no name.” She asserted that contemporary women’s problem is “to limit their development as a full human person” by overvaluing their marriage and motherhood (Tong, 1998, p.26). She suggested that for their development, they “need to find meaningful work in the full-time, public workforce” (Tong, 1998, p. 26).

The participants in the non-career-oriented group experienced the same dissatisfaction with their lives as full-time housewives, and they wanted to develop themselves as full human beings, besides carrying on the roles of mother and wife. However, unlike the participants in the career-oriented group, they gave up employment or did not want to be employed. The career-oriented group usually returned to a graduate school or professional program in an undergraduate school, so they could anticipate a relatively high possibility of employment. However, the participants in the non-career-oriented group attended a university-affiliated lifelong education center or returned to liberal art program in undergraduate school, which provided a relatively lower possibility of getting a job. Thus, they wanted to pursue their personal development as a full human being by having their own meaningful activity, and for them, going to school itself was meaningful because it was an activity that they did as an individual, not as a mother or wife.

Whether the participants in this study wanted to get a job or to have their own meaningful activity by returning to school, what they fundamentally sought was the same: restoration of personal identity. In the Korean social context in which married women's lives are prescribed as only mother and wife, an attempt to restore personal identity requires the rejection of that prescribed social code. Therefore, the women who make this attempt are escaping from the state of being a full-time housewife.

In addition, the high education of the participants influenced them to choose to return to school. Because they were highly-educated, they were confident in and interested in learning. This is the reason why some participants in this study mentioned pursuing their interest in learning as the secondary motivation for returning to school.

In conclusion, the findings of this study about motivations suggest that refusing the pre-determined way of married women's lives and pursuing the restoration of personal identity were the proactive and primary motivations of the participants. And pursuing an interest in learning was understood as an auxiliary motivation they had when they considered how to achieve their goal.

The findings of previous research showed that reentry women in the U. S. mentioned vocational reasons as their primary motivation. Badenhop and Johansen (1980) found that better employment and dissatisfaction with job were some of important reasons for returning to school. Clayton and Smith (1987) also found that vocational motive was most important motivation among eight distinct motives. Padula (1994) who reviewed the research regarding reentry women from 1980 to 1990, concluded that a vocational motivation was found to be a primary reason for educational reentry.

On the other hand, reentry women in Korea generally reported personal development as their primary motivation. Cho (1988)'s study regarding adult female learners who attended university-affiliated lifelong education centers revealed that their highest motivation was for self-development or for being a more cultured person. Lee (1992) also found that increasing culture and participating in social activities were two of the major motivations for adult learners who participated in university-affiliated lifelong education centers. Kim (1995) who compared motivations between younger students and full-time housewives who participated in a lifelong education program, found that full-time housewives reported utilizing leisure and promoting culture as the primary motivations. Son (1997) had similar findings. According to her findings, the most

frequently chosen reason by adult female learners to return to university-affiliated lifelong education center was to become better informed and for personal enrichment.

Unlike previous research conducted in Korea, this study showed that reentry women reported multiple motivations, and getting a job was found to be as important as having one's own activity. Before collecting data, I also assumed that most reentry women turned their eyes to education as an alternative to getting employment. However, in fact, many participants in this study did not easily give up getting a job even though they were consciously or unconsciously forced to be a full-time housewife. They strongly believed that they could not be happy without having their own work and that they were the only person who should be responsible for their own lives. Therefore, they desperately looked for other ways to get a job, resisting the socially legitimate roles of married women.

I think this highlighting of the vocational motivation came from the particular characteristics of the participants in this study. All the previous research regarding Korean reentry women surveyed adult female learners in university-affiliated lifelong education centers. As I mentioned in Chapter One, university-affiliated lifelong education centers are not generally regarded as formal universities (Yoon, 1997), and people who attend the centers do not have high expectations of being employed. My study also showed the same result: The two participants who attended a lifelong education center out of thirteen chose the center as an alternative after giving up being employed. Unlike previous research, this study mostly dealt with reentry women who went to graduate and undergraduate school. Therefore, this study suggests that reentry

women who attend graduate school or undergraduate school have higher expectations of getting a job than those who attend a university-affiliated lifelong education center.

This study also contributed to the literature on reentry women's motivation by discovering a unique motivation of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women: escaping from the state of being full-time housewives. This motivation was never addressed in previous literature of motivation of reentry women in the U. S. and in Korea. As I mentioned above, the Korean social context that surrounds highly-educated and middle class full-time housewives has surely created this motivation. This shows how adult learners are significantly influenced by their social context, and in turn, it supports the notion that adult educators should be aware of the differences between each sub-group of reentry women.

Most of the research regarding reentry women in the U. S. has focused predominantly on Western White middle-class undergraduate students in universities (Padula, 1994). However, recent research has shown different motivations for different sub-groups of reentry women. Johnson-Bailey(1998), who focused on Black reentry women in higher education, also found that the motivation of Black reentry women was different from those of typical reentry women. According to her, the Black reentry women knew that the world was not being fair to them even though they achieved an advanced degree, so they did not expect that their degree would help them with their careers. Thus, they went to school in an attempt to better their lives and possibly the lives of their children. Nazario-Barrera (1997) also showed the different motivation of Puerto Rican women who return to higher education institutions as non-traditional students in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. She found that the main motivation of Puerto-Rican

reentry women to return to school was a result of a painful experience, such as divorce. Hammons-Bryner (1991)'s study, too, revealed the particular motivation of reentry women who came from low-income rural areas of the southeastern United States. She found that the desire to escape abusive men was their major motivation for returning to school. In conclusion, by showing the close relationship between motivation of adult learners and their social and cultural context, this study supports the importance of attending to the differences between different sub-groups of reentry women.

Conclusion Two: Returning to school has a significant impact on the personal development of reentry women.

The findings of this study suggest that as the result of their returning to school, the participants in this study achieved a much higher degree of personal development than they had initially anticipated. First, they had a new identity; they enhanced their self-confidence and self-respect. As has been found in previous research, because of the term out of school, the participants in this study doubted their academic ability before returning to school. However, as they got high achievement from their hard work, all but one participant began to restore their confidence in their academic ability, and thus, confidence in themselves. Being treated and recognized as an individual by others, they also acquired a positive self-image and began to see themselves as equal to their family members, not as an inferior "servant." In addition, after returning to school, the participants separated themselves from their family members and focused on their own concerns. They also understood better those who thought differently from them, discovered how the social structure caused women's problems, and followed their own

perspectives, refusing to accept the socially legitimated perception regarding happiness or women's roles.

These changes were not surprising and support the findings of previous research regarding the experiences of reentry women in the U.S. Karen (1990) found that reentry women shared an increased sense of competence and personal power. D'ortona (1991) demonstrated that reentry women experienced restored self-confidence and enhanced self-esteem as a result of their collegiate experience. She claimed that their restored confidence led them to view themselves as more assertive, self-confident, and empowered. Rifenburg (1995) found that reentry women acquired increased confidence, self-fulfillment, and self-worth. These changes, she said, led them to change their perception about themselves. Benson (1992) also found returning to school made a significant impact on the sense of self of reentry women. Desmond (1982) studied 40 women who were aged 27 to 48, were full-time students pursuing a bachelors degree in order to explore the nature of change and to describe patterns in the timing of life events. She found that college experience fostered an attitude change related to sex-roles.

Another change, enjoying happiness and satisfaction with their lives, was reported in the literature of reentry women in Korea, but not in the U. S. literature. Internal satisfaction (Lee, 1992) and having personal enjoyment and enrichment (Son, 1997) were reported as the primary changes of adult female learners who participated in a university-affiliated lifelong education center.

A new insight uncovered in this study is that as a result of returning to school, the participants got new possibilities and hope for the future. In Korean society, there are few opportunities for highly-educated married women, who interrupt their career for

childcare, to get jobs that are suited to their education. Therefore, before returning to school, the participants in this study most suffered from the fact that their future lives would not be very different from their current lives, except their children would grow. That is, they were frustrated by the lives of no hope and future dreams. However, after returning to school, they began to do something for themselves, and in the process, their vague objectives became more clear and they acquired a new vision of what they might be. Their lives had changed from the lives that flew aimlessly without a specific direction to the lives that moved toward a goal. In conclusion, this change, realizing new possibilities and hope for the future, came from the Korean social context surrounding highly-educated and middle class full-time housewives.

The development of the participants in this study is well explained by the adult development theory of Daloz, Kegan, and Mezirow. Daloz (1999) metaphorically expressed that adult development is a journey in which one leaves one's "old world" and heads for unknown "new worlds." According to him, the "old world" has the assumption that it possesses the sole truth and outsiders are wrong. Thus, the old world ignores knowledge of other truths or conflicting information and regards criticizing the existing authority of this world as standing against it. Consequently, people in this world are supposed to simply believe and follow the given traditions (Daloz, 1988a). On the other hand, the "new world" assumes that various multiple truths can exist simultaneously according to their contexts, and the world is maintained by the conscious choice and responsibility of its members. Thus, the world requires its people "to redefine the boundary between self and other, to reconstruct the meaning of legitimate, recognizing that those who differ from us may have valid reason for doing so" (1988a, p.237).

Comparing the two worlds, Daloz defined the growth of human beings as "[letting] go of old ways of seeing," embracing new understandings, and finally "[reframing and understanding] in a radically new way the meaning of the world they once knew" (1999, p. 27). Based on this definition of development, Daloz asserted that the purpose of learning is to introduce learners to the new world and help them cross over into the world so that they are "capable of dealing effectively with the complex, interdependent and diverse world in which we live" (1988a, p.237).

According to Kegan (1982) who explained human development as a perspective transformation of how we see ourselves in relation to others, people who live in this "old world" are the people who are in the third order, interpersonal stage, of his constructive development model. For the people in this stage, "psychological surround" is the most critical criterion in making decisions, so they believe and act based on what the psychological surround expects and wants them to do. Thus, they do not distinguish what they want from what others want them to be, and they never imagine the existence of a self who is in conflict with the voice of their psychological surround.

Many participants in this study lived in an "old world" or were in the "interpersonal stage." In that world, married women were already determined to live only as mothers and wives, serving the demands of their family members, and this way of life was regarded as absolute truth and goodness. Nobody questioned why they should follow it. Rather, people in that world believed that married women could be happy in motherhood. That is, in that world, being a good mother and developing oneself could not stand together, and thus, married women in that world were forced to think one was right and the other was wrong. Thus, the participants in this study gave up what they

really wanted – consciously or unconsciously – and behaved according to what their society required of them, confusing what they were supposed to do with what they wanted to do.

Jeanwon and Hyunsoo voluntarily followed the social norm. Thinking that motherhood was the most important thing and that being taken care of by their biological mother was best for children, Jeawon did not expect anything but to be a good mother. Hyunsoo also gave up her job after she got pregnant in order to do her best for her children. With the same thought, Heajong postponed her self-development until she could have her own time while her children went to school. Yunoo also remained a full-time housewife, even though she thought it was the work that least fit her aptitudes. Youngran gave up her guaranteed future after experiencing conflict between her career and her child. In short, as Kegan mentioned, they believed and acted based on what significant others expected them to do.

However, they found that, contrary to society's promise, they were not happy and were not satisfied with their lives as full-time housewives. They also found that society looked down on full-time housewives while regarding career women highly. From these experiences, they began to doubt the socially legitimated way of married women's life. Hyunsoo, who believed being a good mother and wife as the ideal image of married women, began to doubt her belief when observing that her classmates, who kept working after marriage, achieved high positions and acquired a high evaluation in society. She stated, "Watching them, I get angry and think that the life that I have dreamed of may be wrong." Being solely responsible for childcare for several years, Jeawon began to find her inner voice. She said, "I understand that my children are precious to me. However,

even though they are precious, strictly speaking, it is me who is the most important one. I wonder why I should live like this, sacrificing myself for them?” While thinking that her children were the most important for her, Heajong continuously suffered from the question, “Who am I? What am I doing now?” Youngran also suffered the same conflict. Even though she gave up her job, thinking, “I could not forsake my child for my own benefit,” she also struggled with the thought, “Can I give up myself? Even though I have a graduate degree and my career path is guaranteed, can I give up everything?” Yunoo also found that even though she made every effort to satisfy the demands of her husband and daughter, following the ideal model of married women, her family members did not welcome her “excessive interruption.” Feeling betrayed by them, she realized that her efforts were in vain and that she needed to live differently. That is, as Daloz (1988a, p.238) asserted, “out of the gap between old givens and new discoveries,” they found “an inner voice telling them their self is born.”

Facing the trigger of the inner voice, the participants responded by returning to school. And in school, they experienced a new world. In this world, they were called by their own names, not as someone’s mother, and were recognized as individuals by others. This world also provided various opportunities for them to obtain a sense of accomplishment. In addition, this new world provided them an opportunity to get acquainted with new and various people. In particular, in the new world, they could meet the people who understood and supported their thoughts and feelings.

These experiences made their voices stronger. In other words, the experiences helped them to move towards Kegan’s fourth order of consciousness, the institutional stage. In this stage, people separate themselves from their “context of interpersonalism”

and find “a sense of self” (Kegan, 1982, p. 100). They distinguish what they want from what they should do or what others want them to do. Many participants moved towards this stage through the experience of returning to school. Yunoo, who identified herself with her family members and took care of them in every detail, separated herself from her daughter and husband and understood them as “other individuals.” She began to think, “He has his work to do, and I have my work to do. Even though he doesn’t do his work, I don’t mind because it is his responsibility, and I will take care of mine.” In addition, she restored her voice. Before returning to school, she had become silent, just following the opinions of her husband or in-laws. But expressing her opinions in a class debate, she began to restore her own voice. Having her own room in her apartment after returning to school symbolizes this restoration of herself. These changes propelled her to follow her voice, refusing the socially ideal role of the married woman. In Korea, where two children was usually regarded as ideal number, she refused to have a second child, despite pressure from her in-laws and decided to pursue her career further.

This change can be explained by the women’s development theory asserted by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997). They insisted that women’s voice and quest for self are central to the development of women, and they propose “five different perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 3). According to them, subjective knowers are aware of “the existence of inner resources for knowing and valuing” and find self-truth inside them, so they rely on their own authority, not external authorities (Belenky et al., 1997, p.54). In other words, when they make decisions, they rely on their own experiences and intuitions and follow “what feels comfortable” to them

(Belenky et al., 1997, p.69). Also, they make an effort to find their “still small voice” and their newly discovered self (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 68).

Hana also distinguished between what society prescribed as right and what she wanted, and determined to persist in what she really wanted regardless of whether it fit the social code or not. She said that it was not a big deal any more for her to be blamed by others because she did not obey the social code. That is, now she found that enjoying happiness by satisfying her desires was more important. Inea also no longer accepted the socially defined “happiness.” Instead she created her own definition of it. Before, she had internalized the social perception of full-time housewives. So she evaluated herself as incompetent while comparing herself with professional career women, and she was not satisfied with herself. However, now she was freed from the fixed-idea about happiness, and built a new definition of it. That is, she rejected the belief that happiness can be achieved only when many people recognized her and rather felt happy when she was satisfied with herself. She found that she herself, not objective outer concepts, was the criteria of happiness. In conclusion, as Daloz (1988a, p. 236) asserted, the participants began to “distance themselves from their upbringing,” to ask questions about the givens of their culture, and to view the world from different perspectives by “[seeing] their values in a broader context.”

The development of some of the participants in this study could be explained by the Mezirow’s (1990b) development theory. From the study of re-entry programs for women in community colleges, he found that the perspective transformation was the major change in the personal development of the women participating in the programs (Mezirow, 1978). According to Mezirow, adults interpret their life experiences and make

meaning from them with their meaning perspectives in order to make sense of what happens in their lives. The meaning perspectives refer to “broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations” (Mezirow, 1994, p.223) and are formed by the way that adults grow up, the culture they live in, and what they have previously learned (Cranton, 1994). This perspective transformation is initiated when adults experience a “disorienting dilemma,” new experiences that cannot be resolved by their existing meaning perspective. Feeling conflicting crisis, they examine their assumptions and find the assumptions are distorted and invalid. In the process of critical assessment of their assumptions, they also recognize that others experience the similar process. This realization helps them to “[explore] options for forming new roles, relationships, or actions” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 321). And they formulate a plan of action, including four steps: “acquiring knowledge and skills, trying out new roles, renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships, and building competence and self-confidence” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 321). Finally, they reintegrate their new experiences based on the transformed perspective.

Hana’s experience of returning to school followed the perspective transformation. Her disorienting dilemma was prompted when she lost a job opportunity when another male candidate was hired instead of her. Because she was pregnant at that time, she had to give up finding another job. Losing the job opportunity made her shocked and frustrated. She felt that she was rejected by society. Also, she could not bear that as she lost her job, she had to be solely responsible for housework and childcare because she never wanted to be a full-time housewife. Experiencing sex-discrimination, she began to

doubt her assumption that she could get a job because of her ability regardless of gender. However, losing a job opportunity challenged this assumption. Recognizing that it happened because she was a “woman,” she became interested in women’s issues in Korea, and the new interest strongly influenced her to explore options of escaping from her unsatisfied full-time housewife’s life. As her option, she determined returning to school for three reasons: to be freed from her life binding childcare, to meet people with whom she could share her ideas, and to work for better conditions for her daughter, the next female generation. When she tried out a new role, a student, it caused strong opposition from her husband and in-laws. Because of her schooling, her husband even demanded divorce. In responding to this, she got support from other women who understood her thoughts and feelings. In the end, she succeeded negotiating new relationship with her family members and gained confidence that she could keep doing what she wanted to do even though others did not like it. She also learned the social structure suppressing women, and this helped her to understand why other women thought like that even though she did not agree with it.

Conclusion Three: The Korean context both precipitates the frustrating role of full-time housewife and shapes the solution.

The findings of this study suggest that the return to school of the participants was triggered by the deep frustration of full-time housewives, and the frustration was created by Korean social structure. According to previous literature, Korean women can be divided into three approximate generations: women in pre-industrialized society, women during industrialization, and women in an affluent and stable economy (Cho, 1987).

When considering the participants in this study in terms of the division, they were in their late 20s to early 40s, and thus they belong to the generation of the affluent society.

Women in the third generation shows high rate of university attendance. In Korea, university-graduated women accounted for 18% of total women aged over 25 in 2000 (Moon & Joo, 2001). However, the level of education in this group was proportionately higher in the younger ages. . Thus, the university-graduated women accounted for about 35% of women aged 30 to 34, and this rate is the third among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD) countries (Chang, 2001). Many women in the third generation have developed self-consciousness through education. The increasing number of working women and the introduction of women's studies in 1970s also fortified their self-consciousness. Many of them realized the false image of "good mother and wise wife" and found the necessity of having lifelong jobs in order to have autonomy and power to live as an independent individual (Chang, 1993; Cho, 2000; Lim & Chung, 1996). Most participants in this study shared the characteristics of the third generation. Except Jeawon and Hyunsoo who internalized the traditional mother, most of the participants wanted to get a job so that they could pursue their development by cultivating their natural aptitudes and ability in the process of carrying on creative and productive work.

In particular, some participants in this study were fully aware of the falseness of the praised mother's image in this society from their mothers' lives. They found that the sacrificing mothers were not welcomed by their family members as soon as their children did not need them, and if they did not prepare for a different way of life as an individual,

they would face a serious crisis. Thus, they refused to follow the traditional mother's image and desperately sought a job in order to have a life of their own.

However, Korean society, in which women's education level and employment rates are inversely proportional (Chang, 1993), could not satisfy the employment desires of the participants. They suffered from limited employment opportunities and the formal and informal gender discrimination that is pervasive in the workplace (Cho, 1992; Shin, 1998; Yum, 1998). Specifically, because of the limited employment opportunities, they could not get a job in which they applied what they learned at university, but had to accept what were "usually regarded as female jobs" regardless of their interests or desires (Yum, 1998). In the workforce, they also found that they were treated as "female" workers, discovering that different jobs were assigned to female and male workers (Cho, 1992; Cho, 1999; Yum, 1998). Thus, some of the participants in this study quit their jobs, growing tired of simple, repetitious tasks. Or some of them left the workplace in order to find other work after discovering that female workers were entirely blocked from promotion.

Further, women in the affluent society believed it natural that women should get married and have children (Byun, 1993; Kim, 1995; Shin 1998). They considered marriage not as an option, but a "rite of passage" that everybody has to go through at a certain age (Yum, 1998, p. 44). Thus, their concerns were when and whom they would marry, not whether they would marry. Likewise, the participants in this study accepted marriage as a natural thing and never considered not getting married. This perception regarding marriage is significantly based on the social prejudice that unmarried women are abnormal. In Korean society, unmarried women were considered either "women who

were too successful to marry” or “women who were below average to marry” (Yum, 1998, p.45). With the illusion of romantic love, this prejudice caused women to voluntarily marry in order to be recognized by society as normal.

The women of the third generation also agree that the mother is the primary caregiver of her children and caring by their biological mothers is best for children (Byun, 1993). Especially, many of them believe that mothers should spend enough time with their children for the children’s emotional stability. This belief clashed with their identity as individuals. That is, they have conflicting thoughts at the same time; While they want to maintain their identity and pursue self-development by having their own work outside the home, they also believe full-time mothers are good for their children. Kim’s (1995) study supported this. She interviewed middle class mothers who ranged in age from late 20s to mid 30s and who had pre-schoolers in order to know their perception of motherhood. Kim (1995) found that the participants of her study believed that women should get married and have children and that mothers are primarily responsible for raising their children. However, they also rejected the assumption, “Women’s identity is to be fulfilled only through motherhood” (Cho, 1995).

Because of the conflicts caused by these two opposite thoughts, many of them voluntarily chose to be a full-time mother. Some participants in my study experienced this conflict, and they finally quit their job to take care of their children. The other participants postponed jobs after until children were schoolgoers. Some participants, who were relatively free from the prevailing belief of good mothers and put priority on quality of mothering over quantity of it, reluctantly quit or were forced to quit their jobs

due to the lack of childcare centers or their family members' opposition to sending children to childcare centers.

Korean society traditionally has created an unrealistic and false image of the mother, praised it, and forced women to adapt themselves to the image. In Korean society, mothers are not normal human beings who have basic needs, desires, or feelings. According to the image, mothers are entirely sacrificing for their children, and they even do not feel pain or agony about the sacrifice. Rather, mothers feel ultimate pleasure and joy when they sacrifice themselves for their children. Thus, our mother's generation followed the image without question. However, participants in this study had too strong a self-consciousness to accept it. Unlike their mother's generation, for them, sacrifice was sacrifice. Under the social beliefs that biological mothers are solely responsible for childcare and that mothers should stay with their children at all times, for them, the existence of children meant a barrier to their career or restraint of their freedom. For them, children were people who continuously required their sacrifice. Because of this, they suffered from the deep frustration derived from the conflict between their sense of self and mothering, and they desperately looked for a "breakthrough" that would enable them to escape from the "unwanted" or "unhappy" situation.

This was the reason why most of the participants defined personal development as "doing what I want to do." Asked what personal development means to her, Dahee answered, "Ultimately, it is to live doing what I want to do." Heajong also defined success as "achieving what I wanted to do." Youngran also emphasized the importance of doing what she wanted to do. She said,

[For me, personal development is] to do what I want to do and what I can do well. It isn't necessarily the means of earning money. Whatever it is, the most important thing is to do what I want to do....Even though what I want to do isn't great, doing it promotes personal development.

Yunoo also mentioned that personal development is “self-satisfaction through doing what I want to do.” Because of the self-satisfaction she achieved after returning to school, she gave the following advice to women whose desires are in conflict with their circumstances:

Just do what you want to do. If you don't do it right now, regret will be left in you. So, surely, you will become to do it someday. Therefore, if you really want to do it, you have to do it.

Emphasizing the importance of doing “what I want,” in particular, Hana criticized the labor division between the genders in Korean society. Pointing out that society assigns housework to women and criticizes women who want to work outside the home, she said,

[To this assignment by society, I'm asking back,] “Why did you decide that, without asking me?” Even though they never asked me what I want to do, why do I have to obey what they decided as they liked? This is my life and it is me who decides my way of life. So, why do others decide my way life?...We usually say not to force children to do something that they don't want to do. Then, isn't it so funny that others decide what I have to do even though I am a grown adult and even though I don't like to do it?

However, in Korean society, there are very limited opportunities for the highly-educated married women to take action for their personal development, pursuing what

they want as an whole human being. It is almost impossible for highly-educated married women who were out of the workforce for some time to get a job that is appropriate for their education. Heajong clearly described this. Waiting for her children grow to go to school, she finally looked for jobs in her late 30s. But she soon found out that there was nothing for her to do except a cashier or a housemaid.

Knowing this limited opportunity, the participants in this study returned to school with the hope of making themselves more marketable. They also chose to return to school because it was the only breakthrough they could choose in their situation. Under the situation in which they were bound with their children, they had few options to choose from. In addition, the respect for scholarship in Korean society made returning to school the easiest way to escape from the state of being full-time housewives. In the social context in which the personal identity of married women is absolutely denied, no excuses permit them to neglect childcare in order to pursue “their own benefits.” Thus, they needed a socially accepted justification to be relieved of the duties of mother and wife and to pursue their personal development. And in Korean society, in which studying is traditionally highly respected as something honorable and valuable, studying at school could be a good justification for them. Their return to school received less opposition from their family members, and in some cases, it even brought support. Moreover, for the participants, the respect for studying also provided them “psychological comfort.” They were proud that they were doing something valuable and recognizable by society, and that they achieved their development by accumulating professional knowledge. The social phenomenon of returning to school came as a result of the combination of these

various social factors. In conclusion, the Korean social context both caused the frustration of full-time housewives, and shaped their way of overcoming their frustration.

Since 1990s, much previous literature has dealt with the Korean women's identity change and the conflicts that Korean mothers suffer from (Byun, 1993; Cho, 1995; Kim, 1995; Rho, 1998; Shin, 1997; Yoon, 1996). By examining mothers' real experience of performing motherhood, those studies uncovered that motherhood was not natural or biological, but a socially constructed ideology. Thus, the studies showed how the ideology distorted adult women's lives in Korea by manipulating them to identify themselves as mothers first, not independent individuals. The studies also identified a collision between the increasing self-identity of the current generation of women and the socially legitimate ideology of motherhood as the reason of the conflict that Korean mothers in this age suffer from. Based on the findings, this study discovered that the desire to maintain identity of women in this generation fundamentally precipitated their returning to school. In other words, this study has contributed to the literature by demonstrating that returning to school is a form of resistance against the pre-determined social code for the lives of married women in Korea and a desperate attempt to live as whole human beings by pursuing what they really wanted.

Implications for Practice

There are a number of practice implications that develop out of the findings of this study. First, this study has illuminated to the serious problem of highly-educated middle class full-time housewives by clarifying their conflicts between performing mothers' roles and pursuing their identity. In addition, this study provided the

explanation of why it is recently so popular to return to school or educational institutes among adult women.

So far, Korean society has ignored women's conflicts by covering it with the name of "motherhood." In Korean society, married women are first defined as sacrificing mothers to their children. Thus, when women pursue personal individual development, they are regarded as selfish and bad mothers. In this social atmosphere, the conflict of married women is covered up, and each woman who feels it considers it a personal problem, evaluating herself as "strange" or "abnormal." In fact, the participants in this study frequently mentioned, "There are many women who enjoy staying at home, decorating home. But strangely, I can't be the same as them." That is, even though most of married women suffer from the forced identity as mother and manipulated motherhood, they believe the false image of mother that ideology of motherhood created. However, as this study exposed, married women are human beings, not only mothers, and thus, they have the basic needs and desires that human beings have. Therefore, this study clearly showed that the problem of married women in Korea is the matter of human rights.

Disclosing this problem of highly-educated full-time housewives in Korea shows that Korean society wastes half of their human resources as well as abuses the human rights of adult women. Therefore, this study can be used for policy makers to build a new direction in policy making about highly-educated women in Korea.

Second, this study can be utilized by reentry women themselves. While I conducted this study, I met many reentry women eager to know the findings of my study, saying, "I want to know how other [reentry] women feel and what they experience." As

non-mainstreamers who go against social code, they suffer from the lack of people with whom they can share their inner voices. Therefore, I think that this study can contribute to reentry women contacting with other reentry women's conflicts and experiences. By providing this information, this study can contribute to highly-educated Korean reentry women correctly seeing their problems in relation to the social structure. By awakening this, they can understand their problems are not personal, but public and political, and they can accept their "uniqueness" positively. In addition, this study can potentially cause more Korean adult women to participate in learning by informing them of reentry women's real experiences of returning to school.

Finally, this study can be used by personnel in higher education in Korea, such as professors, program planners, practitioners or administrators. This study reveals that highly-educated and middle class reentry women strongly wanted to have their own jobs or meaningful activities. It also showed that what they are mainly interested in was not just accumulating knowledge, but restoring their identity by participating in the world outside the home. These findings can be a good reference for program planners in higher education to develop appropriate programs to meet the needs of reentry women.

For example, program planners provide the course in which the reentry women can talk and share their problems and wants. In the course, the reentry women can speak out how they feel conflicts as mother and an individual, how they are not satisfied with the role as housewives, how they suffer from the isolation, how they want to get their own jobs, what the job means for them and so on. Through the process of sharing, they can discover that their personal problems are common to other women and actually originated by their social construction. This understanding will lead them to have a

changed world of view. This changed view raised question about the assumption that they take for granted, and they attempt to explore the alternatives (Brookfield, 1986). From this critical thinking process, the participants will approach their problems with different perspectives, and the different perspectives will lead different understanding about their problems. They will also be aware of what they really want clearly by talking their interests and listening others. These two factors finally will help them to attempt to find new solutions in the cooperation with their classmates. In short, program planners provide the course where the reentry women have meaningful activity and restoring their identity.

This study also revealed that reentry women achieved meaningful development when surrounded by professors and classmates who understood and supported them. Therefore, instructors are recommended to use collaborative interaction as one of the fundamental ways to plan and organize learning experiences, to foster a climate for leaning where instructors and learners support each others in the learning process, to use a cooperative communicative style, and to recognize that feelings are a critical part of fostering relationships in learning experiences (Caffarella, 1996).

In addition, practitioners or administrators in higher education can use this study in providing appropriate services and making policies for reentry women. For example, in order to meet the vocational need of the reentry women, a career placement center should deal with the distinctive needs of the reentry women by providing information regarding jobs and counseling their career after graduation. They also should make an efforts in providing day care system or financial support for the reentry women.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because this study is limited in scope to thirteen highly-educated middle class full-time housewives who returned to the university in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, areas of research in need of additional exploration were uncovered. Some of the recommendations for future research are as follows.

First, it is recommended to replicate this study with more varied participants. This study focused on reentry women who were university-graduated full-time housewives, and excepting two participants, they were in their 30s. These women are one segment of reentry women in Korea. Therefore, study about other reentry women, such as working women, middle-aged women, older women, or high school graduates, merits future research. Actually, this study did not intend to limit the participants' age to their 30s. Rather, the homogeneous group of reentry women in their 30s resulted from the process of collecting data. Therefore, it is assumed that the age of reentry women is related to their motivation. While reentry women in their 30s seem to have some vocational motivation, mid-aged reentry women are perhaps more likely to be more motivated by "having my own meaningful activity." Heajong, who was the only participant in her 40s, mentioned she gave up getting a job and went to school to find her own activity. Therefore, studying motivation of mid-aged women who return to university may reveal other unique results.

Further, this study also revealed that the fundamental cause of returning to school of the participants was the collision between their raised self-consciousness and socially legitimated ideology of motherhood. This analysis may not be applied to older reentry

women because unlike the younger generation, most did not have the educational opportunity which might have prompted self-consciousness. In addition, because they already completed childcare, they would not have the conflicts that young mothers suffer from. Thus, examining the motivations of older reentry women may reveal different results.

In particular, it is evident that motivations and meaningful experiences of employed reentry women are quite different from those of full-time housewives. This study revealed that the full-time housewives' whole process of schooling are derived from their condition of full-time housewives. Likewise, it is assumed that the process of career reentry women is significantly influenced by their working experiences and conditions.

A longitudinal study is recommended on the same participants in this study in order to know the long-term effects of returning to school. About two thirds of them wanted to get a job after completing their study, considering that having their jobs would enable them to live as individuals, in addition to mothers and wives. Therefore, examining what happens after they get their degree will merit future research. Subsequent research could examine the following research questions: Do they get a job and if so, do they achieve personal development through their work as they expected? Then, how does their career influence their development? If they fail to get a job, how do they respond to their state of full-time housewife? Do they accept it with a different perspective and become satisfied with it? If so, how did their returning to school help them to build the perspective? Or do they still seek another breakthrough from it? In the case of the participants who wanted to have their own meaningful activity from their

schooling, do they keep enjoying the activity or do they quit it due to unanticipated disappointing factors? How do these experiences influence their development?

Third, this study suggested that returning to school was one of the ways to resist the socially determined way of life of full-time mothers. Subsequent research could explore the other ways of overcoming the social taboo associated with women who are full-time housewives.

Fourth, this study discovered that many highly-educated full-time housewives perceived that they could satisfy their desire of selfhood by having their own work and participating in society. In other words, they wanted to pursue their personal development through their work. Then, how do professional career women actually think about this? Do they feel that they achieve personal development by working as full-time housewives imagined? Future research could investigate the relation between women's career and their personal development.

Fifth, conducting this study and analyzing the findings of this study, I found that the participants in this study suffered from both their state of being a full-time housewife and from the social atmosphere that looked down on full-time housewives. This finding raised a question for me: Even though Korean society forces highly-educated women to be full-time mothers, why does the society also have contempt for the full-time housewives, calling them *ajumma*? Why does it praise the full-time mother, but at the same time, look down on full-time housewives? Therefore, researcher need to investigate the social context that shapes this apparent paradox.

In summary, this chapter presented three conclusions based on the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5. First, the restoration of a personal identity underlies the

multiple motivations for returning to school. Second, returning to school has a significant impact on the personal development of reentry women. Third, the Korean context both precipitates and shapes the experience of returning to school. The implications for practice and recommendations for future research were also presented in this chapter.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Would you share with me a few specifics of your background?
Birthday, place, education, occupation, family composition,
2. Tell me about life before returning to school. What did you do? What were your major roles? How did you spend your time?
3. When did you start to attend the school? What made you decide to return to the school? Why did you return to the university again? What were your interest at that time?
4. What did you experience in the beginning of your learning in the school? How have your experiences in school changed? Among your experiences in your school, what are your favorite things?
5. How has the return to school affected you personally? How would you describe yourself now? What changes have you seen in yourself since attending the program? Can you give me an example of how you have changed?
6. What factors do you think propel your changes?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participated in the research titled “The impact of returning to school on the lives of Korean reentry women”, which is being conducted by Suh Young Jang, Department of Adult Education at UGA (706) 552-1661 under the direction of Sharan B. Merriam, Department of Adult Education (706) 542-4018. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary, I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this research is to understand how university attendance addresses the personal development needs of highly-educated middle class Korean reentry women. The project has been explained to me, and I understand the explanation that has been provided, and what my participation will involve. This participation will involve one 2-3 hours interview. I understand that a benefit of participation in this study is that I will have the opportunity to reflect about the relationship between my learning and my life.

My identity will be kept confidential. The results of this participation will be kept confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable from without my prior consent unless otherwise required by law. A pseudonym will be used for all data. Data will be stored in a secured place in the investigator’s safety deposit box and will be kept indefinitely for future educational research purposes not be shared with anyone.

Suh Young Jang will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 706-552-1661.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia D. Alexander, M.A., Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.