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FROM LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT TO SELF-EMPLOYMENT:

LEARNING AND JOB INSTABILITY IN KOREA

A Thesis in

Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the learning process of particular South Korean workers forced to move from being lifelong employees to becoming self-employed after the financial crisis of 1997. The study used a case study method using an ethnographic approach. In depth interviews with nine workers from the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyunggi area were conducted. An ethnographic approach was used because this approach highlights three key aspects: cultural process as an object, reflexivity as a process, and etic and emic as an analysis production. Purposeful sampling using chain sampling was used to select participants. Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation was used as the theoretical framework for this study.

This research addressed the following questions: 1) How did Korean workers learn to deal with their new work situation since the economic crisis of 1997? 2) How did they relate their experiences to the larger economic restructuring that has occurred in Korea since 1997? 3) How have cultural, social and class-based traditions and processes shaped the meaning the workers make of their individual experiences? 4) How has their identity changed in their new self-employed context? 5) How have these Korean workers maintained their occupational pride as self-employed persons since the global economic crisis?

Three broad themes emerged: (1) transformation of the concept of lifetime employment; (2) transformation of social and economic status; and (c) transformation in overcoming job instability. In addition, five perspectives were found to be central to understanding the changed situation of these particular Korean workers: (1) recognition of a changed concept of lifetime job; (2) disappointment in changed social-economical

status; (3) strong criticism toward the Korean government policy; (4) job instability was connected to the relationship between North and South Korea; and (5) expectation of a new leader and job stability in Korea.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Job instability in Korea is a very complex issue that has not yet been definitely resolved. The term describes a universal phenomenon from the West to the East. One example of job instability is how South Korean workers had to suffer from the hard experience of a mass layoff after the country's sudden financial crisis in 1997. Beginning with this overview of these particular Korean workers' learning experience and job instability, it must be stated at the outset that they tried to overcome their job instability and uncertainty. Such an experience convinced me of the value of doing an academic investigation of selected Korean workers' learning as adults to reestablish themselves in a self-employed occupation after being forced to leave their long-term jobs. In this chapter, I will describe my personal experiences related to this topic, and then I will state the problem and its theoretical framework.

The Way I Came to My Topic

Because of my academic background I have been interacting with general education, youth education, and adult education which has changed my world view of education. Expectedly, this change has a lot to do with the cultural, social, and economic changes that have occurred in Korea. However, the basic, crucial aspect that affected my worldview is related to the job uncertainty in my home country of Korea.

Changing Occupations of My Father

My grandfather was a poor farmer. He had grown up in very poor conditions. He took the responsibility of taking care of the family as the first boy in the family among his siblings. Later, he decided to go to Seoul, the capital of Korea, after completing his high school degree in order to improve the hard living conditions he grew up with. In

Seoul, my father started by delivering newspapers. This job did not require any special skills, but there was a lot of competition for the position. Thus, he tried many different kinds of jobs, such as a newspaper boy, a poultry farmer, a bookstore owner, a city councilman, and so on, as he tried to hold a sustainable position.

I remember my father changing his job constantly as the economic conditions of Korea altered. He changed jobs to earn more money, but the options were very limited even for low-paying jobs. In contrast to my father, I observed that my friend's father, who was a college graduate, was working for a major company and never had to change his job, and seemed confident and calm about his financial situation.

This experience made me understand why my father wanted me to have a graduate degree. I realized that my father wanted me to have more options and a stable job. Before 1997, a person was guaranteed a well paying and stable job if they got a good education. It was a common thinking that education is the only a way to help people achieve a certain economic level. In other words, better education is better employment.

Stable Jobs for the Next Generation

When I went to a middle school in Korea as a student teacher, I experienced something strange about the young students' hopes and behaviors. Most of the students dreamed of being a doctor or a lawyer as their future job. I was surprised at this same response because, at that time, I expected them to aspire to a diversity of careers. Also, many of the students were usually tired in class because they were studying at private institutions or the library after attending public school.

For instance, most of them were going to several different private institutions after school for instruction in such things as Tae-kwon-do (Korean traditional martial

arts), music instrument lessons, art classes, advance studies like English, math, and so on. These additional, diverse activities were wearing the students out and I observed their fatigue during my teaching. When I asked them to write even in their journal, they sometimes complained that it was just too much homework.

Education in Korea is very competitive for economic reasons partly because it has limited natural resources such as petroleum. So, Korea's economic context requires that we develop human resources for trade in the world market. Because of the limited number of good occupations, the young students have a lot of pressure to get a good education in order to get a good job. I believe that this is a common situation for most students in Korea, because most parents seem to believe that education is the way to guarantee a good and stable job in the future.

Transformed Occupation of My Friend

After my observations and personal experiences, I finally began to think that adult learning is very influential in the global context, including job uncertainty. My personal experiences determined my interest in adult education and lifelong learning, such as the experience of a colleague in Korea whom I met in graduate school. When I first met her at graduate college, she was a graduate student, a wife and mother with two children. But one day I heard that her husband was supposed to be fired from his job because of the 1997 financial crisis in our country.

Especially, with the 1997 Korean financial crisis, the country had to accept the flexible labor market policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a result, a lot of workers were laid off and suffered tragic economic and social consequences. Therefore, many workers had to change from being lifetime job workers to being self-

employed in a difficult economic environment. However, only some of them seemed to be in sustainable employment because of the continuing low economic activities and the high competition.

After my friend's husband lost his job, she decided to help him by opening and managing a private library, although they had not had any such experience at all before. According to my friend, they had to learn their way by making mistakes. For instance, they made the mistake of opening the reading room in a highly competitive area. After about a year, however, the library became one of the good and famous places in the area. If any student wanted to use the library, they would have to wait at least 3 or 4 months. My friend was proud of her accomplishments with her library occupation. I was impressed by their success story in overcoming their challenges in a difficult economic environment. I have wondered how they were able to transform their difficulties into benefits with such successful results. So, I decided to turn my interest to adult education so that I could learn about adult learning and lifelong learning in the global context related to work performance.

Job Instability and the IMF in Korea

Most people as in the case just described seem to work in order to support themselves and their family. So, most workers in the world want to have a stable workplace for a long time. However, today's circumstances are changing so quickly because of advances in science and skill development such as Information Technology (IT). The world seems to have become one united network with the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and so on. Right now, most workers cannot avoid the effects of

this changing global economy. As a result, most workers try to make an effort to learn new knowledge or skills to follow new trends or to change to another job. In other words, most workers are familiar with the concept of job instability today.

However, in Korea, most lifetime job workers believed in the concept of lifetime employment until 1997. Indeed, most lifetime job workers in Korea had not an experience of a large scale dismissal before the 1997 IMF financial crisis. This circumstance for Korean workers was based on Korea's unique history (see Chapter 2). After such a major trauma as the IMF crisis, most of the laid-off workers were transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers. From their viewpoint, most Korean workers were not at fault, but they were sacrificed for their nation. Until now, many of these Korean workers have been self-employed since the IMF situation.

Actually I was living in Korea at the time of the IMF control of the Korean economy. I was employed as a student teacher just after graduating from college. After a few years, as an adult educator, I wondered what particular Korean workers had learned about job instability since the IMF financial crisis. I wondered if they might have special and different circumstances for their learning process. I thought that the particular Korean workers who were transformed from being lifetime job workers to self-employed workers might be part of the whole country's social, economic crisis rather than just dealing with their own individual challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Today, most workers seem to be affected by multiple economic changes such as free trade and flexibility in the labor market. These two issues have increased their momentum and speed by spreading over many places and nations (Lechner & Boli, 2004).

For example, South Korea was compelled to transform its previous lifetime employment system into a flexible labor market system with the 1997 financial crisis (Pieper & Taylor, 1998). The IMF's policies signaled the transformation of South Korean workers' concept of lifetime employment.

Korean Workers' Crisis since the IMF

In 1997, Korea was compelled to accept the policy of the IMF because of her shortage of exchange reserve. There were so many reasons that the Korea government could not avoid this outcome, the so-called IMF economic crisis: many companies' using a shortage of exchange, illegal adhesion between politics and economics, an inefficient and opaque industrial structure, government's mistaken assessment, dangers of customers' overspending, and so forth (Felix, 1998; Han, 2005; Lee, 2005; Pieper & Taylor, 1998). Regardless of these causes, the IMF had given Korean workers an enormous shock in the global economic system by causing dramatic changes.

The IMF had become one of the most powerful international organizations in the global age. The IMF is an organization of 185 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2007). In other words, pursuing free trade and a flexible labor market, the IMF seemed to be a symbol of understanding of the present global environment. This global environment has grown because of the evolutionary development of science, the Internet, telecommunications, and transportation systems. It was inevitable that the world would increasingly be bound or tied hand and foot to such a global economic system (Stiglitz, 2004). But not everyone accepts this situation. For

example, the recent demonstrations in France against the CPE (le Contrat premiere embauche: Contract Premier Employment, 2006) took place as resistance to the job instability in the new global order. It is this uncertainty about jobs that seems to be a primary force in modern life in all fields (Bennhold, 2008).

The results of the IMF policy in Korea created serious and difficult circumstances for many people. Numerous workers were doomed to be laid off from their jobs (Lechner & Boli, 2004; Pieper & Taylor, 1998). Furthermore, the social security system in Korea was not adequate to cover all of the unemployed workers. Meanwhile, the rest of the workers in a company also suffered from job instability (Koo, 2001). In addition to this, the problem of unstable jobs had very serious dimensions that led to family instability, social, and national problems as well ("Emerging Policy," 2005). The number of layoffs reached over 1 million at once under the IMF control. Especially, most of the lifetime job workers who were middle-aged urban males transformed their occupation to some form of self-employment. Today, the rate of independent contractors in Korea has been about three times higher than other countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ("Emerging Policy," 2005; Lee & Park, 2006). Because of the continuing recession and high competition, many self-employed persons have suffered difficult economic and psychological consequences (Kim, 2006; Moon, 2005).

Korean Workers' Learning since the IMF Crisis

Adult education has been focusing on the notion of lifelong learning since the early 1990s. Lifelong learning is regarded as continuous adult learning for improving adults' economic competitiveness in the global economy. In this view, however, lifelong

learning has been criticized on the basis that learning new technical skills with which workers are able to survive in the global context is only a temporary and short-lived solution. In other words, lifelong learning seems to emphasize new and higher levels of knowledge and skills rather than humanity; lifelong learning still and always might be related to the job insecurity of workers who are living in the changing global condition. Even so, adult education needs to include social justice and equity because so far these have been neglected (Marginson, 1999; Schied, Mulenga, & Baptiste, 2005).

Regarding these developments, it is apparent that research needs to examine the Korean workers' learning process since the 1997 financial crisis. The IMF policies have provided limited options and security for the Korean workers since 1997. The Korean workers have been seriously exposed to job uncertainty since their sudden blow in 1997. This experience differs from American workers' recognition of unsustainable job security which they have had for a long time.

In addition, the Korean workers' learning process needs to represent the critical aspects of lifelong learning in the global economy. The Korean workers have developed their own unique, strong identity by overcoming their disadvantageous economic and social conditions. So, their own responsibility regarding job instability is to weather such difficult global economic conditions.

Furthermore, previous studies of the Korean workers' learning since 1997 have mainly adopted the quantitative approach, focusing not on the workers' learning perspective but on policies. So, this study attempts to overcome the limits of previous studies by using a qualitative research method to add to the present research.

In sum, this study of Korean workers' learning in the global context may open our eyes to the struggles and realities of the Korean workers' learning experiences in this context and may help adult educators develop diverse lifelong learning opportunities. Accordingly, as an adult educator I am interested in the learning experiences of particular workers in Korea since the global forces brought new conditions and concerns for the workers and their work environment. I have explored the learning process of the Korean workers' experience in the global economic environment from their personal experiences. Thus, it was essential to investigate how the Korean workers have transformed their life and identity since 1997, and how the Korean workers have shaped their learning perspectives about job uncertainty since the 1997 financial crisis.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, Mezirow's transformational learning theory was very useful to investigate the learning of the Korean workers' experience of the IMF crisis and the global economy. There are three parts to the transformational learning theory. The first, the individual perspective on transformation is an important starting point. Even though some scholars criticize individualism, the individual represents a starting point of cognition and rationality, and is a unique subject who can decide or reject something. Therefore, I have investigated the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, and activities of the Korean workers at the individual level in the global context.

Secondly, critical reflection is also an important part of transformational learning theory for Korean workers because it is a standard cognitive tool they can use to think about and recognize important things in the global context. Although recent research seems to have focused on feelings and emotions in transformational learning, such

feelings may be a means for the Korean workers to access critical reflection or rationality. Critical reflection might be an essential turning point for the workers to transform their previous perspectives into new ones. Thus, Mezirow's critical reflection is adaptable for examining the learning experience of the workers who have strived to overcome their job uncertainty in the global context.

Finally, transformational learning has a problem-solving aspect, which also can help the Korean workers overcome and transform their thoughts or attitudes into new ones. Especially, in the new global economy, transformative learning theory requires new and alternative thoughts or attitudes so that the workers are able to overcome their difficulties. So, I have applied this learning theory to the Korean workers' learning experiences because they need to solve their problem in the global context. In sum, these three aspects of transformation learning theory were useful for investigating the learning experience of the Korean workers who are trying to overcome their job insecurity under the global economic conditions. Thus, Mezirow's transformative learning theory was useful as the theoretical framework for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I describe the impact of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Korea, the identity of the Korean workers, and give an overview of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. First, the history of the impact of the IMF crisis will provide the background for understanding the problem in question, which is the Korean workers' job situation. Secondly, the formation and challenge of the identity of the Korean workers will be discussed through history. Finally, I will review Mezirow's transformational learning theory and provide reasons as to why this learning theory is needed for my research.

Impact of the International Monetary Fund on Korea

Overview of Korean Economic Growth Before 1997

Because Imperial Japan was beaten by the Allied Nations in World War II, Korea had its independence restored in 1945. But the South Korean economy was devastated because so many human and material resources had been used up for the war defense, and the rest of the production facilities could not operate without the Japanese workers. Indeed, the electricity supply had been cut off by North Korea. With about \$460 million in U.S. aid, through Government and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA), South Korea was able to import the necessities of life such as food, clothing, textiles, agricultural supplies, and oil (Korea International Cooperation Agency [KOICA], 2004). In 1948, the Republic of Korea was born and tried to build a national economy. For example, there were the rehabilitation and improvement of the cotton industry, the construction of hydroelectric and thermoelectric power plants, and coal production, to name a few developments.

However, the economic recovery was terminated by the Korean War in 1950. The economic damage to South Korea from the war was reported to be great as 42% of the production equipment; 46% of the factories were destroyed, and the country lost the main part of its industrial activity, including its social overhead capital. Especially, almost all the textile mills concentrated in the Seoul-Incheon area were destroyed. Furthermore, numerous expenditures of public finances for the war funds had accelerated inflation. If the wholesale price index in 1947 was 100, it was 5,446% in 1953 after the war (“Korean Economy,” n.d.). The Korean government decided to accept foreign aid, so the U.S provided about \$2.28 billion without compensation from 1953 to 1961. In that decade Korea chalked up an average annual increase of 4.7% in her gross national product. However, consumer industries such as milling, sugar manufacturing, and the fiber and chemistry papermaking industry were the focus of development, and the mainstay industries such as iron, machinery, and steel manufacture were ignored. Indeed, the national economy was to depend on the importation of over 90% of its raw material (“Korean Economy,” n.d.).

In the 1961 military coup, the Park government developed an economic policy, which means that the government directly intervened in the national economy. From the First Five-Year Plan of Economic Development (1962-1966) to the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1987-1991), the Korean economy was developed and grew continually. These five-year plans for the economy adopted an unbalanced growth strategy in that the government introduced foreign capital to support industry so that industrial goods could be exported abroad (Ryu, n.d.). As a result, the gross national product (GNP) had risen by an average term of 5.8% to 10%, that is, from 3.7 billion dollars in 1966 to 29.2 billion dollars in

1991, and by about 7 times within 25 years. The GNP per person also had increased 53 times from 125 dollars to 6,757 dollars in the same period.

This economic growth was supported by extending exportation that had increased 286 times from 250 million dollars in 1966 to 71,870 million dollars in 1991 on a national scale. Especially, the balance of payments had been in surplus from 1986 to 1989, but the increasing overspending and need for welfare created a trade deficit. The list of export items changed from synthetic fibers and chemical fibers in the 1960s to light and heavy chemical industrial goods at the end of 1980s, with a 38:62 export rate (Korean Overseas Information Service [KOIS], 2005).

But, such an increasing export rate had a lot of weaknesses because the government economy policy provided more preferential duties and financing for international exports than for domestic industry. In the industrial structure, the rate of the first industries (agriculture, forestry, and fishery): the second industries (mining, manufacturing, and construction): the third industries (Social Overhead Capital, and so on) changed from 36.6: 6.3: 47.1 in 1962 to 7.7: 42.9: 49.4 in 1991. But the capital and skills that the increasing economic growth and changing industrial structure were based on had come from foreign countries, so that the whole foreign loan debt had reached 39.1 billion dollars by 1991 ("Korean Economy," n.d.). Finally, the burden of the foreign bond exchange and its interest created a shortage in foreign exchange, and the Korean people suffered hardships when they came under the IMF's control beginning in 1997.

In addition to the adverse consequences of IMF control, there were other weaknesses in the government's economy policy. The export extension based on low wages had enlarged the gap between rich and the poor, so that the discrepancy

between capital and labor was visible. The excessive investment in the heavy chemical industry had strengthened the monopolistic capital, but had also made the medium and small enterprises suffer, with increasing numbers of people giving up farming which created a shortage in agriculture labor. And there was a shortage of social development such as low housing, which increased people's need and desire for affordable housing and economic well-being. Also, the Korean economy was affected by the international energy crisis with the shock of the oil shortage in 1973, and in 1980 largely by import regulation. In 1987, no trade surplus was recorded so that the Korean economic scale was the 17th in the world, her trade scale was 12th, and the GNP per person was over 10,000 dollars in 1994. The whole foreign debt in 1988 was 31.2 billion dollars, but the foreign loans were 7.3 billion dollars, except 23.9 billion dollars in overseas property (KOIS, 2005).

Therefore, the Korean people faced a new and changing economic environment that had never been seen before. Externally, the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) made the special favors of international trade such as the Generalized System of (Tariff) Preferences (GSP) disappeared. The WTO required the suitable responsibility and role for the developed level. Especially, because of the huge expenditure of international payments in Korea, the developed nations tried to restrict Korean imported goods, and pressured Korea to boost its own economy by opening domestic markets.

Meanwhile, internally, the process of democratization improved the autonomy in 1980s. The classes of farmer, laborer, inferior enterprises, and the destitute who had been relatively isolated requested compensation for benefits and welfare. Particularly, a wage hike and the process of forming a new relationship between the management and the

workforce became weak because of the export competition of company. The enlargement of surplus capital coming from trade surplus moved into speculation in real property, and then pushed up inflation. The opening domestic market worried about the dissemination of imported consumer goods and wasting money.

But, by the end of 1997, the Korean economy was in a very difficult situation because of the shortage of foreign exchange, so Korea received funds from the IMF to support its floundering economy. The Korean government with the help of the IMF made an effort to possess adequate money, and to construct the money market, companies, and the labor market (“Korean Economy,” n.d.). As a result, the financial market seemed to have been stabilized and improved.

Korean Economic Crisis in 1997

In 1997, the Korean economy faced internal and external difficulties. A sudden drop in the semiconductor prices since 1996 made the exportation rate go from 30% in 1995 to 4% in 1996. The sluggish exportation had led to an increase in the trade deficit: 2.6 billion dollar in 1996 and 8.5 billion dollar in 1997. Furthermore, a chain of bankruptcies in major companies such as Hanbo, Sammi, and Kia multiplied the difficulties of the economy. These big businesses had reached the breaking point because of too much pay raise during the strong growth era of 1994-1996, and because of limitations of quantitative expanding management such as large scale investments. The profitability of companies fell, and financial affairs were aggravated; for example, the debt rate of the manufacturing industry reached 396% in 1997 (Lee, 2005; Pieper & Taylor, 1998). Six large enterprises like Kia went bankrupt, but resistance for political reasons, some class of leading public opinion, and labor unions postponed their leaving,

so that Kia's economic plight grew worse. It was connected a weak financial company so that its credit was blocked in the financial market resulted.

In this situation, the financial crisis of Southeast Asia including the economies of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan occurred. The Southeast Asian financial crisis began with the superheated business and the collapse of a bubble economy from activity in trade and increasing dependence on foreign funds (Felix, 1998; Lechner & Boli, 2004). Also, the failure to lock up the exchange rate for the inflow of foreign capital was responsible. Indeed, the causes of the 1997 financial crisis could point to mismanagement of financial institutions, a shortage of economic currency, and political uncertainty (Kwon, 2005). Foreign investors tried to withdraw their investment loans. Korea had already a lot of foreign bonds from enrolling in the OECD and processing the open policy with nothing ready. Especially, financial firms borrowed short-term funds in bursts so that it weakened the structure against foreign investors' pressure for exchanging funds. At the time, the financial crisis of Southeast Asia was contagious, and the foreign investors' withdrawal continued. Finally, the Korean government requested emergency financial support from the IMF at the end of 1997 (Lee, 2005).

At that time, the erstwhile Soviet Union's disorganization, China's economic rise, and so on had accelerated global competition (Lee, 2005). Economic globalization had expanded the capital market economy as a universal world rule, so that all the nations had to manage their economy in connection with other nations or international organizations (Kim, 2003). Indeed, the background for the birth of international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank (WB) was related to the rapid advances in technology, communications, and transformation. This brilliant development has contributed to the

growing international markets integration and to nearer linkages among national economies. Thus, for example, financial crises would tend to broaden more rapidly among countries if they erupted. As a result, the global economy called for greater international cooperation with the responsibilities of organizing such cooperation including the IMF. After World War II, the leading allied countries considered such plans to oversee the international monetary system and to promote both the elimination of exchange restrictions relating to trade in goods and services, and the stability of exchange rates. (Pieper & Taylor, 1998) At last, the IMF emerged at the Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, U.S. conference for a well-ordered international economic system (Pieper & Taylor, 1998).

The International Monetary Fund is one of the international financial organizations like the World Bank, and was created in 1945 to help promote the health of the world economy. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the IMF is governed by the governments of the 185 countries that make up its global membership. The IMF's main responsibilities as set out in Article I of the Articles of Agreement include the following: promoting international monetary cooperation; facilitating the expansion and balanced growth of international trade; promoting exchange stability; assisting in the establishment of a multilateral system of payments; and making its resources available (under adequate safeguards) to members experiencing balance of payments difficulties (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2004; IMF, 2005). However, the two important components of the IMF programs, fiscal and monetary austerity and exchange rate adjustment, may produce a crisis of inflationary, contracting side effects that can be politically disruptive enough to derail a program in practice (Pieper & Taylor, 1998). Indeed, the compelling process of

IMF economic policies has not considered “a broader vision of society or the role of economics within society” (Stiglitz, 2004, p. 200).

In November 1997, Korea took a financial risk because of the decline in the foreign credit rate and the shortage of financial possession. The IMF requested that the Korean government make a stern policy and restructure the economic system so that many companies were driven out of business or integrated forcibly with others. This rapid change in the labor market made numerous workers lose their jobs against their will through a workout (a sort of employee layoff). This economic situation was connected to the monetary stringency and the sinking economy. As a result, the Korean economy recorded a high rate of unemployment, high prices, high rates of interest, high exchange rate, and low growth until 2000 (Kim, 2003). For instance, the jobless rate which had remained around 2% from 1988 to 1997 rose to 8.4%, amounting to about 1.7 million jobless people as of May 1999 (Ministry of Finance and Economy [MOFE], 2006). In the meantime, the myth that banks and big companies never perish was proven wrong in the Korean context during the IMF period. For instance, at that time, five banks and many financial institutions had closed or combined, and 13 big business groups had been dissolved or liquidated (Han, 2005). And the Korean workers realized that there was nowhere to work in a lifetime employment system. The labor market flexibility as an employment policy in the global economy caused many workers to be laid off or retired by force.

Today's Korean Economic Recovery Effort

Meanwhile, the Korean economy has successfully escaped the financial crisis of eight years. At first, the Korean government redeemed its foreign loans, 19.5 billion to

the IMF in 2001. The balance of current accounts was transformed from ordinary loss to surplus through the won's (Korean monetary unit) devaluation, the shrinking of the equipment investment, and dominant demand. The cumulative deficit had reached 130.1 billion dollars.

In fact, South Korea recorded 20.2 billion dollars in foreign exchange holdings in 1993 ("The Balance," n.d.). Recently, the amount of foreign exchange holdings has risen to 206.7 billion dollars. This means that Korea is the fourth richest nation possessing foreign exchange (Lee, 2005). The economic system revolution which was stimulated mainly by the government has many products in finance, corporation, public, and labor part. Most insolvent financial enterprises had been withdrawn or engaged in mergers and acquisitions (M&A), faltering loan bonds of financial institutions have largely decreased, and the sound financial enterprise budget has been strengthened. Most companies belong in the 30 big business groups that have been reduced or dissolved, their debt rate has gone down, and the economic system for enterprise transparency such as improving an account system and stockholder's rights was introduced. As a result, such efforts have promoted financial stability and a rise in foreign investment.

Korea had fundamentally not completed the process of strengthening its competition and revolutionizing its rigid economic system until 1997 (Lee, 2005). An impact of the IMF made the transformation of the companies' structure from a productive system which led by the government to a market economy system. The IMF requested transparent management, responsibility, and a moral mind in the global economic environment. In other words, only an enterprise that could make benefits efficiently would survive in this world. However, this principle had not been accepted by the Korea

economy before the IMF crisis. Under the protection of the government which chose an economic goal of a high degree of growth, the Korean economic system had focused on scale rather than on efficiency. Thus, some conglomerates and financial institutions had both become ineffective because of the power of the government. This situation finally caused the 1997 financial crisis.

Another impact of the IMF, however, was its huge payment for rebuilding the Korean economy. The first bill was government debt which increased in place of solving the financial weakness and reducing companies' infirmity. The Korean government put the public funds, 168 trillion won, into the rebuilding or restructuring of its finances and companies, which would contribute very well to escaping the financial crisis. But, much was learned from mistakes and moral hazards in the middle of this input process and post management. Another payment was for family finance loans which took place under the government's domestic promotion policy. A low interest rate and an oversupply of currency had caused a bubble in stock and the fall of savings. Indeed, the credit card expansion policy for enhancing consumption and increasing tax revenue finally drove family debt to a serious level. For example, about four million people lost their credit in economic market (Lee, 2005).

Meanwhile, despite the number of indicators of an improving economic condition from the IMF period, there have still been many serious unemployment problems. The official rate of the unemployed in Korea does not include the disappointed unemployed, who are potential, real but uncaught by statistics, so the real rate of the unemployed seems to be possibly larger. For example, the official unemployment rate in May 1998 was 6.5 % or 1,378,000. But, the potential jobless rate was estimated at about 15.1% or

2,173,000 (Lyu, n.d.). The young applicants who just graduated from their respective universities are at a loss since there is nowhere to go for work. There is also the serious unemployment problem of the middle-aged that were almost compulsorily laid off or retired in the process of the corporate restructuring during the IMF crisis in 1997. Indeed, the unemployment of these former family supporters who retired from their jobs in their 40s or 50s is becoming a severe social burden. For example, it is appears that the rate of suicide and broken or scattered families has risen. Temporarily, people in their 60s or older who do not have a job are also in a non-protected situation. In the case of the aged, they cannot be self-reliant because the pension implementation is too short and the pensions pay too small. Many women are still unemployed because of the prevalent cultural social bias and male dominance, although women's status has been much improved recently. Meanwhile, the sudden drop in the exchange rate, the explosion of oil prices, and the rising rate of interest may constitute a grave menace to the recovery of the Korean economy (Jung, 2006).

Korean Workers Transformed From Lifetime Employment to Self-Employment

The workers in this study became self-employed following the layoffs since 1997. They were composed mainly of middle-age urban male workers in Korea. They worked very hard during the heavy industrial period after 1980s. They also had achieved a general strike against job uncertainty in 1996-1997. These Korean middle-age urban male workers were essential to the government policy at that time (Koo, 2001). At the end of 1997, however, the East Asian nations' financial crises affected Korea. Therefore, Korea requested the management of the IMF for countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and

Malaysia. The IMF began to change Korean economic policy in 1997. The free labor market was one of the important factors for improving international trade.

As a result, Korea had numerous unemployed, especially middle-aged urban male workers from the changing industrial structure of Korea (Han, 2005). They were older and had a relatively higher salary than the other workers. Even though they were called early retired people or honor retired people, most of them would be practically compelled to take early retirement because of the IMF changes in the Korean economy. These workers supported their families and young children. The social security system was not adequate to assist them at that time. And to make a bad situation worse, it was very hard for them to reenter companies or institutions because of their older age. As a result, most of the middle-age workers decided to become self-employed (Moon, 2005). Thus, the increasing rate of independent businesses recorded in 2004 was over 30%, which was 3 times other nations in the OECD (“Emerging Policy,” 2005; Lee & Park, 2006). For example, the number of independent contractors of 1 or up to 5 employees has been estimated at 1.3 million or about 625,000 businesses in Seoul (Shin, 2006). Such a high number of independent contractors reflected the difficult situation for middle-age workers after the IMF crisis.

Today, both low economic activity and high competition have caused another economic crisis for the many self-employed. So, the number of independent business decreased to about 50,000 in 2005. According to the Ministry of Labor in Korea, the number of non-wage workers including one self-employed person, non-wage-earning family, and the self-employer reached 7.6 million in 1998-1999. After that, the number had increased to 7.796 million in 2000, 7.913 million in 2001, and 7.988 million in 2002;

however, the number had decreased to 7.736 million in 2000 and 7.688 million in 2004 (Moon, 2005). The current number was 7.479 million in May 2006 (Korean Statistical Information System [KOSIS], 2006). Especially, the rate of workers engaged in wholesale and retail sales, management of accommodations, or the restaurant business was higher than others. Also, the average wage per month of non-wage worker decreased from 2.25 million won in 2002 to 2.12 million won in 2004. In contrast, the average wage per month of a wage laborer during the same period increased from 1.11 million won in 2002 to 1.18 million won in 2004 (Moon, 2005; “Most Self,” 2005). The number of non-wage laborers earning fewer than 1.00 million won monthly was 24.7% in 2003.

Although the number of self-employed had been increasing since the financial crisis, an analysis shows that workers’ earnings are decreasing due to long-term low economic activity (Lee, 2006; Moon, 2005). Indeed, the closing of self-employed business rate per year was 368,000 in 2004 Korea (Kim, 2006). Meanwhile, the government has a plan for re-structuring independent businesses in order to make it more restrictive to enter the field and to induce workers to enter another workplace through a training course. But, some people criticize the government policy, pointing out the cause of the problem as not being the number of self-employed, but the economic depression as a result of government policies (“Emerging Policy,” 2005).

In sum, many Korean middle-aged urban male workers had left their previous companies or institutions and started an independent business with the 1997 financial crisis after their layoff or early retirement. Their layoff in the context of the Korean and global economies and limited company job opportunities made most workers choose self-employment. However, they have suffered from low economic activity and high

competition. In essence, the middle-age urban male workers as self-employed are facing another economic crisis (Moon, 2005). Despite such difficult conditions, most of them seem to try to overcome their job uncertainty in the global context. Finally, this study of the particular Korean workers' learning process may provide some insights or implications for adult learning in the global context.

The Identity of the Korean Workers

Korea has introduced a strong union for workers. For example, the workers struggle in 1987 and the major strike in 1996-1997, as well as other small-scale workers' strikes involved many people. Especially foreign people get such an image of the Korean worker. The understanding of the Korean workers' identity is based on the political and cultural activities at the time. Since the 1997 financial crisis, the Korean workers have stood at the crossroads of forming their identity (Koo, 2001).

The notion of the worker refers generally to a factory or industrial worker, white-collar worker, professional, independent contractors including consultants, free-lancers, handymen, hair stylists, and others who work for themselves. But, the notion of the Korean workers has mainly been recognized as the blue-collar class in Korea. This is because the blue-collar workers have been a symbol of the Korean workers struggle since the 1970s comparatively rather than as white-collar workers. Meanwhile, the union of white-collar workers has shown up since political freedom in 1987 (Koo, 2001). The reason that the blue-collar workers raised itself instead of others is that they had a relatively weaker and poorer existence on a low economic level, experienced social contempt, and had an inferior workplace.

However, now the identity of the Korean workers seems to have been transformed by the global context, especially since the financial crisis in 1997. That is, the identity of workers may not be fixed but changeable depending on the political and cultural circumstances at the time. (Thompson, 1963; Koo, 2001) As a result, it is necessary to learn the Korean political, cultural, social, and economic situation to explore the identity of the Korean workers, as in this study.

The History of the Korean Workers

Korea has had a dynamic economic history since the 1960s. According to this history, the Korean workers appeared in earnest in the 1960s. The government led them with the slogan of the five-year economic development plan that had focused on export goods like fabric, chemicals, iron, ships, and so forth, rather than on custom industries (Suh, 1987). The efficient export structure was to concentrate diverse factories in a special place so that many cities were built, such as the Seoul-Incheon export complex. Workers have lived in cities to be available to work. Leaving the country for the city was a common phenomenon at that time. For example, the number of urban workers increased from 1.3 million in 1960 to 3.4 million in 1970 (Suh, 1987). Indeed, the large traditional family institution began to disappear.

In the 1980s, the Korean economy was recorded at a high rate of economic development. On the contrary, since the 1960s, the factory worker has suffered from forced, hard, overburden working conditions and lower social status, sex discrimination, and low salary. The government military caused factory workers to be victims with the slogans of industrial warriors. For example, a young factory worker, Chun Tae-il, killed

himself in order to protest the workers' difficult environment in 1970 (Cho, 1991; Chun, 1988). After that, the Korean workers have remained visible in recent history.

Korean female workers' activity has come to the forefront rather than male workers. This is because female workers mainly entered into light industries that started to export goods abroad faster than in the heavy industries that were male worker-centered. Indeed, female workers have suffered double for being blue-collar and female. The struggle of female workers against shutting down the YH trade factory in 1979 was a representative example of this position (Koo, 2001; Former Y. H. Union, & Korean Association for Labor Welfare, 1984). At that time, church groups and conscious college students helped female workers protest their difficult environment.

In the 1980s, with increasing heavy industrial export goods, the dominant gender of the workers was transformed from female to male workers. More theoretical and organizational activity of workers had reached the struggle for democracy in 1987. The whole solidarity for democracy including blue-collar, students, white-collar, self-employees, and intellectuals against dictatorial rule with an iron hand finally succeeded in achieving political freedom. Especially, the white-collar workers played another great role in the demonstrations. There were financial and professional unions, and unions of hospital, transportation, communication, broadcast, newspaper, research institutions, colleges, and so on (Suh, 1998; Kim, 1994; Cho & Yun, 1994). Their purpose was to improve the material conditions and democracy in the workplace and society, and to obtain autonomy from strong government control (Janelli, 1993; Kim, 1992; Koo, 2001). Also, the general strike by the diverse workers against the government's job instability

policy in 1996-1997 made the government postpone creating this policy. Such solidarity of different elements of the workers gave it a positive and hopeful message.

Political Aspects of the Korean Workers

Historically, the Korean people have had difficult experiences through political and historical periods because of the colonial period of Imperial Japan (1910-1945), the division of the Korean peninsula by the Soviet Union (1945-1948), and the Korean War (1950-1953) (KOIS, 2005). These painful events postponed the appearance of the workers in Korea until the 1970s. Almost all the Korean people were in a poor economic situation though the Japanese colonization and the Korean War. Such economic difficult and political confusion after the war became the background for the military regime's entrance into Korea history.

Korean military governments by military coup had taken over the country from 1961 to 1987. The illegal government pursued the Korean people's support through economic development. The five-year plan for economic development began in 1962. This political-economic plan was focused on a export-oriented policy led by the government. This strategy seemed to be more effective because Korea had a shortage of materials, capital, and skill; meanwhile, a lot of labor power. With the devotion and effort of the workers in industry, the Korean economy had increased to achieve a good growth rate. From 1971 to 1980, the Korean economy had achieved an average annual growth of 7.8%. The gross national product (GNP) per person also increased from 289 to 1,592 dollars (Economic Planning Board, 1990). As a result, South Korea was once called one of the four dragons, with Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore in East Asia, because of its fast economic development.

Meanwhile, however, the authoritarian government prevented the appearance of the workers, using force, because of its preference for economic growth rather than improvement of the workers' status or environment. In addition, the nervous truce situation with North Korea, a communist nation, regarded workers activity as communist activity. This evil of too much sustainable economic growth and anti-communist ideology had the authoritarian government cooperating with the capitalists to restrict the workers' rights and conditions (Koo, 2001). The military regime had given big industrial conglomerates or "chaebol" a chance for new and profitable business. The chaebol provided money for political activities to the government. As a result, this abnormal relationship between politics and economics became one cause of the Korean financial crisis (Han, 1993; Jung, 1993). This is an example of the government's frustration with trying to expel weak conglomerates such as Han-Bo and Kia from the Korean business market (Kim et al., 1999). Meanwhile, the political oppression of the workers finally had a chance to promote the identity of the Korean workers (Koo, 2001). Thus, their exploding anger and rage against unfair political power manifested in the general strikes of 1987 and 1996-1997.

Cultural Aspects: Patriarchal and Educational Ideology

Furthermore, social and cultural discrimination against the blue-collar workers broke down the emergence of this class. Korean culture has mainly been based on Confucianism and Buddhism for a long time. Recently, Christianity has increased rapidly in Korea, but Confucianism has been the main governmental rule for about 500 years, from the period of the Cho-sun dynasty (KOIS, 2005). It has left an incorporeal inheritance of the patriarchal system for the whole Korean society. These strict principles

of this patriarchal system were used to get workers' absolute obedience in the workplace without any complaints. In addition, the low social status of the blue-collar worker in Korean society also came from this traditional abuse. Furthermore, for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, most blue-collar workers were ignored or discriminated against by white-collar workers, even at the same factories. Indeed, the female workers' status was worse than male workers' because of the male-centered society (Chang, 1984; Koo, 2001; Willis, 1977). Such a patriarchal and export-oriented government benefited greatly during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s at the expense of the workers' low salary and bad treatment. However, the accumulation of anger and grievances against decades of economic, social, and cultural abuse finally burst in the whole worker struggle in 1987.

In addition, another kind of abuse from Confucianism is its educational ideology as a standard of social position. Although education is the basis of different classes in capitalist society, Korea has experienced huge political confusion and a difficult destiny so that education became a strong tool for moving to high status with more creditable and apparent aspect (Koo, 2001). Thus, this educational level has become a standard of social status (Kim et al., 1986). Educational discrimination has made workers decide to attend evening school so that they can begin to recognize their inhuman status and environment in the workplace. Paradoxically, the educational ideology has played a role in crushing the workers' hopes; equally, it became an identity of the workers as their goal. At the same time, however, these obstacles have provided a chance to recognize their identity and to transform their economic inequality and social treatment (Koo, 2001; Suk, 1984).

The other cultural aspect of building the identity of the Korean workers based on 'Han.' The notion of 'Han' is very wide spread in the whole Korean class. This is not

unique word for the workers only. The definition of 'Han' is accumulated individual resentment and sadness, or anger against injustice. It is an intense feeling of oppression and hope of resolving it (Abelmann, 1996; Lie, 1998; Ogle, 1990). The norm of Han finally makes a person think and act to resolve Han. This concept can explain some Korean activities or phrases. For example, the Korean people have had diligence to work and a passion for education because of the Han of their low economic life and short educational reality. For a long time, this Han has been conceived of mainly by the poor people, the workers, females, the disabled, and so on. Thus, the process of resolving Han was the process of making an identity for the workers in Korea. The stronger political and cultural oppression of the workers was, the stronger the Han in the identity of the Korean workers was. The explosion of Han must be strong, intensive, and powerful in order to be displayed (Koo, 2001).

Korean Workers Since 1997

Since 1997, some important parts of the Korean worker's identity would not seem clear because of the short recognition of the workers. One reason is the lack of enough time for Korean workers to accept or settle on their unique identity outside of the society. The workers' general strikes in 1987, 1996-1997 established their social and economic solidarity for achieving democracy and job stability. However, at the end of 1997, Korea had accepted the IMF's policy of a rigid financial, industrial structure, and labor market. In fact, the Korean workers had felt the pain of the companies' bankruptcies, huge layoffs, sudden decreases in salary, and collapse of families as result of this life. The number of unemployed increased from 658,000 in December 1997 to 1.7

million in December 1998. The annual unemployment rate was increased from 2.6% in 1997 to 6.8% in 1998 (Koo, 2001).

Although the Korean workers could not but accept such hard conditions such as layoffs, they improved their political and social status. The sudden changes in the global economic system let Korean workers change their own economic conditions rather than others'. For example, each leader of the Korean workers was not united with other leaders but have been separated into blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, service workers, and so on since 1997 (Song, 1994). Indeed, the economic gap between regular workers and irregular workers has increased. While many regular workers at a big company have enjoyed welfare, most irregular workers have not. Thus, the sudden financial crisis did not allow enough time to think deeply about the identity of the Korean workers (Lim, Cha, Park, & Lee, 1989).

Another cause of the conceptual lack of workers is the purpose of the Korean worker movement. The workers struggled for human treatment and dignity rather than high salary or a better life. The honor and dignity was more important especially for Korean workers because of the absolute relationship between labor and management (Koo, 2001). After resolving such human condition to some degree, the Korean workers moved their interest to economic conditions rather than issues of local community or society such as poor people (Lim & Lim, 1993). The Korean workers apparently have obtained much good political, economic, and social status through their struggle against oppression (Koo, 2001). Their identity has been changing by their recognition and activities; at the same time, the identity of workers in Korea has faced the global

economic system so that it has been required to transform according to the recent social-cultural situation.

Especially, the middle-age urban Korean workers have been an important group in Korea's developing economic history. This is because they were central workers who have worked for the progress of Korean economic growth since the 1970s. Meanwhile, the middle-aged urban male workers have enlarged their power in the workplace since the 1980s, heavy industrial period. They played an important role in the general strikes in 1987, 1996-1997. However, most of them in companies or institutions had faced a huge layoff in the 1997 financial crisis (Koo, 2001). They have been much victimized in a company or institution because they were just older than others. Indeed, they have suffered the economic, psychological crisis in their families.

Perspective Transformation Learning

Overview of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Lee, Min-ho Mezirow's transformative learning theory is about the adult learning of making meaning from some experience for a comprehensive, idealized, and universal model. Adult learners might interpret and reinterpret their sense experience through their disorienting dilemma, and then they may make meaning from it and hence learn from it (Mezirow, 1994). In other words, each individual adult learner is able to transform his or her perspective through critical reflective and collective discourse. Additionally, critical reflection and rational discourse are elements "of adult learning emphasized by those cultures experiencing rapid social change in which old traditional authority structures have been weakened, and in which individuals must be prepared to make many diverse decisions on their own" (Mezirow, 1994. p. 222).

The transformative learning theory emerged over 20 years ago. It “[began] with the original study by Lee, Min-ho Mezirow (1978), who investigated the learning experience of women returning to school after a long hiatus” (Taylor, 1998, p. 1). Since then, perspective transformation theory in adult learning has been developing into a comprehensive, ideal learning theory. Mezirow’s (1981) perspective transformation theory is a domain of adult learning. It was derived from Habermas’ knowledge and interest theory. Habermas’ theory is concerned with the close relationship between human cognition and human interests. According to human interests, cognitive knowledge can be changeable. Habermas (1971) has classified three primary cognitive interests: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. Mezirow applied Habermas’ classification into three learning areas: technical learning, practical learning, and emancipatory learning. Mezirow points to emancipatory learning as the unique dimension of adult learning. So, he suggests that perspective transformation learning theory is emancipatory learning.

For emancipatory learning to occur in adult learning, Mezirow asserted that we use the notion of our frames of reference or meaning structure that includes two dimensions such as meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Meaning perspectives are “broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). Meaning perspectives serve to shape sensation and to delimitate perception, feelings, and cognition for our value and sense of self. There, for example, are social norms, ideologies, personality traits, learning styles, sensory learning preferences, and so on. Meaning schemes are “specific manifestations of our meaning perspectives” (p. 223). It happens,

for instance, as we think of abortion, black people, free market capitalism or liberalism, and so forth (Mezirow).

There are two kinds of transformation leaning by reflection: one is ordinary transformation learning and the other is perspective transformation learning. The ordinary transformation learning occurs when a meaning scheme is changed by reflection on a context or process; on the other hand, perspective transformation learning happens when meaning perspectives are turned by critical reflection into a presupposition or hypothesis. If an individual makes or changes his meaning perspectives from his or her distortion or disoriented dilemma by critical reflection, she or he would be using perspective transformation learning. Thus, transformative learning theory means to focus on changing meaning perspective only by critical reflection.

According to Mezirow's transformative learning theory, learning is constructed in a linear process and steps: a disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, perspective transformation, reflective discourse, and practical action (Mezirow, 1991a, 1994; Mezirow et al., 1990) We are able to confront a disorienting dilemma when we reflect on the unexamined assumptions of our beliefs that are not working well for us, or where old ways of thinking are no longer functional (Mezirow, 1994). For example, a disorienting dilemma may be a death, illness, or job loss. A disorienting dilemma makes someone feel one's own inability to solve a problem with one's assumptions. He or she pursues self-examination and a critical assessment of his or her own assumptions. The assessment leads him or her to recognize other's similar changes. Then, he or she starts to explore options for forming new roles, relationships, and actions, and formulating a plan of action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Recently, there has been a focus on expanding transformative learning theory to include emotion, feeling, intuition, and spirituality (Dirkx, 1997, 2000, 2001; Taylor, 1997; Wiessner & Mezirow, 2000). Dirkx (1997) regards holistic transformative learning as an understanding of the self through spiritual, emotional, and mythological dimensions of experience. Dirkx (2001) indicates that emotions and imagination are integral to the process of adult learning so that the imagined method is an alternative for rational and reflective process of meaning making. Taylor (1997) pointed out the realm of spatiality beyond the limitations of rationality with non-conscious learning, relationship, and the collective unconscious.

Uses of Perspective Transformation Today

Lee, Min-ho Mezirow (1981) set forth a theory of why adults return to formal education, which he called perspective transformation. Perspective transformation refers to how and why an adult, who may not have thought that formal education was of value, should decide one day to enter a night school, community college, or to finish his or her general educational development. Mezirow argued that this shift in perspective, from a negative to a positive view of education, came as the result of some sort of life shock, such as being fired or laid off, the death of a spouse or other provider, or an accident that demonstrated their economic and career vulnerability. This view of Mezirow's was new because it set forth a comprehensive cognitive learning theory of adult learning. However, Mezirow soon drew criticism from others in the field of adult education. Most of Mezirow's critics found his theory too individualized, too removed from a social context through which one would come to such a change in views towards education.

Clark and Wilson (1991) focused on the rationality of one's surrounding culture, that a rationale for returning to education is deeply embedded in modernity and notions of progress, which inevitably influence individual decisions with regard to education. Collard and Law (1989) likewise found Mezirow's theory too individualized and focused on how the decision to return to school might be tied to collective social action, that the individual finds his or her educational goals through a social movement to which they belonged or fell under the influence of. Newman (1994a) shared this political critique of Collard and Law and narrowed it to the concept of conscientization, by which individuals determine individual goals, although those goals bring them into "political action," to a larger social context of others who share their desire for knowledge of a certain type. Though Newman's critique begins with individual change, as does Mezirow's, it still stresses the social context in which adult learning grows and flourishes.

There is a fundamental divide in adult education theory that is evident here: those like Mezirow who assert that the prime motivation for learning comes from within the individual, and those such as Clark, Wilson, Collard, and Law, who assert that social influences shape the individual's decision to return to formal education. Newman (1994b) acts as a bridge of sorts, suggesting that the individual can aspire to personal change, but will find him or herself eventually politically engaged as a result of this individual commitment. With regard to my research, I believe that Mezirow's theory, despite the shortcomings that other scholars have pointed to, still has use for contemporary research. In summary, I share Newman's critique that adult education can begin with individual initiative and change, as Mezirow emphasizes but that it can and should lead to political-social awareness and a type of learning society.

For Mezirow, there are three points: 1) that individual cognition and rationality are the starting points of social and political engagement; 2) latter-day Mezirow (along with Newman) proves useful for my research in his assertion that critical reflection leads to participation in a rational discourse that leads to civic engagement; and 3) Mezirow's theory addresses individual shock and may help us understand how individuals, and society, can overcome calamities like natural disaster, unemployment, accidents, death, and other forms of vulnerability. In sum, Mezirow's perspective transformation theory offers a comprehensive approach that helps us to understand the individual dimensions of adult learning as a necessary complement to the social dimensions that scholars such as Clark, Wilson, Collard, and Law have pointed out.

Clark, Wilson, and Cultural Context

Clark and Wilson (1991), in their critique of Mezirow's perspective transformation as too decontextualized to provide a useful theoretical model, argued that he has failed to account for the cultural and rational context that influences those adult learners who return to school for formal education. Modern culture, in their view, has had within it the values of progress and education, and adults adopt these values, these "symbolic models" that they internalize, and these values that are "central . . . in modern culture" (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Mezirow, 1991b, p. 190). Essentially, Clark and Wilson argued that social values, more than some kind of innate human desire, were what caused the individual adult to change their perspective about formal education and begin a new career in learning.

To support their argument, Clark and Wilson focused on the fact that Mezirow used a small case study and extrapolated his findings to a broad general theory,

suggesting that this further illustrates the narrowness and incompleteness, or inadequacy, of his theory. This “national study of women in college re-entry programs”, Mezirow concluded, and Clark and Wilson contended, was a sweeping model of “the existential challenges of adulthood” and the consequent “transformations in ‘meaning perspective’” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6). Few since Mezirow’s findings have argued that it is possible to conclude so much from a single case study, which has given his critics ammunition to undermine his findings.

Mezirow responded to Clark and Wilson by saying that the shock that the individual experiences that leads them to reentering formal education is part of the social context; by this, he meant that it was still a shock that affected the individual to have this transformation in their perspective towards education. In essence, Mezirow explained the social influence within his larger model of individual change, that a broad social event like racism might lead to the shock of a racist encounter, which would reveal to the individual his or her vulnerability, which would cause him or her to decide to enter some institution of learning.

Collard, Law, and the Influence of Collective Social Action

Collard and Law, like Wilson and Clark, found Mezirow too individualistic and explored how “collective social action” influenced one’s educational goals, to “emancipatory adult education” (Mezirow, 1989, p. 69). What Collard and Law (1989) discovered was that individuals identified themselves with a political agenda such as regions, gender, age, labor unions, and race-related civil rights. The authors discussed perspective transformation, seen as adult learning that leads to social action, as not a complete theory of adult learning and education.

Mezirow responded to these criticisms by saying that the collective social action that Collard and Law pointed to as influential, was actually not the prime influence but rather the result, or byproduct, of the individual's perspective transformation that sprang from their initial shock and subsequent critical reflection. Mezirow stated that "social action" was the result, by and large, of "transformed meaning structures" on the individual level that grew to influence and change "our interpersonal relationships in the family" and then the larger realm of "collective political action" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 230). This happened through dialogic learning as the individual, while engaged in critical reflection of their shock experience, begins to enter into a discourse that others who have also experienced this shock are also participating in, which, in Mezirow's words early in 1985, would "foster collective social action" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 148). In sum, Mezirow did not discount the reality or necessity of social activism, but simply altered the causality, suggesting that from personal decisions and realizations emerge larger societal change and not the other way around.

Newman, Mezirow, and the Balance between Individual and Societal Causes

As these critics stressed the social-political ramifications of learning, Mezirow modified his individualism and discussed the social effects and benefits for a learning society that scholars such as Clark, Wilson, Collard, and Law were concerned about. Others joined Mezirow in his individualistic model of how learning comes to effect broader social change. Newman was one such scholar who employed educational theorist Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization, the idea that learning must affect social progress of a certain type. Newman (1993), seeking to bridge the warring factions in this debate, relied on Freire's idea of conscientization to argue that it led not only to social

awareness, but to “political action,” pointing to the individualistic tone of Mezirow’s theories as “more like a sophisticated form of self-knowledge, assertion and personal growth” than a model of social change, or of education with any kind of social relevance (Mezirow, 1994, p. 229). In essence, Newman attempted to take Mezirow’s model of individual change and bridge it with the goals of social progress that rested well with scholars like Clark, Wilson, and others. In his own words, Newman stated that “perspective transformation,” Mezirow’s individual model, should be “a personal activity that constitutes the starting point to political action” and that Mezirow and other theorists like him were “still centered on the individual learner” more than they should be (Newman 1994b, p. 29, 61).

Theory and Its Applications in My Research

This line of theorizing, that of Newman and the latter-day, modified Mezirow, is most fruitful for my own research because I agree that the desire for learning begins with the individual’s own personal transformation. However, like Newman and unlike Mezirow, I am seeking ways to apply learning in broader, practical, societal uses to build a Korean learning society. Therefore, I find the individualistic aspects of Mezirow’s thinking, that which would make perspective transformation little more than “a sophisticated form of self-knowledge,” quite useless and even a distraction from the application of learning to social goals, to collective progress and benefit.

The reason I find Newman’s theory more useful for my own research is because I am examining the impact of unemployment, a shock of sorts, on Korean society. Thus, it is necessary for me to have a model of research that takes into consideration these traumas, about which Mezirow has written more and offers a more complex theory than

what the others have written. Clark, Collard, Law, and others focus more on social values and how society imparts them to the individual, yet they have not sufficiently set forth a model which I could use to explain how individuals respond to the crisis that unemployment, stemming from global shifts in the world economy, cause in the individual's personal life. In sum, scholars like Mezirow and Newman have the most elaborate and complete theories on how people adjust to crises that leave them vulnerable. Therefore, I find them most useful for my own line of research, the way that the South Korean government, employers, and educators can use unemployment to draw individuals to worker re-education and other forms of adult learning.

It is important to note, as well, that Mezirow's theories have changed over time, that he is not today the same scholar he was when writing first in the late 70s and early 80s. He has altered his views to accommodate social ramifications, which Newman's scholarship demonstrates in its attempt to show the ability of an individual model to affect broader social activism. With this in mind, I find three aspects of Mezirow's scholarship useful in my own research as explained in the following:

Individual Cognition and Rationality

Mezirow's theory employs the idea of individual cognition and rationality, that the individual person makes a decision to pursue learning based on their innate rational capacity. Furthermore, Mezirow asserted that social change emanates from the rational capacity within each person, who then meets and begins a dialogue with others who have had the same kind of awakening to their need for self-education. Mezirow's theory of individual cognition and rationality provides a useful starting point for my own research

because I investigate workers' learning process through their cognitive and rational patterns mostly.

The individual cognitive-rational capacity makes it possible to converse and connect with a larger social circle, to connect with society, and to connect between the individual and society in each other's conversational situation. Mezirow derived this approach, which individuals learn on their own and then enter into in a larger social discourse through communication, from Habermas' (1972) theory of knowledge and human interests. He regards the communicative interest as conversational learning in adult education area. As a result, the situation or condition of conversation between adult learners has become an essential kind of learning style for everyone. This communicative discourse has to assume that individuals have cognitive and rational capacities in order for them to converse with one another on a larger scale. Mezirow's assumption about the individual's rational capacity, and then desire to converse with others, is what led him to believe that through this discourse they could change their perspective towards education and develop a social awareness.

It is possible to think of transformation from a personal perspective to a social perspective on one hand. It is an essential starting point for an individual to recognize or accept perspective transformation, and then it will be possible to expand to the social perspective transformation. Social perspective change might begin with a personal perspective change because each personal perspective transformation in the cognitive-rational context enlarges or increases the whole group cognitive-rational transformation, and then it will change the perspective of the community and finally society. Mezirow (1991b) said, "We must begin with individual perspective transformations before social

transformations can succeed” (p. 363). So, I agree with Mezirow that we must begin with individual change before we can have a greater transformation of perspective.

For example, there are three kinds of self-society relations in transformational learning theories: the first relation flows from self to society which is recognized by Mezirow; the second progressive relation orients from society to self or from structure to agency, indicated by Brookfield and Welton; and the last transformational relation exists on a shared influence between society and individual by Hart and Tisdell (Wilson & Kiely, 2002). However, all kinds of self-to-society relations can be exposed by the individual cognitive-rational approach. In other words, the individual cognitive-rational approach may be based on all kinds of transformation.

Indeed, Mezirow’s theory of individual cognition and rationality seems to be a starting point examining the individual cognitive rationality of the adult learning process under special social conditions. Especially, the theory may provide opportunity to learn about connection between a social change since the IMF crisis as a global context and the Korean workers’ learning process.

Critical Reflection and Rational Discourse

Mezirow’s perspective transformation provides a rational discourse that is likely to be a conversational cognitive space, in which critical reflection plays a sufficient role in understanding a disorienting dilemma or conflict. Rational discourse exposes an aspect of mutual truth, which is regarded as necessary learning for a society established by the continuous learning interaction between citizens and the social environment. The critical interaction in rational discourse makes meaningful the relationship between individual and society.

The second strength of perspective transformation has both individual and social aspects in rational discourse because transformative learning is “profoundly intersubjective, but it is not exclusively group mediated” (Mezirow, 1989, p. 173). Rational discourse is a critical cognitive space in which the interaction of a person’s or a group’s thoughts, assumptions, perspectives, values, or ideas can happen under free and equal conditions, which make transformations livelier. For example, rational discourse is able to set forth a critical self-learning which may be driven by common conversational between friends or colleagues. Meanwhile, the subject of critical reflection in rational discourse may be experiencing personal conflicts or issues such as job loss, divorce, a serious accident, and death.

Rational discourse deals with a disorienting dilemma that is an acute internal or external personal crisis. Yet, the personal dilemma may be embedded in a social-cultural context because according to Mezirow (as cited in Taylor, 1998), “learning [is] situated, affected by social and cultural forces” (p. 28). A disorienting dilemma seems to connect to a personal crisis; however, it must be essentially grounded in a certain social-cultural crisis in some cases.

Meanwhile, the successful critical reflection finally comes from the trust of each individual. One kind of trust of each other comes from the dialogical methodology in rational discourse. This rational discourse has given people a trusting relationship not only in self trust. Baumgartner (2001) asserts that rational discourse is “not an independent act but is an interdependent relationship built on trust” (p. 19). Indeed, Tennant (1993) shows that Mezirow’s theory is “directed at the intersection of the individual and the social” (p. 36). The term rational discourse is likely to be based on

mutual trust of each other, individual and society. The ideal rational discourse has the fundamental background of a reciprocal truthful relationship. Thus, perspective transformation seems to be in the reciprocal trust context at least. Finally, the basic foundation of perspective transformation is how to make a mutual faith condition for a rational-dialogical methodology, which also encourages building a learning society. Although the ideal condition itself does not seem to be created in practice, the basic premise of it is the common belief relationship or condition for each other as participants. This seems to be much closer to reciprocated trust principles such as human rights and equality. Thus, we could recognize shared truth aspects through rational discourse.

The individual cognition and rationality of Mezirow is based on critical reflection, as an element, which is a critical operation of human cognition, that may occur in the confused and conflicting conditions between one's own distorted assumptions or interpretations and the other's new knowledge, perceptions, or viewpoints. Critical reflection as an essential factor can lead to change in the individual-cognitive perspective transformation that Mezirow focuses on. Freire attempted to transform an individual's disorienting dilemma into a conscientious situation through critical dialogues; in the same way, Mezirow tried to change the individual confused perspective into a new one by doing critical reflection in rational discourse.

On the other hand, critical reflection also plays a role in the learning process, in which critical reflection causes a change in a previous perspective, which is not appropriate for a new situation or environment, into a new or adequate perspective, which seems to be a cognitive cornerstone of conflict-solution. The new cognition called the transformative perspective, according to Mezirow, has changed the level of critical

reflection matching the contemporary environment. Again, the leveled-up critical reflection tends to establish a new perspective through the interaction between perspective and critical reflection. This kind of cognitive learning process may be essentially useful to explain the expansion from personal to social transformation because the individual has to meet the social environment in common. For example, when a man wants to get a job for himself, he has an individual perspective about his own job; however, as he meets people in another company in his business, he must get a new perspective for solving the conflicts that happen between him and the partner or the surroundings. The new perspective transforms the critical reflection level, and then the critical reflection affects the new perspective.

The critical reflection and rational discourse of Mezirow's provided the opportunity to explore the learning process of Korean workers who became self-employed after the 1997 financial crisis. It is possible to deal with critical reflection as a tool of individual perspective transformation. In this article, Mezirow (1998) shaped the notion of critical reflection into critical reflection of assumptions (CRA): "This concept is central to understanding how adults learn to think for themselves rather than act on the concepts, values, and feelings of others" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 185). Also, he mentioned that the need for CRA: "We cannot learn the meaning of what is being communicated without becoming critically reflective of sub-textual assumptions about truthfulness, truth, authenticity, and coherence" (p. 189).

Using Calamity as a Springboard for Adult Learning

According to perspective transformation learning theory, human activity usually seems to depend on a transformative perspective for dealing with a problem or a calamity.

The perspective transformation sets forth critical reflection as a means for solving a shock or conflicts through rational discourse such as conversation, dialogue, or discussion. When I use such an environment of rational discourse for enhancing critical reflection and transformative perspective through everyday practice with others, I might already have prepared the alternative or upgraded perspective through exercising calamities before I really meet those who will engage in the discourse. In sum, this is a fundamental and positive strategy for preventing risks such as a calamity, catastrophe, or upheaval. In addition, the practice of critical reflection and rational discourse in transformative learning show to prepare for individual and social growth development. Moreover, this aspect of transformative learning provides my research added essential questions about the adult learning process.

The cognitive transformation may mostly lead to physical transformation. For example, if a man who had a distorted assumption or faint knowledge has an experience of perspective transformation, he would seem to be transforming into adopting right or correct thoughts or attitudes according to Mezirow's learning theory. Mezirow's critical reflection and rational discourse tend to assume building mutual trust among adult learners so that a transformative perspective refers to positive change rather than to a negative result. Tennant (1993) also pointed out that a perspective transformation is "a [positive] developmental shift (a new world view) rather than simply developmental progresses" (p. 34). This aspect of using calamity as a springboard for adult learning is helpful for workers to deal with their dilemma or shock coming from unemployment as in my research topic.

The benefit of perspective transformation seems to be to prevent the risk of sudden individual and social shocks or accidents from external crisis through everyday critical reflection. Mezirow took an original or often triggering event or disorienting dilemma for a single, dramatic happening for perspective transformation so that he seems to refer to a radical or shocking transformative perspective. For example, after I suffer from a dramatic crisis, I can have a chance to develop my perspective transformation. However, in my opinion, perspective transformation can prevent the sudden-crucial crisis through everyday critical reflection. Mezirow's perspective transformation seems to be a process to deal with sudden or gradual disoriented-shocked dilemma by practicing critical reflection in rational discourse during one's whole life. Perspective transformation will be useful to apply to individual or social dilemmas or crises because personal crisis is mostly connected with social-cultural crisis. Especially it seems to be an adequate strategy against global economic crisis these days.

Perspective transformation theory gives us the tools to continue the cognitive development of individual and society by exercising critical reflection and radical discourse in everyday situations. For instance, Taylor (1998) said, "Elias (1997) describes the transformation of mental capacities associated with cognitive development in response to and working through the mental exigencies of modern life" (p. 11). But, this perspective transformation seems not to develop the individual perspective transformation just once but to do it continually. Transformative learning is "a process where meaning making becomes continually more clarified" (Taylor, p. 11). Thus, perspective transformation is to pursue sustaining development through everyday critical reflection.

Perspective transformation theory provides us with a vision toward a mutual faith learning society through preventing risk and keeping development continually. In Mezirow's ideal condition, critical self-reflection and dialogue activity indicate the learning society. Perspective transformation theory provides us with tools to help develop a learning society because it encourages establishing a mutually trustful relationship between people through critical reflection and rational discourse. A transformative perspective may provide a certain bridge to move from the globalization age to a trustful learning society for adults. Perspective transformation seems to have personal cognitive-rational power through everyday critical reflection to transform social cognitive-active power for a mutual credible learning society.

Thus, using personal calamity for my research provides some advantages, which is to be able to match the research purpose, which was to explore Korean workers' learning process during unemployment, because my unit of analysis was Korean workers who had experienced unemployment. Thus, I examined the learning process of the Korean workers after they had suffered the calamity of unemployment; in addition I have tried to confirm the assumption that the workers were able to continually change their transformative perspective.

Summary

In summary, from Mezirow's transformative perspective learning theory, I was able to garner three useful points for my own research: first, individual cognition and rationality are an important starting point for social and ideal transformation; second, rational discourse takes people into a perspective transformational process through critical reflection toward forming a learning society; and third, perspective transformation

learning theory provides a positive means for coping with calamities such as unemployment, accident, death, and so forth.

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation has been central in the adult education field for 20 years. There are many issues as well as interesting positions on perspective transformation. Especially, the individual versus the social context of perspective transformation learning theory has been a major issue. I believe that with the three positive aspects of transformative perspective learning theory, perspective transformation will have more potential use and application in adult learning practice in the future. It is meaningful for me to discuss why perspective transformation is still useful because this learning theory has helped me to understand the Korean workers' patterns of thoughts and behaviors as well as to encourage them to transform their perspective on job instability and self-employment, especially in a global context.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter presents the research methods for exploring the learning process of the particular Korean workers who changed from being employed as lifetime employment to being self-employed after the financial crisis of 1997. First, I state my purpose and research questions for the study. Secondly, I discuss a case study using some ethnographic procedure as appropriate for my research purpose. Third, I explain the process of selecting the study site, the sample, data collection, and analysis of the data, using the case study using some ethnographic research methods. Finally, I give the limitations of this research study.

Research Purpose and Questions

Today, almost all the nations of the world are connected to each other through the global economic system. Job instability has become the main phenomenon. Indeed, job uncertainty may cause a crisis for family, the community, and even states. Especially, Korean workers could not help but accept the job uncertainty resulting from the decisions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the 1997 Korean financial crisis.

These particular Korean workers need to be acknowledged for contributing to Korea's phenomenal economic growth before 1997; in contrast, however, they were the victims in the response to the financial crisis in 1997. Most middle-aged urban male lifetime job workers were compelled to quit their jobs in their companies because of old age and not enough salary under the IMF policy. Indeed, the Korean social security system did not work well for all these unemployed workers. Although they had to support their families, they were limited in their options for getting another job because

of their older age. However, most of the Korean workers interviewed had overcome their difficult experience in the 1997 financial crisis.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the learning process of the Korean workers who were forced to move from lifelong employment to self-employment with the impact of the 1997 crisis. The purpose of this research was also to investigate how the Korean workers have changed their learning perspectives in the global context since 1997.

According to my research purpose, this study addressed the following research questions:

- 1 How have these particular Korean workers learned to deal with their unemployment and working experience since the economic crisis of 1997?
 - 1.1 How do they make meaning of their experiences since 1997?
 - 1.2 How do they relate their experiences to the larger economic restructuring that occurred in Korea since 1997?
- 2 How have these particular workers learned to transform themselves from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers?
 - 2.1 How have cultural, social and class-based traditions and processes shaped the meaning the workers make of their individual experiences?
 - 2.2 How has their identity of as a lifetime employee been changed and modified in their new self-employed context?
- 3 How have these Korean workers learned to overcome their job instability in the global context?

- 3.1 How have these Korean workers obtained their occupational pride as self-employed persons since the global economic crisis?
- 3.2 How have these Korean workers transformed their learning perspective in order to deal with employment instability after the IMF crises in 1997?

A Case Study Using some Ethnographic Approaches

This study explored the learning process of nine Korean workers after their job loss in the financial crisis of 1997. For this research, I selected a case study using some ethnographic approaches for the following reasons: According to Fetterman (1998), “With a research problem, a theory of social interaction or behavior, and a variety of conceptual guidelines in mind, the ethnographer strides into a culture or social situation to explore its terrain and to collect and analyze data” (p. 31). This remark could be a very simple and clear explanation of my research activity. First, I had a research problem because the Korean workers’ learning perspective was transformed through a special social and cultural situation, so I used a perspective transformation learning theory as a guideline for my case study using some ethnographic approaches.

Second, I tried to enter into a particular cultural or social situation where the lifetime job workers were transformed to self-employed workers since the financial crisis of 1997. So my research formally related to a case study with the boundaries (Stake, 1995). Meanwhile, the contents of the study seemed to close to some ethnographic approaches. Furthermore, the ethnographer uses a qualitative method to describe a culture by dealing with aspects of human experience: what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use (Spradley, 1980). Fetterman (1989) indicated that the “ethnograph[ic] [approach] is the art and science of describing a group or culture” (p. 11).

The ethnographic approach is “not only a research technique but the term also is used to describe the product of an investigation” (Boyle, 1994, p. 161). This definition also indicates that the ethnographic approach is connected to both a process and a product (Agar, 1980; Hughes, 1992).

For this reason, a case study using some qualitative ethnographic procedure seems to have three key aspects of ethnography: the cultural process as an object; reflexivity as a process; and etic and emic as an analysis production.

Cultural Process: The Shared Objective

The first reason for using an ethnographic approach for my research was to understand the cultural process the Korean workers went through. I examined how the particular Korean workers learned to overcome their job instability since 1997. Namely, the learning process of the Korean workers to make this adaptation seemed to be a significant cultural process as this ethnographic study shows. Practically, I have realized that the participants’ learning process was affected by the special social and cultural circumstances in Korea. I recognized that the Korean workers’ learning process was based on elements of Korea’s unique culture—economic, social, political, education, and language.

Thus, for this ethnographic study it was important to understand the cultural process the workers were involved in to be able to understand the context for their learning in a new employment situation. The concept of culture is to enable “the ethnographer [have] to go beyond what people say and do to understand that shared system of meanings we call culture” (Boyle, 1994, p. 160). The term culture is a comprehensive and broad concept and thus it holds extensive and extended

interpretations. Spradley (1979) integrates culture into the acquired knowledge “that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (p. 5). So, I tried to focus on the acquired knowledge of the particular Korean workers, and how they acquired it in a special social economic situation.

Meanwhile, cultural knowledge cannot be gained quickly. Geertz (1973) sees culture as a public symbolic meaning system, whereby ethnographers seek and describe the meaning of human thoughts and behaviors in a social condition over a long term. According to Geertz’s view, I was able to confine my research to examining the Korean workers’ learning process through the economic situation within Korean culture. These particular Korean workers’ learning process has been constructed for at least 10 years. In addition, numerous workers have experienced similar difficult circumstances in Korea as a result of the financial crisis of 1997. Furthermore, I wanted to focus on the meaning of this cultural process rather on presenting a piece of this cultural phenomenon. Thus, the Korean worker’s learning experience seemed to be closely connected with coinciding cultural elements.

According to Spradley (1980), every social situation as culture “can be identified by three primary elements: a place, actors, and activities” (p. 39). However, in my opinion, culture may be constructed through the interweaving of actors (public people), place, activity (thought and behavior), and time. So, I collected my data from the particular Korean workers who were the actors; Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi areas in Korea as the place(s), the workers’ learning processing as the activity, and around the Korean financial crisis of 1997 as the time.

These elements of culture seem to be continually changing their meaning even though they may appear to be externally fixed or the same. In other words, culture can be regarded as a living concept in motion rather than as a static picture of a social situation. Thus, to understand culture as an object of research is not simple or uncomplicated but complex and multifaceted. In my field work, I found that several participants had a little bit different thoughts and behaviors than the others, at least externally. So, I tried to find out the fundamental and deep meanings of what the participants were saying and doing as Boyle (1994) suggests: the ethnographer has “to do more than just describe behavior, she or he must understand why the behavior takes place and under what circumstances” (p. 162).

In sum, the major object of using the ethnographic approach is to examine the cultural process, which is called a meaning system that is established by the interaction and interpretation of the meanings of what people say, or what people do under a social cultural condition. Indeed, ethnographic research refers to the procedures of a culture rather than a just phenomenon of a culture. From my analysis I believe that the Korean workers’ learning process fits into this category and calls for cultural analysis. Therefore, to study the Korean workers’ learning process required an ethnographic approach.

Reflexivity: The Shared Processing

Second, the reflexivity of the ethnographic approach was a way to examine the Korean workers’ learning since 1997 as part of cultural processing. Reflexivity refers to “an act of repeated thinking about our project, [and an attempt to] become self-aware of the process and consequences of knowledge production by bringing the original act of knowledge back into consciousness” (Gadamer as cited in Thomas, 1993, p. 46).

The ethnographic approach has a reflexive character to its method, because its object is cultural process-driven reflecting the interactions of human beings and their environment. Ethnographic processing is similar to the reflective research cycle in which the circulation of research questions and interpretations are continued (Spradley, 1980). The cultural process seems to depend on the interactive reflection between subjective human and the objective environment. In other words, the ethnographic approach tends to focus on the subjective human being's pattern of thoughts and behaviors constructed in the social objective environment.

For that reason, the particular Korean workers' learning under the condition of the 1997 financial crisis was regarded as an appropriate topic for the ethnographic method. During my field work, understanding the Korean workers' learning process seemed to be based on the interactive reflection between the Korean workers and their job environment during the 1997 financial crisis. Although that national financial crisis is over, their interactions would likely have continued through the present time.

Another reason for considering reflexivity in the ethnographic approach is the significant role of the ethnographic researcher as another subjective activator. Boyle (1994) claims that the reflexive character of the ethnographic research implies that "the researcher is a part of the world that she or he studies and is affected by it" (p. 165). Furthermore, Thomas (1993) believes that "reflection refers to the act of rigorous examination of how [systematic intellectual or personal] involvement [with our subjects] affects our data gathering, analysis, and subsequent display of the data to an audience" (p. 46). Thus, the researcher's role is very important to the study itself.

Practically, reflexivity as an ethnographic element discloses the ethnographic problem of the subjective-objective relationship and the ethnographer's role. The role of the ethnographer is to keep the appropriate distance between the himself or herself as a researcher and the participants for creating a balance between the subjective and objective operations. Geertz (1973) also explains that an ethnographic approach is constructed "by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements and then characterizing the whole system in some general way" (p. 17). In my research field, when I interviewed the participants, I would have a chance to decide whether to ask something deeply regarding their difficult experience or emotion or to turn to another issue. This reflected the relationship between myself as the researcher and the participants. As a consequence, ethnographic reflexivity was a useful tool for studying the Korean workers' learning in their special context. That is, the research process for learning the perspectives of the laid-off Korean workers was connected to the reflexivity of an ethnographic analysis. In addition, through the ethnographic approach I could look at parts of the Korean workers' and at the whole in terms of the global economic context.

Emic and Etic: The Share Analysis

Finally, the emic and etic aspects of the ethnographic method support the analysis of this research on the Korean workers' learning since 1997. The emic and etic perspective as a key element of the ethnographic approach is helpful for interpreting the meaning of the participants' experience by using both the insiders' and outsiders' viewpoints. In fact, the emic and etic concept seems to be close to the concept of reflexivity, although the former tends to focus on each role as a factor, whereas the latter (reflexivity) tends to point to the process of interpretation in the ethnographic approach.

The emic perspective means the cultural insider's view or informant's perspective of reality (Boyle, 1994). In other words, the central aim of the ethnographic approach is 'to understand another way of life from the native point of view' (Spradley, 1980; Malinowski, 1922). Meanwhile, the etic perspective means "the outsider's framework, the researcher's abstractions, or the scientific explanation of reality" (Boyle, 1994, p. 166). To use Boyle's analogy, if the emic perspective is the lived contents or resources of a social situation, the etic perspective would be the skillful packing or advertising. Indeed, both of these perspectives are integral for explaining the ethnographic characteristics: procedure and product. That is to say, Boyle maintains that most ethnographers use both perspectives for collecting data "from the emic perspective [the insider's] of their informants and then trying to make sense of it in terms of both the informants' perspectives and their own etic [outsider's] or scientific analysis" (p. 167).

Concretely, emics and etics occur during the ethnographic data collection procedures such as participant observation and conversation or interviewing. Akinson and Hammersley (1994) assert that "both the ethnograph[ic] [approach] and participant observation have been claimed to represent a uniquely humanistic, interpretive approach, as opposed to supposedly 'scientific' and 'positivist' positions" (p. 249). Thus, both emic and etic views facilitate the ethnographer's enlarging conceptual or theoretical interpretations (Boyle, 1994). The term participation is an important aspect of access in garnering sufficient emic perspectives from the participants. Geertz (1973) supports this claim, indicating that ethnographers don't study villages; they study in the village.

Interviewing is one of the essential participation tools for an ethnographic researcher to be able to gain more from his or her emic [outsider] perspective. According

to Spradley (1979), tacit knowledge as a large part of any culture is “revealed through speech, both in casual comments and in lengthy interviews [because] language is the primary means for transmitting culture from one generation to the next, much of any culture is encoded in linguistic form” (p. 9). Concretely, when I examined the learning process of the laid off Korean workers after the 1997 financial crisis, in the field, I was able to get a lot of information about their experience by interviewing them. An aspect of the ethnographic approach is “to see people and their behavior” constructed by “all the real-world incentives and constraints” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 31), so I contacted people with lay-off experience caused by the social economic crisis.

Therefore, an ethnographic approach including emic and etic aspects was suitable to discover the unfolding cultural process of the particular Korean workers’ learning perspectives in the global context of 1997. Geertz (1973) claims that “cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meaning, assessing the guesses, and drawing an explanatory conclusion from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape” (p. 20). Thus, by the emic and etic elements, I was able to explore or analyze the meaning beyond the ‘Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape.’

In sum, these three aspects of the ethnographic approach include the culture process, reflexivity, and the emic and etic perspective. For these reasons, I tried to access my research by a case study using the three ethnographic approaches.

Research Design for Selecting the Site and the Sample

Selecting the Site

The site of qualitative research can be regarded as “specific spatial and temporal regions within society where people interact” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 91). The primary criteria for selecting sites depend on the qualitative purpose, accessibility, and interest (Carspecken, 1996; Fetterman, 1989). Accordingly, I selected the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi area in Korea as my research site.

There were two main reasons why I chose this area for my research. The first was to match the research purpose: to investigate how Korean workers who had been forced to move from a lifelong employment to self-employment had transformed their learning perspectives in the global context since 1997. Historically, the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi area in Korea has been a densely populated place for about one fourth the population of Korea. Most of all, this area, has been one of the industrial areas in Korea for a long time and where many lifetime job workers had been laid off since 1997. Indeed, most self-employment in the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi area has been affected by economic recession and high competition until now. Therefore, this area seemed suitable as a research site for my research purpose.

Another reason I chose the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi area as a research site was the convenience of its accessibility as a research field. The area has a well-developed transportation system including buses, subway, and automobiles, which made it easy for me as the investigator of this research to reach any place comfortably. In addition to this, I was born and lived for over 30 years in Seoul, Korea, so I am still familiar with the environment and could observe things. In fact, I was born in Seoul, Korea in

1971 when my country was developing its industry. For example, I remember wearing traditional shoes made of all rubber, and sneakers a little later. Most important, I have many friends, family, or other relatives living in the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi region so they could assist me in getting access to independent contractors.

Sampling Process

The procedure for sampling is another crucial process in qualitative research because through this process we are able to decide how to choose the members of the target population (Carspecken, 1996; Fetterman, 1989). Patton (1990) reported a number of purposeful sampling strategies that focus on purposes other than on representativeness or randomness. My research purpose was to examine the learning process of particular Korean workers since 1997. According to the method of purposeful sampling, I could learn more by conducting in-depth questioning of a few Korean workers since 1997 rather than by gathering quantitative information from a random sample of all participants.

In my purposeful sampling, I used a snowball or chain sampling technique that relies on people who identify other people or cases to investigate. The reason this sampling strategy was useful was that I had no list of self-employed persons in the Seoul, Incheon, and Kyounggi area, so I had to draw a sample based on individuals' recommendations. Especially, this sampling based on recommendations could enable me to obtain a few key names for this research (Patton, 1990). Thus, I accessed Korean workers who were independent contractors in order to find my sample for the study.

For a field example, I tried to find a key actor who was an important participant and connection for my research participants the first time. Finally, I found a person who

helped me access several people related to his previous and present job, which had a snowballing effect. Using Fetterman's (1998) 'big-net approach,' I met everyone I could at first so that I was able to ensure a broad view of events around the 1997 financial crisis in Korea before I focused on specific participants. The big-net approach was helpful for me to access or understand the whole atmosphere of the crisis regarding the details of the research. So, I decided that I would interview someone who was not exactly matched with my research but who had a chance to see the entire circumstances.

In addition, I did a judgmental sampling strategy, that is, "ethnographers rely on their judgment to select the most appropriate members of the subculture or unit, based on the research question" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 43). Through this process, I tried to select more appropriate samples. Specifically, the following conditions related to the particular Korean workers in the sampling process, which made my research more clear: (a) men who were laid off by industry during the 1997 financial crisis; (b) men who have worked in the self-employment sector since 1997; and (c) men who had at least 5 years' experience in the lifetime employment sector prior to 1997. From those who met these conditions, I was finally able to select 9 participants.

Workers' Career Sketches: From Lifetime Employment to Self-Employment

This section gives an overview of the participants' characteristics and a description of each person's lay-off experience and current work situation.

During my five months of field work, I explored the participants' characteristics such as age, years in the lifetime employed workplace, educational background, marital status, past and present occupation, and current work location. I have summarized these characteristics as follows: (a) the participants' ages ranged from 42 to 60 years. There

was 1 person who was 40 years old, 6 persons who were 50 years old, and 2 persons who were 60 years old. The average age of the participants was about 53.6; (b) their years in the lifetime employment ranged from 13 to 30. There were 3 persons with over 10 years, 5 persons with over 20 years, and 1 person with over 30 years. Their average time in the lifelong employment was about 21.4 years; (c) as to educational background, 2 persons had a high school diploma and 7 persons had a college diploma; (d) all were married and living with their wives. They averaged 2 children who ranged from elementary school to college graduate; (e) the previous occupations of the participants included a small manufacturing plant manager for 4 persons, banking for 2 persons, information system manager for 1 person, financial counselor for 1 person, and 1 person had worked for an agriculture association. Currently, their occupations were: 5 real estate brokers, 1 restaurant owner, 2 small engineering businessmen, and 1 fruit tree farm manager; (f) regarding work location, 1 person was in Seoul city, 2 were in Incheon city, and 6 were in Kyounggi province.

The following sketches of the participants' stories of leaving their jobs and becoming self-employed are based on the interviews with them.

Kim, Cheol-su's Career

Kim, Cheol-su was the first participant I interviewed in my study. When I called him about my research for the first time, he accepted my request for an interview with earnest. His voice and attitude seemed very nice and gentle even though he had not known me before. Actually, I had heard of his self-employment after having a salaried job, through my wife. Kim, Cheol-su was the son of a member of a private association involving my parents-in-law. I really wanted to get him involved in my research, so I got

my mother-in-law to join in the interview. Otherwise, he might not have taken part in my study. This choice seemed right because he had been working without even a day off in a year. Kim, Cheol-su was the manager and cook at his restaurant with four employees. During the interview, he was very kind to speak about something that he had experienced during a break.

Kim, Cheol-su was 42 years old and had spent 13 years as an information system manager in an information system company. He had entered the company just after graduating college. He had experienced the financial crisis in 1997. He felt strongly about the instability of his job during the difficult IMF situation, although he survived at that time. Finally, he decided to leave the company and establish a restaurant that served seafood. He gave the background of quitting the company with his colleague in the company. He explained that one day his close colleague wanted to counsel with him about becoming independent or remaining with the company. During several discussions, they shared their thoughts about self-employment together because of their children and improving their economic status. Then together they investigated the market for the restaurant before they quit their company, because they wanted to manage a restaurant together. But, both of the men's parents rejected their plan to work together. So, Kim, Cheol-su has been running his restaurant as his own business, while his friend has run a different business. Kim, Cheol-su's wife works part time at his workplace and takes care of their two daughters. Despite a recent recession, he looked as if he has strong self-esteem working at his restaurant. He seems to be a soldier to walk his own way.

Pak, Chan-sik's Career

After the IMF lay-off, Pak, Chan-sik changed from being a manager of a bank to working as a real estate broker because of his age and limited money. He had graduated from college and worked at a bank for 26 years. He was 57 years old, but he looked like a man in his early 50s. Despite his contribution to the bank for a long time, he was finally laid off one day by the IMF that he never heard of before. Today, he seems to envy someone who has stayed at their position at a bank through a law suit in spite of such a difficult condition. After he left the bank, his important relationship with the bank business was over. Pak, Chan-sik is feeling isolated and worries about his sons' marriage in the future. Pak, Chan-sik has two sons: the first son works at a company; the other is studying abroad. Pak, Chan-sik is providing less money to his sons because of a little difficult economic condition. But, he is making an effort to support his second son's study. He is also trying to live generously despite having diabetes and high blood pressure. Pak, Chan-sik hopes that young people including his sons will be able to get a house within a stable market economy.

Hong, Gil-dong's Career

Hong, Gil-dong has been working as a real estate broker for seven years. He had worked at a promising computer corporation as a financial counselor. In 1998, Hong, Gil-dong left the company and applied to several companies. Unfortunately, he was rejected because of his age at 50. Accepting someone's advice, he studied for a real estate broker's license for about a year and has been in the real estate business since 1999. He was 58 years old and had spent about 27 years in his previous company. Hong, Gil-dong has worked with his wife in his office. He said that it's a common situation in real estate

offices in the area. He felt that the present economic recession is worse than the IMF crisis, so he regards himself as lower than the middle class. He hopes for a reunion of Korea so that his life will be better than now. Especially, he has wished for a new leader to show up who will be able to solve these problems and improve economic development.

Jang, Gil-su's Career

Jang, Gil-su was 60 years old and had worked in an automobile company for 30 years. He entered the company in the early 1970s when Korea began to develop industrial businesses. Jang, Gil-su seemed to be a typical worker in an industrial generation. In his case, Jang, Gil-su joined the procedure which sells the past company to another company so that he watched his automobile company disappeared to the last time. After he came out of it, he managed a one-room building rental business for a several months. One day, at his nephew's suggestion, he decided to join him as a self-employed real estate broker. A few months later, Jang, Gil-su had a chance to be independent the field, so he has worked with his wife as an assistant for about six years. He is a leader of his family of three young men, his wife, and his elderly mother. Recently, he suffered while taking care of his mother who was ill, and is worried about his son in a military group and his wife's disease. However, Jang, Gil-su repeatedly told me that he is proud of dealing with his life reasonably well without any help, even though the IMF situation attacked him.

Do, Yeong-cheol's Career

Do, Yeong-cheol has been a real estate broker for seven years. In 1999, he was laid off at his previous engineering company by the IMF impact. But Do, Yeong-cheol had already prepared his way toward self-employment while working for the company so that he would not feel scared or would have any other instability. In fact, when he entered

the corporation, he met a senior employment who advised him to prepare for a future life after quitting this job. Do, Yeong-cheol accepted his advice and took a national license test to become a real estate broker. He also made his wife learn the know-how of managing the real estate business for a few years before he was laid off. He remembered the IMF situation as a better chance for his life. Do, Yeong-cheol seemed to be successful in his self-employment real estate business instead of the difficult IMF situation. He also expressed gratitude to God for his second life. Do, Yeong-cheol's religious belief might be another source for overcoming such a sour condition. He is now 51 years old.

Lee, Min-ho's Career

Lee, Min-ho had been a stock team manager in a bank for 23 years. He had a position dealing with all the debentures, bonds, or stocks of the bank. He managed about 4.5 trillion. However, the IMF financial crisis in Korea changed his circumstance totally. For example, the bonds became just papers so that the bank had to fire about 1,000 workers among 3,500 at that time. Lee, Min-ho had the power to decide who would be fired; however, he resigned his office since he was so tired and it was hard work making the decisions. As a result, he got a retirement allowance and spent two years investing in stocks or the bond market. However, at the end of 2001, the Korean stock market collapsed so that he tried to find another job. Lee, Min-ho once ran a rice store but he it up because there were so many of the same kind of stores, as well as because of the hard physical works. After that, he learned baking skills and personal computer management; however, finally he decided to become a real estate broker in Kyounggi province.

Lee, Min-ho began to work in the bank as soon as he graduated from high school; however, he studied economics in a college at night while working at the bank

during the day. Today, he seems to have a difficult life because of a high level outflow with a low level income. Sometimes, he worries about the polarizing situation between the high class and low class in Korean society. But, Lee, Min-ho has still hopes that Korea will become an advanced country with a new leader and take another economic jump with a challenge like an FTA (Free Trade Agreement).

Min, Gi-seo's Career

Min, Gi-seo was an engineer in a big automobile manufacturing company. He had worked at its engineering laboratory for 23 years. Just before the IMF situation happened in Korea, a joint corporation in the US left without returning funds. Because of the lack of funds, his previous company was finally taken over by another automobile company in Korea. During the process, Min, Gi-seo was in an executive position, but he was fired by the new owner. Min, Gi-seo wandered around for six months after he was laid off. He tried to meet and talk with persons like seniors or friends about anything to get peace of mind. Especially, his wife helped him cheer up so that he was encouraged to begin a new life. Meanwhile, he tried to talk with his two daughters about his unemployed status after a long time because he didn't want to shock them immediately. Finally, he established a small business with some colleagues from the same company. This company works on a design for automobile parts like power-transformers. In the early stage of the business, however, it was difficult for Min, Gi-seo to persuade the owners of small automotive businesses to accept his engineering ability, mainly because that they didn't understand the concept of outsourcing at that time. As a result, he had to engage into the production of the assembly line of making auto-machines regarding with power-transformer. However, he has paradoxically gotten about 10 hundred million on

yearly sales for export. He is 58 years old now and likes to walk with his wife for exercise after his leg got hurt. Min, Gi-seo remembers a little about North Korea but less than his old brothers; however, he still has hope for the reunification of the Korean peninsula for economic and social reasons.

Choe, Jae-seong's Career

Choe, Jae-seong was a department head of a Korean agricultural association in the Kimpo, Kyounggi area for about 27 years. He had worked in the agricultural association with his father who received retirement pay and a retirement ceremony when he retired. But, Choe, Jae-seong did not get the same benefit like a retirement ceremony because of the IMF financial crisis. In fact, three years before the IMF crisis occurred, the agricultural association recognized the bad signs, so it tried to integrate several branch associations into one per area. Choe, Jae-seong also joined this project and made one association from five branch associations in the Kimpo area. Despite this effort, the central agricultural association instructed an allocated number of dismissals from each area's agricultural association during the IMF period. Choe, Jae-seong decided by himself to resign his position because he was in a high position and earned a higher salary rather than other staff. He thought that he could retire at his retirement age before the IMF situation. Despite such circumstances, Choe, Jae-seong had confidence since he had already prepared for retirement 5 or 6 before years the IMF situation occurred. During his employment, he had been interested in fruit tree cultivation because it can last for a long time and is kind of nature's present. Actually, Choe, Jae-seong has refused to use artificial or chemical fertilizers and uses organic fertilizer. As a result, his best fruit, the pear, has been exported to Taiwan with the highest grade. Choe, Jae-seong was, however,

60 years old and so it seemed to be difficult for him to manage the fruit tree cultivation as time went on. For example, he has been working alone, so he did not have time to cut the unnecessary branches. So, the quality of the pear was not good last year; because of such a result, he could not export his pears. In addition, he has served his elderly parents in his house for a long time. Meanwhile, Choe, Jae-seong criticized the government's agricultural policy and the agricultural association's activity because the administration did not serve the farmers, which has been harmful to the farmers in Korea for a long time. For instance, there was so much time wasted asking for new report forms whenever the new agricultural minister was elected. And excess investment in a few kinds of crops occurred with surplus crops in every year. Such crop prices dropped and the farmers are still without any compensation for the damage. In addition, Choe, Jae-seong pointed out the educational problem; for example, young men with a college diploma had less knowledge than he did with only a high school diploma. But, Choe, Jae-seong has hope for a new leader in Korea. He believes that to build good circumstances in farming will benefit all the people as well as the farmers.

Yang, Dong-geun's Career

Yang, Dong-geun had worked at an automobile company for 17 years. In 1998, before he left the company, he had been a department head. The IMF financial crisis made the previous company restructure, so Yang, Dong-geun decided to leave this workplace. There were two reasons: the first was that Yang, Dong-geun wanted to give other colleagues another chance of a life, and the other was to accomplish his dream of becoming a CEO (Chief Executive Officer). So, Yang, Dong-geun established his own manufacture company for automobile parts that he was used to working with for a long

time. Interestingly, the anniversary of the founding of his business was the same day as when he had been laid off. Despite his difficult situation, he created his own company. It was possible because his father supported him as well with his own will. Yang, Dong-geun has delivered automobile parts to other big automobile companies since the initial period. However, there are sometimes obstacles such as a labor dispute in a big company. For example, the labor dispute in Hyundai, Kia, or Ssangyong automobile companies lasted about a month last year. In this case, Yang, Dong-geun's work all but stopped during the dispute time. Meanwhile, Yang, Dong-geun is now 53 and has a wife and two children. He let his son study at a college in China. Yang, Dong-geun really wishes that his son would become a CEO more brilliant than himself. He expects that his manufactured business will arrive at a limit in Korea because China, Vietnam, and other developing countries are growing and the business is moving onto such countries now. However, Yang, Dong-geun also expects the GeiSung complex project between South and North Korea to be successful under more political and economic stability. He believes this would be a good chance for improving things for Korean workers as well as the Korean economy.

Research Process of Collecting and Analyzing the Data

Data Collection Process

The data source for this research consisted of my participant observation, face-to-face interviews with the participants, and field notes. These data sources also connected with my substantive interest in exploring the Korean workers' learning experiences since the IMF situation of 1997. This data were collected in Korea for about 6 months from August to December 2006. I as an investigator tried to touch the participants at least

twice times for interview and observation. Meanwhile, there happened North Korea's nuclear test during the data collection period.

Basically, a good strategy for a sufficient data collection is to develop and keep up a good, close relationship with the participants. Intimate, trusting relationships “with several highly knowledgeable key community residents help us develop an insider's perspective on local life” (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 223). A friendly relationship with the participants can be a useful resource for understanding their social situation more closely. As a result, when I tried to enter into a new area of the particular Korean workers' learning perspectives, I strongly felt that I had been introduced to and connected with the study participants in a friendly and informal manner.

Entry Process

At first, I thought that there might be many people such as those I was looking for in regard to the 1957 financial crisis in Korea, and that it might not be difficult to get potential participants. So, I tried to get my family to let me know someone who wanted to participate in my research when I would go to Korea. However, I did not receive any replies from my family members. Unfortunately, my father said to me, “It's hard to find someone you want to see for your dissertation. Could you change to any other person than the unemployed?” I said, “Father, thank you for your effort for me, but, I really would not like to see the unemployed but to see the self-employed after the 1997 lay-off.” Several times I had a similar reply from my family, although I still focused on the self-employed each time. At that time, I was confused about why it was so hard to find some participants, until I finally recognized why, which I explain later. Moreover, after my own family and I went back to Korea, I tried to find a key person who would be a good

participant and a good connection to other persons. I asked my family members, my siblings, relatives, and friends in Korea, but unfortunately I did not find anyone for a while.

Meanwhile, I tried to search for potential participants through the Internet. They might be self-employed now and might have had an experience of lay-off from a lifetime employment after working there for over five years. The important thing was that they had been fired during the IMF financial crisis in Korea since 1997. I also found it hard to find anybody for my research by using the Internet. Using the keyword search word, “IMF,” I realized that the sources on the Internet on IMF were too numerous. Of course, I found some information on people regarding the IMF; however, they were not exactly the target population for my research. Indeed, some of the information was not even correct and was outdated so that I could not connect with them anymore.

In fact, I tried to access one person I had found through the Internet, but when I called him to explain why I wanted to see him, unfortunately he refused to have any connection with me. This is a common situation in Korea when anyone tries to see someone whom they have never seen before. As a result of this difficult experience, I was certainly able to confirm the Fetterman’s (1998) assertion that “access is clearly impossible without some escort” (p. 34).

At the time of my research, I knew that the IMF influence was decreasing because the Korean government had already decided to change its relationship with the IMF by 2001 and that the bad situation was fading in the memories of the Korean people who had been affected. It is 10 years since the Korean government was under the IMF control. However, Korea is the world-wide 4th foreign exchange retention country today. The

Korean government announced several times that the financial crisis was over. So, those who were still affected by the IMF crisis had decreased or were not apparent in the present economic or social situation. This was the crucial reason I could not find anyone for my study for a while.

Finally and fortunately, I found three persons through my family members. One became an important participant as well as a key actor for accessing other people. According to Fetterman's (1998) halo effect, I was lucky to have found the right person who knew a small group of people who fit my participant criteria. This entry process was important because this key person provided me as an investigator with plenty of informal and valid data in my participant observations and for my interviews.

Participant Observation Process

First, participant observation was an appropriate strategy of data collection for my research purpose in some respects. Participant observation provides the opportunity to “describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why—at least from the standpoint of participants—things happen as they do in particular situations” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 12).

In my research, workplace activity was generally regarded as the workers' ability to manage their own store or shop because of their diverse experience. This activity was evident in their thinking, behavior, and imagination in creating their own work and income. In addition to talking with these self-employed persons, their business site and customers would be important since that is how they derived their income.

Actually, I planned to observe the all participants' workplace activity as a volunteer focusing on how to deal with customers for a while. However, what I observed

was at the field was only a few participants' activity on their workplace: a yard sale for fruits and a dealing moment in real estate. It's why I couldn't observe as the followings: at first, the two CEOs in small manufacture business were so busy, for example, they had lots of business trip, that I could not follow them any more. As a matter of fact, it was even difficult for me to make an appointment with them just for twice interviews. In the other hand, most of real estate brokers had no regular meeting with customers, and they seemed not to want for me to join at a dealing moment. Meanwhile, in a restaurant owner's case, he almost worked in a kitchen to cook so that he seemed to have a little chance to deal with customers directly.

According to Fetterman (1998), the time period might be regarded as a long-term residency which helps an investigator "internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of the people under study" (p. 35). However, it could be seen as a short-term residency by comparison. Fetterman (1998) also insisted that ethnographic research in one's own culture may not require as much time to arrive at a core point as research in a foreign culture because of the familiar language and customs, and because the researcher is already seen as an insider in many respects. In my case, I am a Korean, was born and grew up in Korea, and had lived for over 30 years in Korean culture. I also had a personal experience of the 1997 financial crisis so that I gave up taking a job and entered graduate school in Korea at that time. So, the five months seemed a suitable time period for my study.

Practically, I used two observational methods in the field. One was to engage in activities in suitable situations, and the other was to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation (Spradley, 1980). I tried to recognize explicit and tacit

awareness of activity and emotion in others and myself in a particular situation through participant observation, as suggested by Fetterman (1998). And, I tried to form a balance between being an insider and an outsider engaging in introspection with keeping record (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Spradley, 1980). I quickly learned the geography and resources of the workplace as suggested by Fetterman.

Specifically, as a participant observer, one day I was able to take part in the sale of fruit outside at one participant's business location. I helped him set up the sale place with a cloth roof, poles, and boxes. However, because of the hot weather, only a few neighbors passed by the fruit stall. Another observation was of in the activity in a real estate broker's office during the sale of an apartment. My other observations involved being in a restaurant at lunch time, at manufacturing office, and so on.

Interview Process

My second source of data was from interviews of the participants about their learning in the global context. The main source of my data was from in-depth interviews that included written and verbal accounts solicited from the participants. The in-depth interview was a tool that would reveal significant information for my research purpose because of the interactions in the interview transcripts, which included the Korean workers' thoughts and behaviors. In this interview process, the main contents included the workers' learning experiences related to the research questions.

According to Spradley (1979), the skilled interviewer usually lets people lead a friendly conversation while introducing a few questions. Therefore, I interviewed my participants in "a very informal manner and at times [I shared] more personal information about [myself] than do conventional interviewers" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 223). I

translated the interviews and our conversations with the respondents. This was to enhance confidence building between myself as the researcher and the participants as well as to “diminish [my] power and control of the interview process” (Foley & Valenzuela, p. 223).

As an interviewer, it was important to make the research purpose clear because most participants might have an obscure idea of it. In any event, the interview place and time was selected through negotiations with each participant for an available time and place. The two in-depth interviews lasted averagely from an hour to one and half hour each time and were voice-recorded. Actually, the interview places were almost the office of participants and the interview time also were taken at any day of weekday mostly.

Each time I met them, I reminded them where the interview was to go. Furthermore, I repeatedly explained the content or orientation that I was going to use during the interview process. For example, I had to translate the goal of the interview into native terms or language that the participants would understand easily and clearly. So, I tried to explain my research purpose as looking for how they understand their transformed economic or social status rather than their leaning perspective. I also stated my reasons for writing down and voice-recording the interviews. Indeed, it was also necessary to take a time to allow the informants to think about the questions (Spradley, 1979; Fetterman, 1998).

I used mostly retrospective interviews for reconstructing the participants’ past, historical information about their leaning process since the IMF crisis. The retrospective interviews gave me individual information on their values and worldviews (Fetterman, 1998). Indeed, as an investigator I should understand the historical facts, so I read several books, articles, and so on. During the interviewing, I used descriptive, semi-structured,

and contrasting questions as tools for leading the interviews. Descriptive questions were an easier way to ask the informants to describe their concrete events or activities (Spradley, 1979). For example, when I began interviewing a participant, I asked what they had been doing for the past six months. The semi-structured questions enabled me as an investigator to notice the domain of their cultural knowledge. Contrasting questions were useful to distinguish the dimensions of meaning from the informants' terms. Depending on each interview situation, these questions were mixed. At the end of each interview, I expressed my gratefulness for their participation and reminded the informants of where we would start next time. I confirmed the details of time and place for our next interview.

For my research, I first contacted my uncle and asked him to be a participant in my study. He is a nice, warm person so he was likely to take part in my research. But, fact, such decision was not easy for me. At first, I thought that a participant who was so close to me would be wrong for my research. I regarded anyone who had such a difficult experience or loss of security as having a tendency to hide their "embarrassing" past and not share it with anybody. Indeed, if the interviewee, as in the case with my uncle, is very close to the interviewer, the participant might feel nervous about telling a relative his or her story more than to a non-related person. Moreover, I was so nervous in that it was the first time I was officially interviewing for my dissertation. Of course, before that time, I had the experience of interviewing people; however, I felt that this situation and topic would be more difficult than previous interviewing.

Finally, I decided to interview my uncle as the first participant since the initial activity would give me plenty of insight or feeling for the atmosphere for the next

interview. I thought that even though the first interview might fail, it could give me something useful. What I needed the first time was encouragement with which I could entry the field work. Fortunately, when I began to interview with my uncle, I was able to blow off any negative thoughts or ideas because he was very honest as well as kind. He had a positive attitude for telling me about his difficult experience during the financial crisis. As a result, I thought that the initial interview was probably good for the research, although later I felt there were some missing parts.

Now, I know the reasons that my uncle took such a positive attitude towards my research. One was that as a relative he wanted me to work well in my research, so he wanted to give me something important for my research. Secondly, he had been proud of his company experience and of his efforts during that period even when he was laid off. This fact would let him give me a lot of information and insights into his pride about having a salaried job and life style. Finally, I think that he seemed to need someone with whom he could really share his experience and give some advice that he had gotten from the IMF situation.

After several interviews, I recognized that one of the important elements in the interview is the positive attitude of the participants. In fact, I eliminated two participants after I met them in an interview or did an observation. They had no positive attitude to take part in my research and they finally refused the interview without any explanation. For that reason, I got rid of them.

Field Note and Key Actor

As another data source for exploring the Korean workers' learning process since 1997, I, a researcher, used my field notes. There might be concealed clues in the

interactions with the self-employed workers, and the situations might provide plenty of field notes written during my interviews or participant observations. The use of the researcher's field notes is a kind of data analysis procedure during data collection. Spradley (1980) believes that "the language used in field notes has numerous long-range consequences for research, [and] field notes soon become filled with native terms," (pp. 64-65). Thus, these data sources also were necessary units of observation.

Meanwhile, my field notes were a tool to write something special or strange or a main point from my observations of the participants at their places of business. These notes were in a free style, but they might include data about places and situations that would remind me of an idea or provide a clear memory.

Informal interviews such as casual conversations are mostly needed to understand the meaning of what the participants say. For informal interviews, the key actor's role is very important but he or she must be careful to keep an independent distance. Fetterman (1998) stated that "selecting an integral and powerful member of the community is useful, but establishing independence in the field is also important to avoid prematurely cutting off other lines of communication" (p. 34).

One day the key actor in my research tried to have me meet two new members and interview them together according to their schedule. I showed my appreciation for his willingness to contact the two new persons, but I did not reply to his opinion about doing group interview work. Even though I felt a group interview would be good to improve my research on some points, I had to keep the one-to-one interviews for the high quality of the research. Moreover, the group interview has the serious weakness of revealing the individual's difficult experience to the others. Besides, the contract of affirmation about

participants' security is only signed between an investigator and one participant; therefore, there is no security between each participant.

The key actor went with me to see most participants and introduced me to them. The key actor's strong, smooth introduction of myself and my research was needed to create a good atmosphere for interviewing an unfamiliar person at first. In addition, the first time I tried to interview a participant, the key actor was not present at the place where I did the interview, although there was close relationship between the key actor and that participant. His absence at the interview time and place was good to allow the participant to tell his story. I have thanked the key actor for his role in my research activity.

Data Analysis Process

My analysis of the data acquired from the interviews, observations, and field notes focused primarily on particular Korean workers' learning process since the IMF crisis of 1997. The nine interviews were mainly audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis by myself as the investigator. The participant observations and field notes I made also were important resources for my analysis of their learning process.

Analysis Tool: Transformational Learning Theory

If I found any transformative perspectives on the special and unique learning process in these particular Korean workers since the IMF trauma, I thought I could provide a useful reference to adult educators. So, I used Mezirow's transformative perspective theory as an analysis tool for this research because I thought that this theory would be in harmony with my research purpose.

Specifically, I thought that the particular Korean workers seemed to represent very similar stages in Mezirow's transformational perspective theory, which are: disoriented dilemma, critical reflection, and action. For example, the disoriented dilemma might be the IMF financial crisis regarding the huge dismissal of employees in Korea, which had never happened before. The critical reflection stage might be the exploratory learning process of the workers about their concept of lifetime employment. And the last stage, action, might be for the laid-off worker to select a kind of self-employment.

Meanwhile, I was interested in applying Mezirow's transformational learning theory to the social economical situation of the Korean workers' change from being lifetime job workers to self-employed workers after the IMF situation. Mezirow's theory points to the individual, so it would usually apply to personal transformational learning in a limited personal circumstance.

However, this study focused on the transformative learning of the particular Korean workers as individuals within the whole changing economic and social circumstances of the IMF financial crisis. In other words, the IMF had the power to control the Korean government's policies regarding the economic crisis. As a result, for about three years, the whole Korean society was affected by the IMF rulings such as structural reformation, the huge worker dismissal, and so on. So, this study was not based on a special personal condition or situation, but on a whole, special social circumstance. It was under such social conditions that I wanted to involve the transformative learning theory in analyzing in this research. Again, for analyzing the learning process of the Korean workers, the transformational learning theory became a significant analysis tool.

Data Coding Process

With the transformative learning theory as an analysis tool, I coded the data using the following steps. For the first step, I used the first-level coding as an analysis. This was basic coding work for my analysis. I coded the participants own words or key phases into categories if possible. I used different colored highlighting pens to underline sentences on the interview transcripts (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 161).

Simultaneously, I tried to save or record the data coding to a Word file on the computer. This work tended to protect the coding data from being lost as well as to confirm the data.

In the second step, I collected and separated three time-frame level categories: (a) before the IMF trauma; (b) between the IMF shock and self-employment; and (c) from the beginning of self-employment to the present. This stage could help me to see the learning process that the participants were aware of during their transformation from being lifelong employees to a self-employed.

And in the third step, I engaged the data in more detail in the following categories: what the participants thought or recognized about the job, their social and economical status, their family and friends, their education, and the Korean government's policy. In the second and third steps, I cut and pasted different parts of the coded data onto different colored poster boards. Thus, I was able to move any pieces of the interview coding into any other categories according to my reorganization. In addition, this method was easy for me to use to get an overview of the coded data at one time.

Finally, I adjusted the coded data according to my research questions at this step. This coding work helped me focus on my research questions and research purpose. Meanwhile, I read and re-read to find missing parts or to get the hidden meaning from

between the lines of the interview transcripts. I also used several mid-size notebooks that I could write anything in whenever an idea occurred to me. It took a long time for me to get some of my findings.

Theme Finding Process

Concurrently, in the first analysis stage, I tried to find some initial themes that emerged from the coding work based on my interviews, observations, and field notes. Through repeated reading and interpreting of the data, I constructed initial themes that moved into more specific and evident themes. For example, I selected the theme ‘transformed thinking about job’ because the participants had experienced something that changed their thinking about work when they switched from being lifetime job workers to self-employed as a result of the IMF situation. After I examined the data carefully, I found that these particular workers showed a tendency to transform their concept of lifetime employment after the IMF crisis. As a result, this initial theme could be modified to ‘recognition of a changed concept of lifetime employment.’

In the second step of the analysis, I tried to seek patterns of thought and behavior in the Korean workers’ learning experience. I arranged and reflected on the information I had collected from my diverse sources of observations, interviews, and field notes. When any patterns emerged, I tried to confirm and to disconfirm them through evidence from “interviewing the workers again with more precise questions or interviewing other workers to determine whether against their sense of things” (Hull, Jury, Ziv, & Katz, 1996, p. 11). For instance, when I investigated the workers’ learning process related to the theme of transformation of the concept of a lifetime job, there were two clear patterns to this learning process: an active learning process and a passive learning process. These

two types mostly related to their timetable of preparing for and beginning an independent business. In other words, active learning tended to prepare them for self-employment and beginning a new business faster than did a passive learning process.

In the third step of analysis, I was attentive to unusual activities, moments, or situations because these could “illustrate or symbolize, for example, important tensions or problems, typical ways of negotiating change, or habitual ways of thinking and acting” (Fetterman, 1989; Hull et al., 1996, p. 12). The interactions and activities around such essential events could provide plenty of qualitative data and influence the research analysis directly (Hull et al.). In other words, I used the mode of following norms and deviating from data resources. This was meaningful because deviation from the norm could be interpreted as motivation for this research purpose (Feldman, 1995). Garfinkel (cited in Feldman, 1995) showed that both actions, those that were consistent with prevailing norms and those that were inconsistent, were equally meaningful and significant. For example, when I interviewed the Korean workers about the relationship between North and South Korea’s economies, they gave me different reflections on it. However, this situation became a point for my research. Indeed, Thomas (1993) insisted that “interpretation of data is the de-familiarization process in which we revise what we have seen and translate it into something new” (p. 43). Thus, the deviating process in this research was essential to the main emerging perspectives, insights, and values.

In the fourth step, for determining the participants’ intentions more precisely, occasionally I tried to analyze “the stresses, tones, pauses, and inflections of speech that [I] ... record[ed] on audio-record during the interviews” (Hull et al., 1996, p. 18). This analysis provided more confident interpretation of the interview. Actually, during my

interviewing and observations in the field, I continually felt that the participants had no hesitation to say anything related to his past difficult experiences. Some participants even said that using their real name in my paper was permitted. They seemed to have a lot to tell regarding the IMF trauma. As a result, I was able to get enough information from them without additional questions in the first interview.

Meanwhile, to analyze the participants' life histories was a simple and useful tool in order to help arrange their histories chronologically. In addition, it was possible to understand the thoughts and activities of workers as a whole and from a contextual perspective. For example, in the field, I tried to ask the participant his father's job or something else. So, I was able to use it to focus particularly on the conversations that surrounded and comprised key events (Hull et al., 1996). Significantly, this analysis process depended on improving the research quality, so I considered the research quality and the strategies for enhancing the quality of analyzing the data.

Research Quality

The research purpose of this study was to explore the learning process of the Korean workers' transformation of their occupation after the IMF situation in Korea. The quality which was driven by the research purpose, in my opinion, derived from meaningfulness. The term meaningfulness is defined as 'to make meaning or sense' rather than 'to be meaningful.' In other words, the term 'to explore' connects with this term 'to make sense' because both terms tend to find out or construct something meaningful from a phenomenal experience. Thus, 'to make meaning' is a necessary procedure for signifying this research purpose.

The meaningfulness of this research quality is the process of making something meaningful at the present time so that it depends on the degree of the readers' acceptance of the description of the research outcomes. Researchers make meaning from the research participants' cultural experience in order to enhance their research purpose. Meanwhile, the readers are able to decide the degree of quality by some of the indicators. The role of indicators helps meaning to be improved or clarified in accordance with the qualitative research purpose. The indicators for this research quality are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility is the first indicator that represents internal validity and internal coherence. Credibility is a tool that involves comparatively a view point of the emic perspective from the research data. Indeed, this credibility is a measure of the plausibility of the participants' meaning derived from their own experience. In other words, the participants are able to support the findings on this indicator of credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Transferability as an indicator for the quality of this study is, in my opinion, a kind of applicable response for the readers to be able to finally understand the meaning. This transferability is useful to discover the workers' experience in a social condition because it represents meanings as modernized. Making modernized meaning might "move beyond 'what is' to a state of 'what could be' (Thomas, 1993). In other words, transferability involves external validity, context-embeddedness, and the etic perspective. In this indicator, it is possible to make a balance between internal validity and external validity in a certain context (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). However, external validity or the etic perspective is more comparatively an essential element in transferability to meet the target audience.

Dependability as an indicator for high quality research is related to reliability, consistency, and stability. The term of dependability seems to be an indicator for discriminating or discerning observed changes (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). This indicator, dependability, I regard as one of the very important points for exploring my research purpose, because this reorganization of ‘the factors of observed changes’ on the workers’ experience under a social condition is a fundamental interpretational element. Conformability, another indicator for improving quality, is regarded as objectivity, neutrality, and value-explication. The conformability seems to be based on how to show the process of subjective interpretation transparently and objectively. Even the critical research method has essential features that “are epistemological and do not depend on the value orientation of criticalists” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 6).

Quality Enhancing Process

Meanwhile, strategies used for enhancing quality are the following: thick description, thick field notes, peer-debriefing, prolonged engagement, and triangulation.

For enhancing the credibility of this research, I used strategies such as thick description and thick field notes. Thick description contains detailed information that “provides answers to funding agencies’ questions and concerns and guides the intensive fieldwork planned for the project” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 60). Thick description was tightly deep-rooted in the native or insider’s language such as native concepts or meanings. Such emic perspectives were able to permeate the description and give profound scenes from inside the workers’ experience (Spradley, 1979). Even though the descriptions were from both the emic and etic perspectives, the important part of the thick description was the insiders’ language or concepts.

Peer-debriefing was used to check hidden biases in attention and vocabulary (Carspecken, 1996). With this strategy the researcher asks a colleague or a peer to read his or her notes to know whether or not the researcher ignored or paid too much attention to someone for something or used appropriate vocabulary. Besides, prolonged engagement means investing enough time to achieve the research purpose. In addition, attempts to detect distortions in the data and to build trust were present (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). However, the important criterion of using prolonged engagement is to let the investigator become accustomed to 'going native.' It is time to leave the field when the investigators begin to get lost or indifferent to the research perspective by 'going native' (Lincoln & Guba). In other words, as the etic perspective of the researcher was unable to be distinguished from the emic perspective of participants, the function of prolonged engagement was completed at last.

Triangulation was another strategy for ensuring high research quality. This was a technique for getting better findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Triangulation of information was provided through the unstructured interviews, workplace observations, and field notes. Triangulation had four different and multiple modes: sources, methods, investigators, and theories. For example, multiple sources imply multiple copies of one type of source or different sources of the same information (Lincoln & Guba). In the field, I was able to garner some additional information from a key actor who was a friend of some of the participants. Another instance was that the same method was able to be used over time. It was "true of observational notes in field logs written over some months" (Ely et al., 1991).

Limitations of My Research

The limitations of this case study using some ethnographic approaches were the following: The first limitation of this research was that it targeted a certain population. In this case, the research concerned particular Korean workers, who were transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers in the 1997 financial crisis. In addition, some of the self-employed workers among them were the focus of this research because of the possibility of access to them. And it was difficult to find more than a few participants. As a result, the results of this research cannot be applied to the whole identity process of all Korean laid-off workers in the 1997 financial crisis.

Another limitation was the generation gap between the Korean middle-aged workers and myself as a young investigator. Actually, the participants seemed to avoid very difficult parts for me. For example, the moment one of the participants told me about telling his wife and children that he had been fired from his job was difficult. It was very sensitive for me as a person from a younger generation to ask the older participants about such events, even though we were in an interview. Such conversations with the middle-age Korean men seemed to be somewhat restricting because this generation gap.

The other obstacle was that I had no experience as a full-time laborer in practice. So, it tended to be uneasy for me to access the workers' experience deeply, even though they were only casually acquainted. These limitations seemed to be some obstacles to obtaining sufficient data for my qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports the five themes that emerged from the study of the learning process of the particular Korean workers who were transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial crisis. Also, the related discussion is arranged by these themes. Indeed, for exploring the learning process of the particular Korean workers, I had focused on three transformative spaces: (a) transformation of the concept of lifetime employment; (b) transformation of social economical status; and (c) transformation of overcoming job instability. In addition, the following were the five themes as learning perspectives: (a) recognition of a changed concept of lifetime job; (b) disappointment in changed social-economical status; (c) strong criticism to the Korean government policy; (d) job instability and relationship between North and South Korea; and (e) expectation of a new leader and job stability in Korea.

Transformation of the Concept of Lifetime Employment

Theme 1: Recognition of a Changed Concept of Lifetime Job

The first theme was that all the interviewed Korean workers who were transformed from lifetime job workers into self-employed workers since the IMF financial crisis had recognized the disappearance of the concept of lifetime employment by because of that situation. As a result, the IMF financial crisis in Korea had disoriented these particular lifetime job workers.

In addition, the learning process of the particular workers in this study was separated according to a active learning process and a passive learning process. The participants were different from each other in the length of their transitional phase, their

timing for preparing and beginning an independent business, and their age distribution. Also, an adviser or one's will and circumstances were important elements or roles in their learning process. Finally, their transformative learning process helped me understand their shaky concept of lifetime employment.

The IMF Period and Disoriented Dilemma

Most of all, the effect of the learning process of the special Korean workers on their concept of a lifetime job revealed an important insight. All except Do, Yeong-cheol began to recognize the fact that the concept of lifetime employment was destroyed during the IMF period. Do, Yeong-cheol was different from other participants with following reasons. At first, he had met a company colleague who advised him to throw away the concept of whole life job in his department about 20 years earlier than the IMF. Another cause was that Yeong-cheol's department dealt with the company's profit so that many restraints often prevented most workers at the division from doing the promotion. As a result, he had felt the limitation of promotion without any connection with the owner's family in spite of his good contribution for the company.

Meanwhile, although almost all the particular Korean workers had even heard of something like the IMF's so-called honor retirement, they had not started to carefully consider the lifelong employment until the IMF financial crisis. This crisis suddenly caused the Korean workers a disorienting dilemma regarding their expected lifetime employment. For example, Min, Gi-seo described meeting the IMF situation like this:

At that time, I was in my early 50s. I did not have any alternate plan. Without any plan, I couldn't talk to anyone and wandered around. Indeed, I was a leader of my family who had a responsible position so that I did not know how to pass

through this difficult situation. I did not see forward any more. I spent so much time

Pak, Chan-sik expressed his feeling related to the IMF layoff as follows:

It was difficult for me to accept such a situation. If I were a worker now, I would resist against the fire with the employment policy. Why am I laid off? What did you do well for me? However, the IMF mood was different from this mood.

Also, Jang, Gil-su told me about the difficult atmosphere under the IMF:

And Korean workers faced the difficult situation by the financial crisis in 1997. So, I have undergone such difficult tasks, such difficult tasks . . . I had done my best for this company because I believed it was my workplace forever. Ignoring the outside world, I only had gone to the office every day and had earned a salary for my family and my children's education that I had only one thought. However, after I came out of the workplace, I thought that I was a kindergarten student who did not know anything.

Yang, Dong-geun recognized period the concept of a lifetime job as the following:

At that time, I didn't have any sense to emerge the IMF. It was because we had a stable workplace without our own faults at the time. However, the IMF occurred so that such a concept was destroyed suddenly.

Before the IMF financial crisis, Choe, Jae-seong had already experienced structure reformation of his association without any lay-offs. However, when the IMF situation began, it caused a massive discharge. In fact, Choe, Jae-seong had believed that he would retire under the retirement age limit as his father had. So, the IMF situation must have

been a disorienting dilemma for Choe, Jae-seong. He also described the situation at the IMF time:

At that time, before the IMF occurred, my Korean agricultural association had known the difficult situation and started to integrate the branches three years before. So, I attended the project to integrate five agricultural associations into one where I worked. When the so-called the IMF increased to affect the whole economy so much, the association began to have someone fired.

Learning Process: Active and Passive

Despite the particular Korean workers' dilemma, the learning process for overcoming the concept of lifetime employment was different for each individual will or circumstance. In spite of the different cases, I found and arranged the all the workers' learning processes into two types: an active learning process and a passive learning process. The differences between the active learning process and the passive learning process had three aspects: (a) the transitional phase, (b) the timing of preparing and beginning an independent business, and (c) the age distribution.

Transitional phase: Active learning process.

Most of all, the workers who had an active learning process experienced a shorter chaos or wandering period compared to the other workers who had a passive learning process. This active learning group was composed of Do, Yeong-cheol, Choe, Jae-seong, Kim, Cheol-su, and Yang, Dong-geun as self-employed workers. Do, Yeong-cheol noticed that:

Since I had recognized that the executives regarded me as a good worker, since I was a human being, I caused complications, didn't I? I have a lingering regret,

a flood of emotions, no sleeping, difficultness, and something like this so much. Meanwhile, for preparing the future, [I] had [my wife] establish the business, and I had a workplace so that the complication period was short a little bit.

Choe, Jae-seong also came out of the agricultural association without hesitation:

I received an application form of retirement at the IMF situation. Since each individual seemed to look at each other, since nobody seemed to accept the layoff, I quit first. In my case ...there was some preparation already.

Kim, Cheol-su and Yang, Dong-geun had a similar situation to Do, Yeong-cheol and Choe, Jae-seong because they tended to have accepted the reality without comparative indecision. In other words, the particular Korean workers with active learning process seemed to have recognized the disorienting dilemma as a massive discharge; they seemed to have reflected on the concept of lifetime employment critically; and then they seemed to take action without any wavering.

Meanwhile, Lee, Min-ho's case was a little bit different from the above-named workers with an active learning process. He changed from being a team leader selling bank stocks into an individual financial investor at first. During this transforming procedure, Lee, Min-ho did not seem to hesitate:

After I came out, society was in so much confusion. Especially, on January 1998, what confusion there was! The interest was 36%, so I managed financial investment since my major was finance . . . I, we, was brilliant at financial investment more than the others so that I bought debentures and then I was good for about two years.

However, Lee, Min-ho had to find another job because he lost so much money on the stock market in 2002. At the time, all the stock markets had collapsed in Korea with sudden low interest. After that period, Lee, Min-ho tried to manage a rice store, a bake shop, and a personal computer service. Finally, he decided the second way was to be a real estate broker because the job was more related to his professional experience. Lee, Min-ho explained it:

I decided to be a realtor. So, I thought it carefully with my financial information I found only financial business with increasing age. It is a service industry with law information and financial knowledge.

Except for Lee, Min-ho, all the Korean workers who had an active learning process had a little bit shorter transitional phase.

Transitional phase: Passive learning process.

Meanwhile, the Korean workers with the passive learning process had a comparably longer wandering time than those with the active learning process. These Korean workers were composed of Min, Gi-seo, Pak, Chan-sik, Jang, Gil-su, and Hong, Gil-dong. At first, Min, Gi-seo had served at his previous lifelong employment company for 23 years. In addition, he had a position of responsibility for his family. This fact seemed to affect his wandering time. According to Min, Gi-seo:

At that time, I was early 50 years old. I did not have any alternate plan. Without any plan, I couldn't talk to anyone and wandered around. Indeed, I was a leader of my family who had a responsible position so that I did not know how to pass through this difficult situation. I did not see forward any more. I spent so much time . . .

Similarly, Pak, Chan-sik pointed out that the IMF situation was a sudden huge shock. He did not admit to being fired for six months. Pak, Chan-sik described it like this:

When did we experience the IMF situation before? So, I had not any preparation against such condition. When I was laid off, I told the fact to my wife at home. I should adapt the fact that I was fired at that time, didn't I? After that, I had wandered around for about six months.

It took about one year until Hong, Gil-dong opened his office as a real estate broker. Jang, Gil-su also took about one year to start his new business. Hong, Gil-dong said:

When I came out, since my major was not engineering but human society, and my mission in the company was financial counting, I had no business outside. At that time, I was 50 years old. When I tried to get a position with applying my resume to several companies, it was nothing because of old age. But, I tried to apply to LG-Philips once again at that time; unfortunately, it did not work, too. So, on the outside, there was nothing to do. There was no finding employment in old age.

Timing of preparing and beginning independent business: Active learning process.

Most of all, the important criterion for distinguishing between the workers in an active learning process and the workers in a passive learning process in Korea was when they prepared to begin self-employment. Most of the workers with an active learning process had shown that they had obviously been preparing their second life before being laid off. As a result, all the workers with an active learning process tended to begin their second life as self-employed just after their dismissal. Choe, Jae-seong, Do, Yeong-cheol,

Yang, Dong-geun, and Lee, Min-ho all began to work just after they were laid off.

Among them, for instance, Do, Yeong-cheol responded:

Around the IMF financial crisis, someone suggested that my wife should open a real estate office . . . At that time, I already had prepared something through my wife . . . So, as soon as I quit the company, I joined the real estate business with my wife.

Especially, Yang, Dong-geun became the CEO of his own company on the same day he was laid off. Yang, Dong-geun replied in the interview:

Investigator: When did you begin your business after your retirement at that time?

Yang, Dong-geun: I did the same day as I quit.

Investigator: Wasn't it hard to do that?

Yang, Dong-geun: At that time, I thought that the IMF situation triggered me to establish a company even though it was a difficult time By those things, I prepared something a little before I was out on September 1, 1998.

However, Kim, Cheol-su took about 10 months to open his restaurant after he quit his previous company. This time was composed of selecting a place for the restaurant, setting up inside and outside, attending a class on restaurant management, requesting employees, and so on. According to Kim, Cheol-su:

This is a franchise restaurant that protects commercial rights. And, I didn't have any relation with this Chong district where I had never come here before. So, I was looking at an area with no restaurant with this kind of franchise and a good place for this business. As a result, I came here and opened it [I can go to

my restaurant] on foot. Otherwise, [my wife] would be difficult to take care of my children, and I also would feel a burden to work. So, as I began to open it, I had moved to here completely.

Except for Kim, Cheol-su's timing to open his new business, the particular Korean workers who had an active learning process tended to transform from being lifetime job workers to being self-employed as soon as they came out of their previous company.

Therefore, these activities of beginning an independent business seemed to mean that they took an action after their critical reflection about the concept of a lifetime job. For example, some workers who still had been in a company in spite of the IMF's huge discharge also tended to show that their concept of a lifetime job had been transformed. As Kim, Cheol-su's saying:

The IMF made such things [as the lifetime employment concept] collapse so much So, many workers quit their company with their will or not, some of them would be in self-employment Some of them would seek another company And the workers who had continued to work at the company even recognized that there was not the concept of a lifetime job any more now so that if they wanted to have a stable economic status, they should prepare something from the time of working in a company I also could not stay at this workplace forever, so I thought that I had to get an alternative.

However, this action seemed to be an active expression of their critical reflection rather than that of some of the others. Especially, to select an independent business seemed to be at least an active way to respond to the disappeared of the concept of lifetime employment. Although choosing self-management tended to be compelling from

another viewpoint, such as the whole social viewpoint, these workers with an active learning process mostly seemed to have confidence to select and manage their individual business rather than be in a passive learning process. For example, Choe, Jae-seong said:

In my case, I was able to quit with confidence because I had already prepared something before about 5 or 6 years when I worked at the agricultural association. I thought an orchard would be able to help my retirement life a little bit. [Also] I had land.

And Do, Yeong-cheol also expressed the confidence in his skills:

My major was mechanical engineering, and [I] have known [these auto] parts very well. For a business, I know well which part would be good and would reduce risks. The investment burdened me so much, but my family supported me.

In general, the workers with the active learning process moved on to their own business fairly quickly.

Timing of preparing and beginning independent business: Passive learning process.

On the other hand, the worker group with passive learning process had no chance to prepare for other employment before the IMF crisis. This fact was a different element even though these workers also tended to have experience to meet the disorienting dilemma and to critically reflect on the lifetime job concept during the IMF crisis. These workers included Min, Gi-seo, Pak, Chan-sik, Jang, Gil-su, and Hong, Gil-dong.

Jang, Gil-su had worked for 30 years with the concept of lifetime employment. It was a natural situation for all Korean workers because South Korea began to need many workers for developing heavy industries at that time. Such an industrial period might have provided enough things to the workers. So, most workers like Jang, Gil-su tended to be used to the life style. Jang, Gil-su pointed out the following:

I had done my best for this company because I believed it was my workplace forever. Ignoring the outside world, I only had gone to office every day and had earned a salary for my family and children's education that I had only one thought. However, after I came out of the workplace, I thought that I was a kindergarten student who did not know anything. At that time, I confirmed to know so much about the [automobile parts] area. But, after that, now, I didn't know anything about the real estate business. It was a natural situation, wasn't it?

Another example, Min, Gi-seo also had been used to the life style 'working from 6 am to 12 pm' for 23 years. So, it seemed to be difficult for him to transform his concept of lifetime employment. Min, Gi-seo said:

At such a stage, I began my social life working from 6 am to 12 pm so that I had a pride that I had worked hard for my company rather than for my own development. In the period, I had not thought of preparing my second life or anything because I did not quit this company!

Pak, Chan-sik described a typical example of these particular Korean workers. Although Pak, Chan-sik had been fired from their company, most of them had left their job without any resistance. This generation of particular Korean workers was used to showing

obedience rather than resistance although the IMF's massive discharge was a general social phenomenon. Pak, Chan-sik also explained:

However, the IMF mood was different from this mood. I just accepted the firing decided by the high board without any trouble. I only thought what I would do to live without retirement money. I came out without any resistance. Could I have an extra time?

Age distribution.

Meanwhile, the third point that I found in this study was that comparable older Korean workers like Min, Gi-seo, Pak, Chan-sik, Jang, Gil-su, and Hong, Gil-dong belonged to the passive transformative learning group. They had worked in the industrial workplace for a long time as old as they were. As a result, the older workers seemed to be used to the concept of a lifetime job. Such a long service period as an industrial worker might make it difficult to change their concept of a lifetime job. For instance, Jang, Gil-su was 60 years old and had worked for 30 years; Min, Gi-seo was 58 years old having been at an industrial company for 23 years; Pak, Chan-sik, 57 years old, had worked for 26 years; and Hong, Gil-dong, 58 years old, had spent about 27 years at his previous company.

On the other hand, the other Korean workers with an active learning process, Kim, Cheol-su, Do, Yeong-cheol, Yang, Dong-geun, Lee, Min-ho, and Choe, Jae-seong. Except Choe, Jae-seong, were comparably younger than the workers with the passive learning process. In addition, mostly their working years in the lifelong employment companies had been comparably fewer than the older age workers. For instance, Kim, Cheol-su was 42 years old with 13 years in a lifetime employment company; Do, Yeong-

cheol was 51 years old with 18 service years; Yang, Dong-geun was 53 years old with 17 service years; Lee, Min-ho was 50 years old and had worked for 23 years; and Choe, Jae-seong was 60 years old and had worked for 27 years. Among them, Lee, Min-ho had comparably longer working years than others because he had worked at his previous company just after he had graduated from a high school.

Thus, most of the particular Korean workers seemed to reveal the two types of learning process according to their age and working years: the active learning process and the passive learning process.

Adviser, Experience, and Circumstance

Meanwhile, however, there was a common point on both sides. Most of the Korean workers who transformed from being a lifetime employment to self-employment had an adviser and any experience or circumstance related to it. The more important condition for deciding to become self-employed was the fact that the adviser and the experience or circumstance seemed to come together at the same time. In other words, the adviser seems to be a trigger for a Korean worker to accept a self-employment position because of his critical reflection on a related experience or situation in the disorienting dilemma of the IMF crisis. This particular learning process with an adviser or friend illustrates exactly the rational discourse of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1998).

For example, in Kim, Cheol-su's case, though many colleagues were laid off, he began to reflect on his position in the company. At that time, Kim, Cheol-su had met a colleague with the same recognition of job instability. The colleague help Kim, Cheol-su confirm his reflection which led to his decision to open a restaurant. Do, Yeong-cheol's case was similar to Kim, Cheol-su's. Kim, Cheol-su said:

One day, an intimate staff consulted me about the problem of staying here or of being of independent status . . . He talked to me about an independent business for having better economic condition . . . for an example; it would be for growing children. So, I agreed with him and began to have an idea that he and I together would run this kind of restaurant. As a result, with working for the company, he and I investigated the growth possibility of the restaurant on rest days. At that time, this franchise restaurant was growing up. There were many consumers in any such restaurant. So, we had been cheered up by it so that I went to home and consulted with my family.

Although Kim, Cheol-su's family opposed his partnership with his colleague in the restaurant business, eventually Kim, Cheol-su opened the restaurant himself. Min, Gi-seo had made an effort to meet some seniors and juniors to listen their advice. And his colleagues also affected him to establish a new company.

Min, Gi-seo stated:

I was fired as the company was sold. After that, I had to do something to live I quit the company on December 31, 2000, and took a rest for about six months. At that time, I was in anguish of what to do and met and listened with some seniors and juniors . . . Some colleagues in the laboratory were quitting. We met together and talked about establishing a company. This was a starting point so that we finally made it.

Meanwhile, in Pak, Chan-sik's case, his friend seemed to trigger Pak, Chan-sik's decision to become a realtor. Especially, Pak, Chan-sik had spent six months useless. This fact

tended to make him try hard to enter the real estate business at that time. As Pak, Chan-sik told me:

I was laid off with that friend, and for six months, I could not spend time at home with nothing, so I joined at an art class for unemployment held by a bank. And I learned computer skills at an administrated office because I was a beginner on the computer at that time. I spent six months busy. But, after that, I didn't do anything for my second life. So, I decided to do anything. A friend of mine wanted to become a real estate broker. He asked me to take a test together. The reason was that he worried about giving up the study by studying alone. So I took a test with him after I studied it for one year.

Also, Hong, Gil-dong had a very similar situation to Pak, Chan-sik's case. Gil-dong received advice on trying to take a public license test to become a real estate broker. This was a starting point for him to begin a new life after his lay-off.

Jang, Gil-su met with his nephew-in-law and they decided to run a real estate business together. According to Jang, Gil-su:

A nephew-in-law [had worked] at a construction corporation . . . He had a realtor's license in 1985. He worked at a position to fire someone. [One day] he suggested to me to run a real estate business together because of his instable job and my social experience . . . So, we began to do the business together.

On the other hand, Do, Yeong-cheol's learning process was different from the other workers.' He was a unique participant who had learned that the concept of a lifetime job had changed a long time before the IMF crisis. However, Do, Yeong-cheol also showed the same character as the group in the active learning process. According to Do, Yeong-

cheol, in the first year when he had just entered his previous industrial company, he met an adviser who influenced his concept of lifetime employment.

Just after I joined Hai Manufacture Company, it publicly announced a national certification test of real estate broker in 1982 . . . At that time, a senior, five years older gave me advice that a company was not a right place for us to work continually so that you had better prepare anything what you would need later. So, I thought that I had better study the real estate rules systematically on this test and it would be related with a building company.

That was a turning point for him to rethink the lifetime job concept. Do, Yeong-cheol had also deeply recognized the lifetime job concept as a detriment in his workplace environment. Do, Yeong-cheol described it as follows:

I thought that I would come out of the company one day since I was not a relative to the owner . . . I worked on the purchase board with which most workers were easily related if there was a bad profit, so that many workers tended to be fired sometimes . . . I did not do a kind of illicit action for my superior because of my belief . . . I thought that this kind of attitude would not help me be promoted, so I thought to prepare something from after 10 years in the workplace.

Own Will, Experience, and Circumstance

While some did not plan ahead, other Korean workers like Yang, Dong-geun, Lee, Min-ho, and Choe, Jae-seong had reflected on the lifetime employment concept critically without any adviser, by themselves. Their critical reflection seemed to cooperate with their own will and events in the environment together. In these cases, they did not seem to be exposed to a rational discourse with any adviser or friend. Yang, Dong-geun and

Choe, Jae-seong already had their dream for a long time before the IMF situation. Rather, the IMF crisis became a trigger for them to make their dream come true. On the other hand, Lee, Min-ho had a little different experience. After he had suffered from several failures, he considered his matched job and then took it. However, they all belonged in the active learning group. First, Yang, Dong-geun had already a dream to be a CEO; however, the IMF situation triggered him to do something. According to Yang, Dong-geun:

I graduated a college of engineering . . . I thought that automobile industry was the flower of the machinery industry so I was just right at the workplace.

Personally, I had a dream of being a CEO in a further time. The IMF situation was a key actor so that my dream came true.

Just after being laid off from a bank, Lee, Min-ho began to invest in stocks or funds because of his professional knowledge. However, after the Korean stock market collapsed in 2001, he decided he should do something else. Lee, Min-ho had tried several kinds of independent businesses like a rice store and bake shop. However, he realized it would be difficult because of high competition. So, he finally found out a realtor in relation to his previous job. As Lee, Min-ho explained:

The motivation that I took an independent business was because the financial investment had a kind of limitation. At first, I invested in a rice store . . . and then I tried run a bake shop . . . and then I learned the PC business. But, they each had a difficult circumstance . . . I thought carefully about the real estate business because I came out of a financial area. So,...

However, if Lee, Min-ho had met an adviser before or during the IMF crisis, he would not have spent so much time trying other businesses. Rational discourse with an adviser might have helped him get a familiar job. It was so natural for Choe, Jae-seong to be interested in fruit culture because he had a previous job related to the business, having worked for an agricultural association. In addition, Choe, Jae-seong seemed to like the work personally. According to Choe, Jae-seong's story:

Before about 5 or 6 years ago, when I was in the agricultural association ...I had studied fruit culture as my hobby. That was an attractive business for a lifetime, and it would continue for 50-60 years at least. Despite any objection, I began it as a present to nature.

Therefore, the particular Korean workers who were transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers since the IMF financial crisis tended to have recognized the fact that lifetime employment was nowhere to be found. There were the active learning process and the passive learning process among these particular Korean workers. In the learning process, critical reflection operated along with an adviser or personal will to trigger the beginning of another business after the disorienting dilemma from the IMF crisis.

Transformed Learning: Overcoming the Concept of Lifetime Employment

In this study, I investigated the learning process of the particular Korean workers so that I could understand their learning perspectives, especially towards overcoming job instability. To overcome job instability seemed to have been an important norm in the Korean economic and social situation nowadays, as Korea has a serious unemployment problem.

Besides, Mezirow's transformative learning theory seemed to be useful to study these workers' learning perspectives. By this theory, the transformational learning process is composed of critical reflection, and action. In the particular Korean workers case, most had worked for a long time with a concept of having lifetime employment; however, most of them had experienced dismissal suddenly by the so-called IMF financial crisis.

Of course, my ultimate goal in this research was to understand the learning process of the particular Korean workers regarding overcoming job instability. However, I thought that the starting point was the transformational learning process regarding the lifetime job concept, similar to investigating the two kinds of learning processes, active and passive.

Transformation of Social Economical Status

Theme 2: Disappointment in the Changed Social-Economical Status

My second finding in this research is that the particular Korean workers who were transformed from lifetime employment to self-employment since the IMF financial crisis seemed to be suffering from adaptation to their changed social-economical status. Even though most Korean workers have tried to accept their transformed social-economical status, they still seemed to find it difficult to adapt to such a status. Especially, the disappointment in their changed status has been revealed in some situations like dealing with the clients, treating of their children, attending meetings, and so on.

Dealing with the Clients

At first, when the particular Korean lifetime job workers began to work as self-employed, there were a few episodes such as dealing clients during the adaptation process

of a self-management business. For example, Do, Yeong-cheol regretted that he did not work at a business department in the company because of his need to dealing with clients in real society. Do, Yeong-cheol indicated his experience in this regard:

If I worked at a business department in the company, I would adjust myself so fast and very well in a society. Clients asked me if I just came out of a company. I might be strict. I was used to accepting persons' greeting in the company, but it was the opposite in society A self-employed person should begin to work with the clients' view It was a little difficult in the early time.

Pak, Chan-sik had not had any business experience before the IMF crisis. So, he had many embarrassing experience through trial and error. Pak, Chan-sik gave an example:

I had not touched the real estate business. I had not engaged in any kind of business. As a result, I was shameful. I had many trials and errors at the early open time At that time, I had to visit at an apartment with a client. I rambled at the second floor, although I also lived in an apartment. The client asked me, "You are a realtor, aren't you?"

However, at the present time, it still seems difficult for the particular Korean workers in self-management to deal with their clients. They seemed to be familiar with instructing or being instructed by lower or higher colleagues in their previous companies for a long time. As a result, some of the self-employed workers tended to reveal the difficulty of dealing with their clients as in the following episodes:

In Jang, Gil-su's case, for example, he was an executive at an automobile manufacture company before the IMF situation. After he was laid off, he became a real estate broker in an area. One day, I as an investigator for this research had a chance to

observe the moment of his selling and buying an apartment house. At that time, when a client wanted to ask for certification to buy the house, Jang, Gil-su started to explain that it was not needed according to some basic legal concept. However, the client asked him the same certification question again with an insecure face. And then Jang, Gil-su's face turned red and his voice rose. Instantly there was a little bit of an uncomfortable mood between the client and Jang, Gil-su. But, at that same time, Jang, Gil-su's wife who was in the business quickly interrupted and to change the topic, smoothing things over.

Meanwhile, Hong, Gil-dong explained why most real estate brokers like him manage on a small scale. This fact seemed to take out some of the disappointment of self-employment. Hong, Gil-dong explained this approach:

If I want to be a great real estate agent, I would exaggerate a little bit, and would tell a lie in good faith very much, I think. However, we who had accustomed ourselves to the culture of organization or company were not easy in this business. As a result, mostly all were difficult to run in the end so that about seven, or 80 % of the real estate brokers have simply managed with their wives without other assistants.

In Choe, Jae-seong's case, he had transformed from being a branch chief at the Korea agriculture association into a self-employed farmer who cultivates pears. When I worked in the field for this study, I took part Choe, Jae-seong's sale of his pears in the yard. This event seemed to have a purpose of advertising the produce to people as well as selling to someone. In the morning, I helped Choe, Jae-seong and his wife set up the selling place. For example, I assisted them building setting up a tent and marking the pear boxes for sale. The place was located right near a street. It was, however, a very hot day so that

nobody walked out and passed by. Only a few neighbors dropped in. In spite of the disappointing sale, Choe, Jae-seong did not seem to worry about the fact. Rather, he seemed to be pleased to talk with me sitting on a box and eating pears together. At that time, I was confused about Choe, Jae-seong's attitude for dealing with the sale event. I thought that his attitude was to be not accustomed to selling the goods.

Another case was in Yang, Dong-geun who is a CEO of his own manufacturing corporation. Especially, as he had dealt with his employees, he faced the difficult fact that most employees tended to transfer to another company with better conditions. Even though Yang, Dong-geun tried to be familiar with them, he finally could not but lose them. This situation made Yang, Dong-geun disappointed. He described this fact like this:

That's right; [the way to deal with employees] was changed. As a salary man once I tried to understand and to treat the employees well. However, most of them moved away to a workplace with the better condition. So, I felt betrayed so much . . . Great friendly relationships did not even work. So, I was coldhearted. In early time, I really did well [for employee] since I had experienced such position. Eventually, I was disappointed [with the result] . . . finally . . . disappointed, and in anger . . .

I understand Yang, Dong-geun's emotion about that; however, he still seemed to be a lifelong employee with the concept of lifetime employment. It was probably why he was disappointed and angry in such situation.

Changed Treatment of Their Children

Secondly, in this study, all of the particular Korean workers who changed from being lifetime job workers to self-employment since the IMF crisis have maintained their married life with an average of two children per a worker. After most Korean workers were laid off, when they could not but tell something to their own wife and children, they seemed to have experienced a kind of pain. In addition to that, most of the workers could not but find themselves disappointed with the way they had to treat their children. For example, Pak, Chan-sik told me the disappoint feeling when he gave his two sons less pocket money. Indeed, his two sons enlisted in the army because of his father's lay-off. They did it because they wanted to reduce the burden of school enrollment fee to their father. In fact, this situation was common at that time in Korea. Most of all, when the two sons gave comfort to Pak, Chan-sik, he seemed to be disappointed in his changed social status. As Pak, Chan-sik told me:

It seemed to be difficult for two sons to accept the fact . . . The fact meant the difference between my job's existence and nothing, and between father's social status or nothing. After my lay-off, my sons just joined the army . . . Oh, they talked to me in comfort. The time when my father went to the office was good. He was best to do them without any shortage. After I came out [of the company], I treated them without abundance. I was a stingy. The reality was changed so that I could not spend the same money for them as I was in the company. It seemed to take a long time for them to accept the fact.

In addition, Lee, Min-ho also revealed his disappointment regarding his children consumption. Lee, Min-ho worried about the imbalance between income and

consumption. The income earned from the real estate business seemed to decrease; however, his children's wishes seemed to increase. According to Lee, Min-ho:

My children are growing up, so the cost like a college enrollment fee would be needed. But, an income from the real estate business was not much . . . The low income that comes from the economic circumstances has been difficult day after day, and for growing old . . . Consumption has increased for children. They are in the digital generation so that they would like to buy only best shoes and to go abroad. This consumption became unbalance. This seemed to be the biggest problem.

The painful feeling for their children tended to have continued in how they treat their children until now on. Meanwhile, in Jang, Gil-su's case, he faced the reality of his economic status at the time of his daughter's wedding. Jang, Gil-su could not but feel such pain or disappointment when he prepared for his daughter's wedding ceremony after his lay-off. Most Korean fathers, including Jang, Gil-su, tend to invite many people to their child's wedding ceremony. So, one of the most important tasks is to make an invitation card list. But, this was a difficult task for Jang, Gil-su because of his transformed social status. Jang, Gil-su insisted:

I married off my daughter last year. What I recognized at that time was that I would have been better to marry my daughters off when I was an executive in the company. Another idea was that if I were in the company, I would make the invitation list or something very easily. It was difficult for me to connect with many people who had once worked together in the same company except a few close people. It took several months to make the list. Several months!

Changed Meetings

Finally, the particular Korean workers seemed to have undergone changes in attending meetings and social relationships. After the lifetime job workers were laid off, their previous meetings related to the company mostly ended. The friendly relationship in the meetings seemed not to continue after the IMF crisis. The transformed social economical status seemed to cut off the connection point among them. Pak, Chan-sik stressed that the lay-off led to the end of meetings and that the people were apparently divided up. According to Pak, Chan-sik:

In the company, there were many friends; in the outside, there were just clients. If you came out of a company, everything would have come to an end. The relationship was not being continued. There were even a few meetings like an alumni meeting. Such things relating to the bank had been severed mostly. The people in the meetings wanted to deal with the bank not me, didn't they? Ha, ha. Especially, some of them were divided clearly.

In Jang, Gil-su's experience, he pointed out that a big company's meeting was different from a small company's meeting. The meeting of a big company would even be composed of those who were laid off during the IMF period. However, the meeting of a small company was nothing. He seemed to be disappointed about that. Indeed, a meeting related to the previous company usually was held at a wedding ceremony of a member's child or a funeral. As Jang, Gil-su expressed:

If I stayed at Doo Automobile Company to the end, I could join this big company meeting. Although I had a meeting connected with Koser Corporation, I felt it much different from the big one . . . Those who [were laid off since the IMF] had

great difficulty; however, they had lived generally. When I went to a wedding ceremony or a funeral by call, I met some friends and past colleagues. That's mostly a meeting with the previous members.

Kim, Cheol-su has no meetings since he began to manage his restaurant. Especially, he had worked without any holiday for a long time. As a result, he had not met his friends because he was not able to go to them, so Kim, Cheol-su seemed to be disappointed with no rest time. He noticed the following:

The salary men would work from Monday to Friday and would take a rest with their family. However, I had to work continually, and I had no holiday. I had repeated my work every day so that a chance to meet with friends was decreased so much. Without their visiting, I could not go there. Without my friends coming and seeing me here, I couldn't see them. Such a situation made me isolated.

In addition, Yang, Dong-geun explained why a previous meeting did not run well. It seemed to be caused by their different social economical status. As Yang, Dong-geun described it:

I usually met some friends at the previous colleagues meeting. Since they came out of the company, some friends who had worked with his clear business tended to attend the meeting. Otherwise, they tended to avoid the meeting.

Meanwhile, Lee, Min-ho and Choe, Jae-seong noted the inconvenient fact that the previous lifetime employment company did not find the earlier members and encourage them in their employment efforts or about their difficult situation since the IMF layoff. As a result, most of them seemed to harbor ill-feelings towards their previous company.

Choe, Jae-seong and Lee, Min-ho seemed to focus on the company's lack of comfort for the lay-offs' difficult social economic status. As Choe, Jae-seong criticized:

That I felt something wrong was that the previous institution who had fired many members had not tried to find out what they have doing, and not to be interested in their life. As a result, those who had worked for 20 or 30 years were laid off and then they refused to even enter the office . . . They had contributed to establishing and continue the society. But, the company had destroyed them. And it had not been interested in them. So, most of them became drunkards, were in pain, and so on.

In sum, since the IMF financial crisis, the particular Korean workers who transformed from lifetime job workers into self-employed workers had been making an effort to adapt the changed economic, social status. However, most of the Korean workers seemed to have some disappointment about their transformed social economical status.

Theme 3: Strong Criticism of the Korean Government Policy

During this study, I found that the particular Korean workers transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed since the IMF financial crisis had criticized the Korean government policies strongly. Their criticizing voice against the government tended to be increase rather than decrease during the lifetime employment period.

Worse Economical Condition

Today, the particular Korean workers have raised their voices against the Korean government policy. The most important reason is that the economic difficulty has been worse than during the IMF situation. The middle class rating in Korea changed "from

61.1% in 1997 to 53.4% in 2006” which was different from the “average of 71% middle classes rating in the OECD” (Go, Jung, Kim, & Lim, 2007, p. 4).

One reason is the fact that the particular Korean workers had suffered from mental pain more than physical pain at that time. However, the present workers have difficult living circumstances because of low income and high market prices. For example, the Korean economy grew by 5% in 2006; however, the Korean people’s income increased by just 2.1%. This means that Korea added 5% production more than 2005, but the income only increased by 2.1%. The problem is that this situation has continued for 11 years from 1996 (Park, 2007, p. 1, 8). In addition to this, Hwang et al. (2007) found that the costs of the necessities of life in Seoul were higher than in New York City and Tokyo (p. 4). As Yang, Dong-geun said:

At that time, the workers suddenly met with the IMF difficultness so that they did not have enough time to arrange or adapt their transformed situation. Even though there were problems of a little dismissal payment and so on, the mental pain was more difficult than the physical pain. I think that today there is just abundant but invisible stress, less income, and higher market costs. It made it more difficult for them to live.

Ultimately, the worse economic conditions of the present have revealed the IMF affect. The Korean workers have already overcome the IMF difficult period at the end of 2000; however, the effects seem to have continued to the present time. For example, Kim Dae-Jung government’s overloaded credit card policy had made the people run into debt about 3.5 million won per household in 2006. The family budget debt had increased about

5,600 hundred million won, three times more than before the IMF crisis (Yoon, 2006, p.

3). According to Hong, Gil-dong:

There was so complicated an element. The credit card problem . . . The government issued the credit cards recklessly so that made people become moneylenders with about 4 ten million won per a household. Now, this increased two times than before 2, 3 years. The debt scale of a country also had increased about double. Both are difficult.

Meanwhile, Jang, Gil-su, Pak, Chan-sik, Lee, Min-ho, and Hong, Gil-dong focused on the problem of unnecessary regulations to establish and manage a manufacture company. This kind of obstacle because of government policy finally had most workers turn their interest into fewer products in the workplace such as the real estate business. Again, Hong, Gil-dong expressed it with the following:

It was natural that the people like us who came out of the previous industrial company would establish a plant to make goods productively. However, most people including me have engaged in this service business like a real estate business or a small scale restaurant. As a result, there were no workers in productive workplace. These workers wanted to establish a plant; however, this task was difficult and there were no workers.

Moreover, real estate brokers like Jang, Gil-su, Lee, Min-ho, Pak, Chan-sik, Min, Gi-seo, and Do, Yeong-cheol pointed that the government has provided new policies in real estate and excessive regulations (Yoon, 2006, pp. 1-2; Yoo, 2007, p. 3). So, their income has been decreased today. For example, Jang, Gil-su told me that:

The corporation could manage with good income; in the same, a country could govern with good income from the people. However, this economy is difficult for the people to live . . . I had engaged in this real estate business because of [difficult circumstances]. But, it is lucky for me to take a commission for the cost of living.

Although the country's economy seemed to increase with many exports, the individual Korean workers seemed to find it very tough to live. The Cheong-Wa-Dae, office of the Korean president, reported that the true overcoming of the 1997 financial crisis was not completed because of the increasing conditions of enterprise facility investment decreased and the income distribution structure was not recovered in spite of the fast recovery of the macro-economy index (Moon, 2007, p. 1). Yang, Dong-geun explained the fact like this:

As a country, Korea had recorded 3 hundred billion dollars in exports. For example, the large enterprises like Samsung, Hyundai, and LG had exported many goods. However, individual life was hard around me. For instance, my employees have not any hope to buy a house and to invest in their children's education just by a little salary.

Increasing Education Fees

Especially, most of the Korean workers pointed out the overbearing cost of children's education. According to the 2007 OECD statistical annual reports (Kim, 2007), South Korea had the first position in expenditure on private educational institutions by 2.9% of the Korean gross domestic product (GDP) in 2003 (Kim, p. 2).

Most Korean lifelong employment companies have supported their children's educational expenses since the 1980s by the labor and management agreement. However, many former lifetime job workers have been compelled to be self-employed today. That is, they have recognized that they no longer have a right to the supporting educational fees from their previous lifetime employment company. So, their children's education was their first worry after the workers were laid off. Jang, Gil-su confessed the following:

My most worrying thing at the IMF period was about my children's education.

How would I educate them if I was laid off? . . . The IMF made the white collar workers be in pain about their children's education.

In Korea, the private education market had increased for a long time because of the parents' strong passion for education. The Ministry of Education in Korean announced the fact that private expenditure had been increasing continually in spite of reduced policy in 2004 ("Private Education," 2007). According to Hong, Gil-dong, the education fee had increased, especially the high English education fee for individual learning. Hong, Gil-dong described this:

I have a hope for the young generation so that I should support the educational fee so much. I was surprised that it would spend about one and half or one thousand per month for an elementary student. The more important thing was English cost including learning by foreign teachers. It was difficult to pay the education fee.

Also, Pak, Chan-sik had his child studying away from home so that it was difficult to support his son. Pak, Chan-sik said:

I also had a child study abroad. It was difficult to support him with the fee today. My income was not stable so that to send money was hard. Nowadays, I have spent my savings. Ha, ha, ha.

As in Pak, Chan-sik's case, in undergraduate and graduate courses, Korean students studying in the U.S. has reached over 50,000 people in the third position after India and China. However, in K-12, the number of Korean students in the U.S. was over 30,000. In spite of the long recession, the number of K-12 students studying abroad has been increasing (Yang et al., 2007). This educational exodus seemed to come from the inferior educational environment and English education in Korea (Lee, 2006). There also seems to be an expression of the parents' worry about their children's unstable future.

Meanwhile, Jang, Gil-su pointed to one reason the workers are in pain about their children's education, which is that "the Korean educational policy had been changed continually without any basic idea." So, many parents' tended to expect to use private education for their children, which is expensive. The Korean parents have a strong passion about education because they say "if I don't teach them, they would not have a basic life in the society." This excessive investment in private education tends to come from the fact that the parents feel anxious about their children's future (Kim, Choi, & Kim, 2007, p. 10).

According to Do, Yeong-cheol, in Korean society, the diverse salary level has been affected by the diploma level. This would be one reason why the parents try to have their children learn more than others (Kim et al., 2007, p. 10). Since the IMF, many Korean parents have felt that the young generation should be prepared for high competition in order to study and live in Korean society. Thus, Do, Yeong-cheol asserted

that the parents “had children study abroad at an early age, and sent them to a private elementary school rather than a public school.” So, parents want to move to a house near better schools or institutions because of the school group system, which means that students go to a school near where they live. The educational passion that had influenced the cost of houses with such good educational conditions was high every year. But, recently, according to the wide school group system, students can apply to any school regardless of their living area. This policy issued by the Seoul educational ministry made the housing costs rather more stable than the last year (Won, 2007, p. 7-8). However, sometimes the parents’ excessive wishes might make the young generation a burden because of the parents’ expectations and the educational expense. According to a report on Asian youths’ life goals, Korean high school students expressed their dream as enjoying what they really like (Chon, 2007).

Difference between Lifetime Job Concept and Job Instability

On the other hand, I have recognized the fact that the learning process of overcoming a lifetime employment concept is different than the learning process for overcoming job instability in Korea. Even if the particular Korean workers have had a transformative learning perspective on the lifetime job concept since the IMF situation, this fact does not seem to connect with the learning perspective of overcoming job instability. This was a problem because transformative learning is “a way of problem solving by defining a problem or by redefining or reframing the problem” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20).

So, what the particular Korean workers in this study needed was not just critical reflection on the lifetime job concept but ‘to justify the new learning perspective’ in

relation to their every day lives (Mezirow, 2000). Unfortunately, such justified action or behavior seemed to emerge as two findings: The first theme is that most of the particular Korean workers seemed disappointed in their changed social economical status. And the second theme is that they seemed to have expressed strong criticism of Korean government policies.

Transformation for Overcoming Job Instability

Theme 4: Job Instability and Relationship between North and South Korea

The particular Korean workers transformed from lifetime job workers into self-employed workers since the IMF financial crisis had recognized the changed relationship between North and South Korea. This relationship had affected the life of the South Korean people. Han (2007) insisted that, for about 60 years, the relationship between North and South Korea was the opposite “in ideology and military” (p. 3). This continuing crucial tense situation, except for a few efforts like the 2000 top leaders’ meeting, had “destroyed each other’s latent energy and accomplishments” (Han, 2007, p. 3).

According to Korean history, in 1945, Korea was an independent country which had been liberated from the Japanese Empire. Despite the fact that many Koreans had sacrificed for 35 years in order to build an independent country, the liberation of the Korean peninsula would finally be gained through the outside powers of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Korean peninsula was unfortunately separated into South and North by the Soviet Union and the U.S., regardless of the Korean people’s will (Harrison, 2004, pp. 55, 527; Lee, 2007, p. 1; Oberdorfer, 2006, p. 30; Sim, 2007, p. 2).

Another tragedy was the Korean War which occurred from 1950 to 1953. The war began as Kim Il-Sung in North Korea invaded South Korea for military force unity in 1950 (Oberdorfer, 2006, pp.31-32). The Korean War was an ideological war which is substitute for democracy versus communism. According to Oberdorfer, this disastrous war caused the killing of the same people and even brothers of each other. The death toll became about 3 million people, and the dispersed families totaled about five million people (p. 33). After that, the UN and the US provided South Korea with many foods and supplies.

However, the truce between North and South Korea would have continued until now even though the Soviet Union has collapsed. The continued tension between North and South Korea has made dictators like Lee SungMan, Park JungHei, and Jeun DooHwan rule. Even if these dictators would have helped establish Korean economic development and growth, especially with the lifetime employment period, they would have limited people from having freedom, especially the blue collar workers and including the white collar workers (Koo, 2001).

On other hand, the democracy movement has continued to occur from the lifetime employment workplace to Korean society. As a result, in 1987, the Korean workers finally had a right of employment in the law and higher social-economical status (Koo, 2001). As Jang, Gil-su noted, “the workers’ need had started to gush out with the democracy movement in 1987.”

Meanwhile, however, since the dictators’ time, the close relationship between the government and a few insolvent enterprises had distorted the Korean economic market and rule. That had been a cause of the IMF situation. The financial crisis in Korea could

not but choose the IMF program, including massive dismissal. The complex causes might be composed of external investment power, governmental failure, and unclear management of companies. The huge number of unemployed could not be but transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers.

In sum, since the Korean War (1950-1953), South Korea has had a divided relationship with North Korea. Especially, under this particular situation, many workers as well as people in South Korea had limited rights and freedom. Such an oppressive situation seemed to have continued for the particular Korean workers. For example, Min, Gi-seo thought that an unstable North Korea had affected the economy in South Korea. Thus, if the business conditions in South Korea were stable, self-employment would have a good chance of increasing their income. As Min, Gi-seo said:

[The conflict relationship between two Koreas] have influence on the economy of South Korea rather than nothing. When I met with people working in export and import, they talked that it could affect an exchange rate sensitively. If North Korea was stable, it did not matter with economic activity, did it? . . . Conflict might influence our economy badly.

The tense situation between South and North Korea has affected all Korean people as a national loss. Kim, Cheol-su finally recognized the positive aspect of a good relationship between South and North Korea. He explained his idea as follows:

Korean people had continued to shoulder the national loss For example, if the Samsung electronic company put its productive establishment in an American market, I think that Samsung would be able to get higher stock price. The tense situation had influence minus points in several aspects. This was a big minus

situation So, if we turned the energy used for tension into the direction of improving people's life quality and developing economy

In addition, by the Sunshine Policy of former South Korean President Kim DaeJung's administration, most Korean people had a chance to change from a hostile relationship between North and South Korea into a cooperative relationship. Such a transformative opportunity was limited by the two contrasting attitudes of the South Korean people. They had reflected their opposition to North Korea's secession from the 1994 NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), and North Korea's 2006 nuclear test. In 1994, the Korean people revealed their insecure fear; however, in 2006, they seemed not to be frustrated or to have any fear. The particular Korean workers in this study showed their changed recognition of North Korea. For example, Hong, Gil-dong explained the strange fact like:

It was apparent that the mood at this North Korea nuclear test was different from the 1994 North Korea crisis. In 1994, with American submarines and a rumor of another Korean war, many people went to marts to buy and store instant noodles, butane gas, and so on. However, this time, there was no such activity. Most people had worked through the same thing without any frustration. It was because the Sunshine Policy made people know North Korea's reality.

Despite North Korea's nuclear test, most of the particular Korean workers who are now self-employed had a hope for economic cooperation between South and North Korea since the Sunshine Policy. Economic cooperation between South and North could improve the present recession condition. The Gaesung Industrial Complex in North Korea is the representative symbol of North and South Korea's economic cooperation.

The complex has superior competitive power because of having the same language, low labor cost, and low cost of transport; so it could provide an excellent economic effect on both of the Koreas (Lee & Jang, 2005, p. 112). For example, Min, Gi-seo revealed:

Since our personnel expenses are high cost, I agree to manage the complex with the same people I think that the Gaesung Industrial Complex in North Korea would help each other in each economy without ideology Now, like China and Vietnam, North Korea is in the low personnel expenses.

Yang, Dong-geun described some benefits of the Gaesung Industrial Complex as follows:

The North-South Korean relationship...in fact, if the relation was harmonious, South Korea would have a great synergy The personnel expenses are cheap, and they can speak with the Korean language, and North Korean laborers have good quality.

From these facts, it seemed to be clear that the Korean job instability has been connected with the relationship between North Korea and South Korea. South Korean workers seemed to have been transformed by the Sunshine Policy to recognize about North Korea. Before the policy, North Korea's existence had always made South Korean workers feel limitation of labor rights. For that reason, the past lifetime employment instantly seemed to be stable; however, the particular Korean workers could not solve the problem without the recognition ultimately.

The learning process of overcoming job instability in the particular Korean workers seemed to have a disorienting dilemma as the division of Korea according to Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The division of Korea had been making tension between South and North Korea so that such tension had historically restricted

Korean workers' life for a long time. Even though South Korean workers recovered the IMF financial crisis, most of them still seemed to be difficult to work. Simultaneously, they have a hope to overcome job instability with something like the Gaesung Industrial Complex.

Theme 5: Expectations of a New Leader and Job Stability in Korea

Most Korean workers have been experiencing lower income, disappointing social status, and instable employment (Kim, 2007). Most of the particular Korean workers who were transformed from lifetime employment to self-employment since the IMF situation tended to expect a new president for the hope of Korea's future. In fact, Korea's presidential election will be held on a day in December 2007.

The term of a new leader that they commonly want for the future seems to be strongly related to the workers' desired political action. This expectation of a new president apparently comes from their criticism of the Korean government's policies directly. On other hand, this hope seemed to resist their changed social-economical status. For example, Pak, Chan-sik agreed that a president would have a strong leadership to improve economy in Korea with the following:

This recession will be better on the next government, I think. It would be connected with political activity. Good political action reaches good economy. That's simple It would be good for a new leader to make people live well. Isn't the economic principle the same?

Hong, Gil-dong wished to have an able president on economy and diplomacy:

I don't know who the next president is, but he had evidently the driving force or leadership for Korean economic development to jump once more . . . The man

should solve the relationship among Korea, America, and China. In my opinion, he must focus on growth rather than ideology.

In history, Korea had existed for a long time even beside the world powers like China, Russia, Japan, and the U.S. Yang, Dong-geun focused on the hope of Korea with strong Korean character like this:

Our country should cultivate men of ability for life historically. And we should construct a strong country; however, others do not want this, do they? We do not have any material? No, there is nothing except men. Korean people did not assimilate to China If a leader made Korean stable in politics, we would live well rather like others. It is hopeful, I think.

Meanwhile, Choe, Jae-seong said there is the possibility of improving the Korean economy and society under a good environment. Such a good environment may mean job stability. The job stability maybe means solving the division of the Koreas. Choe, Jae-seong revealed this thought with the following:

I have a hope. With a good environment, Korean people who can become interested would be great to do The education made Korea jump to a high level, and they can adapt to any environment So, if a new president made a good circumstance, Korea would recover as many as one wants.

Like Choe, Jae-seong said that the Korean people are outstanding. Most of the participants pronounced the benefits of Korean characteristics. The benefits looked like the basic foundation to rebuild Korean economy and society. For example, Lee, Min-ho added:

The Korean people have a strong spirit that means an ability to live in spite of any difficulty [For example,] they are used to climb a mountain with a backpack. That's great. They go up a mountain in order to get strong physical, mental, and endure conditions as difficult as they live.

On the other hand, some of the workers talked about the shortage of Korean characters. The most common thing was the term and sound like "pallee, pallee" that means hurry up, hurry up. According Do, Yeong-cheol:

I worry that the Korean people had united and constructed huge growth in a short period rather than others. Korean culture of hurry up usually tends to ignore the basics so that the Korean economic fundamentals seem to be weak. Korean people tend to seek a result more than to construct a basic I don't know, but we might have to do anything rapidly for living around powerful countries.

Korean spirit having these characteristics, a good ability to adapt and a tendency to hurry seemed to have been created by a specific transforming atmosphere in Korean history. These aspects might be strengthened more by the recent recession since the IMF crisis. Kim, Cheol-su explained that Korean sentiment and pride might accumulate with history like saying, "And according to Korean history, our people have been invaded by thousands other times. So, we always have been lived in tension." Today, Korean people still have that tension. The present tension has manifested as the reality of the divided Korean peninsula.

In spite of such tension from outside, the fact that Korea still exists seemed to provide a kind of pride in the Korean people. Lee, Min-ho said "Did you see the dramas of Yon-ge-so-moon and Dae-jo-young? When I watched it, I felt that Korean people were

great because of protecting our country resisting against other big countries.” At that time, there were some popular dramas in Korea related to ancient Korean history. For instance, a drama, *Jumong*, had recorded over a 50% audience rating in Korea. This fact might reflect the people’s hope by watching this drama of the great leader Jumong, who devoted himself to the people. They might feel it as a dramatic alteration against the real disappointed society (Jang, 2007).

Another realistic expectation of the Korean workers was related with the FTA between the U.S. and South Korea. The FTA agreement was completed on April 2, 2007. However, from when the FTA negotiations began, there have been two opposite opinions in Korea: approval and opposition. The opposition has insisted that “Korean agriculture and life would be shocked by imported goods” (Lee, 2007, p. 3) and that “bipolarization of income” and “economic uncertainty” would increase (Park, 2007, p. 1). It seemed to be natural for the opposing people to regard the FTA as a foreign power because of Korea’s history.

Meanwhile, those who wanted the FTA had expected that the Korean economy would have a chance of “becoming an advanced economy” (Ryu, 2007, p. 3). It is expected that the FTA will make exports increase by to \$500 million per annum (Na, 2007, p. 12). Also, most of the study participants had stood up for approval. For example, Kim, Cheol-su said:

South Korea has limited resources in this narrow country. The only way for Korean people is exportation. For the export policy, we should not be isolated so that most people might win the sympathy of the FTA If it will help our

recession better and common people earn more money, we in self-employment would meet the best season.

From these particular Korean workers' data, I have recognized that they believe we need a new leader who has a good leadership in order to deal well with the economy and politics. Most of the workers had revealed that job instability seemed to be connected strongly with political action or policy. In other words, the conflict with North Korea had affected the South Korean workers so much in job instability. In contrast, since the Sunshine Policy, the Korean workers tended to show hope that the cooperation between North and South Korea would be needed for all in society. Kim Dae-Jung, the previous president in Korea, expected that "a peace agreement and the amity between North Korea and the U.S." would make North-South Korean relationship enter into "the entire interchange and cooperation period" (Jung, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, these particular Korean workers wanted to have a new leader solve the problem of the division of Korea in order to overcome job instability.

Although the particular Korean workers had transformed from lifetime employment to self-employment since the IMF crisis, they seemed to still suffer from job instability. However, according to the changed reflection about the 2006 North Korean nuclear test, it follows that the particular Korean workers seemed to have recognized unconsciously the relationship between their job instability and the conflict or division in two Koreas. Meanwhile, this unconscious learning process seemed to have been continuing since the division of Korea because the learning process seemed to be constructed by the whole workers' long experience and recognition.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Transformative Learning Process and Korean Workers

To explain my research findings and themes, I needed the new concept of transformative perspective theory. Accordingly, I would like to point out a potential aspect of transformative learning in a society. In other words, I was able to assume that there was an invisible aspect of transformative learning at least in this study; this transformative learning has been continuing under the surface in the whole Korean society; the potential transformative learning has not appeared as critical reflection and reflective action apparently, but it has still been working continually in spite of no evident indication. According to Weiss (1997), the unconscious learning process to get information is “much more sophisticated and rapid” than the conscious learning process so that adult learners “cannot describe the non-conscious processes that they use to acquire information” (p. 428). However, if I used transformative learning with this potential aspect, I could explain something complicated which would not be understood with the present transformative learning.

In 1997, for example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial crisis happened not because of the fault of most lifetime employment corporations but because of a shortage of foreign financial funds in the Korean government. However, when most Korean workers came out of their prior lifelong employment company, most of them had a tendency to accept the fact without any complaining about it. It was not easy for foreigners to understand this situation.

However, I am able to explain such a situation with the new concept of potential transformational learning in a society. That is, Korean workers as well as people in

general have learned pain throughout the 35-year period of Japanese colonization. As a result, Korean workers seemed to have learned the importance of an independent country. Moreover, the middle-aged lifetime job workers including those in their 40s, 50s, and 60s spent most of their youth from after the Korean War to before the industrial period. With their base of high education, they as lifetime job workers had worked hard day and night only for their country and their family. They took great pride in making Korea the 11th nation in the world economy (Rhie, 1997, pp. 214-220).

Such a potential learning perspective in a society is based on understanding the reaction of the particular Korean workers today. It is because transformative learning would “expose the social and cultural embeddedness” as well as “taken-for-granted assumptions in which the self is located” (Tennant, 1998, p. 374). This fact is supposed to be an extension of the potential transformative learning process since the period when North and South Korea were split.

This kind of learning process for overcoming job instability in Korea has been continuing for the particular Korean workers to learn something. In the present time, there seems to be no critical reflection including so-called advisers or a related circumstance in the first learning process. However, one day, the critical reflection on such learning process would finally happen and then action, too. The important point about such a potential continuing learning process is that the particular Korean workers might play an essential role with their own wills or with the help of adult educator or friends towards taking final positive action. (Mezirow, 2000) So, the disorienting dilemma that came from the division of Korea finally might possibly be solved.

Meanwhile, through the particular Korean workers' learning process of the concept of lifetime employment, I found the disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and action. Among the three findings, critical reflection seemed to appear within the whole learning process like the above learning process. The IMF financial crisis made the particular Korean workers recognize the disorienting dilemma suddenly and apparently. As a result, the particular Korean workers were able to begin to critically reflect on the concept of lifetime employment. However, even though the particular Korean workers had transformed their concept of having a lifetime job, and even if they had been transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers, they had not seemed to overcome their job instability until now. They had continued to feel employment uncertainty.

So, in another view of overcoming job instability, I tried to find the disorienting dilemma of job instability in the Korean workers. The division of Korea was apparently the disorienting dilemma; however, most of the Korean workers had not consciously recognized it as such. So, they seemed not to have had any critical reflection at least on surface. Weiss (1997) explained the situation as the "people cannot describe [the non-conscious process]; they are conscious only of the results of their non-conscious mental activities" (p. 428). Therefore, this kind of learning process would be unconsciously continued and accumulate in harmony with Korean social economical changes.

However, if the particular Korean workers begin to recognize the disorienting dilemma consciously at a moment, they would be able to have a chance for more evident critical reflection. Maybe the moment could occur when the Korean workers met with advisers with the related circumstances. For example, the moment would be revealed on a

day when the peace agreement between North and South Korea is issued to the world. The six-party talks in 2006 tried to improve denuclearization in the Korean peninsula and bring about a peaceful relationship (Jang, 2007, p. 5; Han, 2007, p. 1). As a result, the declaration of the end of the Korean War seemed to be adopted by the four-nation summit meeting between the U.S., China, North and South Korea in the first half of next year (Ahn, 2007, p. 5). This potential learning process in Korean society would help to understand the thoughts and behaviors of the Korean workers for overcoming job instability.

Therefore, the particular Korean workers transformed from lifetime job workers to self-employed workers since the IMF financial crises are able to take hope for change from the present society into a new hopeful society. This is because this learning process has potential continued benefits for Korean society. Additionally, the adult educator should take a role in any potential continued learning process to help people transform from difficult circumstances into better circumstances in society.

From now on, the particular Korean workers had experienced their transformation from being lifetime job workers to being self-employed since the 1997 IMF financial crisis. At that time, the trauma had provided more mental shock to the lifetime job workers with their concept of a lifetime job being destroyed. Although the job loss made all of them have a difficult situation, the particular workers had possessed a different learning process according to each different way of recognition. For example, some workers with an active transformative learning process tended to grab another life actively and speedily. The other workers with a passive transformative learning process tended to respond to it passively and slowly.

However, most of the particular workers had been disappointed with the transformation of their social-economical status as they met with situations like dealing with clients, their children, and changed social relations. In addition, the worsening economic circumstances and increasing educational fees made them feel unstable and anger at the government policies. As a result, the particular Korean workers seemed to have still felt job instability even though they had become self-employed without lay-off.

Finally, through the relationship between the division of Korea and job instability, and through their expectation of new leader, the particular Korean workers tended to have exposed the unconscious transformative learning process with its potential, continued, and social aspects. This kind of transformative learning might be a good tool to understand the particular Korean workers' transformative learning perspective for overcoming job instability. This is because transformational learning "involves liberating ourselves from reified forms of thought that are no longer dependable" (Mezirow, 2000).

Recommendations for Further Research

By exploring this research, transformative learning might expand from individual learning to social-potential transformative learning. Especially, social environmental change seemed to provide a chance for the adult workers to recognize their transformative learning in a particular social situation. For example, the 1997 IMF financial crisis made the Korean workers abandon their concept of lifetime employment forcedly and suddenly. Also, the division of the Korean peninsula and the Korean War seemed to retrain the workers for overcoming job instability continually until now on. In such cases, social-potential transformative learning might assist in understanding

individual transformative learning in a special circumstance. Therefore, I hope that this kind of further research related to social-potential transformative learning will be increase.

Most importantly, I believe that it is useful to study the structural aspect of social-potential transformative learning in a specific social situation. For instance, the existing structure of the transformational learning process is composed of a disorienting dilemma, rational discourse, critical reflection, and reflective action. Until now, there was a prerequisite that an adult learner already had realized the disorienting dilemma before an adult educator's participation. In opposition, an adult learner in the social-potential transformational learning had not realized the disorienting dilemma consciously. Indeed, the time for critical reflection in social-transformative learning also seems to be an important element because of the social aspects. For this reason, the structural aspects of social-potential transformative learning are expectedly different from general transformative learning. Consequently, to examine the structural aspects of social-potential transformative learning will be meaningful work in further research for developing social-potential transformative learning.

The other suggestion that emerged from this study is an issue of the adult educator's role. Mezirow (2000) insisted that a starting point of transformative learning is to count "what the individual learner wants to learn" (p. 31). The starting point of transformative learning naturally connects to the recognition of a disorienting dilemma in the individual learner. However, if a learner seems not to recognize a disorienting dilemma on the surface, the learner might have recognized one unconsciously. As a result, the rational discourse might also advance under consciousness. This case may be able to expose the following question: How do adult educators help the learner to learn?

Concretely, how do the adult educators pull up such unconscious discourse from the learner and move into a rational discourse? I believe that the issue related to social-potential transformative learning would provide something important for adult education in the future.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Iteration I

1. Personal background (before participating in self-employment)
2. Why did you take such lifetime employment work?
3. What kind of lifelong job worker was before this job?
4. How long have you worked in such lifetime employed workplace before layoff?
5. When did you have been forced to be laid off since the 1997 Korean crises?
6. What reasons do they think forced them into lay offs?
7. What relationship existed between the worker and the company around 1997?
8. What did they initially do after their layoff?
9. What and how did they tell about their layoffs to their families?
10. How did their family response about their layoff?
11. What were changes in family relationships before and after layoff?
12. When and how did they decide to become self-employed?
13. Why did you choose this self-employment?
14. What forces facilitated the process of self-employment?
15. What kind of self-employment do you work for now?
16. How long have you worked in this job?

Iteration II

1. Describe the working environment when you began the job. Did the working environment change over time?
2. Describe your first week on the job
3. What did you have some expectations to the self-employment?
4. Were these expectations the same or different than the way work really got done?
5. How did you see your role in your job?
6. What do the workers see as challenges of transforming into self-employment from lifetime employment?
7. If you had any problem in self-employment, how did you solve problem in the work?
8. What relations exist between the workers and their family after the layoff?
9. What do you think about the role of father since 1997?
10. What relations exist between the workers and their friends?
11. What relations exist between the workers and their previous colleagues?
12. What were changes in friends/colleagues relationships before and after layoff?
13. What and how did they spend your weekends or holiday? How about your hobby (club/ religion)?
14. What do you think about the government policies to the self-employment?
15. What did your ancestors in the past time?
16. What do you think about the relationship between North and South Korea in economy?
17. What do you think about the national character in Korean people?
18. Who's the best leader in Korea for you and your next generation?

VITA

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Jae Yeol Kim received the Bachelor of Art in Education in 1997 from Sung Kwun Kwan University, Seoul, Korea. He also has received the Master of Arts degree in Youth Education & Leadership from Myoung-ji University, Seoul, Korea in 2000. He most recently attained the D.Ed. in Adult Education from The Pennsylvania State University in 2007.

His relative experience was serving as an adult counselor in practice from YMCA in YongDeongPo, Seoul, Korea in 1997. He also experienced as a student-teacher in practice at ShinBanPo Middle School, Seoul, Korea in 1997.

He has acquired some licenses or certifications: Youth Leader's License in Korea from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Korea in 2000; Second grade Teacher's License in Korea from the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development of Korea in 1997; Hospice Certificate in Korea from SoonChunHyang University Hospital in Seoul, Korea in 2000; and Counseling for Youth Curriculum Certificate in Korea from Seoul Family Court in 1999.