

**THE MEANING OF WORK FOR OLDER EMPLOYED PEOPLE**  
**LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND AGE DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH KOREA**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents the voices of older workers in South Korea through their life stories and experiences in order to interpret how employed older people understand age discrimination in employment, by studying the following four areas: how older workers understand the value of work; theories and concepts of ageing; age discrimination; and South Korea's policies and programmes for employing older people. It is believed that these interact with and influence one another, in terms of age discrimination in employment.

The policy and practice context of the employment of older people is presented to help readers understand in greater depth their life stories and experiences and to construct their perspective on age discrimination in the social, political, economic, historical and cultural context of South Korea. In addition, the theoretical framework draws on social theories which describe negative perspectives such as social prejudice towards older people in Korean contexts: theories on ageing which show positive perspectives on older people emphasising successful ageing; discrimination theories including those on age discrimination; and employment policies and practices for older people drawing on the concepts of employability and workability.

In order to interpret in depth the understanding of age discrimination in employment amongst a sample of eighteen employed older Koreans, a biographical method was adopted which generated experiences of age discrimination within each person's life story. These were analysed using biographical narrative analysis.

These employed older people enjoyed working and chose to work both because they wanted to and because this was the only way of meeting their various needs. Some older people worked to survive, but others worked because they were likely to become ill if they stay at home. Moreover, some research participants worked because it made them feel that they mattered. Others believed that they were people

who liked to work and be active and yet others believed that it was their destiny to work, even though they felt more tired as they grew older. They strongly believed that their work performance was still good enough to be competitive. In terms of age discrimination, they revealed the dilemma between their hope of working and the consideration that younger people were currently unemployed. Nevertheless, they did not accept the effect on their working lives of age discrimination which disregarded their capacity to work. In this sense, some interviewees point to an end to 'dragons coming out of small ponds' (implying that a competent person can succeed, notwithstanding a poor background and circumstances) and hope that the government will provide an environment and opportunity for older workers to show their ability to work. In the discussion of the results, at a time of poor income security and unequal working opportunities, it is considered that policy development should take as its priority those people who have to work to survive. Future research is recommended to develop and contribute to our deeper knowledge of age discrimination by taking more opportunities to listen to the voices of the policy recipients who experience age discrimination and best understand the impacts of the policy.

## **CHAPTER 1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research design and background**

This thesis aims to interpret aspects of age discrimination in the labour market of South Korea, through listening to the views of employed older people as they reflect on the meaning of work and ageing and the policies and programmes for people like them in relation to with their own life stories and experiences. Fraser (1989) supports the use of a biographical method for research purposes, remarking:

“The identities and needs that the social welfare system creates for its recipients always interpreted their identities and needs.”

In other words, the perceptions, thoughts and needs of older workers who are the recipients of a social welfare system, such as employment policies and programmes opposing age discrimination, are interpreted identities and needs. Thus, this thesis adopted a biographical method to understand the interpreted identities and needs of older workers. This method offers each individual the chance to narrate life experiences and stories which serve as resources for deeper interpretation. In particular, Hazan (1994), Midwinter (1991), Bernard and Meade (1993) and Clarke and Warren (2007) believe that it is significant in research on older people to listen to people's life stories and experiences as influences on their later life circumstances. From a more practical standpoint, in this thesis, the circumstances of employed older people can be their workplaces. Therefore, the researcher who interprets an understanding of employed older people to include the meaning of their work, ageing,

age discrimination in employment and employment policies and programmes for older people, is recommended to listen to the life stories and experiences of employed older people as influences on their later working circumstances and their views on age discrimination.

In the meantime, I should explain why I set out to understand other perspectives on the meaning of work, ageing and employment policies and programmes than the mainstream understanding of age discrimination in the employment of older people.

First of all, I asked employed older people what the meaning of work was for them because it can be supposed that their experiences of age discrimination are directly related to their working experiences. Moreover, existing studies show the connection between work and identity which is endorsed in this biographical research. According to them, working is the way to show how individual identities can be reconstructed by workers' biographical stories (e.g. Collinson, 2006; Hatch and Shultz, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

In addition, successful ageing theory supports the intention of my research, which was to understand in depth the effect of age discrimination in the later working lives of employed older people by asking what work meant to them. Wethington and Kessler (1986) believe that the 'social support, networks and economic status' which can result from economic activity influence successful ageing. In short, to be able to understand the meaning of work for employed older people, one must understand that their view of ageing influences their perspectives on age discrimination.

Moreover, the perspectives of employed older people on ageing are interpreted on the assumption that their perceptions of age discrimination in their working lives can be affected by their perceptions of ageing. Choi (1990) and Kim (2003) support this assumption by the point that age discrimination is generated from expanding society's negative prejudices about older people. These authors believe that negative social prejudices perpetuate age discrimination and they criticise the unproven social

theories which indicate that age discrimination results directly from the problems of older people.

As this thesis seeks to present the perception among employed older people of discrimination in employment, the official policies and programmes should also be considered, because it is suggested that the interpreted perception of age discrimination among employed older people is influenced by the employment policies and programmes in the welfare and social system. The view of Fraser (1989) in this regard is in agreement that social welfare system recipients are associated with the identities and needs of the system, as they are interpreted.

Despite the relevance of the research design to the purpose of this research, the question remains why it is significant to listen and understand the voices of employed older people who oppose age discrimination in employment in Korea. In fact, the answers to the question begin by describing an avoidable situation in which older people are choosing to work in the face of age discrimination in job applications and in employment. The following social and economic background of Korea shows the situation. Half of South Korea's older households live in a state of "relative poverty," with an income of less than 50% of the nation's average household income. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), a group of leading economies, the relative poverty in 2006 among Koreans over the age of 65 was 45%, indicating that almost one in two older households lives in poverty, according to Yoo (2008), a researcher at the Korea Development Institute. The figure is the highest among OECD countries and is more than three times higher than the mean poverty rate, of 13%. In no other OECD country did the poverty level for older people exceed 40%. Ireland with 31% trailed as a distant second. The countries with the lowest older poverty percentage included New Zealand, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, all at 2%, followed by Luxemburg (3%) and

Canada (4%). Observers attributed South Korea's high rate to an underdeveloped welfare system:

"South Korea had no social insurance system for older people because, by tradition, adult children supported their parents in their old age," (Yoo, 2008).

He adds that, although Korea has initiated a national pension system, the number of people who benefit from it is still relatively small.

Moreover, Kim (2007) points out that the supporting structure of families has changed. Older people nowadays do not live with their children and many young people do not feel particularly responsible for their parents' financial care.

A greater concern is that Korea is ageing quickly. Of its 49 million populations, 7 percent were already above 65 in 2000. By 2018, Korea is expected to become an 'aged society' with a projected older population of more than 14%; by 2026, it will be a 'super-aged society', when older people aged 65 and over will account for 20% of the population. It is likely to take Korea eighteen years to move from an ageing society to an aged society, much faster than the rate of other developed nations, meriting the title of the world's most rapidly ageing society (OECD, 2004).

In this situation, equal opportunities to take the jobs which older people need to provide a living wage are not likely to be given to these older people because age discrimination is prevalent in the labour market. In a Korean study of the age discrimination in employment, NHRCK (the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 2006b) discovered that most older people, younger people and professional groups asked about age discrimination acknowledged that it existed in Korean society, in particular, in the labour market. In terms of age discrimination experiences,



over 40% of older people had experienced age discrimination whilst half of the younger people had seen examples in employment, according to the NHRCK report (2006b).

The most significant reason to select this research topic for academic scrutiny is that employed older people rarely have the chance to talk about age discrimination to Korean academics, since quantitative research approaches dominate the field because of the desire to evaluate and examine the effects of policies and programmes. Nevertheless, this approach offers an opportunity to reveal a more holistic view of age discrimination as it impacts on the working lives of older people, since these people have experience of discriminative working environments. Moreover, employed older people were selected for the present research group because in their life stories they can present a holistic account, including experiences of age discrimination in the past and the present in workplaces and in job applications. In particular, the research focused on this group of people purposefully to contribute to academic knowledge within Korea. Above all, I believe that a considerate willingness to listen to people's voices should be our priority for this vulnerable group.

Accordingly, to understand how employed older people understand age discrimination in their working lives in South Korea, first, I observed how they shed light on their concepts of work, ageing and discrimination, through their life stories in order to explore their general understanding of these themes. Next, as they told their life stories further questions were asked, which reflected the research themes and questions. The thesis reveals how employed older people understand age discrimination in their working lives in South Korea within a biographical narrative context.

## **1.2. Definition of older people**

Before starting the thesis, it is important to define the term 'older people' since they are the research participants. The term 'older people' has several synonyms: later adults, the old, older adults, elderly people, and senior citizens. The concept of 'older people' varies depending on the national, social, economic and cultural background, social custom, social norms and the history or tradition of a society. In particular, Atchley (1989) attempts to define older people on the basis of chronological age, functional age and life cycle. First of all, in chronological age, older people are those over 65, which is the usual age for receiving pension benefits. In the international statistical approach, the mandatory retirement age is generally 65. In Korea, in particular, the Older Welfare Act was enacted in 1981, according to which people are regarded as older people at the age of 65 (Lee, 2002). Second, functional age defines older people according to the extent of their individual physical and mental ability. Universally, the criteria of functional age may be wrinkled skin, grey hair, a curved posture, poor sight and hearing. However, it is not generally accepted by academics and legal experts or social programmes because it is not easy to judge age when the decline of functions is gradual and different for different individuals. Third, the life cycle approach considers each person's physical, psychological and social features as classifiable into five life periods: adolescence, youth, adulthood, middle years and old age. Despite the common and obvious features of each life period, the boundaries between the life periods are ambiguous. In this research, older people can be defined by a complex approach which includes various concepts of ageing, such as chronological, biological, social and successful ageing, and also by taking the approach of Atchley (1989) to the definition of older people. However, my respondents were all people over the age of 65, and thus defined by chronological age as older people because it is on the basis of chronological age that

society discriminates against older people. Although I decided to interview people of over 65 years who had faced discrimination in the labour market because of their chronological age, I tried to understand them simply as older people who were struggling with age discrimination and tackling it with the approach of successful ageing, because I wanted to understand older people in employment from an equal and active perspective on ageing.

### **1.3. Previous studies in age discrimination research**

When we look at previous studies regarding ageism, which is the significant focus of this research about the perspectives on the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination and employment policies and programmes for older people, it seems that most research into ageism has been carried out in the United States and other Western countries. Noteworthy studies have been made by Butler (1969), for example, who devised the notion of ageism, Palmore (1990, 2001), who actualised the concept by developing research on types of ageism and a scale of its occurrence and Levine (1980), who noted how age was viewed in terms of hiring policy plans. Studies using theories such as feminism and post modernism have been used to understand ageism in relation to age (Laws, 1995; Young, 1990); and studies which take a political-economic approach to ageism by emphasising the unequal attention given to it in terms of the nation, the economy and the distribution and allotment of resources and also by emphasising the structured characteristics of ageism (Estes, 1991; Guillemard, 1983) show an abundance of theoretical arguments surrounding ageism. Moreover, the political-economic perspective on ageing has shown that social practices and policies construct and reproduce ageism and regards the negative effect of ageism on the welfare and security of older people (Bytheway,

1995). The argument that the exclusion of older people from the production process of society depresses the status of older people in comparison to younger people and productive adults and sustains discrimination between different groups including older people was developed by Walker (1981). Townsend (1981) also affirms the institutionalised ageism which has become one of the main attributes of modern society.

In particular, research by Korean academics about age discrimination within the field of social welfare has been carried out on older people aged 65 years and above. The research involves looking into aspects of age discrimination such as prejudice, the impression made by older people, the background of age discrimination, and the conditions and the influence of age discrimination. The areas of discrimination which have been studied include the service of care and everyday as well as social and cultural aspects.

Korean, studies on prejudice and the impressions and stereotypes of age discrimination (Kim, 2000; Lee, 2004; Won, 2004; Park and Lee, 2002; Park, 2001 and Han, 2003) show that, overall, negative attitudes towards older people prevail. Studies on the background or the conditions of age discrimination and on the influence exerted by age discrimination (Kang, 2004; National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 2006a; Kim, 2003; Won, 2005; Choi, 1990) explain why age discrimination occurs, in terms of an individual's psychology, the sociology of the population and the current culture. Such studies also show that age discrimination has become prevalent in the Korean society.

Qualitative studies on age discrimination divide the conditions of age discrimination that older people recognise into: neglect, contemptuous treatment, ungratefulness, control and severance (Kang, 2004). In a study where the experience of age

discrimination was divided into the areas of neglect, evasion and estrangement in order to assess the effect that age discrimination has on older people's sense of security, it was shown that estrangement within the age discrimination experience was greater in extent than other areas of discrimination (Won, 2004). Yet an investigation into the conditions of age discrimination and awareness reported that older people, in common with most non-older people and professional groups, state that they are aware that age discrimination exists in our society. In the case of older people and in terms of specific experiences of age discrimination, 40% of this group and 40% - 50% of younger people report experiences of ageist discrimination (National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 2006b). When the above investigations are combined, it appears that discrimination against the aged is widespread.

In terms of employment, Korean national research on age discrimination has mainly been carried out by scholars in the areas of labour economics and labour law. Many studies have focussed on the causes of age discrimination, improving the system of wages and the need to prohibit age discrimination in order for older people to secure employment (Hea and Jeoun, 1998; Jang, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2004; Kim, 2006a, 2006b; Korea Labour Institute & Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005; Ahn, 2007a; Cho, 2006; Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2004; International Labour Law studies, 2007) and, in terms of employment, studies have looked at the need for the effectiveness of, and the barriers to, introducing such a prohibition ( Kim, 2008, Kim, 2000, Shim, 2006, Cho, 2006, Lee, 2008, and Lee, 2008).

Within South Korea, examples of previous studies which look at age discrimination theoretically are Kim (2000), Park (2004) and Kim (2009); and examples of studies which pinpoint prejudice as the source of age discrimination are Choi (1990) and Kim

(2003). Choi (1990) and Kim (2003) indicate that the spreading of a negative impression of older people is the root of age discrimination. They point out that negative stereotypes of older people perpetuate prejudice and discrimination against them and that the problems of age discrimination are being understood as caused in part by the victims themselves in a form of logic where the victim creates the problem. In addition, studies focussing on the generalisation of stereotypes of older people within Korean society (Kim, 2000), look at age discord as a structured authority-relation, and older people's perceptions which demonstrate how older people themselves are internalising age discrimination (Park, 2004).

Kim (2009) also analyses the daily lives of those in senescence, with family, social and cultural situations in terms of age discrimination, and shows how through modernisation, the welfare state and retirement, the changes in the stages of life, age discrimination and senescence are related.

Significantly it has been shown that the longer the experience of cohabitation with grandparents or of interchange with grandparents, the lower the frequency of negative thoughts towards the aged (Kim, 2002; Won, 2004); both the degree of interest regarding the problems of older people and the frequency of conversing with older people contribute towards reducing prejudice against them (Park and Yi, 2001).

We next look at the factors found in previous studies which influence age discrimination in terms of employment. Firstly, wages in Korea, which increase yearly, become an influential factor. In a system where wages are automatically increased, older workers will be paid well regardless of their productivity and therefore will be burdensome in terms of management; this may result in greater discrimination against older workers (Kim, 2006; Kim, 2009 and Jang, 2004). In addition, the greater the influence and importance of older workers and the greater the average age of the

workers, the easier it is to discriminate against them in employment (Ahn, 2007a).

Areas of the organisational culture, such as the seniority system and strength of the hierarchy, also play an important role in discrimination. In a business where a seniority system is introduced which gives older workers a higher rank in the business, it is presumed that instructions regarding work can be given successfully and work can flow more smoothly; but in such a business, an older worker cannot be employed at a lower rank (Lee, 2004 and Jang, 2002). Changes in workplace technology, whether an employee has been dismissed from the workplace recently and the standard of technology are all factors which influence the employment of older people.

It is not easy to explain in a word the relationship between mandatory retirement and age discrimination. On the one hand, such an age-limiting system can be understood as an employment-guaranteeing system, since it guarantees employment for people up to a certain age. On the other, when the mandatory retirement age is low, it can be understood as more like a system for dismissal (Kim, 2006a). According to an investigation carried out by Cho (2006) regarding the introduction of the mandatory retirement system, the greater the size of the business, the smaller the proportion of the total paid in wages in relation to the total expenses of the business; in addition, the more insufficient the workforce and the more the owners of the businesses manage it themselves, the more limited is the care for human resources and the lower the rate of mid-recruitment, the proportion of such businesses enforcing a mandatory retirement system has been shown to be greater (Cho, 2006). Moreover, when personnel affairs stagnate or a salary class system is introduced, a mandatory retirement system has often been used as a method of dismissing workers who demonstrated only part of their potential and this too can be seen as a discriminatory tendency (Won, 2004 and Jang, 2003a).

In conclusion, the studies of age discrimination have taken as their purpose to address how far age discrimination is recognised by older people and non-older people in Korea and how age discrimination has influenced older people from psychological, social and economic standpoints. The existing studies of Korea have asked what causes age discrimination and what policy approach should be taken to tackle age discrimination in employment. However, it is hard to find a study by a Korean academic that adopts the standpoint of older people who have suffered discrimination, by listening to their voices. In short, this study aims to determine how such older people understand age discrimination and what they hope to do about such treatment in the Korean context through understanding their perspectives on the meaning of work, ageing and employment policies and practices for older people.

Furthermore the research topic of age discrimination has mainly been examined by academics specialising in law and employment studies. In the social policy research area, it is not easy to find research on age discrimination, although the Ministry of Welfare and Health plan and put into practice employment policies and programmes for people of 65 years and over in Korea.

In this sense, this research is a unique approach in this area, attempted in the belief that the voices of the policy recipients who are most deeply influenced by the impact of policy should be heard by academics in social policy.

#### **1.4. Summary of the chapters**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. After the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 shows the policy debate about employed older people in the social, politico-economic, historical and cultural context of South Korea. In particular, it describes the



circumstances which oblige older people to choose to work for economic reasons in this country because they are in poverty caused by the welfare regime which does not provide a secure income system for older people; existing studies also maintain that they desire to work for non-economic reasons such as health, happiness and inclusion in society.

In Chapter 3, the theoretical frame for the thesis is discussed. Despite the urgent need, discussed above, of older people in the Korean context to be employed, it does not seem easy for older people to get equal job opportunities because of age discrimination in employment. Thus, in this chapter, to understand the causes and results of the barrier of age discrimination, social theories are discussed which attempt to explain the social prejudices in modern society which influence the formation of age discrimination and theories of ageing. In order to conceptualise the discrimination debate the positive view of the social participation of older people in employment is set against the negative discrimination theories which include age discrimination theory. Practical concepts such as employability and workability as ways of tackling age discrimination are introduced.

Chapter 4, discusses the interpretive and biographical methodological approaches adopted in this research and the research questions and philosophical foundations of the research aims. In particular, this research uses the biographical approach to interpret how employed older people understand their country's age discrimination in employment. The collection and analysis of data from the biographical narrative interviews of eighteen employed older people in Korea is discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings generated from the biographical stories of the research participants. It was found that the employed older people wanted to work because they identified themselves by their work. However, a contradiction is

revealed between their perception of ageing and their work performance. Physical decline through ageing is accepted to some extent, but they do not admit any decline in their work performance in comparison to the work performance of younger people or to their work performance when they were younger and some complain that society does not recognise this. A dilemma between hope and reality was seen in their perception of age discrimination as they narrated their diverse experiences of age discrimination. However, they did not simply complain about age discrimination but rather empowered themselves to surmount the barrier by asserting that they were too young to stay at home and hoped that government policy would support their struggle for a fair income for their work performance and improve conditions for those who are competitive enough to get work in an open employment market. At the same time they wanted the chance to offer their ideas to those who are working on policy development.

However, in Chapter 6 the discussion moves to 'what takes priority' based on the limited resources of policy development in this context. On the one hand, the employed older people hope to work not only for a secure income in their impoverished old age but also a healthy life, career development, independence, happiness and life itself. In this sense, work may be the priority for older people. However, on the other hand, age discrimination prevents such people from working. Thus, policies for better social security should be developed before those for more working opportunities. In this context, the hopes of older people expressed in the findings give rise to the idea of a balance between two policy approaches for older people, in practice offering them income security and more working opportunities (by improving their employability and workability) and in principle planning a social security net for others who cannot work.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the discussion by taking a holistic approach to the thesis,

answering the research questions through a summary of the findings. Then the implications of the research findings are considered, including the theoretical, methodological and practical implications, reflections on the research process and suggestions for further research.

The Appendix contains materials which were not included in the above chapters. It contains key definitions used in the thesis, the interview questions sheet given to respondents, the interview consent form and brief information on the respondents and examples of analysis mapping and transcripts.

## **CHAPTER 2. Policy approach to employed people in the social, historical, economic and cultural context of South Korea**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The thesis focusses on the experiences and understanding of employed older people in South Korea. Thus, to understand the position of such people, employment for older people will be examined in the context of policy. To do this, the employment of older people will be discussed within the development and context of the South Korean welfare and social policy.

The Esping-Anderson's welfare state theory (1990), which is widely used in policy analysis, is presented and will be used as an analysis tool. The typology developed by Esping-Anderson and its applicability to the Korean case is a controversial issue and this will be discussed in an attempt to categorise the Korean welfare regime and embody the attributes of Korean social policy and thus provide a framework within which to analyse specifically the policies for employed older people.

Hence, within this framework, a context was sought by examining the key features of these people's circumstances, including the insecure income system and an employment policy typified by such things as a Job Creation Act indicating a 'productivist welfare regime' developing social policy alongside economic growth policies (Holliday, 2000). The policy debate in this thesis cannot provide a full understanding of the plight of older people who do not work as it focuses on the research participants, who are employed. However there is scope to present and analyse the policies for income security and employment in other countries from a comparative perspective using welfare state theories to widen and enrich the

comparison and contrast between countries.

## **2.2. Understanding older workers in the context of Korean social welfare policies**

### **2.2.1. The 'Welfare State'**

Various types of welfare state have been formed with different degrees of government intervention in welfare development. The social policy development of each country has also been influenced by the historic evolution of the meaning of citizenship. In particular, the growth of the welfare state has reinforced the social rights of citizens (Marshall 1963). Stoesz and Midgley (1991) consider that the welfare state is one of the social partners that maintain the market economy in a varied formation of private, voluntary and other forms of social provision. However, the neo-Marxists, O'Corner (1973) and Gough (1979), have a different view of social policy formation. They believe that the development of the welfare state conflicts with capitalism, which accumulates capital, and that it is the method by which to legitimate politics.

In the context of social policy formation, welfare state theories developed in two main strands: one concerns the 'quantitative aspects' and the other the 'qualitative aspects' of different countries in terms of the 'production, distribution and institutional aspects of welfare'. First of all, a quantitative perspective is developed by Cutright (1965) and Wilensky (1975). Their criteria are based on the level of welfare spending or the time when social welfare programmes were introduced. According to the criteria, the countries which were quick to spend a large amount on welfare and social policy

programmes are introduced under the name of 'welfare-state leaders'. In contrast, 'welfare state laggards' are the countries which spend little on welfare and have introduced welfare regimes late. In particular, their theoretical background was of *convergence theory*, which holds that the welfare state pursues a 'linear development'.

In contrast, a qualitative approach was made by Titmuss (1974). He classified three welfare typologies, namely, 'the residual welfare model' to assist with remedial and temporary aid, 'the industrial achievement performance model', developed on the basis that social needs are associated with merit, work performance and productivity and 'the institutional redistributive model, 'which aims to achieve social equality by schemes of universal social service and redistribution'. In particular, the criteria which he used to set up categories relate to the extent to which citizens' needs are satisfied by the 'market, family and state'. However, his theory is criticized for being too conceptual and its typology is found to lack comprehensive 'attributes and criteria' (Furniss and Tilton, 1977; Korpi, 1980: 1983).

In this sense, Esping-Andersen's welfare state theory, developed in the late twentieth century, provides detailed criteria for 'de-commodification' and 'stratification' and distinguishes three types of welfare state regime, which brings the conceptual alongside the relevant criteria. He uses such factors as 'their political economy according to their policy outputs, their welfare effects on de-commodification and their feedback effects on systems of stratification' (Esping-Andersen, 1990). His three types of regime are the liberal, the conservative and the social democratic. According to him, the three categorised welfare state typologies were produced from conceptualising the welfare 'regime':

*"Regimes refer to the ways in which welfare production is allocated between state, market and households"*

*(Esping-Andersen, 1999).*

In other words, the welfare states are categorized by the way in which the role of the state is associated in welfare provision with the role of the market, the family and individuals.

First, liberal countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia are characterised by the fact that the market plays the main role of welfare provision and the welfare services are provided by individuals or family. Moreover, these liberal countries provide minimal benefits to low income people who are mostly working class and must prove their eligibility through means tests. At the same time, society stigmatises them for not accepting its work-ethic norms, which insist that people should work to earn their own living and not seek income through state benefits. State benefits should be marginalised and given only to vulnerable people who are not able to work. Additionally, this kind of liberal regime emphasises the efficiency of the market, while exhibiting commodification and stratification (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

Second, conservative countries such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy are corporatist states. States play the main role in providing welfare services through social insurance, according to class and status. Thus, corporatist regimes involve welfare services only marginally and depend on private insurance and the market to supply them; such services are typically established by the Church and a welfare state develops with the intention of maintaining traditions in the structure of society and the family, with no attention paid to social redistribution. However, the social insurance in such countries does not include housewives who are not in paid work. Family benefits ensure the exclusion of non-working females (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

Third, the smallest cluster is formed by the Scandinavian countries including Sweden; these aim for universalism, de-commodification and equal social rights and they extend the middle class. This welfare regime is called a 'social democratic' regime. Countries of this kind are concerned over the equality of the working class and middle class in a social democratic regime, where the state provides welfare services and benefits for the new members of the middle class, up to a level which guarantees full rights to equality for all citizens, including both manual workers and white-collar employees, for example, civil servants. The welfare regime is developed to maximise individual independence while diminishing the role of the market and the traditional family. This type of welfare state helps women to choose to take paid work rather than being housewives, since many women want to be involved in economic activity. In particular, the most noticeable attribute of a social democratic regime is its combination of welfare and work in order to maintain full employment while maximising de-commodification and minimising stratification (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

Esping-Anderson (1990) presents the usefulness of a welfare state typology as a frame within which to extend his analytical view to help readers see the 'wood rather than countless trees'. As Arts and Gelissen (2002) put it, welfare state theory can give the 'Bird's Eye view'. For example, if the welfare typology of a country is classified, then the details of its welfare characteristics can be roughly inferred; that is, the characteristics which show how the state, the market and households are interactively connected in welfare provision can be worked out without the need for specific details so long as its place in a welfare regime typology is known. Esping-Anderson also believes that if the welfare states are grouped according to their common attributes, then analysts can more easily identify the basically developing 'logic of [their] movement' and possibly interconnection. In addition, he emphasises



that in the comparative study of welfare states the analysis tool of a welfare state typology is helpful for arranging and assessing hypotheses (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

He goes on to point to the theoretical concept of welfare state transition. In his book, *"The Welfare State in Transition"* he concludes that the welfare state typology can be described in transit and restructured under the influence of socioeconomic pressures such as de-industrialization, globalization and ageing of society, which have been on the rise since the mid-1970s (Esping-Andersen, 1996).

### 2.2.2. Debates on welfare state theory.

Esping-Andersen sets out four main debates on the subject of the welfare state typology. First of all, welfare state theory is classified in terms of contemporary society. This means that welfare state typology depends on a particular point 'in time', like a snapshot. For example, the British welfare state was a 'liberal regime' in its reflection of the mid 1980s, according to Esping-Anderson's criteria. However, if the British welfare state in the immediate 'post-war decades' is classified, it may be nearer to the social democratic welfare type, in the same cluster as Scandinavia (Esping-Anderson, 1999).

Second, the attributes for classifying the welfare state in his typology have been debated. In fact, Esping-Anderson (1999) uses three criteria: 'de-commodification', 'stratification' and 'de-familialism', which was added to his scheme later. However, when different criteria and attributes are used to classify the types of welfare state, the countries concerned are categorized differently. For example, Korpi and Palme (1998), using different attributes, found five categories applying to the welfare states of the countries that they surveyed: 'bases of entitlement to welfare system', 'benefit level principle' and 'whether there are cooperative industrial relations for governing a

social insurance program.’ Lewis, too (1992) presents three categories of welfare state classified by ‘gender’ attributes; ‘for example, women’s unpaid work’, such as caring for children and elders at home, or housework. Like Korpi and Palme (1998), Lewis (1992) found different categories of welfare state by adopting different attributes for the classification. The implication of this is that the attributes of Esping-Anderson may have limitations in reflecting the conditions of welfare when applied to all countries. However, other researchers who use different attributes and have different categories of welfare state may risk making methodological mistakes because their own attributes are not creative criteria but developed on the basis of Esping-Anderson’s (Kim, 2001).

Third, welfare state theory becomes controversial when it comes to ambiguous cases. When welfare state theory is applied to some countries, countries which do not fit in to Esping-Anderson’s three types of welfare state can sometimes be categorized as hybrid types combining particular attributes. Kim (2001) presents seven combinations as ‘distinct’ regimes. If this is possible, we can make 7 logical combinations of Esping-Andersen’s welfare regime types, as follows: 1) the liberal welfare regime, 2) the conservative/corporatist welfare regime, 3) the social democratic welfare regime, 4) a combination of 1) + 2) (e.g. Japan), 5) a combination of 1) + 3) (e.g. Britain), 6) a combination of 2) + 3) (e.g. the Netherlands), 7) a combination of 1) + 2) + 3) (e.g. South Korea). Beyond these, ambiguous cases can be classified as different welfare regimes, not necessarily as hybrid types. Mitchell (1991) & Castles (1996) present a different type of welfare regime exemplified by Britain, Australia and New Zealand. They classify these countries as a fourth typology of welfare regime, called ‘Antipodean’. Ferrera (1998) asserts that Spain and Italy, countries of Southern Europe, follow a ‘Mediterranean’ model’ as a fourth type. East Asian Countries such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan are also classified as a fourth type, the ‘East Asian

Model'. A further description of the 'East Asian Model' is discussed below, in order to identify the welfare state typology of the East Asian Countries.

A final aspect of welfare state theory is the comparison between mature and immature welfare regimes. Korea and Taiwan, in particular, among the countries of East Asia, are classified as immature welfare states in comparison to the welfare states in Western countries (Croissant, 2004; Hort and Kuhnle, 2000). However, in the perspective of Tang (2000) on 'Korea, Taiwan and Singapore' it is not justifiable to compare East Asian countries which have immature welfare states with Western countries which are mature welfare states as if they were equivalent.

Although Esping-Anderson's welfare state typology has attracted considerable criticism, his theory provides an important analytical frame of reference in comparative studies for understanding the differences between advanced welfare states. In particular, from the theoretical perspective, it is noticeable that his welfare regime typology has contributed a significant amount. According to Gough (2004), Esping-Anderson's welfare regime classification was produced from collective categorisation which was developed through comparative studies. He used it to discover the communal features of individual nations in terms of the welfare regime, going beyond the dichotomy between the functionalist approach, which emphasises the tendency of convergence in the social security system and academics' excessive concern with the singularity of the social security system in each country.

### 2.2.3. East Asian Welfare regime, in particular, Korea

When the welfare systems in the East Asian countries, including Korea, are considered, it is not easy to decide whether East Asian countries can be classified

under one of Esping-Andersen's welfare state typologies or whether they reinforce his categorisation by forming a fourth type. In particular, it is clear that East Asian welfare models are distinct from Western welfare states. Regarding the distinctiveness of East Asian welfare models, Jones (1990; 1993) has pointed to the 'Confucian tradition of family piety and loyalty' as a prevailing factor that influences East Asian countries in forming their welfare model. Alongside Jones's argument, in Korean academic research, the cultural perspective on welfare regimes has also been studied by Shin and Shaw (2003). In addition, Kim (2003) focuses on the Confucian family in his consideration of welfare state development. However, Choi (2007) criticises the 'Confucianism' perspective in the model for East Asian countries. He believes that 'Confucian Values' are produced differently in each society. Thus, the 'Confucianism' aspect of East Asian countries welfare regimes fails to explain the variety in the attributes of the welfare systems and policies of the East Asian countries.

Johnson (1982) defines the typical East Asian welfare regime as a 'developmental state' which is formed by an attribute, 'economic nationalism,' in the authoritative and effective coalitions of 'corporate and bureaucratic elites' so as to pursue economic development. Tang (2000) and Kwon (2009) name East Asian countries 'developmental welfare states' where welfare policies are 'predominantly structured for facilitating economic development'. Where the state has developed predominantly social and economic policies, as in the countries of East Asia, social policy has correspondingly been developed for the purposes of economic growth. Kwon (2009) also writes about the difference between 'developmental states' and 'developmental welfare states' by noting that the latter has been for decades simply a more developed model than the former in social welfare. Moreover, Holliday (2000) and Gough (2004) assert that a 'developmental state' supports a 'productivist welfare regime' in which social policy has developed marginal social rights and has

strengthened activity among some elements in society and the relationship of the state, the market and the family toward economic production (Holliday, 2000).

Hence, an East Asian welfare regime which has continued to develop welfare policies is different from welfare states in Europe, which have advanced welfare policies (White and Goodman, 1998; Gough *et al.*, 2004; Aspalter, 2006; Ronald and Doling, 2010b). Goodman and Peng (1995) also propose that East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan are possibly following the 'Japan-focused welfare model' which should be understood in relation to each country's own cultural, social, political and economic conditions even though these countries may have adopted various perspectives from Western welfare regimes. However, Esping-Anderson (1999) argues that the 'East Asian welfare model' is hardly distinct from Western welfare models. He maintains that countries in East Asia can be hybrid [cases] lying between conservative and liberal welfare regimes in the three worlds' typology'. In this sense, also, Cho (2002) also asks which welfare state typology is applicable to East Asian countries of the three types of welfare state presented by Esping-Anderson. Cho argues that the typological criteria and methodology of Esping-Anderson can refer to the classification of East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan as examples of a 'liberal welfare regime' in consideration of their welfare policy attributes which provide minimal state benefits for low income people and emphasize work before welfare, rather than classifying East Asian countries as 'conservative or corporatist welfare regimes' as Esping-Anderson prescribes (Esping-Anderson 1996, 1997). Shin (2003), in particular, offers the argument that Korea is the country with 'an enterprise-centred regulatory welfare system', leading him to define its welfare regime as individual to 'Korean society'. Meanwhile, Kim (2001) classifies the Korean welfare regime as a mixed type of 'Liberalism and conservatism' because Korea has expanded the social insurance schemes and benefit systems of conservative countries whilst national social services have not been developed

promptly and the inequality of the classes is deeply rooted in society, as it is in economically liberal countries. However, Kim (2001) argues that new criteria should be developed for welfare regime classification if it is to be relevant for both Western and East Asian countries, instead of classifying the Korean welfare model somewhere in the three-fold typology of Western welfare states. He advocates this because he believes that the characteristics of the East Asian welfare system are distinct from those of the welfare regimes of Western countries which can be classified by the criteria of Esping-Anderson's welfare state regime typology (1999). Jung (2002) also presents Korea as a 'developmental welfare state', the fourth type of welfare state; Tang (2000) and Kwon (2009) also call East Asian countries 'developmental welfare states', where welfare state policies are 'predominantly structured for facilitating economic development'. The reason is possibly generated from the view that Korean social policies have fundamentally been developed to achieve economic growth. These policies minimise the state's contribution to social insurance and social expenditure on welfare, emphasising in the development of welfare both the role of the state and that of enterprises (Jung, 2002).

#### 2.2.4. Approaches in the development of Social Policy in Korea

In academic research, the function of social policy raises various issues. Esping-Anderson asserts that 'social policy has existed as long as there has been some kind of collective political action to address a social risk' (Esping-Anderson, 1999).

In the above context, such words might imply that welfare states are developed with the expansion of social policy, which is the response to social risk. Esping-Anderson states that 'social policy means the public management of social risk' (Esping-Anderson, 1999). Moreover, Baldwin (1990) and Giddens (1998) support the

argument that social policy provides a cushion against the conflicts between different kinds of risk. Other debates concern whether social policy is the means to develop the legitimization of political and economic institutions and set limits on the allowance of social distance in society to prevent the conflicts which can result from social distance (Mishra, 1977; Offe, 1984; Piven and Loward, 1971).

Therefore, it is fruitful to see social policy development in the light of national crises, in order to understand what kind of welfare regime the state forms. First, to understand the welfare regime of Korea, we trace how its social policy has been developed. Then, from our understanding of the welfare regime, we will find it easier through in-depth policy debates to appreciate the thoughts and experiences of older Koreans as they struggle against age discrimination in employment.

Academics in Korea began to debate the development of social policy in the late 1980s. In 1987, the introduction of two Social Security programmes, the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance Programme and the Health Insurance Programme led to the development of social policy (Shin 2003). In the early 1980s, a considerable amount of Western literature had become available, such as the work of Furniss and Tilton (1977) and Mishra (1977) on the development of the welfare state. In the late 1980s, too, works such as George and Wilding (1976), Mishra (1984) and Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965) were translated into Korean (Hwang 2002). Since this time, a wide range of Western theories with respect to social policy development has been in the hands of Korean scholars. Among Korean academics, three main standpoints in the debates regarding the development of social policy in Korea can be established.

The first argument originates from the functionalists' economic approach. They assert that social policy develops in step with the growth of the economy. Park in particular (1975) claims that a wide range of socio-economic development frameworks should

be considered in the design of social security programmes. Kwon (1993) takes the view that social policy in Korea has developed behind economic growth. He emphasizes how the growth of the economy and social expenditure are related.

Second, the statist approach is centred on the role of the state in consideration of the expansion of social policy. This perspective brings the view that Korea's social policy was developed in the interests of the privileged citizens and the current political regime (Ha, 1989 and Kwon 1999) or the circumstances in which power fails to strike a balance between the economy and the ministries of social affairs (Jung, 1993).

As the third argument, the development of social policy has been discussed by scholars who are interested in politico-economic effects and debate from neo-Marxist perspectives. According to this perspective, social policies are largely developed from the effects of economic and political changes (Kang, 1993; Lee, 1999; Joo, 1999). Kim (1989) asserts that social policy in Korea was developed to tackle the monopoly of capitalism in Korea.

Thus, in considering the development of social policy from three perspectives: the functionalist, the statist, the politico-economic and the neo-Marxist, we discuss in turn below which applies to Korea, following the arguments of Korean academics.

2.2.5. Does surveying Korea's social policy development require a functionalist approach, a statist approach or a politico-economic and neo-Marxist approach?

Korea has had four historical and political periods in which social policies have developed, namely, after 1961, when large numbers of social policies were implemented; after 1986, when welfare regimes were reformed; after 1998, to overcome economic crises such as the IMF intervention, in the form of a welfare



explosion; and after 2003, when further welfare development was achieved by the political victory of the oppressed.

#### 2.2.5.1. Introducing some social policy regulations (1961 to 1963)

After Park Jung Hee's military coup and his seizing of governmental power in 1961, the government legislated for social policy on a massive scale until 1963. The first Korean social insurance was the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance in 1963, the year when the nation's GDP stood at \$100 per person. The population employed in manufacturing industry was only 8.7%. Korea, which had not seen much development at this stage, was one of the world's poorest countries (Yoo, Lee and Choi, 2005). According to the research of Collier and Messick (1975), nine of the thirty six countries which had the same or a lower GDP developed a social insurance regime. In addition, thirteen countries out of the fifty eight where the population was employed in manufacturing industry had less than 10% of the enacted laws to provide Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance. In their research, they found that the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance in Korea is not to be explained in functionalist economic terms, because it developed at an early stage before Korea had established its programme of industrialisation. Therefore, the development of the social policy regime should be seen from the statist's perspective. In 1963, President Park had attempted to move from military power to democratic power in order to legitimize his rule in the eyes of the people (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010). To this end, President Park announced that the government in 1962 and 1963 would be heavily involved in developing welfare regimes for those excluded from social provision. It is assumed that the 'Livelihood Protection Act' was developed at this time in order to introduce ways for poor people to support themselves by their own efforts (Kwon,

1989 and Seong, 1991). In this context, such a development in the welfare regime makes sense from the statist approach, because the government seems to have developed the welfare system in order to prevent the problems which the legitimizing of the regime might have raised (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010 Yang 2008, Sin 2008)

#### 2.2.5.2. Welfare Recession (1964 ~ 1985)

##### 1) 1964~1972

In this period when the new democratic government took over power from the Park regime, developed social policy is rarely found, except for three policies. These are the '*Training System for groups which can support themselves*', the '*Honourable treatment of persons with distinguished service to independence*' and the '*Regulations for a fundamental system of social welfare*'. The reasons for the recession lie in the political and economic background. When President Park won the election in 1963, he favoured policies for economic growth which were based on industrialisation. His government had stable power, derived from its democratic election and successful economic growth. The politically stable status of President Park's regime was seen in the results of the elections for the National Assembly, in which the ruling party won most seats. From this standpoint, President Park had no need to develop any further welfare arrangements because he fundamentally believed that fast economic growth would enable him to maintain his governance and extend social welfare (Nam, 2006; Park, 2008). Thus, in this context, the statist approach clarifies this relative slowness to further develop social policy. The government did not develop the welfare regime when they did not need the political

justification which it provided for them. Instead they emphasised the economic role and function of Korean society (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010 Yang 2008, Sin 2008).

## 2) 1973~1979

The perception that the welfare regime is a method for developing the economy of a state has been current since the late 1960s. However, from the beginning of the 1970s political stability was widely beginning to decline. In this era, working class crowds and university students held violent demonstrations against military governments. What was even worse for the government was that the capitalists opposed their policies. From 1974, the number of workers' disputes increased. Heavy industry and the chemical industry not only strengthened the power of the regime but also brought a better balance of power for the citizens. In addition, the anti-government movements built up a structured foundation from the industrialisation of the heavy and chemical sectors of industry. These political and economic changes impacted on the legislation of welfare policies, such as the '*National Pension Programme*' enacted by Park in 1973 and '*Medical Insurance*', with its enforced registration (Jeon, 1987; Lee, 1992; Nam, 2006). The purpose of the '*National Pension Programmes*', to support the incomes of older people, was, however, unlikely to overcome the social problems expected from an increasingly ageing population. In fact, in 1973, when this bill was enacted, the older generation totalled only 3.3% of the population; comparable figures come from Germany, which introduced its National Pension Programmes in 1890 when its ageing population had been 5.1%; from Britain, which enacted its Public Pension policy in 1908 when its ageing population was 5.2% and from the USA, which legislated in 1930 for National Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) when its ageing population was 5.4%. In addition, the strong Confucian tradition dictated that children should support their

parents financially. Moreover, there was a '*Retirement Allowance*' available, which was based on Labour Law (Son, 1981; Kim, 2010). In this sense, it is hard to understand the development of the '*National Pension Programmes*' from the functionalists' perspective. The reason for its legislation can, however, be found in the political and economic background. The government had a plan for economic development but not enough funds to embark on it. At this point, pensions may have been seen as an appropriate initiative for mobilising the finance for an economic plan until the oil crisis of 1974 intervened. After a theoretical examination to prepare for enacting the legislation, the government passed the '*National Pension Programmes*' law in 1974. Its introduction was based on the view that welfare regimes are implemented whenever there is a need for economic development. But the development of medical insurance had a somewhat different approach in Korea. The expansion of medical insurance to working class people was in response to a political requirement, since its purpose was to bring them into the industrialised society. This development is explained by Titmuss (1974), who states that integration is a better method of leading people to a desired end than control, which causes complications. In fact, the developed countries such as those in the West developed medical insurance first for low-income working class people and only afterwards extended it to other social classes and finally to everyone; Korea in contrast instituted medical insurance first for people in relatively high positions who might have opposed the government and then extended it to people who were working in small businesses and were powerless in politics, although this policy was introduced to meet the needs of the working class and motivate them to become involved in industry (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010; Park, Choi and Hwang 2007).

### 3) 1980 ~ 1985

After the premiership of President Park came to an end, President Chun Du Hwan took power through a military coup. His views, which inspired him to develop welfare regimes, were similar to those of President Park. President Chun needed to legitimize himself to electors. To do so, he promised that his government would be aligned with a welfare state. However, it was a totally meaningless proclamation. The government instituted a range of social welfare laws in 1981, such as those for children, the older population and the disabled. Yet the laws did not make the policies obligatory but only recommended them as being practical, given their programmes. In 1982 and 1983 they did increase the welfare budget to three times the budgets of previous governments, but the government did not sustain this increase (Kim, 1993; Na, 1995; Park, 2001). The extent of welfare regime development generally depended on the changing political needs and therefore, in the mid-1980s, when society underwent a crisis, President Chun for statist purposes, extended three welfare programmes to cover the whole population: the National Pension, National Health Insurance and the Minimum Income System (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010; Park, Choi and Hwang, 2007).

#### 2.2.5.3. The welfare explosion (1986~1990)

In 1986, Korea came to a turning point in welfare, as well as in politics. President No Tae Woo was the first Korean president to have been directly elected by the people. Between 1986 and 1990, he offered massive welfare services to working-class voters while assigning a great deal of the budget to welfare expenses (Seong, 1991). This explosion of welfare can be compared with the American welfare explosion. From today's position, such a development is not easy to understand, in the absence of outstanding progress in the economy and society. The reason, however, can be seen

in the political crisis. In the elections for the National Assembly, the ministerial party did not have enough support, due to the strength of a non-governmental party, the '*Sinmin party*', which was supported by the intelligentsia, the working class and middle class and university students who had demonstrated against the policies of the government in 1985 (Park, Choi and Hwang, 2007; Kim, 2010).

#### 2.2.5.4. Recession of social welfare (1991)

Politically, Korea was stable once the three parties were united in one conservative party, the ministerial party, in 1990. However, this political stability had a negative effect on the development of social welfare policies. When the number of labour disputes and demonstrations decreased, the budget for the welfare programmes also went down. Just when Employment Insurance was due to come into force, the government postponed the final practical steps. The assumption that the expansion of social welfare is an obstacle to a developing economy became dominant once more in the governance of the period. Instead, welfare policies similar to those of the previous era were inaugurated: '*Workfare*' burgeoned at the end of the welfare spring (Lee, 1997). This recession continued until Korea faced the IMF crisis in 1997. In fact, the governmental power of Presidents Park, Chun and No had to be justified if the people were to support it. The effect of this was to comprehensively develop social welfare policies. However, President Kim Young Sam was the only President between 1960 and 1993 to have been democratically elected and who therefore required no justification for his governmental power. In stable political and economic circumstances, the development of social policy was not essential, but in times of social and economic crises, welfare regimes become obligatory (Kam and Choi and Jin, 2010; Park, Choi and Hwang 2007).

#### 2.2.5.5. The era of reformed welfare regimes, caused by the economic crisis (1998~2002)

##### 1) The growth of social welfare after the economic crisis of 1998~August, 1999)

President Kim Dae Jung favoured the construction of welfare policies. In the IMF crisis, he reformed immense numbers of welfare programmes (Park, 2001). First, he extended the scope of four kinds of national insurance, namely, the National Health Insurance, National Pension, National Employment Insurance and Industrial Accidents Compensation Insurance. Second, he extended to previously excluded groups the provision of social welfare services which created employment in the public area. Third, he increased the budget for welfare policies. The Social Security budget was 7.27% of the total in 2000. Compared to the 3.82% share of the Social Security budgets in 1995, 5 years before, they had doubled in size. His reforming welfare regime can be compared with the reform of welfare programmes by the Roosevelt government in the USA (Park, Choi and Hwang, 2007).

In fact, Korea had reached a social emergency as the result of its economic crisis. There were many social problems, such as increased unemployment and a high divorce rate. The government had to develop a social security net for the victims of these difficulties. At the same time, the IMF requested the Korean government to install a welfare regime to take care of these problems, which the government had to comply with in order to receive the IMF's financial support. However, this was not its fundamental approach to a system of universal welfare; rather, it was a response to the suggestion of the IMF, meant to solve the social problems at the time (Kim, 2002).

2) The development of a social welfare policy after overcoming the economic crisis (since August 1999)

Following the social and economic crisis, President Kim Dae-Jung produced a '*Productive Welfare model*', known as '*Welfare to Work*' in the UK and the USA. There are two aspects to note in '*Productive Welfare*'. The politics focuses on enforcing the rights of the citizen and emphasises working for the welfare of citizens (Kim, Park and Choi, 2009). In particular, Park (2000 and 2008) points out that President Kim believed the principle of liberalism in economics and democracy to be significant for the nation. He presented the '*Productive Welfare model*' after only a year in power suggesting that he had designed it to overcome social problems such as the increased rate of unemployment, a declining middle class and rising social exclusion, since the object of '*Welfare to Work*' is for all citizens to have work. In 1999, the first fruits of the '*Productive Welfare*' model were in the '*National Basic Livelihood Guarantee Act*' which can be compared with the '*Speenhamland system*' of the UK and was a significant event in the history of Korean social policy (Park, 2000). According to this Act, everyone who is capable of work should work or their low-income benefits would be stopped or reduced. The purpose of the Act was to empower low income people to be self-supporting. This Act could both strengthen the rights of the citizen and put emphasis on some form of '*Welfare to Work*' (Lee, 2000 and Park, 2000). The point, however, is that the fundamental aim in developing this Act may rather have been to control society, in particular, those who in the social and economic crisis had been excluded from participating due to poverty. In this context, it reminds us that the history of social policy development can sometimes be understood in terms of political and economic change and a neo-Marxist approach (Park, Choi and Hwang 2007).



#### 2.2.5.6. Welfare development after the political victory of the oppressed

In particular, after President No Mu Hyun's government took control, a new welfare regime was introduced between 2003 and 2008. Government focused on welfare development, alongside debates on social exclusion while emphasising citizen participation in politics. Such a change shows that the welfare issue is coming to the top of the political agenda. However, the issue of policies could not be centred on the simple question of choosing political representatives by voting for them in elections (Park, 2006 and 2008; Lee, 2008). Despite the minor place allotted to the voice of the citizen in politics, those concerned over Korea's welfare provision gave much prominence to the agenda of welfare in their political and academic discussions.

Consequently, it can be concluded that statist and political economic approaches can explain the development of social policy in Korea, which was formed in conjunction with the government's political and economic purposes. Moreover, various social policies developed not so much to meet the needs of the people as to ensure political victory and pursue economic growth. Even so, the country still lacks universal social benefits. The contributions of workers are necessary for social insurance policies to be implemented. Thus, in this regard, it is possible to classify the Korean welfare regime as a 'productivist welfare regime' as Holliday (2000) and Gough (2004) perceive. The reason is that the attributes of Korean welfare regimes and social policy development meet the criteria for 'productivist welfare regimes' in which social policy does not empower social rights but rather enforces productive elements in society for the sake of economic growth and the roles of market and family in welfare provision are emphasised more than the role of the state, while stigmatizing vulnerable people who depend on state welfare for their limited degree of social security (Holliday, 2000). In fact, President Kim Dae-Jung produced 'productive welfare' on an economically liberal basis to emphasise work in return for welfare

(Park, 2000). This reasoning also supports the view that the Korean type of welfare state is liable to be a 'productivist welfare regime' of this kind.

### **2.3. The narrow provision of social security for older people in Korea's ageing society**

#### **2.3.1. Unsecured income system for older people**

The attributes of the 'productivist welfare regime' discussed above lead now to a description of the income needs of older people under such a regime. In particular, it is obvious that the needs of older people cannot be met by the provision made for them, as the poverty rates of older people show. The population of Koreans aged 65 and over in 2009 was 5.35 million, amounting to 11.8% of the population. Significantly, in addition, the relative poverty rate (income below 50% of the median income, as a percentage of households) of those aged 65 and over was 45.1%. This implies that 2.4 million older people were poor. However, only 410,000 of those aged 65 and over were paid the Basic Livelihood Security benefit in 2009, meaning that about 2 million people were left in relative poverty (Korean National Statistics. 2009).

The following table, Table 1, shows the unsecured income sources of older house holders. In 2008, annuities or income from children came to 51.4% of total income in a society where older people are generally assisted by their families; earned income was 26.6% of total income in a situation which older people have great difficulty in getting a job because of age barriers. According to Table 1, private transfer income including income from earning, assets, annuities and children is about 78% of the total income of older people's households. This dependency on private transfer

income cannot be considered to be secure and stable (Kim, 2009).

Table 1. Income sources of older households (over 65)

(Unit: %)

Income sources of older households	%
Earned income	26.6
Assets income	8.9
Annuities/Children	51.4
National pension	9.4
Social assistance	3.7
<b>Others</b>	-

Sources: Korean National Statistics Office, 2008

In contrast, the national pension is shown to be only 9.4%. This figure shows how unstable the income of older people is. Public income sources, such as the national pension, are not developed enough to support the living costs of older people (Kim, 2009).

Further details of income resources such as social assistance, pension, income from children and earning income, which together meet most of the income needs of older people, will be explored in turn.

#### 2.3.1.1. Social assistance for older people

##### 2.3.1.1.1 Basic Livelihood Security

The social security payment, which is public assistance for older people in Korea,

works to secure the minimum cost of living for older people. Social security consists of the National Basic Livelihood Security System and Basic Old Age Pension (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2009). The National Basic Livelihood Security System was introduced in October 2000. The system was transferred from a scheme to prevent people reaching absolute severe poverty and became a way of ensuring that, so long as they pass a rigid eligibility test, they will have the minimum to afford a healthy and civilized way of living. The criteria for eligibility for the Basic Livelihood Security System include a means test and the evaluation of property assets. In particular, older people cannot receive the benefits if someone is under an obligation to support them. The following table shows Korea's estimate of the minimum cost of living for 2012, in relation to household size (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2009; Korean National Statistics, 2009) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Minimum cost of living for 2009

(Unit: pounds, per month)

Household size	1	2	3	4	5	6
	person	persons	persons	persons	persons	persons
(pounds/month)	280	477	617	758	898	1038

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2009

The minimum cost of living for a single person was £280 in 2009, but the average income of older people who live alone was £261 in the same year, according to Korean National Statistics. More seriously, in the 2009 report of Korean National statistics, the percentage in absolute poverty was about 35.9% of the total in their age range. However, only 13.7% of the entire older population (378,302 people of total 5,215,000 people who were 65 and older) received Basic Livelihood security benefits in 2009. In this context, it can be supposed that the government introduced

the Basic Old Age Pension in 1998 to support the people who are poor but not eligible for these Basic Livelihood Security benefits (Korean National Statistics, 2009).

#### 2.3.1.1.2. Basic Old Age Pension

Through the Basic Old Age Pension (BOAP), Koreans aged 65 and over who have 65% or less of the country's average income, qualify for public assistance through means tests, though around 30% of them are not entitled to the full amount. Around £52 a month was given in 2009 to a recipient living alone, but less may be paid according to the level of income and assets of the pensioners (Korean National Statistics, 2009; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011).

The government is considering an increase in the benefits from the Basic Old Age Pension. However, it cannot provide a sufficient increase, because it is believed that the income from the Basic Old Age Pension, which is not contributory but is a public benefit, should be lower than the income from the National Pension (OECD, 2009), which is a contributory insurance system. Moreover, the regulations state that older people are not eligible for benefits if they have children. The Korean government sees children as the source of financial support for older people; see Table 3, below, which shows the eligibility criteria for income benefits (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011).

Table 3. Eligibility based on being obliged to support another person

<b>Criteria:</b> A recipient should have no person under an obligation to support him/her. When such a person exists, he/she should be unable to render support; or a recipient should be unable to be supported		
<b>A person under obligation to support</b>	<b>Ability to render support</b>	<b>Criteria for a person under obligation to support</b>
None		Meet criteria for a person under obligation to support
Where a person under obligation to support exists	Unable to render support	Criteria for persons under obligation to support
		Criteria for persons under obligation to support
	Scarcely able to render support	(Selected under the assumption that sustenance allowances are provided)
	Able to render support (impossible to support; evasion of responsibility to support, etc.)	Criteria for persons under obligation to support
	Able to render support (providing support)	Criteria for persons under obligation to support
<b>Scope of Persons under Obligation to Support:</b> Holders of lineal relations (parents, sons, and daughters, etc.) and their spouses (daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, etc.)		

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011

According to the report of the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2011, 68.9% of the

total older population was accepted on the programme. This figure implies that about 30% of older people in Korea cannot receive the Basic Old Age Pension although the BOA Pension was developed to provide universal income support for older people who are excluded from the Basic Livelihood Security System (Korean National Statistics, 2009; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011).

#### 2.3.1.2. National pension

Korea's public pension was introduced in 1988. This was not considered an early introduction in comparison to many other countries, as seen in the following table, Table 4 (Korean National Statistics, 2009; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011).

Table 4. Years when pensions were introduced in other countries

(Unit: year)					
Country	Germany	UK	US	Chile	Singapore
Year of Introduction	1889	1908	1935	1924	1953

Source: The National Pension Service of Korea, 2011

The Korean National Pension system in Korea, then, is not developed enough to secure an adequate income for older people. In particular, the pension system is a contributory scheme for working people. Many unemployed people are unable to join the pension system if they are unable to pay contributions to the pension funds. Only 27.6% of those aged 65 and over received benefits from the National Pension in 2009 (Korean National Statistics). In other words, around 72.4% of older people have no income from the National Pension scheme.

In fact, the Korean National Pension functions to support only 60% of the total income of pensioners who have contributed for 40 years. However, as mentioned

above, the National Pension was introduced in 1988, which means that most of those who are old enough to receive National Pension benefits are not yet able to obtain them in full (OECD, 2011, National Pension Public Corporation, 2010).

Furthermore, it is projected that the National Pension scheme may suffer a financial crisis when the 'baby boom' generation, who will form 40% of the pensioner population, become recipients; in 2050 they will form 60% of it and in 2070, 70%. (OECD, 2011, National Pension Public Corporation, 2010). Therefore, the government plans to gradually deduct the income replacement rates for participants from 50% in 2008 to 40% in 2028. It can be assumed that the National Pension's financial crisis will probably threaten the income of older people in the future (OECD, 2011, National Pension Public Corporation, 2010; Kwon, 2012).

#### 2.3.1.3. Private income sources

As Table 1 (above, page 58) shows, among the income resources of older Koreans, private sources of income supply the most. These private resources, such as annuities, earned income and children, contribute most to the incomes of older people (Kim, 2008 and Kwon, 2012).

##### 2.3.1.3.1. Private Pensions

First of all, annuities and private pensions consist of retirement pensions and personal pensions. Many believe that the National Pension should be the main means of covering the income of older people; private pensions should be merely supplementary and an insurance. Regardless of the importance of the National Pension for the income security of older people, the government is planning to



reduce the income replacement rate of the National Pension as well as raising its contribution rate because of the prospect of financial shortages in the future, as mentioned above. But in such a situation, private pensions should be further extended. One of the most important private pensions, the Company Pension Scheme, consists of contributions from employees and employers and is a retirement pension introduced in 2005. 23.7% of companies which have more than 5 employees are enrolled in the retirement pension corporation. In 2010, the members of the corporation numbered 1,840,000. At present, companies which have fewer than 5 employees may join the retirement pension scheme (Kwon, 2012). However, the membership of the retirement pension scheme is unstable, because many people find it too easy to opt out of their registration. In other words, employees do not regard this retirement pension as an income source for later life. Instead, it is reported that employees for the scheme join it to qualify for working tax credit. The income replacement rate of the retirement pension is 9.4%, on condition that employees contribute for 25 years, supposing that the scheme is the same as that of the National Pension (see Table 5 below) (Kim, 2008).

Table 5. Income Replacement Rate of Retirement Pension and Personal Pension

(Unit: Years, %)

Contribution years	25 years		30 years		35 years	
Type of pension	Personal pension	Retirement pension	Personal pension	Retirement pension	Personal pension	Retirement pension
Income replacement rate (%)	6.3%	9.4%	7.0%	11.0%	7.5%	12.5%

Source: Korean National Statistics Office (2009)

But, interestingly, the income replacement rate of personal pensions is a little lower

than that of retirement pensions. If someone has contributed to it for 25 years, the income replacement rate is 6.3%. In short, the personal pension can guarantee income security, to some extent. However, the continuity of a personal pension does not last long. For instance, in 2006, 14.8% of older people had a personal pension. However, those who had paid a contribution for 6 years totalled no more than 7.5% of those who had registered for a personal pension in 2006. Evidently, the personal pension does not seem a reliable source of income for older people at present (Kim, 2008).

#### 2.3.1.3.2. Income from children

As can be seen above from Table 1 (above, page 58), 51.4% of older people's total income in 2008 came from annuities or children. The reason for this can be found in the expectation in Korean tradition and the government that children should look after their ageing parents. In particular, children are considered as benefits when considering the eligibility criteria for the public assistance of older people. However, as Table 6 shows, the percentage of income from children and annuities went down from 72.4% in 1980 to 51.5% in 2008. The reduced income percentage from the children may have resulted from Korea's modernisation, which has produced the nuclear family, generated from industrialisation and urbanisation. In short, the nuclear family does not provide the right environment to support its older members. For instance, older people are likely to live alone in their own houses once their children move to houses of their own which are near their workplaces or schools (Korean National Statistic Office, 2008; Kwon, 2012).

Table 6. Income sources of older people (1980 – 2008)

(Unit: year, %)

Year	Year 1980	Year 1995	Year 2008
Earned income	16.2	26.6	26.6
Assets income	5.5	9.9	8.9
Annuities/Children	72.4	56.3	51.4
National pension	-	2.9	9.4
Social assistance	1.2	3.7	3.7
<b>Others</b>	3.2	0.3	-

Sources: Korean National Statistic Office, 2008

Furthermore, there is another reason for family support to have weakened. This is the cost of children's education. Most Korean parents spend most of their money on looking after and educating their children and not saving or accumulating assets for later life, which may be one reason for their present poverty. In modern society, parents are still keen to support their children's education although most older parents do not live with their children. The cost of education in South Korea as a proportion of total living expenses for urban working households, according to the Korean National Statistics Office (2009), is 11.3% per year, while it is 0.8% in France and Germany, 2.2% in Japan and 2.6% in the USA.

What is more serious is that this 11.3 % includes households without children. In 2009, the percentage of households which paid more than £250 per month for private tutoring for their children was 40%. Moreover, the percentage of households which spent more than £750 on private tutoring was 3.7% in the same year (Korean National Statistic Office). Because of this, 90% parents feel that the cost of education

is a burden. The average living costs of Korean urban workers suggest that in 2009 a family with more than 2 people needed about £1,250 per month. In this sense, it can be understood how much weight older workers have laid on the education of their children and why adult children cannot afford more than minimal financial support for older parents (Ahn, 2009).

Ahn (2009) asks why Korean people are passionate about education. The reasons can be found among historical and social factors. After Korea gained its independence from Japan, the demand for talented people to contribute to the country's radical economic and political development increased. At the same time, the social phenomenon of escalating enthusiasm for education became prevalent; after the traditional systems for determining social status collapsed and people found that their social status could be established through education (Ahn, 2009)

In the discourse opposing the idealisation of family support, the socialisation of support for older people in modern society was raised and extended. This approach is based on the premise that the government and society have a responsibility to support older people in an industrial society and that the government should develop the social welfare system to support older people in modern society because it is believed that society has weakened the function of family support for older people and led them to poverty (Ahn, 2009).

In addition older people may prefer not to be a burden on their children and want to be independent financially through pensions and government schemes. Therefore, older people now support the further development of the national social security system to meet their needs (Kim, 2008; Yoo, Lee and Choi, 2005).

Currently, however, older people are struggling with insecure sources of income. For this reason, they may have to work to supplement their other income. In short, they

may seek to create income themselves through their labour although they are at the stage of retirement from the labour market.

#### 2.3.1.3.3. Earning income and thoughts of older people regarding employment

This raises the question of whether or not older Koreans want to return to or remain in work. In a survey by Yonsei University (2005) of participants over the age of 60, 78.8% of them stated that they did want to work whilst in another survey, funded by the Aged Employment Operation Centre (2005), 76.5% of the participants stated that their primary reason for working was to make enough money to raise their standard of living.

Moreover, according to the results of the study by Hwang, Choi, Kim, Lee, Yoo and Byun (2001), amongst those older people who had been suspended from employment, 67.9% wanted a job. It has been shown that out of those older people currently experiencing suspended employment, as many as 76% wanted re-employment for economic reasons, (Hwang, Choi, Kim, Lee, Yoo and Byun, 2001). According to a study on older people between the ages of 55 and 80 years by the Korean Statistical Information Service (2005), the percentage of those wanting the prospect of work was 58.8% and the main reasons for wanting it were shown to be to provide a living wage (31.7%) and joy in working (20.4%). In a different study, the percentage of older people who wanted employment was 78.8% and the proportion of those who needed to work for economic reasons was 63% (Kim, 2004), while 56.8% of unemployed older people wanting work did so for economic reasons, 16.2% for the sake of preserving their health and 10.6% in order to still feel competent (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2005). The older people who are currently engaged in the labour market also selected economic need as one of the most

important factors for their remaining in employment. According to a recent national investigation into the daily lives of older people (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2005), it was shown that 69.9% of older employees went to work for economic reasons, 9.6% to maintain their health and 6.5% because they were happy to be at work. Such results show that the influence exerted by economic factors on the continued employment of older people is gradually increasing. When these research results are summarised, although there may be some differences between those of different studies, economic factors are shown generally to be the most important reason for the employment of older people and fewer people have non-economic reasons, such as: in order to maintain health, attachment to one's work and the wish to remain in society by working as their main reason. Regardless of their own preferences about employment, many older people are forced to work for their income.

Other recent research studies have focused on older people and employment in terms of gender, occupation, age stratification and educational backgrounds.

It has been shown that gender, too, affects the economic activity of older people. According to a study by the Korean Statistical Information Service (2000), amongst men above the age of 65 years, 40.19% participate in economic activity and amongst women, 21.35% participate. In addition, it has been shown that gender also affects the reasons older people give for engaging in economic activity. A study of the reasons unemployed older people give for wanting employment, these depended on the research subjects' gender: 49% of older males had economic reasons for wanting employment and 67.9% of the older females had the same (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2005). In the case of the older males, a tendency was shown to prefer taking part in accomplishment-specialty occupations which allowed them to feel a sense of accomplishment while, in the case of the older females, a preference

was shown for simple occupations that did not require any special techniques or abilities (Kim, 2004) suggesting that economic reasons are more important for older females than for older males.

There is a close connection between age stratification and older people's desire for employment. When we look at re-employment in older workers, the figures decline for the latter half of those in their fifties, then increase numerically through the first half of those in their sixties starting to decline from 65 years of age and finally from the age of 70, the figures show a rapid decrease. Amongst older people, the age group showing the greatest desire for re-employment can be presumed to be the 60-65 year group (Lee, 2001). In addition, whilst it has been shown that the proportion of older people wanting a job for economic reasons decreases as their age increases, it is also clear that as age increases, the proportion of older people wanting work for the sake of maintaining health also increases (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2005). The mental ability of older people has an influence on their desire for employment and their employment decisions. There was a greater proportion of re-employment in older people with primary, middle and high school education, than among those with no educational background and the proportion of re-employment in older people with a university education came between these two groups. This could be because those with a university education have to some extent prepared their post-retirement activities before retiring (Lee, 2001). When the educational standards and the characteristics of the employees were studied, it was shown that the education standards of the older people in employment were higher than those of older people who had been dismissed through age (Hwang, Choi, Kim, Lee, Yoo and Byun, 2001); this can be seen as the result of the lower competitiveness in the labour market of older people with lower educational standards than that of their peers with higher educational standards. Moreover, the higher the level of education, the greater

the tendency for older people to want to remain employed for such reasons as health and a sense of competence, rather than for economic reasons (Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs, 2005). It has been shown that in the case of older people with higher educational qualifications than a high school diploma, there was a greater desire for a professional-accomplishment types of job; in the case of older people with a middle school diploma, there was a greater desire for a simple-accomplishment types of job; and in the case of older people with a primary school background or less, there was a greater desire for a workplace with the simple view to earning an income (Kim, 2004).

The older worker's family environment, family relations and spouse also have an influence on the decision to seek work after retirement (Johnson, LoSasso and Sambamoorthy, 1999). The influence that one's spouse has on the decision to retire or work tends to be considerable. There is a greater tendency for older workers to retire early if their spouse has a secure or high retirement income and there is a greater tendency for early retirement from the labour market if the spouse prefers leisure to labour. In addition, in cases where a member of the family carries the responsibility of care-giving owing to a chronic or serious illness, it has a decisive influence on the retirement and employment decisions of older workers. For example, caring for older people can give rise to discord between family obligations and following one's occupation and there is a tendency for employees to be more often late in arriving or absent from work; the frequency in these circumstances of unexpected absences from work also increases (Kola and Dunkle, 1988).

One of the most important influences on older people's employment is the state of their health (Kwon and Hwang, 2004). According to one study, the healthier an older person is, the more likely that s/he wants to be re-employed and, with regard to older workers who have been suspended from work, their health has been shown to be the



most important factor in decisions to re-employ them. In addition, it has been shown that employment has a significant, positive influence on recognised health states (Mor-Barak and Margaret, 1993). When the health conditions of older people in employment were compared with those of older people not in employment, it was shown that the state of health of the employed older people was much more satisfactory. Whilst only 8% of the unemployed older people replied that their health was good, 45% of the employed older people gave the same reply. When the change in recognised health status was measured, most of the employed older people replied that their state of health was improving and most of their unemployed peers replied that their state of health was deteriorating (Soumerai and Avon, 1983). Not only does their labour provide economic reward, but through labour, the worker can also feel many other benefits such as a sense of self-identity, of belonging to society, of contentment and of security. Some of the studies that looked into workers' responses to labour and the demands of the family reported that workers felt a greater sense of regulation and accomplishment through labour rather than through family life (Hochschild, 1997). An occupation is primarily a method of earning a living but it is also a principal part of allowing people to feel a sense of self-identity, the root of self-esteem, and is the source of their position in society, recognition, worth and creativity (Kim, 2000). This kind of research is of great interest because employment seems to give older people more than an income, although many employed older people do have to work primarily for an income. However, it should also be also recognised that many older people still suffer as a result of working because they are working unwillingly for an income, bearing in mind the age discrimination in the labour market, their impaired health and their desire to do voluntary work or to relax. In this sense it can be argued that income security should be extended to older people who are struggling with poverty and as the Korean population of older people is rapidly increasing more governmental assistance will be needed so that social

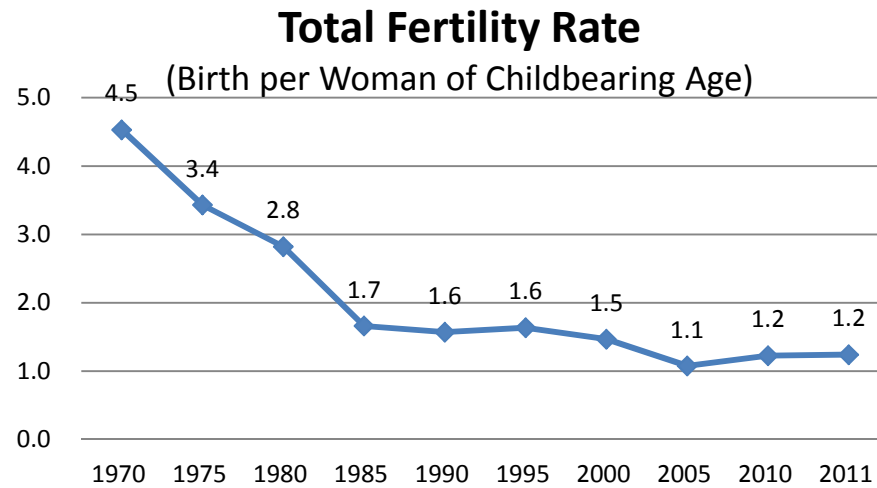
security spending can be increased to support older people who are suffering from poverty in an ageing society. The following chapter will ask how a rapidly ageing society influences the insecure income structure of older people.

### 2.3.2. The excessively rapid ageing of the population

The demographic transition in Korea started at the beginning of the 1960s, mainly due to the country's rapid socioeconomic development and the 'very successful' adoption of the government-led family planning programmes. During the period of the first five-year economic development plan in 1962–1967, the nation's GDP expanded at an annual rate of 7% and continued to grow rapidly. At the same time, the government actively campaigned for a family planning programme, believing that the population was increasing at a rate which would undermine economic prosperity. Abortion was legalised in 1973 and ten years later the government began suspending medical insurance benefits for the maternal care of women with three or more children. At the beginning of the 1980s, parents with more than two children were denied tax deductions for education expenses. In the late 1980s, public and private agencies were involved in promoting and encouraging married couples to have fewer children. As a result of these policies, Korea now has the lowest fertility rate in the world, despite a small rise to 1.2 in 2010-11(see Graph 1), rather lower than the 1.6 average for the OECD countries and significantly lower than the 2.1 needed to maintain the current population level by 2020 (Korea National Statistics Office, 2012).

Graph 1. Total Fertility Rate

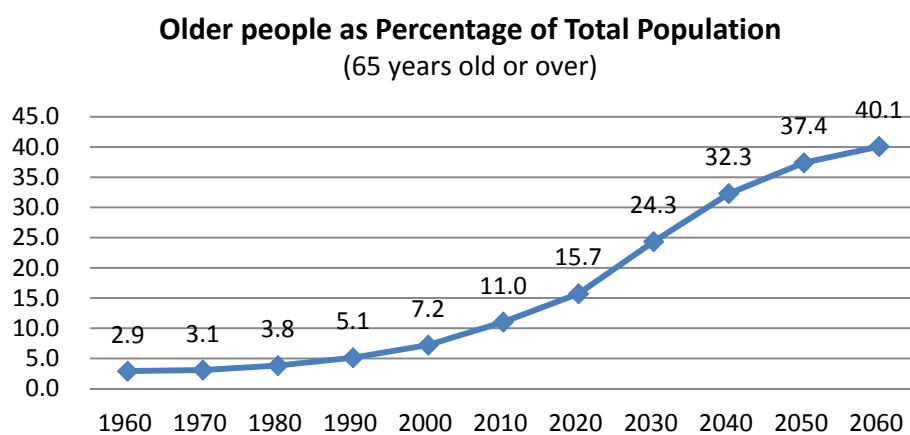
(unit: %, year)



Source: Korean National Statistic Office, 2012

Graph 2. Older people as a Percentage of Total Population

(Unit: %, year)



Source: Korean National Statistic Office. 2012

In the meantime, Korea's National Statistics Office (2012) reported that the older

population was increasing very rapidly. The percentage of older people in the population increased from 2.9% in 1960 to 11% in 2010 and is predicted to reach 24.3% by 2030 and thus to have doubled between 2010 and 2030 (see Graph 2). Moreover, an OECD report (2005) showed that Korea's youth dependency ratio will fall sharply from 5.6 in 2004 to 1.6 in 2040. When the number of people who can work and pay taxes decreases, while the number of people who live on pensions and are likely to need more medical attention increases, any country is likely to find itself in financial difficulties.

Moreover, Korea's potential economic growth rate is predicted to fall from the 5% range in 2004 to 4.2% in 2010, 2.9% in 2020, 1.6% in 2030 and 0.74% in 2040, if the average birth rate remains at 1.2, even if productivity continues to grow at 1.5% (Korean National Statistic Office, 2012).

As a result of the above situation, it can be expected that the nation's retirement funds are likely to become seriously under-resourced and over-extended as more people reach retirement age and receive benefits and as fewer younger people are available to pay into the national retirement fund. In 2001, the number of older people receiving retirement benefits was about 600,000, but it was predicted to increase to 2.4 million by 2010, 6.6 million in 2030 and 10.3 million by 2050 (Korean National Statistic Office, 2005). Social and public expenditure on medical insurance will also steadily increase with the ageing of the population (Kim, 2004).

### 2.3.3. Developing employment policies for older workers

Alongside the need to work among older people on account of economic or other reasons in a 'productivist welfare regime' and the circumstances that the older

population of Korea is rapidly increasing (since an increased older population negatively influences the income structure of older people), the government is developing employment policies and programmes for older people.

#### 2.3.3.1. Job Creation Act : Creating 300,000 jobs for 5 years

As the first step of the productive approach, in 2003, the Job Creation Act was developed in response to the view that the state should provide policies and practices to create jobs for older people in order to reduce the cost of social security. Press releases also pointed to the increase in this cost and the need to maximise employable labour (Yang, 2003).

The research of Nam (2011) recommends that the state should develop policies and practices in terms of improving the employability and capacity for work of older people so as to enable them to take competitive and promising posts. In particular, Nam points out that there should be an interrelated network of organisations including 70 Job Centres which belong to the Ministry of Welfare and Health, 168 Job Centres of the Ministry of Labour and 36 of the Banks and Senior Clubs which create businesses for the employment of older people. Although job placements in private organisations are obtainable for older people, some jobs are rarely available for them because the network between the public and private sectors is not structured to take advantage of all the opportunities. Secondly, where there is no practical difference between jobs in the voluntary sector and volunteering the conception of and systems for such jobs should make the distinction clearer.

#### 2.3.3.2. Job Creation in the public sector

The Job Creation policy developed public work chiefly to employ older people in the welfare and environmental sector where private companies cannot straightforwardly involve themselves. In particular, job placements were created from the introduction of a Long Term Care Regime for older people, extending working hours in public offices to night times, developing tourist resorts and putting on programmes in fishing and agrarian villages. In this process of development, the government has focused on the shift of older workers from the Public Working Business scheme, which was set up for unemployed older people to create jobs in the public sector. On the basis of this change, the government has a long term plan to organise and run Social Voluntary Businesses in the public area in order to maintain the employment rate of older people (Nam, 2011). In the meantime, jobs have also been created in the private sector. However, cooperation within the network of organisations to create jobs for older people is debatable. So, the following section explores the network of organisations concerned.

#### 2.3.3.3. Older people's labour centres

In the programmes run in communities, there was no main organisation to manage sub-organisations such as the Centres of Senior Clubs, Welfare Service Departments of City Halls, Development Centres of Women's Labour, Older People's Employment Centres, Job Centres, Community Centres of Older People, Community Centres and NGOs of local communities which were involved under the Job Creation Act and set up the network for cooperation among the sub-organisations. Because of this concern, 16 OPL Centres were built in the central and local offices of the National Pension organisation. In these centres training programmes were set up to improve

older people's capacity for work and develop the further design of the Job Creation scheme, connecting the resources of local communities and introducing a jobs database as the centres began to work (Park, 2005).

#### 2.3.3.4. Traineeships for older people

In support of job creation, the Ministry of Health and Welfare also introduced a traineeship programme for older people, starting in smaller businesses, the '*New Start Programmes for older people*'. This programme supports opportunities for employers to hire older workers as trainees for a limited period while they are being trained. If these trainees prove their good capacity for work then the companies can offer them a job. In spite of its good intentions, this programme has had little influence. Since August 2009, the number of companies introducing it is only 81 out of the 3.06 million companies which have fewer than 300 employees. The trainees numbered 271, although the government target had been 900. The first reason for this shortfall was the excessively low income being offered, while the employers felt it a burden to train older workers. The income from the state was a mere £100 for working 80 hours per month. On the other side, the employers complained of the difficulty of training older people with so few professionals in so short a time. Despite this difficulty, the government claims that it cannot increase the allowance, due to insufficient funds; yet it has considered reducing to 5% the 10% of working hours of older trainees which the company has to spend on training programmes (Bang, 2005 and Lee, 2008). Under such constraints the companies complained and the government enacted the laws to encourage the employment of older people against age discrimination. The provisions of these laws are as follows.

#### 2.3.3.5. The percentage of older workers in each company's total

The government introduced as a recommendation in 2001 the regulation that all manufacturing companies should have 2% of their workers over 55 years old. In particular, some occupations, such as vehicle businesses and property agencies should have 6% of all their workers in this group. Other companies are supposed to employ 3% of older workers in their workforce. This recommendation is not compulsory, however. On this basis, the result of the government research after enforcing the recommendation showed that 58.2% of all companies with more than 1000 employees did not follow the recommendation. This lack of action was due partly to there being no compulsion to hire older people but also to the fact that the companies had no incentive from the Act to do so (Bang, 2005 and Lee, 2008).

#### 2.3.3.6. Age Discrimination Law

The other legislation which the government introduced in 2008 for the employment of older people is an Age Discrimination Law which forbids discrimination on the basis of age in recruitment, employment and promotion. If employers do discriminate against people because of their age then they must pay a fine of £15,000 in each case. The reason for the opposition was the seniority payment system in which increasing age generates much higher labour costs. In this context, the government introduced an Income peak system under which it provides 50% of income grants to companies which accept the system in accordance with the ageing society and secure an extension of the retirement age for their employees, coupled with a 10% reduction of income. However, in a society with a seniority culture this has not matured in practice, although most workers favour the system, in particular now that the age of retirement has been deferred. In this sense, the government is thinking of



developing a classified Income Peak System along with individual workers who have an annual income but no seniority income (Shim, 2010).

The statistics concerned show that complaints about age discrimination made to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea since the enforcement of the Korea Age Discrimination in Employment Act (KADEA) in 2009 are mainly concerned with recruitment, the practice of which in companies of Korea has been to explicitly put an age limit on applicants for jobs. The actual confinement of the law to this kind of age discrimination in relation to recruitment leads us to ask why other age-related discriminatory practices in companies of Korea have not been addressed, despite their prevalence in the Korean workplace (Shim, 2010).

By comparing the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (EEAR) 2006 of the UK with those of KADEA, we can see three main features that probably give rise to the current state of the latter. The first is that whilst in EEAR 2006 the proportionality test is used to objectively to justify seemingly discriminatory treatment (in the case of direct discrimination) or a provision, criterion or practice putting persons of a particular age at a particular disadvantage (in the case of indirect discrimination), only a reasonableness test was provided for in the KADEA. The latter test is not as strict as the former and thus direct or indirect discriminatory practices are more likely to be justified. A redundancy case in which the Korean Supreme Court held that to use an age criterion to select those to be redundant was reasonable and accordingly justified shows that similar practices can be justified under the KADEA (Shim, 2010).

The second feature is concerned with indirect discrimination. In the UK, the provision of indirect discrimination is taken to require employers to objectively justify an age-related criterion, such as the length of service, as several cases show, although the EEAR 2006 weakens the prohibition of indirect age discrimination by exempting the

criteria of length of service to less than five years and allowing it to be used whenever it appears reasonable to employers that the way it is used fulfils a business need of their undertaking. However, to use the criteria of length of service is explicitly exempted under the KADEA's provision of indirect discrimination of. There has so far been no case in relation to indirect age discrimination (Shim, 2010).

Thirdly, Korea's regulatory framework, in which setting a compulsory retirement age does not require any justification at all, is contrasted with that of UK's default retirement age of 65 in which setting a retirement age under 65 must be objectively justified. Thus, the issue of a compulsory retirement age is hardly within the scope of the KADEA. This is rather surprising given that, as the controversy on the default retirement age before the enactment of EEAR 2006 shows, one of the principal purposes of introducing an age discrimination law is to raise, or remove, a retirement age, thus making people work longer (Shim, 2010).

Only two years have passed since the enforcement of the KADEA. Despite this, it may be concluded that it is doubtful whether the KADEA, unless the above major defects are corrected by further amendment, will play the meaningful role intended . It is far from tackling discriminatory practices in relation to age, such as a hidden age limit on recruitment, and economic dismissal on the grounds of age. In addition, it hardly regulates a retirement age in Korea which, from an ageing society, is rapidly approaching the status of an aged society (Shim, 2010).

## **2.4. Conclusion**

Having considered the debates on welfare state theory, I argue that the welfare regime of Korea is probably of the 'productivist welfare regime' type, as applies to East Asian countries. This type develops social policies with an emphasis on economic growth. The Korean government does not seem to have developed its social welfare regime as far as social democratic welfare states have developed because it has emphasised economic expansion, justified in political terms. In this policy analysis framework, it was found that policies for employing older people are developed with a view to supporting their inadequate income rather than developing equal opportunities for them in the labour market. In this sense, the tendency of policy development implies that employed older people must decide to continue to work, even if some of them in poor health would rather not and some might prefer to retire altogether from this 'productivist welfare regime,' which hesitates to develop policies to provide income and employment for older people or equal opportunities for them when they look for work.

The policies and research presented in the chapter demonstrate that employed older people have as strong a need to work as younger people. However, although older people and younger people need much the same in this respect, society, according to social theories, does not tend to offer these two groups the same job opportunities. In the next chapter, the experiences and perspectives of older people will be explored within a social theoretical framework to provide further support to an understanding of older people's perception of ageing, a key aim of the present research.

## **CHAPTER 3. Theoretical framework**

### **3.1. Negative perspectives on older people in theory**

#### **3.1.1. Introduction**

This theoretical review is undertaken to answer one of the research questions: how to understand the negative perspectives on ageing as social theories interpret them. In particular, the social prejudices about older people, which may cause older people and others in society to view ageing negatively, can be understood in light of these theories. Current experts in social ageing explore four representative theories, namely, a) Functional Theories (Disengagement Theory, Modernization Theory, Age Stratification Theory, Life Course Perspective), Exchange Theories; b) Symbolic interactive Theories (Activity Theory, Social Competence and Breakdown Theory, Subculture Theory); c) Marxist Theories (the Political Economy of Ageing and the World System Perspective on ageing); and d) the Social Phenomenology of ageing and the Feminist Perspective on ageing. These theories originate in modern sociological theories. However, social gerontology itself, which has a short history, has no broad theoretical foundation (Gu, 1985 and 1992). Gu also points out that it is important to see which factors – such as agreement, conflict, self-ego, social structure and language use – are stressed in the composition of each, because each theoretical perspective is influenced by a different aspect of sociology. No one theory can explain all social phenomena. Each theory focuses on and emphasises a particular area of society and attempts to explain the evidence from its particular position and perspective. In short, some theories attempt to explain the macroscopic

and structural system and environment of ageing and older people, while other theories are concerned with analysing microscopic and immediate social relations (Gu, 1985 and 1992).

When Gu looked at the 433 Korean gerontology studies, including masters' and doctoral theses, articles and books written in Korean during the period 1960-1984 to reveal the emergence, growth and development of Korea's gerontology, she recognised that five theories – Functionalism, Conflict theory, Symbolic interactionism, Modernisation theory and the Social Exchange theory – were those most often applied to explain the negative perspectives on older people in the available research (Gu, 1985 and 1992) Therefore, in the present thesis, to understand the social prejudices towards older people in Korea's cultural and economic context, it was useful to invoke the above five theories from the same field. The following shows the various theoretical interpretations grouped under these five broad theoretical frameworks.

### 3.1.2. Functionalism

According to functionalism, society is composed of diverse subsystems which are working harmoniously, interrelated and integrated. This being so, the maintenance and development of those functions which each system performs should let them contribute to one another in order to maintain and develop society (Parsons, 1961; Gingrich, 1999; Sullivan, 1988; Turner, 1991). In this view, it is assumed that the social prejudices against older people are generated when they cannot be sustained in the social system and contribute to its development or when the new needs of older people in the social system are not met. In other words, the functionalist asserts that the social prejudices against older people appear when these people are not

associated with the functioning of the social system. In addition, it is supposed that social prejudices arise when the stage of being older is not integrated in the whole life-cycle. In other words, that the social prejudices against older people are produced when the lives of those who have devoted their productive labour to society when they were younger have no social, material and mental rewards from society as they grow older. In short, in the functionalist perspective, social prejudices against older people are caused by the social function, structure and system rather than individual circumstances (Sullivan, 1988; Gu, 1985 and 1992)

### 3.1.3. Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, society is the organisation which is produced by accumulated wealth and possessive power which is a result of the inter-competiveness and fighting of individuals and groups who desire to possess wealth and power through controlling scarce resources. In this respect, it is assumed that social problems are generated by threats and challenges to the wealth and power of organizations which have more scarce resources and attempt to take action to preserve their power and possessions. In particular, with such unequal distribution the state itself can become a social problem (Mills, 1956; Knapp, 1994; Sullivan, 1988; McPherson, 1990; Park, 1991). The more industrialized a society becomes, the fewer opportunities older people have to acquire or access scarce resources. In Older people can no longer control their own property and their families get a more important position in society. Therefore, it is assumed that social prejudices against older people are caused by a situation in which they cannot or do not have enough scarce resources in family life and in society. In this view, the social prejudices against older people are due not to individual defects or incompetence but to the

problems of the social structure and organisation. In short, the capitalized social economic system can itself be the cause of the social prejudices against older people, according to Marxist conflict theory (Marshall, 1999; Gu, 1985 and 1992).

#### 3.1.4. Symbolic Interactionism

According to Symbolic Interactionism, both society and individuals are deeply related, understood and influenced by each other when creating social interaction (Blumer, 1962; Meltzer et al., 1975). Although society can be maintained for some time, it is always changing and being re-created in accordance with the time and situation, for new members of society impart different and new meanings to it. Therefore, in symbolic interactionism, a social phenomenon becomes a social problem if the members of society define it as a social problem (Blumer, 1971). In particular, through social interaction, age is socially defined and constructed by symbols. For instance, in a traditional society, older people are respected because of the symbolic attribution to older people of wisdom, power and authority. However, in modern society, older people are aged, sick, poor and useless. Consequently, a negative view is formed of old people replacing any positive view of an individual older person who has this personality and characteristics. In this theoretical perspective, when a negative view towards older people pervades society, social prejudices against older people are generated. The more older people are considered from a negative standpoint, the more they are stigmatised as useless. In this context, older people are more excluded from society and the stigma of being older makes them increasingly incompetent and passive. For this reason, social prejudices against older people may be prompted by individual actions or the features of those stigmatized as older, but society and the social regimes which create the stigma

originate in something larger (Unruh, 1980; Gu, 1985 and 1992).

#### 3.1.4.1. Social breakdown theory

The original theory of social breakdown was developed from Zusman (1966). The deterioration of mentally disabled people in a psychological collapse is cycled in negative feedback from the group to which they belong. The theory provides considerable insight, by which we may understand and describe how mentally ill people devalue themselves in response to the external and communal environment. The following definition precisely shows the concept of the Social Breakdown Syndrome:

*“This concept (SBS) relates many symptoms of chronic mental illness to the attitudes and actions of those who are around the mentally ill person. The picture presented by the mentally ill person is felt to be a result of the interaction between a person suffering from an illness and his current environment. The concept emphasises that an adequate description of a mentally ill person requires a statement of the conditions under which he has been observed (Zusman, 1966, p. 364-365).”*

Furthermore, Gruenberg and Zusman (1964) introduced a seven-stage process to formulate the steps in the negative psychological functioning called social breakdown:

- (1) precondition of susceptibility;*
- (2) dependence on external labelling;*
- (3) social labelling as incompetent;*



- (4) induction into a sick, dependent role;*
- (5) learning of 'skills' appropriate to the new dependent role;*
- (6) atrophy of previous skills;*
- (7) identification and self-labelling as 'sick' or inadequate.*

Even though the social breakdown theory was originally targeted at clinical interventions in a psychological approach, it may have implications in the social policy context (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1992).

Under this heading, gerontologists debated whether social breakdown syndrome can be similarly applied to older people. According to the syndrome, society forces older people out of the workplace and treats them as incompetent and dependent. In these circumstances they lose their roles, have ambiguous norms and are deprived of interaction with the reference group. As a result of social prejudices older people internalise the negative aspects of such prejudices, lose their self-confidence and regard themselves as dependent. However, it is also argued that older people can replace "social breakdown" by a "reconstruction syndrome to reaffirm their competence" if they get an opportunity to demonstrate this competence (Kuypers and Bengtson, 1973).

In this context, gerontologists also argue that it is necessary to develop social policies and social services to empower and reassure older people of their competence in order to enhance the labour force in society, as well as improving the self-image of older people rather than abandoning them in a social breakdown syndrome (McLaughlin, 1989a, b; McAuliffe, 1990).

### 3.1.5. Modernisation Theory

Modernization theory can be a relevant approach for considering the issue of the reduced power of older people in Korean society, because the theory seeks to explain how older people have become excluded from a society which is modernizing. Using modernization theory, Thomae (1983) explains ways of life and culture, on the basis of the life of older people today in American society. He asserts that older people who belonged to previous societies were generally respected in their families and beyond. However, in his view the status of such people nowadays has changed and diminished in both the family and society. This assertion was demonstrated in multicultural studies which explored the different statuses of older people in two countries, a modernized country and one which was not modernized (Bengtson, Dowd, Smith and Inkeles, 1975, Yang, 2009). According to Cowgill and Holmes (1972), as an agricultural society is transformed into an industrial society and the ties which bind the family together get weaker or break, the important status of its older people is also weakened. As a result, in the process of modernization, the influence of older people on economics and society diminishes. This dwindling status of older people in the economy and the family has led them to depend on public support. At the same time, Atchley and Barusch (2004) claim that the social resources, skills, social regimes, system and values of urban industrial society and rural agricultural society are not the same as they used to be. In other words, the lifestyle of rural agricultural societies has been transformed into the lifestyle of modern society. However, they believe that this transformation of lifestyle is unidirectional. To cite one of their examples of unidirectional change, medical developments have allowed people to live longer. However, those older people who have no updated knowledge and skills, in comparison to younger people whose knowledge and skills are rapidly modernized, and so are more and more excluded from the labour market. In the

Korean context, modernization has resulted in a fall in the status of older people because of the divisions among generations, regions and societies caused by the movement of young people from the countryside to an agricultural society. There, the knowledge held by older people, which comes from extensive experience of farming and cultivation, is the most important. For this reason, older people used to enjoy much social respect when there were few resources such as books, the Internet and other sources of information for their farming and other aspects of life. It is clear that the experts whom most people depended on and respected were the old. It was hard for young people to know even what date seeds should best be sown. Therefore, younger people needed the help and advice of older people for farming and other related aspects of life. In this sense, older people could have power, based on their experience and knowledge although physically, older people might not be as strong as younger adults. Moreover, in a closed society, respect for older people in Korea could be much influenced by Confucianism, a belief system which rationalised respect for older people in an agricultural society. However, now that society is no longer agricultural but industrial, knowledge and skills need to be continually and rapidly updated. Knowledge which has accumulated for many decades is important in developing something creative, but this accumulated knowledge is already recorded. This means that older people may be no longer important as information providers and an open society does not require the specific knowledge of older people. Thus, older people have merely a passive role in the labour market because of the prejudice against their relative physical frailty (Kim 2007).

As the above makes clear, modernisation theory emphasizes only the negative changes produced by the after-effects of modernization with regard to older people (Atchley and Barusch, 2004; De Beauvoir, 1972; Thomae, 1983, Yang, 2009). This theory, which has a dichotomous character, simply compares the life of older people

before and after modernisation and is thus limited when it comes to discussing it in holistic terms (Atchley and Barusch, 2004, Yang 2009). In particular, gerontologists since 1990 have been refuting the modernisation theory as regards older people, since it is negatively dichotomous; they have preferred positive paradigms such as *'New Senior'* or *'Positive Ageing'*. Interestingly, De Beauvoir (1972) also identifies characteristics of older people which were discovered in previous ages after modernisation. For instance, in the classical era of Ancient Greece and Roman, older citizens had a powerful status in society, while younger people had a surge of social and political power in the Middle Ages (Yang, 2009). Moreover, Atchley and Barusch (2004) hold that both the positive and negative aspects and characteristics of older people have existed in any age, showing that this argument was presented in classical times: Aristotle shows positive approaches to being old, whilst Cicero and Plato criticise the life of older people. In this context, the attempt of the modernisation theory to explain conditions for older people in terms of the negative effect of modernisation can be refuted. Hence, this theory could abandon the dichotomous view of life of the old and instead take a holistic approach including both positive and negative sides of older people's characteristics in any age.

#### 3.1.6. Social Exchange Theory

Exchange theory is rooted in the psychology of behaviourism, the economics of utilitarianism, the anthropology of functionalism and conflict theory (Cook and Rice, 2006). Homans (1958, 1961), Blau (1964) and Emerson (1962, 1976) have systematically developed this theory. It holds that social interaction is the exchange process of giving and taking the valuable tangible and intangible rewards of the actors involved. In addition, Gouldner (1960) believes that the 'norm of reciprocity' that the receiver should invoke to reply to a favour in correspondence to the favour of

the giver is the basis on which social regularity is maintained. In this theory, it is assumed that actors will attempt to achieve maximum benefit at minimum cost (Astley and Zajac, 1990).

Korean sociologist academics are not as much in favour of Social Exchange theory as others. The reasons for this are complex. The selfish and calculating view of human values is probably not persuasive for Korean people. However, most of the social exchange theorists do not try to understand all social action in terms of this theory but instead believe that social exchange is fundamentally different from the economic. Moreover, their main interest and concern is the spectrum which stretches between actions based on pure love and devotion and actions motivated by the desire for mercantile profit (Gu, 1985 and 1992).

There are in fact other approaches to the social exchange theory, by Blau (1964) and Emerson (1976). Blau (1964) upgraded social exchange theory to a structured theory by admitting that it has some attributes which cannot capitalize on personal psychology. Emerson, for his part, introduced such social concepts as power, dependency, balance and exchange actors rather than each actor individually, or a unit of action as a unit of analysis. In particular, the main disadvantages of social exchange theory are criticised for the ambiguity of such concepts as rewards and costs, which are recognised only by subjective and particular individuals in particular circumstances, because there is no objective measurement for them (Deutsch, 1958). Park (1986) points out that this criticism can be supplemented by conceptualising the 'resource' concept. It was a salient feature that the concepts of 'reward' and 'resource' were not distinguished and interchangeably used. However, existing social exchange theory research establishes a difference between these two concepts. When two actors who exchange resources of equal value depend on mutual resources, their exchange is balanced. However, if there is a gap between the amounts of resources

to exchange, the actor who has fewer resources to exchange becomes dependent on the power of the other actor with more, according to Blau (1964). In short, the actor who gives more resources has as much power as the other actor must concede as a result of his insufficient resources to exchange (Emerson, 1976). Furthermore, an actor who has the power advantage as a result of more resources is able to charge more than another actor who has less. In modern countries, older people may find it hard to ensure their resources in a labour market in which direct or indirect age discrimination is prevalent. However, their children who are less likely to suffer disadvantage from their age may have more opportunities to gain more resources in the labour market. In this sense, it can be more easily understood that older people may have to depend on their children who have a better chance to gain resources in the labour market (Park, 1991). At this point, Blau (1964) presents four methods, which he calls '*balancing operations*', by which a dependent actor can achieve an equal relationship. The methods are '*withdrawal*', '*network extension*', '*status giving*' and '*coalition formation*'. These methods have implications for tackling the difficulties of old people (Choi, 1985, Park, 1986), in particular, if the approach of Dowd (1980) is applied to the origin of social prejudice against older people. Such prejudice can be caused by the decrease of social interaction which results from exchanges between society and older people in the situation in which older people become more and more excluded from society – including the labour market, which may be the place where older people exchange social interaction as they grow older. However, Dowd (1975) wants to explain the status of older people not only in terms of ageing but also of their socio-economic status. This approach may apply to older people in the Korean context. When Korea was transformed into a modern industrial society, the resources and values of older people were devalued. For example, in an agricultural society, the ownership of property and the right of inheritance, the experience and knowledge which are related to making a living and relational resources such as

family, relatives and village communities were sharply devalued, while importance moved to the very rapidly updated and regenerated technology and skills of modern society, in which achieved status is more significant than vested status (Park, 1991). Certainly, resources can be evaluated in accordance with the degree of ageing, as well as its resources and the historical background. Despite acknowledging these principles, the attribute in modern society of changing faster than its people age is considerable for older people, because it has led to an imbalance of what can be exchanged between them and everyone else. As a result, older people are suffering from the degradation of their social status, retirement, a worsening of their economic status, loss of their roles, loneliness and deteriorating health. This situation can bring significant problems to older people. Moreover, this situation could have been brought about by a social regime which was most concerned to relieve destitution. Consequently, those older people who cannot be saved by the social welfare regime have become excessively dependent on their children, a dependency which is based on the idea of respect for the aged, whereby children should support their elderly parents. However, it is presumed that this dependency has unbalanced the relationship between children and their parents, making older people feel uncomfortable to be with their children and a burden on them. Therefore, to overcome this problem and restore the balance in the exchange relations between the two generations, Emerson (1976) recommended that excessive dependency on their children for income support should be reduced by governmental social provision for older people.

Modernization has devalued the resources of older people. Rosow (1974) claims that this degradation has been caused by changes in seven systematic powers, including weakened authority to manage the property, the secularisation of tradition and religion, fragmentation of the network between family and relatives and loss of the

community characteristics of the village. To be precise, the changes which appeared in the process by which Korea's agricultural society moved to industrialise provide the structural background to understanding how the social prejudices against older people were generated. The degradation of their status in society is possibly their most serious problem, because it may be the fundamental reason for the other factors which Rosow (1974) presents as the structural background to the social prejudices against them. According to Cowgill and Holmes (1972), there is a tendency to see the status of older people as more undignified, the more society modernizes. Cowgill and Holmes present a cause and effect model in which the processes of change, such as the development of health and medical skills, the improvement of productivity and the development of scientific technology, urbanization and the popularization of education, which are the characteristics of modernization, influence the dispossession of social status among older people. In short, through developments in medicine, the older population is increasing, but those who are living longer face the prejudice that older people have only old-fashioned knowledge and functions. This may have lost them their place in society (Gu, 1985 and 1992). However, this is not simply a matter of lost employment for older people, but rather a psychological shock and relative deprivation which affects them more because they grew up in a society where in all circumstances the old were respected, in a tradition of *'respect for older people'* and *'serving parents with devotion'*. Moreover, Palmore and Manton (1974) assume that the undeveloped social welfare provision for older people in the industrialised society plays a key role in weakening and delaying the possibility of improving their status. However, this theory in its attempt to consider the main factors determining social status has the limitation of not including individual social, cultural and historical experiences and positions in the community or gender and class in a particular society. In this sense, theories should take account of each person's individual background in order to



understand the origin of the social challenges for older people (Gu, 1992).

### 3.1.7. Conclusion

The negative perspectives on ageing which are generated from social prejudice in the social theories reviewed in this chapter have been described. In Functionalism, in particular, it is believed that social prejudices towards older people can be produced because the role of older people does not meet the social expectations for integration in a changing society (Sullivan, 1988; Turner, 1991; Gu, 1985 and 1992). However, conflict theory focuses on capitalist society as a source of opportunities for older people who cannot access as many scarce resources as they would like (Sullivan, 1988; Gu, 1985 and 1992; Knapp, 1994). Symbolic Interactionism attempts to understand ageing as a stigma which society defines (Unruh, 1980) whilst Modernization theory involves a particular emphasis on the difficulties of older people, which is caused by their negative deviations as an after-effect of Modernisation (Cowgill and Holmes, 1972), and Social Exchange theorists believe that older people cause the social prejudices against them which ensue from a situation in which they do not interact socially as equals with the rest of society (Dowd, 1975). To sum up, from the above social theories, it can be supposed that social prejudices against older people are prevalent in society because these people are not considered the equals of younger people in the social system, including the labour market. The various reasons for this are presented above in the social theories outlined. In short, these theories may be able to explain the social prejudice against ageing which is also found in the perspectives of employed older people; nonetheless, the present research has learned about ageing and ageist prejudice by listening to individual voices. Thus, in studying the effect of their present ageing on people's lives,

disengagement, activity and continuity theories are considered to take a different approach to the subject of this research from the approach of the social theories listed above and to be helpful in understanding the individual nature of each employed older person. These will be considered next.

### **3.2. Positive perspectives on older people in theory**

#### **3.2.1. Introduction**

The attempt to understand social prejudices against older people through the above social theories can only be partial in the Korean context, where older people can be stigmatised by age discrimination and are treated as uncompetitive in the current employment market. This is a clear illustration of their seeming to have few resources to exchange with other members of society. However, this approach deals only with the origin of these problems as theoretical inferences. The theoretical purpose of this study is to understand the stories and experiences of individual older people who oppose age discrimination at work within the context of their life story. In this sense, the theoretical approach of successful ageing may also be relevant for my thesis because this approach highlights the successful aspects of a working life for older people. The people selected for my research are actively at work and believe that their working activity is productive and means something worthwhile for their lives; it also can overcome the age discrimination which accompanies a modernising industrial society, as traced above. Thus, in this chapter, successful ageing theory is used to seek to understand what positive and active ageing is, how 'successful ageing' can be defined and how, in principle, successful ageing can be achieved.

However, before successful ageing theory is explored, other social theories of disengagement, activity and continuity are examined more broadly, to understand the positive perspectives on ageing. These theories in turn establish different processes of ageing and place their own distinct emphasis on successful ageing. These three main social theories have not demonstrated clear differences in practice. Rather, they debate the “glass half full” and “glass half empty” approaches to the situation (Franklin and Tate, 2009).

### 3.2.2. Disengagement theory

Disengagement theory is developed from the experiences of older people who have naturally disengaged from social roles or activities or involvement in organisations and social clubs. Such endeavours carry much significance because of the age of these people (Cumming and Henry, 1961). Social disengagement originates from individual mutual disengagement carried out to empower and detach people from others as well as from social pressures such as mandatory retirement and retirement pensions. To propose withdrawal can be to challenge the conventional view of ageing and encourage keeping active. Streib and Schneider (1971) also observe that complete disengagement is not likely; rather what tends to occur is differential disengagement. For instance, when people disengage from certain activities, they may involve themselves in other activities. Troll supports the above tendency of disengagement with regard to older people. According to him, older people find improved engagement with the family when they lose their roles in social organisations. Atchley and Barush (2004) in addition identify frailty or disability, such as poor vision and loss of hearing, as the reasons why older people disengage from activities such as sports; instead they stay and watch on television at home. In this

way, older people do not disengage from activities completely, but rather strike a balance between the two differential statuses that consider their individual favourite activities alongside mediation between involvements encouraged socially and disengagement from other activities. Older people may want to continue to engage in many activities but they withdraw from some of them because they regard themselves as too old or without the ability to participate. In this sense, researchers of disengagement theory advise that older people should replace engaged activities with something similar. For instance, older people are recommended to work with plants in and out of the house if they had been used to gardening (Aitken and Rudolph, 2010).

However, criticism is levelled at disengagement theory from three directions (Rose, 1964). One of the critiques is that disengagement is not an ageing process. People may disengage from society before they get old, while some older people cannot achieve social involvement at any time of life and thus have avoided experiencing disengagement in their later life. In other words, disengagement cannot be the distinguishing factor of being an older people (Reichard, Livson and Petersen 1962; Williams and Wirths 1963; Videbeck and Knox 1963). Second, Havighurst, Neugarten, and Tobin (1963) empirically criticise the view that engaged older people are happier and have more life satisfaction than disengaged people, although the former are not always happier or more satisfied with life than the latter. The third criticism is that disengagement theory is developed from the cultural background of the USA which forces older people to retire and from some other countries, where society does not place value on the social roles of older people, as opposed to younger people's roles and activity, and even considers the social roles of older people as offering good value to society. By not making disengagement mandatory for older people they produce new roles for more age groups which encourage prestige (Rose, 1964).

### 3.2.3. Activity theory; Active ageing, Successful and Productive ageing

Activity theory was developed to challenge disengagement theory and includes the passive perspectives within which ageing is centred on 'loss and decrease' and 'ageing as a dependant period' but is used to emphasise the prevention of problems and the development of older peoples' potential and improved quality of later life (Minkler and Fadem, 2002; Holstein and Minkler, 2003; Bengtson, Silverstein, Putney and Gans, 2009). Activity theory is mainly studied through three theories of ageing, namely, active ageing, successful ageing and productive ageing, alongside the criticism that activity theory neglects those who would like to pursue active ageing but are incapable of doing so because of illness or disability and are not interested in taking part in new challenging experiences (Bengtson, Silverstein, Putney and Gans, 2009).

#### 3.2.3.1. Active ageing

The first generation of 'new ageing' approaches was that of active ageing. Active ageing was in accordance with the recommendation that, in order to tackle social isolation, and indifference and inhospitality towards older people, they should continue to live the same life they used to live when they were younger or find new roles which could replace their lost roles in society. The proponents believed in active ageing which emphasised social roles and social participation as the way to age well (Bengtson, Burgess and Parrot, 1997). In fact, the active ageing theory is situated within the 'busyness' of Western culture, as associated with capitalism, which abundantly expanded in the 1950s and 1960s. At the time, older people tended to enjoy a retired life and live active and creative lives in a developed pension system (Katz, 2000).

In addition, activity theory claims that interrelationships in social roles and efforts to maintain one's role in society can contribute to active ageing. Some research supports this statement. The people who were studied were likely to have better mental and physical health when they had 'the higher socioeconomic status of being employed' but were unlikely to be wealthy enough to have important social status, although the intensity of this relationship tends to depend on the individual 'life course and life situation' (Adler et al., 1994; Feinstein, 1993; Kessler & McRae, 1982; Leeflang, Klein-Hesselink, & Spruit, 1992; Macintyre & Hunt, 1997; Morrow-Howell, 2003; Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003; Stolzenberg, 2001; Weiss, Bass, Heimovitz, & Oka, 2005).

The active theory of Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) also emphasises the place of activity. This theory shows that the need for social participation and personal relationships deepens as people grow older. In addition, the more involved older people are in social participation, the more satisfied they are with life.

#### 3.2.3.2. Successful ageing

As further development of active ageing, which conceptualises activity theory, successful ageing theory suggested that members of society create normative criteria which are the indicators of a model of individual behaviour and justify success in later life (Holstein and Minkler, 2003).

The origin of successful and unsuccessful ageing as concepts is found in the work of Cicero in 44BC, who in 'De Senectute' argued that ageing can imply a positive and productive change in function and that the meaning of ageing should not mean illness (Bowling, 1993).

Significantly, in the medical model, successful ageing can be achieved on condition that people are able to manage their health state and life expectancy. To be precise, living to a '*Healthy Active Life Expectancy (HALE)*' should be achieved by delaying chronic diseases and the morbidity which ultimately results from poor health (Jagger and Reyes-Frausto, 2002).

From a sociological perspective, successful ageing theory has been developed by Jung, Erickson and Peck. The theory has been developed by focusing on the biographical development theory of Abeles, Ryff (1989) and Baltes and Baltes (1990). In Jung's theory, the middle years are the most interesting part of age research. When people reach the later part of their lives, their energy converts from extrinsic to intrinsic factors, due to mental transformation. But Erikson points out that the key point of a fruitful development in later life is the latent reserve from which to resolve crises which can be called up by the '*integration of self vs. despair*' (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1976). Peck expanded Erikson's work by presenting the theory that the extent of development and growth between self-specialisation and attentiveness to occupation, physical transcendence and physical immersion determine the adjustability of later life. This theory can be extended to transcendence (Papalia and Olds, 1998). On the basis of this theory, Peck comments that ageing can be successful if one establishes a continuous relationship between working, physical well-being, self-ego and understanding the purpose of life in depth. At the same time, other researchers into sociological ageing theory further developed the view of a biographical approach that growth, maintenance and loss are important assignments of life. Abeles (1987) explores this stage of life through the distinction of four main themes, namely, biographical progress, a variety of dimensions and directions and various determining factors. In addition, Ryff's successful ageing model is regarded as an integrative model of six new dimensions (self-acceptance, positive

relationships with other people, self-control, being accustomed to the environment, the goal of life and personal growth) and has been evaluated as an ambitious attempt which is based on progress, clinical research and mental health (Ryff, 1989). Baltes and Baltes (1990) concentrate on developing a selective model with regard to compensation over the life-span, which considers progressive adjustability, gain and loss alongside age in the European and biographical approach. In practice, from the sociological perspective, successful ageing theory has developed on the basis of two themes, '*activity theory*' and '*quality of life*'. In America, Rowe and Kahn (1987) produced this definition of successful ageing: "*the avoidance of disease and disability, the maintenance of high physical and cognitive function, and sustained engagement in social and productive activities*" (Rowe & Kahn, 1998, p. 38).

They present their theory as involving three successful factors, a low disease and impediment rate, a high standard of mental and physical function and active participation in life. They also point out that persistent participation in life is the most important factor in successful ageing,

#### 3.2.3.2.1. The factors in successful ageing

The factors which influence successful ageing are physical health, psychological stability and sociability. They interact dynamically with one another.

##### Physical health

One of the needs of every human being is to be healthy. In this sense, Schultz and Heckhausen (1996) believe that one indicator of successful ageing is physical health. Rowe and Kahn (1998), who present the active social participation model, consider that avoiding diseases can be one of the ways to achieve successful ageing. Ryff (1982) states that the personal recognition of a healthy life is related to a satisfactory life. In America, research in Alameda County has revealed, by results from 365



people, women and men, of between 65 and 95 years old in 1984 and 1990 that life without chronic diseases and depression constitutes successful ageing; these show that any one of five chronic diseases – glycosuria, asthma, joint ache, chronic lung disease and depression – makes ageing less successful. In other research, jogging, the intimacy of relationships with people, active participation in the community and physical activity were the expected factors that influenced successful ageing (Strawbridge et al., 1996). In addition, MacArthur's research in the USA reports that exercising and social networking to support mental health impacted on successful ageing (Seeman et al., 1995). Moreover, Fries (1980) notes that desirable ageing requires activity until people cannot live any longer.

#### Psychological stability

People who have high self-esteem, are accordant with their psychological circumstances and are well educated tend to have less fear of death and know how to express their anger in appropriate ways. Moreover, they do not think that the causes of failure are within themselves, their actions are not influenced by the result of success or failure and they can make further progress after adverse incidents (Park, Han, Lee 2006).

In addition, self-efficiency impacts on the decreasing mental risk from the negative effects of development and people who have high self-efficiency possess a persistent problem-solving ability regarding crisis and loss (Brandtstadter and Rothermund, 1994). Featherman (1992) regards the process of successful ageing as the progressive development of social and personal resources which are customary with these changes in life. In this process, he believes that acceptance, an active attitude and openness increase productive life for ageing people.

## Sociability

Social support, social networks and economic status are the main elements influencing successful ageing. Importantly, social support makes people feel safe and secure because they possess faith that this social support will protect them from any prospective hardship (Wethington and Kessler, 1986). Moreover, social networks encourage psychological well-being to release people from life's stresses (Rook, 1997; Larson, 1978). Economic resources influence contentment. The income of older people has a positive effect on subjective well-being if it makes them independent of other people and increases their contentment (Mannell and Dupuis, 1996; Campbell, 1981). Korean research also shows that the economic activity of older people has a positive impact on their security of income, contentment with social provision, the assurance of self-esteem, the maintenance of their health and relief from social exclusion and loneliness (Kwon and Cho, 2000).

## Critique of successful ageing

The critique of successful ageing focusses on the notion of 'agelessness' as a way of denying old age rather than that of extending life from youth and middle age into old age. This perspective describes the application of successful ageing to one's physical condition as wrong. In other words, successful ageing does is not a decline in physical fitness of older people while encouraging them to act as if they were still young. This approach to ageing can lead older people to feel disharmony between the body and the mind (Andrews, 1999). Thus, to keep its dignity, Andrew asserts that old age should be recognised as a good age in itself.

Second, the 'busy ethic' in successful ageing is criticized for endorsing the view current in American culture that the lives of older people are valuable only when they

are productive in economic activity (Minkler and Holstein, 2008). Furthermore, according to the normative successful ageing theory, the activities of enjoying life and spending time on vacation with family or friends are not valuable because these activities are not according to all people's social expectations. However, this perspective can be problematic as most older people find time for things that they were too busy to do when they were younger. Moreover, older people have the right to engage in productive activity but they also deserve to enjoy leisure with family and friends after they retire (Martinson and Jodi, 2011). If society emphasises physical activity only, an older person may feel like a failure if physical limitations and illness curtail his activities (Katz, 2000). Moreover, they may feel excluded from society if they prefer to pursue spiritual enrichment by choosing non-physical activities (Johnson, 2009).

Third, Calasanti and Slevin (2001) criticise successful ageing theory in that it suggests that older people are not worthy or 'unsuccessful older people' unless they meet the standards set by capitalism, which focus on productivity and independence. Additionally, Rozanova (2010) reveals that neo-liberalism leads individuals to take responsibility for their own care in later life by creating a social obligation for them to stay engaged in productive activity. She presents the Canadian media's description of successful ageing:

*"Successful aging as an individual choice, [taking] individual responsibility for unsuccessful aging, and [learning] how to age successfully by staying engaged".*

Last, the criticism of successful ageing concerns 'cultural blindness'. Successful ageing was developed within the American culture to emphasise independence,

youthfulness and productivity, which have been dominant but have not been critically examined in the social and cultural context. In fact, the uncritical successful ageing approach is acceptable in Western societies, because it focuses on independence and the fear of physical weakening, but it can be challenging to Eastern societies where priority is given to the familial-oriented self and the fear of losing loved ones (Waid and Leslie, 2003). In another approach, in East Asian culture, due to Confucianism, people focus on *“progress and meaningfulness at each stage of the life course”*. They find positive perspectives in growing old on the basis of interaction between younger people and older people, while humbly accepting negative aspects in terms of physical decline.

#### 3.2.3.3. Productive ageing

Rowe and Kahn (1997) propose a conceptual mechanism for successful ageing. They advise older people to engage in productive activity in accordance with social values while being healthy enough to live in a functional condition and physically capable of leading their present lives. More interestingly, Kaufman (1986) exposes the perspective of older people on the concept of *‘old’*. He asserts that older people do not think they are old if they remain active and involved in productive activities. Bass, Caro and Chen (1993), too, emphasise that ageing should be defined as productive ageing, which is

*“any activity by an older individual that produces goods and services, or develops the capacity to produce them, whether they are paid or not.”*

In other words, productive ageing places the value of successful ageing on productivity, primarily of an economic kind. In this context, Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong and Sherraden (2003) recommend that older people participate in social activities and have a social role which is economically effective, on the premise that older people can maintain their productivity by an extension of their earlier economic activity.

Accordingly, activity theory, successful ageing theory and productive ageing theory are in some ways interchangeable and interrelated. Active, successful and productive ageing overlap in some respects but are different in others, according to the time at which each concept is introduced. Activity theory was the first to be developed and includes the most wide ranging concept of the new positive ageing theories in individual and social contexts. Next, successful ageing and productive ageing were presented in sequence and expanded their concepts of ageing into social norms by suggesting standards of successful ageing in physical health, psychological stability and sociability. In the meantime, productive ageing is more narrowly centred on the productive activity of older people so long as it produces economic results.

However, in another study presenting the social perspective on ageing theory, other things are equally important, such as the concept of quality of life in morale, happiness, psychological well-being and accommodation. Lane (1994) defines quality of life as a concept to include the broad scope of an integration of politics, society and culture and to take in also physics, the environment and psychology; it balances objective elements, the quality of circumstances and conditions which can bring opportunities for people with subjective aspects, implying that the quality of the human being includes subjective well-being, personal development and growth. However, it is not a straightforward task to define quality of life because the concept has diverse dimensions and cultural variability. Lawton (1991) emphasises the

subjective evaluation of ageing and a subjective interpretation and personal ability to cope with the environment in accordance with physical and mental health. In accordance with Lawton's position, the perspective which sees quality of life as satisfaction with life can be valid. But for this view of ageing, George and Clipp (1991) point out that ageing theory should have a variety of views on successful ageing rather than taking a restricted subjective perspective on it.

#### 3.2.4. Continuity theory

Atchley (1971 and 1989) primarily developed continuity theory by using the concept of 'evolution' alongside normal ageing, defining it as 'usual, commonly encountered patterns of human ageing' whilst also pointing out that activity theory was a homeostatic or equilibrium model which aspired to restore previous equilibrium when this was impaired. In his view, continuity theory defines ageing as an evolutionary process: older people consistently integrate their individual past memories and experiences to the changes in the present and future. Principally, the ground statement of continuity theory is that older people are adaptive to changes by having strategies to continue their lives with the same internal and external structure. Internal continuity requires the personal links which allow past memories to cope with new experiences, while external continuity is the integration with familiar people and remaining within accustomed environments. Thus, it is recommended that older people should live their whole lives in the houses where they have been used to living. If it is not possible for older people to remain at home, the alternative can be to provide the same impression by meeting friends and family in familiar surroundings. In these circumstances they can remain independent. However, in contrast, once older people move to strange and new places, they may become confused and

unsettled (Cohler, 1982; Atchley, 1991; Atchley, 1999; Atchley and Barusch, 2004). According to continuity theory, older people can obtain much energy from familiar circumstances such as family and friends in accustomed locations (Aitken and Rudolph, 2010). Moreover, significant daily activities by older people can be grounded in their continued routines and lifestyles. Societal and emotive needs for interaction and social support can be effectively satisfied by maintaining one's roles and activities. In particular, retaining independence plays an important role in the keeping up of self-esteem. Furthermore, continuity includes adaptive changes to new demands in accordance with continual processes, as well as newly acquired attributes. For instance, when older people need to obtain new information with minimum stress, it is helpful for them to remind themselves of similar memories and experiences involving new information. However, some challenging activities can be refused by older people when they consider that they have to do things for which they lack experience or cope with unfamiliar methods, such as learning computer skills or ordering products on the internet or coming into contact with new neighbours, despite being lonely in a rural area (Atchley and Barusch, 2004).

However, Fox (1981-1982) theoretically criticizes the continuity and change concept for being contradictory, literally, because she believes that continuity, which means 'sameness', cannot be taken to explain ageing which generally progresses through changes. In addition, Fox (1981) presents a criticism in terms of the operational definition of continuity as not being sufficiently abstract to test the theory and research it adequately. However, Atchley (1989) does not accept Fox's criticism because the continuity theory does not literally mean 'sameness', but rather indicates an abstract meaning of continuity, to include changes as an adoptive concept in coherence with past life patterns of older people in later life.

Continuity theory also merits certain practical criticisms. Gutmann (1974) argues that

continuity theory focuses only on healthy people, who are able to maintain their lifestyle in old age. However, it can be problematic for unhealthy older people who would like to maintain their younger life pattern but cannot manage it due to ill health. Older people can develop lower self-esteem when they fail to maintain their former level of activity.

Additionally, there is a particular criticism in applying this theory to Korean society. Continuity theory is not applicable for Korean older women who used to be housewives but now want not to preserve their lifestyle but to change it and take a more active part in society, (Lee, 2004).

### 3.2.5. Conclusion

Positive theoretical views on ageing may be explored in the disengagement, activity and continuity theories, although each of these emphasizes a different point in successful ageing. These theories are helpful for this study with its aim of understanding the perspective on ageing of employed older people, but not all of them may be applicable to the group of respondents. Firstly, disengagement theory is not a reliable approach to this research, because all the research participants are employed older people who have refused the option of disengagement in economic activity; instead, they have chosen to work. Moreover, continuity theory is also not dependable for understanding employed older people in the Korean context. As discussed in the above critique of continuity theory, Korean older women did not have much right or opportunity to work in the labour market when they were younger because Confucianism in their cultural context does not support women's working outside the home. However, by the time these women grew older, society had changed. In modern society, older women can choose to do paid work if they want. In



this context, the activity of many women research participants cannot be explained by continuity theory. Thus, this thesis adopts successful ageing, in which social participation, in particular, economic activity is the factor which leads employed older people to live satisfying lives through managing other factors in an active life, such as good physical and mental health; it is used to understand the individual perspectives of employed older people on ageing, most notably their positive perspectives .

Activity theory including active ageing, successful ageing and productive ageing is useful for understanding the successful approach taken by people in later life, although the each theory highlights different aspects and the time when they are best used may be different because the fundamental ageing approach to successful later life in each of these theories overlaps. In this sense, it can be expected that the theories of successful ageing can contribute to understanding the active participation and employment of older people and the kind of ageing that my research group of employed older people is achieving, which is correlatively influenced by economic activity.

### **3.3. Discrimination**

#### **3.3.1. Introduction**

From the above, it is evident that older people give significant meaning to employment in the Korean social, cultural and economic context. Older people's perspectives on ageing may be understood using dichotomising social theories. In taking the above theoretical approaches, however, the issue of discrimination arises. Older people who desire to work and have the capacity to work feel they should be

given the opportunity to do so and, in the Korean context, older people who retire and are not able to work due to ill health and disability should also have the right not to work. However, society exerts ageist prejudice against older people who hope to work, partly as a consequence of recent social changes. Still, according to some social theories, older people who actively participate in society and the economy can enjoy a good quality of life. This means that social prejudice alone may prevent many older people from achieving active participation in society. In short, the barriers appear to be partly those of discrimination against ageing itself. This being the case, it is relevant to explore theories of discrimination, in particular, theories and studies of age discrimination, to understand the perspective of the employed older people towards age discrimination, one of the aims of the present research.

Further, discrimination is caused by social barriers, which in the labour market are widespread. In this context, first, it is important to define discrimination in employment, to investigate what the social barriers are against equal opportunities for older people and see how discrimination is related to equality.

The International Labour Office (ILO) outlines discrimination as:

*'any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin' (Banton, 1994).*

However, in assessing the level of discrimination in employment, this definition is too broad to include a realistic approach to discrimination against ageing from employers. This chapter goes on to explore diverse concepts of discrimination in this context, to understand better some specific views on age discrimination. . It goes on to discuss how this discrimination is related to the concept of equality. Afterwards, in order to

understand the actual circumstances of older people who oppose age discrimination in Korea, current Korean literature relating to the experiences and awareness of age discrimination among its older people was explored. It is expected that a review of this literature will provide a more practical and realistic understanding of the perspectives of employed older people when faced with age discrimination.

After going through the review in terms of discrimination, equality and age discrimination in theories and practice, this framework places the theoretical approach together with the concepts of employability and workability to gain an understanding in detail of the perspectives of the research participants on employment policies and practices for older people.

Alongside understanding the perceptions of older people in relation to Korea's employment policies and practices, some suggestions from the literature are identified to guide the direction that might be taken by Korea's policy for the future employment of older people; employment policies and practices in the UK were considered to study both the approaches of employability and workability; Japanese policy and practice was considered as a country with a similar economic policy and cultural background, that of an ageing society in an East Asian country; and finally Finnish policy and practice was studied to see how the highest employment rate of older people in Europe was achieved, bearing in mind the concepts of employability and workability.

### 3.3.2. Forms of discrimination

#### 3.3.2.1. Legal and social discrimination

It is important to define legal and social discrimination as precisely as possible in order to understand how and to what extent legal and social objects discriminate against people. According to Schmidt (1978),

*'Legal discrimination is exercised by state authorities, by the legislative, executive and judicial branches. It takes the form of statutes, executive orders or court decisions, whereas social discrimination is exercised by private institutions, by individuals or groups'.*

It may not be enough to distinguish legal from social discrimination by defining them in the approach to this research. In practice, it can be less satisfactory to expose the meaning of discrimination from simple definitions of the two terms. However, this thesis is related to employment, in particular, to the employment of ageing people. Therefore it seems appropriate to examine the experiences of older people who have met discrimination because of their age in the boundaries which are defined by Schmidt because age discrimination in employment can be caused by a lack of action on the part of the state. In this sense, first, the ways in which the state is involved in discriminating against older people should be explored. Then social discrimination by institutions, groups and individuals should be investigated in a later section with practical examples.

#### 3.3.2.2. Direct and indirect discrimination

Taking a pragmatic approach to discrimination, the intention of the discrimination can determine the way to tackle it, because the criterion of the distinction between direct and indirect discrimination is the intention of the discriminator (Waddington and Hendriks, 2002). Direct discrimination normally regards the intention of the discriminator on explicit grounds, while indirect discrimination is not essentially concerned with intention. Direct discrimination occurs in circumstances where the discriminated people merit no less than other people, despite certain differences. In particular, discriminated incidents are hardly ever justified on the basis of an objective view of all people. Yet the basis of indirect discrimination originates from disadvantages which are created for groups which are protected under non-discrimination law. In particular, the indirect discriminator can be described as a person who has no objective justification in an apparently neutral position, while treating some people inequitably without intention (Waddington and Hendriks, 2002). In terms of indirect discrimination, Europe has many different perspectives and laws, yet despite the various types of indirect discrimination, it is difficult to verify instances of it. In this context, the UK government stated that it was hard to find effective ways to tackle indirect discrimination because it is rare to discover the typical types which are formatted by the discrimination (DSS, 1994). In this sense, the UK government concedes that '*reasonable adjustments*' should be developed in the requirement to create equal opportunities in open employment. In the argument of Doyle, unequal opportunities in employment can be produced in circumstances where less effort and concern to make a '*reasonable adjustment*' are not enough to tackle discrimination (Doyle, 1997). In fact, the '*reasonable adjustment*' concept is similar to indirect discrimination but has its own significance (Waddington and Hendriks 2002). Waddington and Hendriks classify this as the third type of discrimination. This type is based in particular on a disadvantageous environmental and social foundation. Day and Brodsky (1996) add a characteristic of the '*reasonable adjustment*' type of

discrimination. They point out that *'reasonable discrimination'* is caused by inadequate social attitudes, which are influenced by governmental power. However, Waddington and Hendriks (2002) comment that the concept of indirect discrimination is a more effective approach than that of *'reasonable accommodation discrimination, because it is difficult to prove the latter. For this reason, the Swedish government adopted the concepts of 'indirect discrimination'* in preparing the anti-discrimination law of 1999, instead of using the concept of *'reasonable discrimination'*. However, Day and Brodsky (1996) argue that the latter approach contains its own implication which can obtain, if not equal participation then equal opportunities for excluded people in the labour market by achieving the intervention of the state or a public organisation.

#### 3.3.2.3. Discrimination and the concept of 'equality'

The discrimination concept is closely associated with the concept of equality in understanding how people should be treated in the same way and the circumstances in which inequalities exist (Tomei, 2003). The way to understand discrimination can be another aspect of defining equality. That is to say, different approaches to the concept of equality can decide the boundaries of discrimination. The definition of equality begins with the basis of 'equal value and importance' for all people. As Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states: *'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...'* (UN,1985). Thus, all persons should be provided with equal opportunities to participate in society (Dworkin, 1978). In the first place, there are two types: *'formal equality'* and *'substantive equality'* (Barnard and Hepple, 2000). The liberal conception of formal equality is described by Barnard et al. (2002). *'Underpinning all British legislation is the liberal conception of formal equality,*

*that likes must be treated alike*'. However, formal equality has less possibility of producing productive outcomes. These limitations of the concepts lead people to strive to develop concepts of substantive equality. In the context of the concept of subjective equality, indirect discrimination becomes an important consideration, because it is assumed that the indirect discrimination concept generates inequality (Loenen, 1999). However, basically, formal equality contributes to a '*more substantive interpretation of the notion of equality*,' the assurance with which people recognise whether their situations are similar to those of different people individually and socially.

In particular, in describing the circumstances of employment, the question of equality is raised by any discrimination based on an applicant's physical characteristics, educational background or career. If no sanction exists for treating candidates unequally in employment because of criteria determined by employers, it can be presumed that the applicants were discriminated against by the negative effect of the state's failure to embody equality formally in its laws. Therefore, future legislation should build in anti-discrimination provision. Moreover, future laws should contain practical regulations to tackle discrimination in practice and achieve equality for all people in all circumstances (Hajdin, 2002: 94). Significantly, relating this theoretical approach of equality to the employment policies and practices for older people means that older people should have equal opportunities to participate in the labour market without discrimination through the formal equality of the legislation and the substantive equality approach of the practical programmes for older people's employment. However, employers likewise can demand equality. They can interpret the fundamental aims of equality as the freedom to choose whatever they desire and need. If the laws limit some employers' free choice, then they can argue that they are being treated unequally. However, from the viewpoint of the fair redistribution of

resources, those who have greater economic resources should have less liberty in exercising their rights, to ensure that they choose something beneficial (Drake, 2001). In this sense, the policies and laws to provide older people with more equal opportunities in the labour market than they have at present should be logically justified and developed from the perspective of both formal and substantive equality.

### 3.3.3. Age discrimination

#### 3.3.3.1. Institutional age discrimination

There are two approaches to age discrimination, one institutional and the other individual. A report by the Equality Authority of Ireland states:

*Ageism involves an interlinked combination of institutional practices, individual attitudes and relationships. Institutional practices in this context can be characterised by:*

- *the use of upper age limits to determine provision or participation;*
- *segregation where older people are not afforded real choices to remain within their communities;*
- *a failure to take account of the situation, experience or aspirations of older people when making decisions, and a failure to seek to ensure benefit to them as a result of an overemphasis on youth and youth culture; and*
- *inadequate provision casting older people as burdens or dependents.*
- *institutional practices which can shape, and be shaped by, individual attitudes based on stereotypes of older people as dependent, in decline or marginal.*
- *practices which can also have a detrimental impact on an older person's sense of self-worth.*



These are possible criteria for distinguishing institutionally discriminated cases from normal differences in groups. First, imposing '*upper age limits*' can be seen as a method of discriminating against older people for such reasons as '*health concerns*' and '*employment purposes*'. Second, segregating older people from the community can be another type of discrimination because communities which regard older people as a burden or merely as consumers who spend resources but produce nothing are not treating them fairly or equitably. Significantly, older people cannot expect benefits from groups which focus on benefiting young people. Unfortunately, institutions which want an independent membership very frequently treat older people as a dependant group. In this way, older people are becoming excluded even from the institutions which used to involve them.

With this in mind, some cases of institutional discrimination in the UK are now considered empirically. A description of the pressures faced, by someone who has experience of them runs as follows:

*Our lives are defined by ageing: the ages at which we can learn to drive, vote, have sex, buy a house, or retire, get a pension, travel by bus for free. More subtle are the implicit boundaries that curtail our lives: the safe age to have children, the experience needed to fill the boss's role, the physical strength needed for some jobs. Society is continually making judgements about when you are too young for something – and when you are too old (Age Concern England 2005).*

In the workplace, 59% of participants in one survey experienced discrimination on the basis of their age. In another study, one-third of respondents who were retired members of a trade union mentioned that they had suffered from age discrimination

because of their chronological age (Age Concern England, 2005).

One in three respondents in the second study said that they had been made redundant by the labour market because they were considered ineffectual and impracticable as employees. In these circumstances, legal sanctions may be needed to tackle institutional ageist prejudice (Age Concern England, 2005).

### 3.3.3.2. Direct and indirect age discrimination in practices

The definition of age discrimination can be seen from different perspectives. First, direct age discrimination occurs when older workers are discriminated against in employment applications and training programmes on the basis of age alone and not of other factors such as education, career or health: specifically, when older workers are excluded from the workplace due to age limits, they suffer direct discrimination on the basis of age alone. Indirect age discrimination, unlike direct, is not based directly on age. Indirect age discrimination can be measured when older workers experience negative treatment in comparison to younger workers because employers are prejudiced in various ways about their capacity to work (Drury, 1993).

The following discussion relates to the characteristics of older workers. The DWP's research from the UK (2003) shows employers' views of older workers which in turn can be reasons for them to discriminate against older workers in a direct or indirect way.

First of all, 63% of the employers responded that older workers have the strengths of wide experiences and knowledge. 32% of respondents think that older workers are very reliable and conscientious. In particular, they consider that older workers are faithful, enthusiastic, trustworthy and devoted to their job. the respondents could also

identify the weaker points of older workers. First, 21% of respondents regarded older workers as stuck in their ways. Just 14% of employers saw older workers as struggling when it came to learning new skills. The participants in the research considered that older employees have a lower educational attainment than younger employees and they learned skills more slowly. Other shortcomings of older workers in particular were pointed out by employers; they thought that older workers were not ambitious and not concerned to achieve higher standards in their work. Instead, they were concerned about job security (DWP, 2003).

#### 3.3.3.3. Experiences and awareness of age discrimination among Korean older people

In the following discussion, which was researched by the Korean National Human Rights Committee (2006) and professional groups, we are presented with the recognition, experiences, causes and counter measures for age discrimination. First, not only do older generation in Korean society recognise that age discrimination exists around them, but so do most of the rest, including most professional groups. Among the subjects surveyed, 70.0% of the older generation and 90.4% of the remainder, including most professional groups, thought that age discrimination was heavily present in today's society (Kang, 2004; Korean National Human Rights Committee, 2006).

Second, in terms of the specific experiences of ageism, more than 40% of older people responded that they had experienced a form of age discrimination. Around 40%-50% of the remainder had also had experience of age discrimination in various situations. Professional groups thought that the refusal to employ older people was the most frequent form that it took and, simultaneously, the most serious form of it in

Korean society, with 'offspring's avoidance of older people's support' and 'the lack of cultural programmes and space for older people' also being indicated as serious examples. Meanwhile, in response to specific examples of age discrimination, there was a strong tendency to see them for what they were. Around 70%-80% of older people – though there may be a slight difference in figures – and 80% of other people recognised the given situations as acts of 'age discrimination' (Won, 2004; Korean National Human Rights Committee, 2006).

Third, both older and younger people mentioned as the causes of age discrimination, 'the low social position of older people', 'people's misconceptions of older people', 'insufficiency of welfare provision for older people' and 'the generation gap'. Professional groups mentioned such causes as 'social values where productivity and youth are concerned', 'lack of understanding about ageing' and 'the stress on negative impressions of older people in many public media' (Choi, 1990; Kim, 2000; Kim, 2003; Park, 2004, Korean National Human Rights Committee, 2006).

Fourth, older and younger people both suggested, with some slight differences, ways to tackle age discrimination including 'the provision of workplaces for older people', 'income support for older people', 'an improved public impression of older people', 'a support service for weak and infirm older people' and 'acknowledging the role of society for older people'. Professional groups suggested as answers 'aid for employment and workplaces for older people' (the most important and foremost solution), followed by 'educating people while they are still young on ageing and older people', 'abolishing the retirement system or controlling the retirement age' and 'introducing a more active image of older people through advertising and the public media' (Won, 2004; Jang, 2003a; Korean Labour Research Institute, 2002).

#### 3.3.3.4. Tackling age barriers by improving the employability and workability of older people

As we see from the above survey, older workers are discriminated against, owing to prejudice about them. In particular, chronological age affects the formation of prejudices. Yet many good examples of tackling age barriers have also been explored. Some of them show ways to overcome the obstacles in companies which use chronological age. In particular, the mentor programmes, which offer training programmes and guidance to younger colleagues and at the same time empower older workers who have wide experience and high skill, can set a good example of companies retaining older workers by improving their employability while enforcing through mentor programmes the capacity to work of those who in the future will make up the older workforce. In addition, ways to support the physical strength of older workers were also explored through the setting up of a mechanical sitting system. These cases show how to develop the employability of older workers. In this context, to explore employability and workability concepts and the practices of older workers can be significant in understanding the perceptions of these older workers of employability and workability, which in turn relate to perceptions of discrimination on the grounds of age.

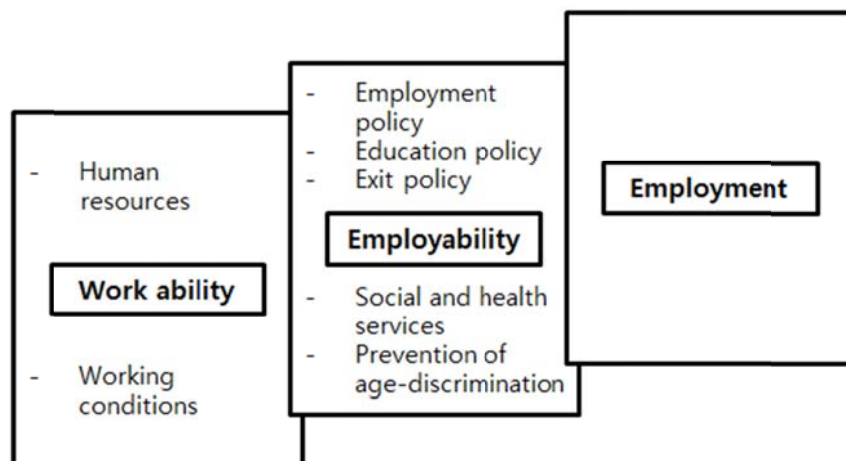
##### 3.3.3.4.1. The concept of employability and workability

In this sense, Ilmarinen (2002) confirms the significance of the concepts and practices of employability and the capacity to work, in the employment of older workers. He comments:

*“The promotion of work ability forms the basis for employability. Together the*

*processes of promotion of work ability and improvement of employability lead to higher employment rates for older workers. It will be a good approach to examine the aged employment with concept of employability and work ability” (see the table below, Table 7)*

Table 7. The concepts of work ability and employability in employment



Under the heading of “employability”, the traditional policies are to be found: an employment policy, education policy and exit policy, as well as the social infrastructure, for example, the social and health services and the prevention of age discrimination (Ilmarinen, 2002).

Literature contains many definitions of employability. Hillage and Pollard (1998) present one of these.

*“In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g.*

*personal circumstances and the labour market environment) within which they seek work.”*

In the above definition, employability includes work ability. However, in this study it is necessary to distinguish between employability and work ability because the separated concepts are used to form an organized approach to improving the rate of employment for older people (Ilmarinen, 2002).

In particular, Taylor (2003) defines employability as the power to force someone to employ someone else by providing good services and making policies to offer opportunities for jobs, education, pension and social security systems and age discrimination policies; and to mount a campaign for people to be perceived as employable by business leaders and the general public.

However, N 34 Voss-Gundlach (2005) points out that:

*“The promotion of the employability of older workers is difficult to achieve through legislative measures alone. What is needed is a fundamental change of consciousness in society.”*

Ilmarinen (2002) also believes that developing employability on its own is not enough to ensure high employment: first, work ability needs to be developed. Therefore society has to combine workability and employability. The workability concept is not the same as work capacity. Ilmarinen (2002) defines work ability thus:

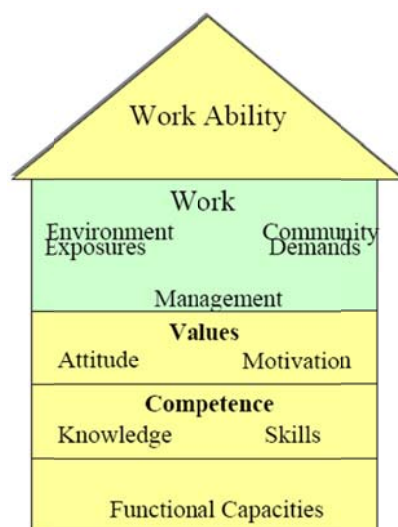
*“Work ability integrates considerations of health, competence, values and work. At*

*enterprise level it offers a holistic framework in which to address such issues as productivity, competitiveness, sickness absence and the costs of disability.”*

*Ilmarinen (2002)*

It can be likened to a house – see the following figure, Figure 1. Functional capacities concern the worker's health, which is the basis for work ability at all ages.

Figure 1. Work Ability



Knowledge and skills are developed through lifelong learning with the along with the attitudes and motivation of the workers.. Last, working components such as work community issues, work environmental issues, workload, work satisfaction and exposure to work are also part of the concept of work ability. Management has an important responsibility to regulate them. In particular, management must understand the content and possibilities of all the elements if they are to achieve the best results from work ability. So, in the workplace, the employee often has the responsibility for all the first three elements: for his health, for developing his competence and for



attitudes and values. This is a very difficult task, unless the employer makes the necessary adjustments to the working environment. The employer should therefore take responsibility for making these adjustments. In this way, employer and employee alike will share the responsibilities and work together to achieve common objectives.

#### 3.3.3.4.2. Employment policies and practices for older people in the UK, Japan and Finland, in consideration of employability and workability

It may be useful to consider the UK which has both a workability and an employability approach to employment policies and practices for older people. For instance, under employability, it is developing the Age Discrimination Act Campaign while, under workability, it mounts 50+ programmes. Second, Japan is an extremely significant country to consider when analysing employment and workability concepts and policies regarding the older generation, because Japan has the highest employment rate of older workers in any OECD country and is an East Asian country like Korea, with a similar oriental culture and economic environment. Finally, Finland is also a relevant country in which to discover policies and programmes for older people because over the four-year period from 1998 to 2002 the employment rate of older workers in Finland increased by 10.1% for men and 13.1% for women, the increase being the highest in any EU state. Researchers point out that this is a significant increase in Europe (Taylor, 2003; Ilmarinen, 2002; OECD, 2004).

Taylor (2003) presents the main public policies to influence the employment of older workers in the EU. First, he notes the strategies to promote employment and support in terms of the retirement of older employees, programmes to focus on age and employment and laws to protect older people which all combat age discrimination in

advertising, recruiting, promoting and retiring in the labour market, with campaigns to make employers aware of the positive aspects of hiring and retaining older people in employment and with pensions and social security reforms and financial support in order to improve the employability of older workers, for those returning later. At the same time, to enhance the work ability of older workers, the members of states in the EU have developed programmes for training and hiring older employees, provided advisory schemes to guide older people in matching with job placements and offered grants to employers to develop working conditions for older people.

Programmes can be classified by the significant approaches of each country in relation to the division between employability and work ability policies. For instance, the New Deal programme is classified as an employability policy in the UK, while Finland has developed a programme as its work ability policy. The UK in particular has not greatly developed its work ability policy. The UK government has focused on employability policies and practices. Recently, it has developed programmes such as the Skills Coaching service to improve workability. The following notes with regard to policies and programmes to improve employability and work ability in these three countries are presented according to the concepts and arguments of Taylor (2003) and Ilmarinen (2002).

In terms of the specific approach to policies and programmes to improve the employability of older workers in UK, Japan and Finland the report of the OECD (2004 and 2012), shows that in terms of 'age discrimination legislation, protection against dismissal, proscription of age bars in recruitment advertisements, and/or the abolition of mandatory retirement', the UK passed an 'age discrimination law' for older people in 2006, in order to empower the equality of older people in employment, while Japan ensured the 'Employment Security' of older people in particular and the state developed a knowledge and experience system to develop the employability

and work ability of older workers making it possible for older people to continue to work regardless of age (OECD, 2012). In Finland, the Contracts of Employment Act and Penal Code protect older people who oppose age discrimination. At the same time, the National Age Programme is preventing age discrimination in the labour market by improving the capacity of older people to work (OECD, 2004; OECD, 2012).

Second, in the sense of ‘awareness-raising campaigns among business leaders and the general public’, the UK is running the Age Positive Initiative to guide employers to change their attitudes, whilst Japan encourages employers to re-employ older people by providing grants. In the same way, Finland renews its employment services, develops working communities, encourages the changing of attitudes on the part of employers, withdraws co-operation from some employers and provides occupational health services (OECD, 2004; OECD, 2012).

Third, ‘pension and social security reforms aimed at removing incentives to early retirement and encouraging later retirement’ are among the factors that influence employment policies and practices. The UK is providing more flexible retirement options for older people who choose to work longer, while Japan has enacted the Law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons which militates against setting a retirement age under 60 and confers the obligation to carry out measures to ensure the re-employment of senior staff. In Finland, pensions have been reformed, reducing the minimum pension age but tightening up eligibility for early retirement in order that older people will not depend on a pension but will wish to remain in the employment market. On the other side, policies and programmes to empower work ability by developing ‘*human resources*’ and improving ‘*working conditions*’ have also been developed. Looking at the three countries, first, ‘*employment and training programmes targeting older workers*’ have been developed in order to improve the

work ability of older people. However, from the UK's standpoint these may be policies and programmes to improve the employability of older workers. In particular, the UK is making an effort to keep older people in their jobs by providing the Skills White Paper to supply older people with training and skills programmes. Interestingly, in Japan, the chance to work has been made available for all who wish it and have the physical fitness to do so through running the Silver Human Resources Centre and developing a Senior Work Programme to implement technical issues in relation to the capacity to work of older people with the association of employers; in particular, those programmes support part-time jobs and the self-employment of older people (OECD, 2004; OECD, 2012).

In Finland, the state has developed programmes and practices to improve work ability by providing lifelong learning programmes and maintaining physical fitness programmes, empowering the skills and competence of teaching staff in the learning centres and encouraging flexible working time and job sharing (OECD, 2004). However, Taylor (2003) considers that the education and training programmes can also be policies to improve the employability of older workers as well as empowering the work ability of older people. In particular, in terms of giving information and advice, the UK has encouraged employers to change their attitude and thinking by offering websites and guidance, which can give advice in terms of training, employment placements and retirement plans through Skills Coaching services. Japan, for its part, has promoted schemes to match job skills with the skills of older people and retain these people by reemploying them. Finland is developing information and consultative services. With regard to policies and programmes to support employers who are willing to employ older people in finance, the UK, Japan and Finland have developed wage subsidies and other employment incentive schemes as ways to tackle age barriers. The UK practises a system through the Pathways pilots in order

to offer advice, employment programmes, health maintenance programmes and financial support to older people who are incapable of work at the moment but want to preserve their job skills in a smooth transition. Japan has a scheme of job applicants' basic benefits under its employment insurance scheme, while Finland offers older people income as they study (Taylor, 2003; Ilmarinen, 2002; OECD, 2004; OECD, 2012).

#### 3.3.4. Conclusion

Whilst investigating age discrimination theories, it was apparent that discrimination is institutionally, legally and directly formed although the institutional, legal and formal age discrimination can be grounded in the social, indirect and individual or group discrimination. In particular, intention is an important factor in distinguishing between direct and indirect discrimination.

In addition, the analysis of the equality concept is relevant for understanding and defining age discrimination in the pursuit of equal opportunities for all older people in the labour market. In addition, it is stated that ageism is interlinked between institutional and individual unequal treatment for older people from the perspective in which older people are regarded as a burden and a dependent group, taking benefits from the younger generation.

Pragmatically, it is shown that older people are directly discriminated against in job application training programmes while older employees are unfairly treated compared with younger people because of the prejudices of employers. Thus, age discrimination can be generated from mistaken prejudice against older people whilst the prejudices cannot be acceptable as a personal approach in terms of individual

health and the ability to work, learn and adjust to new developments in one's job. Moreover, prejudice depends on the extent to which the age discrimination is experienced by older people and how aware they are of it.

From the same point of view, it is expected that age discrimination can be tackled not only by legal action against the sources of direct discrimination but also in terms of older people's personal competence when it is not admitted by employers and society in the labour market. In this sense, it is understandable that the employability and workability concepts approach, which is the fundamental approach for tackling age discrimination, is the one developed in the following pages. In this theoretical approach, improving employability to enforce the policies and programmes for older workers to work and workability to empower the capacity to work by providing training and education opportunities and taking care of health matters seems a reasonable approach to increasing the employment rate of older people, although different countries emphasise their own particular approach to the promotion of employability and of workability among older people. However, in this exploration of these concepts, it is suggested that the balanced and integrated development of the employability and workability of older people should be achieved so as to secure equal opportunities for older people in the labour market.

Thus, from the context, it can be supposed that a theoretical approach to defining the formal and practical concepts of age discrimination and address the key concepts, the employability and workability of older workers in policies and practices, can be helpful for this research. It will be shown through theoretical evidence how employed older people understand age discrimination and employment policies and programmes, which are the third and fourth research questions.

## **CHAPTER 4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

An account of the research methodology shows how the thesis will answer the research questions posed. In this chapter, the four research questions are introduced and considered.

- Research question 1

How do older workers understand the value of work?

- Research question 2

How do older workers understand ageing?

- Research question 3

How do older workers understand age discrimination?

- Research question 4

How do older workers understand Korea's policies and programmes for employing older people?

In the previous chapters Korea's wide-ranging social policy and policies for employing older workers were explored from an economic and political perspective. Following this, various concepts of ageing of ageing (in particular, those of some sociologists) in the social and cultural context were explored and theoretical framework was outlined using the concept of age discrimination with regard to equal

employment opportunities for older people in terms of their employability and capacity to work. It was noted that the economic and political perspective has an impact on lessening the effect of age discrimination through the inter-relationship between economic and political development and the creation of equal opportunities for older people in the labour market. In addition, the concept of social ageing was adopted as one of the theoretical perspectives, because it has been convincingly shown that ageing can be conceptualised and defined in the type of social context where a variety of dimensions of economics, politics and discrimination can be found. Furthermore, the concept of social ageing contributed considerably to building the research methodology, using qualitative methods, as the focus of the research is on to observing, interpreting and understanding the subjective reactions of some people affected by the current policy. These are older workers who have experienced social prejudice in their employment conditions, since it may be assumed that social features can explain the obstacles to employment for such people. In this sense, the concept of equality in the employment of older people has led to a gauging of the significance of my research to include, above all, the experiences and voices of older workers, because it is strongly felt that their subjective views on the employment policy for their age group would give authenticity to the data. The truth is that research on this topic, as noted previously, rarely includes the voices and direct experiences of those who suffer age discrimination in the Korean labour market. In this context, it can be seen, therefore, that these three perspectives; namely, the economic and political perspective, age discrimination theory perspective and the employment (of older people) policy context perspective have influenced the choice of methodology for this study.

This methodology is presented in the first part of the chapter where the reasons for adopting a qualitative, biographical narrative approach to the in-depth study of one



country are given. In the second part of the chapter, the research process is outlined step by step. It begins with the research design, showing how the sample population was identified and the data were collected.

## 4.2. Philosophical approach

### 4.2.1. Ontological position

Through this thesis it has been shown that Korean society is becoming older. While the obvious reasons for Korea's ageing population have been cited, no work has been undertaken of a qualitative nature that explores in depth the motivation and reasoning behind government policies and practice or behind the perceptions of older workers. Quantitative methods alone would not capture the complex picture composed by political, economic, technological and social factors. Therefore in relation to the ontological position, this research will adopt an anti-foundationalist stance, which does *"not believe that the world exists independently of knowledge of it"* (Grix, 2005). Similarly the integrated system of factors affecting Korea's ageing population and the attitudes towards it will, for the purposes of this research, be seen similarly not to 'exist independently of knowledge of it'.

### 4.2.2. Epistemological position

The epistemological position of the study is interpretivism, because it seeks not to discover facts, but to understand the world and interpret the findings through a transparent methodological process (Grix, 2005). On the basis of this belief, the study will use qualitative methods to investigate the perceptions of and attitudes to the employment of older people, in relation to both individual and social need. By accessing a range of perceptions the research will aim to interpret these experiences and approaches in a way which would not be possible through quantitative methods alone.

#### **4.3. The aims of this thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to understand older workers affected by age discrimination in the labour market in Korea through addressing the above research questions. This research in the study field of policy for employing older people has significant implications, focussing as it does on discrimination against older people in the labour market rather than general discrimination in society. In particular, presenting the voices of older workers using qualitative research methods will be challenging to the academic community, for quantitative research methods are dominant in Korean studies today. Above all, it will be noteworthy for involving the participation of older people in the research, because most researchers concentrate on the voices of Korean academics and policy-makers.

This research has four objectives. It intends:

- To show how older workers understand the value of work
- To show how older workers understand ageing
- To show how older workers understand age discrimination
- To give older workers a deeper understanding of Korea's policies and programmes for employing older people

In pursuing these objectives, this thesis aims to offer older people some reinforcement in their struggles against discrimination in the labour market. At the same time, by examining the perspectives, attitudes and responses of older workers, the research has the chance to contribute to developing policies for the employment of older people in accordance with the conditions of the labour market and the circumstances of older workers.

#### **4.4. Main Approaches of this Research**

##### **4.4.1. An interpretive, qualitative research approach with criteria for the justification of knowledge**

Taking an interpretive approach allowed the researcher to explore the narrator's subjective intentions through interaction between narrator and interpreter. In existing studies of subjects related to this, it is rare to discover researchers who have focused on listening to the experiences of the people concerned; instead, most researchers have investigated objective evidence by comparing statistics and figures. However, in understanding the world of people's experience, evidence of this nature is often not representative. Respondents' experiences of age discrimination are conveyed, as far as possible, descriptively as their own subjective observations. However, this makes it more difficult to demonstrate knowledge of interpretive theory, because criteria need to be set to determine whether the study has collected evidence to support the research claim or not when the research results are derived from the participants' experiences and their inter-subjective voices. Therefore, it is necessary now to examine how the strengths of the interpretive approach were applied and how results were acquired in spite of the limitations of the interpretive approach, which rejects any prospect of discovering objective reality.

The interpretive approach has recently become more popular, while there has, at the same time, been a growing dissatisfaction with the methods and procedures of positivistic research as a source of social scientific knowledge. Proponents of the interpretive approach assert that positivists who investigate interpersonal and organizational phenomena inevitably meet the theoretical limitations of any methodological procedure or statements which claim objective knowledge (Alvesson

& Sköldberg, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Prasad and Prasad, 2002).

Advocates of the interpretive approach have paid more obvious attention to the nature of experience and behaviours, following the ideas of philosophical phenomenology, in order to combat the weaknesses of positivism. Holstein and Gubrium (1994) give an overview of the methodological pathways which the qualitative approach takes within the interpretive research tradition; these range widely and

*“diverge into a rich variety of constructionist, ethnomethodological, conversation-analytic and interpretive strains”.*

However, Willis makes distinctive notes about phenomenology and interpretivism from the hermeneutics perspective,

*“In the case of hermeneutics, it shares a great deal with phenomenology and interpretivism”*

According to his notes, phenomenology and interpretivism can theoretically be placed in parallel. Moreover, he defines phenomenology as another theory to support interpretive qualitative research. In this sense, it appeared at first that it might be useful to adopt Ihde's epoché approach to constructing proposed criteria, such as *‘communicative, pragmatic, transgressive validity and reliability’* throughout the progress of the investigation. This would have justified the thesis knowledge to the point required for the interpretive approach taken by qualitative research, although

this approach is mainly based on forms of phenomenology (Ihde, 1977). However, my research does not focus on the experiences which are to be examined for '*communicative, pragmatic, transgressive validity and reliability*' (Ihde, 1977) but on biographical narratives, which should be examined using the methodology of thick description to justify knowledge. Thus, the criteria of Guba were adopted (1981) which seemed more likely to generate thick description through the collection of biographical narratives.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) also remark that validity and reliability were originally developed by positivists. However, these writers (1985) comment that interpretivists should also address validity and reliability, although the measures to address the concepts are not the same in qualitative research. For this purpose, they propose four criteria intending to establish 'trustworthiness' as the pursuit of naturalistic studies:

- a) credibility (in preference to internal validity);*
- b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability);*
- c) dependability (in preference to reliability);*
- d) conformability (in preference to objectivity).*

First of all, Guba and Lincoln (1985) maintain that credibility is the most significant factor in constructing 'trustworthiness' and compare credibility to internal validity which is one of the criteria in positivist research. To establish credibility in naturalistic research, the following are the possible provisions generated by the researcher:

- *Adoption of appropriate, well recognised research methods*
- *Development of early familiarity with the culture of the participating organisations*

- *Random sampling of individuals serving as informants*
- *Triangulation via the use of different methods, different types of informants and different sites*
- *Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants*
- *Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues*
- *Negative case analysis*
- *Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors*
- *Peer scrutiny of project*
- *Use of “reflective commentary”*
- *Description of the background, qualifications and experience of the researcher*
- *Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed*
- *Thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny*

In this qualitative research, to establish credibility, appropriate and well recognised biographical methods to understand older people and interpret their words in the context of their life story as a whole have been adopted. In addition, before starting interviews with older people, social workers or employers working with research participants were contacted and information gathered in terms of organisations and companies. However, random sampling, which is one of the provisions to ensure credibility by excluding bias from the researcher, was not used. Instead purposive sampling was adopted in accordance with the research purpose: to understand only employed older people working with the organisations which employed people of 65 and over, to combat age discrimination in the workplace. There was no use of triangulation in terms of the use of different methods, in particular, ‘observation, focus groups and individual interviews’ to implement the shortcomings of individual interviews. However, the research uses a biographical individual approach to

understand individual experiences and stories in their life context. This means that individual biographical interviews are the only sources and must be enough for the interpretation of the research narratives. In short, more priority is placed on research relevance alongside the philosophical position of interpretivism than on invoking credibility by using various methods. The respondents' credibility was verified by two practices during the data collection dialogues. First of all, the informants were given opportunities to freely choose to accept or reject an interview because only the genuine willingness of research participants can establish good rapport and more familiarity in the opening moments and help people relax enough to articulate their thoughts and narratives freely. Second, while interviewing, the same questions were asked in different words to produce transference of the research findings. Furthermore, in data analysis whilst categorising data all the negative data was revisited to confirm that the construction of the research data included all the occurrences of the research participants. Meanwhile, an effort was made to increase the credibility by encouraging more feedback by diverse means such as 'frequent debriefing sessions' with supervisors and 'peer scrutiny of the research project' with other PhD students in the same department, social policy. A reflective commentary was added to include impressions of the research participants and their narratives throughout the research work. During the interview period, after each one of the transcripts were read, checking whether the transcribed words accorded with the speakers' original intentions. The credibility was improved by describing the actual interview situation in detail so the readers could assess whether the verdicts "rang true". Moreover, for more credibility, the research was compared with previous research results to examine and confirm that these research results had significant or different implications when compared with theirs.

Second, the transferability of naturalistic research is linked to the external validity of



positivists' research; it

*"is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations"*

(Miriam, 1998)

However, in qualitative research, transferability is the power to assess the extent to which a research project is transferable to other studies in the future. Thus, according to the recommendation of Lincoln and Guba (1985), a full description of the research investigation process and procedure was presented so that readers could examine the transferability of the research project to other circumstances. The following are the suggested factors included for transferability in the methodological description of the research design and data collection chapter. The pages presented below show some features of transferability (Cole and Gardner 1979; Marchionini and Teague 1987; Pitts 1994):

- a) the number of organisations taking part in the study and where they are based; (pp. 155-159)*
- b) any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data; (pp. 159-162)*
- c) the number of participants involved in the fieldwork; (pp. 163-164)*
- d) the data collection methods that were employed; (pp. 159-168)*
- e) the number and length of the data collection sessions; (pp. 164-168)*
- f) the time period over which the data were collected; (pp. 164-168)*

Third, dependability; which can be compared to the reliability sought by positivists, means obtaining the same results through the same methods with the same participants. To achieve dependability in qualitative research, it is recommended to

produce a “prototype model” which future researchers may use to repeat the research project even if the research result may not be the same as the original one. Thus, in this research, to ensure the dependability of the research design and data collection methods and reflecting on the research process, the following were recorded:

- a) the research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level (pp.155-168);*
- b) the operational detail of data gathering, addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field (pp.159-168);*
- c) reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken (pp.298-305).*

Last, the conformability of the naturalistic research can be linked to the objectivity of quantitative studies. The following is emphasised to ensure conformability: that the research findings should be founded on the stories and experiences of the informants while excluding the preferences of biased researchers. In this sense, it is advised to bring in:

- *Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias*
- *Admission of researcher’s beliefs and assumptions*
- *Recognition of shortcomings in the study methods and their potential effects*
- *In-depth methodological description to allow the integrity of the research results to be scrutinized*
- *Use of diagrams to demonstrate the “audit trail”*

Of the recommendations for conformability, in this research, these could not all be adopted, but rather the limitations of the research methods and the potential effect of

them are set out when introducing the predisposition of the research to reflect the researcher's beliefs and assumptions in the thesis. The methodological description has been created with honesty and in depth throughout the data collection chapters of this research.

## **4.5. Biographical approach**

### **4.5.1. The characteristics of a biographical approach**

To define the biographical study and to understand 'life history', it is valuable to distinguish study of 'life history' from other similar types of narrative research classified as 'autobiography', 'biography', 'case history' and 'oral history'. First of all, Howarth (1980) describes 'autobiography' by artistic analogy as a portrait in which people draw themselves. As a further approach, Hampl (1996) defines 'autobiography' as a reconstructive process by associating each piece of memory, while 'biography' is a life narrated by other writers. He broadly perceives that both 'autobiography' and 'biography' are narrative, because they are narrating the memories and life experiences from a first-person or third-person point of view. 'Case history' is used for research which examines individuals, community and institutes even though the 'case history' concept is not a qualified term in narrative research. Last, 'oral history' is reconstructed by narratives, as is 'life history'. However, in 'oral history' research, the narrators mainly centre on reconstructing their life, as story tellers. In this sense, 'life history' research consists of extended studies, unlike the other four types of narrative research, because it needs further descriptive explanation and interpretation for individuals in a temporal context (Kim and Lee

2008). The present research adopted the 'life history' approach which is constructed by the life stories which narrators tell other people. The life story is narrative in form; it consists of past, present and future events; and it shows the subjective view of the biographer(s). The narratives which contain sequential events are composed of stories and telling. The story can have a synopsis, which gives it a beginning and an end. When we see a life story as a narrative, it is important to find what its narrative strategies and structures are (Kim and Lee 2008). Time is the foundation in research using life stories. The life story is a history made by events, which has been generated over the span of a life. However, a life story does not tell of the past alone. Life is lived in the present. When narrators tell of their past life, the events interactively influence the present and future. People interpret and justify the past in terms of the position from which they are currently describing it. In contrast, interpretation in terms of the past provides an insight into the present. Furthermore, seeing the past and present together enables narrator and audience to hypothesize something of the future. Since the future is deeply affected by the past and present, researchers should explore how narrators turn back to past experiences in seeing their present and future life. Looking for meaning in life wraps up the past, the present and the future all together. The meaning of events is not given for a while, but is created when someone re-experiences them. Experience is a concept meant to include action, emotion and self-examination in terms of action and emotion. Therefore, experiences are inherently subjective. The attraction of a biographical approach may be that it enables researchers to better understand the subjective experiences of other people. When people remember their experiences and tell them to other people, they analyse them once more. That is to say, when they remember and access the experiences, they express them according to their reconstruction of them, rather than simply repeating particular experiences in memory. In the process of reconstructing their memories, the narrators present a method whereby

researchers can interpret their subjective perspective on their experiences (Bruner 1987, McAdams 1988).

#### 4.5.2. The origin of the biographical approach

The biographical approach which sociologists William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki developed as pioneers began in the traditional form of the Chicago School of Sociology. Their best-known study is 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America' which employed an innovative method in social research against a background of world war. This research was intended to present the societal phenomena of a particular migration which was complex in origin (Apitzsch 2006a). In particular, the tradition of empirical research in the Chicago School was stimulated by Thomas and Znaniecki's methodology, which was distinct from other research by its inspiring insights into the construction since the 1920s of migrants' lives through biographical materials. Significantly, the second-generation research of Shaw's 'The Roller' (1930) contributed to the development of biographical research by using a biographical methods of deviance research in order to shed light on his participants. He combined biographical methods with case studies (Fuchs 2000). German sociologists adopted such biographical methods again during the 1970s at a time when quantitative research prevailed in American studies, which had hitherto made use of a biographical approach in sociology. In the development of biographical methods, '*symbolic interactionism, pragmatism and hermeneutics*' were adopted by social science researchers in complex German methodological and theoretical approaches. A biographical approach is not only the German approach to sociological research but also the international approach, including that of the USA. Moreover, traditional French phenomenology accepted biographical methods, in particular, Bertaux (1986

and 1997), where the “*concept of ‘récits de vie’*” was used. At the same time, practical use of biographical methodology was made by the sociologist Fritz Schütze in Germany. He developed a model which presented the methods in terms of open narrative interviews and analysis of narratives in the theoretical backgrounds of sociolinguistics (Schütze, 1977). His model took a biographical and interpretative research approach. In addition, he developed the theoretical concept of ‘biography’ which by the 1990s had become the main point of the ‘theoretical and social construct in social-scientific research’ (Apitzsch and Siouti, 2007).

#### 4.5.3. The methodological issues of biographical approach

The task of a biographical method is to understand the actions and experiences of the narrators, bearing in mind their subjective view of the content (Denzin 1989a, 1989b). However, the subjectivity which is the attraction of this method and its basic features raise the issue of how far the truth of the story being told is representative. It is not clear how far any individual life represents social experience in academic terms (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This problem is related to the purpose of a biographical method, which is not to see the culture and society through the individual life but rather to focus on individual subjective experiences in the cultural and social context. Hence, the representativeness of a participant is not important when the purpose of the research is to discover how individuals understand culture and society from the subjective standpoint of an individual who is only one of the people involved in the culture and society. This is why more relevant research is the kind which gives the subjective views of the narrators within the culture of the group of which the narrators form a part. In this sense, the research should present what kind of society the narrators live in and how their experiences are produced within a specific social and

cultural context (Denzin 1989a). In addition, the participants' backgrounds, which exist in the context of the life of the narrators, should be presented within the historical and social context of the age because the individual experiences can be understood in different ways alongside different historical and social backgrounds, even if the types of event are sometimes the same. It will be a starting point in a biographical approach to present the historical and social background of the participants as the context of their lives. Moreover, objectivity and representativeness are issues which the positivists raise. What participants remember and tell can only be selective (Richardson 1994). In short, the presented events are the selective expression of narrators contemplating particular aspects of their experiences. Therefore the concern in re-telling life stories is to obtain not a factual record but an imperfect account which is reconstructed by the narrators. The life story of the narrators is relevant, but is still only part of the historical and social context. Therefore, the presence of a variety of life stories shows not one objective account of experiences, history and perception but the subjective interpretation of the majority, formed in the context of individual experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). In this sense, it is not reasonable to ask whether the narratives are accurate or not, because a biographical approach is the intrinsic process of understanding and interpreting selective memories, using the subjective imagination on such memories. The veracity and reliability of a biographical approach do not depend on the extent of objective truth in them but rather are based on the extent to which the stories in the narratives are understood. In this context, researchers should support the narratives by providing relevant historical and social sources to help readers to understand in depth the subjective experiences of the narratives (Denzin, 1989a, Perakyla 1997, Kim 1991, Yoo 2011).

#### 4.5.4. Biographical approach among Korean academics

Biographical studies have advanced in Korean academia by signifying the literal and historical aspects in narrative research, beginning with chorology in the 1920s. In particular, anthropology and sociology started the methodological debate and exportation of biographical researches by Yoo (1990a and 1998) and Lee (2005). Choi in his research (1999) compiled and analyzed a collection of biographical data for Korean qualitative research. Park (2004) and Kim and Hur (2004) more actively spotlighted the significance and relevance of biographical methods in qualitative research. Park (2004), Han (2004), and Lee (2004) performed comprehensive biographical research to understand the life of older women who experienced chronological and significant events such as the Japanese colonization and the Korean War. According to the findings of their research, older Korean women start their life stories with marriage, omitting their childhood. Significantly, in describing the experience of these two events, they revealed their pain from poverty and told of soon becoming grieving widows. They described their lives as filled with social prejudice because of their social standing as widows. A more important feature of their biography was to centre their stories on the people around them and the events they lived through, rather than expressing their opinions. The biographical researcher, Han (2004), observed in particular that biographical studies analyzing the lives of Korean older people can be empirically used in gerontology. She stated that biographical studies provide academics with a wide range of stories in depth about the lives of older people. Moreover, biographical studies help to convey how the narrators' interpretation of the quality of their present life reflects their past decisions and actions (Han, 2004). However, this focuses on subjectivity and temporality, whereas biographical research should comprehend 'narrativity' as well. Furthermore, Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal (1997) highlight that biographical research,



containing both ‘factual truth’ and ‘narrative truth’, should be applied by reconstruction. In addition, they believe that ‘reality’ should be provided by juxtaposing ‘factual truth’ and ‘narrative truth’ interactively (Yoo, 1998 and Lee, 2005). However, previous Korean biographical studies showed the limitations of providing ‘narrative truth’, even though they contribute to the presentation of ‘factual truth’. Lee (2006; 2007a) and Yang (2009b) are, however, unlike these researchers in that they use the biographical narrative interview and analysis method, as do Schutze (1983) and Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal (1997), to identify ‘Narration’ and ‘Reality’. Lee (2006; 2007a), in particular, compensated in her biographical research for the shortage of existing studies; she sought to present ‘narrative truth’ by focusing on reconstructed narrative structures in the acquired disability experiences of older men and women. Yang (2009b, 2011), too, considered ‘narrative truth’ in her biographical research to reveal the later life experiences of older men in a historical context. In this sense, this research methodology to find ‘reality’ in the interaction of ‘factual truth’ and ‘narrative truth’ is generated by referring to Lee (2006; 2007a) and Yang (2009b, 2011), who approach the ‘reality’ of the narratives from the interactive communion of ‘factual truth’ and ‘narrative truth’ in biographical narrative interviews and analysis.

#### 4.5.5. Relevance to my research

Fraser’s framework is referred to in relation to exploring the ideological and subjective dimensions of welfare practices in the social welfare services of the country in question. Fraser (1989) supports the research intentions of this study in using this method, remarking,

*“the identities and needs that the social welfare system creates for its recipients are*

*always interpreted identities and needs.”*

*(Fraser, 1989)*

In this sense, it is interesting to take a biographical approach in exploring older workers' understanding of ageing and their experiences of age discrimination at work that they report, including those at the policy level. This is because it is rare to find older workers who report from their subjective standpoint seeing other workers discriminated against on grounds of age in the context of policy analysis; it is existing studies by academics which show unfair employment practices against older people. It may also be said that the older workers' perceptions and experiences of age discrimination should be interpreted in the wider historical, cultural and social context in which the respondents grew up and grew older. In this sense, a biographical method can be relevant for this research, since it presents the subjective experiences of older workers.

Johnson (1976) also supports the research intentions using biographical methods. According to him, biographical research to explore the past and present life experiences of older people may contain many insights into their desires and hopes within the context of their lives. In other words, as Elipoulos (1997) says, biographical approaches are good opportunities for older people to talk about their life experiences with their family, friends, at work and among their other activities so far. In addition, it is expected that older people feel that they are being treated as valuable people when someone listens to their life story, not least their later life (Bartol, 1989). Thus a biographical approach to the narratives of older people may also have therapeutic value (Bytheway, 1996; Barnett, 2000; McKee et al., 2002). Moreover, Gibson (1998) and Clarke (2000) note that the biographical method possibly offers a challenge to the ageist stereotype. This note supports the research

aim: to understand the perspectives of older people toward socially prejudiced ageist perceptions and age discrimination in their working lives. In short, the biographical texts might enable the researcher to understand and interpret the conceptions and attitudes that older people have in terms of the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination and policies and programmes for older people in employment as the narrators' experiences and created and processed structures of biography throughout the interviews are analysed.

#### **4.6. A one country in-depth study: Korea**

In this research, Korea has been selected as the country for an in-depth study. Initially the practices of Korea were compared with those of other countries in the development of policies for older people. However, an in depth understanding of a number of countries was not possible.. Research into policies and practices is not constructed and implemented only from the objective position of the policy-makers, social workers, employers and older workers. These policies have been legislated upon, revised and carried out in specific historical, political, economic, cultural and social contexts, each with its own background and society outside of this researcher's experience. Therefore, the interpretive and qualitative approach, which aimed to observe interviewees' subjective reality and understand the interpretations of their needs by policy-makers, social workers and employers, became unachievable when it came to countries whose first language was different. In fact, whenever research involved interviews in a different language, problems would inevitably arise because of limited language ability, developed at school rather than learned among speakers in their particular cultural context. It would be particularly demanding to interview people who mainly used a foreign, cultural and social language. Moreover, the focus is on in-depth study of the needs of older workers and

the subjective interpretation of those who implement interventions based on the social policies for ageing workers. Hence, my research would probably be limited in time and resources. For these reasons, a single country in-depth study, that of Korea, was determined as the geographical region of this research. The main reason is that Korea is the researcher's home country and the research is devoted to the development of employment policies for its older population.

#### **4.7. Research design**

The research design includes selecting a research population and sampling method and a method of data collection. I next describe in particular how, among the members of the research population, each research question was explored using data collection methods.

##### **4.7.1. Research population and sampling**

###### **4.7.1.1. Purposive and theoretical sampling**

Purposive and theoretical sampling approaches, rather than random selection were adopted. The sampling plan was grounded in the purpose of the research and the intention to reveal and understand older workers' needs in the relation to age discrimination.. The sampling strategy was to form a theoretical and purposive sample design which would ensure that interviewees were selected in a range of ways from a wide range of situations with a view to, investigating historical situations and assess the equality of employment for older workers Some older workers were selected who would expose the details of their working lives and compare them

with those they had encountered in the more distant past were chosen. This research includes subjects recruited from a range of agencies of different sizes, of different industrial sectors and geographical localities. It uses material from interviews with older workers who belong to the ageing workforce (see the following table, Table 8).

Table 8. Purposive sampling

Interview geographical Area	<b>Seoul</b> Capital city	<b>Inchon</b> Industrial big city	<b>Kwang-ju</b> Medium-sized city	<b>Junju</b> Culture central city	<b>Nam-won</b> Small city
Name of Senior Club	Jonglo Senior Club	Geyang Senior Club	Seogu Senior Club	Seowon Senior Club	Namwon Senior Club
Occupation by type	Parcel delivery Service	Food business and parcel delivery service	Food delivery service	Food business (Sub manufacturing industry)	Recycling business
Older employees Total: 10	2 people	2 people	2 people	2 people	2 people

Interview geographical Area	<b>Wanju</b> Rural area	<b>Seong-nam</b> Small city close to Seoul	<b>Gapyeong</b> Rural area	<b>Yeoju</b> Small city
Name of Senior Club	Wanju senior Club	Jungwon job centre	Gapyeong job centre	Yeoju job centre
Occupation by type	Food delivery service	Employees in building as cleaner and security guard	Agriculture (food bank) business	Manufacturing industry(knitting work)
Older employees Total: 8	2 people	2 people	2 people	2 people

The interviews were with 18 employees who were active in the Senior Clubs and Senior Citizens' Association. . The Korean government gave a contract to provide employment services for older people to Senior Clubs and the Senior Citizens' Association, voluntary agencies which have been developed for older workers, while the government itself concentrated on policies which would ensure employment for them. This was a major factor in the decision to select them as organisations from which to recruit interviewees, so that people with a wide range of views and positions were included, and an holistic process of interpreting and evaluating the current policies and practices of the South Korean government could be developed by which to assess the degree of equality in the employment of older people.

The geographical sampling areas were Seoul, Inchon, Kwangju, Seowon, Junju, Seongnam, Namwon. Gaphyung and Wanju. Seoul was selected for three reasons. First, the administration of the whole country is centralised on Seoul. Second, it is the biggest city in Korea. Last, the cities were chosen because they are likely to have the widest recruitment opportunities for older people, as a result of the first and second reasons. Inchon, Kwangju, Seongnam and Junju, cities ranging from medium to large populations, are included within the research to include a range of industries. Last, Namwon, Gaphyung, Yeosu and Wanju were chosen to explore the characteristics of small city workplaces for older people. In this context, it was expected that the Senior Club and the job centre of the Senior Citizens' Association in each of them would provide a different set of characteristics from the rest and might help to address the research questions relating to older people's employment alongside more diverse types of job. In addition, each Senior Club and job centre of the Senior Citizens' Association specialises in a certain type of business. At the beginning of the research sampling plan, Contact was only made with the branch of the Senior Club because this organisation was the only one involved in job creation in the private sector. It was

expected that the older workers who joined the Senior Club were likely to have been exposed to age discrimination. However, the Senior Citizens' Association, which usually arranges jobs in private companies for older people and creates jobs in public organisations and social enterprises on a non-profit basis, recently became interested in creating jobs in the private sector. For this reason, interviewees were selected from both these voluntary organisations, which are government funded under the Job Creation Acts to contribute to the programme of creating jobs for older workers.

However, selecting only employed older people may be a limitation of this research. In other words, the limitation may be that I did not give interview opportunities to unemployed older people who might have described their more serious experience of age discrimination; after all, although they wanted to work, they were people who could not get a job perhaps due to age discrimination. Unemployed older people and employed older people are likely to have different views of age discrimination in the labour market. For instance, the former might not be opposed to age discrimination in employment but instead might accept it as a realistic view of the negative social prejudices against older people in Korean society. However, this assumption and possibility are not relevant for the present research purpose, which focuses on understanding employed older people who can tell stories of the age discrimination that they have encountered in income, promotion and job training opportunities in their present workplace, as well as articulating a comparative perspective between past and present experiences in terms of age discrimination in employment. In addition, most of the interviewees had manual jobs. Thus the research sample does not include a variety of situations in terms of age discrimination in the workplace. This may show the actual situation of the Korean labour market with which older people are faced with older people being unable to continue to work as professionals and

get similar jobs in the area where they used to work. It appears that the Job Creation Act has not produced a variety of jobs but rather mostly manual jobs for older people. This specific point is reflected on the research discussion in Chapter 6 below.

#### **4.8. Data collection**

Interviews and various documentary sources were used to supply data. All the Korean interview transcripts were translated into English. Some interviewees were reluctant to give permission to tape-record interviews and were uncomfortable. Confidentiality was ensured through not recording any identifying data, including names and permission to record was then given. In analysing the interviews, mapping the data of the interviews with the Excel program was found to be useful in coding and building a thesis. This mapping helped to organise structures for a network built up of one transcript after another. In addition, the program supports texts in Korean.

##### **4.8.1. Ethical issues**

Klockars (1977) and Reiman (1979) stress that ethical issues are very important in interview research of any kind. Creswell (1998) and Seale (1999) emphasise the consent of interviewees as the most important ethical issue. According to their standards for ethical issues, it is important to provide opportunities to allow interviewees to refuse or agree to participate in an interview for the research by asking them to state an affirmative decision several times. Thus, in this research, to get the consent of interviewees, the interview consent form in Korean was presented before any interviewing (attached p. 329). A very gentle approach was used to get their permission to study them before they completed the up the interview consent



form, . At each stage they were asked whether they felt free to talk about their life story and the research issues in terms of the thesis were reiterated. If they did not want their identity to be known, their names were disguised to secure confidentiality as Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest in their principles for ethical research. However, as regards permission to record the interview, some of the interviewees felt uncomfortable in particular about having their voices recorded. This can be understood in the Korean cultural context, where people have experienced military dictatorships which restricted the freedom of speech. The importance the recorded voice was explained and confidentiality was secured by promising to destroy the recorded data after writing up the thesis. After the interview another opportunity to ensure their permission to use their narratives was given by showing the transcript to each interviewee. Only the parts of their transcripts which they agreed were used.

#### 4.8.2. Interview participants - a biographical narrative interview

A biographical narrative interview is important to interpretive research

*“because it is a ‘process-analytical procedure’ which provides an idea of the genesis of the course of social events and records social reality from the perspective of the acting and suffering subjects”*

*(Schütze 1983)*

The purpose of a biographical-narrative interview is to produce the life story of its narrator. The narration by the interviewees was performed in the course of a series of unstructured interviews, which were not to be interrupted by the interviewer, who

listened with empathy. In particular, the biographers were able to construct their biographical narrations in their own way and according to their own preferences. In this way, the field research was undertaken over three months and 18 older workers were interviewed who were working in the businesses of the voluntary organisations, such as the Senior Club and Senior Citizens' Association. As noted, these bodies are under the Job Creation Act involved in creating work for people who are over 65 . The income of these employed older workers comes from government grants and the profits from the business. In this context, contact had to be made first with the social workers who were working with the two voluntary organisations. It was hard to arrange interviews because these social workers are so busy as they manage all the businesses and report back to the government. This means that they are managing the manufacturing and selling of products and are involved in personnel management in the businesses, while compiling reports on what they do, involving much paperwork. In addition, they also are responsible for developing new businesses to create better jobs for older workers. Many organisations were contacted before, the social workers of 10 organisations helped to arrange interviews with some of the older workers employed in their businesses. These social workers believed that such an opportunity would benefit older workers and publicise their working situations and opposition to age discrimination, although this research is academic in purpose and seeks to understand rather than to promote the development of better policies and programmes. The social workers recommended certain interviewees because they thought these workers, who have good workability, could present their views and opinions as material for the thesis. This approach to the selection of interviewees has some disadvantages: it may give an unduly negative impression of older workers because they know how they and others were selected. They could be expected to have an active and positive view of ageing as an employment issue and this might prejudice the findings of the study. However, the

interview approach was not to use structuring questions, but rather to adopt an open ended approach, open to any attitudes and perceptions from the interviewees when they were first telling their life story. The interview questions in the second part were not likely to determine the data for the thesis because they were impartial questions asked with a view to understanding their speakers' own subjective perceptions and attitudes. This is a pragmatic approach to discovering what conditions are for older workers in terms of age discrimination because the selected people may have been more actively involved in the competitive labour market than any other people of their age. The following table, Table 9, summarises the personal data of the research group

Table 9. A summary of the personal data in the research group

Pseudonym of interviewee	Age	gender	Place of residence	Type of business	Family	Education	Income resource(s) per month
Interviewee A	72	M	Namwon Small city	Recycling centre	Wife, 3 sons and 2 daughters	Ended during primary school	£350 from his children £200 from housing property £75 from the Basic old pension £250 from job
Interviewee B	78	F	Junju Medium-sized city	Subcontracting business	Husband, 2 sons and 2 daughters	Schools of education	£250 from children £200 from job
Interviewee C	75	F	Junju Medium-sized city	Knitting business Health food business	Husband, 2 sons and 2 daughters	Primary school	£250 from children £200 from job
Interviewee D	75	F	Wanju Rural area	Food delivery centre	Husband, 4 sons and 1 daughter	No school	£200 from job
Interviewee E	66	F	Kwangju Big city	Food delivery centre	Husband, 3 sons	Primary 1	£200 from job
Interviewee F	66	F	Kwangju Big city	Food delivery centre	Husband, 1 son and 2 daughters	No education	£200 from job £45 from the basic old age pension

Pseudonym of interviewee	age	gender	Place of residence	Type of business	Family	Education	Income resource(s) per month
Interviewee G	69	F	Wanju Rural area	Food delivery centre	Husband, 2 sons and 1 daughter	No education	£200 from job £75 from the basic old age pension
Interviewee H	76	M	Inchon Big city	Occasional primary school teacher Parcel delivery	Wife, 2 sons and 1 daughter	PhD	£100 from job £200 from national pension
Interviewee I	71	F	Inchon Big city	Restaurant	4 sons	High (secondary) school	£250 from job
Interviewee J	85	F	Gapyung	Food bank centre(wellbeing food)	2 sons and 2 daughters	No education	£200 from job
Interviewee K	70	M	Seoul	Parcel delivery	1 son and 1 daughter	Primary school	£450
Interviewee L	79	M	Namwon	Recycling centre	2 sons and 1 daughter	Primary school	£150 from job £75 from the basic old age pension
Interviewee M	66	F	Yeoju	Knitting work	New husband, 2 sons	High school	£100 from job Property assets
Interviewee N	68	F	Seongnam city	Cleaner	2 sons and 2 daughters	No education	£400 from job
Interviewee O	79	F	Yeoju	Knitting work	1 son and 3 daughters	Primary school	£100 from job
Interviewee P	72	M	Seoul	Parcel delivery	Wife, 1 son and 1 daughter	High school	£100 from national pension £400 from job
Interviewee Q	77	F	Gapyung	Food bank (health foods)	2 sons and 2 daughters	University	Much income from assets £ 100 from job
Interviewee R	68	M	Seongnam	Security guard	3 daughters	University	Wife's income £400 from job

To describe in detail the process of arranging interviews, the researcher first contacted by phone the social workers of the Senior Club and Senior Citizens' Association. After explaining the purpose of the study and the need for interviewees and leave was given by the social workers to proceed and a formal request to interview some of the older employees of the organisations was sent. Then social workers recommended individuals and, with the permission of the interviewees,

arranged the times and places of interviews. During the fieldwork two participants were met every week, spending altogether twelve weeks on interviewing; this was possible because of the flexible interview schedule. The researcher was welcomed by the interviewees. Despite their hospitality, to relieve the tension and give a sense of security and trust at the beginning of each interview, student certification and ID card were shown and the purpose of the study was explained and confidentiality promised. However, they still found the interviews a heavy task, most of them saying that it was the first interview they had ever had. Respect for them was shown by listening to their stories carefully and responding to what they were saying. without disrupting their narration once they had started. Questions were asked only when they had finished speaking. They were encouraged to feel that they could talk about their lives openly, even though most of them were not keen on telling their life stories. Some said they had nothing in particular that might be interesting in for the study, but others, in contrast, were happy to take the opportunity of saying what they thought of the employment policies and programmes for older workers. The people who were happy to talk said:

*"I have got too many stories. I could write books about them." (From the research interviews)*

One thing that both groups had in common was that they became more interested in their stories as they went on, whether they were at first hesitant or willing. Sometimes in response to their emotions and actions, I laughed at their funny memories or sometimes we cried together when they talked about the hardships they had endured. In particular, when they talked about the tragedies of history, such as deaths of relatives in the Korean War, they were deeply emotional and, at the time, I also felt

the same emotion with them and shared their grief. The more the interviewees said, the more absorbed I became in their stories, perhaps out of empathy. My empathy allowed them to talk openly about the truth of their lives. As they reconstructed these lives, my heartfelt dialogue with them was able to ignite an impulse on their part to change their lives. As their stories drew to an end, they looked very happy with the interviews and they would give me their telephone number. However, interestingly, in the second part, when they started to answer the questions, the attitude and reaction of each interviewee was different. Some of them talked very aggressively about the issues of ageing, age discrimination and employment. Other people were not interested in giving their views on these issues. Yet others thought about them positively. They tried to understand their conditions and find some way of tackling age discrimination. They showed a variety of narrative characteristics, but most of the interviewees ended by saying:

*"I trust you and understand what you are doing. Please contact me whenever you need me for your research."* (From the research interviews)

As a matter of fact, though I held these interviews as my practical approach to researching a theory, I realised as they went on that they were teaching me about life. The lives of these interviewees were not easy, but they were grateful to have a job although some of them complained about their present situation. They did not actively combat their conditions but regretted with despair what they now had to face. In this sense, this effort to understand people was my journey to looking more deeply into my past and present life and see something of my future, too.

To describe the procedure in the interviews, in the first part of the interview, I

encouraged the interviewees to tell their life stories by appearing to be an attentive and thoughtful listener who would give subtle guiding prompts which did not interfere with the most significant narratives. In this sense, the suggestion of Fisher-Rosenthal and Rosenthal, who developed open ended questions for prompting an autobiographical narration was followed, suggesting as an opening prompt,

*'I'd like to ask you to tell me your life story, all the experiences and events you remember. You can take as much time as you want to. I will not interrupt you; I will ask my questions at the end ...' (Fisher-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997: 4).*

However, if they were unsure how to tell their life history some questions were prepared as prompts to help them as follows:

- How old are you?
- What were/are your parents like?
- Where did you grow up?
- Can you describe your childhood?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters? What about your extended family (uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.)?
- Would you like to tell me something about your teenage years and life as a young person? (Some of these people may not have had much formal education. For this reason, instead of mentioning education, I asked about their teenage years which gave them a good chance to talk about their school life if this was applicable.)
- If married, how did you meet your husband or wife? Can you describe them, and how you met?

- Do you have children or grandchildren? Can you describe them?
- Could you tell me more about your later life?
- Can you tell me about your career? What sort of jobs have you had? What sort of job do you have now?

The latter writer, among others, recommends that in the first biographical narrative interview the interviewer should steer clear of any kind of ‘*why*’ question, to avoid inhibiting the speaker or distorting her/his account. In addition, such questions might make them defensive or try to elucidate and justify their position (Rosenthal 1993 and Riemann 2003).

The second part of the interview would continue until the participant came naturally to the closing stages of her/his biographical themes. After this, questions were asked about points which the interviewee her/himself had left unanswered in the first stage. Interviewees were asked these in order to encourage further questions. Naturally, the expected answers which related to the research topic were not likely to be generated spontaneously; because the narrators could hardly be expected in their accounts to perceive age discrimination in Korea’s socio-economic context as a priority when it is not seen as such in comparison to the unemployment problems of younger people in the present economic recession. Supplementary questions could be asked in a subsequent interview if there were key issues still to raise. In the first interview it was important not to inhibit the participants and to allow them to tell their story in their own way. Further questions asked in the later part of the interviews were as follows:

- How do you understand the value of work in your life?
- How do you understand ageing from your perspective?
- How do you understand age discrimination in employment?



- How do you understand the employment policies and programmes for older people?

#### 4.8.3. Documentary evidence

First of all, aspects of the theoretical frame were explored by reading documents, including books and journals. In a practical sense, the other PhD theses gave appreciable areas of inspiration in terms of this theoretical frame. Furthermore, to find the proper methodology for my research, sources were explored for applicable approaches. In this sense, documentary resources helped in the organisation of the outline and designing the research. Theoretical and research texts used to develop an understanding of the main concepts, such as social ageing and employability and, in particular, the capacity for work. Other documents and resources provided facts and information about Korean employment policies and practices for older people, in particular online resources. . These documents were very helpful in understanding the interviewees who are working in businesses. In this regard, the social workers who arranged the interviewees also provided supportive documentation about the businesses built up by organisations such as the Senior Club and the Senior Citizens' Association. In particular, such documents as the excellent case studies used in the Job Creation Act and business report included interviews showing how social workers managed and felt about the business and how older workers worked and thought about their jobs.

#### 4.8.4. Data analysis

Each tape was listened to twice: the first to catch the sense as a whole and record

impressions of the interviewee's narrative and also of the interviewer. This helped to prepare the approach for the second interview. The second listening, with repetitions at every stage, was to capture all the details on the transcription form which was to be used during the analysis.

To analyse data to the highest standard, theoretical knowledge in relation to the data should be examined first and then the data should be considered on the basis of this, adopting a method of qualitative data analysis. For this work, political and economic perspectives were used to assess the employment policies and practices for older people and the concepts of sociological ageing and age discrimination theory and practice to explain and understand my data. The analytical method of 'Biographical narrative analysis' (Schütze, 1983) was selected and used for the analysis of the interviews. In particular, the biographical data was analysed according to Schütze's three steps (see page 172).

As the research method used language as the means of communication, the interview was transcribed as fully as possible. A blank transcription form with four columns was designed: one column was for numbers, which refers to the speakers' turns and also to units of meaning and the next for the words which expressed their emotional state, attitude and mood during the interview, for example, words such as '*hesitantly*', '*firmly*', '*in a rush*', '*with a laugh*', and '*sadly*'. The third column contained a transcript of the words spoken, with full additions including pauses, interjections, such as 'ah', 'um' and any expressions of emphasis such as high pitched exclamations and accents. The words in which the experiences and stories had been expressed, as though each word implied a significant meaning for the speaker's thoughts and values to do with ageing, employment, policies and age discrimination were noted. Distinguishing labels such as 'Description, Argument, Report, Narrative and Evaluation', which give an initial analysis of each account, were written in the

fourth column (cf., Wengraf, 2001).

#### 4.8.4.1. Biographical narrative analysis

The interviewer in biographical research is not merely a passive listener but a person who influences the reconstruction of the life history of the interviewee. In this sense, biographical research analysis starts from the moment that the biographer begins to tell her/his life story, if the interview is reconstructed by the narrator who speaks about the process of assembling a biography in cooperation with the interviewer who asks the questions and listens to and records the narrative.

There are many ways of analysing biographical narratives. For example, the Personal Narratives Group (1989) presents five aspects of biographical research, namely, the '*origin*', '*context*', '*narrative form*', '*narrator-interpreter relationship*' and '*truth*'. In particular, Yoo (1998) recommends the three concepts of '*context*', '*narrative form*' and '*narrator-interpreter relationship*' from these five aspects as something to consider for biographical analysis. He points out that the context influences the individual's environment and the environment can explain the individual's active processes of constructing a personal life. In addition, the relationship between the individual life and the social and cultural environment, which is the ground for the lives of individuals, plays an important role in interpreting the life history of each narrator. The contexts of the participants' lives which are selected by researchers in the process of collecting life histories are prerequisites to the researchers' understanding. From this standpoint, the context of a life is exposed by the narrator her/himself and also by the researcher in exploring the narrators' life histories. In particular, in order to understand their own lives and let other people understand their lives, the narrators attempt to make a context.

To give due weight to the context, it is important to consider how the concepts of the past, present and future are used and how sexes and ages are described by the same person or other people (Crane and Angrosino 1992). For this reason, when they analyse biographical accounts in the objective formality of autobiography, researchers should categorise the context which they are offered according to the sort of theme brought out by the events in the life story. The extent of categorisation varies according to the purpose and interest of the research. The first part of the narrative in terms of biographical research can be the most significant context which has implications for all the rest. For example, in the research by Yoo (1998), one of his narrators at the beginning of her life history presented her life as an orphan. In this context, the status of orphan was possibly her significant life context.

Moreover, the context of a life has an influence on its narrative form. The basis on which a researcher interprets, understands and empathises with the reconstructed life of the narrator through a biographical interview is the meaning scheme shared by the two of them. For example, one of the meaning schemes is the narrative's structure. A form of narration can often vary according to the different cultural models of different historical ages and the relations of power and individual imagination (Labov, 1997). For example, if the narrator blames destiny as the cause of her/his failure, it can be said that the narrator tends to blame destiny as a main narrative approach to describing her/his life (Yoo, 1996). In particular, it is important for the researcher to understand the narrators in a contemporary social context.

#### 4.8.4.2. Adopting Schütze's three steps for analysing biographical research

Schütze uses the '*biographical method*' approach because he believes that biographical narrative interviewing is the most relevant approach to interpretive social

research; it sees things, as a result of the research, from the actors' subjective perspectives and experiences, which form social reality for them (Schütze 1983). In addition, his treatment of biographical narrative interview material is associated with Grounded Theory and 'the concepts of theoretical sampling, contrastive comparison and theoretical saturation' (Strauss and Corbin 1990). He develops biographical narrative analysis methods into a systematic procedure, employing three steps. These are made up of 'formal textual analysis such as thematic segments, structural description of these segments and analytical abstraction' and the aim of the steps is to generate a theoretical model. These three steps form a system by which the subjective biographical stories can combine to construct a theory. Moreover, biographical narrative interviews are open in structure and thus in need of systematisation such as Schütze's method offers, to reconstruct biographical stories. But it should not be forgotten that other approaches can be taken to constructing biographical stories, as well. In particular, Fischer–Rosenthal and Rosenthal (1997) develop a particular analytical method which is partly a reference to Schütze's model. The focus of this approach is a distinction between the lived life, which is analysed in order to reconstruct a biographical meaning of the narrator's experience, the sequential events which took place in this life and the narrated life story which is reconstructed in line with its present meaning in terms of the experiences which are remembered and the chronological order of the life story which is being narrated now. For this analysis, the researchers present five steps:

*“(a) analysis of biographical data (b) thematic field analysis (reconstruction of the life story) (c) reconstruction of the life history (d) microanalysis of individual text segments, and (e) contrastive comparison of the life history and life story” (Fischer–Rosenthal and Rosenthal, 1997).*

In the meantime, Apitzsch developed other combined methods for analysis in terms of a biographical narrative interview on the lines of Schütze (1984), who had identified four kinds of process structure, and Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal, who found differences between the lived life and narrated life history through sequential single-case analysis. Apitzsch's work was aimed to 'anchor theory' which is generated from:

*'an abductive logic and proceeds in a methodological way by following the research strategies of Grounded Theory' (Apitzsch, 2004).*

In the light of the analytical methods of Schütze (1983) and Rosenthal (1993), also, Wengraf (2001) supports the collective biographical narrative analysis method. He adopts a way which distinguishes the lived life, as drawn out by the researcher, and the story being told, which the narrators provide from their subjective, reconstructive, historical perspectives. As a result of this process, he expects that the analysis procedure generates "case reconstruction" in an integrated and synthesised approach while making materials more significant in their historical contexts and backgrounds (Chamberlayne, Rustin and Wengraf, 2002).

However, there is also a slightly different approach in biographical narrative analysis, using "turning points in the life course". Elder (1985) asserts that it is significant to pay attention to 'behavioral trajectories and transitions' in life experiences, because he believes that a trajectory is "a pathway over the life span" which may be matched by the "turning points" which are people's central life events. He defines 'turning points' as structures of individual occurrences such as 'the death of a loved one' or events of communal history such as war or a collective financial crisis. These turning

points can generate impulses which change the acts of individuals who have experienced and perceived the events in the trajectory of their lives. In Germany, for example, “*turning points*” (‘Wende’) literally means very significant life events. In this sense, ‘*turning points*’ are distinct from transitions, which mean gradual changes, because ‘*turning points*’ implies sudden movement and change in a life. Additionally, in many lives, there are “*breaks*”, which refer to even greater interference.

Wagner and Wodak (2006) also aim to understand “*personal biography or trajectory*” by identifying the ‘*opportunities, choices and individual coping strategies*’ of narrators in biographical interviews. This approach can be complemented by studying the contexts of turning points and life stories, drawing on empirical events (McAdams et al. 2001).

Although there are diverse approaches to biographical narrative analysis in theory, there are common features such as ‘*phenomenological narration analysis, objective hermeneutics, and the method of hermeneutic case reconstruction*’. In fact, the procedure of biographical analysis can be understood in the sense of ‘*case reconstruction*’, which is built up with ‘*biography and action*’ so as to interconnect ‘*individual and institutional aspects of social reality*’ (Wohlrab-Sahr 2000 and Apitzsch and Siouti, 2007). According to Corbin and Hildenbrand (2000) and Apitzsch and Siouti, (2007), the key universal features to consider in case reconstructive procedures are “(1) *reconstruction* (2) *abduction* (3) *sequentiality* (Kraimer 2000) and (4) *reflexivity*”.

The purpose of this research is to theorise the stories of older people in terms of age discrimination in employment which is analysed in their biographical narrative contexts. In this sense, the approach of Schütze which is the foundation of analytical methods for theorising the stories of biographers can be relevant, because it can be

seen that most other researchers who use biographical methods refer to the systematic approach of Schütze, outlined above. To help theorise the research subjects' biographical narratives, the key universal facts of biographical narrative analysis as well as a systematic approach with three steps are included. The following description is the concrete method of Schütze that has been developed for this research theory on the basis of his. The development of this method aimed to expose the structure of the narrator's life story and the 'social processes of action and suffering as well as possible resources for coping and change'. The approach of Schütze in biographical narrative analysis was meant to interpret the life stories of narrators in the context of 'social macro structures' and 'reconstruct' the narrator's biography. To achieve these purposes, Schütze presents three systematic steps in biographical narrative analysis, in accordance with the two important concepts of *'cognitive figures and process structures'*. The first stage is the transcription is the formal textual analysis. While making notes and recording the interview, non-verbal language such as hesitating or emphasising or sighing or a facial expression to show an emotional state are noted at the same time as the words uttered. Furthermore, in this stage, the text of the interview is divided into thematic segments to be reconstructed as *'narrative, argumentative and descriptive parts'*. In the structural description stage, a chronological process structure in terms of the narrative is created in a reconstruction of a biographical narration. In particular, in this step, each interview was summarised according to events of personal history and then the relevant meaning of stories was selected to form reconstructions. In particular, the interview results of the second part of the interviews were analysed by the reconstructed first biographical stories while considering:

*'the substantive biographical structural processes: trajectories of suffering,*



*biographical action schemes, and other social processes’.*

After this, for the theoretical analysis stage each interview was mapped alongside the abstracted finding that was analysed by each interviewee’s reconstructed life. The themes of the mapping included the meaning of the work done in later life, the perception among older workers of ageing in employment, the attitudes and experiences of older workers faced with age discrimination and the expectations of older workers in terms of social policies and programmes. The mapping made it possible to apply analytical abstraction to biographical narrative data in terms of ‘minimum comparison strategies and maximum comparison strategies’. In this phase, it is possible for researchers to create theoretical categories by which to analyse the narrative themes while visualising the empirical complex. Significantly, in the theoretical analysis stage, the researcher offers some implications and interpretations suggested by the narratives within the frame of biographical analysis. After generating theoretical categories, the comparative analysis stage provides an interactive subjective total approach to the biographical narrative, not comparing each interview with its own earlier stages but allowing comparison and contrast to be made between narratives, in order to produce a theoretical model (Schütze 1984).

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

In order to achieve the purposes of the research, biographical narrative interviews and analysis were chosen. In particular, the biographical interviews in the present thesis are designed to allow employed older people to build up their life stories with a focus on age discrimination in employment. It was expected that their reconstructed life stories would show how they understood age discrimination as well as the

meaning of work and ageing; and would also show how they viewed employment policies and programmes for older people, which affect what is assumed to be the perception of age discrimination among those of them who are at work.

However, to be frank, because this approach has been rarely used in this area, it was not sure certain that this biographical narrative interview was altogether adapted to generating the theories which are related to policy perspectives on employment policies and programmes for older people, or the individual perspectives of the employed older people toward the meaning of work, ageing and age discrimination. However, the findings show (Chapter5) that the theories produced not only richly individual and varied views but also very precise policy views on the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination employment policies and programmes for older people.

In spite of an approach which was fruitful for findings that answered the research questions, however, the process of data collection and analysis was challenging. The following is a brief description of the data collection and analysis.

At the first stage of the interviews, 18 interviewees were asked open questions, which would allow them to tell their life stories. The following stories relate more deeply to the issues of age discrimination, the value of work and the perspectives on ageing, together with the employment policies and programmes which were constructed. These go hand in hand with further questions which were raised by their life stories in the first interviews. In particular, the collected data are analysed as biographical narratives in order to respect the subjective nature of the participants' views, whilst not seeking representative and absolute truth in their narratives. The analysis enables an interpretation of their reconstructed life stories and experiences with a focus on age discrimination in employment. The process adopted the three steps introduced by Schütze: transcription, thematic segmentation and analytical

abstraction, in the expectation that this research, unlike other research, would generate theories about the perspectives of employed older people towards the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination and employment policies and programmes; the findings are to be found in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5. Findings**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings relating to the research question: 'How do older workers understand the value of work, ageing, age discrimination and the employment policies and programmes aimed at older workers?' The findings are organized in two parts: an analysis of the way in which older workers understand the value of work, ageing, age discrimination; and the policies and programmes for employing older people and analyses of the way in which their personal backgrounds have affected their perceptions and experiences in relation to the value of work, ageing, age discrimination and the above policies and programmes. In these analyses, this chapter draws on data from interviews with 18 older workers.

The sections of the chapter explore their stories about their employment with reference to their ageing and in particular to employment discrimination in the open labour market against older workers; it addresses the following questions by referring to individual biographical stories:

- i) How do older workers understand the value of work?
- ii) How do older workers understand ageing?
- iii) How do older workers understand age discrimination?
- iv) How do older workers understand Korea's policies and programmes for employing older people?

Sections i-iv reflect the views of older workers on these topics. The sections explore what they see as the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination and employment

policies and programmes for employing older people. The four themes arising from the analysis were as follows:

1. Being one in life and working
2. Contradictions between the perception of ageing and work performance
3. Dilemmas between 'hope' and 'reality' in age discrimination
4. Empowering older people to achieve successful ageing in employment

These will now be discussed in turn.

## **5.2. Being one in life and working**

Some older people begin the interviews by complaining about their desperate situation in terms of its poverty. Others go into detail about their situation but instead give their positive reasons for working; for example, to get a healthy energy, as a challenge in their career, a happy life and independence. In particular, many interviewees claimed that working was life itself. That is, when they become 65, they still want to live a normal life. It has become natural for them to work because they identify their lives by working. The respondents did not appear to feel comfortable initially to go into the more vital reasons for their working. However, as rapport with them grew, they became more open and candidly told their stories and discussed these reasons. Some reasons were not explicit but can be inferred from their autobiographical accounts. The question arose why this should be so and led to a study of how individual reasons could be understood in the context of each different life story. Moreover, early assumptions about older people's need to work were too crude and showed little understanding of older workers. There was an initial assumption that the social security net approach to a secure income for older people

might be emphasised at the expense of their need for a fair chance to work in equal circumstances to those of younger people. Working was not merely a way to secure an income; rather it represented life itself, which they would live with all their energy; it was the best way to interact with family and society and attain an identity for themselves.

#### 5.2.1. To survive

What the interview participants said about their reason for working was mainly focused on its monetary aspect. However, if they did not work, most did not necessarily starve. Yet some interviewees may not have survived without paid work although the expressed extreme need was not only financial but also a matter of social inclusion.

In the course of her story, interviewee N repeated several times that she could not survive if she stopped working.

“There is no financial aid of any kind. I have to work just to survive”. .11

In Korean, “survive” means both being alive and being part of society. In her context, she seems to use the word ‘survive’ to refer to the predicament of living in poverty. Since she divorced her husband (at 37 years old), she has been desperately poor. However, to take the other aspect, she may have emphasised the word ‘survive’ to mean being part of society. She said

“... Children are children. I am just myself” .6

In Korea's Confucian culture, it is expected that adult children should look after their older parents. The children are her children, but she does not want to claim that they are hers; she sees them as separate from her. She may have been disappointed that her children do not support her financially according to the traditional Korean cultural context. The situation in which her children exclude her from their family financial responsibilities may have led her to need jobs whereby she can survive by being part of a working team. In the meantime, she justifies her children's decision.

"My children are already struggling on their own incomes". .7

In this sense, she believes that working is her only chance of being included in society, as well as releasing her from financial problems. However, the physical toll of her hard work was another element in her narratives.

"I wake every morning full of aches and pains because of the hard work I have to do." .8

From these words, the clash between the need to work and the consequences of doing so is evident. It is not clear what her greatest need is and what should take priority in fulfilling her and helping her to survive her desperate situation.

In the meantime, interviewee K approaches the word, 'survive' in its social and historical context, in contrast to the personal approach of the previous speaker:

"I understand that I had to give up my job for a younger person. But I must work to

survive. If I cannot work, I will crack up...The government can't save people like me with their social policies and programmes. I have to work to survive.” .75-77

His sense of 'survive' probably implies that he needs to escape the suffering caused by financial problems. In contrast with his deprivation, he tries to understand that he should give up his only hope, working, in view of the unemployment of younger people. His attempt seems to be ironical when he himself needs so much to work. In fact, the irony may derive from his family situation: his adult daughter is unemployed because of the economic recession. Yet he longs to work to pay his way and he straightforwardly vindicates a situation in which he cannot hand over his jobs to younger employees so that they can survive in a disadvantageous welfare regime. Moreover, he used an historical approach to the meaning of 'survive'. When he started his life story, he defined himself as a member of the “unfortunate generation”, which had suffered through the great East Asian Wars, Japanese colonisation and the Korean wars; he had hovered between life and death more than once and known severe famine and poverty. In this context, 'survive' cannot simply be a word to describe his present circumstances but may instead be a word to represent that his whole reconstruction of the meaning of 'living' in this historical context has been reduced to the concept of survival. To sum up, his financial, social and historical approach to the meaning of the word 'survive' can be interpreted within his total experience of life and the social, economic and historical context of Korea.

Interviewee L, for his part, does not use the word at all, but it is implicit in his phrase,

“I cannot leave this job because there is no other source of income,” .54



perhaps meaning that he feels he cannot survive nowadays without paid work. His situation is described in his autobiographical account. Since he first got a job at the age of 19, up until his present age of 79, he has had only work to depend on. He is very proud of what he has done but he feels ashamed that he still needs to work because he has no savings or pension. In addition, he feels mistreated because he was only 58 years old when he was dismissed from his previous job. He also believed that he could still work like a young man, as even his employer has agreed. He says that he works for four or five hours a day but earns only £200 per month, including a grant from the Senior Club. This contrasts with his full-time job, where at 50 he was getting £1,000 per month. But in spite of his low income, he cannot leave this job. He feels happy thanks to his colleagues, who have shared his life and to the respect of his family and friends on account of his good job. The jobs were not only a source of income but also of happiness, since they aroused his sense of belonging and self-esteem which are included in his sense of the meaning of 'survive'. In particular, the evidence from his particular experience shows that he had a greater need of self-esteem than of security. He took all his retirement money in a lump sum and bought a house with it. It was his dream to have his own house. The house represented his self-identity and pride, but this choice put him into financial difficulties. In this context, there can be no doubt that only a secure income can help him to survive (i.e. belong to this society).

Furthermore, interviewee H reconstructs his life story with its historical background when presenting the paradoxes of his situation.

"The home delivery service pays as much as 50 pence, which motivates me to do this work. Only work gives us physical help as well" .123

He is interested in the health benefits of working and claims that he is working to stay healthy, but it seems that his real motivation to work is to add to his income. Yet both motivations are likely: his desire to work and to earn. However, he may have wanted to hide the genuine reason – his financial need – behind the facade of health. He does not say directly that he needs money but merely that he felt interested in a paying job, which he prefers to volunteering, though he enjoys hiking and climbing. Furthermore, he shows how he has to work for a living when he lists his sources of income. He has the national pension benefit, about £ 200. There is no company pension. He has nothing more from the government. He earns about £ 100 per month in Senior Club activities, such as delivery work. This was his entire income at the time he was interviewed and it was too little in 2009 to meet his living costs, considering the average living expenses of Korean urban workers, about £1,250 pounds per month for a family of 2 or more. Despite his poverty, he did not say he must work for an income, but that he chose his jobs by the amount of self-respect they conferred. In this sense, it is worth noting that survival to him means being able to hold up his head in society as well as escaping poverty.

#### 5.2.2. Generating positive energy for health

Surprisingly, many interviewees claimed that their motivation for working was to live a healthy life. In their interviews, this reason seemed at first to be ostensibly, a way of hiding their poverty. However, when they gave their reasons in detail, it was clear that among the main reasons for working may have been the wish to stay healthy, despite the fact that work is sometimes tiring or can even bring illness. However, some interviewees claimed that they had noticed that in working they could forget their pain, feel happy and enjoy what they were doing, although they were ill, for

instance, with arthritis. It appears that working can give one enough energy to combat pain and be happy. However, it may seem remarkable how work provides older people with energy, since logically work requires energy and consumes energy.

Interviewee A reported this as his health-based motivation for working.

“I have to work and want to work because I have the ability to work. If there was no work, I would lie in bed every day. I have strength. I want to earn more money.” .51-

52

It seems that the opportunity to work is always given, not something to be taken by this interviewee. He presents the situation as ‘There is no work’, without referring to himself. However, when he talked about the motivation, need and ability to work, he used the word ‘I’. In this sense, using the word ‘I’ can show how his working energy is generated. Once he has an active attitude, he takes charge of his life. When he takes up the ownership of his life, this ownership produces much energy. In particular, when he works within his own desire, will and capacity to work, he seems to be strong enough to overcome his pain. His experience makes this point clear. He remembered a driving accident at 60 years which ended his working life. He remembered the pain when he was recovering at home from its after-effects. However, he could vividly recollect that the pain left him as soon as he went back to work. He became healthy enough to get a full time job. At present, he said confidently that, though he is working part time now, he would take a full time job if it were offered. From his experience, he believes that there is no doubt that working can give one enough energy to forget pain and remain healthy.

Interviewee C also presents her working activity as the source of enough energy to

overcome her illness. She adds that she feels helpless when she cannot work. The feeling can lead her to be mentally and physically weak.

“If I stay at home, dementia is likely to come to me. If I don’t move, I think too much. I feel the ache from my arthritis. I also have diabetes. However, I’m healthy enough to work.” .84-85

She uses ‘I’, implying that the roots of her action lie within herself. When she passively stayed at home, she felt her feeble psychological status painfully. However, conversely, she felt healthy enough to continue working once she had actively started. In short, her active motivation is likely to be a strong factor in her vigorous pain-free life.

Working has much more meaning for interviewee B than for the other interviewees. Working was a remedy when she faced a serious mental problem, depression, which gave her the urge to commit suicide. (Interviewees A and C, in contrast, merely believed that their health was maintained by working.) However, a Buddhist priest suggested that interviewee B should cultivate the temple land. Opportunely, she agreed, committing herself with ‘I’:

“I said that I would and I worked day and night, even in freezing weather, to clear the stones, which I put into three baskets. To plant the land with sesame and beans covering 495 m<sup>2</sup>. I did not earn money from it, but my anxiety over money disappeared”. .73-75

Once she had made a decision to work – “I said that I would and I worked” – she

could move to the next stage where she was beyond her emotional pain, the result of two crises, of poverty and of the failure of her business. In addition, when she was able to plant something in ground which had been too stony to produce anything, she regained her mental health. In her illustration, even work which was very harsh and demanding gave her the motive power which started with involving 'I'. The energy from working provided her salvation and restored her to herself so she could see the world positively. This was a reward for her hard work and effort with an active self-ego that she could get back to being a normal person and have the burden of financial anxiety lifted. In the context of her life, it suggests that the process which makes her will-power stronger and produces the energy to help her be active through working therapy for her mental state.

In this regard, interviewee H was not keen on using the word 'I'; rather he tended to adopt the word 'someone' in impersonal sentences when he described the meaning of work.

"Working is the shot in the arm for a healthy and happy life for older people. If someone stays at home all day, I think they might get mental problems. A dull life every day makes people feel depressed, lonely and useless to society. If someone works, they feel mentally and physically alive. And yes, actually, I do" .125-129

He seems to be unwilling to reveal why he needs to work. However, he is very active, saying 'Yes, I do' when he admits the effect of work on the level of energy. In addition, he believes that people get useless not through poor physical condition or deprivation nor negative social prejudice from older people, but by their passive attitude to work. For this reason, he confidently affirms that working is the source of the energy which

drives people to lead a healthy life, mentally and physically.

In contrast with interviewee H, interviewee P straightforwardly pointed to the robust effect of working, which derives from taking active decisions about his health.

“I had stayed at home but I could not sleep well and had been poorly, so I started working for the sake of a healthy life. I think that health takes priority over money.” .14-15

In fact, he put health as a priority over monetary need, in spite of his financial situation. This approach to work and health can be explained by his early life. When he first went to school, it was a long journey; he had to get up at 5 and walk some way to catch the train. He never stopped working throughout his life. He always had to work hard to meet his commitments. Thus, a normal life would always entail work because his physical state would depend on it. Then he was in a difficult and depressing situation in which he needed to work in order to pay back his bank loan and this may have had its mental and physical repercussions. In this sense, when he started working again at a later stage, he got enough energy to be enthusiastic and, as he always used to do, he could through working build a bridge where mental and physical health and the practical situation interact.

### 5.2.3. Career development and sense of achievement

It is often the case that people work in order to achieve career goals. It is remarkable how much older people think about this issue and in their later working lives took on the challenges in their career.

Interviewee C said:

“My skills and performance were so outstanding that the Senior Club recommended me as an excellent older worker and I was given the award.” .57-58

Before she recalled the title ‘excellent older worker’, she emphasised her outstanding skills and performance, which were recognised by the award from the City Council, thanks to the recommendation of the Senior Club. In other words, ‘excellent’ did not signify her own subjective evaluation so much as something to accept from society as an objective assessment. However, there is still some shame in this award, because it calls her an ‘excellent older worker’, implying that older people are not part of the general labour force but in a separate category to be treated as extra labour. This award might encourage older people to work, in a social context where older people are obliged to leave their jobs. In fact, when she had a business earlier in life she had been famous for her knitting. However, to her evident frustration, she said that at 60 she had had to find some different work to do because of economic changes. Japan used to order items from Korea because of the high skills and low cost of labour, but when the Korean economy grew and workers were paid more, orders from developed countries such as Japan came to an end. Thus, if, she had not at 67 years old received a job offer from the Senior Club which ran a knitwear business employing older workers, she might not have attained her peak again and would not have been able to say

“My skills and performance were outstanding”.57

In addition, she would not have had this exceptional achievement in a climate of age discrimination in employment if she had not shown good job performance, which testified to her workability. In short, this award, which was a climax in her life story may have been based on her being challenged to find some way of showing her fine workmanship, which has given her an excellent career and a professional standard of performance throughout her working life.

Interviewee E, too, highlighted 'the most brilliant job I ever had'. The reason why she said 'ever had' can be explained in the context of an ambition fulfilled without any of the right educational background. Though she was shy about it, she revealed her education background: that she did not even finish primary school. However, she talked proudly about qualifying as a care worker. She said that she studied to qualify for a college course in this subject and succeeded, despite her scanty experience of learning. She mentioned that this had allowed her to work in a care centre looking after older people who are suffering from dementia. In this biographical context, the care worker qualification helped her to have the best job of her life, although she received this qualification despite never having had any educational preparation, when there are claims that intellectual ability declines in old age. More ironically, in contrast to her boasts about her job, it seems that she had some difficulty in getting used to care work.

"I could not eat properly because the people who had dementia covered the walls with their poo and they pooped in their pants. Even when my duty was over and I returned home, I remembered the filthy things I'd done. So I couldn't eat a thing. Whenever I tried to eat, I vomited it all. I had constipation as well, as my stomach was stuck." .34-37



In this sense, her challenge was not to do her best to obtain the best job she ever had. She had to overcome her poor educational background and hard working conditions. Since she did not succumb to these hardships, she could boast

“ ... My friends were envious of my job’ .43

and added boldly,

“I was a professional care worker”.44

When interviewee I described her work, she pointed to her ‘New Life’. A year before, she made up her mind to build a basis for her future by making a success of the business which is managed by the Senior Club and subsidised by the government. She said that she devoted her life to the business with a resolute heart. Despite this devotion, there were many difficulties before the business settled down. However, her last words about the business were,

“We now make a profit that we can share among the workers. I am enjoying working. I got accustomed to this new life when I started this job after turning 60” .44-45

The challenge of the business was the start of her new life. As interviewee E could achieve her t success only by meeting the challenge so interviewee I also had to overcome problems in setting up the business before she could enjoy her new life. Whilst most people may think that old age is the sunset time of life, she illustrates

that for her, old age was a sunrise time when she learned about life. When she reflects, she realises that she learned some lessons when at the age of 60 she started working with others. As she confessed, they made her more mature. In the context of her life, it can be seen that learning can come from being challenged and that these two things interact. In addition, interviewee I was now studying on a care worker's course and had not hesitated to take on another challenge. Her life seems to be based on change and growth.

For these respondents their decision about what sort of life to lead, regardless of chronological age, led them to accept the challenge of work, a rewarding job and a new life and they worked through the harsh challenges so that they could re-encounter the spring of life.

#### 5.2.4. Being independent: Beyond a life of burden and guilt

Interviewee D stresses the words,

"I am very happy to be working for myself." .35

From her account, she might have seemed a likely person to make such a statement, but in fact, when her life is considered in the round, she was not. Instead her life was not her own, but belonged to her husband and her children. As a young wife, she could not work because her husband did not allow her to go out and earn money. Sometimes he beat her when she tried to do so. He always wanted her to stay at home, look after the children and do housework. Since her children reached the age of 18, however, she has been able to work and earn money to support her second

child at university. This meant that she could start working for her children only late in life. However, she looked happy to talk about her working life although she points to the harsh conditions where she worked, including construction sites. She did not complain about her tough work but instead claimed that she was very happy to be well paid there. It appears that working was the way to get back her independence and brought her within reach of her true self and of happiness. She confesses that she is now “working for [her]self” and is concentrating on enjoying a life in which she is independent of her husband and children.

Interviewee C has another approach to independence from her children. She looked depressed to acknowledge it:

“I feel guilty at accepting my children’s money.” .33

But this sense of guilt is despite devoting her life and all her means to educating her children and providing the financial support for their success.. Despite her sacrifices for them, she thinks she would feel a burden to them if she accepted their money, although it seemed natural for her to give up everything for them. It appears that she does not like being dependent. She was very proud of her working career, which brought her an award from the city council as an ‘excellent worker’. She was independent enough to attain happiness through working. At present she can still work and can therefore be independent and also healthy by going out to earn money. In addition, ‘dependence’ seems to her to be a very negative state. It gives her a sense of guilt which can make her mentally unhealthy. Therefore, work is a natural choice for her since it provides independence with pride and health instead of accepting the help of her children, which could through its dependence make her feel

uncomfortable and ashamed.

Like her, interviewee M brought out her desire to be independent of her new husband.

Her reason for this is directly presented:

“...because it is hard to say ‘help me’ to my husband, and older people who are over 60 tend to go to hospital very often.” .10-11

However, this seems to be an illogical point to make in the Korean social and cultural context of couples sharing their assets. Her independence only late in life throws light on her attitude. After her first husband passed away, she had to manage her finances for herself. In this situation, she had to adapt to working when she was relatively old. However, after she married again, she stopped going out to work because her second husband was rich. Nevertheless, she felt that it was not fair to ask for money to buy things for herself. If she had always been dependent on someone else and never worked, she might not have felt uncomfortable to ask her second husband for his help. Working life, then, probably made her used to not depending even on her husband. In particular, she highlights the fact that

“They can live together when each of them has financial assets” .12

not in reference to her own marriage alone, but generalising. In describing people who have remarried, her word ‘they’ seems to imply how she feels about the relationship between herself and her husband. One can infer that she would not want to entangle him in her life but rather feel respect for him as her companion. Indeed, she may prefer him to respect her as a companion and not as a financial dependant.

In other words, she prefers to be an independent person who works and manages her finances alone, as she used to be before the second marriage. She is working again and she looks happy to be employed.

#### 5.2.5. Work makes me happy!

The definition in a Korean dictionary, of being 'happy' is to be warm of heart, because one feels joyful and satisfied with life. Interviewees say that they are happy to be at work and hence satisfied with their working lives and joyful. In particular, it is interesting that they feel happy during the working day. Working is their way of being happy. For the interview participant's happiness is the goal of life. The method of reaching this goal is perhaps the most significant part for them. It appears that working is a necessary condition for their happiness. However, people can often become happy in other ways too, such as socialising with friends or by activities such as going shopping or climbing mountains. However the interview participants who stated that their happiness came simply from working are not typical but if they cannot work, they do not feel happy.. Thus, working was not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition. Interviewee A points out:

"When I feel I belong somewhere, I feel happy." .59

He remembered that he had worked ever since his father died, when he was 13 years old. He felt that life was meaningless after his car accident stopped him from working, for working was his whole life. In this sense, his work place was somewhere that made him feel that he belonged. For this reason, he could also state

“When I lost my job, I felt I had no position in my family or in society.” .58

For some people, their position in the family and society may be the way in which they are identified. When this interviewee could be clearly identified by his position and his status in his family and society, he was satisfied with himself and achieved happiness through this satisfaction. In other words, losing a job which gave him status might mean that he lost himself and losing himself would certainly make it difficult for him to be happy.

Interviewee C also felt happy on condition that she had work to do.

“I feel so happy while I’m working. In the past, working was a means to an end for my children’s education. Now I feel I have to work for this business. They need me.” .62-

63

‘They need me’ is a significant phrase, suggesting that happiness in her life comes from being needed herself. Her pride was influenced by job satisfaction. Being needed by a place or a person may be the sufficient condition for her being content, since she is working for her own satisfaction in the business in which she was involved when paying for the education of her children. At the same time, the business may be necessary for her happiness because working in it led her to have a passion for what it offered and in which her contentment is now rooted. As she said

“Now I feel I have to work for this business ...” .63

Moreover, work was where she invested her emotions and faith. She boasted

“I could have been recruited by another voluntary group in the same line of business. But I am an important person here. I cannot let down the Senior Club. I can’t move to another organization. I want to keep faith.” .70-72

Thus, she works in this place not simply for an income but from her pride in the job. In particular, the idea of being offered a job elsewhere made her very proud, happy enough to continue to work for a group that she had faith in. She made a point of working ‘to keep faith’. In the Korean/English dictionary, ‘faith’ is defined as trust in someone’s ability or knowledge. In her case, she is happy to be trusted by the Senior Club to do its work and use her professional knowledge. Accepting the respect and trust of others through her job seems a precious source of happiness for her.

Interviewee D was in a desperate mood as she spoke of her need to work, in contrast to interviewee C, who was proud of her working life.

“What I work at makes me feel that life is happy and pleasant.” .36

Like interviewees A and C, interviewee D also stressed her happiness in going to work. What is more, it was not having a job that made her happy but the work itself. Thus it was working, not anything in herself, that was the main agent of her happiness. Working was regarded as the overall determinant of her happiness and pleasure in life. The following statement also supports this idea

“When I get much older, if I cannot work, I will inevitably feel regretful.” .37

In fact, the particular memory of this interviewee was of her grandmother's later life, when the sight of the old woman living alone in her room and doing nothing influenced her own strong desire to work beyond the retirement age. She said it struck her as a miserable life and she does not want to live as her grandmother did. She seemed to be afraid of ageing rather than death and was worried that she might not be able to work when she got older. In particular, the expression, ‘inevitably feel regretful’ gives a clue to the importance of work in her thinking. It is much more than simply having a job. Working was to her the only element that makes life valuable. It may be assumed that she will not feel happy when the time comes to leave the job. She very much hoped that ageing would not disturb her happy working life.

Narrator F said that her motive for starting work was to escape from poverty. Despite having no choice in the matter, she liked her job.

“I am really happy with a small income.” .65

Even a low income could not stop her working. This strong motivation to work can be understood from her past, when her husband had forbidden her to work outside the house and obliged her to stay at home to care for their children. After her children became independent, she ventured into the labour market and got a job. This experience may have convinced her that working is valuable. She whispered with a smile that it was her pleasure to save the money that she earned from knitting. Moreover, she was excited to report that she was very happy to work with the respect of other colleagues and the compliments from the manager. She comments,



“Possibly, I could find another job that pays better. However, I don’t want to leave the job. I don’t want to disappoint those who are working with me“ .66-67.

These words suggest that she has confidence which may have come from the trust shown by her manager and colleagues that she is fit to work. Trying not to disappoint them may also mean that she wants to continue to earn their high expectations and trust. In this sense, these high expectations and trust may be a significant source of happiness in her life. However, interviewee G stressed that her happiness to have work mainly derives from being able to help her children. In the past, before her children started school, she wanted to support them in higher education so she worked and saved hard. Now her oldest child is struggling financially and she wants to earn money to help him. She smiled when she said that she is very happy to give money to her children.

“I feel so good when I give money to my son. I don’t know how he knows how much I have got. Always, he asks me for as much as I have got. It doesn’t bother me. I like giving all I have” . 42-44

The money which is the source of opportunities to make her son and herself happy can be earned from her job. This may suggest that that her happiness may be taken from her when she eventually stops working. In short, all her happiness is tied up in her work. However, there is another reason why she has to work; she is appreciative of her power to have earned money in earlier days. Before she married, her family was too poor to live together. She was left with her grandmother while her parents and the other children went to Seoul to earn their living. However, she and her

grandmother had no house to live in, so she built a thatched hut. She fainted three times from malnutrition. This severe poverty and hardship have made her grateful for a financial situation in which she can meet the needs of her children. It can be assumed that she feels working to be worthwhile in particular when she can earn extra money for them, though it is possibly all she possesses. In this context, the words 'extra' and 'all' may be in conflict, but both words could be used for her situation. Since she is poor, none of her money is 'extra'. Earning extra money may mean that everything she earns is needed by her children, who are the most precious concern in her life.

In her happiness from working, interviewee Q regards learning as the most interesting aspect.

"I realised it was interesting after I started working." .19

In particular, before she started working she never realised how interested she would be in her work. She had devoted her life to teaching students and had been proud of growing up in a family most of whom were working in the education service. However, she was now working in the food supply business. Her new work was interesting; she commented,

"I feel fit to work". .42

She added that she was happy to learn something new, such as cooking traditional Korean dishes. If she claims to be fit to work, she might also say that she is fit to teach. However, she is now working in a new area, cooking traditional dishes, and

remarks,

“My work is my vocation.” .43

It seems to be the case that she is happy to be at work because she says that she is very eager to learn different things.

#### 5.2.6. Work is life

Interviewee A explained why he had to start work at the age of 13. This was when his father died; if he had not worked, his family would not have survived. He has always worked, ever since. As can be supposed in his context, working became life itself for him. He spoke expressively about his pain when he could not work.

“I had to work, otherwise I would have been in pain from the after effects of the car accident. When I do not work, I feel useless, but when I work, I feel important. I feel alive when I’m working” .39-41

He may be a ‘workaholic’, for he has never stopped working. However, his own statement describes him better. Working became essential for making him feel worthy to be alive. In particular, his phrase ‘feel alive’ shows most significantly the meaning of work in his life, because ‘feeling alive’ can mean life itself. Working is everything to someone who feels important when he works and useless when he does not. Working is not optional for him, but a condition of living.

Interviewee J also described how she has never stopped working since she married in a hurry, fearful of being dragged into the group of 'comfort women', young women taken to Japanese rape camps during World War II.

"I'm addicted to work and have been working like a worm. I have worked day and night. I do not have any hobby, and don't drink or gamble. I don't know what to do except work. I was always busy working. Actually, I have worked for 30 years making knitwear and have also kept bees for 30 years."

She admits she is a 'workaholic' and calls herself a working 'worm' which works very hard even at night and does nothing else. In fact, 'worm' is possibly a very negative word, suggesting that she does not treat herself with respect. However, to Koreans the metaphor of 'worm' can mean a zealous person preoccupied with a certain task. It is understandable why she associates her working life with the word 'silkworm'. She has been enthusiastic to have certain jobs all her life and it is noteworthy that she has always been tempted to work without stopping. It should be noted that an addiction to work may be negative for her at times. In contrast, working seems to have positively influenced the life of interviewee J:

"I think it was my destiny. I am working in this food bank. I'm the leader because at 85, I'm the oldest. They respect me. Now I enjoy working." .34

She emphasised how much she enjoyed working. The reason for her happiness may be her leadership of a group of older employees who respect her. In addition, the fundamental point of her narratives seems to be 'destiny'. In her mind, working is her 'destiny', defined in a Korean dictionary as the superhuman power which controls the whole universe, including humanity. She regards her leading role at work as

something which is the purpose of her life and is beyond her control and she has embraced this.

“I prefer working to resting at home.” .32

Exactly like interviewees A and J, interviewee R presented work as his pride, as life itself:

“I am a person who likes working and being active.” .18

These words show that working is his chosen identity, that by which he introduces himself. Working is important to him and when he says that he is ‘ ... a person who likes working’ he shows his self-identification with the action of ‘working. In this analysis, it is not difficult to infer why working has become his identity. He has devoted his life to it. In his life story, most of the narrative was about his career. At the end of his reflections, he remembered his sadness when he could not work beyond the compulsory retirement age because of the economic crisis and the IMF’s conditions:

“When a healthy person cannot work, he suffers ... depression always pursued me when I was alone and housebound.” .19-20

These reflections illustrate how pain contributed to his life pattern, making him unhappy whenever he could not work. From the texts, it seems that he felt pursued

by depression:.. the word he used was 'suffer'. The emotion he expressed suggested that for someone who could not live a normal and healthy life without working, it was possibly the worst pain, and he identified himself in those terms.

### **5.3. Contradiction between the perception of ageing and work performance**

Most of the narrators perceive ageing as a decline. However, conversely, they assert that they themselves perform well at work. Interviewees accepted that they were weaker now than in the past but they were sure that their work performance was no less than it had been. In addition, once they have had experience as older workers or taken up work later in life, they think that they are no different from younger workers in workability and become aware that workability is influenced by individual health status rather than by chronological ageing. Some interviewees understood ageing in its social context. In other words, they were aware that society defined them as 'elderly people' in the labour market, regardless of individual considerations of their health and ability to work. At the same time, they understood that their physical strength was declining as they aged and some tried to be contented with working in a society which does not favour older people's employment.

#### **5.3.1. Physical ageing vs. work performance**

In the interviews, however, it was apparent that even these older workers have a negative perception of ageing. Most interviewees thought that ageing shows in the loss of physical strength and in poor eyesight but, this is thought to have little influence on their capacity to work.

Interviewee E believed that ageing makes her feel tired and at the beginning of her narrative she concentrated on the effects of physical ageing. Yet, when she talks about her work performance, she confidently says,

“God has given me enough health to do this job.” .51

In this narrative, the reason why she is assured about her work performance, in contrast to the physical consequence of her feeling tired, God, who sends her the health to work well. Although she feels that she has good health and high workability in comparison to other older people, she says she is aware of her deteriorating health. When she was younger, she did not often feel too tired. If she slept well all night, by morning, she always felt rested. However, nowadays, she felt tired in the morning despite a good night's sleep. She tended to droop and complained about her nagging feeling of being tired. In this sense, the increase of physical tiredness was natural for her, but interestingly, she could not tolerate mistakes in her work; it must always be done well. Her present employer complimented her on her performance, as her previous employer used to. She also emphasised that she works as hard at present as she ever did.

“I have no time even to go to the toilet because I am too busy completing the orders.” .53

In particular, ‘completing the orders’ indicates her general sense of duty. Furthermore, her outlook has practically influenced a way of life in which she does her best to complete orders even when it leaves her no time to go to the toilet, which is often the

most urgent physiological need. More significantly, even the conflict between her outlook and a situation which precluded meeting her most urgent personal needs did not make her give up her work. Instead, in her terms, spiritual power led her to resolve the conflict and realise her values.

Interviewee F, first looked back at her previous work, where she achieved a good deal in the paint shop of a car factory. She is sure that she does not estimate her present achievement as any less. For example, she was promoted to supervisor in both jobs. At the age of 50, she did not feel tired, despite working hard until 9 pm each night to earn the maximum wage. In contrast, when she was past 60 and tried working in an electronics factory, she felt much too tired and consequently left the job. After this, she found an easier job in a food delivery bank. In her present workplace, she is working well and does not feel as tired

“...as in [her] previous work. In fact,” .18

she remarked,

“some jobs for older people can be physically hard work.” .40

A cooking job in a restaurant is not easy, but she said that this job was easier than her previous one. She points out that older workers often feel more tired than when they were younger. However she does not feel that conditions in the restaurant are hard. This job seemed to suit her as she says: ‘I don’t feel tired here’. It is important for each person, both old and young to find a job which suits their own situation, including their physical strength. Then they can develop their workability to its



maximum. So it can be said that workability is the same for young and old, so long as jobs are chosen with the worker's age in mind.

Interviewee G also said that ageing could affect the physical strength of older workers. For instance, she felt less able to carry heavy things. However, she pointed out that she could

"...work better than younger workers here. Only I feel a little short of physical strength compared with when I was younger. I am still highly skilful" .38-39

Her concern is her good workability rather than ageing. She believes that her workability is better than the workability of younger people. She is, however referring to her current work place she compares this with past situations. She used to work on construction sites. As an older worker she worked in a food delivery service centre, a take-away restaurant. She has had two different types of job, in different settings. However, neither of these places can be easy for everyone to work in. When she compared her work now and in the past, she thought that her two jobs have called for different degrees of strength. Interestingly, however, she believes that her work performance in the current job is better than in the previous job, although she agrees that her physical strength is declining. The situation which she is facing is paradoxical. She has a positive view of the better workability of older employees, but is also trying to accept the loss of the physical strength she once had. She tries to explain the paradox by referring to her excellent skill, which may prove to her that her work performance has not deteriorated and she can still trust in her workability, despite a little downturn in physical strength. This may be her subjective assessment, but it also seems that her strong confidence underlies and supports her good work

performance.

Interviewee P has an individual approach to the concept of ageing. He thinks that it does not affect the sense of challenge and thus lets him perform well at work.

“So far, it is no problem at all to work. In particular, in the sense of challenge, growing older doesn’t change us!” .24-25

“Ageing affects our working. Eyesight gets worse and hearing gets weaker. I don’t hear well, particularly when I’m on the phone. However, different people have different levels of strength. Anyway, now, I don’t feel as strong as when I was young. But I can keep up with younger workers in work performance. However, I feel tired a lot. It is hard work carrying heavy loads in my deliveries.” .30-34

In his comments about his perception of ageing, he used the words ‘keep up with’. These words show his attitude to both ageing and working. He denied the gap between younger and older people in work performance, which is the most important attribute in the employment market and whilst not claiming that there is no difference between the work performance of younger people and older people he claimed to be as confident about maintaining his work performance as younger workers could. His perception of ageing appears very candid and also challenging. It is suggested that his perception derived from his experience of life, which has not been easy. He began after the Korean War, walking as much as 12 kilometres every day to school, when the bombed routes prevented the trains and buses from running. In addition, his family was so poor that as soon as he finished secondary school he had to begin work. He has never stopped working since those days. He boasted of his children’s

success, however. He was proud that his two children had graduated from good universities and got good jobs, thanks to his hard work. In this context, it is understandable that he welcomed the challenge of work and was confident that he could keep up with the work performance of younger workers by overcoming his physical weaknesses and problems with eyesight and hearing.

Several interviewees agreed that older workers were not as strong now as formerly. However, intriguingly, they believed that their job performance was still as good as before. This may be because they were working harder to achieve the same result, in spite of their increasing weakness, perhaps making them more tired than in the past.

Interviewees N and O, in particular, rationally approached the question of ageing. They said that ageing greatly affected health and the ability to carry on a normal life. Thus they thought that it was the loss of health through ageing which may diminish the chances of older workers in the competitive labour market. However, interviewees N and O presented their strong points, as the other interviewees did. Interviewee N said,

“My supervisor has praised my work. However, I now feel much more tired than when I was young. My work performance is similar to what it used to be” .18-19.

Interviewee O commented,

“After work, my muscles ache. When I was young, I slept well. I was all right. However, now I feel different. Although I sleep through the night, I ache the next morning. My back aches and I feel stiff every morning. However, I work well. I ignore the pain. Once I start working, I forget the pain. It’s nothing ... They call me the Elder

Sister here out of respect.” .32-40

Interviewees N and O were little different from the other interviewees who had a negative view of ageing, except that they had more realistic views which acknowledged that individual health can affect each person's workability. Besides, a perception of an acceptable degree of ageing may be reflected from their personal subjective experiences and they do remember to compare their current physical status to the time 'when I was young'. Nonetheless they tend to approach the issue in terms of their workability as judged by other people, such as supervisors or colleagues. However, their approach to the perception of ageing is slightly different from that of good workability. Interviewee N first boasted about being praised for work and then candidly confessed to feeling tired, whilst interviewee O first of all noted that her body ached after working, then emphasised her good work performance by calling her pain 'nothing' since it can be forgotten when she starts working. Perhaps interviewee N identifies, from the point of view of her supervisor, a more significant capacity to work than her physical tiredness would suggest, while interviewee O tends to be more concerned with her pain than her pride as a result of working well, as the word 'ache' seems to confirm. Two levels of hardship are shown in the words of these two women. Older workers may have similar opinions about ageing and their work performance, but the intensity of their statements on physical decline and job performance may differ between individuals.

### 5.3.2. "I" don't feel old

Interviewee H, however, saw that weakness goes hand-in-hand with illness. He remarked,

“As people grow old, they age through and through, except for those who are extremely healthy. Once people age, they have conflicts, problems and illnesses” 132-133.

His negative perception of ageing influences his views on the health and performance of older workers. In particular, he talks about ‘conflict’ and ‘problems’. These words are negative, but reflect that some people are indeed burdened with problems. He, however, suggests that it is only older people who are affected. However with regard to himself, he went on to say,

“I can teach students in schools but now there is no opportunity since I retired. I’m 76, but I don’t feel it is too old to teach – yet society does. .138-139

He believed that his capacity to teach was no different, even now that he had retired. Thus when he talks about other older people, he does not view them positively, but when he talks about his own capacity he becomes positive, although he too is old. His workability is summed up in the phrase, ‘I don’t feel too old to teach’. It is hard to reconcile his general perception of ageing and his self-assurance about his own workability. One thing that can be assumed is that he formed his perceptions of ageing by generalising about older people as a group, whilst he specifically considers his own case as an individual exception, to be viewed positively. A specific approach to each older worker may be necessary to generate a positive attitude to older workers as a group. The perception of interviewee M was very similar to that of interviewee H. She had the negative view that older workers are too narrow-minded to understand people unlike themselves. This makes it hard for older people to

cooperate with younger workers. Believing that age made people slow in movement and language, she thought that full time jobs were hard for older workers to do. However, interestingly, she also recorded an experience to the contrary.

“I’m different from other older workers. When I worked in the locker room of the Golf Club, I was very popular because of my brilliant work performance. All the customers and colleagues liked me very much.” .38-40

What she wanted to convey was that she herself had a pleasant work personality, despite her own view of other older workers. ‘I’m different’ implies that most older workers have a negative perception, reflected from years of social prejudice as well as their own experience of bodily limitations, but she was confident of being exceptional; her own work performance was good. This may be because she desires to work as a way of meeting her individual needs. Therefore, she must either perform well at work in order to keep her job or else accept limitations which exclude her from the labour market. Her claim to work well may be only her subjective belief. She is working and earning money as she wants to do, and she is on the whole happy. This is the salient point to grasp.

Furthermore, interviewee Q in her comments on ageing pointed to health.

“People cannot be healthy forever. Each person is also different in how far ageing affects their workability. However, I think that health is the aspect which affects ageing the most.” .47-48

Her view that health is the most influential factor in ageing and workability may have

derived from her experience of older colleagues who are working well. In particular she points to

“The best worker in my opinion ... [a] person who is 85 years old. She is a very funny lady” .20

She does not introduce the older colleague by giving her age but describes her first as the best worker and then mentions how old she is. According to her experience, chronological ageing has no effect on the workability of employees. For this reason, she concentrated on health when she was talking about the perception of ageing. However, she recognises that people cannot be healthy forever. In her logic, when people grow older, their health is uncertain and the ability to work may be influenced by one's state of health. This implies that she understands and accepts that ageing can negatively affect the workability of older people ,although she regards the extent of ageing, like the state of their health, as different in different people.

### 5.3.3. This society is not accommodating

Uniquely, interviewee R described ageing as a matter of changing times, which impacted on his earlier experience of retirement

“This generation does not forgive...Abacus calculation was my weapon. However, they use computers, machine ... there is no space in the social system. Society goes ahead so fast that I cannot catch up with it.” .21-23

His perception of ageing was not related to physical health but to social changes which outpaced him as he grew older. He may have believed that ageing had no effect on his physical condition but felt that the excessive speed of social developments caused him to regress in those areas where he used to work. In other words, his perception of ageing was not the decline of the physical body but the social pressure, which he could not cope with, to keep up with modern technologies such as computers. He does not blame society and the younger generation but considers that he is to blame for not updating his skills, in view of the rapid developments in the social system. In this sense, conversely, it can be assumed that he might want to find the hope of going back to work again when he updates his skills or develops some new ones. He blames himself, whom he can change, rather than criticising the movement of society, which he can do nothing about.

Interviewee D, for her part, presented a radical perception of ageing:

“Ageing is just counting. I’m 75. Sometimes, if I work too hard, I feel tired as I used to do when I was young. Since I started working at 50 [for her children’s education], I don’t feel any difference in health, so I have no difficulty in working. There are lots of healthy older people. I’m one of them. They don’t feel old” .38-41

As she emphasised ‘counting’ when she described ageing, to her mind chronological ageing would seem to be a matter of numbers rather than an important influence on health or workability. In addition, it may be said that she has an active outlook which can compare the health of older and younger people, although the health of older people tends to be poorer than the health of the young. The reason for the comparison can be found in her experience: that in her workplace the older people,



including, she claims, herself, are healthy enough to be competitive. However, to some extent, she may not be sure that ageing is a matter of numbers; she does not say that they are not old but merely that they do not feel old, implying in this context that using the word 'feeling' prevents it somehow from a fact. The reason for this is found in the following extracts:

"Society does not acknowledge it. The work performance of younger people is complimented thanks to their young age, but the good workability of older people cannot be recognised because of their old age, although older people work better sometimes. I have experienced very unfair situations" .42-45

Tough though she was, she seemed to feel bitter about society's unfair treatment of older people because she had seen that older people can stay abreast of the social competition. As she saw it, it was clear that what had led to society's negative prejudice was not connected with the workability of older people, but society's failure to acknowledge it.

Some interviewees harboured ageist social prejudices of their own. Interviewee I said that she did not feel that in work performance older workers were any different from younger ones, but before she took a job in later life and met older colleagues, she had herself been prejudiced against older workers.

"I'm 71. Actually, I thought older people didn't work well. In contrast, they do work perfectly well. Older colleagues are very diligent and have good cooking skills. They are very good workers, even compared with younger employees. I think that the negative perception of ageing is formed by social prejudice." .37-40

In particular, her words 'even compared with younger employees' are significant in

her perspective on ageing. Comparing older people's and younger people's ability to work may seem unfair and unreasonable, as the negative prejudice which interviewee I had before she worked with older colleagues. Such prejudice depends on an assumption that younger people are stronger than older people but her experience that older workers 'work perfectly well' demonstrates that the perspective on ageing can be influenced by individual experiences of working with older workers. Furthermore, the narrative of interviewee I suggests that society's negative view of ageing can be changed to a positive one if more opportunities for younger and older people to work together can be developed. However, the possibilities of changing views in society are restricted; the reformed perspective of interviewee I comes from an older woman who might be thought all too likely to take a favourable view of older people.

Like interviewee I, interviewee K also implied that, in his experience, chronological ageing was not relevant in the labour market. This suggests that he may have shared this social prejudice against older people before he worked with them, as is confirmed by his stress on 'but' in the sentence quoted below. If he had not been prejudiced, he would not have been astonished by the good workability of older people.

"I'm 72. There is an older worker who is 80, but works very well. Sometimes, I feel I'm a young man in comparison to this older one." .55-56

The term 'young man' seems to imply that he is the young man in not being as skilled as his colleague. 'Works very well' endorses this supposition. In other words, it can be assumed that his perception of ageing may have derived from his former milieu,

where people had no positive views of ageing, but now he had reformed his perception of ageing in a new, challenging social setting as he reconstructed his life with a focus on historical and social changes.

Interviewee L felt ashamed of growing older. The older he grew, the more he encountered discrimination in employment. It seems to him that ageing is a notion formed from nothing but social prejudice against older workers, which reinforces the negativism of employers towards them. But he claimed,

“I don’t feel any difference in strength although I’ve some difficulty in learning English.” .65

Interviewee L felt ashamed to have been unemployed because of previous negative perceptions of older workers. In his current job, he had been hired thanks to his employer’s positive perception of his workability.

“I knew my boss before I came to work here. I used to come here every day with a lot of waste to sell for recycling which was collected from the street. At the time, my boss took a good view of my work. And then he suggested that I should work here. But my boss pays less and asks for more time at work than with younger workers. I am happy to work here. This job is so precious. But I would like a bigger wage.” .4-8

This case is somewhat different from those of other interviewees, who in the light of experience changed their views of older workers from negative to positive. Here it is the employer who has changed his perception of older workers through getting to know interviewee L. However, this change does not extend to giving all older workers

equal treatment and income in the labour market. From this older person's perspective the employer could not overcome social prejudice and had the same view of older workers as his younger employees, although he had developed a positive view of interviewee L. However he had not offered him full time work or equal pay with younger workers. In this situation it is not possible to discern the reasons for the employer's behaviour. The extract, 'I am happy to work here. This job is so precious' reveals the conditions in the labour market with which interviewee L is faced; 'the job is precious' means that the value of the job is something to treasure in an employment market where a negative social perspective does not favour older people.

Meanwhile, interviewee C faced generalisations about ageing with questions and doubts. From her perspective, physical ageing depends on the individual and can be overcome by methodical support in the workplace. She accepted that most older people had health problems, such as poor eyesight, weakness and arthritis, simply because of their age, but she gave as an example the fact that she overcame her arthritis by using support equipment, such as special seating in her knitting workplace, which allowed her to work sitting down. However, she accounted for the popularity of older workers in the Senior Club business market by their professional standards, such as hers in knitting. In particular, however, she emphasised her ineffective competitiveness in the open labour market.

"At this age, where can I go? What can I do? Does society give jobs and money to older people?" .46-47.

The advantage that the government provides through the Job Creation Act is, in her

view, a space for her to work. In particular, her phrase 'Society gives jobs and money' conveys the social conditions which she finds in the labour market. The chance for older people to be taken on payrolls is the gift of society alone. In short, as she sees it, the one who decides a job offer is not the older employee who wants to have a job, but wider society. In this sense, she supposes that the insurmountable problem of ageing exists in the social context.

#### **5.4. Dilemma between 'hope' and 'reality' in age discrimination**

Most narrators had met age discrimination in their later working lives but some did not recognize this as such. They hoped to challenge the mandatory retirement age in particular but they were also concerned about the unemployment of younger workers. They remembered the social discrimination they had met, which they describe pragmatically, although without calling it discrimination. Most did not identify social discrimination against themselves, but it appears from their stories that they had met it. The form of the discrimination against them included unfairly low incomes in return for poor working conditions. In addition, some participants felt mentally isolated by not being offered jobs in which they could enjoy socialising with their colleagues. There were also people who had not experienced age discrimination because they had been self-employed. To sum up, it can briefly be said that older people are caught between the hope of being able to continue working and to combat age discrimination (income treatment in particular) and the hopelessness of not having a normal working life as they used when they were younger. They try to see age discrimination as acceptable in an economic context where many younger people are unemployed and understand and accept age discrimination. It seems to them to be very hard to tackle in practice, because it is often unseen.

#### 5.4.1. Can't do anything about it! It's a legal requirement

Interviewee D supplied two experiences of leaving her job because of the mandatory retirement age. She experienced no age discrimination before the age of 67, but afterwards she recognized that her age has caused her to be discriminated against.

"I can't accept or bear the negative attitude of employers towards older workers. When I see the work results, I think mine is just the same as those of younger workers – sometimes better. I particularly find that the older ones work harder and more honestly in this workplace. However, I can't do anything about that. Age discrimination is naturally accepted in Korean society." .48-52

She was convinced of her capacity to work. In particular, she paced her work 'better'. This word tells us, conversely, how unfair she felt her treatment was. She might work better than younger people, but had been forced to leave her job because of her age. By her use of 'harder' and 'more honestly'; she wanted to make it clear that anyone who worked in this way should be an ideal person to retain on the staff. In her view, she did so; it was only the legal retirement age that had made her leave. Legal discrimination is likely to be the barrier which cannot be tackled by individual effort. Her desperation is seen in her words, 'I can't do anything about that'. Conversely, it can be assumed that she had done everything she could do to keep her job, but her efforts were in vain. It was useless for her to want to continue.

Interviewee H also recounted a similar experience of being retired at 63 from the Research Park and at 67 from the university because of the mandatory retirement

age. After retirement, he says that he tried to get a job, but was refused everywhere because, he conjectures, he was thought too old to work, despite his good educational background and twin careers. He had been offered a job by a company connected to the Research Park. However, he did not accept this because he wanted to get a job on his own merits and not depend on help from within a private network. In this situation, he went to live in the country but felt too lonely there and returned to the city. He was 76 years old, but is still looking for a good job with a better income to support him. Unfortunately, he could not find a permanent employer who wanted to make use of his good record; he had only temporary work from the Senior Club. Despite his need of a job, he seemed resigned to the fact of age discrimination.

“I think this is a reality I should accept. Younger people can take the jobs that older people leave. We should concede the point in younger people’s favour. They need the jobs more than us.” .140-142

His words suggest that jobs cannot be shared between the young and the old. He believed that older people should not engage in competition for jobs with younger people, although he himself was still looking for a good job to meet his needs. His attitude was that discrimination was natural and that more opportunities should be given to younger people. His word ‘concede’ shows his inclination to admit that the priority should go to younger people who needed good permanent jobs. However, from the phrase ‘more than us’, it can be supposed that older people, including him, need jobs also. It may imply that the need of older people for jobs should be considered, although he tries to understand the mandatory retirement age from the standpoint of younger people.

Interviewee E also told of her experience of being retired under the law. She said that she had been legally discriminated against in this way. She had to leave her job although her employer was happy with her work because her service centre, which ran on a government grant, obliged people aged over 65 years to retire. Afterwards, she looked worried when she envisaged a situation in which she might once more have to retire on age grounds., She expressed the hope that the government would tackle this legal discrimination as a priority.

“I studied very hard to obtain a care worker’s qualification even though I hadn’t any formal education. Eventually, this gave me a job as well as a qualification. I was extremely happy with the job, despite the hard work. However, the mandatory retirement age destroyed everything – my pride and the value of my job.” .17-20

The use of the word ‘destroyed’ suggests that her mandatory retirement was a serious crisis which threatened her way of life. Moreover, the word ‘everything’ suggests how desperate she felt, as well as her pride in and the value of a job which brought hope to her. Thus, from her perspective the mandatory retirement age may have destroyed her whole life. Legal discrimination left her feeling incapable of action, because she recognised that, if the laws to tackle the mandatory retirement age are not repealed, she could do nothing to get her job back.

#### 5.4.2. Lower pay or underpayment in invisible discrimination

Interviewee K had had many experiences of age discrimination.



“In fact, after my business failed, for several months, I tried to get temporary work that would pay well in spite of the very harsh conditions for a 60-year-old on construction sites. Unfortunately, I wasn’t hired at all. I eventually found work as a security guard which paid much less than the tough work. I also had temporary work from one of the programmes of the Work Welfare Act. However, when I reached 70, I couldn’t find any work as a security guard and I wasn’t eligible for employment through the Work Welfare Act. All I could get was a job with the Senior Club” .31-37

From his stories, it emerged that he suffered two kinds of social discrimination: one as a possible construction worker and the other as a possible security officer and in the Work to Welfare programmes. No particular institution had shown him discrimination. In the job area of construction work, people go to the job centres of construction sites and wait there to be hired for the day from 4 am until 6 the next morning. If nobody employs them, they are jobless for the day. He said that he reported to these construction sites early every morning for several months. However, he recalled that nobody employed him – because of his age, he surmises. At the time, he was 60 years old, but there is no legal age limit for such jobs. It can be assumed that the 60-year-olds are not hired simply because they seem too old, according to assumption that older people cannot work as well as younger. In other job areas, such as that of security guard and the Work to Welfare programmes, other people of 60 were able to find something. However, once he reached 70 years, no one wanted to hire him, just as before. This was the second time he had faced ageist discrimination. At neither time could he find any way to tackle the social prejudice which negates the capacity of older workers to work. Instead, he tried to find another job area which provided jobs for people above 65 years old. The Senior Club, the voluntary organisation which is creating business for older workers on a grant from

the government, was the only way to escape age discrimination. However, he points out that this was not enough for him.

“I earn £400 by delivering parcels using public transport. It can be a great help for older workers. People of 65 and above can use public transport for free. However, I can’t live on just £400. I ought to pay back the loans to my failed business. I should look after my daughter, who is unemployed, and my wife. But I don’t know how to solve my problems.” .78-81

His point is that the current legislation is not enough to tackle age discrimination against older workers who are facing poverty and have a need to work. Interestingly, he referred to his specific situation (‘pay back the loans’) and his responsibility to ‘look after my daughter ...my wife,’ words which one would expect to hear from a younger householder. His situation is not that of most older people, but he is becoming too old to find a job which provides a secure income. In his complaint about the low income under the Job Creation Act for older people, he suggests that the government has missed important matters. For instance, some older people still need to earn enough to support their family. Sometimes an older worker is the only person in the family able to earn money and take the responsibility of supporting the others. For him the hardest effect of age discrimination may be that employers, including the government, pay lower wages both in relation to the work done and to those of younger employees. Whilst he could get a job of some sort, he could still be faced with the hardship of low wages through age discrimination. Tackling age discrimination in incomes could be a major challenge for older people in the area of equal employment for older people.

In the same situation as interviewee K, interviewee P, once he reached 60 years old, was faced with invisible discrimination in his job-seeking. He noted,

“Life as a young person is good. It's difficult to get a job in private companies at my age. I was discriminated against when I looked for a job. So I chose this work, as a delivery man. Here, there is no age discrimination. Anyhow, all the working people are over 65 years old here. Transport is free. If it weren't, this job would be tough.” .26-29.

In this context, he showed both his dissatisfaction with his present life, which is impacted by age discrimination, contrasted with his happy life as a young man when no barrier of ageing prevented his employment, and his pleasure at working in the Senior Club which treats all its workers equally. However, the following words imply that he was not wholly satisfied with his current job and he recognises invisible age discrimination.

“In the Senior club, there are no retirement grants in contrast to other companies. Actually, I hope the Senior Club will offer free lunch. The cost of lunch is a burden on me because I have so little money.” .33-35

Whilst the Senior Club shows no age discrimination between colleagues who are all over 65 years old, but they do discriminate in matters of income, unlike other companies which do not employ older people but offer retirement grants; this interviewee complained that he was not receiving this from his current employers. It is hard to find and tackle such discrimination in practice, because its presence is

imperceptible. He appears to feel discriminated against, even though he was not at first aware of it. If he regarded this job as different from the job he used to do when he was younger, as he also expects normal treatment in income and to be fairly treated. He sees this job as the same as jobs in the open labour market in which employees, once taken on, have a right to expect a fair income and treatment in return for their labour.

Interviewee L described the discrimination he felt against his age.

“I’m 79. Growing old upsets me. I really need money to live. I have no assets to produce income, except my job. In this sense, it is essential for me to work. However, the older I get, the harder it is for me to keep in work, but the government doesn’t support me in my old age because I have children to support me. The social security net doesn’t apply. For this reason, I’m afraid of growing old.” .59-63

His phrases ‘growing old upsets me’ and ‘I’m afraid of growing old’ show how he feels about age discrimination. Society discriminates against him in employment because of his age. However, he needs to work to earn money because the government does not support him because he owns a house. In his desperation, ‘growing old’ makes him apprehensive when nobody offers him a job. To begin with, when he found it hard to get employment, he may have been ‘upset’, as he said himself; later, however, he became ‘afraid of growing old’ as a prospect, because he realised that he could do nothing about it. In addition, he complained about his low recompense for the hard work he put in. When he was younger, if he worked hard, he could earn enough to live on, but now he supposed that employers were prejudiced against older workers and consequently did not pay them properly, for, as

he said,

“I’m sure I work really hard, and that the boss knows that. But he thinks younger workers are better. I’m different. I work better. But the boss’s ideas of older workers don’t change – despite my working there. I feel it’s unfair. It’s not the boss’s fault. It’s the fault of the government and society. They make my boss think this way” .51-54

He sees this dilemma logically. He is different from most older people who may have poorer workability than younger people’s, so he feels it to be unfair to earn so little from his skills. However, his employer does not acknowledge this difference. In discussing the issue, he concluded that age discrimination was unfair. Interestingly, he did not blame his boss; rather, he criticised society for its ageist mind-set. His criticism of the government and society in accounting for his boss’s attitude is may be a superficial explanation. However, when his experience of age discrimination is explored, his criticism of the government and society seems to be reasonable and understandable.

“I applied to some companies and went to ask for a job. Most employers were pleased to employ me but they wanted to check my resident registration... when they got it, they refused me on account of my age, which is recorded there. In fact, they said I was too old to work for them.” .56-59

, Low income remains the obstacle which he can surmount only by proving his good workability. However, he is in a dilemma.

"I'm struggling to make a living. Something should be done for people like me." .64

Yet he realizes at the same time that

"...in this country there are too many young unemployed. In reality, older people should accept age discrimination." .67-68

As he sees it, age discrimination should be tackled for the sake of people like him. However, his reasoning dictates that it is natural for older workers to yield their jobs to younger workers at the mandatory retirement age, but he nevertheless complains that his time for retirement came too early.

"I was retired at 58. I was too young to stop working. I understand that I had to give up my job, but this was too early. The mandatory retirement age should be increased to 65 for my type of work." .18-20

Interviewee N remembered that in her younger days before she reached 60 she could get any temporary job she wanted, for instance, in the areas of waitressing, cleaning or domestic work. Now, however, she was critical of employers and customers who tend not to employ people of over 70 for such work.

"In this society, as you grow older, it gets progressively harder to get a job. Nowadays, most older workers have a job. However, as they reach 70, they are sacked because of their age. If older workers work very fast and well, there is no problem. However, they [employers] don't admit that. I've found that many older

workers work well. Their age doesn't matter. What's important is how well they work" .21-25

She also pointed out that 'as you grow older, it gets progressively harder to get a job' corroborating the previous interviewees. In fact, growing old is a natural and unstoppable process. These interviewees are not afraid of growing old because it brings death nearer, but because it gives them a life without work, which is their only source of income. What was worse for interviewee N was that she could not find any way of overcoming this problem. Thus, she relies, desperately, on support from the government.

"The social prejudice towards older workers won't change. We can't change it. The government should help older people who are struggling, who are poor. I want to survive." .26-27

Her phrase, 'won't change' clearly shows her desperation about the barrier of social discrimination which she cannot do anything to tackle; she saw the government as her only hope. With regard to her anxiety about growing old, it appears that she understands that the discrimination which she experienced could also be tackled by tangible governmental legal action.

Interviewee I spoke of experiences in her younger working life quite unlike those of interviewee N. She recalled that, although she was born in North Korea, she could get any job she wanted thanks to her good educational background and various later qualifications as chef and tailor.. She spoke candidly of her memories of secondary school. In fact, she said, she felt no discrimination against her as a North Korean

when she came to South Korea as a teenager. However, in secondary school, she was shocked because her classmates treated her like a stranger, although, after a few months she felt no different from them. She describes how she reached a turning point in her life story:

“Actually, since my husband’s illness, I have had to work to make ends meet. I was 52. Fortunately, my first job was really nice. I enjoyed it a lot. I was the chef in a school restaurant. Whenever I made Kimchi, I shared it with the schoolteachers. They really liked me, and treated me as part of the family.” .14-17

When she talked about her first job, she became very animated. However, when she moved to talking about her reason for leaving the job, she looked very sorrowful.

“I had to leave because of the shock of my husband’s death. Since then, I’ve spent my time looking after the grandchildren. When they get older and go to school, I won’t have anything to do” .29-31

After the story of her working life ended before she had reached 65, she went on to speak of her experience of age discrimination.

“I tried to find work. I was 65. The situation was different from when I was 52. I wasn’t able to find anything.” .37-38

Her voice became stronger when she talked about her current job.



“Fortunately, the Senior Club offered me work as their chef and manager for the other elderly workers. I was happy to work in the restaurant.” .41-42

Talking about her keenness to take this job opportunity, she looked resolutely determined. However, she followed this up with a complaint.

“To begin with, I didn’t get any wages from the profit sharing scheme. In the community, the restaurant wasn’t popular. I suppose that people weren’t fond of the food in a restaurant run by older people. Despite this prejudice, the restaurant has begun to settle down after 6 years. I’m happy with this job even though I am still struggling with the low profit. However, I should be happy with the fact that I’m able to work at this age. Now many people like our dishes. They like us now. I should be content with that.” .33-38

Interestingly, in the context of job satisfaction with this job, she used the conditionals ‘should be happy’ and ‘should be content’. Moreover, she does not forget to say ‘at this age’. She has met social prejudice against older workers by offering her best efforts and by patience. However, this double use of conditionals may indicate that she was not satisfied by her present job. The reason for her dissatisfaction emerged amid sighs.

“The profit is too small for a job that is too demanding. Actually, the people working with me are professionals. They’ve been working in the restaurant sector for 10 to 20 years. They’d get a larger wage if they worked elsewhere. However, nobody wants to employ them since they are over 65. I feel so ashamed. This job is the only work that

they can find to do, despite their skills and ability to work.” .39-43

Her greatest concern is the low income in relation to the demands of the job. The social prejudice against older workers in the community proved to be much stronger than she realized. Even though she tackled to some extent the ageist attitude to the work of older people and as a result, her restaurant became popular in the community, she still had to struggle with the poor income. It was hard to make enough profit to earn a living. To make matters worse, this same discrimination makes it hard for her to get another job which would pay better. ‘The only work’ is a phrase which reveals clearly the situation that she encountered. Although she had successfully tackled unseen age discrimination in some ways it was not enough to provide her a secure income.

Some people have specific experiences. Interviewee C, looking at her later working life, believed that she had not felt discrimination through old age but instead that it had brought benefits. At the same time, she remembered that she had to leave her job for reasons of economic change. The developed countries did not want to order their items from Korea when its labour costs rose. This put an end to her knitting business.

“I’d do anything to earn money to make ends meet and educate my children. I sold fresh-baked bread and sweet potatoes on the street. I was 60 at the time. Things took a turn for the better when I reached 69. The Senior Club built a knitting business to create jobs for older workers with grants from the government. The Senior Club suggested that I work as its manager.” .30-34

It was a second chance for her to show her professional skills and again she won an award, this time from the city of Seoul. She was very proud of her working life and very keen to talk about her success later on. She hoped she would be allowed to continue in her present post as long as she was able.

“I don’t want to talk about this. I feel I’m boasting. Actually, they call me mother. The residents of the Senior Club respect me. So I can’t stand idle. I work as hard as can without burning out. The president and staff want me to stay and work here. They said they can’t live without me. Actually, the Jesus Hospital, which runs a similar business, creating work for older workers, asked me to join them. However I don’t want to go. I don’t want to disappoint the people who trust and respect me.” .64-69

This story, then, is not an example of age discrimination. Interviewee C was happy to have her job back, with the respect of her colleagues. However, invisible discrimination may be an element here, even though she did not feel it. Before the age of 69, when she got back her own sort of job with the Senior Club, whose jobs are all for people of over 65, she may have been a victim of age discrimination, since after she ended her business at the age of 60 she could not get any job for which she had been trained. Some form of age discrimination may be suspected. However, even suspected discrimination might not be very significant for interviewee C since her scale of values, which gives so much weight to ‘trust’ and ‘respect’, is nonetheless interested in the greater financial benefit to be obtained perhaps from a new job offer, as her narrative shows. In this sense, it is noteworthy that tackling age discrimination is important not only for people who have financial needs but also for people who have great need of trust and respect for their good work performance.

In the meantime, interviewee R presented a view of the wide-ranging social discrimination which pervades the social system.

“This generation does not forgive healthy people who do not work ... there is no social space to accept elderly workers in the social system.” .21-25

He did not say that he is discriminated against socially, but rather pointed to a social system which does not accept aged employees in the economic market. The discrimination that he felt could be described as a mountain which he dare not cross. However, as he perceived it, if ‘social space’ were granted, it can be assumed that he believed that social discrimination could be driven away. In addition, guaranteeing ‘social space’ for older people in the labour market might imply the achievement of equality by developing a social system which refused to accept age discrimination in society and which older workers could criticize and hope to tackle through a policy approach.

Meanwhile, interviewee D particularly remembered her employer’s negative perception of older workers. She saw that her employer thought that younger workers performed much better than older ones, including her, although she thought the reverse.

“In fact, I agree that I am sometimes not strong enough to carry heavy loads. However, when I look at the overall performance of the work, I can see that I have done better than anyone else. Moreover, I feel that paying me low wages is very unfair.” .55-57

She regards the negative view among employers of older workers' output as the cause of the low income of older workers. She believes that the employer should pay older workers fairly according to their capacity to work and the effort they put in. Yet she claims to have a different attitude to age discrimination, more acquiescent than what she believes at heart. When she was 65, she said to her employer at the food delivery service centre.

"I can leave this job, if the boss finds a better and younger person who wants to take it." .58

But, she adds

"Actually, I wanted to keep on working. However I think it would be greedy for me to keep the job if my employer wanted to give it to a younger person. From the employer's standpoint, it would be natural for an older person to leave a job for the sake of someone younger" .59-62

Most of these older workers are trying to understand a situation in which people like them tend to face ageist discrimination in applying for jobs and when employed. In particular, her words 'greedy for me to keep the job' shows her principled view that discrimination is natural and should be accepted. However, what older people find much more difficult is to understand how employers can pay them low wages and treat them unjustly merely because they are old. As interviewee D says, 'low income is unfair to me. She does not say 'to older workers' but 'to me'. In general, she tries to understand discrimination, but she cannot accept it when she personally encounters

it in matters of income. This could be an example of individual discrimination. Her attitude seems reasonable if her comments about work performance are accepted. The words, 'I have done better work than any other workers' are her judgment on her performance. Her strong confidence may reflect her deep desire to work. While she accepts age discrimination in recruitment and employment she feels it is unfair to pay unequal wages. Her own strong confidence does demonstrate her desire to tackle age discrimination in her own workplace

At the same time, while complaining about individual acts of discrimination and low wages, some interviewees thank the government for providing jobs for older workers through the Job Creation Act. Interviewee D is grateful:

"Low wages are OK. At my age, I should be glad that I can work and earn money. If there was no Senior Club and other voluntary bodies, I wouldn't be able to work. Even farmers don't want to use someone as old as me. Nevertheless, in my village they're struggling with a shortage of labour." .63-66

Interestingly, as her words, 'I should be glad that I can work and earn money' reveal, the discrimination in the Act, which she does not recognise, still remains, although the government has tried to help older workers tackle age discrimination in employment. The Act has helped to give older workers more opportunities to work. However, it has not gone as far as securing equal treatment for them, in particular when it comes to income, which is one of the most significant factors in older workers' desire for work. Her words include a reference to this.

#### 5.4.3. Mentally isolated

Interviewee A looked crestfallen when he said that he has no colleagues to share his working life; he believed there were barriers to his getting a job where he would have colleagues. He said that the absence of colleagues whom he could meet after work makes him feel lonely and socially isolated.

“I enjoyed a drink with my colleagues in the pub after work. It was fun. I socialized 3 or 4 times a week. It was my joy. I was the team supervisor. They really respected me a lot and followed me. The work was very demanding. But I could forget the pain of the work in chatting and drinking with my colleagues after work. I miss the life.” .62-65

It was not easy for him to work alone because he is used to working in company. Sharing social life means a great deal to him. ‘It was my joy’ is the way in which he emphasised it and his phrase ‘forget the pain of hard work’ shows how much importance he placed on it. This great happiness was enough to help him forget his pain. In addition, ‘I miss the life’ should be highlighted because it shows how much he would have liked it to be restored. In this sense, a situation in which he could not lead the same sort of social life at his present job, where he works alone, counts as mental discrimination against him.

Interviewee M also felt mentally isolated in the group whose other members are all younger. Although everyone at work liked her, she felt that she could not match their physical strength. Whenever she felt that she had grown old, it depressed her and isolated her from the rest of the group.

“My colleagues don’t show discrimination because of my age. I rather think I discriminate against myself because of my loss of strength as I’ve got older.” .42-43

As she presented it, whilst she may not experience substantial discrimination her isolation, which she cannot help feeling because of her greater weakness, may be felt as discrimination older people feel ashamed of something natural which no-one can help. However, the word, ‘show’ in the above extract may have the implicit meaning that her colleagues may have a discriminative perception of older people, although they did not want to show it, or did not show it because they did not intend to discriminate against her or did not recognise they might be doing so on the basis of her physical weakness. However, she does not want to draw attention to the possibility of discrimination, but suppresses it and blames herself instead. The reason may be that, if she accepts that she is experiencing discrimination, she would be agreeing to her own workability as inferior to that of younger colleagues. In the situation, to enforce her workability, she mentioned her greater wisdom than that of younger people:

“Older people share their wisdom with people”. .41

Thus, she may want to let wisdom replace her lost physical strength. Moreover, she may have concealed her intention to turn a blind eye to age discrimination and would reveal it if she assented to invisible or indirect age discrimination in workability, sometimes the most important factor for employers to evaluate. However, it does seem that she may sometimes suffer mental discrimination which should not exist in her workplace, even that which originated in her own self-consciousness. She may



be afraid of unfounded age discrimination or possibly of present but invisible age discrimination at work.

#### 5.4.4. Self-contradiction between what they do and do not admit

Interviewee F said that she had had no experience of age discrimination. However, in her narratives, she appears to have experienced age discrimination in terms of mandatory retirement.

“I had to leave. The mandatory retirement age had been reached - it was not my decision.” .43

In the meantime, her life story shows that when she was 65 years old she accepted mandatory retirement as ‘natural’ at this point in the course of her career, thus accepting age discrimination. Despite her acceptance, however, her comment ‘it was not my decision’ shows that she does not feel that she assented to it because she interprets the event as having been forced by common practice to leave the job, although no-one can feel good about being forced to do what they do not want. However, she tried not to be upset over retirement and she does not define her decision as discrimination. In this sense, she clearly is unaware of self-contradiction between feeling it unfair, though her perspective on this is not obvious, and she makes an effort to understand and naturally accept ageist legislation. Moreover, she complains of the low wages although she does not admit she has suffered from age discrimination.

“The wages are too low to live on. I don’t hope to receive benefits simply for sitting at

home. I work hard and want to have a fair wage for my demanding work ... I just hope the government provides more grants to support the income of older workers.” .60-62

In fact, her circumstances show evidence of age discrimination but in her desire for a bigger income she points to her ‘demanding work’. Although she expected government help to increase her income, she would not admit that the unfair income for her work with the food delivery service is itself a form of age discrimination. She believes that she wants it as a proper income for her demanding work, just as she used to have a proper income in the previous food delivery service centre, run by the Welfare to Work scheme for people under 65. At both food delivery service centres, she did the same job, but when she left one centre for the other, her income declined sharply. She remembered her former wage as about £450, whereas it was now £200. Although her working hours were different, she used to work from 9 to 5 in her former organization, while formally she now worked only from 9 to 1, she added that she found herself going early to the centre and leaving it later than the appointed hour to prepare the food in advance. This is why she felt the wages were unfair. In this sense, the state of affairs that she was complaining of – unfair income and mandatory retirement – amounts to discrimination, but she said that she did not have any experience of this. This appears self-contradictory.

Interviewee G also claimed that she had never experienced age discrimination although she had to leave her job in the hospital restaurant because of the mandatory retirement age.

“I didn’t experience any age discrimination because I worked well. I had a wage as long as I worked. I did my best in whatever I did. When I worked like that, people in

the workplace liked me and called my work good. Wherever I work, people want to work with me. I always smiled and worked with a positive attitude. I think that's why people liked working with me." .45-48

She did not recognize compulsory retirement as a form of age discrimination perhaps because she was easily able to find another job in the food delivery service centre. However, interviewee G, like interviewee F, appeared to be contradicting herself. Interviewee G gave as the reason for not experiencing discrimination that 'I work well.' She may believe that a good work performance combats age discrimination that the workability of older workers is perhaps related to age discrimination. She is very confident of her own capacity to work. 'Wherever I work, people want to work with me.' In giving her attitude as the reason that people like working with her – 'my work was good...I always smiled and worked with a positive attitude' – she showed that she believed that a bright and positive attitude at work can lead to good work performance. Therefore, in her experience, a bright and positive attitude to work can be seen to contribute to tackling age discrimination, for she claimed never to have encountered this at work. But she too complained about her low income in the food delivery service centre, just as interviewee F did. She said that she was looking for another job with higher wages. However, she reiterated that she was happy with this job:

"I'm really happy with everything. I went through a terrible time when I was younger. Now I have a positive attitude to everything." .49-50

In this sense, it can be supposed that she does not accept this age discrimination as

an obstacle because of her severe poverty when she was younger, which she calls a 'terrible time'. She had a positive attitude, despite her earlier deprivation and her positive thinking has made her the sort of person who has an active old age.

#### 5.4.5. The place where age discrimination is no barrier

Interviewee J asserted in her story that she had never experienced age discrimination because she used to be self-employed and had worked as a professional knitter and beekeeper at home before she worked in businesses such as the food bank and winding-sheet business run by the Senior Citizenship Association. In particular, she was careful to point out that in her working life she had been respected by her colleagues because of her professional skills in knitting.

"I have no experience of age discrimination," .40

she said.

"After 80, however, sometimes I see that I cannot do something as well as I imagine." .39

Since she used to be self-employed, running her own business, and was now working in a business which was created for older workers like herself, she would say that she was not discriminated against. However, she bore in mind that this was 'after [the age of] 80'. In general, after people reach this age, they are likely to accept as natural a decline in their ability, but it is unusual to find someone such as interviewee J, who is afraid of being unable to continue do things as she grows older. The reason

can be found in her current situation, where she enjoys the respect of her colleagues despite being 85. The respect may be so precious to her because it is her first experience of having fellow workers, since she had always been self-employed hitherto. She used to be confident of being respected by her fellow-workers for her work performance but growing older has led to her losing this confidence and she seems to be more afraid of losing respect than of losing her workability, struggling with the changes in herself as she gets older although not suffering ageist discrimination from others.

Interviewee O describes her work all her life as farming, until she joined the knitting business run by the Senior Citizenship Association. Thus she had always been self-employed and may be why she said that she had no experience of age discrimination.

“Farming was work where I was self-employed. I’ve never got wages from an employer. Now, my income is from this work. They call me the Elder Sister here out of respect.” .38-40

Since this was her first experience of employment, she may initially have found it difficult but now she claims that she has the respect of the other workers, as her words, ‘... Elder sister out of respect’ indicate. Here, the word ‘Elder’ in Korean includes not only the sense of someone older in age, but also that of a revered person. In this sense, it may be supposed that she has gained respect at work because of her good work performance as well as her greater age. Thus, her situation of perhaps not meeting age discrimination in spite of her age derives not only from having been self-employed and working under the Senior Club auspices but also from working well enough to achieve the respect of other colleagues there.

In contrast, interviewee B spoke of age discrimination when her business failed, before she took up her present work. She said,

“After my private bank loan business failed, I found this job. When I had previously tried to find work, no one wanted to hire me because of my age. I was 72. Moreover, the wages here are too low to live on. If I didn’t have the children’s support, I couldn’t live at all.” .60-62

She experienced no age discrimination when she was self-employed, but she encountered it once she started to look for a job in the open labour market. In this context, self-employment sets a boundary which is not influenced by age discrimination. However, once she went beyond the boundary and looked for a job in later life, she faced age discrimination. In addition, her words ‘the wages are too low to live on’, suggest that discrimination in income can threaten her finances at present. It seems perhaps unreasonable for her to complain of her situation of earning too low an income to live on as she had a job in a situation where work was hard to find because of her age. Her confidence leads her to be aware of unfairness in income, even though it is her first taste of age discrimination. She presented her good work performance confidently; as she said,

“We do similar work. I work harder than the younger worker” .122

To sum up, the interviewees who were used to self-employment before they took their present job are likely to say that they have never experienced age discrimination in employment. They are likely to say this, so long as their judgment of their own

workability is not influenced by others.

### **5.5. Empowering older people to achieve successful ageing in employment**

Older people empowered themselves to hold down a job. In its policies, the narratives suggest, the government seems to empower older people to work with contentment in spite of the low income. However, if there was no positive need to find a job older people would wait in vain for the opportunity to be given one., The interviewees made suggestions for a policy approach to empower them to insist on fair and more contented employment. The following narratives show these suggestions. The interviewees hoped that the government would tackle age discrimination by legislation, such as extending the mandatory retirement age. Interestingly, they tried to justify age discrimination, but they also complained about the present low incomes, hoping that the government would supplement them by bigger grants in recognition of their hard work, instead of accepting government allowances as retired persons. Moreover, they were concerned about improving working conditions and the right climate and opportunities for them to be personally involved in the political development of the Job Creation Act. They hoped that the government would support companies which installed facilities to enhance their capacity to work and give older workers a chance to help create jobs for other older workers. But some older people, having once experienced mandatory retirement, simply asserted that they wanted to continue working, were grateful to do so or were afraid of losing this job as well.

#### 5.5.1. 'You are too young to stay at home'.

Interviewee A pointed out the discrimination of being compulsorily retired by law. However, he did not ask for this stipulation to be scrapped as part of a greater focus on the needs of older people. Instead, he wanted this age limit to be deferred.

"As a matter of fact, I left my job at 60. I would like to have worked until I was 65 or 70." .73.

He names '65 or 70' as an acceptable extension. to which the government could move the age of mandatory retirement, rather than seeking to prohibit all forms of age discrimination. However, he was now 72 years old and wanted to keep his job, which he said he was healthy enough to do well. This implies that the reform of bringing the mandatory retirement age to 70 would not apply to him. and it could be against his interests to make this reform. Interviewee A, however, was speaking with hindsight; looking back on his past, he could see that retiring mandatorily at the age of 60 was 'too early' for him. This may have been in terms of his physical abilities as well his financial capabilities; with the help of hindsight, he knew that even after the age of 60, he was physically fit and able to work, even until the retirement age of '65 or 70' which he proposed. In addition, in terms of finance, he could see that not having retired at 60 and having been able to work for a longer period, until '65 or 70', he could, in financial terms, have benefited more from retirement. Though, as earlier mentioned, it would be against his interests to make the reform to extend or defer the mandatory retirement age, the fact that such an idea or opinion came from someone who is already past the retirement age that they themselves suggested shows that the idea is relatively reasonable, since interviewee A was speaking from experience



and hindsight.

Interviewee E also introduced her experience of mandatory retirement. She believed that no mandatory retirement age should be legally imposed. In particular, she is anxious about having to leave her present job when she reaches a certain age. When she first retired, she was 65 years old and felt ashamed of suffering mandatory retirement. She did her best to qualify as a Care Worker for elderly people, although she did not have a formal education background. Qualifying was a source of pride to her. She says,

“I really appreciated being able to work, praying and being thankful for good health. However, I felt so ashamed that I should stop care work. I couldn’t stop crying. I couldn’t even hide it from my grandson, aged 11, that this worried me.” .46-48

He asked,

“What are you going to do? You’re too young to stay at home. How can I help?” .49

She was working with a business funded by the government which creates jobs for workers over 65. Nevertheless, she is now worrying about a second mandatory retirement, like her first experience of age discrimination in care work. She was too shocked to forget this or to free herself from the dread of mandatory retirement. The phrase ‘I could not stop crying’ shows how desperate she felt when she lost this job. It must be assumed that this intense regret was generated from her considerable appreciation for work. However, she was grateful not to have been deprived of work by health, which she fervently prayed about and which gave her most concern, but by

a mandatory age limit which she had not expected at all. Some people depend on something superhuman, God, when they feel that having very precious things has nothing to do with their efforts; this is why they pray. It implies that working was the most significant matter for interviewee D, so she prayed for health, which she felt was in God's hands, to be able to keep her job. However, in reality, health was not the factor which most influenced her being employed, even though it was what she prayed for. Rather, it was the mandatory retirement age that unexpectedly deprived her of her much appreciated work. Furthermore, she remembers that she found her grandson's words 'you are too young to stay at home' very touching. Even in the eyes of a little boy, she was too young to leave her job. His view, which delineated her as a normal worker, may be the fairest judgment for her. She said that she was encouraged by his unselfish and genuine empathy, which empowered her to find another job and start work again. In particular, after interviewee E had to leave one job, she went out of her way to find a new one with a different employer. This underlines two points for consideration: the retired workers' perspective, and the government's perspective. Interviewee E did not find a new job after retirement as a result of any material need, but rather, it was almost automatic or second nature for her to look for a new job. There was nothing other than the government's legislation on retirement that stopped her from working. She had no health condition to prevent her from working in a new job, so she would have been able to continue her previous job work as a Care Worker if the law had allowed her to remain there. In addition, the fact that this interviewee is currently working for a government body which creates jobs for workers over 65 prompts a question about the government's initiatives; why create job opportunities if they do not provide a fair income for workers over the age of 65? Why not instead make sure that older workers do not have to retire because of chronological age alone?

Moreover, interviewee E also hoped that the mandatory retirement age would be tackled legally. Then she believed that she could work well enough to not worry about bringing her career to an end, so long as her health continued. In addition, interviewee L, too, expected that the government would legislate to defer the mandatory retirement age. His reason for wanting this was that he had been struggling with poverty since he retired. He had tried hard to find safe jobs which would yield enough to live on, but without success. Yet he thought that it was natural for older workers to be dismissed from the labour market at some specific age, in consideration of the employment needs of younger workers. In this sense, he thought that it might be best if the government developed suitable jobs for older workers alone in some area which had not been developed in the labour market so far.

“I feel greedy to want a good job in Korea where many younger workers are out of work and many women wanting to work.” .64-65

He did not expect full equality in the labour market, but he wanted equality to mean equal opportunities to work in areas which were reserved for older workers. With the words ‘greedy to want a good job’, he indicated that he was trying to justify age discrimination in employment by putting himself in the younger generation’s shoes. In spite of his distressing need to work for a living, he deplores the unemployment of younger people; yet the desire to have a good job is a natural human need. It may be assumed that in his situation he not only expects the mandatory retirement age to be deferred, or perhaps scrapped, but also felt greedy to want more than he should. Interviewee N added to the expectations that a better social security net which would combat her poverty, while hoping that the mandatory retirement age could be deferred.

“It’s unfair for older workers not to have a universal social security net as well as having less opportunity to be employed because of their age. If I can’t work, I can’t survive - even one day. I have to work as long as I can ... however, what is worse is that if someone becomes 70, employers unconditionally fire them.” .28-31

It can be supposed that she wanted the benefits of a social security net more than a prohibition of mandatory retirement, since she mentioned a ‘universal social security net’ first. She may have assumed that it is not the government’s intention to tackle age discrimination in employment when ‘employers unconditionally fire’ everyone at 70; rather, she believes that a more pragmatic approach for government is to provide for people who are trapped in poverty by the inadequate social security net. Her financial state is extremely poor. She emphasized the words, “even one day” to show how badly she needs money. For this reason, she also emphasized

“I have to work”. .30

She surely liked working, but she required money to survive. In addition, her concern to stay healthy may also be a reason for this.

“The government should help me when I cannot work because I’m ill or in too poor health to work. Actually, I hope I can go to a nursing home because there is no one able to look after me. My children can’t afford to take care of me. The government should do that.” .34-36

She seemed to believe that the older she became, the more ill she would be.

Therefore, she deemed it more important to have the help of the government than to have equality in employment in later life when poor health would probably prevent her from working. The context implies that it is the government's duty to care for those who cannot be looked after by their family, since the government also made it a duty for older people to give up work at a certain age whether they wanted to or not. Conversely, her words, 'the government should help me when I cannot work' may mean that she wanted to work and did not want to ask help from the government when she was healthy enough to do so. She said at the end of her last interview,

"I want to work as long as I have the capacity to work." .37

Thus, as interviewee N hopes, the government should not put a specific age restriction to show when retirement begins, when even she herself does not know when she will become ill and physically incapable of working; to her it is unreasonable for the government to set a generic age boundary by making an assumption as to when, on average, elderly people are no longer physically fit for employment. By saying that she would like to 'work as long as I have the capacity,' she is showing that retirement should be made a personal decision, in the sense that the age at which someone should retire should be calculated from their physical capacity. In other words, she may also see tackling the mandatory retirement age as a significant task for the government, since it would save her from retirement until the day when her health intervened.

### 5.5.2. Eligible for bigger grants or more benefits?

Interviewee A complained about an income which was too low:

“I’m able and willing to work. If I didn’t work, I’d stay in bed. I’ve got the energy to get money. Then I’ll rest. My children don’t want me to work. I hope government benefits will increase. I can still work. There isn’t a problem with physical strength. This isn’t hard work. I can work full time” .54-56

It is a very interesting set of statements. He did not expect that the employer would raise his wages but instead that the government would give the company a bigger grant so that it could afford to pay him more. If he believed that changing such negative views and attitudes as his employer had to secure a rise in wages was impossible, then ‘I hope government benefits will increase’ is a more rational wish than anything involving a change of mind in his employer. There is a further reason to call his wish rational: he is sensitive to shame and he has a sense of honour. By stating that he is ‘able and willing to work’ and that he has ‘got the energy to get money’, interviewee A is showing that he is not expecting the government to simply increase the benefits that he receives, but that he would hope to receive a bigger income by working accordingly. This implies that interviewee A’s hope that the government would increase the grant to his company is rational and reasonable, since he is willing to work for the money and not simply ‘stay in bed’.

Interviewee B also complained of her unfair wages.

“I’m working in the food bank service which is run by the Senior Club. I get a wage

from profit sharing and grants from the Job Creation Act for grants from the Welfare to Work programmes. We do similar work. I work harder than the younger worker. However, I earn just £200 per month while the younger workers receive £450.” .119-122.

She compared the details of her unfair income. The difference in age is what creates the difference. The income of interviewee B comes from the business of the Senior Club run for the over-65s, while the income of a younger worker comes from the Welfare to Work programmes, which are intended for those below 65. The business was created through the cooperation of two voluntary organizations which run different programmes and have different recipients. This situation has produced the present legal age discrimination on the part of the government, which itself plans and carries out discriminatory acts. In particular, the government provides support for different levels of income according to age. In this context, it is understandable for older workers to conclude that it is far from easy to tackle age discrimination in the labour market. However, the government should take note of the unfair situation in which interviewee B is experiencing age discrimination, though her statement is personal and from her perspective. She said that the work that she does and the work that the younger worker does are ‘similar’; showing that, from her perspective, it is a problem that needs to be solved, regardless of whether it is intentional or not on the government’s part.

In the same situation, interviewee I also felt unequally recompensed. She compared her unfair income with that of people who are working in the same private business.

“If I worked in a private restaurant for the same hours, I could earn as much as any

others working in the private restaurant. I think my income is unequal because the business is managed by older workers. I assume that social prejudice against older workers is tackled through the profit making food bank service, solely operated by older workers.” .46-49

Her ‘small wage’ may come from many sources. She depends on the government as a source of financial help. The reason she gave for wanting more income support was that ‘Social prejudice [is shown] towards older workers’. She revealed that this prejudice prevented her from making the business profitable; it was run by older workers only and they are recognized as a vulnerable group. Her words suggest that she cannot do anything about social prejudice. In this sense, she considered that only government action could save her from hardship.

Furthermore, as interviewee N pointed out,

“Some older people are eligible for government benefits because they’ve no children at home. In contrast, I work hard but have a small wage on which to make ends meet because I have children. However, my children can’t afford to support me financially. I think that older people who work should have more government support than those who are able to work but stay at home.” .40-44

She believed that she deserved more support from the government because she worked hard and did not expect to be paid for doing nothing. As she said, ‘those elderly people who work should have more government support than those who are able to work but stay at home.’ She believes that she is eligible to access more ‘grant’ from the government as fair compensation for her labour, because she does not receive the state benefits which are paid to vulnerable people or childless people who choose not to work.



Moreover, like interviewee N, interviewee G hoped that the government would provide more grants for older working people.

“I want more money. I wish the government would help poor older people like me. I’m a hard worker. I do my best. I wish the government knew. It would be better if the government could raise some more income. I know this life is much better than when I was extremely poor. I’m happy. I enjoy working.” .51-54

It is interesting that interviewee G also wished that the government would provide more income but not that she could hope to raise more income through her business. The business is created and supported by government grants and she regarded this business as belonging to the government. However, she would also be aware that the purpose of the business was to make profits to share among its older workers. Yet she did not expect the business itself to earn more. She may have felt that the barrier of social prejudice against older workers was enough to forestall any higher earnings that may have been made for her and the other workers., She saw limited chances of increasing the proceeds from the business and thus had to look to government for a better income, while thinking that the government action had some value as a challenge – of the most minor kind – to the legal age limits. By claiming that she was ‘extremely poor’ before she resumed work and that ‘this life is much better’, interviewee G showed that the income she received at present was a small amount that she wished the government would increase, but enough to escape poverty at a time when she had been ‘extremely poor’. Thus, they hope that the grants from the government will facilitate the creation of low-paid jobs for older workers who need an income and enjoy working.

Until they do, interviewee P hoped to get other means of support from the government.

“I think the government should develop support in terms of medical insurance and company pensions. In particular, I would like to see retirement grants.” .36-37

He went on,

“one [free] meal, lunch, would be preferable. It is hard to have free lunch in the community centre because there is too much work and the centre is too far away from my delivery centre.” .36-38

In fact, his wish for free lunches, enhanced medical insurance and company pensions and retirement grants arose from his circumstances, in which he struggles to pay his way as a result of having no retirement benefit of any kind. Many companies do pay welfare costs but not those of older employees, including him, which makes him dissatisfied. However, he does not insist, but instead uses the word ‘preferable’. He does not see himself as a normal worker who naturally shares in the general welfare provision of his company. Instead, his concept of the business in which he is working seems to be related to supportive employment for workers over 65 years old who are not eligible for paid welfare but still need it.

To sum up, from the above finding about government grants and benefits, it may be wondered which form of welfare in a realistic and pragmatic policy approach is needed more by older employees. If we consider the situation of the narrators, should the size of grants be increased or should it become easier to qualify for

benefits?

### 5.5.3. Professionalism through supportive equipment

Only one interviewee, A, had any expectation that the government might develop practical support for older workers, such as assisting companies to install equipment to help them in the workplace. This practical expectation came from his experience. Before the sitting press can system was set up, he had felt that this work was too much for him. However, once this system was put in, he felt that work was much easier than before. He said that the employer had allocated more time to the work and that with these systems he could work full time.

“If there were no equipment where workers can sit and press cans electrically, I could not work here for any length of time. As I said before, I felt very afraid to learn to use the new equipment but now it has enabled me to work. I am professional.” .77-79

He believed he was working in equal conditions with young workers because of this practical assistance. This method of tackling age discrimination looked feasible and was rooted in his working circumstance, for, as he said,

“I am professional enough to teach other colleagues.” .79

In fact, according to the dictionary, someone is ‘professional’ when s/he is engaged in a profession or has this profession as a means of livelihood. This means that s/he

is engaged in a profession that is a body of people in a highly qualified or learned occupation. In this case, it may be said that he is in a learned occupation.. He became professional only after he learned to use the new equipment. In other words learning made him into a professional. Thus, it can be assumed that older people can be professional when they learn something that they need for strengthening their workability, which makes them competitive enough to equal that of younger people. Moreover, from the text, the fact that interviewee A was speaking from experience shows how reasonable his statement is; he had worked in conditions where no supportive equipment was provided and also where some was provided. As a result, he could reason without bias after experiencing both sides of the story. It shows, too, that installing supportive equipment for older workers would be beneficial for individuals as well as the company as a whole, since it would improve the individual's performance; as interviewee A said, the equipment enabled him to work to a point where he feels he is now a professional.

#### 5.5.4. Participation in policy development

Interviewee H had a pragmatic approach to his expectations from the government.

“I think the government should develop jobs for older people only.” .143

In particular, he suggested that the type of job should be developed by older workers themselves, who know about ageing and its problems.

“The Government should consider job creation for older people. When I applied for

the type of work I used to do, I couldn't get a job because of age discrimination. Now I'm an occasional primary school teacher with some background and good educational standards. I've got more realistic aims in seeking work. The government should develop the ideas of older workers who experience age discrimination in the competitive labour market." .145-149

In his view, the government should offer older people themselves the opportunity to use their own ideas and experiences to develop and create jobs for other older workers. He defined his approach as 'realistic aims for getting work'. He believed that 'the ideas of older workers experiencing age discrimination in the competitive labour market' are realisable. In addition, according to interviewee H, he could not get a job when he tried to find the type of work he used to do. However, once he searched for a job which had different specifications, he managed to find one. Therefore, interviewee H is suggesting that the government open up exclusively to older workers more job opportunities which are specific to the older generation,. This would result in a greater number of older people in search of a job being able to find one, without experiencing age discrimination.

Interviewee K also hoped that the government would provide opportunities for older workers to create and develop job ideas themselves. He presented one idea in some detail.

"I have a good idea. Nowadays, delivery businesses are everywhere. If we do run this business in a normal way, it would not be economically competitive. The delivery business should make a network to deliver parcels and letters in the community. For example, if we developed a delivery network of older workers in a private delivery

business in the same town, it would be not necessary to use a public delivery service to send letters and parcels. All the mail in the same town could be delivered simply through the network of older workers in their private delivery business. Delivery time would be saved and older workers travel free on public transport so the cost of delivery would be saved. From those benefits of the system, a profit and the creation of many jobs would follow.” .40-48

This idea may not be easy to put into action, but the possibility remains. If the government sees a little hope in this possibility, it would do well to provide an opportunity for older people to develop job ideas themselves. Interviewee K is putting forward the idea that older workers are all part of a community. Therefore, all the older workers who are part of the community are able to converse with each other and come up with new ideas which they all, and most of their generation, agree on. This could mean that the government, if it used the ideas, could follow through plans which would not be met with controversy or contradiction. The participation of older people can be secured not only by the government but also by the older workers themselves. They themselves can lay the ground for raising their concerns. They feel they are a minority and find it difficult to contribute to policy-making. But a few people getting together could start to build involvement into the system.

#### 5.5.5. Gratitude for the policy

Interviewee C appreciated that the government had provided her with job opportunities.

“Thanks to the government, I can work. I should like to thank the government. I really want to keep working. If I have a hope, it is that I can keep working. That is enough”... 49-50.

Interviewee C used the words ‘keep working’ twice, showing how intensely she wanted to have a job to go to. She even felt grateful for being able to work ‘thanks to the government’. However, she could get a job without help if she wanted. Perhaps her reason for depending on government help is unacknowledged age discrimination. If she did not feel discriminated against, she would not hope for government help to continue to work. However, she does not admit that she is discriminated against on account of her age. She simply mentions her gratitude towards the government for allowing her to work; she does not mention any other aspect of her work or the government. This context prompts the question why interviewee C contradicts her unrecognized perception of age discrimination by her situation in which she appreciates her current work which she feels she owes to the government. The answer could be sought in her remark,

“Things took a turn for the better when I reached 69”. .51

She got back her pride from the ‘excellent worker award’ which she obtained from her current job at 69. For this reason, she may be feeling grateful to the government because her pride came from her job, which was created by the government. At the same time, she denies that she has experienced age discrimination. In short, the award of this job was enough for her condition of not admitting the effect of age discrimination on her life.

Moreover, interviewee E also feels thankful to the government.

“Politicians are liars and fighters in parliament. However, they’re good to older workers. They’ve made good policies and programmes so older people can work. No one wants to employ those over 65 - including me. It’s just in this business with government support and the Senior Club that we can work” .60-63

She is frank about expressing what she thinks about her situation. She believes that it is only because of government support that she is able to work. Thinking that the government alone could help her to find a job shows indirectly how far age discrimination had prevented her from obtaining work in the open labour market. Although she referred to politicians in such terms as ‘liars and fighters’ she saw them sometimes in a different light: ‘They are good to older workers because of providing work opportunities’. This illustrates how grateful she felt for being able to work. Nevertheless, as interviewee E is currently working as part of a business with government support, she is grateful to the government for providing work through special schemes for older workers. Therefore, her statement may be influenced by her situation; she is not unemployed nor is she employed by a private business not supported by the government. She cannot speak for older workers who are searching for a job in vain or for those who are working at businesses which do not receive support from the government. This may be why interviewee E has come to the conclusion that it is ‘just [in] this business with government support and the Senior Club’ that older workers can work.

However, interviewee J said that she herself had no expectations of the government. She had never been helped by anyone, but had always managed her life



independently. She simply felt happy to work, thanks to government legislation. She said,

“I am working now because I have been working. I can also earn some money while I work which I enjoy. That is a big enough condition to satisfy my working life.” .48-49

However, her conclusion, ‘that is a big enough condition to satisfy my working life’ suggests that she was happy because she could work and also that she could be happy in continuing to work. Although she did not admit her need and said that she has no expectations of the government, in fact, she hoped to keep working for the Senior Club, which is the one place where someone of her age could find a job.

#### 5.5.6. ‘Dragons coming out of small ponds are ended’

Interviewee Q expected that the government would improve the capacity of older workers to work and also strongly believed that the government should develop policies and programmes.

“The government should develop opportunities in which people can maximize their workability. Age should not be a barrier to giving older workers opportunities to show their workability.” .55-57

Interestingly, she recognized that both workability and employability are both equally important for the development of employment chances for older workers. Her opinion

can be understood by looking at her varied background. Her life was in education. When she was involved in this work, she was able to develop an insight into what is needed to develop policies and programmes for employing the older generation. In addition, her experiences could generate practical ideas for this purpose, since she saw the conditions for older colleagues as she herself grew older.

In interviewee R's narratives, health was taken as a necessary condition.

"I exercise every day. I climb a mountain every morning. I do not smoke or drink alcohol. Health is the most important factor in an employee." .40-41

His approach seems to be somewhat extreme, but this theoretical perception in terms of employment may have allowed him to maintain his capacity to work by keeping healthy. However, interviewee R emphasised the social system in developing jobs for older workers.

"There is no middle class in older people's society. It is natural in this society... this social system of dragons coming out of small ponds is ended. The social system does not give opportunities even to people who are smart or brilliant unless they have the right background, such as a rich family" .64-67

In this extract, the dragon, in the Korean cultural context, symbolizes someone with outstanding talent and the small ponds are poor circumstances. In the past Korean society, poor people could hardly or rarely have opportunities to improve their social class because their underprivileged position prevented them from developing their education and careers. Thus, people managing to overcome deprivation were

praised in this society. However, interviewee R concluded that such dragons could no longer emerge in the present social system, which allows only those from privileged backgrounds to be successful, on account of their riches alone. It appears that he judged it difficult for older people to get jobs despite being healthy and talented enough to work well, because the faulty social system does not support them properly. Moreover, he directly stated that the need for a good background makes it hard for older workers to be employed. 'Good background' may have meant 'a suitable background for being employed' in the broad sense, while 'smart or brilliant' can mean 'having a superior capacity to work'. Therefore, he may be implying that he believes that society should develop not only a propitious climate for older people to be employed without age discrimination but also opportunities for older people to improve their capacity to work well enough to be competitive, in order to increase the employment rate of older workers in general.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

As can be seen, the employed older people identify themselves with their work and regard their work as their life. Some people work for mere survival in society, while others have gained positive energy and good health from working or achieve independence through working and earning their own income. Thus, they feel very happy to have work because of its good effects. Even more, interviewee A claims:

"I feel important. I feel alive when I'm working." .41

Working heightens his self-esteem and is a fundamental asset in living.

In spite of their esteem for work, they encounter a contradiction between the effects of their ageing on job performance. For example, interviewee H admits that he is old when it comes to physical strength but he also believes and emphasises “I don’t feel old”, in particular when he assesses his work performance, though the interviewees in general complain that society does not recognize it. In this sense, it is natural for them to continue to work as they wish to do. However, when they face of age discrimination, they find a dilemma between hoping to continue to work and the admitted need to give the jobs to younger people. ‘Growing old upsets me’ from interviewee L (79 years old) is one of the most significant comments to address age discrimination as older people understand it in Korea. This interviewee does not criticise age discrimination in society but rather blames the fact of ‘growing old’, though it is only a natural part of life. From the narrative, it is supposed that he feels age discrimination to be too strong to tackle and he cannot find anyone who resists age discrimination and provides work. For this reason, he finds and blames ‘growing old’ for the discrimination he meets in the labour market of an undeveloped welfare society that cannot offer him a secure income. However, interviewee I stresses,

“I should be happy with the fact that I’m able to work at this age”... .36

She gains happiness from her work in the situation to which she has been forced. In her narrative, we observe the age discrimination which generates income inequality, since she is not happy with the low income she gets in recompense for her work. However, it is assumed that she is happy with this unfair treatment in income in that she has at least an opportunity to work, which is rarely given to older people in the Korean labour market. Both these narratives show how deeply age discrimination is entrenched, in that older people cannot recognise it, let alone argue against it, when age discrimination means unequal treatment for them. They do not submit to it but actively hope to tackle it by improving their workability and employability in the policy

support schemes for older people. Interviewee R's words,

“‘Dragons coming out of small ponds’ are ended.”

.65

This illustrates how older people think that age discrimination can be tackled. Some older people believe a favourable background is needed before equal opportunities can be offered to them to continue to work if they choose.

They were pleased to have a job. They felt alive at work, in the sense that work is much more to them than a vocation. It sometimes can bring the energy to stay alive. However, at the same time, work is also the reason for some of the emotional and sometimes physical pain they feel. As interviewee A said, older people do not feel important in the family and society once they lose their job and they feel that it is unfair when the precious jobs which are hard to come by do not offer a secure income because of exploitation on the basis of their age, regardless of the level of their workability. It seems that older people understand that age discrimination is a threat to their life but an unavoidable necessity which they cannot ignore but only challenge.

## **CHAPTER 6. What takes priority?**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In the findings, the theories which apply to older people's attitudes to working, the contradictions between their perspectives on ageing and their work performance and between their hopes and experience of age discrimination and their own power to achieve successful ageing in employment were produced by studying their life stories, experiences and narratives. Chapter 5 showed what work, ageing, age discrimination and the employment policies and programmes for older people in their biographical contexts meant to them. However, one significant issue is raised. What is the greatest need that older employees feel? When older people were asked about the meaning of work, they replied that it was not the way in which they fulfilled one of their needs but was their way of identifying themselves, a way of representing what life itself meant to them. The needs which older people can meet through their jobs were not only income but also the sense of belonging, of achievement and of self-esteem.

From this point of view, jobs should be given to older people and younger people on equal terms. Moreover, although they accept their physical decline to some extent, they believe that their work performance is still good, or sometimes better than that of younger people. Thus, they expect a fair recompense for their labour, by means of higher government grants, rather than benefits from a government which does not provide as strong a security net in Korea's developmental welfare state as would be found in some other welfare states. This expectation sounds reasonable, but from their narratives it seems not easy to meet in a society in which there is negative social prejudice and legal discrimination. They hesitate to confront age discrimination,

given the unemployment of younger people who may well be their children. For this reason, their best expressed hope is to defer the mandatory retirement age and work longer, increase their incomes through grants from the government and find jobs which the government, reflecting on older people's ideas, creates exclusively for their age-group. From the standpoint of policy, their complicated situation has created a dilemma about the limited capacity of a welfare society to develop policies for older people.

If a secure income for older people is considered the most urgent need, the government should consider guaranteeing and developing a better security net by allowing more benefit recipients to become eligible. But if it is more important for older people to be allowed to work on an equal footing with others, then the government should consider better policies and programmes to improve the employability and workability of older people and make them competent in the open labour market. However, it is difficult to disentangle these different needs in their narratives and establish which was the greater need. Thus, in order to identify this, it may be useful to consider their needs in social, cultural and theoretical terms, such as were examined in the literature review.

## **6.2. Working is the priority**

### **6.2.1. Meeting peculiar needs to work**

The participants in the present research have one common need, namely, to work. Their needs as a group, regarding the benefits of work, fall into five main categories as seen in the findings: to get enough income for survival, to generate energy for

health and to find a career challenge, independence, a happy life and 'life itself'. These categories show that they have expressed more needs than have been presented by older people in previous studies. In the current literature, first comes the need for a secure income and next the maintenance of health and happiness as reasons for working, according to the research of the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA, 2005). In more detail, 69.9%, more than half the employed older people in KIHASA's sample responded that the reason to work was income, while only 9.6% of employed older participants pointed to 'maintaining health' as their reason for working and 6.5% of the employed older people answered that they worked to be happy. Research by Kim (2004) discloses that 10.6% of his research respondents who were unemployed but hoped to be employed wanted work to attain their career goals, while 56.8% of unemployed older people wanted to work for the sake of an income and 16.2% of unemployed older people for their health's sake.

However, the studies hitherto have focused on the generalisation of theory and classified research results according to gender, age and education, while my research thesis presents individual voices, reflecting on each life story in order to understand the meaning of work for each individual employed older person.

The first difference between my approach and that of earlier studies is seen in gender. Older men, it was thought, prefer to work for the self-esteem gained from professional jobs, while older women want to work for economic reasons choosing simple jobs where special skills are unnecessary (Kim, 2004). However, in the present research, most of the employed older participants, including females, are working for self-esteem, according to the findings. Second, the reasons for older people to want work were categorised by age group. The age group which had the strongest need for reemployment was between 60 and 65 years old (Lee, 2001). However, this thesis in contrast does not use age as the factor to identify how urgent



is the need to work among older employees. When they talked about their work and its meaning, they spoke very enthusiastically. It seemed to be impossible to tell who had the strongest desire to continue working. Interviewees D, J, L and N were more seriously afraid of losing their jobs than of the possibility of imminent death, as the findings show. Third, in the research of the KIHASA (2005), the educational background of older workers influenced their decisions about employment. For instance, the older people who had a background in higher education wanted to work for the sake of their health and career development while the older people whose educational background was weaker desired to work for the sake of income (Kim, 2004). However, this thesis shows that educational background does not play a key role in the individual's decision to seek work. Interviewee D faced the challenge of getting a care worker's qualification when she was advanced in years because she wanted to be a care worker. She finally succeeded although her educational background was not strong.

From a comparison between this thesis and the current literature, it can be understood that each employed older person gives 'work' his or her own specific meaning regardless of background, gender, age or education, just as everyone has his or her own peculiar meaning of the word 'life'.

Thus, it may be concluded that the policy approach of providing equal job opportunities to older people should be made the priority, rather than offering them only income benefits, with a view to better social security, on the theoretical basis that working is their 'life' and they cannot 'live' without it; the reason for doing so is not only financial but also for positive personal outcomes.

### 6.2.2. Income needs

Taking a functionalist approach, the social policy development of each country has also been influenced by the historic evolution of the meaning of citizenship. However, the neo-Marxists (O'Corner, 1973) have a different view of social policy formation. It is believed that the development of the welfare state conflicts with capitalism, which accumulates capital, and that this is the method by which to legitimate politics. At this point, it may be asked what kinds of welfare regime Korea has formed and how it developed. Kwon (1999) uses the term 'developmental welfare state' to describe the Korean welfare state, because he considers that the welfare state concept includes only well-provided welfare regimes and that Korea's welfare regime has not developed far enough to be called a 'welfare state'; rather it is developing this purposefully for economic growth and with political reasons to justify power. Taking Shin's perspective, the elite have developed a social policy in order to maintain the social regime and include the vulnerable members of the community. From this perspective, the development of social policy has expanded in each succeeding social crisis. However, when society is stable, social policies cease to develop (Shin, 2003). In this context, employment policies and programmes for older people could be developed to deal with the crisis of an ageing population. For instance, a Job Creation Act could be introduced in order to reduce the cost of social security and press releases could point to the increase in this cost and the need to maximize employable labour (Yang, 2003). In this context, it can be debated whether the Job Creation Act is indeed beneficial for older people who suffer from poverty. The argument can be illustrated by the country's policy approach. In particular, the regulations say that some interviewees (who have to work to survive) are not eligible for benefits because they have children to turn to in financial hardship. The Korean government sees children as the source of financial support for such interviewees.

Table 3 (page 61), shows the eligibility criteria for income benefits. In particular, the government defines sons and daughters as persons under an obligation to support (MOHW, 2011). However, in the Korean social context, this confidence is unfounded. The current generation does not feel as responsible for supporting parents as the government imagines. The table of income resources of older people show that, while privately transferred income is over 50% of the total income (see Table 1 – page 58), one third of all their income comes from wages; in particular, governmental aid is less than 14% of income. The parental generation seems to need a more secure income to cover its full living expenses (Korean National Statistics Office, 2009; MOHW, 2011).

Moreover, parents nowadays do not expect their children to support them, because they understand that their children need to spend what they have on looking after and educating the next generation; this generation too mostly spends its money on looking after and educating children and not saving or accumulating assets for later life, which may be the one of the reasons for its current poverty. Most of the interviewees had worked hard to educate their children from the time they were born. In modern society, parents are still keen to support their children's education although most older parents do not live with their children. The cost of education as a proportion of total living expenses for urban working households, according to the Korean National Statistics Office (2009), is 11.3% per year in South Korea, while it is 0.8% in France and Germany, 2.2% in Japan and 2.6% in the USA.

The 11.3 % figure may appear low. However, when households who have no children are excluded from the total, its seriousness becomes apparent. The country's emphasis on education could contribute to the poverty of older people owing to the influence of Confucianism in terms both of paternalism and of praise for those versed in literature (Ahn, 2009).

Furthermore, in the past the whole household depended economically on what its head could provide. The economic stability of the father of a family, or in some rare cases the grandfather, can be a further reason for the weakness in family support for older parents. As the society developed and changed, people's views changed step by step with the movement of power in the household. Families have gained independence from the refuge of the family head. In financial terms, if children grow up to be economically independent adults, they leave their parents' home and form another independent family by themselves. This means that their parents have to manage their finances alone, even when they can no longer earn. They have to live on their savings or pension or with some support from their children. This system is, however, not safe nor economically secure for older people (Ahn, 2009). However, the government relies on the culture of the past in planning provision for older people's families, as shown in the above table 1.(see page 58). In particular, although the government encourages parents to live with their children by giving the children tax concessions if they do, children often have to migrate to another town to work or for their children's education (Kwon and Hwang, 2004, Kim, 2009). Hence, when older people are beginning to live apart from their children, this assumption by the government no longer holds. Regarding the financial situation of older people, it can be seen that the government and the welfare society do not provide a secure income. However, it might be expected that jobs offered under the Job Creation Act would offer a secure income to the older people. Unfortunately, the interviewees in the present study whose jobs were obtained through this Act do not describe them as a secure source of income. The income to be earned from working is not sufficient to secure a living wage for the older people in the Korean welfare society who are exposed to poverty but are not supported by the social welfare security net. Thus, it follows that the Korean government should consider developing a wider income security net to cover all older people rather than creating low-paid jobs for them.

However, the older people in the present research had other reasons for wanting to work.

#### 6.2.3. Other needs to work

Interviewees who want to work for their health, social support, happiness and life itself can be understood in terms of successful ageing theories. These theories identify the reasons why they want to work and what they want to achieve through their jobs. The theory of successful ageing has developed on the basis of two themes, '*activity theory*' and '*quality of life*'. The active theory of Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) is based on the importance of activity. This theory argues that the need for social participation and personal relationships deepens as people grow older. In addition, the more older people are involved in social participation, the more they are satisfied with life. As they take more part in working, this work participation leads to greater satisfaction with life. In this sense, the social support, networks and economic status which result from work participation are the main elements influencing successful ageing. Importantly, social support makes people feel safe and secure because they believe that this social support will protect them from any prospective hardship (Wethington and Kessler, 1986). Moreover, social networks encourage psychological well-being to release people from life's stresses (Rook, 1997; Larson, 1978). On the one hand, economic resources influence one's contentment. The income of older people has a positive effect on subjective well-being if it makes them independent of other people and increases their contentment (Mannel and Dupuis, 1996; Campbell, 1981). On the other hand, Korean research also shows that the economic activity of older people has a positive impact on the security of their income, contentment with the contribution from social development, the assurance of self-

esteem, the maintenance of their health and relief from social exclusion and loneliness (Kwon and Cho, 2000).

#### 6.2.4. More jobs or better security?

To sum up, in my research findings, employment is essential to the research participants and helps them to achieve successful ageing and therefore the government should consider developing job programmes for older people while ensuring as their priority a finer social security net to secure older people at present on very low incomes. However, currently, the Korean government is focusing on creating more jobs and is less concerned with better income levels. President Kim dealt with the social and economic crisis partly by introducing a '*Productive Welfare model*'. In the UK and the USA the '*Productive Welfare model*' is referred to as '*Welfare to Work*'. There are two different aspects to note in 'Productive Welfare'. One is that politics focuses on enforcing the rights of the citizen. The other is that politics emphasises working for the welfare of citizens. This means that this model was designed to overcome social problems such as an increased rate of unemployment, a declining middle class and rising social exclusion, since the object of "*Welfare to Work*" was to emphasise work for all citizens (Park, 2000). According to the Act which introduced it, everyone who is capable of work should work. Otherwise, their low-income benefits would be stopped or reduced. The purpose of the Act was to empower people on low incomes to be self-supporting. This Act could both empower the rights of the citizen and emphasise some form of the '*Welfare to Work*' scheme. The Job Creation Act was introduced with this in mind (Park, 2000). The Act challenges the state to create jobs for older people who want to be active and productive in employment, while providing some grants to older participants,

instead of offering income benefits to older people who slip through the social security net and are in a condition of poverty. In this sense, there may be a conflict between the theoretical purposes of the Act and its practical implementation. The Act can be a very important way for older people to fight against age discrimination in the labour market, but at the same time it can contribute to obstructing the development of welfare policies and programmes for those older people who have escaped the social security net.

### **6.3. Negative ageing perception and age discrimination in social theories**

The above discussion still fails to clarify which is the prior need, but it does expose the problem of the need for older people to find work and to enjoy a higher secure income in a nation which these days favours providing insecure jobs for them whilst not ensuring a reliable income. Therefore, this chapter seeks to show how the perceptions among older people of ageing and age discrimination have been formed in a particular social and theoretical context and how the perceptions can play a significant role in finding what the prior need of Korea's older people is: a job or better income security.

Interestingly, some of the interviewees in the present study seem to have a negative perception of ageing themselves as the speakers tried to understand and in some ways to accept age discrimination, although they had a strong wish to work, based on pressing needs. In addition, they complained of their low income and feared being deprived of their jobs again at some point in the future. The reason for this can be explained by social breakdown theory when applied in gerontology. This theory explains how older people and the social system are interdependent and older people can be deprived of their capacity for independence and depicted as a

dependent group. According to this theory, older people base their self-awareness not on their own judgment but on the negative social prejudice which is generated by society, although 'social breakdown' can be replaced by 'competence' when older people have the chance to demonstrate their ability (Kuypers and Bengtson, 1973). In this theory, as people grow older, they lose their roles and their prescriptive guidance grows indefinite; the reference group of older people is missing. As a result, older people experience negative circulation, in which they become sensitive to other people's judgment and internalise the stigmas of society, whereupon their own acceptance intensifies the social stigma. In this research, the interviewees demonstrated 'social breakdown' even though they also reconstructed 'competence' by having job opportunities in later life. They describe being stigmatised by society but in trying to understand the stigma, they themselves somehow accept it. Furthermore, some narrators defined themselves according to their social stigma. Their experiences of discrimination because of their old age reflected in their self-image and they regarded them as instances of negative ageing and considered that age discrimination was natural to this generation and to society as a whole.

The social prejudice which influences ageism can be understood in different aspects of social theories, such as symbolic interactionism, modernization theory, social exchange theory and functionalism.

For instance, in symbolic interactionism a social phenomenon becomes a social problem if the members of society define it as a social problem (Blumer, 1962; Meltzer et al., 1975). Interviewees may have recognized the negative perception of ageing by which the members of a society define aged people as a social problem for the modern industrial generation, in contrast to the traditional symbolic meaning of older people in an agricultural age, when they merited respect for their wisdom, power and authority. In this way, when members of today's society regard older



people as a social problem, it creates a stigma for older people which can generate a social mood of naturally discriminating against employing them on grounds of age alone (Unruh, 1980; Gu, 1992). From another perspective, modernisation theory attempts to explain the hardship which older people go through when they look for a job, due to other people's social prejudice against older people. This may be caused by a situation in which older people rarely have updated knowledge and skills that modern society requires in the employment market. In particular, rural-urban migration may have influenced the status of older people. Before industrialisation, the experiences and knowledge of older people were very precious, since their skills, obtained from their greater experience, were essential in an agricultural society. However, modernisation condemns older people to be useless now that most information can easily be obtained from papers and the media. This social context, , may generate social prejudice against older people and this social prejudice could contribute to the discrimination that employers show to older employees in the labour market (Cowgill and Holmes 1972).

Furthermore, social exchange theory seeks to describe social prejudice towards older people. Its point is that older people are now becoming excluded from the competitive labour market because their typical resources are devalued. For this reason, society does not offer older people many opportunities to access jobs. In particular, companies are not likely to employ older people but discriminate against them on account of the social prejudice which declares that the resources of older people are not useful and valuable in securing the maximum profit. This assumption may rest on the condition that the intellectual and physical ability of older people has not kept up with the rapidly updated technology and skills which society requires. In other words, to see things from older people's standpoint, their values are underestimated and this situation leads the status of older people into a condition of

unbalanced exchange in which they do not have enough opportunities to take jobs. For example, older people will be more stigmatised as vulnerable people if they have fewer opportunities to show their good workability in a prejudicial social system, where a mandatory retirement age and age limitations exist in the form of age discrimination in recruitment. In this context, it follows that social prejudice towards older people could be created by distorting the evidence of what they can offer a modern society, where exchanges can be achieved only by balancing the relative positions of the exchangers (Dowd,1975). This approach is supported by Rosow (1974). According to Rosow's theory, this degradation of older people has been caused by changes in seven systematic powers, of which four are weakened authority to manage property, the secularization of tradition and religion, fragmentation of the network between families and relatives and loss of the community characteristics of the village.

Additionally, functionalists see older people as reversing the function of the social system and therefore would exclude older people from the labour market and discriminate against them in this most sensitive and competitive area. In particular, functionalists consider that older people cannot adapt to the developments and changes of society. In other words, the negative perception of ageing could lead people to assume that older people are more vulnerable at work than younger people, because of their physical and intellectual decline; and this vulnerability makes older people retard the development of the social function (Sullivan, 1988 and Gu, 1992).

However, older interviewees do not take a one-sided view of the subject of ageing and age discrimination; they can appreciate both the negative perception of ageing and the widespread acceptability of ageist discrimination and their own positive view of their competent work performance. The theories outlined above are too one-sided to do this. On this basis the chapter goes on to discuss how their belief in their

competence at work is to be understood in terms of other social theories, such as the active, productive and successful ageing theories, in order to reconcile these two opposing voices.

#### **6.4. Successful ageing approaches beyond the negative perceptions of ageing**

The narratives in the present research had more to say about ageing than any negative perception of it, as explained by the above-named social theories; the interviewees straightforwardly emphasised their good workability and self-confidence. In fact, they were at heart convinced about their own competence, although they conceded that they were physically old and that in the employment market society saw them as old. In addition, whereas they accepted age discrimination against older people in general, they also stressed how little they themselves were paid for a worthy work performance. Moreover, they did not accept age discrimination as applied to their own jobs, though they were often apprehensive about the age discrimination they might face later. In this sense, older interviewees, as expected, wanted to achieve successful ageing and refuted the negative perception of ageing and age discrimination. Rowe and Kahn (1998) define it thus:

*“ ... the avoidance of disease and disability, the maintenance of high physical and cognitive function, and sustained engagement in social and productive activities.”*

In particular, in this theory, successful ageing emphasises ‘sustained engagement in social and productive activities’ which was the greatest desire of the research

participants who pay attention to the paid activity.

Furthermore, as they asserted,

*“chronological ageing cannot be the measure to evaluate work performance”*,

in the words of Bass, Caro and Chen (1993). These authors emphasise that ageing should be defined as productive ageing, which is

*“any activity by an older individual that produces goods and services, or develops the capacity to produce them, whether they are paid or not.”*

In the meanwhile, some interviewees adopted the concept of productive ageing when they spoke of other older workers who performed well at work, instead of applying the same productive view of ageing to their own workability. However, the concept of productive ageing is hardly ever applied in the form of equal treatment and income by employers, even when they have had experience of the productiveness of older workers, as the findings show. However, these findings are challenged by the fact that the productive perception of ageing puts down equal roots in the employment market; some employers do change their negative view of older workers to a positive view after employing older workers and in spite of the difficulties of the labour market, older people are not likely to give up their desire to age successfully and remain productive at work. Rowe and Kahn's successful ageing theory asserts that older people can sustain intimate relationships with other people through engaging in social and productive activity. In addition, older people can have the sense of social integrity and feel that they have a social identity and belong to society. As a result,

they feel that they are valuable people and are contented with life (1998).

In this context, therefore, it may be the case that the most important need for older people is the assurance of job opportunities which will yield a sufficient income in equal circumstances, rather than being taken out of jobs and paid income benefit if they are in serious financial need. However, although they may have an urgent need to work and can emphasise their good workability, the prejudice in today's society, with its negative social perception of ageing and its age discrimination, is not likely to allow older people to remain in the labour market. It was seen that the narrators had been subjected to diverse types of age discrimination.

## **6.5. Age discrimination as a barrier for successful aging.**

### **6.5.1. Threat of legal age discrimination**

The working lives of many of the interviewees had been threatened by legal age discrimination. Schmidt (1978) defines this as follows:

*'Legal discrimination is exercised by state authorities, by the legislative, executive and judicial branches. It takes the form of statutes, executive orders or court decisions, whereas social discrimination is exercised by private institutions, by individuals or groups'.*

Some interviewees seek to understand a mandatory retirement regime as a good approach to the effective labour market because they think that older people take

jobs from those younger than themselves. In these narrators' minds, younger people should take the jobs which older people vacate. This perception may be influenced by the modern social prejudice against older people, as stated above. They may be absorbed in this social mood because they have always lived in a society which legally defines older people as vulnerable people who ought to relinquish their jobs. Moreover, Sullivan (1988) points out that age discrimination results not from individual defects or incompetence but from a faulty social structure and organization.

In the above context, it can be suggested that older people, if they think that they should hand over their jobs to younger people who might need them more, might not want to work if their needs for income were fulfilled,. However, when their attitudes toward such social discrimination are revealed, this assumption is at variance with their expressed needs.

#### 6.5.2. Possibility and hope

In the interviewees' accounts of legal discrimination, it is typically supposed that social discrimination has influenced legal discrimination. However, it is also implicit that indirect, social and invisible discrimination could itself be affected by direct and legal discrimination. In brief, whilst social prejudice derived from indirect and social discrimination has affected the perceptions and attitudes of older people toward ageing, age discrimination in its direct and legal form also has an effect on the perceptions and attitudes with which older people, as well as many others, regard it. In Schmidt's definition (1978), this is because

*“Social discrimination is exercised by private institutions, by individuals or groups”.*

However, according to the definition of Waddington and Hendriks (2002), if there is no intention on the part of the discriminator, the discrimination is considered to be indirect. The discrimination springing from social prejudice may have made invisible the work performance achieved by older workers. This discrimination is not visible and not tangible. Even so, individuals may have felt able to some extent to tackle social discrimination, but not legal discrimination. Legal discrimination was the obstacle which older people as individuals felt they could do nothing about, unlike social discrimination. In the meantime, low income in itself may not count as direct discrimination if there is no intention from an employer to discriminate against older workers and the wage exceeds the legal minimum. Instead, it can be indirect discrimination, resulting from legal discrimination and social discrimination, which is in turn, indirectly influenced by the legal action of the government.

Legal discrimination can be tackled only by changing the law. However, it is sometimes difficult to find exactly what should be tackled when one meets this intangible and imperceptible discrimination. Yet social ageist discrimination could be tackled to some extent by raising the awareness among older people of the unfairness of discrimination and the efforts by older workers to challenge this. The possibility of tackling society's age discrimination can, to some extent, lie in the hope that the need for jobs can be seen in practice as the prior need of older people, although in the realistic view this hope is unlikely to be fulfilled. However, there may be some prospect of it if older workers can prove or improve their workability. If they cannot improve enough to compete openly, older people can only hope that the government will help them demonstrate their workability through its policies and programmes. They are entitled to hope this because they too are citizens who matter to this society.

Moreover, this hope can be representative of their greatest inner need. Throughout

the discussion so far, one unmistakable thread has been that older people very much want and need jobs, yet their need for income security cannot be ignored while they are living below the poverty level. Hence the question arises why they do not simply ask the government for income benefit rather than hoping the government will help them to work. The reason may be the self-esteem which they certainly hope to maintain. Therefore, they do not want to relinquish self-esteem for the sake of income; rather, they want to preserve it by working, which fulfils all their needs, including such human needs as belonging, love, self-esteem and personal fulfilment, at the same time as financial security. Working seems to give them enough self-esteem to live the normal life that they desire. However, age discrimination does not permit older people to achieve their wish, since it is based on the negative perception of older people's work performance. However, conversely, if this is the case, they can have their wish if they develop their work performance enough to compete with younger people. Or if they cannot do this by themselves, the government can help them to do it by adopting policies such as improving older people's employability and workability, as the findings indicate.

## 6.5. Practices needing priority

### 6.5.1. Improving the employability of older workers

Most of the interviewees wished to defer their mandatory retirement age in order to remain in the workplace to which they had devoted much of their lives. This wish may underline the need for policy focused on improving the employability of older people, as Ilmarinen (2002) suggests. Traditional policies such as '*employment policy*,



*education policy, exit policy, as well as the social infrastructure'* can be introduced as approaches to improve the employability of older workers. In the policy context, Taylor (2003) also approaches the concept of employability in detail. He defines employability as

*"the power to force someone to employ someone else by providing good services and making policies to offer opportunities for jobs, education, pension and social security systems and age discrimination policies; and to mount a campaign for people to be perceived as employable among business leaders and the general public."*

In fact, the Korean government has developed several policies and programmes to improve the employability of older workers. It enforced an age discrimination law on recruitment and employment from 1st January, 2010. It is planned to extend this law to such areas as income, education, training, promotion and retirement. For instance, people who meet discrimination can complain and report it to the Human Rights watchdog. If this official's inspection finds evidence of discrimination, the commission first gives a recommendation to rectify it. If this recommendation is ignored, then the commission can charge any fine below £ 15,000. However, the age discrimination law conceals a trap. The law does not cover the income level that relates to most of the interviewees in the present research, although they were employed initially by overcoming the mandatory retirement system and similar actions. Moreover, the government uses an unfair income system to discriminatively develop the employment distinction between people under 65 and those above. The government itself discriminates against older people by paying them less than younger people. This may be acceptable if the government had also made everyone over 65 eligible for a national pension and then paid pension holders less. However, the older generation does not receive sufficient pension because a full national pension for

older people has only lately been introduced. Many older people are struggling with low incomes, as many interviewees most urgently complained. Jang's research (2004) supports this idea. He examined the motivation for participating in the Old People's Employment Project and found that it was mostly (77.2% of responses) 'to earn a suitable income to meet living expenses'. However, in spite of the motivation which prompts older workers to seek paid work, the government introduced the Job Creation Act with the intention merely of providing opportunities for older workers to work, ignoring the need for a fair income for such workers (Lee, 2008). The Ministry of Health and Welfare provides the lowest possible wage for people who are over 65 years old and in the Job Creation Act is not concerned with their income security. Yet the Ministry of Labour developed and runs the Welfare to Work programmes for people who are below 65 years old. They receive a regular income of about £450 per month and are offered full time jobs in such areas as cleaning streets and construction sites in cities (Ministry Of Employment and Labour, 2010). Therefore, in this context, it may be inferred that the government policies themselves discriminate against older people in the labour market and that this political discrimination leads private employers to discriminate against them as well, most of all in recruitment and income. This highlights the need for different departments to co-operate to develop integrated Job Creation programmes for all ages, promoting equality. Building up positive and active approaches to policy for older people could be the first government cornerstone in creating equality for older employees in the labour market.

#### 6.5.4. Improving the workability of older workers

Some of the interviewees in this research showed in their reflections on their experiences an expectation that the government should develop policies and

practices to strengthen the workability of older people, indicating that they could improve their workability by developing, for example, new seating systems and training programmes. It can be seen that approaching the problem through workability could play a significant role in the development of employment for older people, since this approach would help to develop equality in employment. Ilmarinen (2002) confirms that not only should the employability of older workers be developed, but also their workability, in order to ensure high employment. In his definition, the concept of workability covers the health of older workers, their knowledge and skills, attitudes and motivation and also management matters such as the working environment and community issues.

The narrators point out that each approach of employability and workability, is individually important. An integrated approach to employability and workability can be considered essential for the development of employment policies and programmes for older people.

#### 6.5.5. Integrated approach

Using education is a specific policy approach. If the government develops policies and programmes to improve the circumstances of older workers, one approach may be that of emphasising the employability of older workers. However, if older workers are involved in programmes to obtain suitable knowledge and skills to improve their ability to work, the education policies and programmes can also take the form of workability policies and programmes. Ilmarinen (1999) explains that some programmes can be classified differently according to the significant approaches of different countries in separating employability policies from those for workability. For instance, in the UK the New Deal programme is classified as an employability policy,

while Finland has developed such a programme as its workability policy. In particular, Finland has made policies and programmes such as those for lifelong learning and maintaining physical fitness, strengthening the skills and competence of teaching staff in the learning centres and encouraging flexible timetables and job sharing, while the UK has developed policies and programmes such as skills development to enhance the employability of older workers. In Korea, it seems that the government has tried to arrange education policies to improve older people's workability. This understanding is derived from the interviewees' experiences. For instance, many interviewees are interested in care work so they study in institutions which award qualifications in this field, which the government subsidises on behalf of older workers. In this context, the government does not guarantee work for older people by offering them opportunities to learn and be trained. Rather, it provides opportunities, limited to older workers, to help them compete with younger workers, by updating their skills and knowledge in the open labour market. If the education policies set no age boundary in offering these educational opportunities, they could be an ideal approach to employment for older people. Only a systematic and holistic approach to employability and workability will be effective in attaining equal employment conditions. That is to say, society should develop not only suitable conditions for older people to work in without age discrimination, but also ways of giving older people the chance to improve their capacity to compete in the labour market in order to increase the employment rate of older workers. Ilmarinen (2002) underlines their convictions about the significance of employability and the capacity to work as concepts and practices in the employment of older workers. He comments:

*“The promotion of work ability forms the basis for employability. Together the processes of promotion of work ability and improvement of employability lead to*

*higher employment rates for older workers.”*

## **6.6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is difficult, given the limited resources of the government, to state what should be seen as the priority for employed older people between their need for income security (which they could obtain through benefits) and their need for a policy which would provide jobs. Both needs are equally important, when the research interprets the expressed wants and needs of older people as self-esteem.

In fact, when the interviewees talked about the meaning of work, they gave various reasons for needing to be employed. The needs expressed in this study did not closely match the needs of older people to work as recorded in other studies which obtained evidence from quantitative research. In their research, in particular, they showed different reasons to work in terms of gender, age group and educational background. However, in the present research, all the reasons given for them to work were important and special to each interviewee. In particular, the need which they listed for independence, happiness, career development, energy for mental and physical health and self-esteem were quite as intense as the need for income. If this is so, work should be found for older people at the same time as securing their income. However, in their experience, the social prejudice against older people often created age discrimination for the interviewees. This age discrimination is too strong to admit the need of older people to work. However, older people can work as much as they need by developing their workability and employability, as their stories emphasised. In other words, improved employability could give older people the chance to work as long as they wished if governmental policy were such as to

combat the negative social prejudices of employers and society against older people. In an ageing society, this approach would seem to be very significant. Some older people have no desire to work, but might instead prefer to claim state benefits in consideration of their poverty and poor health, as interviewee N pointed out. Hence a balanced policy approach would be best, ensuring job opportunities by developing or improving older people's employability and workability and at the same time providing more generous and secure benefits to enable older people to survive.

## **CHAPTER 7. Conclusion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The main themes of this thesis have been the perspectives of employed older people, understanding the value of work, ageing, age discrimination and employment policies and programmes through their biographical narrative interviews. This chapter provides a summary of the findings and discussion as they relate to the research questions, together with a reflective evaluation of the research process undertaken. Finally, the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of this research are discussed.

### **7.2. Summary of research findings and discussion**

Though older people, like younger people, work for enough money to survive, to generate the energy for health, or to challenge their careers, and to avoid being a burden on their family, they also desire to work for their fundamental goal in life, happiness. For the interviewees in the present study, work was not only the resource for meeting their basic needs but in effect 'life' itself. They identified themselves as working people. However, when they were talking about ageing, they showed the contradiction between their perception of themselves as ageing and their undiminished capacity to work. They do admit a physical decline but they also emphasised their good work performance, due to their useful work experience and enthusiasm. They strongly maintained that they did not feel old, even though society believes that they are too old to continue in the labour market. In this way, strong social prejudice forms a barrier against older employees, making them name age

discrimination as the main area to tackle.

However, older people contradicted their hope of eradicating age discrimination in the labour market by acknowledging that younger people had a right to Korea's limited job opportunities. Moreover, they feel desperate about legal discrimination, against which they are powerless. One practice which they urgently wanted to challenge was underpayment in compensation for their hard work or lower wage rates than younger people doing the same work; but most conceded that they should leave their jobs at the mandatory retirement age. This self-contradiction seemed to give older people the hope of tackling age discrimination, in particular, invisible discrimination, and social discrimination. They strongly believed that their job performance could equal that of a young employee. As a result, they worked for an equal income through ensuring high profits in their businesses. They may consider that intangible discrimination can be possibly tackled to some extent by individual effort. Older employees who have worked on the margins, for instance the self-employed and those employed in the Senior Clubs of the Job Creation Act, typically denied any experience of age discrimination. They do not move to areas where age discrimination is prevalent, but instead hope to take an active approach to job-seeking, in the belief that they are not too old to work. They would rather the government provided more grants to improve employment than more benefits, so great is their need for self-esteem. In some ways, they feel grateful for the job opportunities that the government has already created and they look for more government support, such as increasing income grants for older people and providing equipment to support older people at work. Finally, they emphasised that their ideas, drawn from experience and actual conditions, could provide the most practical and realisable contributions to government policies if there were an integrated social system for improving the work performance of older employees and



developing applicable employment policies and programmes for them.

If the findings are applied to a theoretical approach, there is a debated issue of the priority for either income security or equal employment opportunities. Older workers want to satisfy their various individual and particular needs to work. Moreover, income security, in particular, is the most important material need of older people, given Korea's inadequate security net and a family structure in which children no longer feel responsible, as children did in the past, for meeting their parents' needs. However older people have other desires, such as for a sense of belonging, self-esteem and personal fulfilment mainly through working. Such desires are met through work, since, as the successful ageing theories explain, productive economic activity gives older people positive contentment with their lives. In this sense, the prior need for older people seems to be the provision of jobs. However, society does not take seriously the needs of older people. Reasons for this are conjectured by such social theories as symbolic interactionism, modernisation theory, social exchange theory and functionalism, which concludes that the workability of older people is devalued in modern and industrialized societies because it underestimates their experiences and knowledge in comparison to the updated modern skills and knowledge of younger people in the competitive labour market. However, older people do not accept the premises of such social theories when it comes to social prejudice. This disagreement on the part of older workers may be understood by moving to such social theories as productive, active and positive ageing, which encourage people to take a progressive, energetic, vigorous and individual approach to their later years. At this point, the above two theoretical approaches may provide another reason to place the priority for older people on their need for jobs. However, the conditions met by the respondents point to entrenched age barriers. Older workers raise their voices to condemn age discrimination. They

believe that, because of this social prejudice, they are discriminated against by individuals, society and the law. The degree of polarization between older people and Korean society, and legislated by government, can be seen from this finding. Society (or government) seems to consider that working is an optional though sufficient condition for older people to fulfil their human needs. With this assumption, a government might allow a mandatory retirement age, but if it did so it should also pass a special Job Creation Act for the benefit of 65-year-olds, and not an amalgamated Job Creation Act to include people of every age. It can be inferred that the government and society think that working is not necessary for older people, although they do not provide secure incomes for everyone. From where they stand, it does not seem easy to grasp that older people see work as essential to satisfy their basic needs, including income security, although older people have no alternative to work and, just like younger people, they have a strong attachment to their jobs. Nevertheless, the interviewees emphasised that if they are not able to work as well as or better than younger people, then they should give up their jobs, but they still cannot accept a situation of having to retire merely on reaching a certain chronological age, so long as they can still work well. In this context, older workers suggested a re-direction of policy. Interestingly, their suggestion was an ideal and theoretical approach, such as professionals suggest. First of all, even when they did not know the relevant concepts, they wanted the government to take an organised approach to improving people's employability as well as their workability in order to help them compete in the open labour market. At the same time, they did not recognise that they were suggesting this. Everything that they specified came from their experiences of working beyond the age of 65. In particular, they believed that they should look after their own health. They realised that a well-developed medical system would complement this and they also expected the government to develop job training programmes which included education. Some older workers may get jobs

as a result of such programmes, which upgrade their skills and knowledge and offer various qualifications. However, they think that the programmes are not systematic enough to guarantee the competitiveness of all older people. At the same time they are also concerned about sufficient employability to generate a good environment which would help older people to work in equal circumstances with younger people. Furthermore, they think that the government should give opportunities to older people and empower them to participate in developing policies and practices for employing people in their age group. They believe that their experiences can contribute to the realistic, practical and effective development of policies and practices for employing older people.

In brief, it can be seen that age discrimination is not only a social problem to be solved by ensuring equal opportunities to work for older people but one which, in their view, hinders them from having a good quality of living. This would fulfil their wishes for, for instance, a secure income, the energy for healthy living and a sense of achievement, self-esteem and happiness from working, as indicated in their life stories.

### **7.3. Reflecting on the research process**

This thesis aimed to explore research questions from the perspective of older workers: in doing this, I interviewed older people who had competed in the Korean labour market. A biographical narrative form of interview enabled me to include the stories of older workers who had experienced age discrimination.

I felt honoured that older people were willing to share not only the personal and intimate details of their history and lives, but also their remembered experiences of

age discrimination. The older workers sincerely and vividly revealed their life stories in the first part of the interview and spoke as they felt about age discrimination in this country and the policies and programmes of employment for their age-group.

Overall, I found the interview method was an excellent research tool for exploring the discriminatory and subjective aspects of life in society, as seen by older workers. Moreover, a biographical narrative provided a place from which the voice of each individual older worker may be understood in its subjective and intense historical and cultural context. I tried to reproduce these, helped by mapping the stories of older workers which are too emotive to yield research findings. The systematic and integrated approach of mapping produced the main themes in the words of those whom I interviewed. The biographical narrative interview is not a familiar method of study in the field of age discrimination in Korea; however, this unique methodological approach is a very valuable and significant method which exposes the needs and voices of the interviewees. Moreover, the participants' biographical accounts assisted my analysis of their opinions about the meaning of work, ageing, age discrimination and employment policies and programmes for older people. However, this has its limitations, since the interview was made up of two parts in a single session with a ten minute break. If two interviews had been given, the second interview could have drawn out the main themes more evidently and profoundly, but with only one session there is little time available to focus on the analysis of the participants' biographical accounts before further interviewing them about my main research topics. This limitation resulted from lack of time and the constraints of the location, since the research was based in the UK while the interviews took place in Korea. Moreover, some of the interviewees had to be interviewed in their workplace, during working hours. This might have been a problem and made them cautious in talking about their experiences of age discrimination at the hands of employers and colleagues or some

of the difficulties in their workplace, in spite of ensuring private, free interview rooms.

However, it is worth noting that despite these limitations the methodology adopted challenged the existing traditions of research on age discrimination in Korea and, in doing so, it opened up fresh ways for the future.

## **7.4. Implications of the research**

### **7.4.1. Theoretical implication**

Korean social policy academics have a tradition of adopting international perspectives into their studies of social policy in Korea. As a consequence, the development of a distinctly Korean perspective on age discrimination has been lacking. Instead, Korean academics in this field have relied on a supplementary approach. Korean academics are concerned over better job creation schemes for older people, in accordance with the government's actions, rather than tackling age discrimination in policies and practices for employing older people. However, in the present research, I adopted an equality approach to employing older people. To be practical, I focused on active and equal needs in terms of employment, as my respondents spoke of them. Additionally, I presented not only social theories to explain the negative social prejudice against older people but also a positive social theory approach to them, such as theories of social, active and productive ageing, to explain that their active working lives enable them to be happy while having significant implications for their work.

In particular, I attempted to see the findings on age discrimination in a systematic and

integrated way by using not only legal and social concepts but also direct and indirect concepts and the concept of equality, which are generally used in theoretical explorations to uncover discrimination. Furthermore, in addressing the policies and programmes for older people from the evidence presented by the interviewees, I introduced theoretical concepts of employability and workability which are made use of when these policies are being implemented. As noted above, Korean academics approach age discrimination with a view to alleviating it in the labour market. However, this research approached the problem of combating age discrimination by suggesting policies and programmes which seemed to the interviewees themselves to illustrate the most practical methods. In other words, the intention of an equality approach to employing older people may have come from the researcher, but the pragmatic suggestions were given by the specific older workers who participated in the present research. In this sense, the concept of equality and the positive, active and productive ageing approach to employment for older people, which were obtained from the voices of the employed older people, may act as a positive challenge in the Korean academic world, which attempts to lessen and alleviate age discrimination by exploring supplementary policies and programmes for this purpose, while looking at and exploring documentary or statistical evidence, to the exclusion of the older workers' deeper knowledge.

#### 7.4.2. Methodological implications

In researching policies and programmes for employment, biographical narrative approaches are rarely found. The reason for this may be the assumption that policies should be understood at a national or international level in a political and historical context. However, interpretive and qualitative research sets out to understand actual

needs and hear the actual voices of interviewees, as the research focus prompts. In this sense, biographical narrative interviews can be relevant to the purpose of addressing age discrimination through people's stories and experiences. Admittedly, it is very important in interpretive research to draw off the subjectivity of the interviewees' stories. Therefore, biographical life stories can relate to two methodological needs. They include very subjective and personal views, while opening up the possibility of discovering new and creative perspectives or unexpected details as well as individuals' backgrounds, which call for an understanding of social, cultural and historical contexts at the national or international level. This research approach can be a challenge to Korean academics, who have not so far transmitted the voices of the main recipients of policy, although these may be the most important factor in the comprehensive exploration of the research issues. Consequently, it is hoped that research which includes older people with a life story to tell will be conducted in Korea in the future through more refined methodological approaches.

#### 7.4.3. Practical implications

To be frank, the older people whom I met were considered merely as recipients of policy. However, this judgement of them was not accurate. They were active in improving their workability by their efforts, in the confident belief that they were industrious and productive enough to be competitive as workers. They even had their own ideas for improving ways of employing older people. Moreover, they wanted to participate in the process of policy and programme making and also in preparing future legislation. This being the case, the policy makers or practitioners can refer to these recipients' ideas and can make a plan which allows older people to take part in

making policies and programmes. Therefore, if the government wants to support these older workers, they can begin by securing equality for them in the open employment market. This means that the government should examine its tendency to exclude older people from national employment policies and practices. Moreover, it should promulgate a stronger age discrimination law to prohibit any mandatory retirement age and force employers to employ older people on the basis of workability regardless of age, rather than suggesting abstractly and superficially that age discrimination should be forbidden in recruitment, employment and promotion. However, if this is not a practicable approach, the government should at least plan to extend the age of mandatory retirement and pass an age discrimination law which takes account of income deficiencies, as older workers have a right to expect. Otherwise, if the government finds it difficult to take such action, then a better income security system to satisfy a basic human need is needed. Half of South Korea's senior households live in a state of "*relative poverty*" on an income of less than 50% of the nation's average household income (OECD, 2007).

In addition, older workers pointed to an integrated approach in combining the concepts of employability and workability. The state could develop cohesive policies and practices between younger people and older people to improve the employability and working capacity of older people so as to enable them to take competitive and promising posts. However, if such an integrated approach is not yet ready, then the government should develop an interrelated network of organisations, such as the 70 Job Centres which belong to the Ministry of Welfare and Health, the 168 Job Centres of the Ministry of Labour and the 36 banks and Senior Clubs which create businesses for the employment of older workers. Although job placements are obtainable now for older people in private organisations, some jobs are rarely available to them because of the poor networking between separate job creating



organisations (Nam, 2011).

For the older workers who were involved in this research, there may be opportunities to look back on their lives and find more relevant meaning in their jobs. If so, they will recognise the social prejudice against older people and the age discrimination which arises from social prejudice and this will give a practical basis to their expectations of the employment policies and programmes which were meant to provide equality in the employment market. The interviews in which they took part may give them a chance to be more aware of the nature of their situation in the labour market and to realign their attitudes, actions and hopes for present and future employment.

### **7.5. Thoughts on further research**

The older generation has gone through dynamic historical events, including Japanese colonisation and the Korean War. The present economic growth may have been based on their efforts. However, it cannot be denied that they are today struggling with poverty. Today's wage-earners, the children of the elderly, who are assumed by government to be giving financial support to their parents, have none of the strong sense of responsibility which older people feel; older people indeed might not want to take financial support from their children as some interviewees have indicated. In this context, equality, at least, should be given to older people in the employment market because work is probably the only way in which they can escape poverty. Age discrimination prevents them not merely from working but even from surviving in a non-welfare state. This implies that older people must challenge age discrimination in order to meet their basic needs by working; if they are strong-willed enough to tackle age discrimination then the policy makers and experts in employment for older people will challenge age discrimination as well. If these

together justify combatting age discrimination, then it will be useful for further research to discover the resources to improve older peoples' workability and the ways to improve both it and subsequently the employability to which older people are entitled. This is far from the present situation, in which the government has not provided a better climate for older people seeking jobs. Hence, this research should produce other studies which would contribute to strengthening the justification for tackling age discrimination. This research has questioned employed older people to understand the age discrimination in their past and present working lives and workplaces. However, age discrimination will have been experienced more intensely by those unemployed older people who desired to work but could not get a job. Thus, to understand how far age discrimination prevents older people from working, further research should listen to the stories of unemployed older people about age discrimination in the labour market. The limited time and the declared research intention for the present study to focus on employed older people made this impossible here.

## **7.6. In Conclusion**

Most employed older people seem in fact to enjoy working for various reasons such as income security, energy/good health, being independent (self-esteem), career development and the happiness which can be generated from social participation and economic activities such as working. All these are emphasized in the approach to successful ageing. Furthermore, their life stories and experiences support the above finding. They have been working and hope to continue to work because their jobs have been the only way to secure their wants and needs. Conversely, for this reason, they feel depressed and ill when they do not work and lose their position in

the family and society. Put simply, they do not want to stay at home and lie in bed but rather to feel that their lives are still worth living through having a job to go to and an income of their own. Although it is certainly possible that to some extent they need to work to survive, they are in a situation where, according to their narratives, work is the only activity offering wages and social participation that they are interested in. However, they have been discriminated against because of social prejudice which assumes that their workability is too poor to compete in the labour market, although they do not agree that their work performance has declined. Older people to some extent share this social prejudice as far as physical ageing is concerned but challenge the age discrimination often based on such prejudice. They continue to work, emphasising their competence, despite their unjustly low wages. They appreciate that they can still work at 65 and over, though it ought to seem natural that people who can work should do so. From this, it is suggested that age discrimination is strong and systemic in Korean society. However, the government does not have a cohesive approach to employment policies and practices to cover both those above and those below 65, nor an integrated approach to employability and workability as older workers would prefer. However, it is becoming more important to improve employability and workability and the government has enacted complementary employment policies and programmes for them, such as the Job Creation Act. Older people are no different from other people. Older people are simply human beings with equal needs who want to work as long as they are capable. Discrimination on age alone should not be allowed; instead, opportunities to work should be given to everyone, regardless of chronological age, in an attempt to improve employees' employability and workability in Korea. They should also consider older people who are unable to work due to ill-health or disability, by developing policies and programmes to ensure that their needs are also met. To sum up, the confidence and hope of older workers to work in circumstances of equality should be considered in

developing employment policies and practices for them; at the same time it should ensure that any policy developed for the employment of older people should not be a policy approach which hinders the development of a social security net for older people in poverty who do not work.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Key Definitions**

#### **\* Ageing**

In order to define ageing, the concepts of 'ageing' and 'senescence' should be distinguished. First of all, there are some similarities of feature between these two. The definitions of both these terms are concerned with transformations in biological function. For example, the skin is not so elastic, the hair becomes grey and sparser and the muscles grow weak. However, it is clear that the two concepts are different in meaning. When people speak of 'senescence', they are referring to a period of life, whereas 'ageing' refers to any time in which people can be described as subject to the processes of senescence. The confusion over the causes of ageing comes from the fact that there are two sets of ageing theories. They are polarised between "programmed theories of ageing" and those that are described as theories of 'wear and tear', stochastic or "error theories". These two perspectives on ageing are described as polar opposites. However, scholars now believe that there may be one cause of ageing although there are diverse views of it. To be sure, all theories have some clue in them but, at the same time, they all possess some defects of authentication. This means that there may be a variety of causes, including both 'environmental (extrinsic) and genetic (intrinsic), which interact with each other'. First of all, in the concept of 'Chronological age' it is conventionally believed, lies the category of "elderly", which contains people of 65 years old and older, those from 65 through 74 years old being referred to as "early elderly" and those over 75 years old as "late elderly." However, this distinction is based on unknown evidence (Orimo, Ito,

Suzuki, Araki, Hosoi, Takayuki, and Motoji, 2006). The definition of chronological age entirely depends, then, on the length of time since someone was born. The purpose of measuring ageing is to measure the physical, mental and functional body in figures (Gompertz, 1825, Vaupel, 1998). At the same time, ageing can also mean increased closeness to the possibility of death. In more detail, one way to describe a person's chronological age is by the decline in her/his appearance. However, this approach to chronological age is considered the 'product of social history and unemployment rates in the nineteenth century' (Thane, 2000). Second, the concept of 'Biological ageing' uses the 'pathological ageing model', which originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This concept is still held by many, including the medical profession. The characteristics of biological age, such as an unhealthy body, poor diet and accommodation and the immanence of death, were presented by Sheldon (1948). In particular, he notes that some diseases are attributed to ageing or are part of ageing. Four factors, namely, 'universal, degenerative, progressive and intrinsic' were used by other scholars as criteria in order to distinguish them from other features denoting 'growth and development' (Strehler, 1962). Atchley and Barusch (2004), meanwhile, present the concept of ageing in a social context. He defines it as follows: "social aging means society's assigning people to positions and roles based on age. Relations that go with them define the participation of people in their society. Going through life, roles are sequentially changing, bringing changes to social environment and life style". From this definition, the social ageing approach can be one of the most important concepts for understanding an ageing society, because social ageing can be influenced by the changes in society. In short, ageing affects society while the changing society has an interactive effect on the concept of ageing. To sum up, I attempted to approach my older respondents with various concepts by which to understand them. However, in particular, in this research which is aimed at understanding older people in the context of Korean employment, the concept of

social ageing has been important for understanding older people because age discrimination in employment is assumed to be related to social roles and positions. Moreover, for a further approach to social ageing, successful ageing was adopted to understand my research, which actively attempts to understand the employment of older people in positions of equality with younger workers rather than always referring to social prejudices toward older people in terms of their capacity to work.

### **\*Older people**

‘Older people’ are defined on page 25 in the introduction chapter of the present thesis, as follows:

“The term ‘older people’ has several synonyms: later adults, older, older adults, elderly people, and senior citizens. The concept of older people varies depending on the national, social, economic and cultural background, social custom, social norms and the history or tradition of a society. In particular, Atchley (1989) attempts to define older people on the basis on chronological age, functional age and life cycle. First of all, in chronological age, older people are those over 65, which is the usual age for receiving pension benefits. In the international statistical approach, the mandatory retirement age is generally over 65. In particular, in Korea, in 1981 the Older Welfare Act was enacted on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981, according to which people are regarded as older people at the age of 65 (Lee, 2002). Second, functional age defines older people according to the extent of their individual physical and mental ability. Universally, the criteria of functional age can be wrinkled skin, gray hair, a curved posture and poor sight and hearing. However, it is not generally accepted by academics and legal experts or social programmes because it is not easy to judge age when the decline of functions is gradual and different for different individuals. Third, the life cycle



approach considers each person's physical, psychological and social features as classified into five life periods: adolescence, youth, adulthood, middle years and old age. Despite the common and obvious features of each life period, the boundary between each life period is not clear but ambiguous. In this research, older people can be defined by a complex approach which includes various ageing concepts, such as chronological, biological, social and successful ageing, as well as the approach of Atchley (1989) to the definition of older people. However, unintentionally my respondents were all people over the age of 65, defined as older people by chronological age because society discriminates against older people on the basis of chronological age. Although I had to interview people of over 65 years who faced discrimination in the labour market because of their chronological age, I tried to understand them simply as older people who were struggling with age discrimination and tackling it with the approach of successful ageing because I wanted to understand older people in employment from an equal and active perspective toward ageing" (please see page 25, above).

#### **\* Ageing Employment Policy**

'Ageing employment policy' consists of two kinds of sub-policy: 'employment promotion' and 'protected employment' for older people. 'Employment promotion' means 'aiming to encourage the employment of older people into the open labour market through the efforts of Ministry of Labour by such things as government subsidies to the companies which retain or employ or train older people in their workplaces in Korea'. Conversely, 'protected employment' means 'aiming to provide work opportunities and transition services into open employment for older people who are temporarily or permanently excluded from the open labour market through the support for the Job Creation Act by the Ministry of Health and Welfare' (Yang,

2003).

#### **\* Job Creation Act**

The Job Creation Act was introduced in response to the view that the state should provide policies and practices to create jobs for older people in order to reduce the cost of social security and press releases pointing to the increase in this cost and the need to maximise employable labour (Yang, 2003).

The Job Creation Act specifies four different sectors where jobs should be created: 'the Public sector', 'the Social Welfare sector', 'the Education sector' and 'the Private sector', all complemented by the 'Staffing sector'. Among these, the term 'Job Creation Act' as used in this thesis refers mostly to the 'Private sector' which creates chances for self-employment through running businesses to compete with business in general in the open economic market and the 'Staffing sector' which actively introduces older people to companies while subsidising part of their wages. This activity is mostly performed by two organisations, the 'Senior Club' and the 'Korean Senior Citizens Association'. The research explores the protected environment in which older people are actively working in jobs created through the Job Creation Act because these people could not surmount the age barriers in the employment market. Older people are still, moreover, struggling with age discrimination although they are working in jobs which were created in protected conditions under, for instance, the Job Creation Act (Yang 2003; Nam, 2011).

#### **\* Direct Discrimination against older People**

Direct legal discrimination occurs when policy makers treat older people less favourably in legislation. This is defined as less favourable treatment by policy makers of older people than younger people, unless there is an objective justification for such difference of treatment (Waddington and Hendriks, 2002).

#### **\* Indirect Discrimination against older People**

Indirect legal discrimination occurs when government fails to embody positive action which seeks to promote the employability of older people through legislation and policy, including budgets. In this construction, it is conceptualised as a differentiation on the basis of an apparently neutral criterion, which results in a situation where older people are disadvantaged compared to younger people (Waddington and Hendriks, 2002).

#### **\*Employability and workability**

In my research, I want to distinguish between employability and work ability; the relevance of the two concepts approach was formally presented by Ilmarinen (2002), who used the separate concepts to form an organized approach to improving the rate of employment for older people.

In particular, Taylor (2003) defines employability as the power to force someone to employ someone else by providing good services and making policies to offer opportunities for jobs, education, pension and social security systems and age discrimination policies; and to mount a campaign for people to be perceived as employable among business leaders and the general public. In contrast, the work

ability concept is not the same as work capacity. Functional capacities concern the worker's health, which is the basis for workability at all ages. Meanwhile, knowledge and skills are developing through lifelong learning commensurate with the attitudes and motivation of the workers, which provides the important values. Last, working components such as work community issues, work environmental issues, workload, work satisfaction and exposures are also part of the concept of work ability. Management has an important responsibility to regulate them. In particular, management must understand the content and possibilities of the other three elements if they are to achieve the best results from work ability. So at the workplace, the employee often has the responsibility for all the first three elements: for his health, for developing his competence and for attitudes and values. This is a very difficult task, unless the employer makes the necessary adjustments to the working environment. The employer should therefore take the responsibility for making these adjustments. In this way, employer and employee alike can share the responsibilities and work together to achieve common objectives.

## Appendix 2 : Interview Consent Form

### Interview Consent Form (인터뷰동의서)

Course name and number: the University of Birmingham, PhD course in Social Policy: 0491575)

(과정 이름과 학번 :버밍햄 대학교 사회복지정책 박사과정: 0491575)

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_(participant's name), understand that I am being asked to participate in an interview that forms part of Yonglim You's required work in the above-mentioned University of Birmingham PhD course. It is my understanding that this interview will cover the following subjects or topics: employment policy for older people in South Korea.

나는(응답자이름) 버밍햄 대학교 박사과정을 하고 있는 유영림 학생의 인터뷰의 응답자가 되어 질문에 응답할 것을 동의합니다. 그리고 한국 노인 고용 정책에 관련된 연구임을 인지합니다.

I have been given some general information about this project and the types of questions I can expect to answer. I understand that the interview will be conducted at a place and time that is convenient to me, and that it will take approximately 2 hours of my time.

나는 전반적인 프로젝트와 질문에 관한 정보를 받았습니다. 그리고 나는 모든 질문에 대답할 것입니다. 인터뷰 장소와 2시간 정도 소요되는 시간에 대해 인지하고 인터뷰를 합니다.

I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary and that I am free to decline to participate, without consequence, at any time prior to or at any point during the interview. I understand that, with my permission, this interview may be audio (or video) recorded and that any information I provide during the interview will be kept confidential, used only for the purposes of completing this course, and will not be used in any way that can identify me. All interview notes, tapes or records will be kept in a secured environment and all raw data such as tapes, transcripts, notes, and electronic files will be destroyed within three years of the completion of the course.

나는 자발적으로 인터뷰에 참여하는 것이고 참여도중 중단하는 것에 대한 자유도 갖고 있습니다. 그리고 나의 허락하에 녹음이 되는 것을 허용하고 있고 어떠한 정보도 나의 동의에 의해 사용되어질 것이고 이 연구 이외의 다른 용도로 내 자료가 쓰이지 않을 것에 대해 인지합니다. 그리고 모든 전자화된 나와 관련된 자료들은 이 과정이 마쳐지는 3년 이내에 없앨 것에 대해 인지합니다.

I also understand that there are no risks involved in participating in this activity, beyond those risks experienced in everyday life.

나는 역시 인터뷰 활동에 전혀 위험이 없다는 것을 인지합니다.

I have read the information above. By signing below and returning this form, I am consenting to participate in this project via face-to-face interview as designed by the below-named student of the University of Birmingham.

나는 위의 모든 정보를 읽었으며 이문서의 아래에 사인을 하고 구면으로 이 프로젝트에 참여하는 것에 대해 버밍햄 대학교 유영림 학생에게 동의하는 바입니다.

Participant's name 참여자: \_ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature 싸인: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 날짜 \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records. If you have other questions concerning your participation in this project, please contact me at:

당신의 기록을 위해 이 동의서의 복사본을 가지고 있으시기 바랍니다. 이 프로젝트에 대해 어떠한 질문이 있으시면 아래 연락처로 연락을 주시기 바랍니다.

**Student's name 학생이름:** Yonglim You 유영림

**Telephone number 전화번호:** \_\_\_\_\_ and

**email address 이메일주소:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my project.

이 프로젝트 참여하는 것에 대해 진심으로 감사 드립니다.

## Appendix 3 : Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

#### Older workers

#### 고령노동자

##### < Personal details > <개인정보사항>

Interviewee number 인터뷰번호;

Age 나이;

Gender 성;

Working place 현재 일하는 장소;

#### 1. First part of interview: Biographical approach

*'I'd like to ask you to tell me your life story, all the experiences and events you remember. You can take as much time as you want to. I will not interrupt you; I will ask my questions at the end ...'* (Fisher-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997: 4).

However, when my interviewees were unsure how to tell their life history even if I had explained what a biographical narrative interview was, I prompted them with questions such as those below.



### **Questions about life in general**

- How old are you?
- What were/are your parents like?
- Where did you grow up?
- Can you describe your childhood?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters? What about your extended family (uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.)?
- Would you like to tell me something about your teenage years and life as a young person? (Some of these people may not have had much formal education. For this reason, instead of mentioning education, I asked about their teenage years which gave them a good chance to talk about their school life if this was applicable.)
- If married, how did you meet your husband or wife? Can you describe them, and how you met?
- Do you have children or grandchildren? Can you describe them?
- Could you tell me more about your later life?
- Can you tell me about your career? What sort of jobs have you had? What sort of job do you have now?

### **2. Second part of Interview –Research topic issues**

The second part of the interview would continue until the participant came naturally to the closing stages of her/his biographical themes. After this, I asked questions about points which the interviewee her/himself had left unanswered in the first stage. Interviewees were asked these in order to encourage further questions. Naturally, answers which related to my research topic were not

expected to be generated spontaneously

- How do you understand the value of work?
- How do you understand ageing?
- Have you understand age discrimination in employment?
- How do you understand employment policies and practices for older people in Korea?

## Appendix 4 : A Summary of the Personal Data in the Research Group

### <A Summary of the Personal Data in the Research Group>

Pseudonym of Interviewee	Age	Gender	Place of residence	Type of business	Family	Education	Income resources per month
A	72	M	Namwon Small city	Recycling centre	Wife, 3 sons and 2 daughters	Ended during primary school	£350 from his children £200 from housing property £75 from the Basic old pension £250 from job
B	78	F	Junju Medium-sized city	Subcontracting business	Husband, 2 sons and 2 daughters	Schools of education	£250 from children £200 from job
C	75	F	Junju Medium-sized city	Knitting business Health food business	Husband, 2 sons and 2 daughters	Primary school	£250 from children £200 from job
D	75	F	Wanju Rural area	Food delivery centre	Husband, 4 sons and 1 daughter	No school	£200 from job
E	66	F	Kwangju Big city	Food delivery centre	Husband, 3 sons	Primary 1	£200 from job
F	66	F	Kwangju Big city	Food delivery centre	Husband, 1 son and 2 daughters	No education	£200 from job £45 from the basic old age pension
G	69	F	Wanju Rural area	Food delivery centre	Husband, 2 sons and 1 daughter	No education	£200 from job £75 from the basic old age pension
H	76	M	Inchon Big city	Occasional primary school teacher Parcel delivery	Wife, 2 sons and 1 daughter	PhD	£100 from job £200 from national pension
I	71	F	Inchon Big city	Restaurant	4 sons	High (secondary) school	£250 from job
J	85	F	Gapyeong	Food bank centre (health foods)	2 sons and 2 daughters	No education	£200 from job
K	70	M	Seoul	Parcel delivery	1 son and 1 daughter	Primary school	£450
L	79	M	Namwon	Recycling centre	2 sons and 1 daughter	Primary school	£150 from job £75 from basic old age pension
M	66	F	Yeoju	Knitting work	New husband, 2	High school	£100 from job Property

					sons		assets
N	68	F	Seong-nam City Near Seoul	Cleaner	2 sons and 2 daughters	No education	£400 from job
O	79	F	Yeoju	Knitting work	1 son and 3 daughters	Primary school	£100 from job
P	72	M	Seoul	Parcel delivery	Wife, 1 son and 1 daughter	High school	£100 from national pension £400 from job
Q	77	F	Gapyung	Food bank (health foods)	2 sons and 2 daughters	University	Much income from assets £ 100 from job
R	68	M	Seong-nam	Security guard	3 daughters	University	Wife's income £400 from job

## Appendix 5 : Transcript Sample

### Transcript sample

*"I have worked since my father died, when I was 13 years old." ..... "I'm 72 and getting old. I'm scared of losing my job and not being able to live at home. If it's because I was past it, I'd feel the agony from after the accident all over again as I used to do before I went back to work. I have to work and want to work because I have the ability to work. If there is no work, I will lie in bed every day. I have strength. I want to earn more money." .....*

*"When I do not work, I feel useless, but when I work, I feel important. I feel alive when I'm working. I also feel very important once more as the head of the family. When I feel that I am an important person, it makes me very happy. In fact, when I had no work, I felt that I had no position in my family or in society. When I feel I belong somewhere, I feel happy." .....*

*....."I enjoyed a drink with my colleagues in the pub after work. It was fun. I socialized 3 or 4 times a week. It was my joy. I was the team supervisor. They really respected me a lot and followed me. The work was very demanding. But I could forget the pain of the work in chatting and drinking with my colleagues after work. I miss the life. " .....*

*"As a matter of fact, I left my job at 60. I would've liked to work until I was 65 or 70." .....*

*“I think that older people who work should have more government support than those who are able to work but stay at home.”.....*

*“If there is no equipment where workers can sit and press cans electrically, I cannot work here for any length of time. As I said before, I felt very afraid to learn to use the new equipment but now it has enabled me to work. I am professional enough to teach other colleagues no.”.....”the government supports the employers who want to set up auxiliary systems for older workers”*

## **Appendix 6 : Data Analysis Sample**

### Data Analysis sample

#### **Interviewee A**

##### **1. Summary**

He was born in 1938 in Namwon and was the third child, with two sisters and two brothers. His father passed away during the War of 25th June. After his father's death, he left school and worked at whatever he could to support his family. He delivered luggage in stations for twenty years. He stopped this work because he felt that he was not strong enough to continue. After the job, he worked for the state in a public water recycling centre for 15 years. He had to leave this job under the mandatory retirement rule. However, he had to earn money in order to support his children's education and thus moved to Seoul, the capital city. He and his wife opened a shop. After all his children had graduated, the couple returned to Namwon, his home town. He said he was fortunate enough to get a security job in the market, where he worked for 8 years until his back pain, caused by his hard work, grew too intense. What made things worse was that when he came back to his security job he was involved in a car accident. Even when he recovered, his employer did not want to rehire him because he was now too old (65 years old at the time). In spite of this setback, he tried to find another job. However, his age made this impossible. Fortunately, he was introduced to new work by the Senior Club. He was quite happy to work in a private recycling centre. He said that he was happy to have the opportunity to work. In fact, he received regular monthly income payments of 350 GBP from his children. In addition, he got a housing letting income of 200 GBP, his wife's pension of 75 GBP, a Basic Old

Age Pension of 35 GBP and the income from his job of 200 GBP. He wanted to continue working if his health permitted although he thinks that he is paid too little for the work he does. He is not struggling to make ends meet.

## **2. Thematic segments**

- ① In Namwon, he was born as the third child but the eldest son, who used to have responsibility in Korean tradition for supporting his parents.
- ② He could not finish his primary education because of his father's early death. He had to become the breadwinner instead.
- ③ He did his military service and before it ended he got married at the age of 20 because his wife was expecting a baby.
- ④ After his military service, he supported his family for 20 years, including his mother and younger brothers, by a delivery job in a station.
- ⑤ When he was 43 years old and he felt that this work was too much for him, he moved to a job in a public water recycling centre. He worked there for 15 years.
- ⑥ He was given mandatory retirement at the age of 58. However, he had to earn money to cover the cost of his children's education. So he went up to Seoul where his children were at university and, together with his wife, opened a shop.
- ⑦ He returned to Namwon after their children graduated. He took a security job in the market.
- ⑧ At 65 he had to leave this job.
- ⑨ The Senior Club introduced him to a job at a private recycling centre.



### 3. Structural description

#### 1) Death of his father

He started to talk about historical events; in particular, the war between North and South Korea, because this was when his father passed away. At this point, he had to leave the school and take over responsibility for supporting his family although he was only 13 years old. He had to do anything he could to earn money.

“My father passed away just after the war finished because of an illness caused from being evacuated during the war. My two sisters got married. My second sister lived in Noamri. So I moved to this town, where I delivered luggage in the station. My brothers also worked on the foreshore. I came back to Namwon with my mother and brothers”

#### 2) Working as an regular employee

He looked quite happy to talk about his working life as a manager in a public water recycling centre. He said that he very much enjoyed his working life. He said little in his life story about his marriage, suggesting that the jobs were much more meaningful to him than marriage. He felt safe and content to work as a regular employee and manager. As noted above, he had to earn money for his family in particular; he deeply desired to educate their children. In this sense, he was longing to make money. So a safe job would be his most important concern. The other significant meaning is that he would be particularly proud of his position as manager, given his low education level.

In particular, he had a good memory about the colleagues at his first and last jobs in his working career. He remembered that it was one of his happiest experiences to have an informal social meeting after work.

## 2) Meaning of the present job

He was now 72 years old. He had applied for many jobs, but without success. This job is the only job which the Senior Club could find for him and which he could do at the time. He found this job more important than simply a source of money. He thought that he felt useless unless he could work and he guessed that he would fall ill if he had no job, although the income from this job is low.

## 3) Boasting of his children's success

His children's success meant a lot to him. His sacrifice was all for their success. He was keen to earn money to support their education. In Korean culture, most Korean parents are passionately keen to educate their children. They believe that the success of their children is the most important feature in their life. A job is necessary to earn money and earning money is essential to provide for his children's successful education. It would not be fair to say that they made all this effort to educate their children in the expectation that the children would support them financially in later life, because parents in today's society are still keen to support their children's education, even when most of them do not live with their children. These trends should be understood in Korea's historical and cultural context. In particular, this man's historical background should be considered, to understand his marked concern for his children's education and prosperity. He himself had his education cut short but he thought that this was why he was barred from well-paid, prestigious jobs. Hence, he believed that a good education would benefit his children and bring them successful careers and a better quality of

life than he had had.

#### 4) Maintaining later life in economic terms

One of the surprising comments in his life story is that he was saving the money that he gets from his children. He said he wants most to have a paid job. Meanwhile he earns enough to pay his way and can save up his children's contributions. He said that saving money makes him feel safe. This implies how important wealth is for him. He chooses the security of seeking paid work rather than living in comfort.

### **The second part of the interview**

#### 1. What is the meaning of a job to him now he is growing older?

He is working for himself. He has good financial support from his children. However, he wants to work partly to keep healthy. Once when he stayed at home, he was in pain from the after effects of his traffic accident. When he works, he said, he gets enough energy to overcome the pain. In particular, he feels that his life is valuable when he has a paying job. He thinks that the income is something to be proud of. He wants to work as long as he can, because working also gives him a sense of the value of life in society.

#### 2. His understanding of ageing in the employment context

He thinks that ageing affects the capacity to work. For instance, he gets tired more easily and has less strength in his legs and a worse memory.

'However', he said 'I think have enough capacity to work although my memory and strength have declined', in particular because the company is

supporting him by buying new seating for their equipment, that is, a seating system and mechanical workbench. 'In fact, I am working with new equipment'. At first, he was afraid of learning new skills. However, he went on to say that he was now "well used to working the equipment. I can teach the other colleagues now. I am professional." He is working part time (20 hours per week) and earning 200 GBP. However, he hopes to work longer and be paid more because he is confident of his ability to work in the current workplace, although he wants to avoid carrying heavy loads. He told me "I am lucky to have a job. My friends are not working. They are not keen on learning new knowledge and skills.' Once, he tried to learn Chinese but it was hard work to memorize it. However, he was still studying the language.

3. His experiences in terms of age discrimination

Since he retired from his last permanent job, his applications faced discrimination because of his age. Once he reached 60, he could never get a permanent job; every employer refused to hire him on account of his age. Through good luck, he got a temporary security job in the market. However, after being dismissed as a result of his traffic accident, he could not get any other work. He was fit enough to hold down a job, but employers did not want to rehire him. However, he did not submit to this discrimination but went to the Senior Club to find a more active job and was taken on to do his present work. He said that most of his friends were not working although they could still have got jobs if they had looked hard for them.

4. How has age discrimination affected his life, in comparison to employment conditions when he was younger?

He thinks that age discrimination has changed his outlook greatly but

otherwise has had little effect. Even though most employers are not keen to employ him, he has never given up working. Before his children got jobs, he worked for their sake. When they became independent, he worked for the symbolic value of working. However, he points out that fundamentally he works because he has always done so and if he stopped he would become ill again and lose the will to live. When he was younger he could get any job that he applied for. However, after he reached 60, he could not continue in the same kind of work. Yet he accepted this fact out of his concern for younger workers. He said “Too many young workers are unemployed in Korea. In this situation, I cannot hope to get a permanent job with a good salary’. In particular, he had felt happiest when could get together sociably with his colleagues after work. However, now he has no colleagues to turn to and thus feels very lonely. He misses the life. He said “It might not be related to discrimination but I cannot get a job in which I was part of a team, simply because of old age. Therefore, it can be said that this emotion and experience have resulted from age discrimination that has affected me recently’.

5. His expectation of the government’s becoming involved in age discrimination in employment

He hopes very much to work as long as he is healthy, regardless of the low income. However, if it is possible, he would like the government to give financial support to the companies which employ older workers. In particular, he thinks, they should develop facilities to help older workers to work in such workplaces as factories, which younger workers are not keen on. For example, his duty is to press cans in a recycling centre. He said “If there had been no equipment to allow workers to sit and operate an electric press, I should not

have been able to work there for long. As I said before, I felt very afraid to learn about the new equipment but now I can work, thanks to this equipment. I am quite professional enough to teach other colleagues now. “

## Appendix 7: Mapping Sample for Further Analysis

Mapping sample for further analysis

### 1. The meaning of work

Interviewees	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Income								√			√	√		√		√		
Identity	√		√	√						√								√
Self-fulfilment			√		√													
Energy for Health	√	√	√					√								√		
Social connection	√			√	√			√										
Rescuer from hardship		√				√												
Independence				√									√					
Life values	√														√			
Happiness, belongingness	√			√	√	√	√		√									
Turning point									√									
Challenge, learning									√				√				√	

## 2. Ideas about ageing

Interviewees	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Ageing affects the capacity to work (physical ageing acceptable)	√	√			√	√	√	√		√			√		√	√		
Depends on health		√	√	√													√	
Possibly overcoming physical ageing by a strong spiritual challenge																√		
Ageing does not affect the capacity to work The result of working is the same									√		√	√						
Ageing does not affect the physical capacity to work but affects the capacity to keep up with modern technology																		√



### 3. Age discrimination

			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Exp erie nce  Yes	Increasing discrimination as one grows older (including income)		√			√				√			√	√		√		√		
	Different experiences in different jobs			√																
	Type of discriminator	Employer				√					√									
		Society									√			√						√
		The government (Mandatory retirement or income support)					√													
		Mental discrimination													√					
Exp erie nce  No - reas on	Actually experienced but this was not recognized							√	√											
	Self-employed before working under the Job creation Act			√								√					√		√	
	Age discrimination is reasonable in the open labour market							√												
	Helped to keep working by ageing employment programmes				√															

#### 4. The attitude of older people toward age discrimination

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Acceptance	Yes								√			√		√					
	Partly yes (for younger people)																√	√	√
	No		√		√	√		√		√			√						
Influence	Yes	√				√			√			√	√						√
	Partly Yes	√			√														
	No	√	√	√														√	
Indifference										√					√				

#### 5. Expectations from employment policies and programmes for older people

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Thanks to the government for their job			√		√													
Low income/ Increase of income support	√	√				√	√		√							√		
Supportive environment in the workplace	√																	
Legal action				√	√							√		√				
More realistic and pragmatic approach of government based on ideas of older people								√			√							
Improving balanced workability and employability of older people																	√	√
More widespread social security system															√			
No expectations										√			√					

## 6. Sample analysis of mapping

In each table which is checked by the answers, there appears the reason for the statement

< The meaning of work >

←----- \*INCOME-----→

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Income								*			*	*		*		*		
Identity	a-1		√	√						√								
Self-fulfilment			√		√													
Energy for health	a-2	√	√					√										
Social connection	a-3			√	√			√										
Rescue from hardship		√				√												
Independence				√									√					
Life values	a-4														√			
Happiness, belongingness	a-5			√	√	√	√		√									
Turning point									√									
Challenge									√				√					

<Sample reasons from each one's life story which was filled in for each table in mapping>

<Vertical contexts sample>

- a-1. He has worked since his father died when he was 13 years old . When he stopped working, he felt that life was meaningless. For this reason, he could say that working is his identity and life itself.

- a-2. In fact, when he stopped working, he felt more pain from the after-effects of the car accident than before. However, when he went back to work, the pain was gone. Working supplied the energy for him to regain his health.
- a-3. When he was working with colleagues, he saw them as people to share his social life. He is working still, but has no colleagues to share his life. He does not feel included in society.
- a-4. He felt that he was a very important person in his family, its head. However, when he does not work, he feels that he has no position in the family.
- a-5. Although his children support him financially and he has enough money to live on, at heart he wants to work for the sake of its symbolic value – it means life.

<Horizontal contexts sample>

- Income –H; He could not prepare financially for his later life and therefore has to earn money to survive.
- Income –K; He failed in his business so he is struggling with financial problems. He was working for a secure income. He said that if he did not work, his family could not survive. The particular reason for his wanting to work hard and earn plenty of money is that he is very concerned about a child whom he is still supporting.

- Income-L; Since he was compulsorily retired from his first job, he has been poor. He has to earn to support himself, in the absence of assets or a pension.
- Income –N; working enables her to survive, but she is still poor. She brought up all her children alone after her marriage ended in divorce. Despite her poverty, the government does not give her any benefit because she has children. However, they themselves, with their inadequate education, earn little and cannot support her. Therefore, if she does not work, she has no money. She continually reverts to expressing despair about her work.
- Income –P; He had been housebound, but was not altogether fit or sleeping well so he started work for the sake of his health. However, although he thinks that health takes precedence over money, he is struggling to pay back his loan from the bank, through which he bought his house.