

論文 / 著書情報  
Article / Book Information

題目(和文)	
Title(English)	The structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries
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出典(和文)	学位:博士(学術), 学位授与機関:東京工業大学, 報告番号:甲第9947号, 授与年月日:2015年6月30日, 学位の種別:課程博士, 審査員:猪原 健弘,桑子 敏雄,坂野 達郎,金子 宏直,妹尾 大
Citation(English)	Degree:., Conferring organization: Tokyo Institute of Technology, Report number:甲第9947号, Conferred date:2015/6/30, Degree Type:Course doctor, Examiner:,,,,,
学位種別(和文)	博士論文
Type(English)	Doctoral Thesis

**The structure and mechanism of career paths  
for executive leaders  
moving across organizational boundaries**

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1-1 Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study is to clarify what the structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries are.

In this study, I define structure as the visual representation of commonalities of executive's career paths, and mechanism as what gives the structure its meaning by the clearly defining the parameters in which the structure can be used.

The Japanese business environment has been confronted with many challenges by the wave of rapid globalization. Helping the organization achieve its goals begins with recognizing that the most important problem faced by virtually all employers is the need to respond quickly to changes in competitive environments (Cappelli, 2008). However, the limited number of talent who have enough experience to tackle this environmental transformation is becoming a bigger issue.

In order to handle such a situation, Japanese companies have launched the “Next generation of leaders program” (Roumugyousei kenkyujyo, 2009) to provide employees with adequate training, but so far with little success. According to research, over 85% of companies still have limited results through in-house training (Recruit management solutions, 2013).

A voice of hiring executive leaders from the outside has been increasing (Matsuzono, 2008) and drawing attention we have never had before (Nikkei, 2014). According to Recruit management solutions (2014), the mobility of labor is inevitable trends in Japan

and Japanese companies are being required to face it. However, since Japan has been known for decades for its lifetime employment and most employee tends to stay at a single company until retirement, Japanese companies are not used to recruiting executives from the outside. They have been urged to provide a management system which accepts those leaders and deals with other employees appropriately. But in the research, little has been conducted for newcomers' adaptation. It should be examined to identify the mechanism of their adaptation process to new organizational settings with theoretical and empirical implications.

On the other hand, from the individuals' point of view, there is a concept of a boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) which represents a 'new' career era (Chudzikowski, 2012) in the area of human resource management study. People have a variety of career options and paths and in which they can navigate their own careers rather than letting the organization decide for them (Baruch, 2006). Recently, the concept has drawn increased attention in both practitioners and scholars (Inkson, K., et. al., 2012).

Despite the trends, the study of career transition, boundaryless career, is still in its infancy (Ibarra, 2004). Ibarra (2004) noted that there is plenty of how-to advice own career, but how people exactly change their careers has been little known. Besides, most of the studies are conducted in Europe and America. In Japan, there are few studies have been conducted and they only focused on consultants in an IT industry.

One's career paths are directly influenced by the characteristics of a country's labor market. The conventional western mobility pattern cannot be simply applied to Japanese. Kanai (2002) also pointed out that the research of understanding the career mobility patterns needs to be explored one by one. Therefore, clarifying the structure of career

paths is inevitable.

Considering the above, my interest in the boundaryless career paths of executive leaders led me to following research question: “*What is the structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries in Japan?*” In response this research question, based on the definition of structure and mechanism, I divided it into three sub-questions which are:

- 1) *What is the mobility structure of executive leader career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries?*
- 2) *What is the common ground, of executives who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations?*
- 3) *What is the mechanism of the executives’ adjusting process to cope with the new organizational settings in order to exceed expectations quickly?*

Each sub-question is discussed in a single chapter: Chapter 4, 5, and 6 respectively. Sub-questions 1) will basically respond to visualize the commonality of the structure for executive’s mobility, and sub-question 2) and 3) will provide the answer with what is the mechanism to move to and adapt to new organizational settings. Moreover, all of the results are mutually connected and tied together, which will contribute to the response of the research question’s viability.

\* This study is not aiming to urge Japanese companies to accept boundaryless career concept in their management system, or to persuade them to reconstruct their organizational structures by applying this concept.



## **1-2 Contents of this study**

This study is structured as follows.

In Chapter 1, as an introduction, I clarify the purpose of this study and contribution to organizational behavioral study and practices, and provide the structure of the contents.

In Chapter 2, I describe the related research which are composed of three sections; features of Japanese employment system, career study focusing on executives' career paths, and organizational socialization study.

In Chapter 3, I explain mainly two methods which I am going to apply in this study, a narrative approach and grounded theory analysis. The validity of applying those method is also noted.

Chapters 4 through 6 are the body of this study which examine the sub-questions. The following is a brief description for the contents of the three chapters.

Chapter 4 corresponds to the first sub-question and is the basis of the whole structure as a way to interpret the mobility of one's career paths. The purpose of this study is to visualize the structure of executive leaders' career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries. In the interest of executive mobility, a career path framework (Career Path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM) were developed and 14 executive leaders working in a variety of industries were interviewed. As a result, 14 cases were explained through CPT and CPM and the mobility of their career paths was able to be visualized. By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility patterns will be discussed. These results provide an opening for the first step to understand Japanese executive leaders' career paths and patterns within external labor markets in organizational behavioral studies.

Chapter 5 refers to the second sub-question. In this chapter, the behavioral features which lead or support Japanese executive leaders to transfer to new organizations are clarified

through examination of case studies, by applying a grounded theory approach. In this research, based on the case study of Chapter 4, nine corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries were intensively interviewed. By examining those cases by applying a grounded theory approach, it turned out that they can be categorized into four patterns which are mobility, mindset, motivation, and source of information. Based on the results, the behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations are discussed and some common ground are clarified. The study added to the significance of the findings in the understanding of the structure basis, which was visualized and explained with CPT and CPM in Chapter 4.

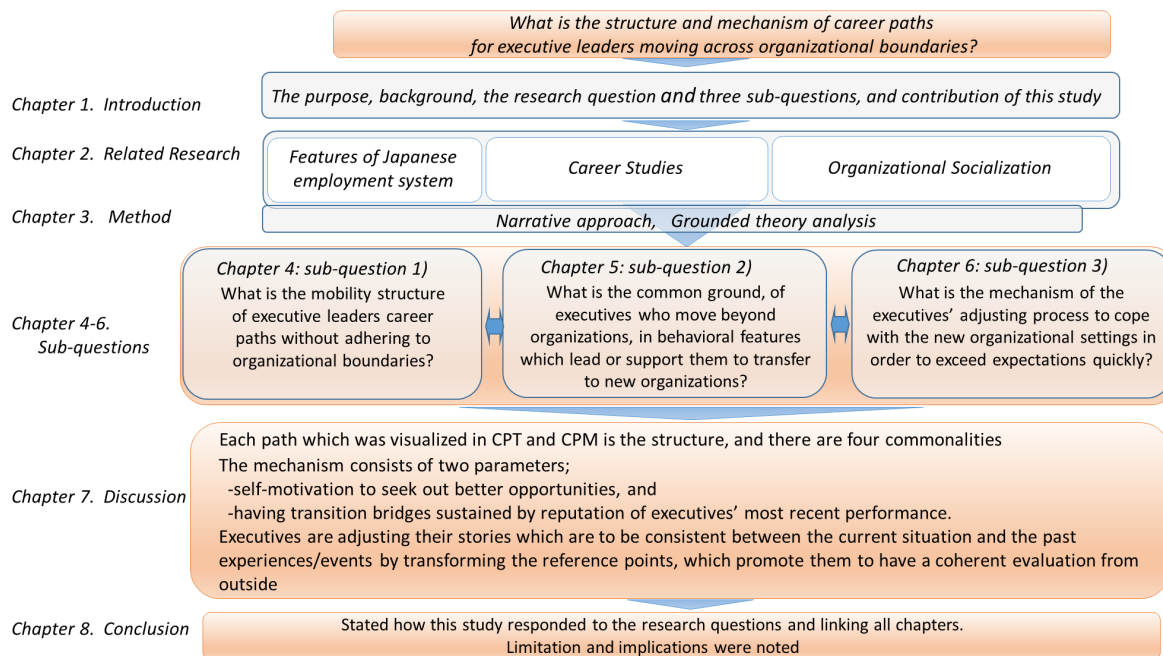
Chapter 6 aims to respond to the third sub-question. The purpose of this study is to identify the mechanism of the process of how executives adapt to and cope with new organizational settings, by focusing on their sense-making process in which they interpret past experiences to suit and be acceptable to the current situation. In this chapter, narrative interviews were conducted with executive leaders in work transitions. By examining the interviews through the grounded theory approach, it turned out that there were certain points, named 'reference points', to which individuals always refer to and/or compare before applying the individuals' meaning of own experiences. By considering the findings and the key factors which were derived from related research, a model of the sense-making process was developed. With this model, the mechanism of the adaptation process in individuals' transformation to new organizations was identified.

Then in Chapter 7, I discuss the results of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to respond to the research question, "*What is the structure and mechanism of career paths of executive leaders' moving across organizational boundaries in Japan?*", with the results.

And the final section to this study, Chapter 8, I summarize each chapter to respond to the research question and conclude this study and provide the limitations.

### 1-3 The structure of this study

The whole structure of this study is depicted below



### 1-4 The contribution of this study

The Japanese business environment has changed. Keeping up with its transformation is inevitable for organizations. Hiring executive leaders from outside has been increasing but still with limited understanding in both research and practices. Through this study, the structure and mechanism of executive's career paths are visualized and clarified.

This study will provide organizations with the empirical insight to reconstruct a portion of their management system and be useful to create strategies for hiring executives who actively manage their careers moving beyond organizations. That will also lead to better decision making for organizations regarding the planning of executive career paths, such as succession plans for the future, and contribute to effective management of human resource practices. Moreover, the sense-making model, which I developed in this study, can provide human resource management with adequate tools to aide their reorganization

processes of recruitment and/or retention management. In addition, the framework and models will be applicable to measure employees' career paths.

In the research field in Japan, having been known for decades for its lifetime employment, boundaryless careers has drawn little attention. Especially research focusing on executive leaders has rarely been conducted. This study can provide a deeper understanding of Japanese executive leaders' career paths within external labor markets, which has recently been emerging. I believe this could be the first step to understand the Japanese executive leaders' career paths moving beyond organizations. Additionally, this research could contribute to organizational socialization studies in order to lead to a deeper understanding of the adaptation process for entry practices.

## **Chapter 2: Related Research**

In this chapter, initially I describe the features of the Japanese employment system and show the uniqueness of it. Afterwards, I overview the previous literature related to the research question of this study, such as boundaryless careers by focusing on the executives, and organizational socialization specialized in individual's adaptation to new organizational settings.

### **2-1 Features of Japanese employment system**

In this section, in order to further understand Japanese employment environments, I describe the unique Japanese employment system. Then, I clarify the three distinct labor markets in Japan.

#### ***2-1-1 Unique employment system***

Traditionally, Japanese companies hire new graduates for entry positions once a year in April. The new graduates' skills are usually developed within the company (Yashiro, 1996; 2011). Organizations move them to a variety of job assignments as internal transfers, in other words "job rotation", to develop their skills based on the lifetime employment structure under a single organizational setting.

Yashiro(1996; 2011) noted that job rotation has the following meanings attached to it. Firstly, it is important to determine the aptitude of each employee which is convenient for

organizations to allocate resources in-house and develop employees' skills which are a fit for the organizations. Secondly, companies are able to improve the employees' versatility through job rotation. Thirdly, job rotation provides useful unofficial networks to make decisions.

Moreover, there are two types of transfers, which are horizontal transfer and vertical transfer (Nitta & Hisamoto, 2008; Yashiro, 1996). The horizontal transfer refers to changes in function, division or department (Schein, 1971). Transitions across the vertical dimension correspond to promotions and demotions (Chudzikowski, 2012). In Japan, promotions are mostly characterized on a seniority-basis.

For employees, internal transfer most likely consist of a set of implicit agreements between organizations and employees based on the lifetime employment system. In addition, this is an essential tool for them to ascend corporate ladders. This leads the workers to become generalists rather than specialists. Seniority based promotions tend to be slower than the western style of promotion (Ouchi, 1983; Yashiro, 2011).

According to the research of Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training (1998), in comparison of the employment systems among Japan, US, and Germany, there are remarkable gaps in the first selection timing of candidates for managerial positions. While Japan takes 7.9 years to start the selection, it only takes 3.4 years for US, and 3.7 years for Germany. And the years it takes for candidates to encounter a ceiling which prevents them from accessing upper executive positions is 9.1 years for US, 11.5 years for Germany, and 22.3 years for Japan, after joining the company. Furthermore, according to the survey, in order to develop ones career, US and Germany are focusing more on being specialists of the same job, whereas Japanese are focusing on being generalists by

experiencing a variety of jobs in the same organization.

### ***2-1-2 Three distinct labor markets***

In Japan, there are three distinct labor markets in which are the internal labor market (ILM), the semi-internal labor market (SILM), and the external labor market (ELM). Each market is classified based on a certain type of individual mobility such as an internal transfer in a single organizational setting (ILM), a temporary and permanent transfer to other affiliated companies and/or subsidiaries of a group (SILM), and a job change to completely other organizations (ELM).

The Japanese labor market has been dominated by ILM or SILM for decades. The following is more detail on ILM and SILM.

#### **-ILM**

ILM is defined as a labor market that has a job ladder at a single organizational settings, i.e., a hierarchy of jobs requiring different levels of skills and knowledge, with the entry point only at the bottom or with internal promotions as the only way of filling every position (Kim, 2005).

#### **-SILM**

On the other hand, SILM exist between internal labor market and external labor market. Temporary transfer and permanent transfer represent inter-company mobility among companies within the same group. According to Yashiro (2000), temporary transfer is to be on loan to a company for a certain time period. Permanent transfer is to be transferred to a company permanently. The market of both temporary transfer and permanent transfer

are managed by the organization which originally hired the employees.

There are two types of temporary transfer and permanent transfer. One is active transfer and the other is passive transfer (Inagami, 2003). According to Inagami (2003), the former is to send employees to support group companies in the areas of technical assistance, technology transfer, and job training as examples. The latter is most likely intended to conduct curtailment of unprofitable departments and/or streamlining of employees.

Temporary transfer and permanent transfer are mutually-connected. Generally, the former is a round-trip ticket and limited in duration. After three to five years of working at a group company, the employees usually comes back to the former company. The latter obviously ends up as a one-way ticket. However, there are cases which start as a temporary transfer and change status to permanent in the middle of assignment. According to Inagami (2003), the employees who are older and/or in a higher position are more likely treated as permanent transfers.

## **2-2 Career study**

In this section, first I aim to classify the previous career studies into organizational careers and boundaryless careers by their career paths. Afterwards, I describe the previous career paths of executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries.

### ***2-2-1 Two Concepts of career paths studies***

I apply the definition of career as "The career is the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life" (Hall, 1976; 2002). In this thesis, I focus on the perspective of



individual's behavior in order to identify the structure and mechanism of boundaryless career paths.

In the career study, two specific career eras - representing the 'old'(1970s) and the 'new'(1990s) career context, respectively - were examined (Chudzikowski, 2012).

In terms of the 'old' career which can be described as an 'organizational career', that study was led by scholars at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Lotte Bailyn, Edgar Schein, and John Van Maanen in the mid-1970s (Tams & Arthur, 2010) and the emphasis in that work was on organizational careers, careers unfolding in a single organizational setting.

According to Kallinikos (2004), the career is bureaucratic order which is embedded in a context within hierarchical order, centralized plan, and controlled by organizations. Baruch (2004) also noted that the nature and notion of traditional careers were based on a hierarchical, highly structured, and rigid structure. In that case, career paths were designed to obtain a fair trade-off between employees and their organizations, and were characterized by loyalty-based psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995).

On the other hand, as the 'new' career, career transitions are most likely associated with that and are often characterized by 'boundarylessness' (Arthur et al., 1999; Hall, 2002; Chudzikowski, 2012). The current study focus on career transitions that imply movement from one position to another and that are directly observable, measurable, and verifiable (Chudzikowski, 2012). The horizontal dimension refers to changes in function, division or department (Schein, 1971). Transitions across the vertical dimension are promotions and demotions.

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) noted that the old picture of stable employment and

organizational careers associated with it have faded, and the new picture of dynamic employment and boundaryless careers calls for our attention. It is a true and valid view that certain shifts and transitions have a major impact and are relevant to most employees (Baruch, 2006).

According to Arthur et. al., (2005), currently there are the following two types of arguments in career theory; on one hand he mentions increasing number of boundaryless careers, where career opportunities transcend any single employer (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), and of the personal meaning of career success (Hall, 2002). On the other hand, focuses on career success in terms of individual's position or promotion in a single organization. And still many researchers mentioned that the traditional career paths are still alive and valid (i.e., McDonald, Brown, & Bradley, 2005; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

In this study, since I focus on the career paths moving across organizations, I describe more of the concept of boundaryless career.

### ***2-2-2 Boundaryless career***

Boundaryless careers are the opposite of 'organizational careers' - careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). In contrast to organizational-bounded careers, the 'boundaryless' career involves frequent movement across organizations, and is sustained by external networks, and draws validation from outside the employer rather than from hierarchical advancement criteria (Hamori and Kakarika, 2009). These transitions generate new challenges both in organizations and employees and they change their expectations and lead to generating new psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995, 1996)

Tams and Arthur (2010) reviewed the boundaryless career perspective which emerged in the 1990s based on 17 years of cumulative research. In that review, they noted 'The Boundaryless Organization' was started at the theme of the Academy of Management annual meeting in 1993 and 'The Boundaryless Career' symposium followed right after that. Then, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* was quickly followed as a special issue of it and wider books followed on the same topics (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

Boundaryless careers involved a range of forms that are distinct from careers built upon traditional employment assumptions (Tams and Arthur, 2010). In this paper, applying DeFillipi and Arthur (1996)'s definition, boundaryless careers is "sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment setting".

Though the new concept of boundaryless careers has drawn attention since 1990s, there are only a limited number of empirical studies which have only dealt with samples of employees in a small set of geographic and occupational environments that include such as Silicon Valley, film, the biotechnology industry, and consultants (Miwa, 2009; Uda, 2007; Gunz, Ebans, & Jalland, 2000; Jones, 1996). It is because most research has focused on its conceptualization (King et. al., 2005; Uda, 2007).

Currently, the study has focused on the impact of career transitions on career success (Chudzikowski, 2012) especially on subjective career success which is defined as the accumulated position work and psychological outcomes from its work experience. (i.e., Verbruggen, 2011).

There is still little research conducted to clarify how executive leaders transform from one organization to another organizations.

On the other hand, the movements across organizational boundaries may be highly affected by the characteristics of each countries' labor markets. Boundaryless career research has been conducted mostly in Europe and America. In Japan, since developing ones careers at a single organization is the main stream, little attention has been paid by researchers on individuals' careers moving across organizational boundaries. It is difficult to simply apply western mobility patterns to the Japanese labor markets. Thus, Kanai (2002) pointed out that the research of understanding the Japanese mobility patterns needs to be explored one by one.

### ***2-2-3 Career paths of executive leaders moving beyond organizations***

There has been little research examining executives who move across employers (Cheramie, et. al., 2007; Hamori and Kakarika, 2009; Arthur, Khapova, and Vilderom, 2005) and especially less researched are the particular career paths inside and across corporations (Hamori and Kakarika, 2009). Also most of them have been examined the movements across organizations from the organizations' point of view (Gunz & Jalland, 1996).

Since Arthur & Rousseau (1996) mentioned in the concept of a boundaryless career, executives should also be treated as individuals who seek to manage their own careers by taking advantage of career opportunities to maximize their career success.

From the individuals' point of view, Cheramie at. el., (2007) examined the factors both intrinsically and extrinsically that may cause executives to change jobs in the context of managing their careers. In the research, they found the age and compensation are related to the likelihood of job movements as well as declining organizational health. In managing careers, individuals seek opportunities to maximize their extrinsic rewards,

specifically their salary and bonus, and if these executives experience a decline in the health of their organizations, they are also more apt to change employers (Cheramie et al., 2007). Also when it comes to motivation to move, generally, frequency of promotions has been one of the most commonly used indicators of objective career success (Ng et al. 2005). According to the Cheramie et al, (2007), the compensation is a very relevant factor associated with an executive's propensity to switch organizations. Though they revealed the factors of motivation to move across organizations, the executives' career paths remain still unclear.

Another researcher, Hamori (2014) examined the executives who move across organizations by focusing on executive labor markets. In this research, 14,000 executives' dataset in the financial services industry, mostly in the United States, produced by a large multinational executive search firm, was divided into two groups. A group of executives who change employers with the firm's mediation and the other who did without it. Then she presented how intermediaries of labor markets have an impact on executive careers in terms of individuals' mobility across organizations. This research illustrated that executives whose moves are mediated by search firms are more likely to obtain a promotion or move to a larger and more reputable new employer than those who move without such mediation. On the other hand, executives who move with mediators are not more likely to move to a developmental assignment. That result shows that mediators such as search firms may constrain executives' options. However, this research focused only on the impact of mediators assistance for executives who change organizations and is not spotlighted on executives' individuals career paths.

Many researchers mentioned that examining mobility and the boundaryless career need more of studies evaluating career patterns beyond organizational boundaries (i.e., Briscoe

& Hall, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

### **2-3 Organizational socialization**

In this section, I review the organizational socialization studies as follows: 1) Classification of organizational socialization studies, 2) Individual adaptation to new organizational settings.

#### ***2-3-1 Classification of organizational socialization studies***

To enter an organization is to confront many unfamiliar ways of doing things (Gundry and Rousseau, 1994). Organizational socialization that refers to the process through which newcomers make the transition from being organizational outsiders to insiders and an individual acquires the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential to assume an organizational role (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, Bauer, et. al., 2007).

Organizational socialization plays a central role in the adjustment and learning process of employees (Chao, et. al., 1994). Since dealing with entry practices smoothly is one of the key factors to be accepted by the new organizational settings, as Schein (1968) mentioned decades ago, this concept is the most useful because it focuses clearly on the interaction between a stable social system and new members who enter it. Moreover, on a practical level, understanding these relationships can aide managerial interventions to improve socialization strategies and processes (Chao, et. al., 1994).

### ***1) Two distinct aspects for organizational socialization***

Organizational socialization has two distinct aspects; one is an organizational view point and the other is an individual's view point (e.g., Takahashi, 1993; Wanous, 1992; Nakahara, 2012). Wanous (1992) described the above two distinctive aspects; one is the organization's socialization of the newcomer known as socialization strategies and/or tactics, and the other is the newcomer's personalizing of the organization, individual's adaptation process to a new organization. Over the decades, much more has been studied about organizational aspects than the individual's adaptation process (e.g., Schine 1968, 1978; Van Maanen 1976, Wanous, 1992, Nakahara, 2012).

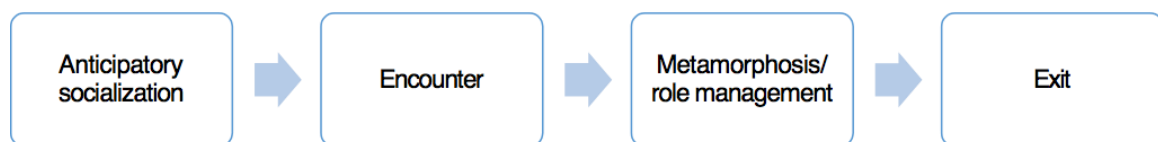
In this study, I only focus on the individual point of view for the sake of adhering to the purpose of this study.

### ***2) A process model of organizational socialization***

Organizational socialization also has a distinct division between two types of research (Chao, et. al., 1994). One is concerned with understanding the processes through which a newcomer passes as he or she develops into a part of organizational member (e.g., Feldman, 1976, 1981; Louis, 1980; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Chao, 1988; Kramer, 2010; Bauer, 2012). The other area is concerned with the content of socialization; what is actually learned during socialization (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986). And the former is the focus area of this study.

Regarding a process of organizational socialization, most of the models have three phases in common based on time period known as 'Stage model'(Fisher, 1986; Kramer, 2010, Ashforth et. al., 2011). Prior to joining an organization is known as *anticipatory*

*socialization*. The second stage, *encounter*, focuses on the actual entry of new members and how they cope with what they find and with the inevitable slippage between their expectations and reality (Ashforth et. al., 2011). The third stage is known as metamorphosis, role management, or change and acquisition, which represents the time when an individual is an active, established, or full organizational member (Kramer, 2010). Furthermore, for the fourth, Jablin (2001) added an *exit or disengagement* phase upon the three phases. The following chart is the stage model described above.



Anticipatory socialization is the time period prior to joining an organization. According to Kramer (2010), during this time, individuals anticipate taking positions in one or more organizations. Jablin (2001) divides this period into two sub-parts; vocational anticipatory socialization and organizational anticipatory socialization. The former is the process of selecting an occupation or career. The latter, organizational anticipatory socialization which Kramer (2010) calls the term role anticipatory socialization, is the process of selecting an organization to join.

The encounter phase is when an individual becomes an organizational member and assumes some organizational role (Kramer, 2010). Being a newcomer is often an intense experience (Kramer, 2010). Louis (1980) noted that a newcomer experiences the interaction between his/her organizational expectations developed during anticipatory socialization and the reality of their roles in the organizations.

The period of metamorphosis / role management is usually used to describe a significant



change in some phenomenon (Kramer, 2010). It is difficult to objectively determine the time the metamorphosis phase begins, since it often refers to the change from being a new comer to being an established organizational member. The period is typically thought of as the first weeks and months in a new organizational setting. However, according to Kramer (2010), time-based definitions are probably inappropriate for making this distinction and more appropriate to consider the beginning of the phase when individuals no longer consider themselves newcomers.

Organizational exit is an inevitable transition and divided into two types: 1) voluntary exit when individuals initiate the change, 2) involuntary exit when others initiate the change (Kramer, 2010).

In this study, for the sake of understanding the mechanism of executives' adaptation to new organizational settings as an entry practice, I focus on the second period known as 'encounter'.

### **2-3-2 Individual adaptation to new organizational settings**

Focusing on individual adaptation to new organizational settings on the encounter phase, Louis (1980) and Adkins (1995) noted that adjusting to the new organizational settings is most likely affected by the previous work experience. Also in order to understand the process with which newcomers cope with entry and socialization experience, Louise (1980) mentioned that we must first understand that experience.

Especially, the time period of coping with such differences and "learning the ropes" of the new setting typically occupy the newcomer for the first 6 to 10 months on the job (Louis, 1980).

An appreciation of what newcomers typically experience during the transition period and how they cope with their experience is fundamental to designing entry practices that facilitate newcomers' adaptation in the new setting (Louis, 1980).

The following sections are the sense-making and narrative repertoires which are closely related to this study.

### ***1) Sense-making***

Where sense-making is concerned is about how individuals understand or assign meaning to experiences (Kramer, 2010). According to Louis (1980), an important part of sense-making during encounter is understanding or making sense of the differences between new and old settings.

Sense-making focuses on how individuals retrospectively assign meaning to their experiences (Kramer, 2010; Weick, 2001). As individuals experience their new environment, and particularly as they experience differences compared to their previous environment, they assign meanings to the new events (Kramer, 2010). It can be viewed as a recurring cycle comprised of a sequence of events occurring over time (Louis, 1980).

Sense-making is also a transactional process, not an independent process, it is through communication that individuals make sense of the new settings (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) mentioned that sense-making is not an individual process, but a collective process in which individuals inter-subjectively create meaning for a situation. Therefore, it can be said that focusing on interaction is a necessity in terms of understanding the sense-making process. Regarding the above related research, the sense-making process should contain continuity and interaction with each other over the time.

The cognitive approach of sense making has provided the premise for many studies, the focus has been more on information seeking behaviors and interactions and less on the cognitive processes and interpretations that newcomers supposedly enact (Sakes, et. al., 1997).

Louis (1980) developed a sense-making model with which individuals cope with their entry experiences by focusing on what newcomers need during sense making in a new organizational setting.

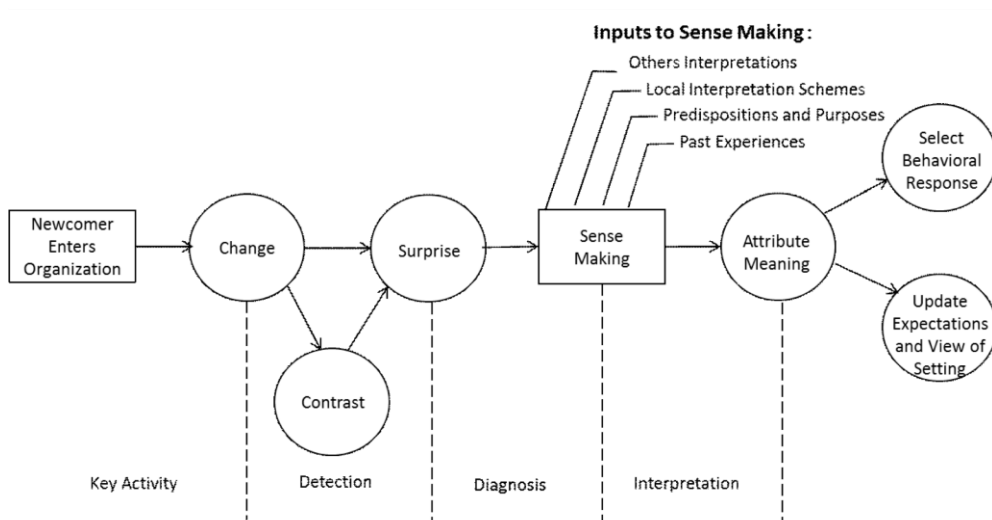


Figure 1, Sense-making in organizational entry [Louis, 1980]

Figure 1 is Louis's sense-making model. During the encounter period, errors in assumptions sometimes emerge, and the newcomer must handle the recognition that he or she is different from his or her previous perceptions of self (Louis, 1980). She stated that there are some key features of the newcomer experience such as "change", "contrast", and "surprise".

Through above model, she defined newcomers' special sense-making needs and clarified that individuals rely on a number of inputs such as newcomers' past experiences with

similar situations, which help them in coping with current situations in making sense. And it turns out that there were four significant inputs which are required to assess the experience of newcomers which are others' interpretations, local interpretation schemes, predispositions and purposes, and past experiences.

Even though her model derived significant findings for theoretical and practical implications, consistency and interaction were not included, which are invaluable to make a sense-making process

## ***2) Narrative repertoire***

Another previous research focuses on individual's narrative. Fisher (1984) noted that all communication forms that we use to tell stories or give reports of events are narrative and Brown (2004) suggested that individuals organize their experiences using narratives. Since sense-making is essentially a narrative process (e.g., Brown, 2004; Fisher, 1984), narratives are an important symbolic form through which meanings are constructed and shared (Brown, 2004).

Ibbara and Barbulescu (2010) proposed a process model in which people draw from narrative repertoires, focusing on individual's narrative forms of expressing and claiming identity to understand individual's identity change in a new work role.

In changing over the new organizational settings, individuals encounter various situations where he/she needs to explain themselves. Ibbara and Barbulescu (2010) noted that narrative repertoires consist of previously told stories through individuals' experiences and other social interactions to convey them or vary their form from old settings to new settings. They also noted that those repertoires transform as people retain new stories

about meaningful events that occur in the course of the transition and/or reinterpret past events which lead people to revise old stories to new stories to be more suitable and appropriate in the new organizational settings (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) further described that the key of the evolution process of narrative repertoires is its variety and coherence. A varied narrative repertoire allows people to customize stories to specific audiences (Brown, 2006). Having access to a variety of narrative repertoires may also be critical for accomplishing rewriting and/or revising self-narrative flexibly to adjust to the new surroundings. However, the more varied the narrative repertoire, the greater the possibility for situational adaptation and innovative response, but at the same time, variety increases the danger of inauthenticity across different episodes (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

In their research, though they focused on the evolution of the narrative repertoires, there is still no clear understanding of the mechanism of developing sense-making. Also, there is still little research which focuses on either the mechanism of individuals' transformation or the rewriting of self-narratives in new organizational settings, aiming to understand their adaptation process.

## **Chapter 3: Method**

In this chapter, I describe the following methods; the narrative approach for interviews and the grounded theory approach for analyzing and examining the interview data.

### **3-1 Narrative approach**

Currently, the narrative approach has drawn attention to examine and identify subjective issues in organizational behavior (Kato, 2012).

Narratives are written or verbal accounts focusing on common themes or issues which also link a set of ideas or a series of events (Gabriel, 2004). People begin putting their lives together into integrative narratives of self, reconstructing the past and imaginatively anticipating the future in such a way as to provide their lives with some sense of unity and purpose McAdams (2001).

Narratives are fundamental to the way in which we think about ourselves and how we interact with one another (Ochs, 1997) and an important symbolic form through which meanings are constructed and shared (Brown, 2004).

Narrative has chronological dimension and can be a simple chronicle of events or an account that contextualized events, by attempting to explain them and/or persuade others of their relevance (Ochs, 1997). Narratives may concern past, present, future, hypothetical, habitual, or other culturally relevant mode of reckoning time and can also be primarily concerned with sequences of events taking place in present time (Ochs, 1997).

A narrative approach can provide insight into how meaning is socially constructed and action is generated (Brown, 2004). So that, a narrative approach does not focus on capturing the substance nor seeking the truth. It approaches how individuals construct and understand their reality through the narratives. In context, narrative analysis can provide insight into how meaning is socially constructed and action is generated (Brown, 2004). Narratives provide us with a better understanding of how individuals are integral to the process of sense-making in organizations (Weick, 1995; Brown, 2004). Furthermore, a narrative approach can possibly construct the dynamism of sense-making in the basis of the constructing the process of narratives (Kato, 2012). Therefore, in terms of understanding the sense-making process, the narrative approach provides us with useful information to reveal it.

### **3-2 Grounded theory approach**

In the analysis of qualitative data, the technique of a “grounded theory” is, by far, most often applied in the qualitative research (Lee, et, al., 1999)

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Since my study which applies this approach aims not to develop a certain theory, but to understand the mechanism of adaptation process, as Strauss & Corbin (1990) suggested, the grounded theory procedure would stop by axial coding phase.

A grounded theory approach is suited to small-scale research, recognized rationale for qualitative research, fairly adaptable to use with interview transcripts, pragmatic and well suited in business areas to understand the matters in terms of interpersonal relations (Denscombe, 2010). Also, this approach is helpful with a systematic way of analyzing qualitative data to make sense of the data and well suited to exploratory research (Denscombe, 2010).

In terms of selecting methods of my study, concerning adaptability to use interviews, data analysis followed a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Ibarra, 1999; Denscombe, 2010).

The first step of this approach involves the coding and categorizing of the data. The researcher begins to assign bits of the 'raw data' to particular categories. Careful scrutiny of the data will allow the researcher to see that certain bits of the data have something in common (Denscombe, 2010).

The codes are open to change and refinement as research progresses, which is referred to as *open coding*. The code will be fairly descriptive and are likely to involve labelling chunks of data in terms of their content (Denscombe, 2010).

Then, utilizing the chunks to apply for *axial coding*, (Denscombe, 2010) stated that examining the relationships between the codes, such as links and associations, allows the shaping of codes which are subsumed under broader headings and are seen as more crucial than others. After, it will be applied to selective coding. This step focuses on the key components and the most significant categories which have emerged from open and axial coding.

Theoretical saturation occurs 'when additional analysis no longer contributes to



discovering anything new about a category (Strauss, 1987). So, a grounded theory approach uses the constant comparative method as a means of analyzing the data (Denscombe, 2010).

The constant comparative method entails a commitment to comparing and contrasting new codes, categories and concepts as they emerge – constantly seeking to check them out against existing versions, which allow them to refine and improve (Denscombe, 2010).

This approach accepts that researchers cannot be entirely neutral and that the meaning attached to any data involves some kind of interpretation by the researcher (Denscombe, 2010). However, this takes the position that the meaning exists in the data and the grounded theory approach allows the researcher to extract the meaning and develop it into a more abstract theory (Denscombe, 2010).

In this study, first, I coded and categorized the data. Second, I examined the relationship between the codes. Then, I focused on just the most significant categories which have emerged from former order and then integrated codes and categories under common headings. Through this examination, I applied the constant comparative method which compared and contrasted new codes and categories.

## **Chapter 4: The structure of executive leaders' career paths beyond organizational boundaries; the mobility analysis with career paths frame work and model**

The purpose of this study is to visualize the structure of executive leaders' career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries. In the interest of executive mobility, a career path framework (Career path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM) were developed and 14 executive leaders working in a variety of industries were interviewed. As a result, 14 cases were explained with CPT and CPM and the mobility of their career paths could be visualized. By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility patterns will be discussed. Furthermore, the results present the effectiveness of both CPT and CPM for future usage and this study can provide a better understanding of executive leaders career paths within external labor markets.

### **4-1 Introduction**

*“What is the mobility structure of executive leader career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries?”* In response to this question, in order to visualize the structure, I developed a career path framework (Career path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM) based off of previous research and conducted interviews with the 14 corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries. As a result, 14 cases were explained with CPT and CPM and the mobility of their career paths were visualized. By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility

patterns will be discussed.

Through this study, I would like to contribute to organizational behavioral studies with a better understanding of Japanese executive leader career paths within external labor markets. And in practice, this study will lead to better decision making for organizations in planning executive career paths for the future. Furthermore, the results present the effectiveness of both CPT and CPM for future usage.

This chapter consists of 6 sections. In the introduction, I state the purpose and research of this study. In the second section, I introduce the career path frame work (Career Path Tableau: CPT) and model (Career Path Model: CPM) which I developed for this study. Third, I conducted case study interviews focusing on 14 executive leaders' career paths in a variety of industries though CPT and CPM. Fourth, I present the results of the case study with its demographic data, CPT, and CPM. Fifth, I discuss the structure of mobility and the tendencies of individual career paths with CPT, and show possible career paths which are categorized into ten distinctive mobility patterns. And in the sixth and final section of this chapter, I provide the conclusion with a brief summary of this study.

## **4-2 Developing Career Path Tableau (CPT) and Career Path Model (CPM)**

In this section, I developed a career path frame work (Career Path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM), which stems from previous studies, to describe and analyze a variety of career path information of executive leaders beyond organizations.

### ***4-2-1 The structure of the Career Path Tableau (CPT)***

I developed a career path frame work (Career Path Tableau: CPT) in Table 1. The

following is the structure and rules of descriptions.

[Table 1: Career Path Tableau (CPT)]

Levels	Enterprise manager			
	Group manager		Fin	
	Business manager		Fin	
	Functional manager		Fin	
	Manage of managers	Fin [Branch]		Fin
	Manage others	Fin		
	Manage self	Sales Fin		
Industry	IT	Consumer		
Comments	—	—		
# of companies worked for	2			
overseas experience	-			
Case	1			

				Fin
				Fin
	Fin		Fin	Fin
	Fin	Fin	MBA	Fin
	Fin			
	Trading	Consumer	Trading	—
	—	Temporary transfer	—	MBA
	2 (including a temporary transfer)			
				■
				2

				Fin
				Fin
	Fin		Fin	Fin
	Fin	Fin	Fin (MBA)	Fin
	Fin			
	Banking	Consumer	Consumer	IT
			MBA	
				■
				4
				3

CPT’ structure and rules of descriptions are as follows. From the bottom, case number, overseas experience, # of companies worked for, industry, and levels which based off of the leadership pipe line model of Charan in 2001 (Charan, et. al., 2001) and divided into seven categories, which are: manage staff, manage others, manage of managers, functional manager, business manager, group manager, and enterprise manager (CEO). The definition of a corporate executive leader in this study is from group manager level and higher in this frame work.

As a rule, one column is allocated just for one company. So if the number of companies increases, a column is just added in right side. In the column, there are Fin or Sales as departments they experienced. Each abbreviation used in CPT is explained in the bottom of the table 3. Overseas experience is marked with a circle in the particular column when individual experienced and is also described as a square in the bottom row

In case 1 (see Table 1. case 1), at the bottom, internal transfer at the same level are shown with a diagonal line in the same cell with the new job on the right and the old on the left.

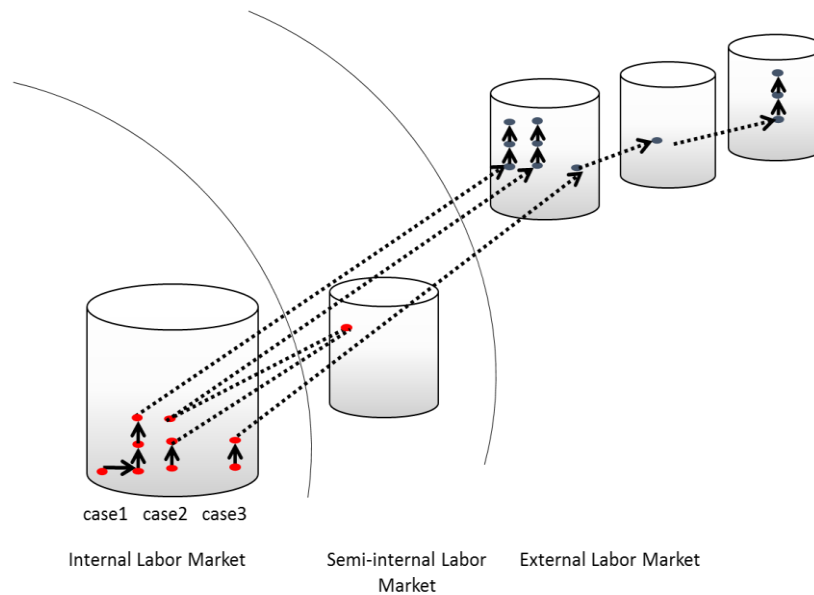
If they changed their place to work, such as from headquarters to a branch, the information is just added in parenthesis in the column.

In case 2 (see Table 1. case 2), in the case of temporary transfers, the original job is connected to the temporary transfer by a solid arrow and shaded and commented below.

The current level of the interviewees is highlighted in the column. If the interviewee is already an enterprise manager (CEO) level, the cell is circled and highlighted in the column.

#### 4-2-2 The structure of Career path model (CPM)

Career path model (CPM) represents the CPT as a model in order to simplify the individuals' mobility from one company to another (see Figure 2).



[Figure 2: Career path model (CPM)]

From the left, there are three distinct markets as noted in Chapter 2 which are an internal labor market (ILM), semi-internal labor market (SILM), and an external labor market (ELM). A solid arrow shows a promotion within the single organization and a shaded arrow describes job changes to another organization. The following is an example to which CPT is applied.

### **4-3 Case Study**

In this section, I show the case study by interviewing 14 corporate executive leaders from a variety of industries.

This research was conducted from August 2011 to July 2013 with 14 intensive interviews. In the interest of comparison, within the 14 executives, nine have been moving across organizations and the remaining five have been working at a single organization.

There were one or two interviews per interviewee which lasted between one to one and half hours. Each interview was composed of semi-structured questions. The questionnaires were constructed from three main topics which follows the research questions; 1) What was their career path, 2) What led them to move to another company, 3) What support they had to move to another company.

In the interviews, I first asked their career paths in chronological order. Then I asked the following questions; "Did you have any self-created movement?" "What made you think about moving to another company?" "How did you move to another company?" "How did you acquire the information for the job change?" "Do you have any experience in which you had difficulties coping with new organizational settings?"

The interviews were all recorded and transcribed. Initially, the interview transcripts were put into CPT and compared with the interview data back and forth. Afterwards, I described all of career paths information with CPM to simplify the individuals' mobility. Throughout this research, full consideration to their privacy was given.

#### **4-4 The result of the case study**

As a result, I describe all interviewees' demographic data and depict all of the interview data through CPT and CPM.

##### ***4-4-1 Results with demographic data***

Table 2 is the demographic data of the interviewees. From the left, case numbers, levels of position based off of leadership pipeline, age, number of companies worked for, number of employees at current company, experience of temporary/permanent transfer, number of departments they experienced, overseas experience, and the base country of their current company.

Cases 1 through 5 are working for a single company within an internal and/or semi-internal labor market. Their ages range from early 40s to early 60s and the number of their departments is one or two. Two cases have experience moving to another group company as a temporary transfer and two other cases have overseas experience.

Cases 6 through 14 are moving across organizations within external labor markets. The number of companies they worked for is from two to seven, of which one case has experience with M&A and another has experience in temporarily transfer due to a spinoff of the department into separate companies. Their ages range from early 40s to late

50s and the number of their departments is one or two. Six cases have overseas experience.

[Table 2: Interviewees' demographic data]

# of case	level	age	# of company worked for	# of employees at current company	temporary/permanent transfer*	# of job	overseas experience	owner: local/foreign
1	Group manager	early 50s	1	over 10,000	-	1	-	Local (Japan)
2	Enterprise manager	early 60s	1	1000-2999	-	2	-	Local (Japan)
3	Group manager	early 50s	1	1000-2999	-	2	-	Local (Japan)
4	Group manager	early 40s	1	over 10,000	Temporary 1	2	YES	Foreign (US)
5	Enterprise manager	early 40s	1	over 10,000	Temporary 2	1	YES	Local (Japan)
6	Enterprise manager	late 50s	2	1000-2999	-	2	YES	Local (Japan)
7	Group manager	early 40s	2	over 10,000	-	2	YES	Foreign (US)
8	Group manager	early 50s	3	over 10,000	-	2	YES	Local (Japan)
9	Enterprise manager	early 40s	3	over 10,000	-	1	YES	Foreign (US)
10	Group manager	early 50s	3	over 10,000	-	1	-	Foreign (Switz)
11	Group manager	early 40s	4	over 10,000	-	1	-	Foreign (US)
12	Group manager	early 40s	4	3000-9999	M&A 1	1	-	Foreign (US)
13	Group manager	early 40s	5	over 10,000	-	1	YES	Foreign (US)
14	Group manager	early 40s	7	3000-9999	Permanent 1	1	YES	Foreign (France)

\*all information above is at the time of interviewed.

\*case 5 is an enterprise manager at the temporary transferred company.

\*Temporary transfer / Permanent transfer to another group company

By dividing all 14 cases into two categories; Japanese based companies and foreign based companies, it turned out that there is a gap between their ages. Especially in enterprise manager (CEO), there is a 20 year age gap.

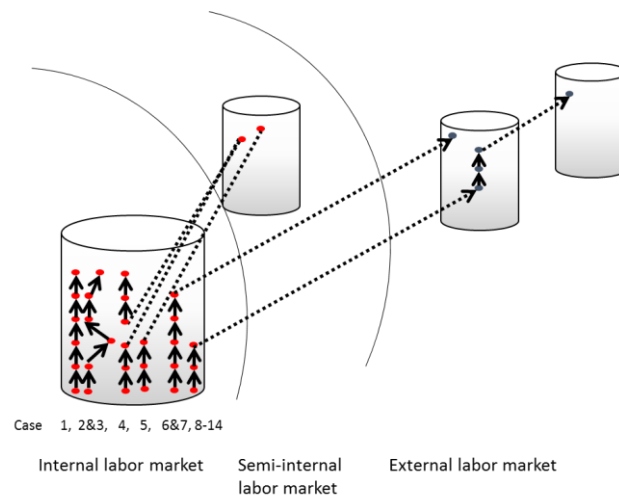
#### ***4-4-2 Results with Career Path Tableau (CPT)***

Below (see Table 3) is the case from 1 through 5 who work at a single company. For example, case 2 was in his early 60s and an enterprise manager (CEO) at a Japanese company. He has been working for a single company for over 35 years and does not have any overseas experience. He experienced mainly logistics and human resource departments in accordance to the internal move. This is quite a normal situation in Japanese based companies.









[Figure 3: CPM; the model of all career paths described in CPT]

#### 4-5 Discussion

In this section, I discuss the above results by examining the following two parts using CPT and CPM in order to understand more of the mobility structure of executive leaders career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries; 1) the features of their career paths moving beyond organizations, 2) the variety of individual's possible career patterns within all labor markets.

##### *4-5-1 Examination towards the features of the career paths moving beyond organizations*

By examining the results of CPT and CPM, it turned out that there is the following common ground of career paths moving beyond organizations: 1) Consistently developing their careers within a own specialty, 2) Being directly hired into the management level from outside, 3) Started to work at management level at an earlier age, and 4) Moving beyond boundaries in both industries and companies.

According to Yashiro (2000), there is an evidence that many companies are hiring executive leaders from outside of the company to tackle the rapid environmental changes. The companies believe that accepting well-experienced executives from outside is indispensable in terms of obtaining new networks and/or gaining knowledge. Since some of the cases have moved across industrial boundaries companies can apply that knowledge beyond their industry as well. Regarding moving across organizations in their earlier ages, they may have opportunities to proactively gain more of their experiences and knowledge than one who stays at a single company. However, some issues come up from the data and those lie ahead for the companies.

There is a huge gap in the age of executive leaders between Japanese companies and foreign companies. The average age of executives in foreign companies is ten to twenty years younger than those of Japanese companies. In Japan, we mainly develop one's career by moving a variety of jobs through internal/semi-internal transfers and promote slowly based on seniority bases within a part of the life-time employment system. Compared to western countries, which define the career course whether stepping into a succession plan or not by their early 30s, generally Japanese companies need ten more years than the western average.

In Japan, generally the wage is also based on seniority and accordance to a slow promotion. This issue may cause of another issue which makes organizations hard in terms of fitting newcomers into the current system. Also that will influences the motivation of executive leaders hiring from outside.

#### 4-5-2 Examination towards a variety of individual's career patterns

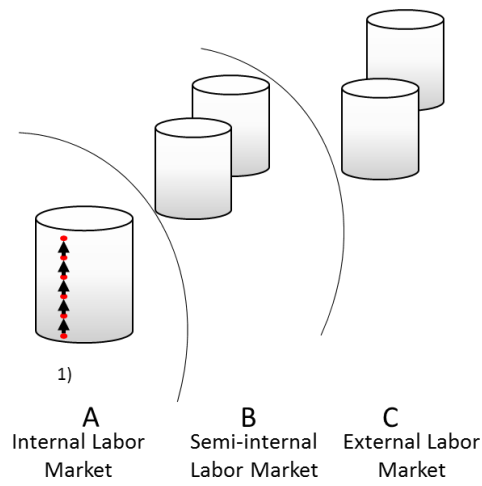
By examining all of the cases based on CPT and CPM, there are ten distinct mobility patterns for likelihood of individuals' career paths across all labor markets.

The following are the rules of the examination (See Table 5). From the left, the number of patterns, the number of transfers; 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> transfer, reference case number in above results. In the table, [A] is Internal Labor Market (ILM), [B] is Semi-Internal Labor Market (SILM), and [C] is External Labor Market (ELM). The transfer limit among labor markets allowed is at three. Moves in-house are omitted for simplification.

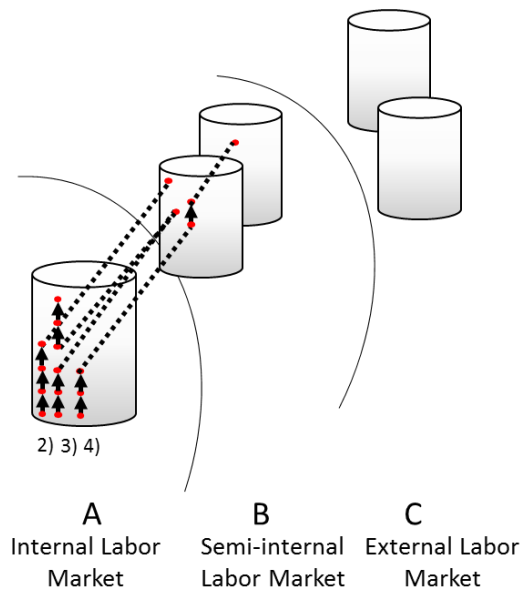
[Table 5: Possible career path patterns among labor markets]

Patterns	1st	2nd	3rd	Referring cases	Comments
1)	A	-	-	1,2,3	Develop ones career within a internal labor market
2)	A	B	-	5	Transfer to a group company within semi-internal labor market and not coming back to ones original company
3)	A	B	A	4	Transfer to a group company within semi-internal labor market and coming back to ones original company
4)	A	B	B'	-	Transfer to group companies and move to another group companies from 2nd company within semi-internal labor market. In my case study, pattern 5 is not shown, but this is likelihood to appear in the companies which actively engage personnel exchanges.
5)	A	B	C	-	Transfer to group companies within semi-internal labor market then move to another company within external labor market. As same as pattern 4, this is not shown in my cases, however, according to Inagami (2003), the transfers managed by original company are expanding from semi-internal labor market to external labor markets. Therefore this is likelihood to be appears.
6)	A	C	-	6,7,	Transfer to external labor market as a job change and stay there for entire work life time.
7)	A	C	A	-	Transfer to external labor market as a job change and return to the original company
8)	A	C	B	-	Transfer to external labor market as a job change and get into the group company of original company within semi-internal labor market
9)	A	C	CB	-	Transfer to external labor market as a job change. And transfer to the company's group company.
10)	A	C	CC'	8,9,10,11,12,13,14	Transfer to external labor market as a job change. And continue to change the companies

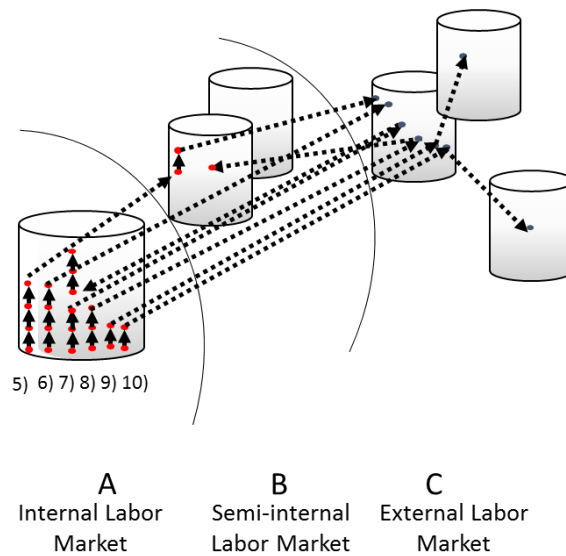
Those 10 patterns can be classified either by organizational career paths or boundaryless career paths. From 1) to 4) are the organizational career path patterns. These four patterns are divided into two categories; "Bounded career paths" which only has work experiences at a single company (Figure 3), and "Semi-bounded career paths" which has work experiences in transferring to affiliated company at least once within the same company group (Figure 4). From 5) to 10) are the boundaryless career paths, which have experiences in the external labor markets (Figure 5).



[Figure 3: Possible career paths patterns only in an internal labor market; Bounded career paths]



[Figure 4: Possible career paths patterns moving between an internal and semi-internal labor markets; Semi-bounded career paths]



[Figure 5: Possible career paths patterns moving among all labor markets; Boundaryless career paths]

By examining boundaryless career paths, it turned out that all of career path patterns who experienced external labor markets fall into either pattern 6) or 10). There was no interviewee who moved to external labor markets right after semi-internal labor market.

The people who experienced the semi-internal labor market just stays there quite a long time or returns to their original (mostly parent) company within three to five years.

It apparently seems that moving from internal labor markets to external labor markets is easier than having semi-internal labor market experiences before joining an external labor market

However, considering the uniqueness of Japanese labor markets, transferring to semi-internal labor markets intends several meanings as I described in Chapter 2. If they were told by HR department that transferring to semi-internal labor market is a part of their career plan in a positive way, they will actively devote to gain their experiences in a different situation. In this case, they are most likely returning to their original company.

On the other hand, if their transfer means branching them off from their original company,

they may be demotivated and just stay the transferred company for just a means to pay their bills based on the life-time employment system. On top of that, there is a tendency that the subsidiaries are ranked low compared to the parent company. Whatever the reasons being transferred to subsidiaries, there are possibilities that they may think themselves less valued and have a negative impact on their motivation. Considering those situation, though boundaryless career paths for the interviewees are dominated by moving from an internal labor market to external labor markets, Pattern 5) was not available among the interviewees who moved to the external labor market before their parent companies forced them to transfer to their subsidiaries as a job rotation. For the future research, tracking their career paths by age and by years they stayed at each company are required.

#### **4-6 Conclusion**

I'll conclude this section with a brief summary.

In response to this chapter's research question, I developed a career path framework (Career path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM) based off of previous research. Then I conducted interviews with 14 corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries and described all of their career paths with CPT and CPM. By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility patterns were discussed and the career paths structures of beyond organizational boundaries were visualized and clarified.

Considering the research questions; "What is the mobility structure of executive leader career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries?", the mobility structure is each path which was visualized in CPT and CPM. And there are four commonalities which are to develop ones careers in adhering specialties, to be hired at the management level directly from outside, to be promoted into management level in their early ages, and



to move beyond boundaries in both industries and companies.

Hiring executive leaders from outside has drawn attention in Japan through practice, there is only a limited number of research and its reality remains unknown. Through this research and the application of CPT and CPM for case studies, there is more clarity of career path mobility within organizations, as well as from external to internal organizational boundaries.

In addition, CPT is applicable to measure employees' career paths and CPM can illustrate individuals' mobility patterns within companies by tracking personnel changes. CPT and CPM provide a clear understanding of personnel movement and will be useful to create strategies for hiring executives who actively manage their careers moving beyond organizations. Moreover, that will lead to better decision making for organizations regarding the planning of executive career paths, such as succession plans for the future, and contribute to effective management of human resource practices.

In this chapter, career path tendencies and the possible mobility patterns were described with CPT and CPM. Through this study, the mobility structure of executive leaders' career paths beyond organizational boundaries could be visualized. These results provide an opening for the first step to understand Japanese executive leaders' career paths and patterns within external labor markets in organizational behavioral studies. In order to better understand the structure of executive leaders' mobility beyond organizations, the behavioral features in moving to another company will be clarified in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Behavioral features for executive leaders moving beyond organizational boundaries; Based on a case study of corporate executive leaders**

The purpose of this study is to clarify the behavioral features of Japanese executive leaders who transfer organizations by applying a grounded theory approach. In this research, based on the case study of Chapter 4, nine corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries were intensively interviewed. By examining those cases by applying a grounded theory approach, it turned out that they could be categorized into four patterns which are mobility, mindset, motivation, and source of information patterns. Based on the results, the behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations are discussed. Furthermore, included are the insights for organizations which accept executive leaders from outside the company.

### **5-1 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, the structure of the executive leaders' career paths beyond organizational boundaries was visualized by developing and applying the career path framework (Career Path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM). By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility patterns were discussed.

Based on the study in Chapter 4, in order to understand how executive leaders' mobility structure is sustained, a follow-up research question arose: *What is the common ground of executives who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or*

*support them to transfer to new organizations?* In response to this question, I conducted interviews and examined the data by applying a grounded theory approach to explore and categorize their behavioral features. As a result, their mobility features are categorized into four patterns which are mobility, mindset, motivation, and source of information. Based on the results, their behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to a new organization will be discussed as well as the common ground they share.

Their strong motivation to enhance their expertise horizontally and vertically and expand their career opportunities lead them to move to other organizations. Also Head hunters and former colleagues play a key role to support them in transition toward better opportunities. Moreover, the existence of an invisible but invaluable “Executive search network” was another asset for them to access the new organizations

Through this study, I would like to contribute to organizational behavioral studies with information about the common ground of individuals’ behavioral features leading to a deeper understanding for the transformation process of Japanese executive leaders. Also in practice, this study can aide with reconstruction of organizations human resource management structure. In Japan, since only little research has been accumulated in the career paths of executive leaders who move around organizations, I believe this study is significant for both practitioners and researchers.

This chapter is framed into 5 sections. In the first section I clarify the follow up research question and the purpose of this study. Second, I describe a case study of interviewing executive leaders and the process to derive the patterns. Third, I show the results of the case study. Fourth, I discuss the behavioral features of executive leaders’ career paths. And in the fifth and final section of this chapter, I provide a conclusion with a brief

summary of this study.

## **5-2 Case Study**

### ***5-2-1 The method of case study***

This research were conducted from August 2011 to July 2013. Nine corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries were interviewed, which has experience to transfer to other companies at least once. Interviewees were selected from the lists of respondents in chapter 4 for the sake of the consistency of the research. Based on the interview data developed in chapter 4, I conducted a follow up interview in order to gather more detail data which is appropriate for a grounded theory approach.

The follow up interviews lasted from one to one and half hours. Each interview was conducted by semi- structured questions. The questionnaires were basically constructed by two topics which follow the research questions; 1) What lead them to move to another company, 2) What support them to move to another company.

In the interviews, I asked mainly the following questions; "What made you think about moving to another company?" "How did you acquire the information for the job change?" "Do you have any solicitations from other companies?" "How did you move to another company?" "Do you have any particular ways to move?" "What do you think of your career?" "Do you have any experience in which you had difficulties to cope with the new organizational settings?" They were all transcribed. Throughout this research, I provided full consideration to their privacy.

### 5-2-2 Demographic data of interviewees

[Table 6: Demographic data of interviewees]

# of case	level	age	# of company worked for	# of employees at current company	temporary/permanent transfer*	# of job	overseas experience	owner: local/foreign
1	Enterprise manager	late 50s	2	1000-2999	-	2	YES	Local (Japan)
2	Group manager	early 40s	2	over 10,000	-	2	YES	Foreign (US)
3	Group manager	early 50s	3	over 10,000	-	2	YES	Local (Japan)
4	Enterprise manager	early 40s	3	over 10,000	-	1	YES	Foreign (US)
5	Group manager	early 50s	3	over 10,000	-	1	-	Foreign (Switz)
6	Group manager	early 40s	4	over 10,000	-	1	-	Foreign (US)
7	Group manager	early 40s	4	3000-9999	M&A 1	1	-	Foreign (US)
8	Group manager	early 40s	5	over 10,000	-	1	YES	Foreign (US)
9	Group manager	early 40s	7	3000-9999	Permanent 1	1	YES	Foreign (France)

\*all information above is at the time of interviewed.

\*case 5 is an enterprise manager at the temporary transferred company.

\*Temporary transfer / Permanent transfer to another group company

### 5-2-3 Data analysis

Data analysis followed an inductive, grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Ibarra, 1999; Denscombe, 2010) described in chapter 3. (More details are covered in Appendix)

In this study, first, I coded all of the interview data which I thought relevant to the research questions, such as “headhunters” ”coworkers” “career opportunities” “sponsorship” “tired of dealing with politics”, and categorized the codes. Through this examination, since I applied the constant comparative method which compared and contrasted new codes and categories, these steps were almost overlapping at the same time.

By examining the relationship between codes and categories, four categories of behavioral patterns emerged: 1) mobility pattern, 2) mindset pattern, 3) motivation pattern, 4) source of information pattern. I focused on these four categories to integrate codes and

the categories under common headings.

### **5-3 Result**

As a result of examining the case study interview with the grounded theory approach, it turned out that there are distinctive four common grounds of behavioral features as follows.

#### **1) Mobility pattern**

- Having clear objectives in advance for the next company; either temporary place or the place where they really want to commit for a long time. For example, in the case 6 and 9, avoiding to breach of what is called gentleman's agreement, they once joined the companies in different industries for a short time (less than 1 year). Then they transferred to the competitors of the previous job. Working at a competitor within the same industry, and/or a company in the related field were easier to present their performance in a short time. Also the temporary places tend to be a bit smaller companies than the previous ones in order to show good performances in a short period.
- Transferring to new organizations by bringing previous company's know-how, intelligence, and intellectual information, and apply them somehow to new jobs. They also took their own networks which include both suppliers and clients.
- Using executive search firms and former colleagues to move. Seven out of nine cases were using executive search firms so-called "head hunters" to move other organizations. The remaining two cases were scouted directly by the new organizations via their former colleagues.

- Moving around C suites in external labor markets. Once they become a part of executive layers which is named as “C suites” in external labor markets, they are most likely moving around within the related industries and job markets.
- Having difficulties to adjust to new career structures, especially the salary, which is mostly based on seniority. In these cases, the organizations grant exceptions beyond the regular wage structures and hire them as ‘contract workers’ even though they are treated as if they are regular workers.

## **2) Mind set patterns**

- Recognizing the difference between mentor and sponsor. All of them were aware that the influence of sponsors is more important than the skills of themselves to acquire better opportunities. They believed that the right sponsors give them real career opportunities and put them on the path to power and influence. They were strategic to search potential sponsors both within and outside of the company and maintain the relationships with sponsors they already have.
- Carefully watching internal and external politics. Some of them said they do not care those politics at all. However, they were still watching carefully the tide of the internal political issues.
- Taking all the advantages of their know-hows and networks with clients and/or suppliers which they had acquired/accumulated in previous companies in order to fulfil their responsibilities in new organizations.
- Efficiently using lunch time for meetings with clients instead of playing golf or having “nominication” much. They did not think playing golf is the only way to maintain and sustain their networks.

- Naturally following their instincts when it comes to determine their way.
- Having a good sense of reading between the lines of what people say and capturing the whole picture of the situation.
- Showing up and leaving office earlier than subordinates in order to secure their own time. They believed that controlling the time by themselves and having their own space and time were invaluable to keep their mental and physical balance.

### **3) Motivation patterns**

There are apparently two reasons to move to another company;

- Aiming to enhance their expertise and expand their career opportunities. Generally they are hired in a particular position and responsibilities. When they get used to it, they tend to seek other challenges outside the company.
- Getting tired of dealing with internal politics, failing to adapt to new cultures, and divergence of corporate strategy from what they used to believe, etc.

### **4) Source of information patterns**

There are a variety of sources;

- Headhunters: they keep in touch with several headhunters to exchange information in order to update their own value and seek the other opportunities. These kind of personal relationships allow respondents to get access to better opportunities. And some respondents regularly received inquiries/solicitations from current contacted headhunters and/or unfamiliar ones once or twice a week. Also many of them constructed their own careers with headhunters and were collecting information regarding current bosses from headhunters in order to have good relationships with them, and search if there are any opportunities to be promoted in-house.
- Former colleagues. In the case of direct scouting from new organizations, former colleagues play key roles as the "transition bridge" between respondents and new



organizations. Also they are the ones who recommend respondents to headhunters. Many of them proactively attend alumni events of former organizations and frequently exchange information regarding the current job market situations.

- Friends from college and/or graduate school. Most respondents actively develop and maintain a variety of networks by attending various cross-industrial meetings/parties with friends from colleges or graduate schools.
- Invisible, unmentioned "Executive search network" exist in external markets. Regarding the flow of the job information, seven out of nine respondents mentioned that there is some unmentioned, invisible "Executive search network" which has a strong linkage with job information for the executive level.

The following is a summary of above results.

[Table 7: Four patterns of behavioral features]

<p>Mobility Patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being hired directly to the executive levels from outside and developing a career in a specific field</li> <li>- Moving around C suites in external labor markets</li> <li>- Using executive search firms and former colleagues to move</li> <li>- Having difficulties to adjust a current career structure especially the salary</li> </ul>
<p>Mindset Patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizing the importance of sponsors and strategically searching the potential sponsors</li> <li>- Carefully watching the tide of the internal and external politics</li> <li>- Naturally following their instincts when they judge</li> <li>- Thinking others expectations first and trying to respond a little bit beyond it</li> <li>- Focusing on securing their own time and space to keep mental and physical balance</li> <li>- Efficiently using lunch time for meetings with clients instead of neither playing golf nor having "nominication" much.</li> </ul>
<p>Motivation Patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aiming to expand and enhance their career opportunities</li> <li>- Getting tired of dealing with internal politics, failing to adapt to new cultures, and divergence of corporate strategy.</li> </ul>
<p>Source of Information Patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Headhunters</li> <li>- Former colleagues, friends from college and/or graduate school</li> <li>- Invisible, unmentioned "Executive search network" existing in external markets</li> </ul>

## 5-4 Discussion

In this section, by examining the above findings, I discuss according to the research

questions: *What is the common ground of those who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations?*

***1) What lead them to move***

Their self-motivation to seek out their career opportunities towards outside lead them to move.

Regarding mobility patterns, according to Parks, et. al., (1998), their obligations to their organizations are short-term, indefinite, and both performance and contractually oriented. At the same time, Cheramie (2007) noted that they own their careers by autonomously capitalizing on new opportunities that they believe will provide them with valued returns in exchange for performance and they strongly believe they have the capacity to move across boundaries.

Therefore, developing careers with their own specialties in several organizations let them to enhance their expertise deeply and accumulate diversified experiences. Those enhance and maximize their value in external labor markets, therefore, that motivate them to move other companies.

The other key factors which lead them to move are internal and/or external environmental changes such as organizational politics, M&A, change of CEO, and divergence of corporate strategy, etc.

According to Cheramie, et. al., (2007), their research results imply that in managing their careers, these individuals seek opportunities to maximize their extrinsic rewards, specifically their salary and bonus. They also noted that if these executives experience a

decline in the health of their organizations, they are also more apt to change employers. Indeed, some executives will move to get the salary/rank they desire, decreasing loyalty towards any one organization.

Furthermore, in the case of a changing CEO, when a successor arrives, he/she tends to replace all of strategies which the predecessor worked on and to reconstruct them with a full of new ideas. In that case, sooner or later after the arrival of the successor, the current executives who used to have strong relationships with the predecessor are often forced to resign from their positions. Those positions are most likely to be open to the ones who are closer to the successor. In general, shaking up the members are decided based most likely on the personal relationships underneath the surface. This reality has not been openly talked, but is recognized by respondents as a real business practice as well. And this situation strongly influences the motivation for executive leaders to move to the next better opportunities.

## ***2) What support them to move***

Having transition bridges, which is sustained by their external networks drawn by their performance and reputations from others, support them to move.

All cases have their own ways which support them to move beyond organizational boundaries such as headhunters and/or former colleagues whether they recognized or not.

Regarding headhunters, Hamori (2014) stated that executives have higher chances of receiving a promotion in moves across organizations if these moves are mediated by search firms. Besides, in this study, the respondents strongly recognized that former colleagues are the key players. Those who transferred to other organizations via

headhunters mentioned that former colleagues had first recommended them to headhunters and respondents received the solicitations from headhunters. Also, headhunters gather reliable information through respondents' former colleagues.

As Yashiro's research (2000) presented some evidence that many companies are positive to hire executive leaders from outside the company. Because they believe that accepting them are beneficial to the company such as being able to acquire know-hows and networks with clients and/or suppliers which those executives had acquired/accumulated in their previous companies. All organizations are eager to hire high performance leaders; however, candidates and hiring organizations are often unaware of each other or lack of social network connections (Hamori, 2014). Since knowledge and skills that were already demonstrated by job candidates in a previous position are easier to assess with reliability (Hamori, 2014), organizations also are heavily relying on the information from former colleagues.

Information about job opportunities travels through social networks. For instance, those who belongs to new networks most likely have different biographies could have provided them with a large number of "weak ties" who can deliver job opportunities they would not otherwise encounter (Granovetter, 1973, 1998). Most of the respondents are actively involved in a variety of events including the alumni gatherings of former companies in order to maintain and expand their own networks beyond organizational boundaries. These activities may play crucial roles as mutual supporters and that bridge a person and unmet opportunities. Therefore, having diversified social networks bring many "weak tie" connections which are critical in linking people to unmet opportunities and has a high likelihood of guiding them to career opportunities.

Moreover, most of them were aware that the importance of sponsors. In Japan, generally, companies are willing to launch mentor programs in order to support employee's career. However, according to interviewees, when it comes to developing careers, mentors were nice-to-have. Mentors may navigate them to ascend corporate ladder, help them understand the unwritten rules, and provide them with an informal map uncharted corridors to power. Mentor could shine their strength with their own essential assessment to prepare to attract bosses and/or sponsors. Mentors also help their dreams to define, but cannot put them on the new position.

To acquire the better position, they need to have "sponsors" which is must-have. Having a right sponsor is an extremely important to be put on a better jobs internally and/or externally. In other words, sponsors are the enablers for executives. Sponsors are connecting executives to career opportunities and providing a huge support such as raising their visibilities within or outside of their company. Also they cover when executives happen to encounter some problems. Once the door opens, the flow make it rapidly. Executives can receive better opportunities.

In the interviews, seven out of nine respondents mentioned limited and unspoken society which is deemed a "Executive search network". Respondents did not exactly know when and how the society became available for them and what the structure looks like. Some of respondents told the timing might be when they received a sealed letter from one of the top executive search firms in the world. Since then, the job opportunities they receive have changed to upper levels in both position and salary. Therefore, becoming the member is one of the key steps to expand accessibility to upper echelon, which support and lead them to better opportunities.

However, there is only a limited number of studies focusing on how effective sponsorship is to employees' career development and what is the difference between mentors and sponsors to employees. Especially in Japan, those empirical researches have not been conducted yet.

### ***3) The implications***

There were some new findings in this area of studies. Regarding the mobility patterns, most of the interviewed executives were moving around C suites in external labor markets. This is a quite different pattern from the traditional Japanese system. And the existence of "Executive search network" has never discussed before even though this is the part of the keys to accessing the upper echelon. This is the significant contribution of this study.

Those executives also have faced some difficulties to smoothly move to new organizations. Especially, it is hard for them to fit to the existing career structure and wage ranges of new organizations. Generally, frequency of promotions has been one of the most commonly used indicators of objective career success (Ng et al. 2005). And the compensation is a very relevant factor associated with an executive's propensity to switch organizations (Cheramié et al, 2007). In managing careers, individuals seek opportunities to maximize their extrinsic rewards, specifically their salary and bonus, and if these executives experience a decline in the health of their organizations, they are also more apt to change employers (Cheramié et al., 2007).

Since Japan has been known for the life-time employment and its promotion is slowly based on seniority, there are obviously wage differences between Japan and other global markets. Consequently, some respondents transferred from foreign based companies to

Japanese companies have been offered exceptional terms outside the current wage ranges. Since organizations cannot easily change their official wage structure just for one person hiring from outside, they treat the person as a "contract workers" to deal with current structure. It seems apparently reasonable for both the new comer and the organization. However, practically it is very hard to coexist quite different ways in one company. These cases sometimes cause friction and bring controversial issues among other employees due to the salary gaps. Therefore, special cares should be needed for the organizations.

Moreover, individuals' adaptation to new organizational settings are big challenges for both individuals and organizations. When beginning work, the individual passes from outsider to newcomer and enters the encounter stage (Louis, 1980). Entering a new organization for individual is to confront with many unfamiliar ways of doing things (Gundry and Rousseau, 1994). By examining the findings carefully, not many of them have been able to smoothly adapt its new culture. There are great difficulties in adjusting to new organizational settings, which is one of the most important deciding factors for success for both individuals and organizations. To deal with this difficulty, organizations are required to deal with newcomers' adaptation process with high considerations.

From the view point of organization side, hiring executive leaders from outside might send a strong message to internal employees that there is a ceiling they cannot reach. Hiring executive leaders from outside brings new networks and know-hows to reinforce the current businesses. This, at the same time, means there are possibilities of intelligence leakage through those who leave the company.

Also hiring executives from outside itself could send a strong message to internal employees that there is a ceiling which cannot reach at in-house. In fact, one of our

respondents said as follows. “Basically, I am aware that it is no way to move up to the CEO in-house. So all I am doing now is that just do my job and enhance my specialties till I get new opportunities outside this company. As my next step, I am thinking to transfer to a bit smaller company where I can manage as a CEO. I guess, through my experiences, that is a reasonable decision for me.” Hiring executive leaders from outside will elevate the negative motivation of internal members to seek out other opportunities in external markets and bring risks for employees’ retention and could be a double-edged sword situation. Therefore, organizations need to recognize that and fully consider to manage succession plans.

## **5-5 Conclusion**

In this section, I’ll conclude with a brief summary.

Based on the study of Chapter 4, I examined the follow-up research question; *What is the common ground of executives who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations?* In response to this question, I conducted an interview with nine corporate executive leaders working at variety industries and examined the data by applying a grounded theory approach. As a result, they are categorized into four distinctive behavioral features which are mobility, mindset, motivation, and source of information pattern. Based on the results, the behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to a new organization were discussed.

By examining those results in the discussion, there are common ground of behavioral features which are as follows. Developing their own careers within specialties and responding to internal and/or external environmental changes were main factors to more



of lead them to move.

Regarding the support they have, the headhunters and the former colleagues support them to move. Especially, the former colleagues play a key role among respondents, hiring organizations, and headhunters. Sponsors and the “Executive search network” were also a part of the keys to accessing the upper echelon. Those are to be their transition bridges to move.

On top of that, it needs to be noted that having own transition bridges is based on accurate or detailed information on executives. From the perspective of transition bridges, their choice is being largely determined by the reputation and performance of candidate’s most recent employer, and much less by the executive’s actual performance within that organization, about which they have difficulty obtaining relevant information (Khurana, 2002). Accordingly, executives are inevitably to show their performance in a current organization.

Therefore, to answer the research question, what lead them to move beyond boundaries is their self-motivation to seek out better opportunities and what support they are transition bridges which are based on and chosen by reputation of executives’ most recent performance. Both of them are necessary for them to move beyond organizations.

As a result, this study added to the significant findings on the basis of the structure visualized with CPT and CPM in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 6: A Sense-Making Process for executive leaders adaptation to new organizational settings; based on a narrative interview of executive leaders in work transitions**

The purpose of this study is to identify how executive leaders adapt to and cope with new organizational settings. In this study, I focus on their sense-making process which they interpret past experiences in order to adjust to their current situation. Narrative interviews were conducted with executive leaders in work transitions. By examining the interviews through the grounded theory approach, it turned out that there were certain points, named ‘reference points’, to which individuals always refer and/or compare before applying the individuals meaning of own experiences. By considering the findings, in order to identify their adaptation process, I developed a model of the sense-making process. With the model, the mechanism of the adaptation process in individuals’ transformation to new organizations was identified.

### **6-1 Introduction**

In Chapter 5, the behavioral features which lead or support Japanese executive leaders to transfer to new organizations were clarified through examination of case studies by applying the grounded theory approach. The study added to the significance of the findings in the understanding of the structure basis, which was visualized and explained with CPT and CPM in Chapter 4.

Based on the studies of Chapter 4 and 5, in this study, I examine the following question: *What is the mechanism of the executives’ adjusting process to cope with the new organizational settings in order to exceed expectations quickly?* Individuals who enter a

new organization are confronted with many unfamiliar ways of doing things. Hiring executives are required to present a certain level of performance in a short term, and smoothly adaptation to new settings are a foundation for generating their better performance. This is considered key issues in organizational behavioral study, especially in organizational socialization field and practices in managing recruitment and retention practices.

In Chapter 6, I conducted narrative interviews with five executive leaders in work transitions, focusing on their sense-making process. By examining the interviews with a grounded theory approach, as a result, there were certain points, named 'reference points', most likely connected to their past experiences, to which individuals always refer and/or compare before applying meaning to individual's own experiences. Considering reference points, executives have a variety of reference points. Reference points are able to generate more than two interpretations at the same time and also are changeable over time. Based on these findings, how they adjust to and cope with new organizational settings was discussed by focusing on their sense-making process. Through examining the findings and considering the other factors which should be included in sense-making, derived from related researches, I developed a model of the sense-making process. With the model, the adaptation process of individuals' transformation to new organizations was explained and identified. Furthermore, expanding the interpretation and generating diversified reference points will play a large part in how people cope with new organizational settings.

Through this study, I would like to contribute to organizational socialization studies with reference points as key factors leading to a deeper understanding of the adaptation process for entry practices. Also in practice, this study can provide human resource management with adequate tools to aid with the reconstructing their recruitment and/or retention management.

This chapter is comprised of four main sections. First, I state the purpose and introduce

this study. Second, I briefly show the related researches (Chapter 2 covers more in-depth regarding related researches). Third, I present a case study of interviewed executive leaders by applying the narrative approach and provide some results from the study. Fourth, I discuss the sense-making process by developing a model based on the results and related researches in order to respond to the research questions. In the fifth and final section of this chapter, I provide a conclusion.

## **6-2 Related Research**

Adkins (1995) noted that adjusting to the new organizational settings is most likely affected by previous work experience. And sense-making is concerned with how individuals understand or assign meaning to experiences (Kramer, 2010). An important part of sense-making during encounter is understanding or making sense of the difference between new and old settings and it can be viewed as a recurring cycle comprised of a sequence of events occurring over time (Louis, 1980). Moreover, sense-making is also a transactional process, not an independent process, it is through communication that individuals make sense of the new settings (Weick, 1995). Therefore, considering sense-making process, continuity and interaction over time should be included in the conceptual model.

On the other hand, since sense-making is essentially a narrative process (e.g., Brown, 2004; Fisher, 1984), narratives are an important symbolic form through which meanings are constructed and shared (Brown, 2004). Generally, people transform self-narratives to adjust to new surroundings. Self-narratives are powerful instruments for constructing a “transition bridge” (Ashforth, 2001). Ibbara and Barbulescu (2010) proposed a process model in which people draw from narrative repertoires, focusing on individual’s narrative forms of expressing and claiming identity to understand individual’s identity change in a new work role. Ibbara and Barbulescu (2010) noted that narrative repertoires consist of previously told stories through individuals’ experiences and other social interactions to

convey them or vary their form from old settings to new settings. Those repertoires transform as people retain new stories about meaningful events that occur in the course of the transition and/or reinterpret past events which lead people to revise old stories to new stories to be more suitable and appropriate in the new organizational settings (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). Accordingly, the key to the evolution process of narrative repertoires is its variety and coherence (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

### **6-3 Case Study**

In this section, I show a case study of interviewing executive leaders by applying narrative approach. In this case study, five corporate executive leaders in a variety of industries were interviewed. The following is the method and results of our cases.

#### ***6-3-1 The method of case study***

This research was intensively conducted from November to December 2013. Five corporate executive leaders working in a variety of industries in Japan were interviewed by applying narrative approach. By using my professional networks, I carefully selected those executive leaders who just after hired from outside their current company.

Narrative approach is not focusing on capturing the nature of things based on essentialism but focusing on how individuals generate, construct, and understand their realities through narratives based on constructionism. Therefore, this approach can provide insight into how meaning is socially constructed and action is generated (Brown, 2004). Since I aim to explore how they construct the meanings through their experiences they've encountered, this approach is perfectly applicable to this study.

The interviews lasted from one and a half to three hours (two and a half hours on average),

and one to two times per person. Each interview was conducted by semi-structured questions and focused on their story telling from their own experiences.

Regarding the interviews, I prepared semi-structured questions as follows, but I mostly focused on story telling of their experiences. I first asked for their career paths in chronological order, then I mainly used the following questions based on the research question of Chapter 6: "Do you have any self-created movement?" "What made you to think about moving to another company?" "How did you move to another company?" "Do you have any experience in which you had difficulties to cope with new organizational settings?" "What was the most challenging event which you went through in new organizations?" "How did you deal with that at that time?"

They were all recorded and transcribed verbatim. Throughout this research, I provided full confidentiality.

### ***6-3-2 Demographic data of narrative interviewees***

The interviewee demographic data is shown in Table 8. Their age ranged from early 40s to early 50s. Their current positions were in upper management layers which I define as an executive leader level. They changed their jobs 3 times or more so far. Their current types of businesses and professions vary. In order to protect their privacy, the descriptions were simplified on this table.

[Table 8: The demographic data of interviewees]

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>The number of experienced companies</i>	<i>Current type of business</i>	<i>Profession</i>
A	44	Director	4	Logistics company	Logistics
B	41	CFO	7	High-end consumer products company	Finance
C	51	Director	3	Telecom company	Research, corporate planning
D	42	Director	3	IT company	Engineer, corporate planning
E	41	CFO	4	Consulting firm	Finance

### **6-3-3 Data analysis**

The interview transcripts were analyzed an inductive, grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Ibarra, 1999; Denscombe, 2010) described in Chapter 3.

In the analysis phase, I examined the interview data with a grounded theory approach. In the beginning, I coded the data and examined for categories which seemed commonalities through their narratives focusing on their making sense of the new experiences in a new organizational setting.

Up until first two to three narratives, there seemed less commonalities derived from data. However, by continuously examining previous narratives and new data back and forth, certain points came up as categories, to which individuals always referred and/or compared before putting meanings of their own experience to explain to an audience. Their sense-making seemed guided by the points they have already in their mind. And the interpretation of the points directly influenced into their story to be suited to their current situation.

Since then, I started to focus on collecting the similar categories through all along. Through this process, I used an interactive process in back and forth between the previous

and new data. As new concepts or categories emerged, I examined the other to find more evidence to refine it. Through examination, I named them reference points. How to code the interview text is described in the appendix section.

#### ***6-3-4 Results of the case study***

It turned out that reference points consisted of some specific events that executives had in their experiences such as episodes and/or specific words, and metaphor they have created in their mind. The reference points had some common ground as follows.

Firstly, there are a variety of reference points. Some of them use only one word “death”, “dismiss”. Others quote their previous experience such as “I was able to complete the final account report by myself despite the disorganization of the company’s merger”.

Secondly, a reference point is able to be produced more than two interpretations to give it meanings. Individuals select a suitable interpretation to be adapted by and flexible for the listener and could change flexibly depending on the person talking to. Moreover, a variety of interpretations increase depending on the frequency of interaction between individuals and others.

Thirdly, the interpretation could change over time. Interpretation is most likely told at the moment of interaction with consistency throughout the process. For example, they tend to say "I thought that experience was....., but when I look back the moment, I think that was ...."

#### **6-4 Discussion**

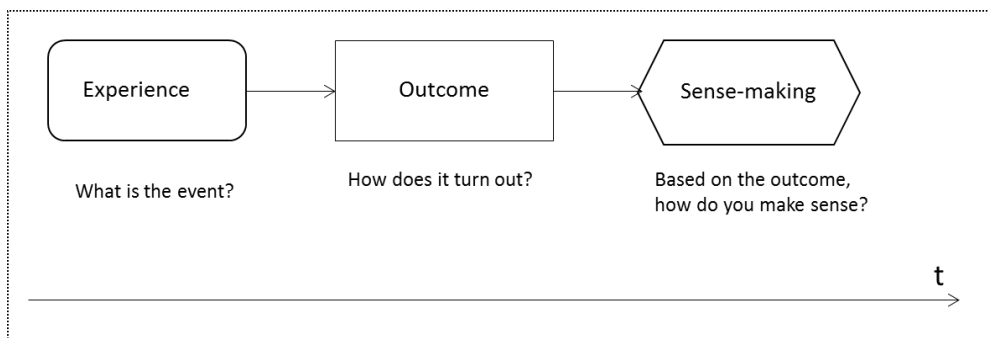
In this section, by examining findings focusing on their sense-making process and key factors which derived from related research for sense-making and narrative repertoire



studies, I depict a sense-making model to clarify the mechanism of adaptation to new organizational settings in Figure 6 and 7. First I show the conceptual model in Figure 6 and then I describe the Sense-Making Process for individuals' adaptation to new organizational settings in Figure 7.

#### **6-4-1 The conceptual model**

Figure 6 is the conceptual model for sense-making model including continuity and interaction. Based on the chronological order.

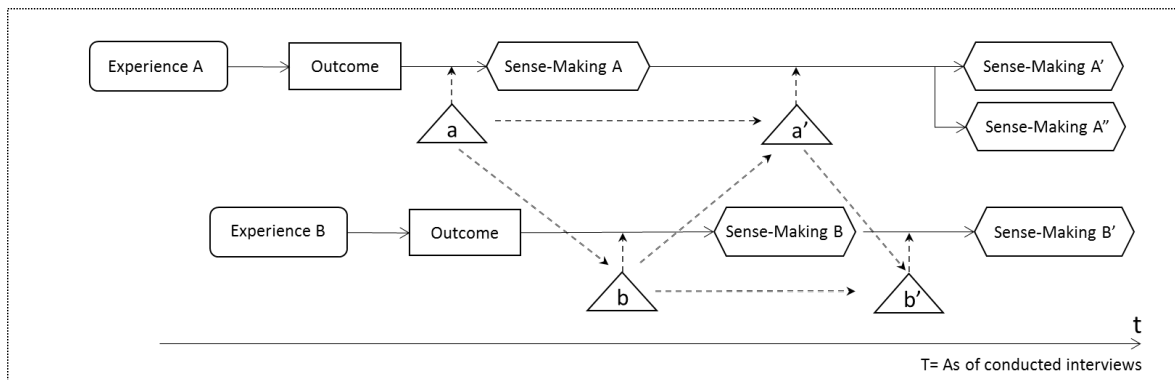


[Figure 6: The conceptual model of a sense-making process]

A solid arrow shows the time flow from the left. At first, the individual has an event that leads to a certain outcome. Then, they apply the most reasonable meaning.

#### **6-4-2 A Sense-Making Process for individuals' adaptation to new organizational settings**

Based on the conceptual model in Figure 6 and the key factors which should be included in sense-making process, continuity and interaction abstracted from related research described earlier, I depict a Sense-making process in Figure 7.



[Figure 7: A model of sense-making process]

In Figure 7, an arrow shows the time flow and dotted arrow illustrates the direction of the effective. Lower case [a], [b], [a'] and [b'] are the cognitive reference points which individuals put a reasonable meaning on the outcomes for sense-making. Considering that, according to previous research, interaction and continuity are key factors. The reference point is highly influenced by other experiences and those should be included into the process.

For instance, reference point [a] influence [b], then transforms to [a'] due to the influence. Therefore, the reference points themselves are interacting and reflecting each other in order to be consistent with the individuals' narrative story at the moment.

Moreover, since Bateson (2004) noted that people don't have just one, but many coexisting self-narratives that ensure a flexible presentation of self, reference points shall produce more than two meanings such as sense-making [A'] and [A''].

According to Beyer and Hannah (2002), adjusting to new work settings is harder when people cannot draw on their past as a resource for present sense-making. With that in consideration in addition to the model I developed, expanding the interpretation for previous experience supports individual's adaptation to new surroundings. Moreover,

individuals may actively develop the reference points; Generating diversified reference points can guide and help them provide a consistent story that can be easily accepted and be effective to cope with new organizational settings.

With the model I developed, the mechanism of the adaptation process in individuals' transformation to new organizations was explained.

## **6-5 Conclusion**

This study aims to identify the mechanism of how executives adapt to and cope with new organizational settings, by focusing on their sense-making process.

In this study, I conducted narrative interviews for executive leaders in work transitions. By examining the interviews through the grounded theory approach, it turned out that there were certain points, named "reference points", to which individuals always refer and/or compare before applying individuals meaning of own experiences. By considering the findings and the other factors which should be included in sense-making process, continuity and interaction over time, a model of sense-making process was developed.

Considering the research question, "*What is the mechanism of the executives' adjusting process to cope with the new organizational settings in order to exceed expectations quickly?*", the mechanism is adjusting the stories which are to be consistent between the current situation and the past experiences/events by transforming the reference-points. This transformation has two meanings; one is for them to obtain the consistent stories intrinsically, and the second is to secure their consistent reputation from outside companies.

Furthermore, this findings provide significant insight for organizations to manage their recruiting and retention management. And also for executives, understanding this model can generate reference points for them intentionally from their past experiences in order to actively expand their interpretations, which can lead to managing themselves more effectively during entry practices. For the organizational socialization study, this model provides an invaluable step to understand a linkage between executive leaders' experiences and their adaptation process to new organizations.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

In this chapter, I discuss the results of sub-question, which examined in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, to respond to the research question: “*What is the structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders’ moving across organizational boundaries in Japan?*” Then I respond to the research question with the results.

### **7-1 Discussion for sub-question 1, in Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 is to respond to the research questions; “What is the mobility structure of executive leader career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries?”, Each path which was visualized in CPT and CPM is the structure. And there are four commonalities which are to develop ones careers in adhering specialties, to be hired at the management level directly from outside, to be promoted into management level in their early ages, and to move beyond boundaries in both industries and companies.

The structure is the visual representation of the commonalities in executive’s career paths. This is a tool which utilizes the executives’ past experiences in order to better understand their movement in the past, present, and future.

According to previous research, Japanese companies tend to focus on creating generalists by having their employees experience a variety of jobs, so called “job rotation”, in the same organization. They adopt seniority-based promotion, which is the basis of a lifetime employment system. These above-mentioned commonalities of executives’ career paths were quite opposite from a Japanese employment system, but can be explained with the

concept of a 'boundaryless career', which little research has been conducted in Japan.

Though hiring executive leaders from the outside could be useful to tackle the rapid environmental changes, their boundaryless career paths may generate new challenges for organizations and employees.

Since the Japanese standard has been seniority-based for decades, the career development framework and the wage system are guided by employees' age and/or the year they joined the company. However, in boundaryless career paths, individual's salary and positions are highly dependent on its value and validation for demand and supply within the external labor market. In this study, such differences were revealed by executive's age; Executives who work across organizations are more than ten years younger than the ones who work for a single company.

In order to handle the differences, Japanese companies provide exceptions for hiring executives from outside of their current wage structure. In those cases, there are two quite distinct wage axes co-existing in one organization. This sometimes causes friction and controversial issues among other employees, and could lead to demotivation of them. Moreover, hiring executives directly into management levels could be a risk for the company as well. This would send a strong message to internal employees that there is a ceiling they cannot reach. Without adjusting an in-house succession plan, that also leads to de-motivating the current employees. Organizations should be urged to deal with the situation beforehand.

Moving around the C-suites is one of the commonalities in their mobility. They might not stay in an organization for long and may leave it sooner or later. A retention plan should be included in the management system. An intelligence management system is also important for organizations in order for them to secure and accumulate their knowledge

as a common asset in-house.

To better understand their boundaryless career paths structure, I developed ten distinct possible mobility patterns across all labor markets. In Japan, companies move their employees to a variety of jobs as internal transfers which is considered an essential tool for them to ascend corporate ladders. However, this is only one out of ten patterns. In order to hire the executives moving across boundaries, organizations need to understand the possibility of a variety of executives' career paths.

### **7-2 Discussion for sub-question 2, in Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 is to respond to “*What is the common ground of executives who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations?*”. To answer the research question, what lead them to move beyond boundaries is their self-motivation to seek out better opportunities and what support them are transition bridges which are based on and chosen by reputation of executives' most recent performance. Both of them are necessary for them to move beyond organizations.

By examining the results of behavioral features which led and supported executives to transfer to new organizations, several common parameters came up. The executives have strong motivation to enhance and expand their specialties based on their own belief, and actively keep in touch with several headhunters and former colleagues to exchange current information regularly.

As a feature of the Japanese market, especially at the big corporations, generally once an individual has left the company where they were hired on as freshmen, it is difficult for them to get into another companies' seniority system at the same level as they were previously. They need to somehow survive by themselves in external labor markets.

According to Hamori (2014), using headhunters as a mediator can provide higher chances of receiving a promotion. Headhunters act as a “transition-bridge” for better opportunities for them.

Also, former colleagues who already transferred to other companies play a key role as a “transition-bridge”, too. Hiring organizations are relying on the information from the executives’ former colleagues as a reference. Headhunters tend to gather personal information of candidates for executives via their former colleagues. Therefore, former colleagues who already transferred to other companies are mediators between executives and their unmet opportunities in external labor markets. Executives recognize such importance and proactively keep in touch with their former colleagues and headhunters as a form of insurance.

Using such networks, executives have their information sources up-to-date in the interest of generating better opportunities in advance. That is a crucial resource for executives to survive in external labor markets.

Besides headhunters and former colleagues, another information source which is deemed a “Executive search network”, became available for executives. It is a limited and unspoken society and only the members can have the advantage of being provided advantageous information beforehand. The higher the position, the fewer the opportunities. Becoming a member of the society is one of the key steps to accessing the upper echelon, which is achieved by receiving a sealed letter from one of the top executive search firms in the world.

Even though we now live in an information based society and we can access mass information from anywhere, information about job opportunities only travels through limited social networks. Having accurate and reliable information resources is key and



could be the only transition-bridge to survive in external labor markets.

However, having the above information resources is not enough to bridge the transition gap. Individuals' reputation is a necessity as well as the information resources. Individuals need to show that they are well-experienced and skilled business persons in the related field. Presenting their credibility and capabilities in external labor markets is critical to being recommended new job opportunities by a person in the transition-bridge. That drives executives to be more eager to enhance their expertise. In other words, without improving their own value in the markets, they cannot reach better opportunities.

Actively enhancing their expertise and having accurate, reliable information resources as a transition-bridge are mutually connected. That is their crucial way of survival in external labor markets.

### **7-3 Discussion for sub-question 3, in Chapter 6**

In Chapter 6, the research question is "What is the mechanism of the executives' adjusting process to cope with the new organizational settings in order to exceed expectations quickly?. The mechanism is adjusting the stories which are to be consistent between the current situation and the past experiences/events by transforming the reference-points. This transformation has two meanings; one is for them to obtain the consistent stories intrinsically, and the second is to secure their consistent reputation from outside companies.

To survive in external labor markets, the reputation of individual's consistent performance is critical. Executives need to show a certain level of good performance in a short period of time, right after getting into a new organization. Adjusting their past experiences to new organizations and dealing/coping with other employees are invaluable to further their roles and enhance their reputation internally and externally.

A lot of research on the adaptation process to new organizations focuses on information seeking. Cognitive process and interpretations that newcomers supposedly enact was less researched. However, adapting/coping with new organization smoothly is critical for executives in order to show own capability.

I conducted narrative interviews to explore how executives adapt and cope with their new organizational settings and developed a sense-making model based on the results. By examining the model, it turned out that they were changing their stories to suit and be acceptable to their current situation. In the process of changing their story, they would expand their interpretation of reference points, which they always refer to before applying meaning from their own experiences. Then, they are choosing one interpretation from among them derived from a reference point. Through everyday work life, regardless of whether intentionally or unintentionally, executives would actively generate diversified reference points and expand their interpretation, which can guide and help them provide a reconstructing their story flexibly to be suited and accepted by surroundings.

By consistently changing their story to suit and be acceptable to current surroundings, executives are smoothly adapting/coping with a new organizational setting, which led them to showing their capabilities internally and externally. That directly influences their reputation and is critical for them to survive in external labor markets.

#### **7-4 Discussion for the research question**

By examining all of the results above, I respond the research question: *“What is the structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries in Japan?”*

Each path which was visualized in CPT and CPM is the structure. The mechanism consists of two parameters; self-motivation to seek out better opportunities, and having

transition bridges sustained by reputation of executives' most recent performance. Executives are adjusting their stories which are to be consistent between the current situation and the past experiences/events by transforming the reference points, which promote them to have a coherent evaluation from outside. These two parameters are necessary for executives to move beyond organizations.

Considering the relation between the structure and mechanism in chapter 4, there was no interviewee who moved to external labor markets right after semi-internal labor market. The executives who experienced the semi-internal labor market just stays there quite a long time or returns to their original (mostly parent) company within a short term. There is still a tendency that subsidiaries are ranked low compared to parent companies. By examining the relations between the structure and the mechanism, being in semi-internal labor market is evaluated low from outside. It will be an obstacle to have supports from transition bridge. This is the reason why pattern 5) hardly comes up within the interviewee's career paths

As Hamori and kakarika (2009) noted, a boundaryless career involves frequent movement across organizations and is based on external networks, and draws validation from outside the employer rather than from hierarchical advancement criteria. As a parameter of transition-bridge, there are two key players: headhunters and former colleagues. Executives proactively keep in touch with them to update for generating new opportunities in advance.

Besides headhunters and former colleagues, another information source which is deemed a "Executive search network" would be another strong transition-bridge for executives. The higher the position, the fewer the opportunities. Becoming a member of the society means to be able to have more opportunities of accessing the upper echelon. To survive in the external labor market, the accurate reliable information resource is crucial. This is

their way of survival in the External Ocean, sink or swim, without relying on companies.

However, having a transition-bridge is not enough to generate better opportunities. Individuals' reputation is a necessity as well as the information resources to gear their structure. Executives need to constantly show how they are a qualified and credible candidate in external labor markets. Reputation is composed of executives' own expertise and good performance in the current organization. Without such a reputation, no one recommends them job opportunities even though they have strong will to contribute to the new organizations.

Reputation is the driver for executives to be more eager to enhance their expertise beyond companies/industries. In other words, without improving their value in the markets, they cannot be offered better opportunities by transition-bridges.

Moreover, executives are required to present a certain level of good performance in new organization in a short period of time. In order to do that, adjusting executives past experiences to new organizations and dealing/coping with other employees smoothly are invaluable to further their roles and enhance their reputation internally and externally.

In this study, executives are constantly changing their story, sense-making of experience they are currently facing, to suit and be acceptable to current surroundings. That led them to show their capabilities internally and externally. That directly influences on their reputation and is critical for them to survive in external labor markets. Executives might have a good sense of generating reference points and/or expanding interpretation to change their story.

However, to survive in external markets, to enhance their own reputations, it is undeniable that there are possibilities of intelligence leakage through those who leave the company.

According to the results in Chapter 5, some of them temporarily joined companies in different industries for a very short time, less than one year.

The reputation from outside tends to be measured by the most recent performance. They are apt to achieve good results in short term by taking all advantages of their know-how, networks with clients and/or suppliers, confidential business information which they had acquired/accumulated in their previous companies. On top of that, transition bridges seemed to select executive candidates who can contribute to new organizations with those advantages. This would be considered as a breach of gentleman's agreements.

On the other hand, if focusing on reputation from outside too much, executives may try to establish their stories to be accepted with rational and reasonable way whenever the current situation has changed. This could make their stories inconsistent for the people who know the executives for a long time and degrade their reputation.

When it comes to the Japanese labor market, organizational intellectual properties are not protected enough through career changes. Organizations are facing this risk. Two parameters, transition bridges and reputation, sustain boundaryless careers; however, in reality, the mechanism is maintained under the risk of being not in compliance.

Actually, through my professional experiences in practice, there were controversial cases in changing jobs. Here is one example. First, one employee moved to another company. Then, some of the remaining team members (5-6 people) in the same department also moved to the same company one after another. Consequently, all members of the department have gone to the company within one year or less as if it was a parallel displacement.

Given the current reality, more and more people move across organizations.

Organizations should be urgently required to handle how they hire employees from outside, how they protect their intellectual properties, and how they manage compliance.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I'd like to summarize this dissertation on a chapter to chapter basis and finally conclude my study as a whole. Lastly, after my conclusion, I added some limitations and implications for future research.

### 8-1 Summary of this study

In Chapter 1, at first I clarified the research question: *“What are the structure and mechanism of career paths of executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries”* and its motivations. I described three sub-questions which came up in order to respond to the research question. Secondly, I outlined the contents of my study using a structure map I created. And thirdly, I stated the contributions to organizational behavioral studies and practices.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the three main fields of related research, which would be the foundation of this study, to respond the research question.

- First, are the features of the uniquely Japanese employment systems: lifetime employment, job rotation, and seniority based promotions. Japan takes many more years than its western counterparts regarding the selection timing for management positions. Japan also tends to focus on being generalists by experiencing a variety of jobs in a single organization, whereas U.S. and Germany are focusing more on being

specialists of the same jobs.

The other features of the Japanese employment system are the three distinct labor markets, which is the internal labor market (ILM); having a job ladder at a single organizational setting, the semi-internal labor market (SILM); existing between internal labor market and external labor market as well as having transfers to the companies within the same group, and the external labor market (ELM); changing jobs to a completely different organization.

- Second, related research was the career paths study. In this section, I classified previous career studies into two distinct concepts by its career mobility: organizational careers and boundaryless careers. Organizational careers unfold in a single organizational setting. Boundaryless careers are the opposite of organizational careers and involve frequent movement across organizations. There has been little research conducted to clarify how executive leaders transfer from one organization to another. Since one's career path is directly influenced by the characteristics of a country's labor market, the conventional western mobility pattern cannot simply be applied to Japanese. Clarifying the structure of career paths is critical for both research and practice. Moreover, I reviewed the previous career paths for executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries, for which there also has been little research on.
- The third is organizational socialization. In this section, first I reviewed organizational socialization studies and then focused on individual adaptation in new organizational settings. Organizational socialization has two distinct aspects; one is an organizational viewpoint and the other is an individual's viewpoint. In this study, I only focused on



the individual point of view in the interest of adhering the purpose of this study. Focusing on individual adaptation to new organizational settings, sense-making and narrative repertoires are closely related to my study. Sense-making is concerned with how individuals understand or assign meaning to experiences. In this study, the sense-making model, depicted by Louis, was shown. From previous work I derived that the sense-making process should consist of continuity and interaction with each other over time. Moreover, individuals organize their experiences using narratives. Narrative repertoires consist of previously told stories through individuals' experiences and other social interactions to convey them or vary their form from old to new settings. Though some researchers focused on the evolution of the narrative repertoires, there is still no clear understanding of the mechanism to develop a sense-making process.

In Chapter 3, I explained the applicability of a narrative approach and the grounded theory analysis to this study. A narrative approach can provide insight into how meaning is socially constructed and actions are generated through individual's narratives. There are possibilities in this approach to building the dynamism of sense-making based on the construction of the narrative process. On the other hand, a grounded theory is inductive and helpful with a systematic way of analyzing qualitative data to make sense of the information and is well suited to exploratory research. These two approaches are suitable to my study since it aims to understand the mechanism of career paths and individuals adaptation process to new organizational settings.

Chapters 4 through 6 are the body of this study which are based on sub-questions to the research question. The following are brief descriptions of these three chapters.

Chapter 4 responds to the first sub-question: "*What is the mobility structure of executive*

*leader career paths without adhering to organizational boundaries?”* and this was the basis of the whole structure as a way to interpret the mobility of one’s career path. In the interest of executive mobility, a career path framework (Career path Tableau: CPT) and a model (Career Path Model: CPM) were developed and 14 executive leaders working in a variety of industries were interviewed. As a result, 14 cases were visualized with CPT and CPM. By examining the results, the tendencies of their career paths and ten possible mobility patterns were discussed. These results provided an opening for the first step to understand Japanese executive leaders’ career paths and patterns within external labor markets in organizational behavioral studies.

Chapter 5 responds to the second sub-question: *“What is the common ground, of executives who move beyond organizations, in behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to new organizations?”* Based on the study in Chapter 4, I conducted interviews and examined the data by applying a grounded theory approach to explore and categorize their behavioral features. As a result, they were categorized into four patterns which are mobility, mindset, motivation, and source of information. By examining the results, the behavioral features which lead or support them to transfer to a new organization were discussed as well as the common ground they share. The common grounds of what lead them to move beyond boundaries were their self-motivation to seek out better opportunities and support from transition bridges which were based on and chosen by reputation of executives’ most recent performance. Both of them were necessary for executives to move beyond organizations. The study added significant findings towards the understanding of their mobility mechanism on the structure basis, which was visualized and explained with CPT and CPM in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 responds to third sub-question: *“What is the mechanism of the executives’ adjusting process to cope with the new organizational settings in order to exceed expectations quickly?”* In this chapter, narrative interviews were conducted with

executive leaders in work transitions, by focusing on their sense-making process. By examining the interviews through a grounded theory approach, it turned out that there were certain points, named ‘reference points’, to which individuals always refer and/or compare before applying the individuals meaning of own experiences. By considering the findings and the key factors for the sense-making process, continuity and interaction, a model of the sense-making process was developed. With the model, the mechanism of the adaptation process in executives’ transformation to new organizations was identified. The answer to the research question in Chapter 6 is that the mechanism is adjusting the stories which are to be consistent between the current situation and the past experiences/events by transforming the reference points. This transformation has two meanings; one is for them to obtain the consistent stories intrinsically, and the other is to secure their consistent reputation from outside companies.

In Chapter 7, first, I discussed the three sub-questions which were examined in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. After, I discussed all of their results by examining the research question: *“What is the structure and mechanism of career paths for executive leaders’ moving across organizational boundaries in Japan?”* The answer is the structure is each path itself which was visualized in CPT and CPM. The mechanism consists of two parameters; self-motivation to seek out better opportunities, and having transition bridges sustained by reputation of executives’ most recent performance. Executives are adjusting their stories which are to be consistent between the current situation and the past experiences/events by transforming the reference points, which promote them to have a coherent evaluation from outside. These two parameters are mutually connected and give the structure its meaning.

## **8-2 Conclusion to the research question**

Recently, the Japanese business environment has been confronted with many challenges

by the wave of rapid globalization. To tackle these environmental changes, the voice to hire executive leaders from the outside has been getting louder. However, organizations have not gotten used to accepting those leaders and how to deal with other employees appropriately. In research up until now, there is still little understanding of executive leaders' mobility beyond organizations and their adaptation process to a new organizational setting. Therefore, research should be urged to identify the structure of executive leaders' mobility and the mechanism of what gives the structure its meaning in both theoretical and empirical implications.

Through this study, I aimed to clarify the research question: “*What the structure and mechanism of career paths of executive leaders moving across organizational boundaries are.*” to address the lack of research and to identify its usage in theoretical and empirical implications.

The career paths of executive leaders moving across organizations were structured by the boundaryless career concept. Their structure is sustained by “transition-bridges” to external labor markets and “reputation” in external labor markets. Both factors are mutually connected and directly reflect each other and are invaluable to sustain the mobility structure. Executives are eager to enhance their viability in external markets in order to access better opportunities provided by transition-bridges; having accurate and reliable transition-bridges is crucial for executives to access better information in advance.

Transition-bridges are critical for both organizations and executive leaders. For organizations, using transition-bridges is effective because knowledge on potential executives and skills that were already demonstrated in previous companies would improve the understanding of how they can be utilized in a more efficient way.

Organizations can easily assess potential executives' experiences/capabilities with reliability in external labor markets. Transition-bridges can represent the executives' reputation more accurately. For executives, the higher position, the fewer opportunities. Without accurate reliable transition-bridges, they wouldn't have an upper hand in accessing the higher echelon of opportunities. To swim in external labor markets as an executive leader, they consistently need to acquire, not only own specialties, but also demonstrate their talents appropriately in order to improve their reputation. On top of that, executives are expected to bring a different, fresh approach to an organizations needs to tackle and keep up with such environmental changes, and smooth adaptation to a new organizational setting is crucial.

However, it cannot deny that there are possibilities of being not in compliance throughout the transition process of executives from one company to another, Organization must realize the risks of intelligence leakage.

### **8-3 Implications**

#### ***8-3-1 Implications for practices***

In Japan, the reality is that 85% of companies have failed to train executives in-house. They seek well-experienced executives to tackle environmental changes, even though they have not gotten used to accepting them from other companies. This study would be applicable and beneficial to those companies to better understand the hiring of executives from external labor markets. This study can lead to better decision-making for organizations in planning executive career paths for the future

Also, it can aide future organizations in better adapting to similar situations. This study will provide useful insights into organizations which have been urged to provide an

appropriate management system which accepts those leaders from the outside and deals with other employees appropriately.

Also, by incorporating sponsorship systems into succession plans, organizations will be able to effectively develop employees' careers.

### ***8-3-2 Implications for research***

Many researchers mentioned that examining mobility and the boundaryless career need more studies that evaluate career patterns beyond organizational boundaries (i.e., Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Especially up until now, there has been little research examining executives who move across employers (Cheramie, et. al., 2007; Hamori and Kakarika, 2009; Arthur, Khapova, and Vilderom, 2005) and especially less researched are the particular career paths inside and across corporations (Hamori and Kakarika, 2009). This study focused on an individuals' point of view and contributes significant insights and more understanding for the structure and mechanism of career paths inside and beyond organizations. Also, the features of career paths are affected by its countries labor markets and since little research has been accumulated in Japan, this study provides the first step to understand the features of boundaryless careers in Japan.

Furthermore, in organizational socialization studies, how individuals adapt to new organizational settings is a fundamental issue and their previous experience is considered important for making sense. However, consistency and interaction, which are invaluable to develop a sense-making process, were not included in previous sense-making models. This study can provide a framework with another perspective for understanding their adaptation process to new organizational settings.

### ***8-3-3 Implications for individuals***

For individuals who want to develop their careers across organizations, or already pursue boundaryless career development, this study is to be a useful tool to better understand the structure and mechanism in developing their careers in external labor markets. Especially, understanding the importance of sponsors in internal and external organizations is critical to acquire better opportunities for individuals' future careers. Also, in the entry stages of their careers at new organizations, this study would provide them with a useful tool in interpreting events they have encountered in new settings and help them with their smooth adaptation.

### **8-4 Limitations and future research**

This study was conducted with a limited number of executives, all of which had a strong will to achieve their goals. If the number were to be increased, other findings may arise and different goal patterns may generate other findings. Also, some of the executives may have experience being demoted and getting back on the track, which could have impacted their mobility patterns.

The interviewees were selected from a variety of fields, however, most of them work for large and older companies. This may be difficult to apply to small-mid size, and/or young companies. The career path structure and mechanism may be categorized by a company's size, age, maturity, base country, industry, etc. Each segmentation has different types of tendencies of career structure and mechanism; all of which require further exploration in the interest of better understanding.

The demographics for the interviewees must be considered as well, this time, all interviewees were male. There could be a gender bias and could be very different/difficult to predict female executives career paths, due to varying factors.

Regarding executives behavioral features, there might be some data that could have been missed in the observation process, which may have affected their motivation, mobility, and/or source of information patterns. Also to further understand the boundaryless career, comparing the differences between the behavioral features of the ones who move beyond the boundaries and the ones who do not is needed.

Examining the Executive search network in detail is also necessary. Exploring the answers of the following questions, such as “What kind of information is circling?”, “What is the criteria to become the members?”, and “What is the structure of it?” will contribute to clarify executives’ boundaryless career paths.

One final limitation could be regarding experience. A lot of the study is based off of previous experience, so people with a limited pool might have trouble utilizing it, even though they are trying to expand their interpretations, there could still be some difficulties.



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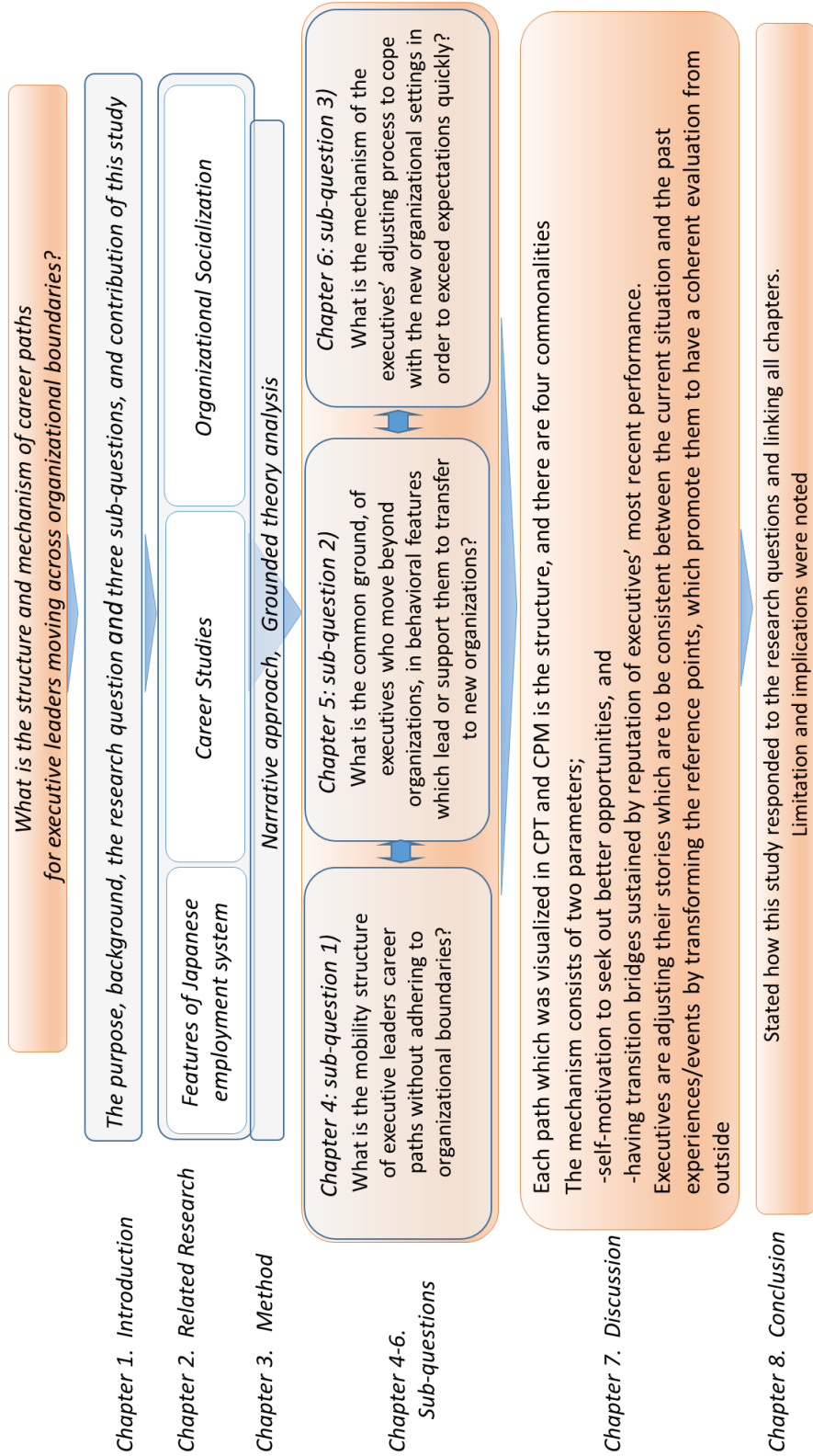
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# Appendix

## 1. The structure of this dissertation



## 2. Selecting the Case Studies and analyzing the Interviews for Chapter 4 and 5

Since my theme focuses on Japanese executive leaders' career paths moving across organizations, accessing to the appropriate cases was one of the most difficult parts for this dissertation. Through this study, I followed what qualitative researchers call "theoretical sampling" which is often explained as purposive sampling, and the "constant comparative method"

For the cases in Chapter 4 and 5, I applied in-depth interviews and the grounded theory approach to the analysis of the interview data. Firstly, I used my professional networks to access well-suited interviewees. I contacted my former colleagues who have changed their organizations more than once and have already reached C-suite level. After conducting the interviews, I converted the data into CPT and depicted CPM to visualize their career paths. Subsequently, the person I interviewed introduced me to the next candidate for the interview just like a snowball sampling. I added new cases all along, compared those cases through CPT and CPM, examined them whether there were gaps in my coverage of types of career paths, and selected new cases to fill the gaps.

In order to highlight executives with boundaryless career paths and compare them to those without, I also conducted the interviews with executives working at a single organization. As a result, within the 14 executives I interviewed, 9 have moved across organizations, and the remaining 5 were working at a single organization.

According to Strauss (1987), theoretical saturation occurs 'when additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category. My study is not to develop a certain theory by utilising the grounded theory, but to understand the structure and mechanism of the career paths of executives moving across organizations. When my 12th-14<sup>th</sup> interviewees exemplified varieties of career paths which already covered by the

previous interviewees, I stopped to find additional interviewees.

The questionnaires were constructed from the following three main topics;

- 1) What was their career path?
- 2) What led them to move to another company?
- 3) What support they had to move to another company?

Interview guide as follows;

- Could you tell me about your career to date in chronological order?
- Did you have any self-created movement?
- What made you think about moving to another company?
- How did you move to another company?
- Did you have any solicitations from other companies and/or someone else?
- Do you have any particular ways to move?
- Who has been helpful or inspiring for you and your thought process?
- How did you acquire and access the information for the job change?
- How often do you meet the informants?
- How many different kinds of ideas or possibilities did you consider?
- What was the hardest thing about the whole process?
- Do you have any experience with which you had difficulties in coping new organizational settings?
- What do you think of your career?

Interviews began with the question “Could you tell me about your career to date in chronological order?” Then I conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews with questionnaires mentioned above.

The analysis of the interviews followed an inductive grounded theory approach. In the

early stages of the interviews, I coded the data and categorized them by the similarities of the types of career paths and behavioral features.

As a result, three rough commonalities of patterns emerged: 1) moving features; 2) having own meanings to move to other companies; and 3) acquiring information supported by own networks.

As these commonalities emerged, I examined them interactively and explored all the other possibilities. As a result, I categorized them into the following four behavioral features: 1) mobility patterns; 2) mindset patterns; 3) motivation patterns; and 4) information patterns.

All the interviewees were men, by chance. Analyses of gender differences in selecting case studies are beyond the scope of this study. But I briefly noted in the limitation section.

### 3. Selecting and analyzing the Case Studies for Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, I applied narrative approach to interviews. The narrative approach is not focusing on capturing the nature of things on essentialism, but focusing on how individuals generate and construct and understand their realities through narratives based on constructionism. I prepared semi-structured questions as follows, but I mostly focused on story telling of their experiences.

Regarding the interviews, they lasted two and a half hours on average. By using my professional networks, the interviewees were carefully selected executive leaders who were just after hired from outside of their current company.

In the interviews, I first asked for their career paths in chronological order, then I mainly used the following questions based on the research question of Chapter 6: "Do you have any self-created movement?" "What made you to think about moving to another company?" "How did you move to another company?" "Do you have any experience in which you had difficulties to cope with new organizational settings?" "What was the most challenging event which you went through in new organizations?" "How did you deal with that at that time?"

They were all recorded and transcribed verbatim. Throughout this research, I provided full confidentiality.

In the analysis phase, I examined the interview data with a grounded theory approach. In the beginning, I coded the data and examined for categories which seemed commonalities through their narratives focusing on their making sense of the new experiences in a new organizational setting.

Up until first two to three narratives, there seemed less commonalities derived from data. However, by continuously examining previous narratives and new data back and forth, certain points came up as categories, to which individuals always referred and/or compared before putting meanings of their own experience to explain to an audience. Their sense-making seemed guided by the points they have already in their mind. And the interpretation of the points directly influenced into their story to be suited to their current situation.

Since then, I started to focus on collecting the similar categories through all along. Through this process, I used an interactive process in back and forth between the previous and new data. As new concepts or categories emerged, I examined the other to find more evidence to refine it. Through examination, I named them reference points.

It turned out that reference points consisted of some specific events that executives had in their experiences such as episodes and/or specific words, and metaphor they have created in their mind. The reference points had some common ground as follows.

Firstly, there are a variety of reference points. Some of them use only one word “death”, “dismiss”. Others quote their previous experience such as “I was able to complete the final account report by myself despite the disorganization of the company’s merger”.

Secondly, a reference point is able to produce more than two interpretations. Individuals select a suitable interpretation to be adapted by and flexible for the listener and could change flexibly depending on the person talking to. Moreover, a variety of interpretations increase depending on the frequency of interaction between individuals and others.

Thirdly, the interpretation could change over time. Interpretation is most likely being told at the moment of interaction with consistency throughout the process. For example, they

tend to say "I thought that experience was...., but when I look back the moment, I think that was ...." Below is examples how I coded the cases.

### **[Case A-1] Getting into a new organization and getting culture shock**

Definition of the lines;

Under line: coded as their experiences (events)

Wavy lines: coded as reference points

*Italic and double lines*: coded as the interpretation for experiences

After getting into X company, at first, *it was really tough situation for me*. The way of doing business was quite different from the previous company's. I really screwed up and was almost neurotic. I *completely freaked out in everything I did*. First, I had a language barrier. English was most likely standard language there and meetings were quite often conducted in English, but I was not able to speak English at all. Second, since I was hired from outside the company as a specialist, their expectation level of me was really high. *This became an enormous pressure on me*. The responsibilities for the job were completely different from the previous Japanese company's. Third, I could not understand their words even though they were talking in Japanese. I was in the logistics field; however, the terminologies were quite different from the ones I used to use. After one or two weeks, *I realized that I should not have been here, I supposed not to belong here. I did not deserve this company. I was useless* as a professional for the company. I took this seriously and I thought showing my considerable efforts to them is the only way to survive at the company.

Actually, at that time, it took two or 3 times more to finish my job comparing to other staffs. So I went to the office early in the morning and stayed there late in order to show others "I am doing the best". I think this is a cheap trick, but I presented myself to let others recognize how hard I am trying. Since then, I couldn't eat well, sleep well. My

heart was pounding very hard. My autonomous balance went terrible. I lost a lot of weights.

By showing the hard-working attitude all the time, I was able to slowly gain their trust, I thought. And after six to ten months, I felt that colleagues in my company were slowly beginning to believe in me. And this experience led me to become a youngest director ever with exceptional speed in the company.

### **[Case A-2] Encountered the crisis**

In six months after joining X company, the logistics system turned into chaotic nightmare. At that time, my boss was abroad attending his daughter's wedding, and I was the only person who were in charge of the department. This was my worst disastrous experience ever. That financial damage was estimated up to 1,000,000,000 yen.

----- \*snip\*-----

I did not have any confidence to manage the disaster. I was working overtime more than 200 hours per month. I thought I was going to die. If I could give up this situation, or if I could put the blame on others, I would be willing to do that. But no one was there except me, I had no choice. I prepared myself for the worst. The worst scenario which came up to my mind was getting fired. No one takes my life. I will not die. I could still be alive whether I could make it or not. Then I changed my mind, I determined to take this responsibility to clean up the storm



## **Acknowledgement**

I am very grateful to the evaluators; Professor Kuwako, Professor Kaneko, Professor Sakano, and Professor Senoo, for sharing expertise, and sincere and valuable guidance and encouragement extended to me.

During much of the process of researching and writing this paper, I received thoughtful, supportive comments from anonymous referees, where I presented some parts of this study at international conferences: Global Conference on Business & Social Science-2014, in Kuala Lumpur; The 13th International Conference of The Asia Chapter of Academy of Human Resource Development in Seoul, and 11th International Conference on Service Systems and Service Management (ICSSSM '14), in Beijing. I am so grateful to all of them. Their comments stimulated my thought process for the paper.

I am very grateful to all of my friends for sharing precious time with me and my paper.

I am very grateful to Michael, we discussed many things regarding my paper, and without his superb support, I cannot image I would be able to reach where I am now.

Also I am very grateful to Mr. Miyahara for his kind supports and encouragement.

I am very grateful to Professor. Sato for his continued kind supports for years.

I would like to thank Professor. Takada and Yokota for being there for me whenever I need to talk to.

I am very grateful to Ms. Takagi and Ms. Nomura for cheering me up and their warm supports in many ways.

I take this opportunity to express gratitude to all of Inohara lab members for sharing great fruitful time with me, and special thanks to Ms. Segawa for her professional support.

I am honored to write the name, Professor Takagi, who was my professor at business school. He pointed me towards this path and I am now happy to tell him I am almost there.

I thank my parents and my brother for all of their continued support. I am very lucky to have such a wonderful family in this life.

I would like to thank my wonderful husband. I am sure I cannot be here without his superb

supports in many ways. He has been my inspiration to continuously overcome hurdles I encountered throughout my academic pursuit.

Last but most certainly not least, I would like to conclude with my utmost gratitude to Professor. Inohara, who gave me a once in a lifetime opportunity to pursue this study in the Tokyo Institute of Technology.