Korean wild geese families: split household strategies and gender dynamics in transnational families

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KOREAN WILD GEESE FAMILIES: SPLIT HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

by

Se Hwa Lee

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ABSTRACT

Korean *wild geese* families are one of the rapidly increasing but underexplored middle-class Asian migrant families whose members live apart overseas and occasionally fly back and forth across the ocean to meet one another. Of these families, mothers accompany their children abroad for their children’s education, while fathers remain in South Korea and send remittances to their families.

The dissertation explores the changes in wild geese parents’ (1) gender status, (2) mothering practices, and (3) fathering practices throughout their transnational family separation. To complete the research, I have conducted in-depth interviews with 64 Korean wild geese parents (31 women and 33 men) in the course of a year at three main research sites: Tenafly, New Jersey, United States; London, Ontario, Canada; and Seoul, South Korea.

First, I confirm that transnational spousal separation triggers wild geese mothers’ speculating about their taken-for-granted roles and reconfiguring the patriarchal gender relationships. Nonetheless, I further demonstrate that migrant women’s gender status can be shaped quite heterogeneously by the ways they utilize new resources in the host society, such as their legal status, employment and additional education.

Second, I describe how wild geese mothers strive to successfully perform *intensive mothering* and achieve the educational goals for their children, while overcoming the unexpected challenges in the host society. I corroborate the importance of the co-ethnic immigrant community as critical resources for migrant women’s parenting and survival. However, I also identify the special costs that these women have to pay for the legitimate access to their own ethnic community’s resources and information.
Third, I employ the *responsible fathering* framework and analyze wild geese fathers’ transnational fathering practices. Particularly, I highlight how these men try to be responsible fathers and fulfill both economic and emotional roles by sending remittances and gifts, maintaining transnational communication, and having regular face-to-face encounters. I further explain the changes in the relationships between these left-behind fathers and their children throughout transnational family separation.

In conclusion, this dissertation provides gender-balanced and interdisciplinary frameworks to better understand the complex and changing gender/family dynamics of transnational migrant families and offers nuanced knowledge of Asian middle-class transnational families.
To my daughter,

**VICTORIA SHEEYUN CHUNG,**

and to my husband,

**RAKKOO CHUNG**
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, many migrant families use transnational “split household” (Glenn 1983) strategies to enhance their overall well-being. Previous migration and gender studies have focused on Latino or Asian working-class transnational families whose husbands or wives migrate to the United States alone as workers and send remittances to the rest of the family in their country of origin. Accordingly, there are not enough studies of middle-class migrant families. Hence, this study aims to fill the gap and contribute to better understanding Asian middle-class migrant families.

Among various Asian middle-class transnational split households, I choose Korean wild geese families, who share many structural similarities with Hong Kong and Taiwanese “astronaut families” (Aye and Guerin 2001; Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Ho and Bedford 2008; Waters 2002) and Chinese “study mothers” (Huang and Yeoh 2005). All three groups are middle-class transnational families whose mothers and children migrate to different countries for their children’s education, while fathers remain in the country of origin to support families economically. Nonetheless, there is considerably less scholarship on Korean wild geese families. This is probably because they are relatively a newer group that has emerged since the late 1990s.

However, Korean wild geese families deserve scholarly attention in two regards. First of all, they are a rapidly increasing group of migrants in the United States, while Chinese middle-class transnational split households primarily migrate to the other English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, or Singapore, not to the United States. Second, previous studies on Chinese “astronaut families” and “study mothers” often miss men’s voices in their studies (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002), as if gender is
only a women’s issue. As Zhou (2000) suggests, this research on Korean wild geese families examines both women’s and men’s perspectives and contributes to drawing a more comprehensive picture of gender status and parenting practices of middle-class Asian transnational split households.

Korean wild geese families have unique characteristics that distinguish them from traditional transnational migrants who adopt split household strategies. First, unlike most transnational split household migration that often aims to enhance the current generation’s economic opportunities, Korean wild geese families aim to improve their children’s future socioeconomic status by providing them with better educational opportunities abroad. Second, while traditional split household migration is often led by men, migration of Korean wild geese families is led by women. It is wives and children who migrate abroad, not husbands. Third, while traditional split household migrants usually send remittances to their families remaining in the country of origin, wild geese wives and children abroad receive remittances from husbands who remain in Korea. Finally, unlike those who migrate to permanently settle down in the destination country, wild geese mothers and children are temporary migrants who tend to return to Korea after a sojourn. These differences demonstrate why existing literature based on working-class migrants cannot adequately explain middle-class migrant families, and how this dissertation research can add to the knowledge of diverse Asian middle-class families that adopt transnational split household strategies.

I attempt to answer two main research questions throughout the dissertation.

[Question 1] How does the gender status of Korean wild geese mothers change through their transnational migration? Existing studies of Korean wild geese families well explain why they adopt transnational split household strategies and how their everyday life has changed as they
live apart across national borders. Nonetheless, they often overlook the effects of such living arrangements on wild geese mothers’ gender status. Even if some studies discuss the changes in spousal relationships, they mostly focus on the changes in marital quality. Instead, I explore how transnational split household strategy affects the spousal power dynamics and wild geese mothers’ relative statuses in their households.

To analyze the changes in bargaining power and spousal relationships of wild geese families, I pay particular attention to the intersectional impacts of wild geese mothers’ legal positions, employment and additional education in the host society. I put emphasis on women’s legal, economic and educational resources for two reasons. First, the implications of women’s employment and employability for their gender status await further discussion. Most wild geese wives in the United States do not have rewarding jobs commensurate to their qualifications but are highly dependent on the remittances sent by their husbands remaining in Korea (Cho 2004; Kim 2006; Kim 2007; Lee and Koo 2006). However, there has not been enough discussion of how women’s loss of employment and increased economic reliance on their husbands after migration affect their spousal relationships and gender equality in their transnational households, even though “social relations negotiated between remitters and recipients” are a highly gendered process (Pessar and Mahler 2003).

Second, existing studies fail to explain wild geese mothers’ diverse legal statuses. Wild geese mothers in the United States have diverse legal statuses including tourist visas, student visas, working visas, visiting scholar visas, business visas, and green card holders (Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Lee 2010). Nevertheless, previous studies lack specific explanations of why wild geese women hold diverse legal statuses, and how such diverse visa statuses impact their bargaining power, relative gender statuses and their relationship with their children, even though
women’s legal status affects not only women’s social networks and adaptation to the host society but also family dynamics (George 2001; Kim 2006; Lee 2013; Menjívar 2006; Pessar 1986; Wong 2000).

[Question 2] How do Korean wild geese parents perform their parenting roles throughout their transnational migration? My analysis of Korean wild geese families’ parenting practices is built upon two important theoretical frameworks developed in the family and the gender studies: “intensive mothering” and “responsible fathering.” These two concepts have been mostly applied to the experiences of middle-class American parents, as if immigrants cannot afford to perform such parenting practices. Thus, my application of “intensive mothering” and “responsible fathering” to Korean wild geese parents offers a good chance to test whether such parenting practices are exclusive to middle-class Americans or applicable to other middle-class families in the global context.

My research particularly aims to contribute to literature on transnational fathering. American family and migration studies have overlooked migrant fathers’ fathering practices. Likewise, Korean studies on wild geese families also have missed how fathers perform “transnational fathering” while they overcome the physical distance from their children. In this regard, it is even more important to investigate the fathering practices of Korean wild geese men with their own accounts. This research vividly describes how wild geese fathers fulfill both economic and emotional roles throughout their transnational family separation, and advances more in-depth knowledge of transnational fathering.

In sum, this dissertation advances the knowledge of the rapidly increasing but underexplored middle-class transnational split families. First, this dissertation provides a valuable opportunity to better understand how gender dynamics and parenting practices of
middle-class migrant families can be differently shaped and re-negotiated (from the typical working-class migrant families) when the migration goal is children’s education (not fathers’ employment), when migration is led by women (not by men), when remittances go from the country of origin (not the opposite direction), and when they migrate abroad temporarily (not permanently). Moreover, this dissertation research also takes into account wild geese parents’ experiences after family reunification as well as during family separation, and thus provides a chance to explore both short- and long-term effects of transnational family separation on their gender status and parenting practices. Finally, this research examines both women’s and men’s perspectives, and provides (1) a more balanced analysis of the ways in which gender relations and power dynamics of middle-class migrant families are negotiated and re-shaped, and (2) a more comprehensive understanding of both mothering and fathering practices.

I. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature in the fields of gender, family and immigration, and constructs the theoretical frameworks for the analysis of gender dynamics and parenting practices of Korean wild geese families, including (1) transnational split households, (2) household labor, (3) intensive mothering, and (4) responsible fathering in the transnational context.

Chapter 3 describes the data and methods for the dissertation research. I conducted qualitative in-depth interview with wild geese mothers and fathers in the United States, Canada, and South Korea.

Chapter 4 describes my sample by summarizing their socioeconomic backgrounds and motivations of becoming wild geese families.
The next three chapters represent the results of my analysis. Chapter 5 discusses (1) how changes in wild geese mothers’ gender status are triggered by transnational spousal separation, (2) how wild geese mothers re-negotiate (and strengthen) their bargaining power and gender status in their transnational households, and (3) how their re-negotiation is made possible by their resources (i.e., legal status, employment, and additional education) available in the host society.

Chapter 6 demonstrates how wild geese mothers strive to successfully perform intensive mothering for their children’s education and handle the challenges of the host society. It also emphasizes how important it is for wild geese mothers to construct social networks through their own ethnic community.

Chapter 7 explicates how wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering and fulfill economic and emotional roles for their children in the transnational context. These fathering practices include sending remittances and gifts, maintaining transnational communication, and having regular face-to-face encounters with family. This chapter also discusses the changes in the wild geese fathers’ intergenerational relationships.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws conclusions, discussing the theoretical contributions and limitations of the research. Future research is also suggested.
The transnational split household is not unique to Koreans families. There are three types of such families: 1) families with migrant fathers, 2) families with migrant mothers, and 3) families whose mothers and children migrate. Korean wild geese families fall into the third category. But, I discuss the literature on the other types of transnational families in this section, and Korean wild geese families in a subsequent section.

I. Literature Review

1. Transnational Split Families with Migrant Fathers

The first group of transnational families I discuss are ones in which fathers migrate to the other country while leaving their wives and children in their country of origin. Studies focusing on this type of transnational families have demonstrated that more egalitarian conjugal relations emerge during the long spousal separation (Glenn 1983; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004) and after the re-unification of transnational couples in a host country (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994). For instance, wives gradually increase their power and authority over the family decisions and household economy (Glenn 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kyle 2000; Pribilsky 2004), while their working-class migrant husbands more actively share housework with their wives when they come back to visit families in their country of origin (Parreñas 2008).

This increased egalitarianism within the transnational split families is attributed to several factors. First, during the long period of spousal separation, wives assume expanded tasks and responsibilities beyond the domestic arena, which helps them enhance their sense of social power.
and autonomy (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kyle 2000). Second, transnational husbands do not feel that their masculinity is threatened by sharing housework with wives, because they make a significant financial contribution to the family (Parreñas 2008). Some transnational husbands are willing to help do the domestic tasks of their wives after they reunify, because they learned how to perform them through their split migration experiences (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Third, wives’ strengthened ties with their children, as the sole parent residing with them, increases wives’ leverage within the transnational family (Glenn 1983). Finally, after family reunification in a host society, many working-class migrant women tend to have paid jobs and expanded personal networks, which further strengthens their leverage within the household (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994).

On the other hand, these studies also point out that women’s empowerment through their husbands’ migration may be somewhat limited. According to Kyle (2000) and Pribilsky (2004) who both analyze Ecuadorian transnational split migration to New York, migrant men try to maintain their power by restricting information about their lives in the United States to their wives in the home country. Thus, although women who remain in Ecuador take on expanded tasks, their empowerment through work is mitigated by their husbands’ strict “code of silence” (Kyle 2000:107). Many wives are also concerned that their migrant husbands may have extramarital relationships abroad and/or they may be abandoned by their husbands as their transnational separation is prolonged (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; Kyle 2000; Pribilsky 2004).

These studies also demonstrate the significance of remittances on the gender relations of transnational couples who are currently living apart across national borders. For instance, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) shows remittances sent by Mexican migrant husbands were sporadic and smaller than wives’ expectation. Accordingly, resentful wives in Mexico not only find
informal employment to supplement family income but also are motivated to migrate to the United States despite the opposition of their husbands who hide the exact amount of their income and spend it for their own pleasure. In studies by Kyle (2000) and Pribilsky (2004), Ecuadoran transnational husbands in New York try to exert their patriarchal power on their wives in the country of origin by delaying sending remittances. At the same time, wives remaining in home countries attempt to wrest power from their transnational husbands as these women assume a new role of a “remittance manager” (Pribilsky 2004: 328).

In sum, previous studies analyzing transnational split families in which fathers migrate to different countries alone clearly demonstrate how such living arrangement can change patriarchal gender relationships. However, it should be noted that these studies gather data through interviews with young adult children of transnational migrant families based on their retrospective memories (Glenn 1983; Parreñas 2008), or narrowly focus on the changes in gender relations after the re-unification of transnational families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994). To capture an accurate picture of the gender dynamics of wild geese couples, it is necessary to gather data not from retrospective memories of children, but from husbands and wives who are currently in the transnational split household context (See Pessar and Mahler 2003 for further critique on retrospective interviews).

Furthermore, as these studies primarily focus on the experiences of working-class transnational families in which fathers migrate abroad, it is important to develop their discussion on remittances further by incorporating transnational middle-class couples in which mothers migrate abroad. Particularly, it is necessary to analyze how the direction of remittances and the degree of reliance on such remittances affect the spousal power dynamics of transnational middle-class migrant couples while they live apart across national borders. As Pessar and Mahler
(2003) point out, the seemingly economic relationship through remittances also has a significant impact on the gender relations (Pessar and Mahler 2003) of transnational split couples.

2. Transnational Split Families with Migrant Mothers

The second group of transnational families are ones in which mothers migrate while leaving their children and husbands in their country of origin. Studies on transnational migrant mothers are often focused on migrant domestic workers from Latin America or the Philippines (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Mckay 2007; Parreñas 2005a, 2008). Feminist scholars praise transnational mothering performed by women who migrate alone to the United States, leaving their husbands and children in their country of origin, as it radically expands the definition of motherhood to encompass not only taking care of children but also fulfilling financial obligations, which requires long-term and long-distance separation of mother and children (Collins 2000; Dreby 2006; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2000, 2005a).

However, as these scholars mainly focus on the relationship between migrant mothers and children remaining in the country of origin, they have paid less attention to the conjugal relations of transnational couples. For instance, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Parreñas (2000, 2005a) find that the husbands’ share of the housework and childcare does not increase despite their migrant wives’ increased economic contribution to the family, which is believed to be a pivotal source to challenge male dominance and renegotiate unequal gender relations within the households (Blumberg 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kibria 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong and Azores 1994; Pessar 1984). Nonetheless, neither Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) nor Parreñas (2000, 2005a) explain why husbands residing with children in
their country of origin are still exempted from domestic responsibilities, while migrant wives continue to retain their traditional responsibility of nurturing despite their physical absence from the rest of the families. These scholars only show that transnational migrant women seek help from other women such as their own mothers, extended female kin, and eldest daughters, as well as other female domestic workers, to substitute for their role as the caregiver of the families (Dreby 2006; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2000, 2005a; Schmalzbauer 2004).

In sum, while Parreñas (2000, 2005a) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997) were effective in expanding the definition of motherhood, they were not so successful in addressing gender inequality with respect to parenting responsibilities between spouses in the transnational context. Further, they are not so clear about how migrant women maintain their relationship with their husbands who remain in the country of origin. To fill the gap in this literature, I investigate not only mothering, but also fathering practices of transnational split households. By doing so, it can be found if and how such living arrangements worsen gender disparity in parenting obligations. In addition, I examine how transnational women transform and re-negotiate their spousal relationships while they live apart from husbands across national borders.

3. Transnational Split Families with Migrant Mothers and Children

The third group of transnational families are those in which mothers and children migrate to different countries while fathers remain in the country of origin to support their overseas families economically. Chinese “astronaut families” (Aye and Guerin 2001; Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Ho and Bedford 2008; Waters 2002) and “parachute children” (Bartley 2003; Eyou et al. 2000; Ho 1995; Orellana et al. 2001; Pe-Pua et al. 1998) in English
speaking countries, Chinese “study mothers” in Singapore (Huang and Yeoh 2005), and Korean “wild geese families” in the United States fall into this third category. In this section, findings on “astronaut families” and “study mothers” are discussed, as the literature on Korean “wild geese families” are examined in the following section.

The Chinese middle-class transnational split families are quite different from the previous two groups in terms of their class background, the goal of migration and the direction of remittances. The previous two groups are primarily working-class migrants who migrate to the United States or other parts of Asia to give financial support to their families remaining in the country of origin. In contrast, Chinese transnational families with migrant mothers and children often have a middle-class background, and they migrate to provide children with better educational opportunities (Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002). In this case, mothers and children abroad are financially dependent on fathers who remain in their country of origin.

Accordingly, their gender dynamics and couple relationships in the migration process are significantly different from those of working class transnational split families whose goal is economic. First, when these Chinese middle-class couples make a migration decision for their children, it is always women who are expected to accompany the children, not men. Even if both women and men are working, women are pressured into sacrificing their careers to be “ideal mothers” who try to improve the lives of children (Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002). Thus, while women uproot their entire lives to accompany their children, their husbands remain in the country of origin with careers, and relationships to relatives and friends intact (Huang and Yeoh 2005).
Second, after migration, these wives take full responsibility for child rearing as a sole parent (Chang and Darlington 2008), while losing parental support and the social networks they enjoyed prior to migration (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002). Moreover, these women encounter difficulties in finding a job in the host countries commensurate with their qualifications and experiences in their home countries, partly because of the difficulty in transferring their high educational and occupational qualifications to the labor market of the host society (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002), and partly because of the restrictive immigration laws that often forbid migrant women from finding a gainful job in their host countries (Kim 2006; Man 2001; Yeoh and Khoo 1998). Therefore, although Chinese middle-class migrant women enjoy greater decision-making power and a sense of freedom and independence through physical separation from their husbands, their increased economic dependence on their husbands, combined with the continuous challenges and fluidity they encounter in the host society as “transient sojourners” lowers their status within their family (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005).

In conclusion, these studies effectively describe the gender dynamics of Chinese transnational split families from the women’s perspective. However, they miss men’s voices. While these studies assume that men who remain in the country of origin do not experience much change in their life after the migration of their children and wives, it has not yet been examined whether this is the case. Furthermore, these studies tend to view women as passive victims of migration who forcibly sacrificed their lives for the sake of the family. Thus, they often overlook middle-class migrant women’s active role and agency in the migration process. Finally, most studies on Chinese transnational split families focus on those who migrate to Australia, Canada, or Singapore, not to the United States.
To fill the gap in this literature, I explore not only women’s perspectives but also men’s. Particularly, I focus on what kinds of changes both women and men undergo after they live apart. By doing so, a better understanding of the complex and relational gender dynamics among transnational couples can be accomplished. In addition, I analyze women’s agency in the migration process. In particular, I pay attention to how women discuss transnational migration, pursue their own interests and reconfigure patriarchal gender relations through migration. Finally, I study transnational families who migrated to the United States to reflect the unique impacts of U.S. society on the lives of transnational migrant families.

II. Korean Wild Geese Families

Korean “wild geese families” refer to transnational households in which mothers and children migrate to English speaking countries for the purpose of their children’s education while fathers remain in Korea and economically support their families (Kim 2010; Lee 2010; and Lee and Koo 2006). Wild geese fathers occasionally fly across national borders to visit their families in different countries (Lee and Koo 2006).

I. Korean Wild Geese Family Trends

There are no official statistics regarding wild geese families. However, using Korean educational statistics on the numbers of Korean elementary, middle school and high school students studying abroad since 1995, we can estimate the trends for wild geese families, which are closely related to that of Korean students studying abroad at an early age.
Table 1. Students Studying Abroad by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1,799</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,107</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3,301</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4,052</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>5,568</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8,148</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>6,670</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>13,814</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>9,246</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12,341</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>9,201</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>12,531</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>8,888</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8,369</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>5,723</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8,794</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>5,870</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: a. Students who went abroad to accompany their parents stationed in foreign countries and those emigrated to foreign countries are excluded; b. Year means academic year; c. Number of students abroad; d. Number of students abroad per 10,000 Students = (number of students abroad / students enrolled) ×10,000.

As Table 1 shows, the number of Korean elementary, middle school and high school students studying abroad dramatically increased from 2,259 in 1995 to 29,511 in 2006 and then decreased to 18,741 in 2010. Although the number of students studying abroad in 2010 was smaller than the number in 2006, it still represents a growth of nine times more than the number in 1995. Given that this figure does not include students who went abroad to accompany their parents stationed in foreign countries and those who emigrated permanently to foreign countries, the actual number of students studying abroad may be far greater than the figures in Table 1. The Korean Ministry of Strategy and Finance estimated that the total number of Korean students studying abroad for their primary and secondary education exceeded 100,000 as of 2003 (Kim
2006). Given this trend, wild geese families are a quite new but rapidly increasing phenomenon that appeared in Korea beginning in the mid-1990s, as Lee and Koo (2006) argue.

Figure 1. Number of Students Studying Abroad\textsuperscript{a} by Year\textsuperscript{b}

![Graph showing number of students studying abroad by year for elementary, middle, and high school students. The graph shows a significant increase in the number of elementary school students studying abroad, while the numbers for middle and high school students increase more gradually.](image)


Notes: \textsuperscript{a} Students who went abroad to accompany their parents stationed in foreign countries and those emigrated to foreign countries are excluded; \textsuperscript{b} Year means academic year.

Figure 1 shows a more rapid increment in the number of elementary school students studying abroad than that of middle school and high school students. For instance, the number of elementary school students studying abroad has increased 37 times over the 15 years between 1995 and 2010, while those of middle school and high school students have each increased just 5 times. Studying abroad has become more popular among children in earlier ages. The domination of elementary school students among those who study abroad is also supported by a study of wild geese families in New Zealand (Kim et al. 2005). Many wild geese mothers strongly believe that the best timing for their children’s foreign education is during their elementary school period (Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2007).
Table 2. Student Studying Abroad\(^b\) by Country, 2010\(^b\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country and Region(^c)</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number(^d)</td>
<td>Ratio(^e)</td>
<td>Number(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2,433</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>1,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia(^f)</td>
<td>2,228</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,794</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,870</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: a. Students who went abroad to accompany their parents stationed in foreign countries and those emigrated to foreign countries are excluded; b. Data as of 2010 academic year; c. Countries and regions are sorted on the total number of students; d. Number of students abroad; e. Number of students abroad per 10,000 Students = (number of students abroad / students enrolled)\(\times\)10,000; f. Southeast Asia includes Philippine, Thailand, Singapore and India.

Table 2 shows that Western English speaking countries are the most popular destinations for Korean students. For example, around 60% of elementary school, 54% of middle school and 65% of high school students studying abroad go to Western English speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K. According to Table 2, Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and India, are also emerging popular destinations for Koreans, as around 25% of elementary school, 24% of middle school, and 14% of high school students studying abroad go there. These four Southeast Asian countries become new destinations for Korean students because not only do they have English as one of
their official languages but they also are cheaper than Western English speaking countries and closer to Korea (Kim 2010).

Figure 2. Percent of Student Studying Abroad\(^a\) by Country, 2010\(^b\)

Figure 2 shows that the United States and Canada are still the most preferred destinations for young Korean students: 28% of elementary school, 33% of middle school, and half of high school students go to the United States whereas 18% of elementary school, 12% of middle school, and 8% of high school students go to Canada. From this figure, it is estimated that the greatest number of wild geese families reside in the United States and Canada, which are the main locations of my dissertation research.
2. Literature Review on Wild Geese Families

Compared to much research on Chinese “astronaut families,” there are only a small number of studies on Korean wild geese families in the United States (Lee 2010; Lee and Koo 2006; Kim 2010). Although some studies have been conducted in Korea on wild geese mothers (Cho 2004; Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Kim et al. 2005), wild geese fathers (Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2008), and wild geese couples (Choi 2006; Kim 2010), these studies are in the early stage. Thus, although they provide a good description of wild geese families, they often do not yield in-depth sociological implications of this wild geese phenomenon.

Below, I first discuss findings of previous research on Korean wild geese families divided into four areas—motives for migration, everyday lives after family separation, changes in spousal relationships, and parenting—and then point out the weaknesses of these studies, combined with an explanation of how my dissertation fills the gap in previous literature on Korean wild geese families.

Previous studies have contributed to finding out the reasons why many middle-class Koreans want to become wild geese families, analyzing both structural and cultural backgrounds and individual motivations. In Korea, speaking fluent English is seen as critical social capital for success and wealth (Nam 2005; Shim 1994). The Korean government’s emphasis on globalization and its admission to OECD membership in 1996 also play an important role in the English zeal among Koreans (Kim 2010; Lee and Koo 2006).

In addition, the sense of insecurity and employment uncertainty has rapidly increased among the Korean middle-class since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, as they experienced massive layoffs and forced retirement (Choi 2006; Kim 2010; Lee and Koo 2006). Accordingly, many middle-class Korean parents decided to heavily invest in their children’s education,
particularly in English education, which seems to be a critical asset for their children’s successful economic survival in the competitive global market (Cho 2004; Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2010; Lee 2008; Park and Ableman 2004). Furthermore, many Korean parents are dissatisfied with Korean education, which seems to kill children’s creativity, while entrance to a college is too competitive and private educational expenses are unreasonably high (Cho 2004; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim 2010; Lee and Koo 2006; Lee 2008).

Korean wild geese families also have a “strong familism” (Lee and Koo 2006: 539) which is child-centered (Cho 2004; Lee 2010). To pursue their children’s stable future through education, wild geese parents often sacrifice their current marital relations (Cho 2004; Choi 2006; Lee 2010; Lee and Koo 2006). Many wild geese mothers readily sacrifice other roles for the sake of motherhood (Kim 2007). Some mothers also migrate abroad to be freed from stressful in-law relations (Choi 2006; Kim 2007; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2010).

Overall, studies on wild geese families have offered a good description of how mothers abroad and fathers in Korea manage their everyday lives after separation, although they focused more on the difficulties each parent encounters in her/his everyday life.

Here are findings on the lives of wild geese mothers. On the one hand, wild geese mothers seem to enjoy greater mobility and freedom from family in-laws after migration (Choi 2006). They also enjoy enhanced decision-making power as they decide many things independently (Choi 2006). On the other hand, wild geese mothers have limited social life after migration (Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2007; Kim 2009). Due to the language barrier, combined with difficulty in finding jobs after migration, wild geese mothers continue to live among ethnic Koreans without much contact with the dominant society (Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2007; Kim 2009). Accordingly, many wives suffer from loneliness (Kim 2009). Some wives go to Korean
churches and enjoy greater social networking options than others and also obtain useful life information (Kim 2009). The churches’ vital role for immigrants as a space to obtain assistance and connect with others is also true for other immigrant groups such as Central Americans (Menjívar 2006). However, the Korean churches do not always play a positive role. They dissuade many wild geese mothers from assimilating into the mainstream society: as wild geese mothers live among the Korean community, they lose the motivation of acculturation (Kim 2009). After migration, wild geese mothers also lose their own independent everyday life, as it is mainly organized to meet their children’s educational schedule (Kim 2009). They serve as the “educational manager” for their children (Lee 2010:253). Many wild geese women also suffer from economic difficulties (Choi 2006). Thus, some wives work in the United States to supplement the family income (Lee and Koo 2006).

After separation from the rest of their families, wild geese fathers feel freer (Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2008). Some fathers are confident that they play a role as good fathers since they provide economic support for their families abroad (Kim and Chang 2004). However, as they no longer have wives to take care of them, fathers encounter difficulties in dealing with everyday housework (Kim 2006) and spend more time in doing housework (Kim and Chang 2004). Fathers also send most of their earnings to the families abroad, so that they suffer from serious economic pressure, which lowers their economic status (Kim 2006; Lee and Koo 2006). Many fathers feel that they are excluded from the rest of family life abroad and lose the role of “father” due to separation (Choi 2006; Kim 2006; Lee 2008). Fathers also feel more isolation and struggle with loneliness after separation (Choi 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim 2006; Lee 2008). Some even suffer from depression (Kim and Chang 2004). Although they have parents, relatives and friends in Korea, many fathers spend time alone (Choi 2006; Kim and Chang 2004). For
fathers, it is difficult to manage relationships with families in Korea (Lee 2008). Interestingly, for fathers, the sexual relationship is also a critical issue after transnational spousal separation (Choi 2006; Kim and Chang 2004), while it is not for wives (Cho 2004; Choi 2006).

A small number of studies also have explored the change in spousal relationships after wild geese families adopt a transnational split household strategy (Kim 2009; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim et al. 2005; Lee and Koo 2006). For instance, wild geese parents interact and maintain transnational connections through phone calls, chatting, and visiting on vacations or holidays (Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2009). Split households occasionally strengthen the quality of conjugal relations, by reducing spousal conflicts and even preventing divorce (Kim and Chang 2004; Kim 2009; Lee and Koo 2006). Due to the transnational gender division of labor, both spouses who go through hardship in their everyday life can have heightened sympathy and understanding for each other (Kim 2009; Kim and Chang 2004). Nevertheless, prolonged spousal separation in general lowers the quality of wild geese couples’ relationships, as it weakens the emotional ties and the quality of communication between spouses (Kim 2009; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee and Koo 2006).

Previous studies also offer some discussion on the parenting practices of Korean wild geese families. According to studies on wild geese fathers, fathers remaining in Korea generally maintain transnational connections with their children in the United States through phone calls, email, and short-visits (Kim and Chang 2004). Similar to studies on Mexican migrant fathers in the United States (Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994) and Filipino fathers in Hong Kong (Mckay 2007), previous studies on Korean wild geese fathers tend to focus on the economic role of wild geese fathers (Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee and Koo 2006), while overlooking their emotional roles.
Literature on wild geese mothers demonstrates how they follow a traditional gender ideology to become good mothers. Wild geese women readily sacrifice their role as professionals and wives for the sake of motherhood (Kim 2007). After migration, they serve as an “educational manager” for their children (Lee 2010:253), and their daily life is mainly organized to meet their children’s educational schedule (Kim 2009). In this respect, wild geese mothers are comparable to White middle-class wives who are actively performing “intensive mothering” (Arendell 2000; Fineman 1995; Hays 1996) or “concerted cultivation” (Lareau 2002) as a full-time homemaker. According to Lareau (2002:773), “concerted cultivation” refers to parenting-practices of White middle-class parents who make a “deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children’s development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills.” “Middle-class parents engage in concerted cultivation by attempting to foster children’s talents through organized leisure activities and extensive reasoning” (Lareau 2002:747).

Nevertheless, Korean wild geese mothers are not always confined to the domestic sphere, as American intensive mothering ideology or concerted cultivation dictates. Like Chinese middle-class “study mothers” in Singapore (Huang and Yeoh 2005) and many Latino working-class migrant mothers in the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Pessar 1984; Zentgraf 2002), some Korean wild geese mothers work in the United States to supplement family income (Kim 2007; Lee and Koo 2006). In this respect, studies on Korean wild geese mothers contribute to expanding the definition of motherhood by incorporating financial obligations as an integral part of motherhood, as argued by feminist scholars (Collins 2000; Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2000, 2005a). In sum, previous literature contributes to enhancing the understanding of Korean wild geese families by shedding light on the underexplored lives of them.
Nonetheless, I still would like to point out some weaknesses of previous literature on Korean wild geese families, and then explain how I will resolve such issues. First of all, most studies of wild geese families have put more emphasis on finding out the motivations for the transnational split household arrangement. They also have endeavored to explore how each spouse’s everyday life changes after they become wild geese families. Accordingly, there has been less discussion on the relational aspects of wild geese parents. Even a small number of studies that analyzed the spousal relationship of wild geese parents have paid more attention to the quality change in couple relationships. As a result, there has been less discussion on the change of spousal power relations or relative gender statuses within the households.

The exceptions are studies by Kim (2009) and Choi (2006) that report wild geese mothers’ enhanced status and decision-making power after their migration to the United States. According to Kim (2009) and Choi (2006), wild geese mothers achieve this enhanced domestic power as they independently resolve everyday issues after they migrate to the United States. However, these two studies lack a detailed description of spousal power dynamics during family separation. Furthermore, migrant women’s legal, social and economic positions have significant impacts on their gender relationships and the pattern of housework (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Yet, Kim (2009) and Choi (2006) fail to discuss such critical legal, social and economic factors, including women’s legal position as temporary migrants, their social status as racial/ethnic minorities, and their economic reliance on husbands’ remittances. To fill the gap in the literature, I analyze how these factors are intersected to influence women’s bargaining power and their domestic status.

Second, none of the previous studies on wild geese families have explored spousal power relations after family reunification: Is women’s status enhanced or are patriarchal gender relations re-imposed after family reunification? To fill these gaps, I explore why and when wild
geese families reunify, and I analyze how the transnational split household strategy not only affects power dynamics during family separation but also after family reunification. While Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992, 1994) investigates the impact of spousal separation on the marital relations of Latino working-class immigrant families after the family reunification in the host society, my study further extends her discussion by including Asian middle-class couples who reunify in their country of origin.

Third, compared to its importance, studies on wild geese fathers have not paid much attention to how they perform transnational fathering to overcome their physical distance from the rest of the family. Since fathering is an important aspect of the transnational family life, this dissertation explores what kinds of transnational fathering strategies wild geese fathers employ with their children who live abroad, other than just providing economic support. Given that Mexican transnational fathers interact with their children only when they are able to send sufficient remittances to children in home country (Dreby 2006), it is interesting to find whether Korean wild geese fathers’ ability to send enough remittances to the families abroad are related with the quality of relationship with their children.

I also examine what kinds of efforts wild geese fathers in Korea make to maintain transnational connections with families abroad, other than communicating with children via phone, email, and short-visits (Kim and Chang 2004). For example, it is intriguing to find out how often fathers visit families abroad, what fathers do with children, and how they feel during their transnational family separation. Compared to much research on wild geese fathers’ tremendous educational zeal, economic support, and sacrifice of spousal relations for the sake of children, there have not been many studies on the transnational fathering practices of Korean wild geese fathers. Similar to Mexican migrant fathers in the United States (Dreby 2006;
Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994) and Filipino fathers in Hong Kong (Mckay 2007), previous studies on Korean wild geese fathers narrowly focus on their economic roles (Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee and Koo 2006). By providing rich description on the fathering practices of wild geese fathers, my dissertation contributes to expanding the understanding of transnational fathering across class and national backgrounds.

Fourth, previous studies on wild geese mothers have limitations in two aspects. First, although they uncover that some wild geese mothers have paid employment after migration (Kim 2007; Lee and Koo 2006), they do not specify what kinds of jobs these women hold, how they find those jobs, and how much they are paid. They do not examine either if or how these mothers’ economic contribution to the family economy helps them enjoy greater bargaining power and/or challenge male dominance in the households. According to the literature on working-class migrant mothers, paid jobs empower women and thus help them renegotiate traditional gender roles after migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Pessar 1984; Zentgraf 2002). Given this, it is necessary to investigate whether paid jobs help wild geese mothers enhance their status at home and make gender relations more equitable, as it does for many working-class migrant women. If not, it is also important to find out the factors that hinder wild geese mothers’ paid jobs from contesting male dominance and promoting gender equality at home. My previous research on Korean international students’ wives (Lee 2013) shows that paid employment itself does not necessarily empower middle-class migrant women within the household. Rather, the social status and prestige attached to the jobs are more critical for increasing middle-class migrant women’s power in their spousal relations (Lee 2013). I discuss whether this is also the case for Korean wild geese mothers.
Second, previous studies on wild geese mothers have shown that these women hold diverse visa statuses: student visas, working visas, visiting scholar visas, business visas, tourist visas, and green card holders (Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Lee 2010). According to Kim (2009), many wild geese mothers hold F1 student visas. Since their goal is not to pursue their own education, but to justify their long residency in the U.S, many mothers choose to attend language schools (Kim 2009), which require less time and energy. Therefore, although they feel it is repressive, they unwillingly attend language schools to satisfy the visa regulations for foreign students (Kim 2009). Kim (2009) also finds that some wives have working visas. Even if they are economically affluent, they have occupations in the United States to maintain their legitimate legal status (Kim 2009).

Nevertheless, studies on wild geese mothers do not offer specific explanations of why they hold diverse legal statuses, how such diverse visa statuses impact the lives of wild geese mothers in the host society and their gender relations within the family. Given that migrant women’s visa status can be a significant source of leverage to negotiate patriarchal gender relations (Espiritu 1995, 2008; George 2001; Kim 2006; Lee 2013; Ong and Azores 1994), it is important to examine the role of wild geese mothers’ legal status on their family relations. Menjívar (2006), focusing on immigrants’ “in-between” status (between “temporary legality” and nonlegality), shows how such “legal liminality” negatively shapes the personal, social and cultural lives of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in the United States. In my dissertation, focusing on the issue of “temporary legality,” I examine how Korean wild geese mothers’ temporary migrant status configures their family relations as well as their incorporation to the host society. I pay particular attention to the fluidities and uncertainties wild geese women encounter in their everyday lives as temporary visa holders. I argue that not only prolonged
“legal liminality” (Menjívar 2006) but also “temporary legality” negatively shapes migrant women’s lives.

Finally, I would like to point out issues related to samples and methodologies. Among eleven studies that I referred to for these literature review on Korean wild geese families, nine studies rely upon qualitative methodologies utilizing mostly face-to-face interviews (Cho 2004; Choi 2006; Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Kim 2010; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2008; Lee 2010; Lee and Koo 2006). Only one is a quantitative study conducting a survey with 66 mothers in New Zealand (Kim et al. 2005), while the other is a mixed method study conducting three interviews and six surveys with wild geese fathers, combined with a content analysis of sixteen news reports on them (Kim 2006). Given that wild geese phenomenon is new and that it is difficult to locate sample, their choice of qualitative methodology seems reasonable.

However, it is problematic that these studies have a very small sample size. For instance, among nine qualitative studies, four studies have sample size below ten (Lee 2008; Lee 2010; Lee and Koo 2006; Kim and Chang 2004), three studies have a sample between 10 and 20 (Cho 2004; Kim 2007; Kim 2009). Only, two studies have a sample size of 26 (Kim 2010) and 34 (Choi 2006).

In addition, these qualitative studies’ sample selection is highly restricted by the location of the researchers. For instance, scholars residing in Korea mostly explore the experiences of wild geese fathers (Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2008; Lee and Koo 2006), while scholars abroad focus on the experiences of wild geese mothers where they were currently living (Cho 2004; Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Lee 2010). Only two studies are exceptions. They recruited both women and men for their studies (Choi 2006; Kim 2010). Yet, these two studies have limitations in describing comprehensive family dynamics, since their samples are highly imbalanced with
respect to gender, due to the limitation of the residence of researchers. Specifically, Kim (2010) conducted in-depth interviews with 18 mothers in Singapore where she resided, but she conducted interviews with only 8 fathers in Korea. While Choi (2006) conducted 20 face-to-face interviews with husbands in Korea where she resided, her data on wives abroad are quite limited: It is based on only 5 face-to-face interviews, combined with 5 phone and 4 email interviews. Compared to male data achieved by in-depth interview, Choi’s (2006) female data obtained by phone and email interviews seem to be less appropriate to produce rich and in-depth knowledge. In sum, although the studies by Choi (2006) and Kim (2010) investigated both women’s and men’s perspectives, gender imbalance in their samples limit the implications of these studies’ findings on gender.

In conclusion, in order to better investigate the complex family dynamics of wild geese families in a more comprehensive manner, it is critical to conduct in-depth interviews with an adequate size of sample composed of both women and men, regardless of the current location of a researcher. More detailed explanation about how my research overcomes such methodological issues is provided in the method section.

III. Conceptual Framework

My dissertation is built on theories of (1) gender and transnational split households, (2) household labor, (3) intensive mothering, and (4) responsible fathering in a transnational context. Each of these frameworks is described in the subsections below.
1. Gender and Transnational Split Households

Transnational migration is a highly gendered process that affects both women and men (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Willis and Yeoh 2000). Even if transnational migrant families migrate to a host society as a single household, women and men in these migrant families have different interests and goals and thus experience gender conflict and unequal power dynamics in their migration (Lim 1997; Man 2001; Min 2001; Willis and Yeoh 2000).

Recently, an increasing number of migrant families are adopting transnational “split household” (Glenn 1983) strategies. Although such migrants’ initial goal is improving the overall well-being of “the family,” there may be more serious gender struggles in their migration process. Nonetheless, scholarly research on gender and migration has not paid much attention to the issues of gender (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Only some studies investigate the wife-husband gender dynamics of transnational split household families.

Glenn (1983) is the pioneer in examining gender issues in transnational split household families. According to Glenn (1983), transnational “split household” families refers to the types of families in which some family members (usually fathers) migrate to a different country (usually to a more developed country) in order to support the rest of the family members (usually mothers and children) who remain in their home country (Glenn 1983). However, today, “women migrate across international boundaries at approximately the same rate as men” (DeLaet 1999:13). Reflecting this trend, Parreñas (2005a) further expands the categories of transnational “split household” families by including working-class mothers who migrate from developing countries to developed countries, while leaving their husbands and children in their country of origin.
Migration studies that have focused on working-class transnational split families find that more egalitarian conjugal relations emerge during the long spousal separation (Glenn 1983; Parreñas 2008) and after the re-unification of transnational couples in a host country (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994), by elevating women’s bargaining power in family matters and by increasing men’s share of housework. However, it is important to note that these equitable gender relations are found among Latino and/or Asian working-class transnational families whose husbands or wives migrate to the United States alone as workers to support families, while the rest of the families remain in their countries of origin. In contrast to working-class transnational split household families, the gender status of middle-class migrant women is lowered after the adoption of transnational split household strategies, according to studies on Chinese middle-class transnational families such as Hong Kong and Taiwanese “astronaut families” (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Waters 2002) and “parachute kids” (Pe-Pua et al. 1998) in Canada and Australia, and Chinese “study mothers” in Singapore (Huang and Yeoh 2005).

In my dissertation, I explore how middle-class Korean wild geese mothers’ gender relations change after they adopt transnational split household strategies. In particular, I expect that wild geese mothers’ bargaining power will vary based on their legal positions, employment statuses, and the degree of reliance on the remittances sent by husbands. Specifically, women who have green cards or working visas have more family power than those who have tourist or student visas. Women who work in the United States are less dependent on remittances and accordingly have more power than those who do not work and are highly dependent on the remittances.
In sum, by analyzing Korean wild geese mothers, my study aims to overcome the existing literature’s unitary and peripheral portrait of middle-class Asian migrant women who go abroad for their children’s education as passive victims of Asian patriarchal culture who suffer through transnational migration. Although they share the goals of migration and class backgrounds, I argue that the gender paths of middle-class Asian female migrants who adopt transnational split household strategies diversify based on the intersectional impacts of their legal positions, employment statuses, the degree of reliance on the remittances sent by husbands, and their ability to construct an extensive social network across their own ethnic communities.

2. Household Labor

A long period of transnational spousal separation can challenge the patriarchal pattern of household labor performed by migrant couples. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) shows enhanced egalitarianism in household labor after family reunification, while Parreñas (2008) discovers such egalitarianism during family separation. These studies provide an excellent explanation about the reasons why migrant couples reach more egalitarian divisions of household labor. However, these studies do not provide specific explanations about what the supposed egalitarianism is in household labor that is achieved by these transnational migrant couples. For instance, there is no description of the types of housework performed by each spouse, nor the changes in time spent doing housework after spousal separation or after family reunification. While it is important to find out the cause of egalitarianism in the performance of household labor, it is equally critical to understand what kinds of egalitarianism are achieved by transnational migrant couples in their housework through transnational spousal separation. To fill the gap in the migration literature, I analyze the changes in the pattern of household labor
performed by Korean wild geese parents. Specifically, I examine the time and types of household labor performed by wild geese parents in their separate households across national borders.

Theoretically, my analysis of the household labor is primarily grounded upon “doing gender” theories developed by West and Zimmerman (1987:125), which views gender as “a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction.” Drawing on this “doing gender” perspective, many family scholars define housework as a “symbolic enactment of gender relations” (Bianchi et al. 2000:194; South and Spitze 1994:327).

According to “doing gender” perspectives, men’s earnings are not a powerful predictor of how men and women divide housework (Brines 1994; Hochschild 1989). Rather, the more a husband is economically dependent on his wife, the less housework he does to recover his masculinity (Brines 1994; Hochschild 1989). Since men recover self-esteem and masculinity by not doing housework whereas women show their subordination or love to their husbands/partners by doing more housework, the gender gap in housework time is the greatest in marital households where wives and husbands live together (South and Spitze 1994.) Similarly, analyzing the impact of transitions in marital status on women and men’s time spent doing housework, Gupta (1999) demonstrate that men spend less time on housework when they enter “coresidential unions” through marriage and cohabitation, while women decrease their housework time when they leave “coresidential unions” through separation or widowhood. Given that Korean wild geese parents do not reside together although they are married, Gupta’s (1999) finding is particularly significant, since it demonstrates how much the co-residence of women and men is important for their gender performance through housework.

Based on the “doing gender” theory, I expect that wild geese mothers’ time on household labor will generally decrease, while fathers’ time increases after they live apart. If women do
more housework to show their love to their husbands and men do less work to show their masculinity when they live together (South and Spitze 1994), wild geese parents lose such incentives because they no longer live together. In the same vein, there would be blurred boundaries between men’s and women’s types of housework performed by wild geese parents while they live apart, since there is less reason for “doing gender.”

I also argue that “gender” is not the only factor affecting the time and types of household labor performed by wild geese couples. Relative resources also matter. That is, women with more power do less housework. Traditionally, family theorists focus on women’s education and jobs as their relative resources to challenge men’s dominance (Bianchi et al. 2000; Coltrane 2000; England 2000). However, in order to correctly reflect the unique situation of Korean wild geese couples as transnational migrants who live apart each other, I discuss two alternative relative resources that have not been much discussed in previous family studies: 1) migrant women’s legal statuses and 2) their economic dependence on husbands through remittances.

The majority of wild geese mothers are prohibited from finding an employment in the host society due to their legal statuses, and accordingly make a living mainly with remittances sent by their husbands in Korea. Even if some women find under-the-table jobs to support their family, I do not expect that their paid employment would greatly help them enhance their relative power to their husbands, because of lower prestige and income attached to these jobs. I expect that only some women who have legitimate legal status (such as green-card, working visa, or visiting scholar visa) that allows them to find gainful employment and accordingly can provide a significant contribution to the household economy will be empowered to do less housework during spousal separation. In addition, only these small numbers of women with legitimate legal status and the adequate level of economic independence from their husbands are expected to
enjoy greater egalitarianism in household labor after family reunification in Korea. This is because they are the only group who are able to enhance their sense of social power, independence and autonomy during spousal separation.

Grounded upon two household labor theories, my study aims to construct more nuanced explanations about the household labor performed by transnational migrant families. In particular, since Korean wild geese couples do not live together, my dissertation provides a valuable opportunity to test whether factors affecting the household labor of married couples who live together have the same effects on couples who live separately across national borders.

3. Intensive Mothering

The ideology of intensive mothering frames mothering as exclusive, child centered, and time-consuming (Arendell 2000; Hays 1996). Since the mother is expected to be self-sacrificing, she should devote herself to taking care of other family members, while overlooking her own needs and interests (Bassin et al. 1994). Mothering practices involve not only nurturing, protecting, and training children (Leonard 1996) but also shaping profound intimate relationships with children (Oberman and Josselson 1996). Intensive mothering also reinforces the strict division of labor between men and women (i.e., the husband as breadwinner and the wife as caregiver) (Arendell 2000; Fineman, 1995).

Researchers in the United States have argued that the ideology of intensive mothering exclusively reflects the mothering practices of White middle-class women, while overlooking the experiences of working-class women of color who have always worked (Amott and Matthaei 1996; Collins 1994; Hattery 2001; Landry 2000; Lareau 2003; Thorne 1992). While I agree with their arguments, I disagree with their implicit assumption that all immigrant women are working-
class and cannot afford such mothering practices. This assumption provides a ground for an ethnocentric explanation of why middle-class Asian women accompany their children to the United States: Scholars say that it is mostly the negative outcome of patriarchal Asian culture (Chee 2003; Choi 2006; Huang and Yeoh 2005).

However, I argue that intensive mothering is not limited to White middle-class women. Rather, we need to view Asian middle-class mothers’ transnational migration as an active performance of intensive mothering. In some respects, Korean wild geese parents are very similar to American middle-class parents as they actively seek a better educational environment for their children (Lee and Koo 2006). However, given mothers’ willingness to cross national borders, even sacrificing their home country status as middle-class wives and/or successful career women, their zeal in performing “intensive mothering” seems to be even greater than that of their American counterparts who organize their children’s academic activities where they reside (Lee and Koo 2006). Hence, Korean wild geese wives’ migration decision to cross national borders for their children’s education provides empirical evidence that intensive mothering is a global phenomenon differentiated by women’s class position across their racial/ethnic backgrounds and nationalities, as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) have argued.

On the other hand, I am doubtful about how successfully Korean wild geese mothers achieve their children’s educational goal through their intensive mothering after migration. As racial ethnic minority women who are neither fluent in English nor familiar with mainstream culture, Korean mothers are located in a disadvantageous position in their destination country (Lee and Koo 2006). To overcome their structural disadvantages, wild geese mothers tend to reside in areas where Koreans are highly concentrated (Lee and Koo 2006). It is known that same ethnic immigrant communities are the primary social infrastructure of immigrant women
(Espiritu 2008; Kibria 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Menjivar 2006, 2012; Ong and Azores 1994). Given this, in this dissertation, I explore how wild geese mothers construct their new social networks across the Korean immigrant community and achieve their educational goals. I expect that those who build extensive social networks across the Korean immigrant community can better perform intensive mothering and thus achieve their educational goals, utilizing its resources available to its members.

4. Responsible Fathering in the Transnational Context

Recent U.S. family scholarship argues that fathers should be seen as “equal coparents” (Pleck and Pleck 1997) who perform “responsible fathering” (Coltrane 1996; Doherty et al. 1998). Levine and Pitt (1995) suggest two important characteristics of “responsible fathering.” First, fathers should actively share the “continuing emotional and physical care of their children” (p.6) with mothers. Second, fathers should share the “continuing financial support of their child” (p.6) with mothers. “Responsible fathering” is emphasized because it is essential to meet children’s needs (Doherty et al. 1998). “Children need and deserve active, involved fathers throughout their childhood and adolescence” (Doherty et al. 1998: 279). It is important to note that “responsible fathering” is suggested not only to fathers who live together with their children but also for those who do not live with their children (Levine and Pitt 1995). Therefore, transnational fathers who live separately from the rest of their families might also be expected to perform “responsible fathering.” That is, transnational fathers should pay attention not only to providing financial support for their children but also providing them with emotional and physical care.
Nonetheless, transnational fathers often pay less attention to the emotional part of fathering (Dreby 2006; Pribilsky 2004), while maintaining familial intimacy is highly emphasized for transnational mothering (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2000, 2005a). Rather, transnational fathers often believe they fulfill their role as “responsible fathers,” as long as they support their families economically (Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee and Koo 2006; Mckay 2007; Pribilsky 2004). This is probably because “fathering from a distance does not reconstitute ‘normative gender behavior’ in the family but instead abides by gender-ideological norms such as male breadwinning” (Parreñas 2008:1057). Thus, transnational fathers become estranged from their children remaining in their home country, if they fail to provide sufficient economic support to their children (Dreby 2006). However, I believe that maintaining emotional connections and intimate relations with children is as much an important part of fathering as is economic provision. Thus, I analyze how Korean wild geese fathers maintain transnational intimacy with their children abroad. I also explore how wild geese fathers’ intergenerational relationships with their children changes during their transnational separation.

According to Doherty et al. (1998), fathering is more sensitive to contextual forces than mothering. In particular, fathers’ presence with children is quite critical to building a father-child bond (Doherty et al. 1998). Thus, nonmarital fathers and fathers who divorce and do not live with their children encounter more difficulties in being good, nurturing fathers than those who live together (Doherty et al. 1998; Dreby 2006). Doherty et al. (1998) also finds that fathers’ ability to establish a good relationship with their children relies on the quality of their marital relationships. When transnational migrant fathers’ relationships with wives remaining in the
home country deteriorate, they also have worsened relationships with their children (Dreby 2006).

Given this, I expect that wild geese fathers who visit their children more often will have better relationships with their children. I also expect wild geese mothers play a critical role in shaping transnational intimacy between wild geese fathers and their children. In sum, by exploring how Korean wild geese fathers perform the role of responsible fathers in the transnational context, my dissertation contributes to advancing the interdisciplinary knowledge of fathering across family and immigration studies.

5. Summary: Literature and Conceptual Issues

Thus far, I have proposed two research questions: 1) How does the gender status of Korean wild geese mothers change through their transnational migration?; and 2) How do Korean wild geese parents perform their parenting (intensive mothering and responsible fathering) during their transnational family separation? I have also discussed the contributions and weaknesses of previous research on Korean wild geese families. Then, I have provided several theoretical frameworks for my dissertation: 1) gender and transnational split households, 2) household labor, 3) intensive mothering, and 4) responsible fathering in a transnational context. These areas represent how my dissertation project contributes to aspects of the broader sociological literature. In the following section, I explain how I conducted my dissertation research, by providing a specific description of its data and methodology.
Korean wild geese families are a relatively new phenomenon that has not been studied extensively, and there are not enough data about them. I aim to produce “rigorous knowledge” (Emerson 2001: 18) on Korean wild geese families, by “pursuing meaning-rich, context-sensitive, and holistic descriptions” (Emerson 2001:35). Therefore, after obtaining IRB approval and defending my dissertation proposal, I gathered the data by conducting qualitative in-depth interviews with 64 Korean wild geese parents in the course of a year at three main research sites: (1) Tenafly and surrounding areas, New Jersey, the United States, (2) London, Ontario, Canada, and (3) Seoul, South Korea. Specifically, I interviewed 31 wild geese mothers (23 current and 8 former) and 33 wild geese fathers (22 current and 11 former). After each interview, I added extensive field notes and an analytic summary. I was writing dissertation chapters while analyzing data.

I originally planned to conduct participant observation of about ten wild geese couples as supplementary data to the self-reports on household dynamics. However, due to the difficulty in gaining couples' approval for these observations, I decided (with my committee members’ concurrence) to conduct only in-depth interviews. As a result, my information on husband-wife division of labor is limited to interview data.

My sample is unique in four aspects. First, it includes both women and men so that it can provide more balanced perspectives on how gender relations and power dynamics of Korean wild geese parents are negotiated and re-shaped within their transnational households. Second, it includes not only current but also former wild geese parents, from whom I can better understand the impact of transnational split household strategies on the gender dynamics of wild geese.
families not only during their separation but also after reunification. Third, by interviewing wild
goose mothers both in the United States and Canada, my dissertation provides an opportunity to see
how transnational middle-class migrant women’s gender status and settlement in the host
society can be differently shaped based on the host country’s immigration and settlement policies.
Finally, it includes a few wild goose parents whose marital relationships are in crisis through
divorce, separation, spouse’s death, or thinking of divorce. Interviews with them help me uncover the gender conflicts and struggles in transnational split household families, which have been underexplored.

I. Sampling Strategies

My dissertation aims to provide a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of Korean wild goose families, particularly focusing on the relational dynamics between spouses. To achieve this goal and shed light on the diverse aspects of wild goose families, I did my best to increase the diversity of participants in my study.

1. Recruiting Wild Geese Mothers

To recruit current wild goose women in the United States, I started with an initial purposive sample of wild goose mothers in New Jersey, which is one of the most preferred destinations on the Eastern coast for wild goose families (Kim 2009) and accordingly has a large pool of potential research subjects. Because I did not have any direct personal connections with Korean wild goose mothers, I first relied on key informants who knew many wild goose mothers and were willing to introduce me to them. I met these key informants during my one and a half year of residency in “Korea towns” within northern New Jersey cities and via my participation in
the SSRC Korean Studies Dissertation Workshop. Particularly, my involvement with two Korean church communities in New Jersey and New York and my active search for good educational opportunities for my own child greatly helped me meet a diverse range of Korean immigrants and build necessary social networking to locate potential research subjects.

The first group of informants is the wives of Korean businessmen in New Jersey. Although they were not wild geese mothers, they knew many wild geese mothers whose husbands were Korean public officials, professors or businessmen. The second informant is a former president of the Tenafly Middle School Korean Parents’ Association (KPA). She is also a former wild geese mother who reunited with her husband in the United States after years of transnational separation. Thus, she knew a vast pool of Korean wild geese mothers in Tenafly, which is an affluent city with a good school district in northern New Jersey where many Korean immigrants and wild geese families reside. The third informant is a teacher who worked for a Korean private education institute in New Jersey. He knew many students and their parents from Korean wild geese families. The final group of informants is those whom I met in Korean churches in New Jersey and New York. They include a minister, deaconesses, and lay believers. Korean churches are deemed to be critical for Korean immigrants, including wild geese families, as a locus to obtain useful life information, vast social networking and a sense of belonging (Kim 2007). Through my networks in those Korean churches, I was able to recruit diverse wild geese mothers.

It was more difficult to recruit current wild geese mothers in the United States than I had expected. Although my informants knew many wild geese mothers, they were often hesitant and declined to participate. That is related to the fact that wild geese women are a kind of “stigmatized” group among Korean immigrants despite their higher social and class positions.
compared to other Koreans (Kim 2009). To the eyes of Korean immigrants, wild geese women
are seen as those who just take advantage of the Korean immigrant society during their
temporary stay, those who have problematic spousal relationships, those who are crazy enough
to devote themselves to their children’s education, and/or those who may possibly engage in
affairs with Korean male immigrants in the United States (Kim 2009). Because many wild geese
mothers in my sample knew such prejudices very well and/or already had experienced animosity
against them, they were quite defensive and reluctant to share their personal experiences with
anyone outside of their group. In this regard, the male teacher and the male minister were not
quite reliable sources of references for many wild geese mothers. Because they were not wild
geese mothers but had influential positions in the Korean immigrant networks, many wild geese
mothers who were referred to me by the teacher and the minister were very concerned about their
reputation within the Korean immigrant community. Therefore, it was critical for me to assure
their confidentiality at the beginning of each interview.

However, after having obtained the initial sample of wild geese mothers in the United
States through these key informants, I was able to gather a number of wild geese mothers faster
through a snowball sampling procedure, which refers to “a method for generating a field sample
of individuals possessing the characteristics of interest by asking initial contacts if they could
name a few individuals with similar characteristics who might agree to be interviewed” (Lofland
et al. 2006: 43). In particular, referral from the wild geese mothers whom I had already
interviewed was the most effective way of recruiting other wild geese mothers. Wild geese
mothers, particularly current ones, often lived in the same local community and interacted
closely through their own social network. Thus, although it was not so easy for me to meet wild
gleese mothers in the beginning, once I met some of them, news about me spread quickly among
the wild geese mothers in those areas. Because I could build rapport and accordingly had high quality interviews with the wild geese mothers in my initial sample, many of them were willing to refer to others. Some women even thanked me for a chance to reflect on their own lives. Wild geese mothers that I met through the referrals by other wild geese mothers often trusted me even before meeting me. In addition, because of my own identity as a mother with a young child, and my academic background from a prestigious university in Korea, wild geese mothers who were enthusiastic about their children’s education viewed me as less threatening and felt interested in talking to me. In some cases, mothers consulted with me about their children’s education after the interviews.

While I originally planned to recruit current wild geese mothers only in the United States, I also interviewed wild geese mothers in Canada. It was much more difficult to recruit wild geese mothers than I had expected. Wild geese mothers were quite reluctant to share their private life with a stranger due to their stigmatized status within the Korean immigrant community. As I employed snowball sampling, one wild geese mother whom I interviewed in the United States introduced me to another wild geese mother in Canada, who was willing to participate and refer me to other wild geese mothers in her community. Considering many similarities between the United States and Canada and the difficulty in recruiting participants, I conducted in-depth interviews with wild geese mothers in Canada. Retrospectively, the Canadian cases greatly enriched my data, and highlighted the differences in the immigration and settlement policies between the United States and Canada.

In order to recruit former wild geese mothers in Korea, I first drew on my personal networks. In particular, my relatives and the female alumni from Seoul National University greatly helped me. Although they were not wild geese mothers, they were living in rich areas in
Seoul and knew many former wild geese women through their children’s school networks. After having obtained the initial sample, I gathered a number of former wild geese mothers through snowball sampling. Like wild geese mothers in the United States and Canada, many wild geese mothers in Korea expressed their satisfaction with the interviews and willingly referred me to other wild geese mothers. Some women even had suggested introducing other wild geese mothers before I asked.

It was interesting that most wild geese mothers (both current and former) were quite reluctant to introduce their husbands to me, even though they were happy to introduce other wild geese mothers to me. When I asked about spousal referrals after interviews, most wives instantly rejected it. Some did not like to introduce another woman to their husbands who were living apart across the ocean even for a purely academic purpose. Others argued that their husbands were too busy to have an interview. A few mothers were also concerned that their husbands would be angry if they knew that their wives had an interview with me to talk about their personal life. Accordingly, these women could not think about a spousal referral.

Of course, some women voluntarily suggested to interview their husbands before I asked. Some wild geese women who were so satisfied with their interview even called their husbands to arrange an interview with me. However, their husbands often rejected the interview, saying that they did not have time or they were very busy. Out of five spousal referrals arranged by wild geese mothers, only one interview was actually accomplished. In sum, I was able to interview only one wild geese couple through the spousal referral.
2. Recruiting Wild Geese Fathers

To recruit a wide range of wild geese fathers in Korea, I started from my personal networks, including my family, professional, academic, and religious networks. As a Korean national, I had an extensive network in Korea. My family and relatives have middle or upper-middle social status and good jobs in Korea so that they greatly helped me to locate the wild geese fathers for the initial sample. I also utilized my personal networks that I had constructed through my academic and professional experiences in Korea. As I worked for one of the most prestigious corporations in Korea, I had many acquaintances and former colleagues who could introduce me to potential interviewees. I also received both bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the most prestigious university in Korea. In particular, many alumni from the graduate program (public policy) were currently public officials and professionals in Korea. Given that the majority of wild geese fathers are middle-class businessmen, professionals, public officials or professors (Cho 2004; Choi 2006; Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim et al. 2005; Lee 2008; Lee and Koo 2006), my personal networks provided an excellent venue to recruit diverse middle-class wild geese fathers in Korea. I also recruited wild geese fathers through my personal networks with missionaries and deaconesses of two churches in Korea. Recruiting wild geese fathers through churches was of importance, not only because about one third of Korean population was either Christians (18%) or Catholics (11%) (Korean Census 2005), but also because I had learned from the interviews with wild geese mothers that wild geese fathers went to church more often since their familial separation in order to relieve their loneliness.

In addition, I gathered more wild geese fathers through snowball sampling, by asking my interviewees to suggest other potential male participants. Interestingly, while snowball sampling was the most effective way of recruiting wild geese mothers, it was not the case for wild geese
fathers. In contrast to wild geese mothers who often resided in the same local community and constructed close social networks among themselves, wild geese fathers did not live in the same residential area with other wild geese fathers, and did not know many other wild geese fathers, unless they joined some social clubs of wild geese fathers. Many wild geese fathers in my sample continued to live in the same area where they used to live even after their family’s emigration. They also maintained the same social networks which were mostly composed of their colleagues and friends who were not wild geese fathers. Moreover, because of the negative social view of wild geese fathers’ social gatherings with other wild geese fathers as a source of moral decadence, some wild geese fathers had even narrower socializing with other wild geese fathers after their family went abroad.

Interestingly, similar to wild geese women, wild geese men were also reluctant to introduce their spouses to me even if they greatly enjoyed the interviews with me. It was primarily related to my female status. Many current wild geese men told me that they did not want their wives to know about their meeting with another woman. Even if it was for an interview, wild geese men often believed that it could be a source of unnecessary spousal conflict and suspicion, especially while their wives were away. Consequently, none of the wild geese fathers referred to their wives for an interview.

II. Risks and Compensations

My interview did not incur any significant physical or emotional harm to the interviewees, although some people might feel uncomfortable talking about their spousal relationship or economic situation. If the respondent did not want to answer, I definitely skipped such questions. In the beginning of each interview, I clearly informed my interviewees that their participation
was entirely voluntary, and all the information that I obtained from them was strictly confidential. Every participant signed on the consent form (See Appendix A).

Research subjects were compensated for participating in qualitative in-depth interviews. Because cash remuneration was culturally inappropriate for Koreans, I provided a $15 (or 15,000 Korean won) Starbucks gift card (or equivalents when Starbucks was not available in the interview areas) at the time of each interview. Some people refused to receive it, as they were concerned about my budget. This refusal mostly happened when interviewees thought that I travelled a long distance to have an interview with them. However, in the end, all my interviewees received the gift cards with pleasure. In particular, given that wild geese parents had a very busy schedule and were reluctant to share their personal experiences with a stranger, providing financial compensation was critical, not simply as a method of increasing the participation rates, but also as an effective way of expressing my gratitude to my interviewees for sharing their personal experiences and valuable time with me.

Other than financial compensation, I also offered an educational consultation to wild geese parents if they asked. As I experienced both Korean and American educational systems, wild geese parents particularly wanted my advice and information regarding university education opportunities both in Korea and the United States.

My interviewees were also satisfied with the interviews and felt emotional support from me. Many parents felt very lonely after becoming transnational families. Some even confessed that they were criticized for being wild geese families by their own extended families, friends or colleagues, and did not have enough support from them for their decision. Hence, when I actively listened to and expressed my sympathy for them, they were not only very grateful for being understood but also highly satisfied with the interview. In particular, it was quite enriching
for me when wild geese parents told me that my interview gave them a great opportunity to reflect on their own lives. In sum, my research provided the research participants with financial benefits, educational information and emotional support.

**III. Data Collection: In-depth Interviews**

1. **Languages and Cultural Competency**

   Korean is my mother tongue and I am very familiar with Korean culture and society, as I grew up in Korea. I am also fluent in English, as I received my second master’s degree in the United States, as well as pursuing my doctoral degree. Thus, I told my interviewees that they could have interview with me either in Korean or English based on their preference. For most interviews, I had conversation primarily in Korean. Only one interview was mostly conducted in English with an American father who was working in Korea while his Korean wife and children migrated to the United States to learn English.

2. **Interview Process: Time, Length, and Location**

   Interviews were conducted in a setting that was mutually agreeable to the participant and me in order to maximize privacy and a sense of comfort. Interviews with wild geese mothers were held either in their houses or cafés near their houses, while interviews with wild geese fathers were mostly occurred in their offices or cafés near their offices. Only one wild geese father was interviewed in his house.

   Before starting the fieldwork, I expected to conduct interviews with women during the weekdays and with men during the weekends because the former might be busy during the
weekend to take care of their children and the latter might be busy during the weekdays because of their work. In contrast to my expectation, I interviewed most wild geese parents during weekdays. Wild geese mothers preferred to meet me during the daytime on weekdays because of their busy schedule with their children during the weekends, and wild geese fathers preferred to meet me during or after their work in or near their office to save their time. Some wild geese fathers also changed the interview schedule many times because of their busy work. I also sometimes had to wait up to an hour for my male interviewees in their offices or nearby cafés when they were too busy to meet me on time.

It took about at least two hours to conduct interviews with most wild geese mothers. Sometimes, it took more than three hours, when wild geese mothers had many issues to talk. On the contrary, it took on average an hour and a half to conduct interviews with many wild geese fathers, while there were some longer interviews which took more than three hours. Especially, when the interviews were conducted in their office during the daytime, wild geese fathers often asked me to put the one hour limit on their interview and I agreed. In such cases, I chose the most important questions and concentrated on them, rather than asking all the questions in my interview guide, which was an inevitable strategy for me to obtain the most important and relevant information from each wild geese father within the time limit.


Interviews were conducted based on semi-structured interview guides (See Appendix B and C) with open-ended questions. However, as I conducted interviews, some questions were added to my interview guides such as sexuality, whenever I found important themes according to
wild geese parents. I also audio-recorded all my interviews and transcribed them later. After each interview, I also added extensive field notes and an analytic summary to the interview transcript.

As my interview guides in Appendix B and C show, the interviews consist of inquiries about couple dynamics, parenting, and housework. The first topic occasionally was sensitive to some research participants. In addition, my female gender identity played a role in the interview process with wild geese fathers to some extent, as some researchers have pointed out (Arendell 1997). However, I am confident that my status as a woman did not undermine the research. From my past interview experiences with Korean international male students and their wives (Lee 2013), I obtained the skills to overcome such difficulties. At the beginning of the interviews, wild geese fathers were often nervous and hesitant to talk about themselves. In order to relieve a feeling of discomfort and wariness toward a female researcher, I carefully ordered the interview questions. For instance, I first asked easier questions and topics that male interviewees like to speak about, such as questions about their professional life and career achievement. Male participants greatly enjoyed talking about such topics, and I played the role of a good listener. Male interviewees also greatly enjoyed talking about their children and their fathering experiences. Once I was assured that I had established some reliable interview relationship with male participants, I asked questions about more difficult and/or sensitive topics such as spousal relationships. Then, male interviewees, who found me comfortable to speak with, spoke more readily about themselves as well as sensitive topics.

I found that the expression of my empathy to the interviewees was particularly useful to successfully build rapport and an effective research partnership. I also used probing questions effectively in order to extract candid and vivid accounts about markers, which refers to “a passing reference made by a respondent to an important event or feeling state” (Weiss 1994: 77).
Through these various techniques, I produced rich data — which refers to “a wide and diverse range of information collected over a relatively prolonged period of time in a persistent and systematic manner” (Lofland et al. 2006: 15) — not only from wild geese mothers but also from wild geese fathers. It is said that “(G)ood interviewers remain good interviewers irrespective of the sex of the respondent. Also, it has seemed to me, the great majority of respondents can form a good research partnership with an interviewer of either sex” (Weiss 1994:140).

The specific questions I addressed include, but are not limited to: why wild geese couples decided to emigrate; how they chose their destination countries; how their everyday lives changed after transnational family separation; how wild geese parents interacted with their spouses and maintained their transnational connections; how the transnational division of labor between spouses (the wife as a sole parent residing with children in North America, and the husband as a sole breadwinner remaining alone in Korea) affected their gender relations and relative power within the family after separation; how wild geese mothers’ economic dependence on husbands affected their spousal relationship; how wild geese mothers’ legal status, employment, and re-education after migration affected their position within the family as well as their adaptation to the host society; how the parenting practices of wild geese mothers and fathers changed during transnational family separation; how the intergenerational relationships of wild geese parents changed during transnational family separation; and how the spousal relationship and parenting practices changed after the family reunification.

There might be an issue related to the validity of interviews. As Weiss (1994:148) mentions, I cannot assume that the interviewees have told me “the whole truth nor the precise truth.” Nonetheless, “richly detailed accounts of vividly remembered events are likely to be trustworthy” (Weiss 1994:150). In particular, I believe that my effort of establishing a good
research partnership with my interviewees is especially helpful for me to extract more concrete and rich accounts, which in turn helps ensure the validity of the interview findings.

IV. Data Management and Analysis

All interview data were audio-recorded in a digital recorder and then transcribed verbatim on my personal computer. To accelerate the overall transcribing process, I hired a graduate student as a part-time transcriber. He received a Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certificate and was approved by IRB as a part of my dissertation project. Based on my transcription guideline (See Appendix D), he transcribed a half of my interviews. In the transcription guideline, I made it clear that he should keep the all interview contents confidential. He was also asked to remove both audio and transcript files from his computer after he sent them to me in order to protect the privacy of the interviewees. If he could not well hear some parts of the conversations from the audio files, he was asked to mark that part as [inaudible], and to specify the time of those parts. Then, I transcribed such inaudible parts by myself. Furthermore, in order to check the quality of his transcripts, I re-read carefully his first five transcripts while listening to the audio files, and gave him additional instructions. With such adjustments, he produced the transcripts of a satisfactory quality. I paid for his work. Since most of the interviews were conducted in Korean according to the preference of my interviewee, I translated parts of the transcripts in English that were quoted in my dissertation. Using a Microsoft excel program, I could effectively manage and analyze the data obtained through in-depth interviews.

My qualitative data include personal information, by which research subjects may be identifiable. In order to safeguard the data from an unauthorized access, I saved my audio files and field notes in locked files, and protected the computer with passwords. I also substituted
codes for personal identifiers, and maintained code lists and data files separately in secure locations without internet connection. Pseudonyms are used in all transcripts to protect confidentiality of the research subjects.

V. Organization of Results

The results of my research are contained in the next four chapters. Chapter 4 describes the background and motivations of the members of my sample. The other three chapters are organized around three important themes that emerged in my analysis: The legal and economic status of wild geese mothers (Chapter 5); intensive mothering and mothers’ networks (Chapter 6); and transnational fathering (Chapter 7). Note that these chapters also reflect three out of my four conceptual frameworks. The fourth concept was household labor, and material on this subject matter is integrated within the other results chapters, where it appeared most appropriate. Chapter 8 summarizes my conclusions, describes data limitations, and future research.
CHAPTER 4. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATIONS

In this chapter, I first describe the background information of wild geese parents that I interviewed, such as the number of interviewees based on their gender and destination country, age, marital status, education, occupations, income, and the number and gender of their children. Then, I analyze the reasons why they chose to become wild geese families. Although the motivations of wild geese families are not my main research topic, they are important in order to understand the main themes of my dissertation, gender relations and parenting practices of wild geese parents, which I discuss in the following chapters.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>US</th>
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<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
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<td>Current</td>
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<tr>
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<td>64</td>
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As Table 3 shows, I interviewed 64 wild geese parents in total: 31 women and 33 men. Among the women, about two thirds are current and one third are former wild geese mothers. Approximately two thirds of the women lived in the United States while one third lived in Canada. Similar to the women, two thirds of the men are current and one third are former wild geese fathers. However, men in my sample have more diversity in their families’ destination countries. While two thirds of wild geese fathers sent their families to the United States, others sent them to Canada, Australia, Singapore, the Philippines, and China.

To analyze wild geese mothers, I focused on their life in the destination countries after migration. Hence, it was a useful strategy to recruit wild geese mothers who migrated to the most
popular destination countries for Korean students: the United States and Canada (Korean Educational Development Institute 2011). In contrast, in analyzing wild geese fathers, I paid attention to their life in Korea after their families went abroad. Furthermore, by interviewing a wide range of wild geese fathers who sent their families not only to Western English speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, but also to the emerging popular destination countries for Korean students such as the Philippines, Singapore, and China (Korean Educational Development Institute 2011), I could better explore the diverse aspects of wild geese fathers’ lives.

Out of the 64 cases, wild geese parents’ gender roles were reversed in just two families. That is, whereas most wild geese mothers in the sample migrated abroad to accompany their children and their husbands remained in Korea to economically support their families, in two cases, mothers remained in Korea and fathers accompanied their children abroad. Although there are only two cases of gender role reversal in this study, it is interesting to see why these two families did not follow the traditional gender track and how it has shaped their family dynamics.

I. Backgrounds of Wild Geese Parents

To explore the background of wild geese parents, I asked my interviewees to report not only their own but also their spouse’s demographic information. Thus, by interviewing 64 wild geese parents, I could obtain the information on 128 people in total. In this chapter, I describe the backgrounds of wild geese parents based on these 128 people.

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Wild geese parents in my study are middle-aged. Wild geese mothers are, on average, 46 years old with a range from 35 to 60 years old. Wild geese fathers are, on average, 49 years old with a range from 37 to 63 years old. As Figure 3 shows, most wild geese parents are in their forties or fifties, while some are in their thirties or sixties.

**Figure 4. Wild Geese Parents’ Marital Duration (n=63)**

Note: All 33 wild geese fathers who were interviewed reported the duration of their marriage. However, out of 31 wild geese mothers who were interviewed, one wild geese mother who was divorced did not mention the duration of her marriage.
Wild geese parents’ average years married is 19 years. As Figure 4 shows, the majority of wild geese parents have been married between 10 and 30 years, although there are a few who have been married as little as 10 years or more than 30 years. Most wild geese parents maintained an intact marriage at the time of interview, except five: one is divorced, another is widowed, the third is re-married and the other two have been separated.

Figure 5. Wild Geese Parents’ Highest Education Level (n=126)

Note: All 33 wild geese fathers reported both their own and their wives’ highest education level. However, out of 31 wild geese mothers who were interviewed, two women who were widowed and divorced reported their own education level, but not their husbands’.

Wild geese parents had upper-middle class status prior to migration, given their education, occupations, and annual household income. Figure 5 demonstrates that wild geese parents in my study are highly educated. All wild geese parents, except five, have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Moreover, 20% of wild geese mothers and 40% of wild geese fathers have a master’s degree or higher. Nonetheless, wild geese mothers tend to have a lower educational level than their husbands. While only two wild geese mothers have a doctoral degree, thirteen wild geese fathers have a doctoral degree. When the education level of wild geese couples is compared, only seven out of 62 women achieve a higher educational level than their husbands. All other wild geese mothers have the same as or a lower educational level than their husbands.
At the time of interview, according to Figure 6, wild geese fathers hold professional jobs such as a businessman, entrepreneur, professor, public official, doctor, journalist, and banker. Other jobs include a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), lawyer, accountant, architect, programmer, senior research scientist, and teacher. This is consistent with the previous literature’s findings on wild geese fathers’ occupations (Cho 2004; Choi 2006; Kim 2006; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim et al. 2005; Lee 2008; Lee and Koo 2006).

On the other hand, a half of wild geese mothers (32) were full-time homemakers prior to migration, whereas the other half (31) had paid employment. Among the 31 wild geese mothers who worked before migration, 13 had typical female-typed teaching jobs such as a teacher and private tutor, but 18 had professional positions such as a public official, business woman, lecturer at universities, nurse, banker, journalist, programmer, research scientist, entrepreneur, and artist. I provide a further description on wild geese mothers’ employment status after migration in Chapter 5 which discusses the changes in gender status of wild geese mothers.
Wild geese families’ average annual household income before migration is about $128,000 with a range between $60,000 and $400,000.\textsuperscript{2} According to the Korean Statistical Office (2013), the average annual household income in Korea in 2012 is $44,750; the households whose annual income is $66,000 or higher fall in the upper 20% income bracket; and the households whose average annual income is $88,250 or higher fall in the upper 10% income bracket. Therefore, according to Figure 7, the majority of the wild geese parents have comparable income to that of the upper 10% household income bracket in Korea.

Many wild geese parents also had prior experiences of living abroad (U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, England, France and Japan) before becoming wild geese families, usually for wild geese parents’ employment or education, or for their children’s education. Some even lived abroad as immigrants, while others were the 1.5 generation of Korean immigrants who lived abroad.

\textsuperscript{2} Some wild geese parents reported their annual household income in Korean won (KRW), while others reported in U.S. dollars (USD). For consistency, I asked them to convert their household income into dollars. When asked, wild geese parents converted their annual household income based on the exchange rate of 1,000 KRW equals to 1 USD. Therefore, in this dissertation, I also use the same exchange rate to convert the Korean Statistical Office’s 2012 average annual household income in KRW into USD.
abroad when they were younger. A few parents also had prior experiences of being wild geese families.

On average, wild geese mothers in my study live in their host countries for about 6 years with a range from 8 months to 25 years, and they have been transnationally separated from their husbands for about 4 years with a range from 6 months to 13 years. The discrepancy between wild geese mothers’ migration period and their transnational spousal separation period signifies that not all wild geese mothers in the study leave their husbands in Korea to accompany their children. Rather, in reality, one third of wild geese mothers in my study originally migrated with their husbands to the host countries and remained there even after their husbands’ return to Korea. This is especially the case among the wild geese mothers recruited in the United States I discuss in more detail about this phenomenon in Chapter 5 on legal and economic status of wild geese mothers.

In terms of children, 30% of wild geese parents have only one child and 61% have two children. Only 9% of wild geese parents in the study have three children. On the one hand, this reflects the low fertility rate\(^3\) in Korea and the increased value of children in middle-class Korean families. On the other hand, it may reflect how difficult and costly it is for middle-class parents with three or more children to migrate abroad for their children’s education.

Among the 19 parents with only one child, 12 have a son and 7 have a daughter. Among the 39 parents with two children, 21 have both a son and a daughter, 12 have only sons, and 6 have only daughters. Among the 6 parents with three children, 4 have both sons and daughters and 2 have only three sons. Given this distribution, at least in my study, parents who have sons tend to migrate abroad more than those who have only daughters.

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\(^3\) The average number of children per Korean woman is 1.24 in 2011, which is the second lowest among the OECD countries after Hungary (OECD 2014).
II. Motivations of Wild Geese Families

Wild geese parents’ accounts in my study corroborate previous studies’ findings on the motivations for becoming wild geese families: it is mainly a decision for their children. First of all, wild geese parents in my study want to provide their children with opportunities to learn English in English speaking countries, because speaking fluent English is seen as critical social capital for success and wealth in Korean society (Nam 2005; Shim 1994). In particular, some professional wild geese parents have to speak English in their employment. And since Asian financial crisis in 1997, they further emphasize the importance of English education as a critical asset for their children’s successful economic survival in the competitive global market (Cho 2004; Kim et al. 2005; Kim 2010; Lee 2008; Park and Ableman 2004). Therefore, these parents not only heavily invest in their children’s English education even before migration, but also willingly become wild geese families to promote their children’s English capability.

Second, wild geese parents in my study are generally dissatisfied with the current Korean education system which emphasizes cramming for exams while killing children’s creativity. They also point out that entrance to a college is too competitive and private educational expenses are unreasonably high in Korea (Cho 2004; Kim and Chang 2004; Kim 2010; Lee and Koo 2006; Lee 2008). For many wild geese parents, it is heartbreaking to see that their children are burnt out as they spend most of their adolescent period to study for the university entrance exam. Moreover, if their children are not so well adapted to the standardized education system in Korea or have some conflicts with teachers and/or friends in their schools, parents in my study are more eager to migrate abroad to find an educational alternative that can provide their children with more freedom and creativity. Some parents also hope their children will broaden their experience and cultural sensitivity by living abroad.
Finally, wild geese families are built upon a “strong familism” (Lee and Koo 2006: 539) which is child-centered (Cho 2004; Lee 2010). As previous studies have revealed (Cho 2004; Choi 2006; Lee 2010; Lee and Koo 2006), many wild geese parents in my study also prioritize their role of parents over their spousal relationship, and they eagerly sacrifice their current marital relations for the sake of their children. It is also interesting that many wild geese parents feel their marriage and their spousal relationship are intact as long as each spouse successfully fulfils their traditional gender roles, wife as a nurturer and husband as a breadwinner, despite their prolonged transnational spousal separation.

However, my study further reveals that many wild geese mothers also pursue their own goals and interests through transnational migration, and this explains the reasons why women’s own goals are often hidden or disguised. First, a substantial number of wild geese mothers in my study migrated primarily for their own education or career development. For instance, some want to achieve another postgraduate degree in their destination countries, hoping to have better employment after returning to Korea. Others hope to be assigned to an overseas office for better salaries or for promotion opportunities. Some further want to open their own business abroad.

In addition to their educational goals or career development, wild geese mothers pursue diverse interests. Some who have felt exhausted in their work in Korea want to migrate abroad to take a rest. Others have long desire to live abroad. Some women also migrate in order to be freed from conflicting in-law relations or from heavy familial obligations, as previous studies have shown (Choi 2006; Kim 2007; Kim and Chang 2004; Lee 2010).

While some husbands are quite supportive of their wives’ migration abroad, other husbands are not, especially if it is primarily for their wives’ own sake. Accordingly, it takes more than a year for some wild geese mothers to persuade their husbands and parents-in-laws in
their negotiation for transnational migration. To overcome the confrontations or reluctance of their husbands and parents-in-laws, these women often emphasize the educational benefits to their children over their own goals or interests. The story of Chaerim, who worked in a globalized company prior to migration, supports that it is a very effective gender strategy:

Chaerim: Before migration, I worked for 10 years and went on many overseas business trips. As I was promoted, I had more new staff under my supervision. When I went on overseas business trips with them, I realized that they spoke English much better than I did. Of course, they had experiences of studying abroad. Nonetheless, I felt very insecure in my position, and wanted to study abroad. If not now, I thought, there seemed to be no more chances…

Sehwa: So, when you first suggested the idea of migration, how was your husband’s response?

Chaerim: In fact…if I had frankly told him that I wanted to go abroad for my English education, most people would have opposed it.

Sehwa: Whom do you mean “most people” here?

Chaerim: My husband, my parents-in-law, and my own parents as well. They would have not liked it if I had told them I would live apart from my husband for my own education. However, my child became a good excuse for me at that time. In Korea, we had spent about $2000 monthly only for our daughter’s English kindergarten. So, I argued that it would be better for her to migrate abroad to learn real English, rather than spending such an amount of money ineffectively in Korea. As my husband agreed to her study abroad, I additionally could obtain a chance to study abroad.

In conclusion, while the majority of wild geese parents in my study choose such living arrangement for their children, a substantial number of them (particularly women) also pursue their own goals. To overcome possible spousal conflicts in their decision on transnational spousal separation, women often employed such “gender strategies” (Pesquera 1993) as hiding their own goals but emphasizing educational benefits for their children.
CHAPTER 5. LEGAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF WILD GEESE MOTHERS

After transnational spousal separation, middle-class wild geese mothers become disillusioned with their former control under traditional patriarchy that normalizes unequal spousal relationship and are motivated to renegotiate their previous unequal gender relations as do their working-class counterparts (Glenn 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Parreñas 2008). Nevertheless, wild geese mothers’ gender statuses are not uniform, but are heterogeneously shaped based on how successfully they have utilized their recourses such as legal status, employment and additional education.

In this chapter, I discuss (1) how spousal separation triggers wild geese mothers to re-think about their taken-for-granted patriarchal gender roles, and (2) how wild geese mothers utilize their legal status, employment and additional education as resources for their empowerment and the promotion of their gender status in their transnational households. While I mostly focus on the changes in wild geese mothers’ gender status during their spousal separation, I also explore some changes after their family reunification.

I. Physical Separation from Husbands as a Triggering Event

Korean wild geese couples’ transnational spousal separation is a quite patriarchal decision that requires wild geese mothers’ sacrifice for their children as “ideal mothers,” as shown in the cases of Taiwanese “astronaut families” (Chee 2003; Waters 2002) or Chinese “study mothers” (Huang and Yeoh 2005). Nonetheless, it also liberates wild geese mothers from the heavy burden of traditional obligations as wives and filial daughters-in-law, and many wild
geese mothers are empowered to challenge their traditional roles while searching for their own alternative identities.

Before migration, many wild geese mothers in my study managed child- and husband-centered lives, as if their primary goals of life were assisting their husbands and nurturing children. They were expected to arrange the major family events and take care of their parents-in-laws. In addition, wild geese mothers had to perform the majority of housework, regardless of their employment status. Even some women who earned more than their husbands also did the majority of housework in order not to hurt their husband’s masculinity and their symbolic authority as the head of the household. For example, Bora, a 45-year-old wild geese mother, earned more money than her husband prior to migration. Nonetheless, she had to perform all the housework alone without her husband’s help. According to Bora, her husband always told her, “Complete the housework first and then do other works in your spare time. If you cannot adequately perform [your] housework, don’t have other job.” Encountered by her husband’s such patriarchal attitudes, Bora did not challenge him. Rather, she felt guilty and ashamed if her house was not neat and clean, as if she neglected her duty as a good housewife. Another wild geese mother named Sowon also earned much more money as a banker than her husband who was an entrepreneur. During her marriage in Korea, Sowon not only made a living with her own salary but also paid for her husband’s college tuition and financially supported her husband to launch new businesses several times. Nonetheless, Sowon neither nagged her husband with the financial issues nor asked her husband for the equal share of housework. Sowon said that she did not want to hurt her husband’s pride as a man because he had already had a hard time outside due to his unsuccessful businesses. These two cases corroborate that it is gender rather than relative earnings that leads to the unequal division of household labor between spouses, as “doing gender”
theory has argued (Brines 1994; Hochschild 1989). In sum, many wild geese mothers managed a quite patriarchal life in Korea by serving triple roles as mothers, wives, and filial daughters-in-law.

However, spousal separation offers great opportunities for many wild geese mothers to be freed from the traditional roles of good wives and filial daughters-in-law. In particular, in the absence of their husbands, wild geese mothers no longer find many reasons of “doing gender” by performing much housework. Accordingly, similar to women who left “coresidential unions” through separation or widowhood (Gupta 1999), most wild geese mothers in my study also perform much less housework and do not feel guilty after they left “coresidential unions” through transnational spousal separation. For example, Sohee, a full-time homemaker in Korea who introduces herself as a “maid” of her husband prior to migration, says that she feels much more comfortable and freer after migration as she no longer has to perfectly perform housework to meet her husband’s high standard. Particularly, Sohee is happy that she does not have to iron scores of her husband’s dress shirts every weekend and get his approval. Similarly, Bora, a wild geese mother who worked in Korea but performed all the housework without the support of her husband, likes that she is after migration freed from pressure to maintain her house in a very neat and clean condition. She also no longer feels guilty even if she does not wash dishes after every meal, as she does not live with her husband, who used to keep a close eye on her to see whether she performed the role of a good homemaker. In addition, some professional wild geese mothers who suffered from serious spousal conflicts on the division of housework feel more relaxed after migration as there are no such conflicts any more. Therefore, even if they still serve in the role of mother, most wild geese mothers feel that they have much greater freedom after spousal separation.
Furthermore, for some wild geese mothers, their migration functions as a “turning point” in their life as they deeply speculate about their taken-for-granted sacrifices for children and they even plan for their own independent life. Particularly, wild geese mothers who have experienced conflicts with their adolescent children or whose children have not achieved satisfactory academic outcomes tend to become gradually estranged from the traditional ideology of motherhood that made them devote their whole life to their children. As an alternative, these mothers try to find new identities: some pursue more education in their destination countries while others seek different employment opportunities, which gives them joy and happiness that had not obtained through their wifehood or motherhood.

In addition, through spousal separation, middle-class Korean wild geese mothers have become more independent decision-makers and enhanced their confidence and autonomy, as do working-class migrant women (Glenn 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kyle 2000; Pribilsky 2004). Before migration, many wild geese mothers reported that they had quite hierarchical spousal relationships, although a few maintained an egalitarian relationship. In particular, full-time homemakers were quite dependent on their husbands in their decision-making. They said that even if they made small or domestic decisions using their own discretion, such as choosing their children’s extracurricular activities, they always made important household or official decisions after discussing them with their husbands. They also internalized the traditional gender role division: their husbands as the head of the household, primary breadwinner and decision-maker, and themselves as a secondary breadwinner, nurturer and follower. For instance, an account of Mikyung, a wild geese mother in Canada, well shows how she was deeply dependent on her husband not only economically but also physically and mentally prior to migration:
I feel that I was always protected by my husband. He is little bit older than me, and thus always took care of me. He also helped me a lot in childcare. For instance, he always dropped off and picked up my child. I even did not have to drive… He did everything for me. When I went on a long-distance excursion with my kid, he always gave us a ride, regardless of how far it was… I did not receive any living expenses from him, because he managed all the household economy. We always went to grocery shopping together. If I need to buy something else, I always bought it with his credit card. I didn’t mind to let him know what I bought, because he was not a type of person to say no.

However, after spousal separation, most wild geese mothers in my study, regardless of whether they want to or not, have gradually transformed into more independent decision-makers, as they handle everyday challenges they encounter in the host society by themselves. Because most wild geese fathers who remain in Korea are not so familiar with the American culture or system, they are not the right consultants for their wives abroad. Even if some wild geese fathers know a lot about the culture of the host society, because of their physical separation from the rest of the family, it is almost impossible for wild geese fathers to help or control what their wives are doing in the destination countries. Consequently, although many wild geese mothers are not so familiar with American culture nor so fluent in English, they are entitled to make important decisions in their destination countries based on their own discretion. Furthermore, as a sole parent residing with their children in a foreign country, Korean wild geese mothers are authorized to exercise much greater leverage than their husbands when making a decision about their children, like Chinese women remaining in their home country (Glenn 1983).

Interestingly, wild geese mothers are not always happy with their enhanced decision-making power, particularly at the beginning of their spousal separation. Some women are not so familiar with independent decision-making and thus undergo many trial and errors. Others find it quite burdensome to take the whole responsibility for their independent decision-making, especially on their children’s educational outcomes. Thus, some miss their husbands while others
are resentful with their husbands who do not share the burden of decision-making in the host societies.

Despite such difficulties, over time, wild geese mothers have gradually enjoyed their enhanced decision-making power as well as the accompanying responsibilities. Moreover, as their autonomous decision-making and problem-solving experiences have accumulated, wild geese mothers become even more confident in themselves and more independent from their husbands. For example, it is striking how independent decision-making experiences can change Mikyung from a highly dependent to a more independent woman:

My status is not the same [after spousal separation]. Because I am now in charge of many things, my husband respects my opinions. I was passive in the past. I mean, I always discussed with my husband and followed his opinions, as if I did not have my own voice at all. But, I have become much more assertive [after spousal separation]. Now, he can figure out what is going on here only through me. Thus, he totally believes in me and follows what I say to him. If I shifted all the responsibilities on him in the past, I now handle many things by myself and notify him of my decisions.

If previous studies have shown the positive impact of spousal separation on women who remain in their country of origin (Archambault 2010; Glenn 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992), my study demonstrates how spousal separation empowers migrant women who leave their husbands in their home country. In addition, when their spousal separation is lengthier, its positive impact is stronger, as it gives migrant women more chances to assume expanded roles and make independent decisions.

In addition, as wild geese mothers have realized that their husbands cannot solve the challenges that they encounter in the host societies, the traditional gender role division between spouses (husband as the leader and wife as the supporter) is challenged. Wild geese mothers want their husbands to emotionally support them by expressing compassion and sympathy for their hardships in the foreign countries, rather than directing them what to do. Accordingly, the
role of wild geese fathers should be adjusted from the leaders or decision-makers to the emotional (and economic) supporters after the spousal separation. Usually, wild geese fathers’ gender role transition occurs smoothly over a long period of time. However, when some wild geese fathers are not ready to accept their wives’ enhanced voices and authority, it can lead to new spousal conflicts on the leadership of the household. Furthermore, according to some former wild geese mothers’ accounts, if wild geese couples do not successfully re-arrange their changed roles during spousal separation, their spousal tensions can be even worse after the family reunification. While wild geese mothers do not want to relinquish their enhanced status, their husbands often want to recover their supremacy as the primary decision-maker. Given this, wild geese mothers’ enhanced domestic status can be maintained after spousal separation when they successfully overcome challenges and resistance from their husbands. And I argue that wild geese mothers’ legal status, employment and additional education in the host society are critical resources to enhance their gender status during spousal separation as well as maintain their egalitarianism after the family reunification. These three resources are discussed more in detail in the following sections.

II. Legal Statuses

Similar to previous studies (Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Lee 2010), wild geese mothers in my study also migrate to North America with diverse legal statuses such as international students, visitors, temporary workers, dependents of their husbands, permanent residents or citizens. However, unlike previous studies which have narrowly focused on the wild geese mothers who are international students, I explore wild geese mothers with diverse legal statuses. By doing so, I aim to extend the immigration research which has paid less scholarly attention to the legal status
of migrants, although it is one of the most critical factors that shape their lives in the destination countries, as Menjívar (2006) argues. In addition, I also find that wild geese mothers’ legal statuses are not constant throughout their migration process. Rather, wild geese mothers flexibly change their legal statuses. Therefore, in this section, I investigate the reasons why wild geese mothers choose such diverse legal statuses and how their bargaining power and settlement patterns can be differently shaped based on their choice of legal statuses, focusing on the opportunities and challenges of each legal status.

Table 4. Entry and Final Visa Statuses of Wild Geese Mothers (n=55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student/Visitor</th>
<th>Resident/Citizen</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Temporary Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Visa</strong></td>
<td>20 (36%)</td>
<td>13 (24%)</td>
<td>19 (35%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Visa</strong></td>
<td>24 (44%)</td>
<td>23 (42%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Out of 64 wild geese families that I interviewed, 57 wild geese families migrated to North America, and two of them are gender role reversed cases. That is, in these two families, not mothers but fathers migrated to North America with their children, and mothers continued to hold their professional careers in Korea after their families migrated to North America in order to support them economically. Thus, in order to discuss the implication of the legal status change of wild geese mothers, I use these 55 people’s data.*

Table 4 shows the diverse entry and final visa statuses of wild geese mothers in North America. Entry visa refers to the visa status when wild geese mothers first entered North America. For the current wild geese mothers, final visa status refers to their current visa status at the time of interview. For the former wild geese mothers, final visa status refers to their visa status at the time they exit North America to reunify with their husbands in Korea.

According to Table 4, when entering North America, more than one third of wild geese mothers hold international student or visitor status. It should be also noted that wild geese mothers with a visitor visa are mostly found in Canada, whereas those with an international student visa are often found in the United States. This is the outcome of their strategic decision-making to maximize their migration benefits while coping with different immigration and citizenship policies of the United States and Canada. The opportunities and challenges of an
international student and visitor statuses are discussed first, followed by the discussion of dependent, resident/citizen, and foreign worker statuses.

1. International Student Status in the United States

In the United States, if children migrate with a F1 international student visa, their mothers are not allowed to stay in the United States as their guardians. Instead, they are supposed to go back and forth between the United States and Korea with a visitor visa in order to take care of children. In addition, children with a F1 international student visa are not allowed to enroll in an American public school but may attend an expensive private school. On the other hand, when children enter the United States as the dependents of their mothers who hold an international student status, they can receive free public education in the United States Therefore, many wild geese mothers in my study strategically chose to become international students with a F1 visa, while their children migrated to the United States as dependents of their mothers with a F2 dependent visa. They are the representative cases of wild geese mothers who migrate to North America with their children for their children’s education while leaving their husbands in Korea.

Then, what kinds of educational institutions do wild geese mothers attend as F1 international students? In order to provide their children with free public education, wild geese mothers in the United States can enroll either in academic or language programs. In my study, the majority of wild geese mothers attend private language schools as F1 international students, although some enroll for university language programs or study at postsecondary academic programs such as college, university or graduate schools. Given that these women’s primary goal is not pursuing their own education but supporting their children’s education, maintaining their full-time student status seems to be quite burdensome for them, because it takes more of their
time, money and energy that can be used for their own children. Accordingly, many wild geese mothers with a F1 international student visa choose to attend private language schools, whose tuition is cheaper than that of university language programs and whose workload is much less than that of post-secondary academic programs. Even if some wild geese mothers attend the university language programs at the beginning of their migration, once they know there are cheaper options, they soon move to private language schools. By doing so, these wild geese mothers still can legitimately justify their long residency in the United States while their children receive free public school education.

Of course, among those who attend the language schools, there are some women who genuinely enjoy learning English and feel achievement by moving to the upper levels of language class. They even believe that their advancement in the language school will be good evidence that they do not just waste their precious time and remittances sent by their husbands. Others are even empowered with their student status itself. Sujin, a 43-year-old wild geese mother, well describes her satisfaction with her new identity as a student:

Sujin: I feel freer here.
Sehwa: Can you explain the reasons why?
Sujin: It is probably because I go to school here. Here, in the U.S., if people ask me what do you do? Then, I answer “I am a student.” Because of my student status, I feel I am younger. I also like to learn. Moreover, in Korea, I used to be someone’s mother and someone’s wife, rather than being myself. However, here, I don’t feel that way. Although I am still a mother, because I am a stranger, people don’t care. In my ESL school, I am standing by myself with my own name. So, I feel that I become more active.

Despite these benefits, wild geese mothers with a F1 international student visa encounter many challenges in U.S. society due to their legal statuses. In particular, most of their challenges are related to their “legal liminality” (Menjívar 2006) as temporary visa holders. First, wild geese mothers’ attendance in their language schools is regularly monitored, and if they miss the classes
beyond some limit, they can no longer maintain their international student status in the United States. Even though many wild geese mothers know a few private language schools that have a lenient attendance policy, all women in my study do not want to attend such schools. Some do like to do anything illegal in the United States as foreigners. Others do not want to take the risk of deportation. An account of Eunji, who attends a private language school, well demonstrates this point:

It is dangerous to attend an ESL school that allows you to often miss classes. If their practices are detected by an investigation office, such an ESL school will be shut down, and students who attended there will also lose their F1 student visa. So, we, who come here for our children’s education, should be more careful in choosing our ESL program.

Therefore, regardless of whether they are satisfied with their language school programs or not, most wild geese mothers with a F1 international student visa go to their ESL class every weekday from the morning to the afternoon, which makes them feel that they forfeit freedom to organize their schedule as they want.

Second, as temporary visa holders, Korean wild geese mothers are required to renew their F1 international student visa regularly, and it makes them worry what they will do if their visa is not extended. In particular, those who have attended a language school for a prolonged time are more concerned about the possibility that the U.S. consul will be suspicious of their true purpose for staying in the United States and will not renew their F1 visa. Minji, a former wild geese mother who attended a private language school while she stayed in the United States with her F1 visa, well describes her insecure feelings as a temporary visa holder:

In fact, one of the most critical reasons that we decided to return [to Korea] was our visa. I was so tired of enduring such an insecure life. As foreigners, we were neither assimilated into the dominant society nor were we fairly treated. Reflecting on my past, anxiety on my temporary status was so critical in negatively shaping my experiences there. […] I regularly had to renew my F1 visa. But, as time passed, I was even more anxious whether my visa could be renewed
next time. Further, whenever I renewed my F1 visa, I had to pay for it. I continuously felt uneasy while living there. It was not like a real life.

Since wild geese mothers’ F1 visa is not easily extended if they attend the same language school for a long time, many of them jump around to different language schools every two or three years. In addition, some who expect that their children will stay in the United States much longer than they originally planned decide to apply for (community) college rather than remaining as a language school student. Even if these wild geese mothers are not so interested in pursuing an additional postsecondary degree in the U.S, they believe that their enrollment at a higher level of education legitimately justifies their prolonged stay in the United States and relieves the immigration office’s suspicions about them. However, in this case, since the tuition of (community) college is much more expensive than that of language schools, it puts extra burdens on the household economy of a wild geese family, which is already very constrained, and thus wild geese mothers’ college enrollment can be a new source of transnational spousal conflicts. Moreover, after transferring from the language schools to postsecondary education, some wild geese mothers also feel frustrated, because they cannot find any motivations for their learning. The story of Yuri, who has recently transferred from the ESL program to a community college, also reflects this point:

In order to study hard, I should have a goal. Of course, I like to learn. However, I am very doubtful how much my education here would be helpful for my career after return. If I had come here earlier when I was much younger, I must have had a goal such as getting a better job after graduation. If so, I must have studied harder. However, I now don’t have any motivations at all. I am just busy trying to do homework. So, I become lazy….

As Yuri’s case shows, when wild geese mothers have to study in any levels of educational programs in the host society even if they don’t want to, it quite negatively shapes their life after migration.
Third, wild geese mothers’ temporary international student status without a social security number also makes their everyday life uncomfortable and challenging. Sujin, a 43-year-old wild geese mother, well describes her everyday challenges.

Sujin: International students do not have a social security number. Without a social security number, I realized, I really cannot do anything here.
Sehwa: What is the implication of living without a social security number for you?
Sujin: For example, if I needed to register for some places, they asked me to submit my social security number. So, I could not register. Even if I wanted to open a small credit card or a department store card, I could not. Further, because I am a F1 international student, my I-20 document\(^4\) should be also re-issued regularly (less than a year period). Whenever I have a new I-20, I also have to renew my driver’s license. You know how annoying it is to go to the DMV office here?

Finally, in the United States, there are no generous employment or residency opportunities available for international students with a F1 visa. According to the Department of Homeland Security, international students are not allowed to work during their first academic year in the United States. They can limitedly have on-campus jobs in this period. After the first academic year, international students can seek off-campus employment with a sort of work permit such as CPT (Curricular Practical Training) (Department of Homeland Security 2015). However, their off-campus jobs must be related to their area of study and must be authorized prior to starting. Given that most wild geese mothers with a F1 international student visa attend private language schools, they cannot benefit from such employment options for international students. Even if some wild geese mothers find on-campus employment, they can work only part-time during the semester. Wild geese mothers who have stayed in the United States more than 10 years reported that visa regulations on international students have become much stricter after 9/11. While some wild geese mothers find off-campus jobs that are not related to their area of study despite the regulations on international students, they feel it is very unstable and

\(^4\) I-20 is a supporting document of F1 international students issued by their academic or language programs.
insecure because of the illegality attached to such employment. Minji, a former wild geese mother who had several under-the-table jobs while studying at the language school, expresses her frustration with her legal status as an international student in the United States as below:

I was frustrated after finding out the employer I really wanted to work for would not hire me… Even if I got an interview opportunity, once they met me, they did not hire me because of my visa status. They told me that they needed a person with residency. At that time, I desperately wanted to have a full-time job. However, I could not. I was screened out because of my legal status. Finally, I admitted that I could not work where I really wanted to work.

Moreover, after graduation, international students are expected to leave the United States within 60 days. To search for a gainful employment after graduation with some grace time, they have to apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training) program before graduation (Department of Homeland Security 2015). While the OPT is valid for a year, if international students cannot find employment within 90 days after implementing their OPT program, they have to leave. Given such strict restrictions on international students’ employment both before and after graduation, a F1 international student status does not seem to be so empowering for most wild geese mothers in the United States.

In sum, Korean wild geese mothers are very strategic in utilizing the American immigration law and education system to achieve their goal. By becoming international students, they not only can provide their children with free American public education, but also can legitimately stay with their children in the United States. However, because of “legal liminality” (Menjívar 2006) attached to their temporary international student status, wild geese mothers continuously encountered challenges and uncertainties in their everyday lives. Given this, holding a F1 international student visa in the United States is not so helpful for wild geese mothers to enhance their gender status in their households. Being international students in the United States is quite repressive for wild geese mothers despite its benefits.
2. International Student Status in Canada

In contrast to the United States, in Canada, when children migrate with a study permit\(^5\), migrant parents are allowed to stay in Canada as their guardians with a visitor visa. With their own study permit, children can enroll in the Canadian public school by paying cheap tuition. Moreover, similar to the United States, Canada also provides dependent children of international students with free public education. However, unlike the United States, its free public educational opportunities are exclusively given to the dependent children of international students who enroll for Canadian post-secondary education programs such as colleges, universities, and graduate schools. That is, in contrast to the United States, children of international students who attend the language schools cannot receive a free public education in Canada. Therefore, if Korean wild geese mothers intend to provide their children with free Canadian public education, they have to attend post-secondary education, not ESL (English as Second Language) programs. However, in this case, mothers’ college tuition is often more expensive than their children’s public school tuition. Moreover, in order to apply for the Canadian post-secondary education programs, wild geese mothers should submit an English language score as a pre-requisite, which is quite burdensome for many of them who are not so fluent in English.

Consequently, many wild geese mothers in my study migrated to Canada as legal guardians of their children with a visitor visa, while their children mostly migrated with their own study permit. Only some wild geese mothers migrated to Canada with their own study permit and these are the ones who wanted to study for their own goals. This pattern is quite different from that of wild geese mothers in the United States who unwillingly become international students for their children’s sake.

\(^{5}\) Study permit in Canada corresponds to F1 international student visa in the United States.
Wild geese mothers who are international students in Canada also encounter similar kinds of challenges like their American counterparts because of legal liminality (Menjívar 2006) as temporary visa holders. However, wild geese mothers who are international students in Canada reported interesting issues that were not mentioned by their American counterparts: Serious conflicts between their own interests (pursuing their own education) and obligation as mothers. On the one hand, because these women go to schools for their own sake, they feel more frustrated than their American counterparts if they cannot spend time on their own study. On the other hand, this is because they no longer have any childcare or housework support that they used to enjoy in Korea. Chaerim, who is studying in Canada with a 7-year-old daughter, expresses her frustration, as her reality after migration is quite different from what she originally expected:

There are no wild geese mothers who came here with such a young child like me. If children are older, it is easier for mothers to study. They have more time for their own study. However, in my case, my child is too young to be cared by others. So, I cannot really concentrate on my study, because my day is mainly organized by her schedule. It is difficult for me to study.

Jiwon, who migrated to Canada with her two adolescent children and studies in a nursing school, also describes her work-family conflicts:

While I was preparing for my mid-term exam [in Canada], I could not cook for my children for a month. [...] In Korea, I did everything for them. They were just expected to study in Korea. However, after coming here, it is not the case anymore. They have to study and they are also expected to help me doing housework. So, my kids are confused of their roles. In Korea, I told them that I would have done everything for them after migrating to Canada. But, after we came here, they have found that their mom is even busier than she used to be. I neither cook well, nor do other housework [because I am so busy with my study]. So, my kids have a very hard time.

As these two women’s cases show, it is not so easy for wild geese mothers to pursue their own education while performing the ideology of intensive mothering (Arendell 2000; Hattery 2001;
Hays 1996). Since their official goal of migration is supporting their children’s education, wild geese mothers who pursue their own education continue to struggle with a sense of guilt about their children. They are also highly pressured to prove to their husbands and family-in-law that they provide sufficient care for their children while they are studying abroad. Some mothers even give up their college education in the host society because of the difficulty to combine work (study) and family obligations.

Despite such difficulties, I argue that the international student status in Canada gives more opportunities to wild geese mothers to enhance their domestic status through its generous employment and residency options than in the United States. In Canada, in contrast to the United States, wild geese mothers who are full-time international students at the Canadian postsecondary institutions such as colleges and universities can officially work part-time both on-campus and off-campus without any working permit (Government of Canada 2014). They can also work full-time during breaks. More importantly, in contrast to the United States, if international students graduate postsecondary education in Canada, they are eligible for a three-year work permit, and if they have one year of full-time work experience in Canada, they are eligible for permanent residency. As wild geese mothers in Canada have gradually realized this chain of permanent settlement through education and employment, those who are not students want to be students, those who are language school students want to transfer to postsecondary schools, and those who are attending postsecondary schools are highly motivated to complete their education. Some wild geese mothers have already achieved residency statuses through their education and employment, which greatly enhances their bargaining power and gender status within their family. Moreover, since they can dream of their future life in Canada after graduation, wild geese women who are international students in Canada are more willing to
overcome their current challenges as temporary visa holders and make more efforts to incorporate into the mainstream Canadian society.

In conclusion, although wild geese mothers with international student status encounter similar difficulties and fluidities as temporary visa holders in both Canada and the United States, Canadian wild geese mothers have greater resources to contest male dominance and renegotiate patriarchal spousal relations based on the Canadian government’s more generous employment and residency opportunities available for their international students.

3. Visitor Status in Canada

As I mentioned above, in Canada, when children migrate with a study permit, their parents are allowed to stay in Canada as their guardians with a visitor visa. Moreover, with their own study permit, children can enroll in a Canadian public school by paying cheap tuition. Accordingly, many Canadian wild geese mothers in my study hold a visitor visa while their children migrate with a study permit.

In contrast, visitor status is the least preferred legal option for wild geese mothers in the United States. With a visitor visa, wild geese mothers are not allowed to constantly stay with their children, but must go back and forth between the United States and Korea. Furthermore, their frequent shuttle between the United States and Korea as visitors/travelers makes wild geese mothers get suspicious looks from U.S. immigration. Miseon, a former wild geese mother who held a visitor visa during her stay in the United States, well illustrates how painful and traumatic it was when she was under the strict interrogation of the immigration officer who treated her as if she were a criminal offender or illegal immigrant:
When I first entered the U.S. with a visitor visa, it was ok. But, at the second time, the immigration officer interrogated me so badly, asking “why you are going back and forth so often?” Since I was so scared I could not answer his questions well. I was just shivering and crying until he finally allowed me to go. He also told me that “I will keep an eye on you.” So, I was extremely nervous until I finally returned to Korea. […] [Before having such a bad experience at immigration] I had thought that such an ill-treatment was only for those who committed a crime or illegal immigrants.

Because of such disadvantages, no wild geese mothers in the United States hold a visitor status throughout their migration. They hold such status for a very short time, only when there are no options available, and then switch to the other legal status quickly. Therefore, in this section, I discuss the opportunities and challenges of a visitor status primarily based on the experiences of wild geese mothers in Canada.

In general, compared to the international student status, the visitor status in Canada better serves wild geese mothers to fulfill their official goal of migration: supporting their children’s education through intensive mothering. Unlike their international student counterparts, mothers with a visitor visa in Canada are less distracted by other obligations, and thus can devote most of their time, energy and money to their own children.

It is also quite interesting that there are two types of wild geese mothers who hold a visitor visa in London, Ontario, Canada. One group is those who migrated temporarily to Canada for their children’s education. Another group is those who applied for permanent residency. According to wild geese mothers that I interviewed, London is one of the few Canadian cities that allow applicants for permanent residency to come to their city even before applicants’ permanent residency is approved, and applicants’ dependent children can get free public education while the immigration decision is made. Therefore, London, Canada is a quite popular destination for Korean wild geese families, although it is not a major Canadian city.
Interestingly, the short-term goal of Canadian wild geese mothers who applied for residency is not so different from that of other wild geese mothers: providing their children with free education abroad. They are also very strategic in utilizing the existing immigration law and educational opportunities available in Canada. Since Canadian residency is sought as a tool for wild geese mothers to achieve their educational goal more efficiently while minimizing their educational costs, many wild geese mothers who applied for Canadian residency plan to return to Korea after their sojourns. Nevertheless, over time, wild geese mothers who applied for Canadian residency have gradually leant toward permanent settlement in the Canadian society, particularly after their husband’s retirement in Korea.

On the other hand, wild geese mothers with a visitor visa also encounter many challenges in their host societies based on their legal liminality (Menjívar 2006) as temporary visa holders. In particular, those who came to Canada with a visitor visa while their permanent residency application was being processed are vulnerable to changes in Canadian immigration policies. According to the wild geese mothers that I interviewed, the Canadian federal government has recently decided to eliminate the backlog of immigration applications. Thus, many wild geese parents’ applications for permanent residency are also rejected. That is, their children are no longer eligible for free public educational benefits in Canada. Accordingly, many wild geese families whose permanent residency has been rejected have to make a critical decision: either return to Korea or stay in Canada by paying tuition for their children’s education. In this return migration decision-making process, many wild geese parents have experienced serious spousal conflicts. Especially, when their children are attending high school, spousal conflicts on the timing to return to Korea is very intense. Wild geese fathers often ask their families in Canada to return to Korea as quickly as possible due to the increased economic burden, whereas wild geese
mothers insist on staying until their children graduate Canadian high school. Hyomin, who migrated to Canada (five years prior to interview) with three adolescent children before receiving permanent residency and has been recently informed of the rejection of her immigration application, well describes how she has experienced conflicts with her husband:

My husband asked me to return to Korea right away when our residency was rejected. However, I insisted on staying….My youngest [son] is timid… And the most importantly, since he came here when he was in the 7th grade, he did not have any experiences in Korean middle school. So, if he returns to a Korean high school now, his academic record must be the lowest of all students. Then, how can my son cope with such frustration? As such a loser, what kinds of friends will he make? What if he continues to live as a loser? Because of such concerns, I have kept persuading my husband…I have insisted to stay….Even if my son does not study so hard here, he is doing ok in school. If he graduates with his ok grades, he will not feel that he is behind others. Further, if he returns to Korea when he enters the university, he will not experience any bullying issues. So, I have insisted to return to Korea after he graduates high school. However, I am not so sure whether my decision [to stay] is right. Furthermore, my family-in-laws and my husband have not been so amicable to me during our decision-making process. They have been suspicious that I argue to stay, because I have lived here so comfortably.

In addition, when wild geese children return to Korea unexpectedly earlier than they originally planned because their parents fail to achieve Canadian residency, there are many tensions and conflicts between parents and children. Moreover, some wild geese children undergo serious maladaptation to Korean society. A former wild geese father, Woosung, whose family returned to Korea when they failed to get Canadian residency, well illustrates his frustration in watching his two adult sons’ maladaptation to Korea:

It is heartbreaking that we could not fulfill our goal of migration. After they unexpectedly came back, my sons had to go to [obligatory] military service when they were too old. My first son went to Canada when he was a high school student and my second son went there when he was a middle-school student. In Korea, the importance of old school ties and regionalism cannot be dismissed. After returning, the elder one was better off. Because he left Korea at an older age, he could easily recover his old friendship network at school and at church. But the younger one had a difficult time. It was difficult for him to rebuild his friendship network and socialize with other Koreans. If we got residency [in Canada], my
children would have graduated college and found jobs there. Then I could join them later after my retirement. But, because our residency was rejected, my children had to return to Korea and enter military service. It was so difficult for them to re-adapt to Korean society, as they lost friend networks that I mentioned earlier.

Finally, the Canadian government’s delayed immigration decision (as well as the rejection of permanent residency) also negatively affects the career paths of wild geese fathers who remain in Korea. Generally, after their families migrate abroad, many wild geese fathers report that they can better concentrate on their work, as they are less distracted by the familial obligations. However, when wild geese fathers plan to reunify with their families abroad, they often lose their loyalty to their current job and are not so interested in their chances for career advancement, as they expect to leave Korea and start a new life in another country in the near future (e.g. within a year). Consequently, if the immigration decision on their permanent residency is delayed for several years and then their application is eventually rejected after a long waiting period, these wild geese fathers’ careers are also negatively influenced. An account of Bora, who migrated to Canada five years prior to interview with her two adolescent children while leaving her professor husband in Korea, is exemplary:

Before making his mind [not to come to Canada], my husband refused so many good offers such as writing a book. He also could have been promoted earlier in his university. However, since he always expected to come to Canada [whenever the residency was issued], he did not accept any good offers for his career. Only after giving up to come here, he devoted himself to his current job and was promoted. Now, we feel that he made a forethoughtful decision, because we finally failed to get residency.

In sum, a visitor status in Canada is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, visitor status allows wild geese mothers to focus on their primary goal of migration, while not being distracted by other obligations. Furthermore, migration to Canada as a visitor even before becoming permanent residents is a blessing for many wild geese families because their children could
receive free Canadian public education sooner. On the other hand, their earlier arrival in Canada with a visitor visa before becoming permanent residents can cause many unexpected familial problems if their immigration application is rejected. Thus, wild geese mothers have to be good negotiators adjusting conflicting interests among family members.

4. Dependents in the United States

It is quite interesting that one-third of wild geese mothers who migrated to the United States was not originally wild geese mothers, but dependents of their husbands. These women’s husbands entered the United States with L1 visas (intracompany transferee executives or managers) or J1 visas (exchange professors), while some also had O1 visas (individuals with extraordinary ability or achievement), F1 visas (international students), and E1 visas (treaty traders). However, in my study, there are no wild geese mothers who migrated to Canada with their husbands as dependents. It is probably because my research site in Canada is a small city, which is not such an attractive location for overseas branches of big Korean companies or governmental offices. Thus, I discuss the implication of dependent status based on the experiences of wild geese mothers in the United States.

Unlike wild geese mothers who migrated to North America alone with a student or visitor visa, this group of wild geese mothers with a dependent visa did not intend to be transnationally separated families at the time of their migration. Rather, all of them reported that they originally came to the United States in order to live together with their husbands who migrated for their work or study. So, their original goal of migration is maintaining their so-called intact family. However, this group of women also have become wild geese mothers by remaining in the United States after their husbands returned to Korea.
Then, what kinds of legal status do these women choose on becoming wild geese mothers? As Table 4 shows, out of 19 women who entered the United States with a dependent visa, only three have maintained the same dependent visa at the time of interview or until returning to Korea, and all the others achieved a new legal status: One had a visitor visa, six became international students, and nine achieved a permanent resident or citizen status.

Why do such legal status changes occur? When they first migrated to the United States as a whole family, these women (and their husbands) often over-emphasized the positive aspect of migration. They believed that it would be a great opportunity for their children to learn English and experience diverse cultures. They were also pretty confident that the whole family could return to Korea all together. However, at the time that they had to return to Korea, these families realized that returning was not as easy as they originally thought because of their children’s education. These parents realized how it would be difficult for their children to survive in a competitive Korean education system. In particular, those with teenagers were very concerned about the possibility that their children fell behind in important subjects such as Korean literature, Korean history, and mathematics. Even if their children were competitive enough, some mothers strategically decided to remain in the United States, hoping that their children could enter a prestigious Korean university through a special admission system for overseas Koreans. Other mothers wanted their children to enter a good American university, find employment, and permanently settle down in the American society.

To stay in the United States even after their husbands have returned to Korea, only a few wild geese mothers continue to hold their dependent visa. In this case, their husbands often visit their families in the United States in order for their families to legitimately maintain their dependent statuses. However, there are some problems in maintaining this legal status. First, it is
very costly since fathers need regularly to go back and forth between Korean and the United States. Second, even if wild geese mothers encounter some problems in the host society, due to legal liminality (Menjívar 2006), they cannot handle those problems by themselves. Their legal ability in the United States is even much more limited than that of wild geese mothers with international student status. For example, they cannot open a bank account or credit card; they cannot sign on their leasing contract; and they cannot work. They always have to rely on their husbands who live across oceans. Thus, living in the United States with dependent legal status is not an ideal option for wild geese mothers who plan to stay in the United States for a longer period. Accordingly, most wild geese mothers in my study adjusted their legal statuses from dependent to independent ones at the time they became transnationally split families. In particular, given that these women’s primary goal of remaining in the United States is supporting their children’s education, the most preferred legal status for these wild geese mothers is permanent resident or citizen status. Unlike visitors or F1 international students who suffer from many challenges as temporary visa holders, it is much easier for permanent residents or citizens to pursue their goal of remaining: they do not have to attend postsecondary education in the host societies unless they want to; they can organize their everyday life as they want; and they also can legitimately work. Since wild geese mothers with a dependent visa in my sample know such pros and cons between the international student status and resident status, they prefer to become permanent residents if they can, rather than becoming international students. For this reason, professional wild geese fathers often applied for residency before they returned to Korea, and the rest of the families obtained residency status through their fathers. Thus, it is relatively easier for these fathers to maintain their patriarchal authority as the head of the household with legal power.
In sum, while living with their husbands in the United States as dependents, these wild geese mothers have comfortable but dependent lives. However, their gender paths are quite diversified after their choice of different legal statuses. Since I have already explained the implication of international student and visitor statuses in the previous part of this chapter, I discuss resident and citizen statuses below.

5. Residents or Citizens

As Table 4 shows, one fourth of wild geese mothers in my study already had a resident or citizen status when they migrated to North America and it is almost doubled at the time of interview or when they returned to Korea. Some became residents through their husbands, while others achieved resident or citizen status through their own education and/or employment in their destination countries.

Compared to women with other legal statuses, wild geese mothers with permanent resident or citizen status enjoy greater freedom and autonomy in their host societies. They attend postsecondary education only when they find it necessary. They can legitimately contribute to the family economy through their employment, which is critical for enhancing their domestic status. They can organize their everyday life as they want. Some women even plan to stay in their host societies permanently, even if it means that they live separately from their husbands forever. Wild geese mothers’ legal independence from their husbands also leads to their emotional detachment from their husbands, which in turn further strengthens their relative gender status in their transnational households. Some women with citizenship further enhance their domestic status, by sponsoring their children and/or husbands to achieve residency through
them. In sum, among all wild geese mothers, this group of women has the most stable legal status that can empower them.

Nonetheless, these wild geese mothers often have aggravated spousal conflicts over the leadership of their transnational households. Let me introduce the case of Yuna as an example. Her family has mixed legal statuses: she is a green card holder, her eldest son is a citizen, and her youngest son is a F1 international student (See Fix and Zimmerman (2001) for further discussion on the “mixed-status families”). When I met her for an interview, she had lived in the United States for 12 years (and had been a wild geese mother for 10 years). It was quite interesting for me why she continued to stay in the United States, although her two sons were already fully grown up: one had a professional job on Wall Street and the other attended an Ivy League university. Yuna argued that she had to sponsor her younger child to achieve a green card through her. To sponsor her child, she first had to achieve her citizenship status, which means her prolonged stay in the United States. While she seemed to sacrifice her own life for her children, Yuna also pursued her own interests as she extended her stay in the United States. For instance, she enjoyed her enhanced decision-making power as an emerging leader of the family, as well as promoted autonomy and freedom from her husband. In this process, Yuna also had to cope with conflicts with her husband:

With children, I am the leader. I make decision and they follow it. However, when my husband comes, he overthrows my authority [as a decision-maker]. Because he lives alone [in Korea], he likes to make all the decisions [even when visiting us]. He also wants to recover his status as the head of the family. He wants me to take care of him twice more than I used to do in Korea in order to make up for his loss of status. He also asks me to run many errands for him. For the first few days of his visiting, I tried to endure it. But, soon, I could not stand it. I wondered why I had to ingratiate myself with him whenever he visited us. Being a wild geese family is not so good for spousal relationships. It needs both spouse’s training. I had to humor him rather than getting into argument. I also needed to be patient. Sometimes, I exploded and shouted him “Why do you try to shackle my freedom?”
In sum, residency and citizenship status are the best legal resources that can greatly empower wild geese mothers in their transnational context. However, their enhanced status sometimes can be the source of spousal conflicts. Thus, as a newly emerging head of the household, it is important for these wild geese mothers to adequately handle the frustration and resentment of their husbands who are losing their dominant status as the head of the household. By doing so, these mothers can keep maintaining their enhanced gender status.

6. Status to Work as Foreigners

Finally, there are a few wild geese mothers who have not fallen into the traditional definition of wild geese mothers: professional women who are working in North America with their independent temporary work visa for foreigners. As Table 4 shows, in my study, only three out of 55 wild geese mothers entered the U.S. border with such a legal status. Two held an A1 visa for diplomats or foreign governmental officials, and one held a L1 visa for intracompany transferee executive or manager. They are high-profile professional women. Their main goal in becoming wild geese mothers is pursuing their career development, whereas providing their children with educational opportunities abroad is a secondary goal. The number of wild geese mothers who are officially working in North America as foreigners had increased from three to five at the time of interview (See Table 4). Unlike the first three women who migrated with the legal status to work from the beginning of their migration, these two other wild geese mothers have achieved such legal status to work as foreigners through their education in the host societies: One became a professor and another became a cook. Since I discuss in more detail the impact of having additional education and employment in the host society on the gender status of wild geese mothers in the second section of this chapter, now I focus on analyzing the gender status of
three wild geese mothers who migrated to North America with the visa to work as foreigners from the beginning of their migration.

Compared to other wild geese mothers that I have described so far, these three wild geese mothers with temporary work visas for foreigners from the beginning of their migration have an advantageous status in various aspects. First, they are the only group of mothers who do not sacrifice their career for the sake of their children’s education. Second, during transnational spousal separation, they are economically independent from their husbands who remain in Korea. They do not receive any remittances from their husbands in Korea but make an independent living through their own salary. Sometimes, they even economically support their husbands. Third, unlike other wild geese mothers who take care of their children alone after migration, these three women migrate with their own mothers from the beginning to North America to share their childrearing responsibilities. Accordingly, they are less burnt out by the burden of childcare than other wild geese mothers. Finally, while most wild geese mothers send their children to public schools due to their budget constraints, these mothers educate their children in expensive private schools based on their dual-earner systems during their wild geese period.

Nonetheless, they also encounter different kinds of difficulties after migration. In particular, unlike other wild geese mothers who are automatically assumed to be good mothers that have sacrificed their lives for the children, these professional wild geese mothers are continuously challenged by their husbands and families-in-laws about their motherhood. Furthermore, since wild geese fathers often think that they are making a huge sacrifice for their wife’s career, they are less sympathetic to the hardships of their wives, even if their wives are struggling to meet the competing demands of work and family in the foreign countries. An account of Sungjae, a wild geese father whose wife is a dispatched Korean public official in the
United States, well shows the begrudged attitudes of wild geese fathers who remain alone in Korea toward their professional wives who are working abroad:

When my wife said to me that she was exhausted, then I responded to her, “This is the trouble that you asked for. So, does it make sense if you say it is hard?” My wife also goes to school because she wants to study more. She works during weekdays and serves the role of the father on weekends. She always told me that she was so tired because she played triple roles [parent, worker, and student]. But, I then responded to her like this, “You should not say that you are tired. This is what you chose. Don’t complain!”

Finally, the experience of these professional wild geese mothers well shows how patriarchal gender ideology that frames nurturing as exclusively women’s work (England 1996; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Moon 2003; Parreñas 2000) is still deeply embedded even in their transnational arrangement. As I have described earlier in the case of wild geese mothers who originally entered the U.S. border as the dependents of their professional husbands, when men have good career opportunities abroad, their wives are expected to give up their own career in Korea and accompany their husbands to maintain their so-called intact families as good wives. In contrast, as seen in the cases of professional wild geese mothers who migrated to North America with their own visa to work as foreigners, when women have good career opportunities abroad, no women should expect that their husbands will accompany them to support. Of course, no husbands are willing to do so, as the primary breadwinner. Rather, wild geese women often feel sorry for their husbands as if they abandoned their husbands for their own sake, while being grateful for their husbands who allow them to go abroad. Furthermore, wild geese mothers are expected to continuously serve as the primary caretaker of their children even when they are abroad for their career. Because of persisting gender inequality which relegates nurturing exclusively to women (England 1996; Hochschild 2003; Moon 2003; Parreñas 2000), wild geese mothers in my study try to share their heavy burden of childrearing with another woman, in this
In sum, wild geese mothers who migrate to North America with their own independent legal status to work as foreigners are in a quite advantageous position to promote their domestic status both during spousal separation and after family reunification, utilizing their economic power, legal independence, and the social prestige attached to their professional jobs as critical resources. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these women’s empowerment is achieved with the sacrifice of their own mothers. Confronted by begrudging husbands who are not so happy with their wives’ going abroad, accompanying their own mothers are the only viable solutions for these women to overcome challenges and suspicions from the husbands and families-in-laws. This shows that even professional wild geese mothers are not free from the patriarchal pressure on their womanhood. Rather, they are constantly asked to prove that they are not off the track of traditional gender ideology that defines good mothers (if not good wives).

7. **Summary**

In sum, the discussion of wild geese mothers’ legal status challenges the common assumption that they are passive victims of migration (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; See the critique of Darishpour 2002). Rather, they are very active agents of transnational migration and strategic decision makers who flexibly choose and change their legal status in order to maximize not only their familial benefits but also their own interests,
overcoming rapidly changing immigration policies of the host countries. In addition, my study not only empirically supports the previous literature’s argument on the migrant women’s official legal status as a significant source of leverage to renegotiate their patriarchal gender relations (Espiritu 2008; George 2001; Kim 2006; Lee 2013; Menjivar 2006; Ong and Azores 1994; Pessar 1986; Wong 2000), but further demonstrates that migrant women’s degree of empowerment can be heterogeneously shaped based on the types of official visa that they hold. In general, worker visas, green cards and citizenship give more family power to wild geese mothers than international student, visitor or dependent visas. However, my study also shows how it is hasty to simply conclude that one legal status is always better than the other, because diverse visa statuses entail different opportunities and challenges for migrant women. Furthermore, based on their ways to utilize other important economic and social resources such as employment and additional education, wild geese mothers’ level of empowerment can be divergent. In addition, while Menjivar (2006) emphasizes immigrants’ “in-between” status (between “temporary legality” and nonlegality) as a critical factor that negatively shapes the personal, social and cultural lives of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in the United States, my study further demonstrates that the prolonged “temporary legality” of documented migrants can also negatively shape their family relations and incorporation to the host society because of the uncertainties associated with these temporary legal statuses. Finally, by comparing different life patterns of wild geese mothers with the same legal statues (i.e. international student status) in the United States and Canada, my study shows that the same legal status can lead to different outcomes based on the destination countries. That is, structural factors such as the nation-state and its immigration and settlement policies play an important role in shaping migrant women’s lives (Bloemraad 2006; Menjivar 2006, 2012; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).
III. Employment

Previous immigration research has emphasized migrant women’s increased economic contribution to the family as a pivotal source to challenge male dominance and renegotiate unequal domestic relations (Blumberg 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kibria 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong and Azores 1994; Pessar 1984; Zentgraf 2002). In the same vein, studies on middle-class Asian women who migrate abroad for their children’s education argue that these women’s gender status has been lowered due to their increased economic dependence on their husbands after migration (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Man 2001; Yeoh and Khoo 1998; Waters 2002). Nonetheless, previous studies on Korean wild geese families have overlooked the role of economic factors on their family power dynamics. For example, although a few studies find that some wild geese mothers have paid employment after migration (Kim 2007; Lee and Koo 2006), they do not specify what kinds of jobs these women hold, and if or how these women’s economic contribution to the family economy empowers these women. To fill this gap in the literature, I analyze the economic aspects of wild geese families in this section. Specifically, I investigate how wild geese mothers’ economic dependence change after migration, and how their employment and additional education in the host society affect their gender status in their transnational households.

Among 55 wild geese mothers who migrated to North America, half (28) were full-time homemakers, whereas the other half (27) had paid employment prior to migration. Among the 27 wild geese mothers who worked prior to migration, ten had typical female-typed teaching jobs such as a teacher and tutor, and seventeen had professional positions such as a business woman, lecturer at universities, public official, banker, nurse, accountant, programmer, journalist, researcher, and artist.
Figure 8. Wild Geese Mothers’ Official and Real Occupations in the Host Countries after Migration (n=55)

Note: Out of 57 wild geese families that migrated to North America, two of them are gender role reversed cases. That is, in these two families, not mothers but fathers migrated to North America with their children, and mothers continued to hold their professional positions in Korea after their families migrated to North America in order to support them economically. Thus, this Figure shows the employment pattern of the 55 wild geese mothers.

After migration to North America, as Figure 8 shows, the majority of wild geese mothers have become officially either international students or full-time homemakers regardless of their prior careers in Korea. Only fifteen women are officially employed after migration: the majority have well-paid full-time positions including a nurse, physical therapist, professor, public official, business woman, entrepreneur, and cook, whereas a few have lower-paid part-time positions such as a cashier at Deli or laundry shop, and private tutor.

Nonetheless, some wild geese mothers, whose official statuses are homemakers and international students, who accordingly are not allowed to work in the destination countries due to their legal statuses, also hold under-the-table jobs at Korean immigrant-owned shops such as a café, restaurant, laundry shop, and flower shop; and a few even work full-time. Thus, the actual number of wild geese mothers who work after migration is greater than its official number (See Figure 8). In this section, I discuss wild geese mothers’ gender status primarily based on their
real employment status, although I also compare the different impact of official and unofficial employment on their empowerment.

I. Wild Geese Mothers without Employment after Migration

Let me first discuss the gender status of wild geese mothers who are not employed after migration. They are divided into two groups: 1) those who did not work both before and after migration and 2) those who worked to prior to migration but no longer work after migration. Wild geese mothers who do not work both before and after migration do not find much change in their economic dependence on their husbands. Rather, their control over the household finance is very heightened after migration. While many wild geese mothers had to receive their husbands’ permission for their spending before migration, they no longer need such permission after migration. Instead, they receive a lump sum money as remittance and spend it with greater leverage. According to wild geese fathers, they can no longer easily control their wives’ spending from a long distance. According to wild geese mothers, they enhance their economic leverage by not sharing their specific spending information with their husbands. While the “code of silence” is used by the Ecuadoran male migrants to maintain their dominance over the wives remaining in the home country (Kyle 2000), Korean wild geese mothers use it as an effective gender strategy to overcome their economic dependence on their husbands. Furthermore, as wild geese mothers serve as a “remittance manager” of their transnational households, not only their decision-making power but also their domestic status is significantly promoted, like their Ecuadorian counterparts (Pribilsky 2004). Bora’s story is representative:

I have greater decision-making power here. For now, I have children with me. Before migration, my husband had a final say on every household issue. But, now, I have to decide even minor issues by myself. Such minor decisions accumulated into a big decision. With respect to living expenditures, when I lived in Korea, I
had to read his countenance and got his final approval on my spending. However, in here, he doesn’t know how I spend, because I do not keep a household account. For example, my children are now playing instruments in the local youth orchestra. When we lived in Korea, I could not dare ask him about the youth orchestra, because I knew that he would say that orchestra was the luxury for us. But, here, if I want my children to play in the orchestra, then I just can do it…. He also knows that our children are orchestra members. But, it is ok with him. Why? It is because I do not tell him how much it costs. I just cut unnecessary information from him. That is the way that I manage my spending here.

Moreover, the fact that these wild geese mothers live in a foreign country alone for their children’s education gives them power and authority to legitimately ask their husband to send remittances to them without feeling sorry or guilty. Some mothers further frame their mothering in a foreign country as one of the most important economic activities for their whole family, and thus, they do not believe that they are economically dependent on their husbands, even though they receive a huge amount of remittances from their husbands. It is also quite interesting that wild geese fathers in my study also agree with their wives’ arguments and even feel sorry if they cannot send as much as their wives request. Given this, Korean wild geese fathers are not so effective in utilizing remittances as a means to maintain their patriarchal power over their wives, in contrast to Ecuadoran and Mexican transnational husbands (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; Kyle 2000; Pribilsky 2004).

In contrast to those who did not work prior to migration, wild geese mothers who worked prior to migration but no longer do so are quite sensitive to their increased economic dependence on their husbands. In particular, those who maintained an independent economy from their husbands are not so familiar with receiving remittances from them. Some of them even feel guilty for spending it. In addition to their increased economic dependence on their husbands, the loss of social status attached to their employment also disempowers wild geese mothers who stop working after migration. Wild geese mothers who had professional careers see “being at home”
as quite derogatory. Although they have migrated to pursue the ideology of intensive mothering, full-time motherhood does not seem to be a quite respected status for these women. Damso, who was a respected high-school teacher before migration but has no employment after migration describes her sense of loss after becoming a full-time mother:

In Korea, I was extremely busy as a teacher. I always lived with a pride that I was a very smart and competent person. However, after migration, I am no longer a teacher respected by others. I feel that I have been downgraded to a mother whose mission is only cooking and doing laundry for the children. I was very depressed particularly when I first migrated, because I could not find any value in the work I did as a full-time homemaker.

Moreover, some wild geese mothers who worked in the fast-changing industries such as computer science or fashion are seriously concerned about their future job prospects after returning to Korea, given that it is extremely difficult for them to be re-employed in these industries after a long career disruption. In sum, wild geese mothers who worked prior to migration are quite sensitive to the loss of their own income and social status attached to their jobs, which in turn lowers their relative gender status after migration.

Interestingly, however, my study finds that wild geese mothers’ increased economic dependence and the loss of social status attached to their jobs do not always weaken their domestic power, in contrast to the previous studies’ findings on middle-class Asian women who migrated abroad with their children (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005). There are several reasons for this. First, some wild geese mothers were extremely tired with their hard-working professional jobs and looked for excuses to quit even before migration, and thus they are quite satisfied with their non-working status after migration. For them, becoming wild geese mothers serves as a wonderful excuse to legitimately quit their jobs. Furthermore, some of them also feel liberated from the heavy burden of supporting their families economically after migration. They are relieved as they no longer have to worry about their
household economy as much as they used to do. They can just inform their husbands of the total amount of money they need in order to survive in their host countries, then it is their husbands’ duty to find financial resources and send remittances to them.

Second, wild geese mothers who temporarily leave their professional jobs and plan to return to their original positions after returning to Korea do not feel their domestic status is quite lowered, even if they no longer work after migration. Since their economic dependence on their husbands is only temporary, these women tend to evaluate their wild geese period more positively, for instance, as a time to recharge themselves.

It is also interesting that these professional wild geese mothers feel happier after migration as they no longer compete with their husbands to do less housework. Prior to migration, they had as good employment as their husbands and made an equal or similar contribution to their household economy. Nonetheless, they had to perform the majority of housework. When they challenged the unequal division of household labor and childrearing responsibilities, it often ended up with serious spousal conflicts and confrontations. For instance, some wild geese parents (both mothers and fathers) that I interviewed told me that they cursed their spouses and even threw stuff at each other. Others thought of divorce because of endless spousal conflicts on the division of household labor. However, after spousal separation, their conflicts on the division of household labor have considerably decreased. In the absence of their husbands, wild geese mothers can be liberated from the pressure of traditional gender ideology which forced them to perform more housework, as “doing gender” theories have claimed (Gupta 1999; South and Spitze 1994; West and Zimmerman 1987). On the other hand, wild geese fathers who did not equally share the housework with their wives are now struggling with increased housework after being alone. This gives opportunities to these men to better
understand how it was difficult for their professional wives to combine both paid work and
housework. Thus, they express greater compassion on and gratitude to their wives for what they
have done for the family, which in turn greatly improves their transnational spousal relationship.

In sum, some professional wild geese mothers do not see that their domestic status was
significantly lowered after migration, because their economic dependence on their husbands is
temporary and their spousal conflicts on the household labor is mitigated.

Third, wild geese mothers who voluntarily enroll for graduate schools or professional
programs in the destination countries are not significantly challenged by their increased
economic dependence on their husband during their wild geese periods. They are quite confident
that their current loss of income is temporary, and they can find better occupations after
completing their education. Their belief can be corroborated by the job trajectory of former wild
geese mothers who studied in North America and found new and/or better occupations after their
returning to Korea. Their new job titles include a nurse, a professor, a lecturer, an assistant
director at private educational institute, and an artist.

Finally, some professional wild geese mothers see the loss of their own income as the
outcome of their unwanted career disruption for the children, and their husbands are also quite
sympathetic with this argument. Thus, these women are not debased by their increased economic
dependence on their husbands after migration. Rather, like their full-time homemaker
counterparts, they feel entitled to ask their husbands to send remittances, and their husbands also
accept it as their familial obligation as the single earner.6 In addition, like their full-time
homemaker counterparts, former professional women also can enjoy the higher level of leverage
on the size and the breakdown of their household expenditure as a transnational “remittance

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6 Moon (2003) also finds the similar entitlement among Korean immigrant women who retreated to full-
time motherhood after several years of working as professionals.
manager, which is quite helpful to complement their loss of income and social status attached to their jobs.

In sum, for wild geese mothers who do not work in the destination countries, their prior employment status and future job prospects are more important to shape their gender status than their current economic dependence on husbands. For wild geese mothers who were full-time homemakers in Korea, their economic dependence on their husbands is not an important factor to affect their transnational gender relations. Rather, they can strengthen their domestic status by playing the role of remittance manager and by re-framing their mothering as a fruitful economic activity for their transnational family. Wild geese who worked prior to migration are more sensitive to the loss of their income and social status after migration as well as their increased economic dependence on their husbands, compared to their full-time homemaker counterparts. However, not all of them feel their gender status is critically destabilized after migration. In particular, women who plan to return to their original jobs, or can find better jobs through their further education tend to evaluate their current domestic status more positively than those who do not have such optimistic job prospect. Moreover, by emphasizing their career disruption as a sacrifice for the children, these women’s economic dependence on their husbands can be successfully justified while not significantly lowering their status.

2. Wild Geese Mothers with Employment after Migration

Now, let me discuss the gender status of wild geese mothers who have paid employment after migration. They are divided into two groups: 1) those who have employment although it is not legally allowed, and 2) those who can legitimately hold jobs in the host countries. My previous research has found that the social status and prestige attached to their jobs are more
critical for middle-class Asian migrant women to increase their gender power in their spousal relationship, rather than their income (Lee 2013). Given that, I originally expected that low-tiered under-the table jobs would not empower wild geese mothers as much as professional jobs did. On the contrary, I found that both professional employment and under-the-table jobs help wild geese mothers have greater bargaining power after migration. Let me explain the reasons.

First of all, most wild geese families have encountered increased economic pressure since they lived apart. Thus, wild geese mothers’ additional income from their employment, regardless of its type, is essential to maintaining their decent life style in the destination countries. In my study, wild geese families spend in North America about $87,000 a year, which accounts for approximately 70% of their annual household income during spousal separation.

**Figure 9. Wild Geese Families’ Annual Living Expenditure in North America Compared to Their Annual Household Income Earned by Their Fathers Remaining in Korea (n=41)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% ≤ Pct &lt; 75%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% ≤ Pct &lt; 75%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% or more</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Out of 57 wild geese families that migrated to North America, only 41 reported both their annual household income during spousal separation and their annual living expenditure in North America.*

Figure 9 shows that the majority of wild geese families in the sample spend between 50% and 100% of their annual household income as living expenditure in North America. Substantial numbers even spend more than their annual household income in their host countries. Given that wild geese fathers also have to make their own living in Korea, it is certain that their income is
not sufficient for many wild geese families to maintain a comfortable life style in the transnational context.

Then, why do so many wild geese families spend more than they can afford? Wild geese parents that I interviewed admit that they failed to estimate how much they would spend in their host societies, and eventually have spent much more money than they originally planned. Unless they have their own families or close friends in the host societies, it is very difficult for most wild geese parents to make an accurate estimates on their living expenditure. Only a few wild geese families can spend as much as they expected in the destination countries thanks to their close friends who had lived in their host countries before they migrated.

In particular, wild geese families spend much more money than they expected for their initial settlement in the host countries, such as buying a car or paying for fixed costs such as rent, health insurance premiums, and college tuition. Wild geese families in my study pay on average $2,200 in North America for their monthly rent with a range between $1,300 and $3,500. Since most of them were home-owners prior to migration, they are quite embarrassed by the fact that they have to pay expensive rent for lower-quality apartments. Thus, some who are richer and open to permanent settlement buy a house in their destination countries after they are adapted to their new environment. Moreover, for wild geese mothers who paid a very low premium for their health insurance prior to migration, due to the national health care system in Korea, health insurance costs they have to pay in the host countries as foreigners seem to be abnormally high. In addition, most wild geese families do not consider carefully how many times they will visit each other during their separation. In most cases, wild geese fathers visit North America more often than their families visit Korea. It is a decision to save their travelling costs while maintaining their familial intimacy across the ocean. Nonetheless, it is still costlier than they
expected. Finally, some wild geese families have to pay for their children’s college tuition. Although all wild geese children in my study migrated to North America when they were younger, some have entered universities in North America, whose tuition is much more expensive than that in Korea.

To cope with their imminent financial pressure, wild geese parents try various strategies. Most wild geese fathers in my study have their original houses leased to pay for their family’s initial settlement costs, and then move to smaller houses. Some also live with their own parents or parents-in-law to save their living expenses. They also take advantage of bank loans or overdrafts to make up their monthly shortage and paying for their children’s tuition. Some fathers also plan to clear their increasing debt with their severance pay or pension after they are retired. Wild geese mothers who worked prior to migration often use their own financial resources after migration such as their own savings, salary, or severance pay. Some even receive economic support either from their parents-in-law or their own parents. Most wild geese parents also significantly decrease expenditures for themselves after spousal separation such as shopping, socializing, and dining out.

Despite such efforts, many wild geese parents in the study report that they feel severe economic pressure to maintain two transnationally split households. Since they maintained a comfortable life styles of the upper-middle class habitus (Bourdieu 1977), wild geese parents are quite sensitive to the minor changes in the size and the pattern of their spending. Some feel that the quality of their life is greatly lowered after migration, whereas others even suffered from serious depression. In addition, many wild geese parents commonly report that their overall household assets have significantly decreased during their wild geese period. Some even find that their debt has greatly increased in that period. Thus, many wild geese parents are very
anxious about their future. Some feel that their future stable and comfortable elderly life, after retirement, is sacrificed by their heavy investment in their children’s education. An account of Younghwa, a 42-year-old wild geese mother in Canada, well describes this:

> It is not the family. My husband is really like a machine that earns money. In short, he is just an ATM machine. This is not the right way of family life. If we just focus on our children, this is a really good place to live. I like education here, which provides a solid foundation for my children to grow. On the other hand, it is based on such a huge parental sacrifice. We have to support our children, while not preparing for our elderly life. As we live in this way, not only our household economy has become unstable but also our spousal relationship has become estranged because we no longer share our lives as much as we did.

Confronted with the combination of such current economic pressure and concern for their own future, it may be imperative for some wild geese mothers to seek employment opportunities in their host countries. Interestingly, these middle-class wild geese mothers do not mind having low-tiered under-the-table jobs. There may be several reasons for that. First, wild geese mothers know well how difficult it is for them to find gainful employment, because of the difficulty of transferring their prior educational and career backgrounds to the hosting society’s job market, as shown in the cases of Asian middle-class migrant women (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Kim 2006; Man 2001; Waters 2002; Yeoh and Khoo 1998). Second, they have dual standards on their social class, as Wright (1997) theorizes. As temporary migrants who plan to eventually return to Korea after their sojourn, wild geese mothers’ reference on their social class is primarily based on Korea, not on North America. Thus, even if they have low-tiered under-the-table jobs after migration, they do not think their real social class is lowered, as long as their upper-middle class location in Korea is secured by their professional husbands. Third, faced by current and/or future economic constraint, middle-class Korean wild geese mothers expand the definition of motherhood to incorporate not only nurturing but also economic provision, like working-class migrant women (Collins 2000; Dreby 2006; Espiritu 2008; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Grahame 2003;
Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2000, 2005a; Pessar 1995). Although they no longer can devote all their time and energy to their children after having employment, wild geese mothers try to combine both work and family by having part-time employment while their children are studying at school. Their employment also enables wild geese mothers to provide their children with greater educational opportunities beyond the limit of remittances sent by their husbands, which greatly enhances their leverage on the decision-making for their children’s education.

Moreover, under the tight budget constraints, wild geese fathers in my study also welcome their wives’ decision to work. Some fathers even directly ask their wives to have jobs. Wild geese fathers are also very grateful for their wives’ initiative to take dead-end-jobs in the foreign countries for the families regardless of their prior social class and careers. In particular, some men who worked in North America before becoming wild geese families know very well how it is difficult for foreigners to find any types of employment abroad. Thus, they express further compassion toward their wives who find paid employment after migration. As they have changed their perspectives on their wives from dependents to equal earners or companions, wild geese fathers also can more readily accept the enhanced status of their wives without much resistance.

Furthermore, even if there is no imminent economic necessity, employment is still a critical resource for wild geese mothers to enhance their bargaining power while contesting male supremacy in their transnational households, as they can achieve their economic and emotional autonomy from their husbands. After migration, many wild geese mothers often feel guilty to buy even small things for themselves, because they know how burdensome it is for their husbands to economically support their families abroad. Some women also feel that their
husbands do not like them to spend remittances for their own education or leisure. Since wild geese mothers are expected to spend most (if not all) of their time and energy for the kids, spending remittances for their own goal or interests is seen as a violation of the ideological role of good mothers. Given that, having a part-time job is a great option for many wild geese mothers who need additional financial resources that they can spend with greater leverage without feeling guilty or sorry for their husbands. Thus, some women even do not tell their husbands that they have part-time jobs after migration. An account of Yejin, who was a full-time homemaker prior to migration and now works as a part-time cashier at the local Deli after migration, well demonstrates the empowering role of migrant women’s employment.

[Before having a job] I didn’t have much leverage on the remittances. It was quite transparent where I had to spend. However, after I have earned $800 a month as a cashier, I can more comfortably buy lunch for my friends or make an offering of money for my church’s missionary work. Before working, I felt sorry to spend money for myself, because it was not the essential part of our living expenditure. But, now I treat others and make church offerings with my own income. This makes me feel less sorry for my husband and I have more leverage. I am much freer on my expenditures now. I can do what I want to do without asking my husband.

A story of Damso, who was a high school teacher prior to migration and found a new job as a private tutor after migration, also shows how her small income from a new job still helps her recover her social life:

We are economically better off than others. However, since I lost my job [after migration] and was economically dependent on my husband, I could have not spent money for me. So, when I first came, I rarely went out, which was so painful. After I teach students and earn money, I feel like I can breathe again. Before teaching, the money issue always weighted on me. But, after earning my own money, I can meet people more freely. I now have recovered my social life.

Finally, some wild geese mothers are delighted to learn about the host society while interacting and socializing with culturally mainstream Americans, even if they earn only a minimum wage from their unofficial employment. They also enjoy their low-paid employment as a good
opportunity to learn English. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the more they are familiar with the host societies than their husbands, the less wild geese mothers discuss with their husbands when they make important decisions. Such independent decision-making experiences greatly empower wild geese mothers to challenge patriarchy in their transnational households. In sum, wild geese mothers who work after migration enhance their domestic status, as they become more emotionally and economically independent from their husbands, like Mexican migrant women in the study of Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992, 1994).

Nonetheless, there are two critical differences between official and informal employment in their positive impacts on wild geese mothers’ gender status. First, wild geese mothers who have official employment not only can contribute to their household economy but also have legal power to support their family’s permanent settlement in the host societies. They are able to apply for their own residency in the host societies as well as sponsor their children’s and/or husbands’ residency through them. In contrast, wild geese mothers with informal employment do not have such legal power, although they still can make an economic contribution to their family. In my study, many wild geese families are open to permanent immigration to North America. Some even plan to reunify (or actually reunified) in the host countries after their fathers’ retirement or quitting jobs in Korea. Hence, wild geese mothers’ legal capability to support their family’s permanent settlement in the destination countries is a very powerful resource for them to further enhance their status within their families.

Second, the positive impact of wild geese mothers’ official employment can last even after the family reunification in Korea, whereas that of informal employment is often effective only during wild geese periods. In my study, many former wild geese mothers who had official employment while staying in North America can find new (and/or better) employment after their
returning to Korea. They do not experience any career disruption while being abroad, and their 
foreign work experience is often preferred in the Korea job market. Furthermore, although 
former wild geese mothers’ income is no longer so essential to make a living after their family 
reunification, they are still empowered by the fact that they contribute to their household 
economy. They also enjoy their independent social life outside the home. Given that many 
Korean women no longer work in their middle-age even if they worked before, working outside 
of the home gives them respectful social status which greatly enhances their confidence and 
pride as competent women. Former wild geese mothers also feel more entitled to request that 
their husbands share their household labor more equally. Many former wild geese fathers, who 
were struggling with increased housework during spousal separation, are also more willing to 
share housework with their working wives after their family reunification. In sum, wild geese 
mothers who have official employment in their host countries can maintain their enhanced 
gender status even after family reunification, by keeping their economic power and social status 
attached to their jobs.

On the contrary, it is much more difficult for wild geese mothers who have informal jobs 
in the host societies to find any gainful employment after they return to Korea. Furthermore, they 
often regard their informal jobs in the host societies as temporary expedient to supplement their 
family income, not as their real careers. Therefore, rather than eagerly seeking for jobs, these 
women readily return to their original position of full-time homemakers after returning to Korea. 
Given that migrant women’s economic contribution to the family economy is a critical resource 
to challenge male dominance and reconfigure unequal gender relations at home (Blumberg 1991;

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7 More egalitarian division of household labor after family reunification is not unique to Korean wild 
geese families. Some fathers obtained increased skills of doing housework during spousal separation like 
Mexican men in Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994). Other fathers recognized hardships of their working wives 
who had to combine work and familial duties.
Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986), it makes sense that wild geese mothers who do not have any employment after returning to Korea cannot maintain their enhanced sense of social power and autonomy.

**IV. Additional Education in Host Societies**

Not only wild geese mothers’ paid employment, but also their additional education in the host society is critical in helping wild geese mothers contest patriarchal spousal relationships. The majority of the wild geese mothers in my study officially hold international student status by enrolling in ESL (English as Second Language) institutes in order to justify their prolonged stay in the host society. However, there are some women who voluntarily pursue post-secondary education after migration. While other wild geese mothers are mainly focusing on supporting their children’s education, these women were highly motivated to pursue their own education. They are divided into two groups: 1) those who plan to settle down in North America; and 2) those who plan to return to Korea. Based on their future plans, wild geese mothers choose different educational options.

Women who have dreamed of permanent settlement in North America tend to choose very practical programs that can help them find new jobs in the host society such as culinary work, physical therapy, nursing, or medical programs, regardless of their prior educational backgrounds and careers in Korea. They make such decisions because of the difficulty in transferring their prior educational and occupational qualifications to the labor market of the host society, as shown in the studies of Asian middle-class migrant women (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Waters 2002). It is also a strategy to overcome their weaknesses in the North American job
market as newly immigrated women who are not so fluent in English. A story of Jaerim, who majored in marketing and worked as a business woman in a prestigious company prior to migration but was studying culinary arts at a community college at the time of interview, well illustrates this:

I majored marketing. So, I should have studied marketing after migration. However, there is no work for me if I study marketing in this country. Thus, I chose to study culinary arts. If I complete the culinary program, it is relatively easy to find a job here. I also heard that culinary jobs do not ask for a high level of English proficiency. So, it is advantageous for Asian migrants who are not so fluent in English like me…. Studying culinary arts might not be helpful for me to find a job if I return to Korea. I chose this major on the premise that I would continue to live here. If I return to Korea, I need to find the type of marketing job that I used to work in.

On the other hand, the educational pattern of wild geese mothers who wish to find jobs after returning to Korea is more diverse. Women who had good careers prior to migration but would like to find better jobs after returning to Korea often choose majors that are closely related to their prior education and/or careers, and try to strengthen their educational credentials by achieving higher degrees while they are staying in North America such as master’s or doctoral degrees. In contrast, wild geese mothers who did not work prior to migration tend to choose more practical educational programs that can help them overcome their weaknesses in the Korean job market caused by their long career disruption. For example, one wild geese mother studies at a community college to be an English teacher after getting a TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate and another woman studies to be a florist. Both are quite optimistic that they can resume their new careers after returning to Korea based on their practical education during their wild geese periods.

Moreover, regardless of whether they plan to stay in their host countries or return to their home countries, wild geese mothers who are pursuing post-secondary education in their host
countries are not significantly discouraged by their current economic dependence on their husbands. As I have mentioned earlier, these women believe that their economic dependence is only temporary, and they can eventually make considerable economic contributions to their family after completing their education. While previous studies have focused on the positive impact of migrant women’s current economic contribution to the family as their resources to renegotiate patriarchal gender relations (Blumberg 1991; Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986), my study further shows that migrant women’s expectations or capability to contribute for their household economy in the future can also empower these women, overcoming their current economic dependence on their husbands.

Former wild geese mothers’ educational choices and their following job trajectories also support the importance of education and employment as key resources to promote migrant women’s gender status, as argued by family theorists (Bianchi et al. 2000; Coltrane 2000; England 2000). Out of the 16 former wild geese mothers who reunified with their husbands in Korea, 15 women migrated abroad with their children, and one woman remained in Korea to economically support her family while sending her husband and children abroad. While staying in the North American societies, five out of these 15 wild geese mothers were full-time homemakers, six were international students, two found professional jobs such as a registered nurse and a professor after having completed postgraduate education, and two who did not pursue any further education in the host societies worked as a cook and a business woman.

After returning to Korea, all six homemakers continued homemakers, although one woman has an unofficial job as an unpaid manager in her husband’s doctor’s office. Among the two mothers with professional jobs in the United States, a nurse quits her job to take care of her
sick husband and a professor finds the same faculty job in Korea. Two mothers who worked in their host countries without any education continue to work after returning to Korea, but they now work in the different fields: one becomes an environmental activist, and the other opens her own business. Among six international students, three women who attended the ESL programs become full-time homemakers, but three other who were attending higher educational programs found jobs after returning to Korea: one is a professional artist based on her college major in arts, another is an assistant director of a private English institute thanks to her TESOL certificate and experience as a mother who is successful in sending her daughter to a prestigious American university, and the other obtained a university lecturer job by completing her doctoral program in the United States. Although this finding cannot be generalized due to such a small sample size, these trajectories show that migrant women who have pursued their educational credentials and employment in the host societies have greater opportunities of finding new employment even after they return to their home country than those who have remained as full-time homemakers.

In sum, additional education in the destination countries is empowering as it provides wild geese mothers with chances to enhance their employability in the official job markets of both home and host countries. For wild geese mothers who have continued to work, additional education provides the chances to upgrade their qualifications and find better jobs. For wild geese mothers who experienced career disruptions, additional education offers the opportunities to return to the official job market.

V. Conclusion

Although transnational spousal separation generally puts patriarchal gender relations into renegotiation, the outcomes can be quite heterogeneous based on migrant women’s resources based on their legal status, employment and additional education. First, my discussion of wild
geese mothers’ legal status challenges the common assumption that they are the passive victim of migration (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; See the critique of Darishpour 2002). Rather, they are very active agents of transnational migration and strategic decision makers who flexibly choose and change their legal status in order to maximize not only their familial benefits but also their own interests, overcoming rapidly changing immigration policies of the host countries. Moreover, my study not only empirically supports that the migrant women’s official legal status is a significant source of leverage to renegotiate their patriarchal gender relations (Espiritu 2008; George 2001; Kim 2006; Lee 2013; Menjívar 2006; Ong and Azores 1994; Pessar 1986; Wong 2000), but further demonstrates that migrant women’s degree of empowerment can be diverse based on the type of official visa that they hold. In general, worker visas, green cards and citizenship give more family power to wild geese mothers than international student, visitor or dependent visas. However, I also argue that it is hasty to simply conclude that one legal status is always better than the other, because diverse visa statuses entail different opportunities and challenges for migrant women. Furthermore, based on wild geese mothers’ ability to utilize other important resources such as their employment and additional education in the host society, their gender dynamics can be even more heterogeneous. In addition, while Menjívar (2006) emphasizes immigrants’ “in-between” status (between “temporary legality” and nonlegality) as a critical factor that negatively shapes the personal, social and cultural lives of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in the United States, my study further demonstrates that the prolonged “temporary legality” of documented migrants can also negatively shape their family relations and incorporation to the host society because of uncertainties associated with these temporary legal statuses. Finally, by comparing different life patterns of wild geese mothers with the same legal statues (i.e. international student status) in the
United States and Canada, my study shows that the same legal status can lead to different outcomes based on the destination countries. That is, macro-level conditions such as the nation-state and its immigration and settlement policies play an important role in shaping individual migrant woman’s lives (Bloemraad 2006; Menjívar 2006, 2012; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Second, my study provides more nuanced explanations on the impacts of employment and additional education on middle-class migrant women’s gender relations. I agree with previous literature that migrant women’s economic contribution to the family is critical to reconfigure their patriarchal gender relations (Blumberg 1991; Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986). For Korean wild geese mothers, their paid employment, whether it is official or unofficial, is helpful to challenge male dominance in their households during a spousal separation because of their imminent economic constraints. And, even after family-reunification, those who had official employment in their host countries tend to continuously maintain their enhanced gender status, by keeping their economic power and social status attached to their new (and/or better) employment. Nonetheless, I also argue that migrant women’s domestic status is not always weakened by their increased economic dependence and/or their loss of employment. Korean wild geese mothers often feel that it is legitimate to ask their husbands to send remittances as they are necessary for their children’s education. They also enhance their economic leverage by not sharing their specific spending information with their husbands, while heightening their decision-making power as a “remittance manger.” Moreover, I also find that wild geese mothers’ expectations or plan for their future economic contribution to the family gives them power to overcome their current economic dependence on their husbands. In this respect, wild geese mothers’ additional education in the host countries is very critical for their empowerment, as it
enhances their employability both in their host and home countries. My finding contributes to extending the knowledge of transnational migration studies which have narrowly focused on the positive impact of migrant women’s current economic contribution to the family (Blumberg 1991; Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986).
CHAPTER 6. INTENSIVE MOTHERING AND SOCIALIZING

The ideology of *intensive mothering* that frames mothering as an exclusive, child centered, and time-consuming practice (Arendell 2000; Hays 1996) requires middle-class Korean wild geese mothers to devote themselves to taking care of their children and sacrifice their own lives and interests. Furthermore, under the Confucian Asian culture that values success through education (Kim 2010; Park and Abelmann 2004; Yi 2013; Zhou and Kim 2006), wild geese mothers’ motherhood is often evaluated by their children’s academic attainments, including their admission to prestigious universities. Thus, prior to migration, wild geese mothers actively played the role of an ambitious educational manager of their children and tended to equate their own life’s success with their children’s educational achievement. In short, wild geese mothers “live vicariously through their children, viewing them as extensions of themselves” (Yi 2013: 193).

Chapter 4 shows that wild geese mothers pursue their own goals and interests through transnational migration, in addition to supporting their children’s education abroad. Nonetheless, achieving their children’s educational goals, by significantly enhancing their children’s English proficiency and helping their children enter prestigious universities either in the United States or in Korea, is still so critical for wild geese mothers. This is because wild geese mothers believe their children’s educational success is deeply related not only to the future upward social mobility of their children, but also to their current bargaining power and relative gender status within their households.

Interestingly, however, after migration, it is not easy for many wild geese mothers to achieve their educational goals, because of their marginalized status as newly migrated
foreigners who lack English fluency and important educational information and resources in the host societies.

In this chapter, I discuss how Korean wild geese mothers try to accomplish their high educational aspirations while overcoming their unforeseen challenges in the host societies. Among the various resources that wild geese mothers can utilize to perform intensive mothering, I pay particular attention to the role of their social networks within the Korean immigrant community, emphasizing that ethnic immigrant communities are known to be one of the most important social structures for new immigrants (Kibria 1993; Espiritu 2008; Ong and Azores 1994). However, I not only highlight the bright side of the ethnic community, but also shed light on its darker side. Demonstrating the ambivalent impacts of the Korean immigrant communities on wild geese mothers, this chapter adds a more nuanced explanation to the literature on the interplay between the immigrant social networks and migrant women’s parenting and survival.

In the following sections, I discuss (1) how wild geese mothers perform intensive mothering in Korea prior to migration, (2) why it becomes difficult for wild geese mothers to keep their role as an effective educational manager after migration, focusing on the challenges they encounter in the host societies, (3) how the Korean immigrant community—the Korean Parent’s Association (KPA) and Korean churches—emerges as the primary source of support to wild geese mothers for their successful performance of intensive mothering and achievement of their educational goals, and (4) how the Korean immigrant community also places constraints on wild geese mothers’ mothering capabilities and gender roles.
I. Wild Geese Mothers’ Intensive Mothering in Korea

In Korea, wild geese mothers were very enthusiastic about their children’s education, and actively performed intensive mothering (Arendell 2000; Fineman 1995; Hays 1996; Bassin et al. 1994) for their children. Some of them even introduce themselves to me as highly disciplinary tiger moms (Chua 2011) who could (and should) do whatever is needed for their children’s education. This section discusses two main aspects—daily childcare and educational management—of wild geese mothers’ mothering practices in Korea, prior to their migration.

1. Providing Daily Physical and Emotional Care in Korea

While their husbands tended to be exempt from childrearing responsibilities (often justified by their busy work schedule), wild geese mothers were expected to provide daily care for their children regardless of their employment status. In my study, about a half of wild geese mothers were full-time homemakers prior to migration, while the other half were working mothers.

All full-time homemakers maintained quite child-centered lives as intensive mothering ideology dictated (Arendell 2000; Hays 1996) in Korea. They provided their children with physical and emotional care, and organized their daily lives primarily based on their children’s educational schedules (see also Kim 2009). For example, Eunji, who used to be a full-time homemaker prior to migration, defined herself as a “ride mom” who was always busy with giving rides to her daughter who attended various academic and extracurricular activities.

My daughter went to good schools in Korea, from kindergarten. She went to a private elementary school from Ilsan to Seoul.8 I was very enthusiastic about her education. I strongly wanted to educate her in a good school, although she did not

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8 It took about an hour for Eunji to drive from her house in Ilsan (city near Seoul) to get to her daughter’s school in Seoul (Capital city of South Korea). For her daughter who was a first grade elementary school student at that time, it was quite a long distance to commute every day.
ask for it. She also attended an English kindergarten when she was five years old. At that time [in Korea], ten years ago, it was not so common to send a five-year-old child to an English kindergarten [which is very expensive]. I was a kind of enthusiastic mom. [...] Because she went to a [elementary] school far away from home, it took very long time for me to give her a ride. Further, because she was a member of the school orchestra, I had to give her a ride to the Saturday practice session as well. I was a ride mom. [While she went to school in Seoul], she also took classes from private academic institutions [after school] in Ilsan. [To give her a ride], I came back and forth [between Seoul and Ilsan]. I just followed her all day long.

In contrast to full-time homemakers, the majority of working mothers confessed that they did not perform their mothering role adequately in Korea. Compared to homemaker mothers, they were too busy with their work to spend much time with their children or to pay enough attention to building an intimate relationship with their children. For example, Mira, who used to be a teacher in Korea, said that the only job she had done as a mother was sending her children to private academic institutions after school.

The two wild geese mothers in my study did not even provide daily care for their children due to their career, which seemed to be a serious violation of the norm of intensive mothering. According to Chaerim, who used to be a businesswoman in Korea, her daughter spent weekdays in the house of her mother-in-law who lived nearby. Chaerim stayed together with her daughter only during the weekends. She did not cook much for her daughter, because she spent the weekends in playing outside with her and dining out. In case of Sowon, a banker, her own mother lived together with her and provided daily care for her two sons, such as giving snacks, taking them to doctor’s appointments, fulfilling voluntary services at school, and attending the PTA meetings.

Although working mothers could not aggressively perform the idealized role of devoted mothers compared to their full-time homemaker counterparts, they still tried to balance between their work and family. Furthermore, as the intensive mothering ideology mandated (Bassin et al.
1994), these working mothers sacrificed their career development when it was necessary for their children (see Kim 2007 for self-sacrificing, devoted wild geese mothers). For instance, Bora used to be a math teacher at a private academy, but, as her children grew up, she quit her job and became a private math tutor who taught students at her own house. While she could not earn as much as she had earned before, she was happy because she could spend more time with her children thanks to her more flexible schedule. Sukhee is another example: She was a high school English teacher in Korea when she taught her first child English and her second child math like their private tutor, and eventually retired when she decided to accompany her children to the United States.

As implied by these examples, it is important to point to gender inequality embedded in the script of intensive mothering. Like middle-class mothers in the United States (Arendell 1999; Coontz 1997), wild geese mothers felt guilty for pursuing their own careers, dividing their commitments between work and family, and failing the ideology of intensive mothering, which idealized full-time motherhood (Arendell 2000). Furthermore, it was always wild geese mothers who were in charge of arranging alternative child caretakers, as the intensive mothering ideology reinforces the strict gender role division between husbands as breadwinner and wives as nurturers (Arendell 2000; Fineman 1995). Thus, many wild geese mothers who were working prior to migration had to share their child care burdens with other women, not with their husbands. To make things more difficult, they had a strong negative attitude toward paid child caretakers. Consequently, wild geese tended to share their child care responsibilities with their own mothers and/or mothers-in-law, often having to read their mothers-in-law’s countenance, even if they were able to hire nannies. Again, despite their successful coordination of necessary
care for their children, wild geese mothers who were employed were not deemed as good as full-time homemakers.

Chaerim, a businesswoman in Korea, is a representative case. While she often dropped by her mother-in-law’s house on the way home to see her daughter on weekdays, her husband always went home directly from work to take a rest. While Chaerim did not go to the office during weekends in order to spend time with her daughter, her husband often did a lot of work during weekends for his company. While Chaerim sacrificed her promotion opportunities to be a better mother, her husband kept pursuing his career-oriented life regardless of her struggles. Despite Chaerim’s greater commitment to their daughter, it was not her husband but she who felt sorry for her daughter as if she were a bad mother.

Chaerim’s case is commonly observed in the middle-class families in the United States (Peterson and Gerson 1992) in that professional mothers are juggling between work and family whereas their professional husbands are freed of such work-family conflicts and often indifferent to their wives’ sufferings. It is probably based on the pervasive patriarchal gender ideology that defines child care as primarily women’s responsibility (England 1996; Hochschild 2003; Moon 2003; Parreñas 2000). Even though some wild geese mothers confronted such unfair situations, it often led to more serious spousal conflicts rather than more equal share of childrearing responsibilities with their husbands.

2. Performing the Role of an Educational Manager in Korea

While full-time homemakers and working mothers showed a wide gap in the amount of the time spent with their children and their provision of daily physical care for children, both groups of mothers actively performed the role of a competent “educational manager” (Lee
2010:253) for their children prior to migration. As middle-class parents, wild geese mothers commonly hoped that their children would get good grades at school and be admitted to prestigious universities. In turn, the quality of their mothering role was gauged by their children’s academic performance.

To achieve their ambitious educational goals, most wild geese mothers in my study heavily invested in their children’s education: not only in formal schooling but also in private supplementary education, so-called “shadow education” (Byun and Park 2012: 41). For example, Jina, a full-time homemaker mother with a son attending an elementary school, spent $2,000 monthly just for her son’s private education in Korea, such as English tutoring, math tutoring, history camp, science camp, clarinet lessons, and swimming lessons. Damso, a math teacher of a high school, had spent $80,000 annually (more than a half of the household income of $150,000, including her husband’s income) on her two children’s education (including their expensive tuition for a private international school in Korea) until she migrated to the United States two years prior to the interview.

Furthermore, in order to achieve their high educational goals (i.e. children’s entrance to prestigious universities), wild geese mothers kept a close eye on their children’s academic records even when they were very young, and then carefully selected and organized their children’s educational programs to improve their academic performance. In particular, under the current Korean education system, the scores on standardized exams are critical for their admission to prestigious universities (Byun and Park 2012). Therefore, wild geese mothers often enrolled their children in private academic institutions (i.e. cram schools) to prepare for such high-stakes tests. Many wild geese mothers also arranged additional one-to-one tutoring for their

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9 It is not unique to Korean parents. Other East Asian parents like Japanese and Chinese also heavily rely on private education for their children’s academic success (See Byun and Park 2012).
children in subject areas where their children needed further improvement for their university admission.

For example, according to Damso, her two children already had more advanced English proficiency than other typical Korean students, because they were immersed in the English speaking environment of their private international school in Korea. Nonetheless, she still thought that her children’s English fell behind compared to their classmates who were native English speakers. To improve their English fluency, she arranged private English lessons for her children. Furthermore, to support her son’s activity at the (English) debate club of the school, she organized another private English tutoring team with other club mates’ mothers who also wanted to improve their children’s English fluency. Similar to Damso, the majority of wild geese mothers in my study highly relied on private supplementary education to maintain or improve their children’s academic performances in the formal education system.

As much as wild geese mothers valued their children’s academic excellence, they also put great emphasis on their children’s extracurricular education in arts, music, and sports. Therefore, they provided their children with diverse educational opportunities in music (e.g., piano, violin, cello, clarinet, and drum lessons, and attending a youth orchestra), arts (e.g., painting and ballet), and sports (e.g., martial arts like Taekwondo and Kendo, swimming, tennis, skating, skiing, and ice hockey). Wild geese mothers strongly believed that their children would greatly benefit from such extensive enrichment programs, as they could cultivate confidence, creativity and cultural sophistication balanced with their high intelligence. In this respect, Korean wild geese mothers were very similar to American middle-class parents who “engage in concerted cultivation by attempting to foster children’s talents through organized leisure activities and extensive reasoning” (Lareau 2002:747).
To better perform the role of an educational manager for their children, wild geese mothers were also actively involved in various activities and events of their children’s schools and interacted with their children’s teachers. They regularly attended school events such as PTA meetings, arranged individual consultation sessions with their children’s teachers, and provided various voluntary services such as serving children’s school lunch and guiding students at crosswalks in front of the school. Some mothers further served as the members of the school board, members of a committee for school operation, and members of a parent committee (including parent representative of the school, and parent representative of the Girl Scouts).

Wild geese mothers also worked hard to build and maintain extensive social networks with other school mothers who were also enthusiastic about their children’s education. Through their own exclusive social networks, these mothers shared important educational information such as the fast changing Korean college admission system, good private cram schools and good private tutors. If necessary, they also organized study groups and invited famous teachers from private academic institutions. Of course, behind their great educational enthusiasm about their children’s education were harsh competition and jealousy among mothers, which further encouraged wild geese mothers to invest more in their children’s education.

With such tremendous efforts described above, wild geese mothers quite successfully performed their expected role of educational managers for their children in Korea. However, there were side effects of their intensive mothering and high educational zeal. A substantial number of wild geese mothers in my study confessed that they did not have good relationships with their children in Korea. As over-solicitous mothers, wild geese mothers continuously nagged and pushed their children to study harder and to get better scores. They were commanders, and their children were followers. Rather than having conversations with their
children, wild geese mothers often gave directions and orders to their children about what to do. They also often compared their children with other children because of a furtive competitive spirit to win over other school mothers, and forced their children to do too many after-school activities regardless of their children’s willingness. Accordingly, there were lots of tensions and confrontations between mothers and their children prior to migration. Jiyoun, a wild geese mother with an 11-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son, well-articulated how her excessive educational pressure on her daughter had ruined their relationship:

When my first child was young, although I did not think about sending her to IVY leagues yet, I wanted her to do everything that other children did. If others played the piano, my daughter had to play the piano. If a neighborhood child knew how to multiply, my children had to know how to multiply. In the same vein, when she went to a preschool, I taught her phonics, and we fought a lot. I also fought a lot with her when I taught her playing the piano. But, the outcome (of my pressure) was just a bad relationship with her. Although she did not play the piano so well nor did she have much talent in it, I pressured her too much.

Sunmi, another wild geese mother with a 25-year-old daughter and a 23-year-old son, also expressed the similar sentiment for being too pushy in Korea:

At that time, I obsessed about my children. I should have not done so. I did not have to do it like that. At that time, I excessively pressured my children on their study, sports, and instruments. I always stayed together with them. Luckily, my son was OK with it [my pushy mothering]. However, for my daughter, it was like hell.

In conclusion, this section discusses wild geese mothers’ mothering practices in Korea prior to their migration, focusing on their daily physical and emotional care and educational management roles for their children. Full-time homemakers devoted themselves to taking care of their children, as intensive mothering ideology dictated. In contrast, working wild geese mothers could not spend much time with their children, or provide much daily physical care for children. Nonetheless, with a strong desire to pursue the idealized norm of intensive mothering, working mothers greatly struggled to balance between their work and family obligations and arrange
necessary care for their children and often sacrificed their work and career for their children’s education. In addition, both full-time homemakers and working mothers actively performed the role of a competent educational manager for their children: 1) they carefully selected and organized their children’s academic and extracurricular activities; and 2) they actively engaged with their children’s school, teachers, and other school parents. Finally, a ruined relationship with their children is addressed as a side-effect of these mothers’ enthusiastic (sometimes pushy) intensive mothering for their children’s education.

II. Challenges to Performing Intensive Mothering in Host Societies

This section discusses wild geese mothers’ mothering practices in the host society after migration. Particular attention is paid to the changes and differences in their mothering practices and capabilities between when they were living in Korea (prior to migration) and when they are living in the host society (after migration).

1. Providing Daily Physical and Emotional Care after Migration

After migration, most wild geese mothers can better perform full-time motherhood and better conform to the ideology of intensive mothering. While half of them worked prior to migration, the majority of wild geese mothers no longer work after migration. Even though some wild geese mothers have to study as international students and maintain their full-time student status, most of these mothers attend a private ESL institute while their children go to school. Even though some wild geese mothers have jobs, their jobs are mostly part-time ones with a flexible schedule and do not seriously hinder them from performing their mothering roles. Accordingly, after migration, most wild mothers spend much more time with their children and
provide more physical and emotional care for their children, better conforming to the ideology of intensive mothering. Hyomin, a wild geese mother with three adolescent children, well describes her busy day as a full-time mother giving rides to her three children at three different times every morning:

In Korea, I did not have to wash my face [in the morning], but just gave them [children] breakfast and said bye-bye at the door. However, in here, because I have to give them a ride, I first wash myself and prepare [three] lunch boxes from six o’clock. Then, I start to carry my kids one by one [by car] as their band practice sessions begin at 7 o’clock. I am extremely busy [every morning]. […] When I was in Korea, I could deal with my children’s matters with money and online banking. But here, I have to do mothering with my body.

Hyomin also expresses satisfaction with her new life as a ride mom after migration:

In Korea, my children spent a much longer time outside. We did not have much time together face-to-face. We just lived separately in the same space. However, in here, I have to give them a ride. I have to ride them everywhere they go. So, we have a lot of conversation in the car. We also have some fun together [in the car]. I feel that I am closer to them, as our time together has increased.

Interestingly, spending more time with their children is not always a positive experience for wild geese mothers. Among wild geese mothers who used to work prior to migration, some feel uncomfortable spending so much time with their children in a small apartment (e.g., one- or two-bedroom apartment), or find it tiresome to prepare their children’s meals three times a day (including a lunch box). Some wild geese mothers who are attending degree programs after migration feel annoyed that they cannot find much time to study for themselves, because of their increased burden as a sole caretaker. Some wild geese mothers confess that they have had some conflicts with their children in the beginning of migration, which was a process of adjusting to each other. A few mothers admit that they have increased tension with their children (particularly with adolescent sons) as they no longer live with their father who used to mediate disputes between mothers and children. Nonetheless, in general, wild geese mothers’ relationships with
their children greatly improve over time as they spend more time together and overcome challenges together in the host society.

The improvement in the mother-child relationship is partly due to the changes in wild geese mothers’ educational enthusiasm, as a substantial number of wild geese mothers have changed from pushy tiger moms to more relaxed ones. On the one hand, it may be because of the different educational institutions in North America that less emphasizes students’ cramming for standardized exams. On the other hand, it may be because of wild geese mothers’ unexpected downgrade in their capabilities from competent educational experts to marginalized mothers who are neither fluent in English nor familiar with the educational system of the host country. Ironically, instead of feeling anxious and concerned about not knowing what the best is for their children, many wild geese mothers rather feel comfortable and relaxed after migration, because they no longer have any comparison group to compete with, and because they are also liberated from the competitive Korean educational atmosphere. Some wild geese mothers even assert that transnational migration gives them an unexpected turning point to reflect on their taken-for-granted roles as devoted wives and mothers and thus encourage them plan for their own future and career. As they pressure their children less and allow them to do what they like, many wild geese mothers acknowledge that they are closer to and have stronger emotional bonds with their children after migration than in Korea.

2. Performing the Role of an Educational Manager after Migration

If wild geese mothers migrated for the purpose of having a better relationship with their children, the outcome would have been satisfactory enough for them. However, their goal of migration is not to improve their relationship with their children but to improve their children’s
educational accomplishments (i.e., enhancing their children’s English fluency and/or helping their children enter prestigious universities either in the United States of Korea). Unfortunately, after migration, it becomes much more difficult for most wild geese mothers to perform their role of competent educational managers for their children as they used to do in Korea. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the structural disadvantages that wild geese mothers are faced with as newly migrated foreigners in the host society, including 1) language and cultural barriers, and 2) their isolation from the mainstream social networks. I also analyze how those challenges make it difficult for wild geese mothers to perform their expected role of competent educational managers for their children after migration.

2-1. Language and Cultural Barriers

First, wild geese mothers are daunted by the language barriers in North America. Those who could barely speak English feel that they have become deaf, neither speaking nor listening to English. Accordingly, they are quite reluctant to visit their children’s schools when they are asked to attend various school events such as an open house, parent-teacher conference, or school counseling. Others who speak better English still feel it difficult to communicate with teachers and parents in their children’s schools. For instance, Heeyoung, a wild geese mother who speaks some English, feels greatly humiliated when Americans do not understand what she says, and thus is further discouraged from speaking with anyone in English. Another wild geese mother, Jina, narrates how the lack of confidence in her language proficiency prevents her from interacting with American teachers and parents in her child’s school:

Although it is never difficult for me to speak English when I go grocery shopping or in my ESL class, I cannot talk comfortably with my son’s teachers or his friends’ moms. I feel really timid. So, I rather close my mouth in order not to cause any harm to my child.
Furthermore, even if some wild geese mothers gradually have overcome their language barriers, they are still frustrated by the fact that their cultural background and knowledge based on the Korean society are of no use in their host countries. The story of Sukhee, a wild geese mother with a 12th grade girl, is an example. When they came to the United States three years prior to the interview, Sukhee’s daughter had to write a response paper on a video clip about public health. Because her performance in that course was not great due to the language barrier, she wanted to submit a great assignment. Thus, she watched the video clip several times (she had to do so because she could not understand the content at once), searched the internet for related information, and then summarized the video clip as it was in order to demonstrate how well she understood the content. Watching her daughter study hard, Sukhee was proud of her daughter and expected a good grade for the assignment. However, in contrast to their expectation, her daughter was charged with plagiarism and given a failing grade for the course, because she missed citations in the paper. This happened when Sukhee and her daughter had just migrated from Korea, where the formal education system is so centered on standardized exams that students do not have much experience of writing essays or response papers and thus do not have a clear understanding of plagiarism in the American context. Although Sukhee met teachers and counselors of the school to resolve the situation, she failed to defend her daughter against the F grade in the course. Sukhee greatly reproached herself because she thought the punishment could have been lighter than the failing grade, if she, as a mom, had explained better to the school authority about her daughter’s good will, the language and cultural barrier, and newly migrated foreigner’s likely ignorance of the stricter American standard on plagiarism.

The language and cultural barriers are not easy to overcome. Even though she has spent three years in the United States, Sukhee still feels nervous and incompetent whenever she meets
her daughters’ American teachers. Sukhee further expresses her frustration as a *perpetual foreigner* or *unassimilable alien* (Espiritu 2008) who comes from a different culture and thus will never become a part of the dominant society:

> Because I don’t know the American cultural background so well, I am always mindful whether my behavior is culturally acceptable or not. After migration, I have realized how my cultural background and knowledge [based on Korean society] is deeply entrenched in me. In [South] Korea, everything was so natural, and I did not have to be conscious of what I was doing. It was like breathing air. However, in America, I feel that I am walking on eggshells every moment. […] I know nothing here. There is nothing that I know by itself. I have to think carefully at all times.

As wild geese mothers (like Sukhee) keep failing to deal with everyday challenges due to their lack of (confidence in) English fluency and cultural competence, they end up having low self-esteem, tolerating unfair disadvantages, and giving up further communication and interaction with their children’s school authority and teachers, which in turn prevents wild geese mothers from effectively performing their expected role of competent educational managers for their children in the host society.

### 2-2. Isolation from the Mainstream Social Networks

Despite the language and cultural barriers, wild geese mothers often hope that their children and they themselves can closely interact with dominant Americans and be immersed with the American middle-class society. Such hopes are particularly strong at the beginning of their migration.

American churches can be the venues for the realization of such wild geese mothers’ hopes. Based on the concrete foundation of the same religion, Americans in churches are generally more favorable to and more eager to accept Korean wild geese mothers than Americans outside the church communities, although Korean wild geese mothers cannot
immediately reciprocate their friendship and assistance (Hirschman 2004). Hana, a wild geese
mother who has tried hard to socialize with mainstream Americans through her American
Catholic church well describes the positive role of religious institutions in incorporating newly
migrant women to the host society:

When I first came [to America], my goal was to learn English. So, I intentionally
went to the American Catholic church near my house. I attended the service every
day and became close to old ladies who also came every day. […] Then, one of
the old ladies invited me to her bible study group in a Catholic church in another
town. There, I met women of diverse ages from those who were younger than me
to older ladies. […] I felt comfortable among them because we shared the same
religious belief. They were so nice to me. […] Through my bible study group, I
could join another prayer gathering composed of younger women. In that way, I
could easily become a part of [American] religious community here.

However, attending American churches is not a common path to socializing with mainstream
Americans among Korean wild geese mothers. Only a few wild geese mothers, who have strong
Christian beliefs and are highly motivated to learn English, choose to regularly attend American
church services and/or bible study groups.

Rather, wild geese mothers’ more common pattern of socializing with dominant
Americans is engaging with parents whom they meet in their children’s schools. Women with
older children often meet their American friends through their children’s extracurricular
activities such as football, ice hockey or youth orchestra, whereas women with younger children
make their American friends by arranging playdates with their children’s classmates or hosting
their children’s birthday parties.

Nonetheless, most wild geese mothers admit that it is very hard for them to maintain their
membership in mainstream social networks. There are several reasons for these women’s
exclusion from mainstream social networks. First, upon arrival, wild geese mothers soon find
that American middle-class mothers have known one another for a long time and have already
built strong social networks among themselves. These American mothers do not have much incentive to become friends with Korean wild geese mothers who have just migrated and seem to be seeking help rather than making contributions. Accordingly, except for only a few wild geese mothers who are fluent in English, very sociable and able to make tremendous efforts towards American friends, most wild geese mothers cannot become a part of the pre-established social networks among American middle-class mothers. The story of Jina well demonstrates this difficulty:

My child currently goes to a private school and all his classmates have known one another since kindergarten. So, all their parents know one another and have a very strong in-network among themselves. So, I could not become one of them. Of course, they did not block me. They were very nice to me. Nonetheless, I still feel that I cannot be one of them. One day my child asked me, “Mom, why am I not an American?” I felt really sorry for him. I could not help him. This is beyond my ability.

Second, wild geese mothers’ unique situation as a sole mother residing in the United States without their husbands make them feel uncomfortable when they interact with the mainstream middle-class mothers. In particular, by exposing themselves to the so-called American middle-class family culture that requires not only mothers but also fathers to actively participate in their children’s school and extracurricular activities (Lareau 2002), many wild geese mothers feel that the absence of their husbands may look unusual to their American counterparts. Because many wild geese mothers feel awkward due to their unique situation as a de facto single parent, they tend to withdraw from married couple-based parental social groups, even if they have not experienced any explicit attempt at exclusion by other American parents in their children’s schools.

Finally, wild geese mothers’ sense of lowered social status after migration also critically hinders their active interaction with mainstream middle-class mothers in the private spheres.
Even though most wild geese mothers enjoyed comfortable life styles of the upper-middle class habitus (Bourdieu 1977) in Korea, they start suffering from imminent economic pressure after migration as they have to maintain two costly transnationally split households. Accordingly, many wild geese mothers rent small, shabby apartments in affluent residential areas. Even though it is a necessary strategy for them to provide their children with free public education in a good school district while saving on living and educational costs, many wild geese mothers are quite depressed because of their lowered quality of living. They are also afraid that their children can be dispirited if their middle-class school friends happen to witness their living situation. Thus, some wealthier wild geese mothers even purchase and move to a townhouse or single-family home for their (and their children’s) better socializing with middle-class American parents. However, most wild geese mothers lack such financial resources and tend to close the door to their children’s American friends and their mothers.

In short, most wild geese mothers are not successful in socializing with the larger mainstream society, despite their need to do so to achieve their high educational aspirations, due to their marginality based on language barriers, cultural differences, de-facto single-mother status without husband present, and the sense of lowered social status after migration. Accordingly, most wild geese mothers do not have any American friends at all.

Only some manage to have a close American friend or two. And this small social network is not extended to the bigger social networks. Rather, if their close American friends relocate to another city, wild geese mothers no longer can make new American friends but just lose connections with existing American friends. None of the wild geese mothers in my sample are actively participating in any bigger social groups such as a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Minkyung is representative. She used to be a proud mother who was actively engaging with her
daughter’s school and socializing with school mothers prior to migration. She even served as the parent representative of her daughter’s school in Korea. She was also quite confident in her English because she had spoken English for her work in a French company until she became a full-time homemaker in Korea. Therefore, after migration to the United States, she has tried to continue her intensive mothering: She attends PTA meetings, goes to open houses, and meets her daughter’s teachers. Nonetheless, she admits that she no longer actively interacts with other middle-class mothers as she used to do, because she has lost confidence in herself due to her newly obtained status as a racial/ethnic minority mother who is new to the host country. She adds, “all of them [except me] are [white] American mothers, my English is still not enough, and I feel awkward [when I am interacting with them] because I am different from them.”

In sum, wild geese mothers have become less competent educational managers for their children after migration due to various obstacles and find it difficult to provide their children with better educational opportunities and to achieve their goal of migration, even though wild geese mothers tend to experience improved relationships with their children after migration.

III. Korean Immigrant Networks as an Alternative Source of Support

This section describes how the Korean immigrant community serves wild geese mothers as their primary source of support and helps them perform intensive mothering and achieve their educational goal. Again, wild geese mothers’ goal of migration to North America is to enhance their children’s English fluency and help their children enter prestigious universities either in the United States or Korea. Furthermore, because they endure significant sacrifice of their spousal relationship and often the loss of their decent income and social status as successful career women in Korea, wild geese mothers tend to find their satisfaction and self-realization mainly
through their children’s outstanding educational attainment. Likewise, wild geese fathers who remain alone in Korea also tend to believe that only their children’s extraordinary academic achievements can compensate for their sacrifice and prove their wives’ good performance in their expected role of devoted mothers. In short, children’s good academic performance (as a goal of migration) is critically related to wild geese mothers’ success as mothers, not to mention their children’s future upward social mobility.

Therefore, confronted by social isolation from the mainstream American parent’s networks, many wild geese mothers alternatively resort to the Korean immigrant community in order to achieve their goal of migration and continue their role of effective educational mangers for their children. Same ethnic immigrant communities are known to be the primary social infrastructure to meet immigrant women’s diverse needs (Espiritu 2008; Kibria 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Menjívar 2006, 2012; Ong and Azores 1994). Min Zhou (2009: 1157) further points out that “total strangers among co-ethnics in their own ethnic community […] are able to reconnect and rebuild networks with relative ease through the involvement in ethnic institutions because of their shared cultural and language skills.”

Interestingly, wild geese mother’s socializing patterns are not monolithic. Some are supported by their pre-established personal networks with their own families, relatives, friends or acquaintances in the United States. Some wild geese mothers have their own families, relatives, or friends who have already resided in their destination countries. In this case, wild geese mothers can greatly benefit from their pre-established personal network both before and after migration. For instance, these mothers can more accurately estimate their expected living and educational costs in the host society, and prepare their financial resources. They also can choose better schools and educational programs for their children without much trial and error, based on
the educational information provided through their personal networks. Some women also save
their living expenses by sharing their residential areas with their families and friends in their host
countries.

In addition, there is a group of wild geese mothers who are supported by their own
(and/or their husbands’) social and professional networks that they have established in the host
society before they become transnationally split families. As I have described in the Chapter 5,
these women initially had migrated to the United States as their husbands’ dependents, and then
became wild geese mothers later by remaining in the United States after their husbands returned
to Korea. Since they have lived in the United States before becoming a transnational family, they
have more time to become familiar with the dominant society, and to construct their social
network, including their husbands’ professional networks. Hence, even if they encounter new
challenges as wild geese mothers after remaining in the host society alone, they tend to handle
those challenges with relative ease thanks to useful information and support through their pre-
established social networks and resources.

Unfortunately, the majority of wild geese mothers in my study do not have such pre-
established personal or social networks in their destination countries. Furthermore, some wild
geese mothers who have families and friends in their host countries undergo conflicts with them
after migration. Consequently, the wider Korean immigrant community is still needed for all
wild geese mothers as the locus of socializing and the sources of support.

There are two most common routes through which wild geese mothers construct their
new ethnic social networks: 1) Korean Parent’s Association (KPA) in their children’s schools
and 2) Korean churches. In the following sub-sections, I discuss how these two Korean
immigrant networks affect the ways in which wild geese mothers overcome challenges in the host society, achieve their educational goals, and enhance their gender and social statuses.

1. Korean American Parents at KPA: Source of Education Information

To gain access to the most updated education information in the host society, wild geese mothers want to socialize with middle-class American mothers through their children’s schools. However, it is a mission impossible for most wild geese mothers who even feel uncomfortable when they attend the PTA conferences or meet their children’s American teachers for college counseling.

As an alternative, wild geese mothers try hard to strengthen their mothering capability by obtaining information and resources through their social networks with Korean immigrant parents whom they meet in their children’s schools. In particular, when they have just arrived in the United States, socializing with Korean American mothers through the KPA is regarded as mandatory for most wild geese mothers to obtain necessary educational information and resources in their host society.

Thus, Korean immigrant mothers they meet in their children’s schools have been one of the most useful venues for building up their first social networks, obtaining helpful educational information, and having their children settled in the new educational environment. A few wild geese mothers that have stayed for a longer period in the host country also feel fulfillment when they serve as the president of the Korean Parent’s Association (KPA) and become the opinion leaders among Korean immigrant mothers.

Whereas the KPA is primarily the source of educational information, the Korean ethnic churches satisfy wild geese mothers’ diverse needs and thus are vital for their survival in the host country. First of all, wild geese mothers are emotionally supported by the Korean immigrant church community that share the same culture and language. Such emotional support and the sense of belonging make Korean churches the greatest asset of wild geese mothers who have to overcome their frustrating experiences of being downgraded into incompetent mothers and educational managers for their children after migration, because of their language and cultural barriers and unfamiliarity with the host society’s educational system (Hirschman 2004; Min and Kim 2002).

To wild geese mothers, the Korean church community means more than just a religious organization. It serves as a haven where wild geese mothers can find comfort and rely on others, particularly when they are frustrated by the dominant society. Wild geese mothers assume leadership positions within the Korean church community such as deaconess, cell group leaders, bible study group leaders, and/or Sunday school teachers so that they can recover their lowered confidence and self-esteem. Some wild geese mothers who have lived in the host country for a longer period of time feel achievement when they help newly migrated women adjust to the new environment. According to George’s (2001) study of Indian immigrant families in the United States, the positive role of the immigrant church is often limited to men: It helps Indian American men to regain their lowered social status after migration by participating in the public area of church; but it forces their wives not to challenge the hegemonic male status in their religious organizations. However, the case of Korean wild geese mothers demonstrates that
immigrant churches also can empower immigrant women to enhance their social status, through the leadership positions that they could not otherwise have attained in the broader host society.

Second, in addition to the emotional benefits, the Korean church community also meets wild geese mothers’ practical needs (see Hirschman 2004 and Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000 for the discussion about how other immigrant churches serve the practical needs of the immigrants). Newly migrated wild geese mothers, particularly those who do not have any pre-established personal or social connections, find the Korean church networks critical for them to smoothly settle down into the host society, as well as to obtain educational information and resources for their children.

It is important to note that the majority of Korean wild geese mothers naively expected prior to migration that the host society would be pretty similar to the Korean society. Accordingly, they are quite embarrassed after migration as they recognize that the system and culture of the host society are different from those of the Korean society. Consequently, many wild geese mothers cannot even start thinking about how they can effectively manage their children’s education until they secure survival in their host society. In this respect, Korean church networks are very helpful, providing wild geese mothers with useful information and social and economic resources to solve their everyday challenges after migration. For example, wild geese mothers make a number of decisions based on the information provided by the Korean church and the Korean immigrant community: Wild geese mothers choose Korean doctors to visit, Korean lawyers to consult about their legal issues, Korean realtors to find their housing, and Korean grocery market to buy their daily necessities, based on their reputations among Korean immigrants. Some newly migrated wild geese mothers even stay at their Korean church pastor’s house for several months until they find an appropriate residence. The Korean
church networks are also pivotal for those who seek employment opportunities in ethnic enclave stores and companies. For example, some wild geese mothers were able to find paid jobs at Korean American-owned shops such as delis, laundry shops, and restaurants through their church acquaintances’ referrals, despite their lack of English proficiency and/or a legitimate visa status to work.

Most importantly, wild geese mothers utilize their ethnic church networks to fulfill their educational goals. For instance, through casual conversations with their church members, wild geese mothers with older children obtain valuable educational information about, for example, the American education system in general, the admission requirements for Ivy League universities, and private academic institutions to help their children get a higher SAT score (see Zhou 2009 for significant educational benefits from the ethnic community for non-English speaking Korean parents in Koreatown in LA).

Furthermore, as Korean wild geese mothers are not successful in obtaining educational information from American parents and teachers in their children’s schools due to their social isolation from the mainstream networks, they alternatively attempt to fulfill the role of their children’s educational manager with the information and resources obtained from their co-ethnic immigrant community. In particular, wild geese mothers tend to heavily rely on Korean tutors in the private academic institutions in Korea town. For example, according to Miseon, a former wild geese mother whose daughter has just graduated from one of the top design schools in the United States and found a job in a good branding company in NYC, she achieved her educational goals thanks to the assistance of Korean teachers in her daughter’s private arts institute and private SAT preparation academy in Korea town. Similar to Miseon, most wild geese mothers, whose adolescent children are currently preparing for the SAT test for American college
admission, send (or have already sent) their children to Korean-owned private educational centers, even if it is very costly. Dambi, a wild geese mother whose daughter was 11th grade at the time of interview, well explains why she has to rely on the Korean private supplementary education even after migration to the United States:

My first daughter attended a private SAT academy last year. It was a summer session costing over $3,000 for eight weeks. […] It was a private academic institution owned by Koreans, although all teachers taught in English. It [sending children to commercial SAT preparation institutes] is very popular among Korean immigrant mothers here. If your children have lived in America for a long time and study hard by themselves, they don’t have to go to such a private academy. However, as a wild geese mother [who migrated to America just two and a half years ago], I am very anxious [about my daughter’s college admission]. If your children migrated here [like mine] during their secondary school, you also might feel urgent. That’s why many [wild geese] mothers send their children to there [Korean cram schools]. Because I am nervous and anxious, I am willing to send her again, even if it requires me to borrow money.

Parents’ dependence on private educational institutes for their children’s better academic achievement is quite common among East Asian immigrants (Byun and Park 2012; Kao 2004; Sun 1998; Zhou and Kim 2006). While they can utilize the Korean ethnic media or commercial advertisement to find appropriate Korean-owned private educational institutions for their children, many wild geese mothers in my study tend to trust the word-of-mouth of their church community as one of the most reliable sources of information. In this regard, it is even more important for wild geese mothers to maintain their membership in the Korean church community.

In addition, the informal church networks are useful even to those who plan to return to Korea prior to their children’s completion of secondary education and thus have to keep up with the fast-changing Korean educational policies such as terms and conditions of special admission of overseas Koreans to universities. Wild geese mothers’ younger children also benefit from their church affiliation, as they attend the extracurricular activities offered by the church such as youth orchestra, summer camp, and English classes, and make Korean American friends.
Wild geese mothers also learn through their church networks how to communicate with their rebellious adolescent children with their husbands physically absent (who are expected to do a better job of disciplining them). For instance, Minhee is a wild geese mother who experienced serious confrontations with her teenage son. She pressured him to study harder as she used to do in Korea, whereas her son did not follow her directions and spent a lot of time in playing an online computer game. However, since she took an eight-week parent mentoring program provided by her church two years ago, she has changed her parenting style from pushy to communicating one. She still regularly attends the weekly church parent group to share with other immigrant mothers her trials and errors as a sole parent in the foreign country and get some advice from them. For Minhee, her church community and her Christian belief are critical resources to help her recover an intimate relationship with her son.

Because of many practical benefits from the Korean immigrant church community that I have described so far, not only those who had Christian beliefs prior to migration but also those with different or no religious beliefs have converted into Christians and regularly attend the Korean immigrant churches after migration, as Hurh and Kim (1984) also note. Younghwa, a 42-year-old wild geese mother, used to be a Buddhist in Korea, but expresses her gratitude to the Koreans whom she has met through the Korean immigrant church after her migration to Canada:

[After migration to Canada] I have been involved in Church. I was not Christian originally. I was Buddhist [in Korea]. When I first came here, I was under great stress. While I was really struggling here, the first person who helped me was a Christian. Thus, since then, I go to Church. Church people have really helped me a lot [to adapt to the new environment].

Many wild geese mothers also select their church affiliation primarily based on their practical (educational) needs rather than their religious matters. Hence, it is not rare that they move to another church if it is expected to meet their needs better than their current church. For
example, Eunji, a wild geese mother with a 13-year-old daughter, moved to a new Korean church that had a youth orchestra so that her daughter could have an opportunity to play the cello there.

Nevertheless, once they have joined a church, most wild geese mothers continue to remain a part of the Korean church community, even if they move from one church to another. Moreover, wild geese mothers who were Christians prior to migration often have become more religious after migration and deepened their attachment to their church community as time goes by (Herberg 1960).

In sum, the Korean immigrant networks through the Korean churches and the Korean Parent’s Association (KPA) provide Korean wild geese mothers with emotional support and practical resources that are necessary for them to effectively perform their expected mothering roles and achieve their educational goals.

IV. Constraints in the Korean Immigrant Community

While the previous section discusses the benefits of Korean immigrant networks, this section analyzes the hardships that wild geese mothers undergo within their own ethnic community. In particular, this section highlights that the KPA and Korean immigrant churches do not always play positive roles in supporting wild geese mothers’ lives. Interestingly, despite its disadvantages, the majority of wild geese mothers still struggle to maintain their membership in their ethnic community, particularly the Korean church community, because of its huge practical benefits to their role of mother and educational manager for their children.
1. Korean American Parents at KPA: Demanding in Unwanted Ways

While newly migrated wild geese mothers benefit from interacting with Korean immigrant parents whom they meet through their children’s schools and the KPA, these social networks are less attractive for wild geese mothers who have stayed in the host country for a longer period and thus have built other alternative social networks within their Korean immigrant community. In fact, many wild geese mothers cease to be committed to the KPA, once they have reached out to the wider Korean immigrant community through the KPA. Several reasons are addressed: (1) Some wild geese mothers explain that they have left the KPA because they are overwhelmed by its excessive educational information; (2) others do not like the high competition and jealousy among Korean immigrant mothers within the organization; and (3) a few wild geese mothers even wonder why they have to follow what other KPA mothers expect and to pursue the Korean-style education and mothering practices, even though they have come to this new country for something different, if not better.

2. Korean Immigrant Churches: Most Useful but Most Exclusive

Zhou (2009) claims in her analysis of the Korean ethnic community in LA that new Korean immigrants can benefit from its ethnic community’s resources primarily based on their co-ethnicity. While I agree with her that the Korean immigrant community is quite exclusive to other racial/ethnic groups, I further argue in this section that even the same-ethnic new comers cannot gain access to its abundant educational resources and information unless the existing community accepts them as its members.

Among various Korean immigrant communities, Korean churches are the central social organization. Zhou and Kim (2006:14) even argue that the Korean ethnic church is “the single
most important ethnic institution” in the Korean immigrant community. Therefore, the first task of newly migrated wild geese mothers who seek assistance from the Korean immigrant community is being accepted as the legitimate members of Korean immigrant churches. Then, the next task is maintaining their membership in order not to lose their support.

After joining, Korean churches are ubiquitous in wild geese mothers’ everyday lives, which may be helpful. However, it is noteworthy that Korean churches tend to have conservative perspectives on family relations and uphold patriarchal values (Moon 2003). Consequently, Korean churches at times function like a *Panopticon* (Foucault 1977) that monitors and disciplines wild geese mothers. Some wild geese mothers are even ostracized when they do not seem to conform to the traditional Korean values such as good mothers and faithful wives. For example, Hyojin, a wild geese mother who was divorced during the wild geese period, confesses that she finally had to leave the church because of her Korean church members’ excessive attention to and interference in her personal life. Sohee, another wild geese mother, who appeared at the interview in fashionable short pants and a sleeveless shirt, recalls how she was annoyed and hurt when other Korean Americans reprimanded her for wearing clothes in an unchaste way. She also adds:

> They criticize me not only because of what I wear. They monitor and carp at me in all aspects. So, I feel like I am a celebrity here, really. Even if I am just different from them a little bit, they blame me. Although I don’t know them, they know me. It is so stressful for me.

As someone who stands out in her small immigrant church community where nearly everyone knows one another, Sohee has been often misunderstood as a rude woman if she does not say hello to other Koreans whom she does not know so well. Due to her suffering from hostility and negative rumors about her, at the time of interview Sohee has closed her mind to others and is no longer willing to make any new friends in the immigrant community. She even asserts that “I
now have a very pessimistic view on all human relations.” As these two women’s stories show, when wild geese mothers seem to violate the traditional values that the Korean church community upholds, they are blamed and criticized rather than getting any assistance from it.

To make matters worse, wild geese mothers often have to tolerate even closer surveillance on their private lives than any new comers by their immigrant church community, because of their marginality in terms of their family structure. Unlike the so-called normal families where wives and husbands live together with their children, wild geese mothers live separately from their husbands. While they are free from the patriarchal control of husbands who remain in Korea, because of that, wild geese mothers are now under even more severe patriarchal surveillance by the Korean immigrant community that highly suspects wild geese mothers as people who are prone to behave inappropriately.\(^\text{10}\) Some wild geese mothers who have been exhausted by the constant surveillance and discipline eventually decide to leave their Korean immigrant church community, giving up its educational benefits that are so critical for their successful mothering.

Furthermore, while Frankenberg (1993) and Espiritu (2008) have problematized othering between whites and non-whites (including Asian Americans), I find that serious othering is also ongoing even within the same racial/ethnic immigrant community. For example, there are negative controlling images (Collins 2000) attached to wild geese mothers, such as exploiters, who take advantage of the information and resources that other Korean Americans have strenuously built up over a long period of time and leave after their short sojourn without making any meaningful contributions to the community. One wild geese mother, Eunji’s experience with

\(^{10}\) Given that Guatemalan and Ecuadorian women who are left behind by their migrant husbands are also under close moral surveillance by their families-in-law, relatives and friends in their home country (Menjívar 2011; Pribilsky 2004), transnational spousal separation does not necessarily liberate migrant (and left-behind) women from the surveillance of traditional gender patriarchy.
a small Korean church in New Jersey well represents Korean immigrants’ typical hostility to wild geese mothers. Eunji heard some people saying sarcastically, “Oh, another wild geese mother comes again!” when she first went to the Korean church. Others even said to her face that they did not need a wild geese mother but another person who could serve the church for a longer period. Contemplating the reasons why she was treated unfavorably even from the first moment she joined the Korean church, Eunji says:

Koreans who have lived here [as permanent immigrants] view that wild geese mothers are different from them. They think wild geese mothers are those who just suck them dry and leave. So, they [Korean immigrants] don’t show much affection to us.

Even when she skipped the church service only once, she was severely criticized by others who believed that she did so because of her sojourner status and lack of commitment to the community. To overcome the prejudice against her and to be accepted as a true member of her Korean church community, Eunji had to attend and serve the church even more faithfully than anyone else. Only after that, she could legitimately gain access to the church resources that had been readily available to other co-ethnic Korean immigrants. She still very cautiously maintains her good reputation within the church community in order not to lose her valuable educational resources.

There are other controlling images that wild geese mothers have to overcome within their ethnic community: They are often branded as women who are extravagant, and/or so crazy about children’s education that they even abandoned their husbands in Korea. Moreover, as married women without legitimate sexual partners (i.e., their husbands) being present next to them, wild geese mothers are often suspected of readily engaging in affairs with Korean immigrant men. Thus, wild geese mothers’ sexual reputations are closely monitored by their Korean immigrant
community, although such monitoring of women’s sexuality by the immigrant community is not unique to Korean immigrants (see Kibria 1993 for the cases of Vietnamese immigrants).

Many wild geese mothers that I interviewed have not only experienced animosity against them but also internalized such negative controlling images about themselves. Hence, they were quite defensive about their personal life and tried hard to convince me that they were different from the so-called bad wild geese mothers through their own othering process. For instance, wild geese mothers highly emphasized during the interview how frugal they were, criticizing other extravagant wild geese mothers who were shopping for luxuries (e.g., CHANEL or Gucci bags) and playing golf.\textsuperscript{11} They also stressed that they were not interested in a sexual relationship, as if being asexual was the prerequisite for virtuous wild geese mothers. At the same time, they told me of gossip they had heard about some bad wild geese mothers who were flirting with men, had love affairs, and even got divorced.

Under the constant surveillance of their private lives by the Korean immigrant community, some wild geese mothers have to fabricate their personal stories in order to be accepted by their immigrant community. For example, one wild geese mother, named Jiwon, says that she does not tell anyone around her that her husband has passed away. According to her, sharing her widowed status with others will only result in adding one more layer of discrimination against her on top of her stigmatized wild geese mother status. In particular, she is very concerned about the possibility that she can be seen as a partner in Korean immigrant men’s potential infidelity. As she always has to be careful not to reveal her personal story to others, it is also very difficult for her to make close friends. For her, the Korean ethnic community is not a source of support and socializing but a source of isolation and distress.

\textsuperscript{11} Golf is seen a luxury sport in Korea.
In sum, while Korean immigrant churches and social networks that have been formed around Korean churches provide wild geese mothers with emotional and material resources that are critical for performing their roles as mothers and overcoming their marginality in the host society, such resources are accessible only when these women have passed the immigrant church community’s strict and constant scrutiny of their private life and are accepted as their legitimate members. Accordingly, wild geese mothers struggle to maintain their membership within their ethnic Korean community in order to gain (and not to lose) access to its resources and information that are essential for their successful mothering as well as survival in the host societies.

V. Conclusion

This chapter explores the experiences of Korean wild geese mothers who have migrated to the United States for their children’s education, even sacrificing their spousal relationship and stable social status in their home country. While previous literature has narrowly defined the Asian middle-class mothers’ transnational migration for their children’s education as something mandated by the patriarchal Asian culture and have focused on their hardships in the host society (Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005), I provide an alternative explanation: Korean wild geese mothers have agency and decide to migrate abroad in order to better enact the ideology of intensive mothering, which is a global norm of middle-class mothers across their racial/ethnic backgrounds and nationalities, as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) argue.

I also compare how Korean wild geese mothers perform intensive mothering in Korea and in North America. Prior to migration, wild geese mothers were different in providing physical care for their children by their employment status, but were commonly enthusiastic
about and successful in performing the role of ambitious educational manager for their children. They even were too enthusiastic and pushy to have good relationship with their children. In contrast, after migration, most wild geese mothers can better provide emotional and physical care for their children, as intensive mothering ideology dictates, and tend to have closer relationships with their children thanks to their relaxed mothering style. However, unexpectedly, transnational migration makes it more difficult for wild geese mothers to accomplish their educational goals, because they no longer easily gain access to the educational information and resources they took for granted in Korea owing to their structural disadvantages in the host society as racial/ethnic minority women who 1) lack language fluency and cultural knowledge and 2) are isolated from the mainstream social networks.

To overcome such unforeseen challenges and fulfill their intensive mothering ideology and their educational goals, wild geese mothers alternatively resort to social networks they construct within their own ethnic community. Thanks to the emotional and practical supports provided by the Korean immigrant community, wild geese mothers (1) overcome their frustrating experiences of being downgraded from the competent middle-class mothers in Korea into marginalized mothers who suffer from social isolation from the mainstream networks and (2) achieve their educational goals of migration to enhance their children’s English fluency and/or chance of being admitted to prestigious universities. In sum, my study corroborates that the immigrant community of the same ethnicity is one of the most important resources for immigrant women (Espiritu 2008; Kibria 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Menjivar 2006, 2012; Ong and Azores 1994; Zhou 2009).

Nonetheless, my study not only highlights the bright side of the ethnic community, but also sheds light on its darker side. While the immigrant community’s ethnic solidarity can be the
primary resources for immigrants to overcome the racial and class oppressions they encounter in the host society (Espiritu 2008; Kibria 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), I add more nuanced explanations of how the ethnic community’s resources and information are not equally available to all the co-ethnic immigrants. Usually, the newcomers cannot legitimately gain access to their own ethnic community’s resources and information until they have passed its scrutiny of them and are finally accepted as its members. Moreover, my study illustrates that wild geese mothers are subject to even stricter monitoring by their same ethnic community on their body, sexuality, and private lives, because of their marginality in terms of their gender status and family structure (i.e., women living separately from their husbands). Even though wild geese mothers have the agency not to allow their immigrant community’s constant surveillance of them, many choose to maintain their membership within the Korean immigrant community rather than losing its resources, which are critical for their successful mothering and survival in the host society. Wild geese mothers also tend to internalize and reproduce the negative prejudice against themselves through their own othering process rather than challenging it.

In conclusion, comparing wild geese mothers’ mothering practices in Korea (prior to migration) and in North America (after migration), and demonstrating the ambivalent impacts of the Korean immigrant communities on wild geese mothers, this chapter suggests a more nuanced explanation of the complex interplay between middle-class Asian migrant women’s status and empowerment and the immigrant social networks. This theoretical contribution is based on clear descriptions of the advantages and the disadvantages of the Korean immigrant communities. Through their active involvement in the same ethnic immigrant community, wild geese mothers obtain valuable resources and information to overcome unexpected obstacles in the host society and to better perform their expected role of good educational manager for their children.
However, all these resources are accessible only if these women conform to the existing community’s patriarchal family/gender norms and rules.
CHAPTER 7. TRANSNATIONAL FATHERING

Nowadays, the paradigm of fathering is rapidly shifting in the United States. Fathers are now expected to be “equal coparents” (Pleck and Pleck 1997) who perform “responsible fathering” (Coltrane 1996; Doherty et al. 1998). Levine and Pitt (1995: 6) suggest two important characteristics of “responsible fathering.” Fathers should actively share the “continuing emotional and physical care of their children” and the “continuing financial support of their child” with mothers. That is, not only financial but also emotional supports are important components of fathering (Dermott 2008). In addition, responsible fathering is emphasized regardless of whether fathers live with their children or not (Levine and Pitt 1995). Accordingly, family studies have investigated not only resident fathers but also non-resident fathers such as divorced or single fathers. However, transnational fathers who live separately from their children have been largely neglected in the family scholarship, although they are also one type of nonresident fathers (see Nobles 2011 for an exception). Even if they are discussed, transnational fatherhood is often described as atypical, abnormal or fragile (Dermott 2008).

Compared to family studies, migration studies have paid greater attention to the fathering practices of migrant men (Dreby 2006; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004, 2012; Schmalzbauer 2015; Waters 2009), reflecting the increasing significance of fathering in the American society. However, there are still some gaps in this growing literature on transnational fatherhood. First, similar to the family literature, fathers in transnational contexts are often described quite negatively in migration studies (see the critique of Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014). For example, migrant fathers show little concern for their children (Yeoh and Willis 1999); and left-behind fathers neglect their role as fathers (Parreñas 2005b). According to Waters (2009: 66), this
negative portrait of migrant men may be related to the fact that they are rarely the main object of research but “are examined only to the extent that they impact on women’s lives.” However, fathering behavior of transnational men needs to be explored with a more balanced perspective as an independent topic.

Second, while maintaining familial intimacy is highly emphasized in the analysis of transnational mothering (Dreby 2006; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Madianou and Millder 2011; Parreñas 2005a), the emotional role of transnational fathers has not been appropriately addressed. This is partly because of patriarchal gender expectations on parenting (Carling et al. 2012; Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Menjívar 2012; Parreñas 2005a). While transnational mothers are expected to maintain intimate relationship with their children (Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2005a), “fathering from a distance does not reconstitute ‘normative gender behavior’ in the family but instead abides by gender-ideological norms such as male breadwinning” (Parreñas 2008:1057). Accordingly, transnational fathers are often assumed to be “responsible fathers” as long as they serve their breadwinning roles (Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Lee and Koo 2006; Mckay 2007; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004). Indeed, the breadwinning roles are important in that they are estranged from their children remaining in the home country if transnational fathers do not fulfill their economic roles (Dreby 2006). However, I argue that not only economic provision but also emotional support is equally an important part of fathering (Levine and Pitt 1995) even in the transnational context.

Third, transnational fathers’ emotions are also under-researched (see critique of Carling et al. 2012 and Montes 2013). In particular, migrant fathers are often assumed as “independent and non-relational” (Kilkey et al. 2014: 179) ones who are less emotionally influenced or suffer
less from the separation from their own families compared to migrant mothers (Dreby 2006). However, a few studies show that transnational fathers also undergo emotional changes because of their separation from the rest of families (Schmalzbauer 2005, 2015; Worby and Organista 2007). Montes (2013) further argues that migration offers an important opportunity for men to deeply reflect on the emotional relations with their family members and openly express their emotions which was not possible under normal circumstances. Given that “there is intense advocacy to recognize the connectedness of men in general to family-life” (Kilkey et al. 2014: 179), it is necessary to correctly understand the emotions of transnational fathers with regard to their changing relationship with other family members.

Finally, current migration studies have focused primarily on the working-class men who migrate abroad (Dreby 2006; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012; Menjívar 2012; Montes 2013; Nobles 2011; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004, 2012; Schmalzbauer 2008, 2015) and have found little about the fathering practices of middle-class fathers who remain alone in the home country. Furthermore, research on Asian transnational fatherhood is largely missing (see Parreñas 2008 and Waters 2009 for exceptions). Given that class plays a critical role in shaping the ways that people maintain the transnational ties and resources they resort to (Carling et al. 2012; Landolt and Da 2005; Menjívar 2006; Parreñas 2005a; Sassen 2008), the experiences of middle-class Asian fathers should no longer be overlooked.

To fill the gaps mentioned above, my dissertation investigates how middle-class Korean wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering in the transnational context and explores Asian middle-class left-behind men’s fathering experiences with their own accounts. By doing so, I aim to build an overarching theoretical framework that can be used for the analysis of responsible
fathering of non-resident fathers in the transnational context. I also seek to contribute to the scholarships of both family and migration, as I advance the interdisciplinary knowledge of fathering by combining the concept of responsible fathering (Coltrane 1996; Doherty et al. 1998) developed in family studies and the idea of transnational fathering discussed in migration studies. Moreover, by revealing a wide spectrum of transnational fathering across class and national backgrounds, I extend the discussion of responsible fathering from the American context to the global one.

In the following sections, I first explain the reasons why wild geese fathers remain alone in Korea rather than accompanying their family abroad. In the second section, I discuss how Korean wild geese fathers fulfill the two important components of responsible fathering (i.e., economic and emotional roles) in terms of these patterns: 1) remittances and gifts; 2) transnational communication; and 3) face-to-face encounters with children. In the third section, I analyze the changes in the father-children relationships during transnational family separation. In order to show the wide range of wild geese fathers’ parenting practices and the quality of their intergenerational relationship with children, I also consider other factors, such as the children’s age and gender, the father-children relationship prior to migration, fathers’ familiarity with the host society, the type of fathers’ employment, wives’ role as mediators, and the length of separation. The emotions of wild geese fathers are also analyzed in the third section. Then, the last section draws conclusions.

I. Wild Geese Fathers’ Decision to Remain Alone in Korea

For Korean wild geese fathers, it is not an option to send their children alone abroad to a foreign country. They strongly believe that their children still need parental care and guidance,
and thus at least one parent should be present with their children, if not both. When asked the reasons why they remained alone in Korea, most wild geese fathers pointed out their responsibility as the primary economic provider of the households. In contrast to less educated working-class migrant fathers who do not have gainful jobs in their home country and seek less-skilled, low-paid jobs after migration (Pribilsky 2012; Schmalzbauer 2015), Korean wild geese fathers are highly educated professionals with a good salary in Korea. Therefore, if they emigrated, they would have wanted to find the similar type and level of jobs. However, due to the difficulty in transferring their home country qualifications to the host country, it was not so feasible for many wild geese fathers to find good jobs commensurate with their career expectations. In addition, a lack of English fluency was mentioned as one of the critical barriers for Korean wild geese fathers from getting any gainful jobs abroad, similar to Taiwanese left-behind fathers (Chee 2003). Thus, rather than risking their stable income and decent social status, many wild geese fathers, particularly those who were sole earners, decided to remain alone in Korea and continue their role as a reliable economic provider of their family.

It is interesting to explore reasons why it is almost always wild geese mothers who give up their careers (if any) and accompany their children abroad, even if some wild geese couples are dual earners with similar income. This is partly because of the patriarchal ideology that dictates each parent’s roles based on their gender (Carling et al. 2012; Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Menjivar 2012; Parreñas 2005a). In the accounts of both wild geese fathers and mothers interviewed, mothers are often framed as the better nurturer by nature. Likewise, wild geese fathers are often acknowledged as the primary breadwinners of their households; and thus their careers are more valued than their wives’ if both spouses are working. Accordingly, while living together in Korea, even if these men spent much less time with their
children than their wives and did not provide much care for their children, they were not blamed for neglecting their role. Although some wild geese fathers lament their absence in the family life, they still argue that it was because of their busy work schedule and that their pursuit of career and success at the price of their family time was for the sake of their family rather than for their own.

Also, in practice, wild geese mothers before migration spent much more time in taking care of their children than their husbands regardless of their employment statuses or earning capabilities. Wild geese fathers do not question why their equally working wives had to be the primary nurturers of their children. Rather than seeing any good reasons to become good caregivers themselves, they just praise that their wives as good (even ideal) mothers who are the best for their children. Furthermore, most wild geese fathers were cared for by their wives in their everyday life. Consequently, wild geese fathers do not believe that they would be able to give the necessary care to their children if they brought their children abroad without their wives.

In sum, when wild geese couples were to make an emigration decision, wild geese fathers were not even considered the right person to accompany their children abroad and provide them with necessary physical and emotional care. Instead, wild geese fathers were expected to remain alone in Korea and continuously serve their role as a competent economic provider for their family. The Korean wild geese family’s transnational split household arrangement in this manner is justified by and reinforces the traditional gender roles (fathers as breadwinners and mothers as caretakers). While wild geese fathers’ decision to remain alone in their home country is often packaged as their sublime self-sacrifice for the family, it is basically the outcome of the patriarchal gender ideology that imposes unequal shares of caregiving responsibilities on parents.
II. Responsible Fathering during Transnational Separation

This section discusses how Korean wild geese fathers fulfill the two important components of responsible fathering (i.e., economic and emotional roles) in three sub-sections: 1) Sending Remittances and Gifts, 2) Regular Transnational Communication and Virtual Co-Presence, and 3) Regular Face-to-Face Encounters.

1. Sending Remittances and Gifts

Given that the strict transnational parental role division is the foundation of the transnational arrangement of Korean wild geese family, sending remittances is the single most important part of wild geese fathers’ responsible fathering, as shown in previous studies on transnational fathers (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007; Menjivar 2012; Nobles 2011; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004, 2012). One wild geese father named Jaesick even asserts that economic provision is the paramount role of fathers: “I think that the ideal father is the one who makes good money. It is a lie that fathers can do something for their children even if they don’t have any money.”

1-1. Ways of Sending Remittances

Wild geese fathers in my study have profitable professional jobs; and their average annual household income in Korea is about $128,00012 ranging between from $60,000 to

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12 Throughout the chapter, I have changed the currency from Korean “won” to American “dollars” in all accounts.
$400,000. They send remittances to their families abroad about $87,000 a year on average, which accounts for approximately 70% of their annual household income. While the majority of wild geese fathers in my study send between 50% and 100% of their annual household income as remittances to their families abroad, a substantial number of fathers send even more than what they actually earn from their savings, by selling real estate, or by getting loans.

Some fathers send the remittances regularly such as monthly or quarterly. Other fathers put a substantial amount of money in their wives’ (or joint) bank account in the host country so that their wives can use it as needed. When there is not enough money in the bank account, or when their wives ask for more money, these fathers transfer a large amounts of money via online banking system. A few fathers also let their wives use their Korean credit cards for easier financial management, particularly when their family plans to stay abroad only for a short period of time (i.e. less than a year). In addition to regular remittances, wild geese fathers also send money to their family abroad for 1) their family’s initial settlement (e.g. purchasing a house or a car), 2) their children’s education (e.g. college tuition, private SAT preparation services fees, or summer camp fees), and 3) the celebration of important events for their children’s lives such as birthdays and graduations.

To send the maximum amount of remittances to their families abroad (sometimes even exceeding their earning capability), wild geese fathers employ two main strategies. First, most wild geese fathers have their original houses leased and then move to smaller apartments or studios. Some also choose to live with their own parents or parents-in-law. While the primary goal of living with their parents is to save their living expenses, it also serves other goals: Some wild geese fathers frame it as their filial duty for their aged (often sick) parents; other fathers are
cared for by their parents (particularly mothers) in the absence of their wives; and a few fathers have to do so because their wives are concerned about their husbands’ possible infidelity.

Second, many wild geese fathers also substantially reduce their daily living expenses and the amount of money that they spend with their own discretion, like other transnational fathers (Kilkey et al. 2014; Pribilsky 2012). Wild geese fathers generally spend for themselves only about a thousand dollars or less per month. Among them, Sangmin is particularly noteworthy. Although he earns a very high salary as a corporate lawyer of a global company, he lives a very frugal life and says, “I just spend only ten dollars a day. Ten dollars a day! I use it to buy lunch! That’s it!” For him, it is a mandatory decision to survive, because he sends almost all of his income to his family abroad to pay for mortgage, auto lease, and children’s schooling.

Even if wild geese fathers do not encounter any impending economic difficulty like Sangmin, they still try to save an expenditure for themselves as much as they can, because they are not sure when urgent situations may occur to their family abroad. In particular, wild geese fathers significantly decrease their entertainment or leisure expenditure. For example, they do not buy their own clothes. They also change the type of exercises from expensive ones such as playing golf to cheaper ones such as going to a gym, walking or hiking. They also eat their meals within their company’s cafeteria rather than dining out. Some also try to socialize less with their friends, because socializing incurs additional expenditure that can be otherwise used for their family. Inho can be a typical case in this regard. He is a highly-ranked public official who earns a good salary. However, as he sends 90% of his annual income to his family abroad, the remaining 10% is not sufficient for him to make his own living and pay the mortgage bills. Thus, his spending pattern has changed as below:

There are big changes in my spending [after becoming a wild geese father]. For example, if I say I used to meet my friends five times before, I now meet them
only once. I have just minimized socializing. It is because, if I meet my friends, I have to spend at least a hundred dollars for my roundtrip transportation, food and drink. However, if I do not go out, I do not spend even couple of dollars. Next, I don’t buy my clothes. My wife buys them when she visits me here. I think that I can just wear the same clothes that I used to wear, because I don’t need a good appearance to buy favors from others. I also no longer dine out because I am alone. I sometimes go to a [cheap] food court, but very rarely like once or twice. My life is now simplified around the office and I spend minimum for myself.

Interestingly, while the majority of wild geese fathers economize the spending for themselves, some men show different consumption patterns during their wild geese period. Faced with a sudden increase in free time after separation from their family, some men do not know how to manage it. Further, as they struggle with severe loneliness, they try to overcome it by spending more money for themselves. For example, some men develop new hobbies and spend more money for their own leisure (e.g. playing golf, riding an expensive bicycle for health). Others relieve their loneliness by meeting and drinking with people more often than before. A few men further admit that that they have abused alcohol and had extramarital relationships to relieve their loneliness, like other transnational migrant fathers (Dreby 2006; Schmalzbauer 2005). A few wild geese fathers also spend more money to buy their clothes and dine out, as they no longer have wives to take care of them.

1-2. Financial Situations and Prospects

After becoming wild geese fathers, many men feel insecure not only about their current but also about their future financial situation. One third of wild geese fathers in my study are in debt at the time of interview, and the total amount of their liabilities keeps increasing as they take advantage of bank loans or overdrafts to make up their monthly shortage and pay for their children’s (college) tuition. Faced by their imminent economic hardships, fathers are anxious. For example, Sangmin defines his financial situation as a crisis, “It is a little bit of crisis. We are
very tight every month. Too tight!” Jaesick, another wild geese father who earns high income as a vice-president of a company, lamented during the interview: “All the money that we spend now comes from debts…. If I don’t work even just for one day, we will be doomed.” Inho also expressed similar frustration about his tight budget constraint:

I don’t have any surplus. I am always in the absolute shortage [of money]. So, I have to apply for new loans again and again to make up our living expenses and pay for my children’s tuition, which in turn makes me in more debt. As I get more loans and pay interests, I am more concerned about our financial situation.

Some wild geese fathers plan to clear their debts with their severance pay, retirement pension, or insurance after they are retired. Nonetheless, they are not optimistic about their future. When they no longer have debts, they will not have financial security either for their elderly years. This gloomy prospect is major source of these wild geese fathers’ serious concern about their future.

Two thirds of wild geese fathers in my study are not in debt at the time of the interview. Nevertheless, half of them still express a sense of financial insecurity like their indebted counterparts. While sending a huge amount of remittances (sometimes even exceeding their earning capabilities) to their family abroad, some fathers’ total wealth has significantly decreased: They sell their house, sell their stocks and funds, and/or cancel their installment savings account and life insurance before it matures. Of course, there are some fathers whose total wealth has not decreased during their wild geese period. Nonetheless, they also feel insecure because they save much smaller amounts than before. These fathers think that they have not yet accumulated enough retirement savings or funds. While some fathers think of the increased expenditure for their children’s education abroad and the following transnational familial rearrangement as an investment in their children’s future, others deeply agonize whether it is an overinvestment in their children and puts their own future at risk. Nonetheless, to relieve their economic burdens, only a few wild geese fathers discuss their current economic situation and future economic
prospect with their family members abroad and ask them to save money. Dongwook, a
government official whose wife and two teenage daughters live in the United States, says:

I am so concerned about our future. I am not more affluent than others, but I am
still overinvesting in my children’s education beyond my ability. Thus, I tell my
wife, “I am sorry, but I want you to save the remittances as much as possible. We
have only this amount of assets at this moment.” I also explain to my first
daughter about our financial situation and tell her, “Your dad is excessively
spending for your education beyond his ability. Thus, I hope you to go to the
university whose tuition is cheap.” Now, my daughter is applying for universities,
only for universities that give scholarships.

Some fathers plan to postpone their retirement to prepare for their future. Dongwon, a 50 year-
old architect whose wife is also working abroad, is a good example:

We have not yet bought a house and just enjoyed our life by spending all we
earned. But, we are now old and feel very insecure for our future. I don’t know
when I stop working. I don’t know when my wife will be sick. Because we
haven’t prepared for such situations yet, I am very anxious about my future. So, I
have to work only for ourselves at least about three to five years after my son
becomes an adult and goes to the university.

It is important to note that not all wild geese fathers are anxious about their future.

Among those who are not indebted, another half of fathers do not express much concern about
their future even though they send a huge amount for remittances to their families abroad. It is
because these fathers have their own financial safety net for their elderly period. Some fathers
with a rich family background do not find a much difference between the amount that they used
to give to their wives as living expenses in Korea and the amount that they currently send to their
family abroad as remittances. They also tend to maintain their assets including a house,
retirement funds, and savings. In addition, in case of governmental officials and professors,
although they do not have more assets than richer ones, they still feel relatively safe thanks to
their decent pension after retirement. A few fathers also prearranged almost perfect financial
planning for their wild geese period and thus do not have much unexpected expenditure beyond
their budget to maintain their two transnationally split households. Even some fathers expect that their economic situation will be much better when their wives return to Korea and resume their career or start a new business.

1-3. Meaning of Sending Remittances: Economic Roles

Then, what does “sending remittances” mean to Korean wild geese fathers? It plays two important roles: economic and emotional roles. First of all, by sending remittances, wild geese fathers feel that they are fulfilling their economic role as fathers. Similar to other transnational fathers, wild geese fathers often define their economic support of their children as their paramount obligation that fathers must accomplish. In contrast to their working-class counterparts who stop or delay sending remittances to their families for various reasons such as their own economic hardships (Dreby 2006), discipline of their wives (Pribilsky 2004), and discipline of their children (Kilkey et al. 2014), middle-class wild geese fathers in my study do not think that they can stop or delay their remittances to their family abroad for any reason. At worst, these fathers can ask their families abroad to return to Korea.

Behind their strong economic obligation are their expectations of their children’s (and their own) future; and wild geese fathers in my study also show varying expectations of their children’s future careers. About half of them have an ambitious vision of their children. They want their children to be competent and cosmopolitan professionals who can work in the global market beyond the national boundaries. These fathers are also as enthusiastic in supporting their children’s elite education as their wives. The other half of fathers do not expect much from their children. Since their wives are too ambitious regarding their children, these men try not to create
much stress for their children. They just hope their children will live freely and happily doing whatever they like.

Despite such different expectations of children, wild geese fathers in my study commonly emphasize English fluency and college education as the minimum qualifications for their children to become adults who can make their own independent living. Thus, even if they are currently suffering from the tight budget and concerned about their uncertain future, the majority of wild geese fathers neither stop nor reduce their economic support for their children, until their children finish their college education (often including graduate education) and get a good job. Only after that, wild geese fathers believe that 1) they are truly freed from their heavy burden as “the father” and the economic provider of the family, that 2) they no longer have to worry much about their children, and that 3) they finally can plan for and manage their own future and elderly life. An account of Jaesick follows:

I don’t have any security for my old age. In my case, I have to choose either preparing for my elderly life or investing in my child’s education. I cannot do both [because of budget constraint]. I can do this [the life of wild geese father] because I have only one child. You are crazy if you choose to become a wild geese father with two children. In my case, I choose my kid’s education, although I do not expect that he will care for me later. I believe that if I invest in my kid’s education now, his bright life will be possible. Then, I do not have to worry about him. I can just worry about me and my wife.

Some wild geese fathers’ economic support continues even until their adult children marry and purchase a house, particularly if their adult children are sons. Woosung is a representative case of wild geese fathers who send remittances to their adult children for a prolonged period. At the time of the interview, Woosung’s first son (30 years old) was still attending a college abroad, while his second son (27 years old) just started working after having returned to Korea. For his sons, Woosung not only paid their tuition but also supported their living expenses. He justified his somewhat prolonged economic support for his adult sons, “I believe that my sons will be
successful, and until then, I will do my role as a father. I will support them at least until they finish their college education. After that, they can fight their own battles.” According to another wild geese father named Hojun, he said to his 13-year-old daughter abroad, “I don’t have much inheritance to you. However, I will support you while you are studying. I will pay your tuition. I will also help you when you marry. Don’t expect more than that from me! I will just help you until you graduate and get a job.” While these two wild geese fathers calmly talk as though they are providing their children with the minimum economic support for a limited time, it is clear that these fathers have offered (and will continue to offer) a huge economic support to their children for a long period, in the strong belief that their children are not yet competent enough to make their own independent living.

It is known that Asian/Asian American parents heavily invest in their children’s education as a family strategy to pursue the whole family’s upward social mobility, prestige and stable future (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Lee and Koo 2006; Zhou and Kim 2006) with a strong Confucian belief that children will care for their elderly parents (Kibria 1993). And thus, children’s educational success is often equated with their parents’ success (Choi 2006; Yi 2013). Wild geese fathers in my study share a similar view with their Asian/Asian American counterparts regarding the positive impacts of education on the younger generation’s upward social mobility. Therefore, they eagerly offer the economic support to their children until they finish their education and get a good job.

However, wild geese fathers in my study present a different perspective from their Asian/Asian American counterparts on their children’s support of parents in return. That is, the majority of wild geese fathers do not think that their stable elderly life is guaranteed by their children’s success. Nor do they expect that their children will care for them when they are
elderly. Instead, wild geese fathers believe that they have to live their elderly lives for themselves rather than relying on their adult children. Hongki, a wild geese father who still economically supports his son (25 years old) studying at a doctoral program in NYC, says:

> When your children are fully grown up, they will anyway leave the nest. It is good enough for me that my son will make his own family and live well. How can parents rely on their children? How? I never expect my son will return what I have invested in him. My last obligation as the father is downsizing my assets here [in Korea] and buying my son a house there [in the United States]. Then, I will be finally able to enjoy my own life. How other wishes do I have [from my son]? That is not the father of my generation.

Wild geese fathers’ such low expectations of the return on their investment in their children, despite their considerable economic support for a long time, may reflect the Korean society’s rapidly changing attitudes towards the filial obligation of adult children. According to the report of the Korea Development Institute (2015), the percentage of Koreans who think that the family (adult children) should look after their parents has plummeted from 89.9% in 1998 to 31.7% in 2014, while those who think that parents should care for themselves has doubled from 8.1% in 1998 to 16.6% in 2014. In addition, class may matter. Wild geese fathers, as middle-class men with successful careers, feel hesitant or even embarrassed to admit that they expect any economic reliance on their children. To their eyes, their children are not the ones whom they can rely on later but “emotionally priceless” (Zelizer 1994: 209) ones whom they have to take care of forever, which is well demonstrated by Inho’s comment:

> My children will make their own living, and I will make my own living. Eventually, I will be able to live based on my pension. That is my safety net for my old age. I console myself by the fact that I will not ask my children for money in my later years.

Accordingly, even though many wild geese fathers are seriously concerned about financial insecurity in their elderly years, none of them say that they expect any economic support from their children. For example, Hojun says:
Basically, I think that my daughter already repaid to me by doing cute things when she was younger. I never expect anything from her. If she gives me money, I do not want to use it. I rather would like to return it to her by saving it.

By framing their children as ones whom they have to take care of forever rather than ones whom they can eventually rely on in their elderly years, wild geese fathers can maintain their masculinity and status as “the father” and “the breadwinner” of their transnational households.

1-4. Meaning of Sending Remittances: Emotional Roles

So far, I have discussed how Korean wild geese fathers fulfill their breadwinner role by sending remittances to their family abroad. However, this is only a half of the story. Let me now discuss the equally important but less explored aspect of transnational fathers’ economic provision: the emotional role. By sending remittances, wild geese fathers not only try to express their love, care, and attention to their family (Horst 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007), but also feel achievement that they are involved in the care of their children from a distance (Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Parreñas 2005a; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012). For example, Seungwon, a 53-year-old businessman, used to be a family man who shared a large portion of daily care of his children as well as housework. For his children, he attended school conferences, did his children’s school projects together, gave his children a ride to their extracurricular activities (e.g. tennis and youth orchestra), and watched their performances. In terms of housework, he vacuumed and washed the dishes on weekends, mowed the lawn when necessary, and fixed something broken. However, since he became a wild geese father, he has not been able to perform such tasks any more. Thus, he tries to make up his absence by sending 100% of his salary as remittances to his family abroad, while he sustains his life in Korea on a small amount of activity fee from his company. He also bought a new car for his wife, so that she
would not have to deal with car maintenance issues. He also tells his wife to call a repairman whenever something is broken rather than trying to fix it by herself. By doing so, Seungwon feels that he still shares some caring work and household labor with his wife across the ocean.

Here, it is important to note that wild geese fathers always send remittances directly to their wives, not to their children, and that most fathers do not talk about their financial hardships to their children. Money is a topic discussed only between wild geese couples. Accordingly, even though wild geese fathers live very frugally and suffer from the high burden and stress of sending a huge amount of remittances abroad, their children often do not even recognize their fathers’ economic sacrifices and emotional struggles. Fathers believed that their economic support is just invisible or taken for granted to their children’s eyes. Inho’s bitter description well shows how wild geese children are ignorant of the reality of their fathers:

They [children] mostly do not recognize it [my sacrifice]. They admit only one third of what I expected. When I sometimes tell them how [frugally] I live here, then they respond like this, “Who asked you to live like that? Spend some money for yourself!” They don’t understand my mind…So, I don’t talk about it anymore.

Though wild geese fathers’ frugal life style and strong obligation of sending as much remittances as possible are their ways of loving and caring for their children, their children often do not think the same way. Such intergenerational gaps are not unique among Korean wild geese families (see Schmalzbauer 2008; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012 for other cases).

In order to bridge the emotional distance between fathers and children, their wives’ role as a mediator is critical (Doherty et al. 1998; Dreby 2010; Parreñas 2005a; Pribilsky 2004). Many wild geese mothers in my study remind their children of father’s sacrifice and love for the family. Mothers tell their children how much their father works hard, saves money, and endures economic and emotional hardships. Mothers also ask their children to express their gratitude to their father for his sacrifice and supports. Through their mothers’ mediation, children can
appreciate their father’s supports and suffering, which they would have ignored or taken for
granted otherwise. Wild geese mothers also serve as a messenger and convey their children’s
feelings to fathers, if children are so young or adolescents that they are unable or reluctant to
express their thankfulness. When wild geese fathers think that their family appreciate their
economic supports, they also feel that their hardships and sacrifices are worthy and rewarded,
similar to Honduran transnational fathers (Schmalzbauer 2008). In sum, through mothers’
mediation, remittances can finally play emotional roles in strengthening the bond between wild
geese fathers and their children across the ocean and letting the fathers feel rewarded.

1-5. Sending/Giving Gifts

Compared to remittances whose emotional impact is often managed by the intervention
of wild geese mothers, gifts tend to more directly maintain the transnational intimate relationship
between fathers and children (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012;
Pribilsky 2004; 2012). When wild geese fathers visit their family abroad, they never go there
with empty hands. They often bring lots of gifts for their children. One wild geese father named
Sangmin even claims that “I buy so much gifts. So, whenever I visit my family, I go broke.”

Wild geese fathers feel great happiness and fulfillment when they shop what their
children have asked for and bring (or send) these gifts to their family abroad, because such
behaviors demonstrate that they are still communicating with their children and doing some
important jobs as fathers even though they are not living together. For example, Minho, a 50-
year-old businessman, monthly sends to his family abroad a gift box, filled with various kinds of
snacks such as Korean ramen and crackers. Although it is not an expensive gift at all, buying and
sending various snacks that his two sons like, Minho relives his longing for his children and
expresses his love to them. Another wild geese father named Seungwon greatly enjoys shopping for his children abroad. Because he is very busy during weekdays as a highly ranked businessman, Seungwon often goes shopping on weekends. In the store, using his smartphone, Seungwon directly shows to his children abroad the several items that he considers to buy, asks which one they like the most, and then buys the ones his children choose. By doing so, Seungwon feels great joy and fulfillment as he keeps communicating and interacting with his children.

Given that existing literature has often analyzed the meaning of gifts based on the experiences of the working-class transnational parents, my research expands its scope by exploring the meanings of gifts for middle-class transnational fathers. For many working class transnational parents, shopping and sending special gifts—as well as remittances—to their family is often the only way of enacting their role as parents from a distance, because they cannot easily visit their family or spend time together due to their tight budget and undocumented legal status (Dreby 2006; Parreñas 2005a; Pribilsky 2004, 2012). Furthermore, shopping and sending special gifts (particularly merchandise made in the USA) to their families can be a critical, alternative way for working-class transnational fathers to maintain their masculinity and status within their family and home communities as “successful migrants, committed husbands and attentive fathers” (Pribilsky 2012: 336), as they cannot easily find an appropriate channel to satisfy their desire for social status in their host country.

In contrast, for the middle-class Korean wild geese fathers who can regularly visit their family and spend time together thanks to their stronger economic power and legitimate legal status, gifts are primarily a way of expressing paternal love, care, and attention to their children. They also keep maintaining their stable, well-paid professional jobs in Korea, and their family
can easily purchase so-called American stuffs they like or need with remittances sent by fathers. Accordingly, wild geese fathers do not think their domestic and social status should be (or can be) strengthened by their actions of giving American products to their families. Instead, they often send Korean products to their family abroad such as clothes, Korean bestsellers, K-pop (Korean pop music), Korean food or snacks, Korean cosmetics, and toys, while electronic products like iPads, smart phones, and game consoles are also popular gifts. For wild geese children, gifts serve as strong evidence that their fathers are closely paying attention to what they like and need across the ocean.

In sum, although gifts is an important way for all transnational fathers across their class positions to enact their responsible fathering from the distance, there are clear differences between working-class and middle-class fathers in ways of using their gifts as well as its implication.

2. Regular Transnational Communication and Virtual Co-Presence

In the previous section, I have discussed the functions of remittances and gifts, through which Korean wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering from far away, financially supporting their children and maintaining their emotional intimacy with children during separation. In this section, I discuss how wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering by regularly communicating with their children. It is known that regular communication is critical to maintain intimate relationships between migrant parents and children (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Kilkey et al. 2014; Madianou and Miller 2011; Parreñas 2008; Ryan et al. 2009; Schmalzbauer 2008, 2015; Smith et al. 2004; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012). I
also highlight how some wild geese fathers further strengthen their emotional bond with children through their virtual co-presence in their children’s everyday lives.

To correctly understand how wild geese fathers communicate with their children abroad, it is critical to investigate how they utilize advanced communication technologies. Wild geese fathers in my study do not use traditional hand-written letters, landline phones or calling cards to communicate with their families abroad, though they are still commonly used by the working-class transnational families (Horst 2006; Madianou and Miller 2011; Orellana et al. 2001; Parreñas 2005a; Pribilsky 2004; Wilding 2006). Furthermore, old-fashioned 2G mobile phones—through which people can just make phone calls and send text messages— are rarely used by wild geese fathers in my study, although they are praised as effective transnational communication methods that allow intensive parenting of migrant parents from a distance (Horst 2006; Madianou and Miller 2011; McKay 2007; Şenyürekli and Detznera 2009).

Alternatively, wild geese fathers in my study primarily rely on the high technology-based platforms such as smartphones and computers to communicate with their children abroad. As middle-class professionals in South Korea, which is one of the leading IT countries with the fastest internet connections in the world (Akamai 2015), Korean wild geese fathers not only have ready access to high-speed internet but also more familiar with such advanced communication technologies in their everyday lives than their working-class counterparts in developing countries who lack “the knowledge, experience or resources to use such technology” (Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012:353).

The following sub-sections discuss specific modes of transnational communication methods that wild geese fathers use in order to perform their responsible fathering
transnationally: voice calls, video calls, mobile text messages, social networking sites (SNS) and emails.

2-1. Voice Calls, Video Calls, Mobile Text Messages

The most preferred medium of transnational communication among wild geese fathers in my study is “Kakao Talk,” which is a very popular freeware application for smartphones among Koreans. Using Kakao Talk, wild geese fathers instantaneously make voice calls and video calls, exchange instant text messages, and share photos and video clips with their children abroad for free. This effective transnational communication is possible because both wild geese fathers and their children have smartphones and the internet access. While smartphones may be luxuries for working-class transnational families due to their expensive price, they are already essentials for Korean wild geese families, given that 82.5% of Koreans use smartphones as of 2015 (Korea Internet & Security Agency 2015). Furthermore, while it is often the working-class migrant parents who initiate transnational communication because their children in home countries do not have financial and technological means (Carling et al. 2012; Madianou and Miller 2011; Parreñas 2005a; Pribilsky 2004), middle-class wild geese families in my study do not have such intergenerational asymmetry in communication, because both wild geese fathers in Korea and their children abroad have smartphones and can contact each other whenever they want to. In addition, while the working-class migrant parents spend a great portion of their income for their transnational communication with children (Madianou and Miller 2011), wild geese fathers in my study surprisingly do not spend much money for international communication other than what they pay for smartphones and Wi-Fi network. Again, this is not surprising given that 98.8%

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13 Smartphone users in Korea include 79.6% among the 6-19 years old, 99.9% among the 20s, 99.7% among the 30s, 98.6% among the 40s, and 89.9% among the 50s (see Korea Internet & Security Agency 2015).
181 of households in Korea have access to internet as of 2015 (Korea Internet & Security Agency 2015). In this respect, my study corroborates how class (Carling et al. 2012) and country’s internet infrastructure play a central role in shaping the intergenerational communication patterns of transnational families.

To make international voice calls, wild geese fathers can additionally use landline phones, mobile phones (including smartphones) and internet phones. However, these are less preferred ways than Kakao Talk, because voice calls through Kakao Talk are free whereas international calls through landline phones and mobile phones are relatively expensive. Wild geese fathers infrequently use these expensive alternatives only when the internet connection is unstable and thus the quality of voice call through Kakao Talk is not satisfactory. Some wild geese fathers also use internet phones to make free international calls with their children abroad. After migration, most wild geese families in my study do not have traditional landline home phones in their destination countries. Instead, some of them bring an internet phone whose service provider is a Korean telecommunication company. As long as both wild geese fathers in Korea and their family abroad use the internet phones from the same service provider and have the internet access, they can make free voice calls without limit. Thus, internet phones can be a good alternative to Kakao Talk voice calls. However, internet phones have disadvantages compared to Kakao Talk (and mobile phones) in terms of mobility, because both wild geese fathers and their children must be at their respective homes concurrently. Thus, internet phones are less frequently used than by Kakao Talk or (mobile phones).

To have face-to-face video calls, wild geese fathers use Skype and Facetime, as well as Kakao Talk. Again, these are less frequently used than Kakao Talk. First, Skype is an application for computer or laptop, which is less mobile than smartphone. In addition, when Wi-Fi is not
available, Kakao Talk still works through the 3G or LTE network of the smartphone, whereas Skype is disconnected. Thus, Skype has limitation similar to internet phones and is less popular than Kakao Talk. Second, Facetime enables wild geese family members to have free transnational video calls even when one side does not have the internet access, just like Kakao Talk. However, there is one constraint: Facetime requires both wild geese fathers and their children to be Apple iPhone or iPad users. Because most wild geese families in my study use Korean brand smartphones (e.g. Samsung or LG), Apple’s Facetime is not very common.

Many wild geese fathers also exchange free one-to-one instant text messages with their children abroad using Kakao Talk. Some men also open a family chatting room in Kakao Talk, inviting both their children and wives. While wild geese family members cannot see or hear one another, they still like this method for its ease. They can exchange insignificant daily messages without much burden, because they can just send text messages to one another without having to make sure that the other side is ready for conversation (e.g. at the office or at school). Wild geese fathers also like the fact that they can organize their thoughts more clearly and logically in their text messages than talking on the phone. This is particularly useful when wild geese fathers want to give some useful instructions to their children, or when they want to talk with their children calmly in disputes. For some fathers who are reserved, it is easier to express their love and affection to their children through text messages rather than voice calls or video calls. Also, text messages are useful for memory so that wild geese families use text messages to arrange to meet each other through voice calls or video calls at a particular time.
2-2. Emotional Connections through Voice Calls, Video Calls, and Text Messages

Using voice calls, video calls, and instant text messages, wild geese fathers try to maintain their frequent and regular communication with children abroad. For example, Inho has a voice talk with his children at least once a day, in addition to several text messages. Suman and Dongkun finish their day by having a short video call with their children every night. For these fathers, their action of making frequent and regular communication with their children is more important than the content shared, because the ritual by itself clearly demonstrates to all family members that fathers are still emotionally connected with their children and maintain a sense of coherence as a family despite a distance (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Madianou and Miller 2011).

By instantaneously interacting with their children abroad through voice calls, video calls, and text messages, wild geese fathers also provide the emotional care of children from a distance and fulfill an important component of responsible fathering (Dermott 2008; Levine and Pitt 1995). For example, Jihwan, a 48-year-old public official, always says, “I love you” whenever he has voice calls with his children abroad. He also gives educational and religious advice to his children, whenever necessary. When his adolescent daughter sent a picture of the first paycheck from her part-time job to him via Kakao Talk, Jihwan expressed how deeply he was grateful for her small but meaningful financial support to the family economy. Minho, a 50-year-old businessman who has two sons, tries to relieve their stress from studying abroad by talking with them about the computer games they both like. He also keeps up with them on how much his sons have improved their swimming skills through the video clips sent by his wife. Whenever he sees some improvement from their performance, he praises his sons highly. Dongwook, a 50-year-old government official, well describes how technological development has helped him
maintain his intergenerational intimacy during his two phases of wild geese lives. When he first became a wild geese father, he mostly relied on international phone calls to communicate with his family abroad. Back then, he could not make a phone call frequently due to its cost. Even when he made a phone call, it had to be a short conversation just to check something important. However, until his second time, there was huge technological development that significantly lowered the cost of transnational communication. Thus, he now communicates much more often with his daughters than before without being concerned about the costs of transnational communication. Now, Dongwook discusses many diverse topics with his daughters via Kakao Talk from daily issues such as a playdate or sleepover to academic issues like schoolwork, grade and exams to social issues like the LGBT rights. He also daily exchanges pictures with his daughters and more quickly catches his daughters’ daily mood, which greatly helps him perform his role as a counselor or a mediator for his first teenage daughter from a distance:

I call my [first] daughter very often. I ask her in Kakao Talk. While talking with her, I can figure out her mood of the day based on her voice from the phone call or from the content of her Kakao Talk [message or profile]. One day, she was very depressed, because she had a quarrel with her mom. If that happens, I try to placate her right away. Although I cannot physically be there to be with her, I let her know that I am on her side and I deeply understand her position. I encourage her and advise her to well resolve the disputes [with her mom]. Then, after one night, she sends me a good text message. I think that I am proactively intervene in my children’s issues.

Like Dongwook, many wild geese fathers in my study define themselves as friendly fathers who are close to their children despite the distance. They also serve as counselors for their children and mediators between mothers and children. They further want to serve as role models for their children abroad. Interestingly, however, none of the wild geese fathers in my study include the role of strict disciplinarians in their definition of ideal fatherhood, in contrast to their Filipino (Parreñas 2008) and Mexican (Schmalzbauer 2015) counterparts. Wild geese fathers generally
put much more emphasis on maintaining friendship with their children rather than asserting the authority as their father. Some men want to comfort their children, because their wives are strict and disciplinary enough. Other fathers are afraid to be estranged from their children if they take the role of strict disciplinarians during the separation. Thus, when there is a dispute between their wives and children, wild geese fathers try to arbitrate between them rather than unilaterally scolding their children.

Among the wild geese fathers who maintain strong emotional connections with their children abroad through frequent and regular communication, Seungwon, a 53-year-old businessman, is exceptional given his virtual co-presence in his children’s everyday lives. He provides routine care work and performs the micro-management of his children’s everyday lives as if he is living together with his children in the United States, to the degree to which Filipina migrant mothers perform intensive mothering from a distance (Madianou and miller 2011). He turns on Skype 24 hours a day and let his life in Korea deeply mingled with his family’s life abroad:

I install the Skype right in front of my bed…I act considering what I would have done if I were in America. I try to do whatever that I can do [for my children] from here. I wake up my children at 6AM in the Eastern Time, which is 8PM in the Korean time. Then, my children wake up, wash their faces, and go to school at 6:30AM. When my wife gives them a ride and comes back home, it is 9PM in Korea. Since then, she and I have conversation through the midnight [in the Korean time]. Then, I go to bed. When I wake up about 6AM here [Korea, it is 4pm [in the United States] when my wife returns home with our children picked up from school. Then, I ask my children how their school was and what they have done today. I also check their homework and help them do it. When my wife tells me she has gotten a package or a bill today, I make a phone call to check it.

2-3. Emotional Connections through Social Networking Sites (SNS)

In addition to voice calls, video calls, and instant text messages that I have described so far, some wild geese fathers further communicate with their children abroad by constructing their
own online community through social networking sites (SNS) such as “Facebook,” “Band,” “Kakao Story,” or “Daum Cafe” (the latter three are Korean social media). Transnational communication through online family community may be less instantaneous compared to voice calls, video calls, and text messages. However, it also gives wild geese fathers a valuable means to share their everyday lives, perform their role as responsible fathers from a distance, and build and strengthen emotional bond with their children. For instance, using an online family community, some wild fathers serve the role of a private tutor for their children abroad. Kanghyuk, a 51-year-old teacher who has been separated from his two daughters for five years, provides a detailed description of how he has helped their homework through online community:

When they first left, we made a Daum Cafe together and four of us [Kanghyuk, his wife and two daughters] became its members […] In the beginning, my daughters’ English was not so good. So, whenever they had a homework assignment like writing an essay, I, an English teacher [in Korea], helped them a lot. If they posted their English essays on the [online] cafe, I downloaded it, checked their grammars, corrected some errors, and then posted the edited ones. Particularly, for the first two years, I helped their homework a lot, as they continuously asked for my help […] While reviewing their homework, I could tell what they were learning. It was really fun to me. Then, as their [English] level went up, they asked fewer questions to me.

According to Kanghyuk, their online community is no longer a medium through which he offers an academic consultation to his daughters. He admits that English proficiency of his two daughters, who are now college students in Canada, has exceeded his. He expresses mixed feelings on this. On the one hand, he is so proud of his children. On the other hand, he feels a little sad that he no longer is his daughters’ teacher who used to know much more than them. Now, this once online private academy has been transformed into a virtual locus of family socializing where all his family members including relatives and extended family interact and share their milestones.
Another wild geese father named Hojun effectively maintains his transnational intimacy with his daughter and has adjusted his fathering practices based on his transnational communication. He has a video chat with his daughter every night using Skype. During Skype, they not only share their everyday lives but also talk behind her mother’s back (Hojun’s wife) when his daughter has some complaints about her. He also actively interacts with his daughter through “Band,” one of the popular social media in Korea. In Band, if he writes his thoughts and feelings on its online bulletin board, his daughter and wife add their comments on it right away. When he sees a beautiful scenery or has some delicious Korean food, Hojun takes a picture and uploads it to share his joyful moments with his family. When he cannot attend his daughter’s milestone events such as birthday, graduation, contest or performance, his wife video-records and uploads it to the family Band to share it with Hojun in Korea. For Hojun, his family Band is like a *diary* that all his family members record their daily lives and instantaneously share together. He also frequently visits his daughter’s Facebook page. By doing so, he keeps up with her on her recent interests and is able to buy some surprise gifts that she likes. In addition, by reading his daughter’s thoughtful writings posted on her Facebook, Hojun also learns how much his daughter has grown to a mature adolescent girl during their separation, and accordingly he adjusts his fathering practices as well as gifts to match her physical and mental growth. Through his active transnational communication with his daughter, Hojun has successfully performed a role of good father and reinforced the transnational emotional bond with her. Hence, he is certain that he is still “very close” to his daughter despite the four years of transnational separation.

Similarly, a wild geese mother named Yuna confidently states, “We don’t feel that we are separated, even if we are physically separated,” as she and her children constantly communicate with her husband through diverse transnational communication mediums. In short, building an
online family community is a very effective way of strengthening the intergenerational family ties. However, I have found only a few wild geese families actively use this, because it needs a lot of efforts and time to maintain such virtual family community.

Finally, small numbers of wild geese fathers also use emails to communicate with their children abroad. However, emails are not so frequently used, owing to the availability of other instant communication methods such as voice calls, video calls, and text messages. To upload pictures and videos, wild geese fathers prefer using SNS to emails for easier sharing with family members. While emails have been welcomed by the working-class transnational families as a cheaper means than phone calls (Orellana et al. 2001; Wilding 2006), wild geese fathers do not find many merits of using emails as they can easily exchange free instant voice calls, video calls, and text messages with their family members abroad through smartphones.

2-4. Summary

Thus far, I have discussed how Korean wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering and fulfill their emotional roles through frequent and regular transnational communication with their children abroad. Their close and intimate relationships with children abroad is achieved because these wild geese fathers effectively utilize various high technology-based communication mediums including voice calls, video calls, mobile text messages, social network services and emails. While the importance of technology in shaping the transnational family relationships is acknowledged by the literature (Horst 2006; McKay 2007; Wilding 2006), the specific usages of each medium by transnational families, particularly by the middle-class ones, has rarely been discussed (see Orellana et al. 2001; Parreñas 2005a for a comparison of transnational communication between working-class and middle-class transnational families).
While previous studies have described how the working-class transnational families’ communication is restricted by their lack of resources (Carling et al. 2012; Mahler 1999; Sassen 2008; Schmalzbauer 2004, 2008; Şenyürekli and Detznera 2009), my study explores the fathering experiences of middle-class Korean wild geese families and contributes to better understanding the role of class and technology in shaping intergenerational intimacy in transnational families.

Nevertheless, I also would like to point out that technology does not “automatically guarantee a smooth flow of transnational communication” as Parreñas (2005a: 329) has already argued. Even though all wild geese fathers in my study have a similar level of wealth and technological resources, they still achieve varying outcomes in terms of their transnational communication and intimacy. On one extreme, there are wild geese fathers who are virtually co-present in their children’s everyday lives and strengthen their emotional ties with children like Seungwon and Hojun. On the other extreme, there are some fathers who communicate mostly with their wives, and hardly with their children. For example, according to a 49-year-old journalist named Kangsan, he was a workaholic when he lived together with his family in Korea. He also enjoyed socializing with his colleagues rather than having family time. Thus, he went to work very early in the morning and came back home around midnight after having drink with his friends. Because he was not so interested in communicating with his children, he was not so close to his children prior to the transnational family separation. After becoming a wild geese family, neither his communication pattern nor his intergenerational relationship with his children abroad has changed much:

I haven’t done much fathering [for my children] […] I sometimes call them to hear their voices. However, because I don’t know specifically what they are doing there, I just ask such insignificant questions. Then, they also give me such banal
answers. After having a very short conversation composed with just two or three sentences, then they toss a phone to their mom.

As Kangsan’s case shows, technology is not a magic that suddenly improves intergenerational intimacy out of nothing. Rather, their transnational emotional ties are positively shaped by the father-children’s relationship prior to family separation and their (particularly fathers’) continued endeavor to utilize communication technologies. Usually, wild geese fathers who were close to their children prior to separation tend to make more efforts to communicate with their children and thus maintain more intimate intergenerational relationships after separation. In sum, technology is meaningful as long as transnational family members are willing to communicate with one another and avail themselves of the communication technologies to maintain their familial intimacy despite a distance.

3. Regular Face-to-Face Encounters

This section highlights the importance of regular face-to-face encounters, despite the advantages of advanced communication technologies. Through frequent and regular transnational communication, many wild geese fathers in my study have maintained emotional connections with their children while overcoming a distance. Nonetheless, there are clearly information gaps among wild geese family members during their separation, because they no longer easily “share all the nonsignificant daily events or thoughts in life” (Şenyürekli and Detznera 2009: 816). Wild geese fathers tend to hide their current economic hardships and concerns about the future from their children. Wild geese mothers tend to show only their adolescent children’s positive aspects to their husbands in order not to worry or disappoint them. Because of censorship practiced by both sides of wild geese families (Şenyürekli and Detznera 2009; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012), even the constant transnational communication does not
necessarily allow wild geese family members to have a good understanding of one another during separation (Madianou and Miller 2011; Schmalzbauer 2008). Some wild geese fathers confess how greatly they were surprised by their children’s physical and emotional changes when they actually met their children in person. Furthermore, when there are some conflicts or misunderstandings with family members abroad, many wild geese fathers find it more difficult to resolve such issues than when they lived together, because one side across the ocean can easily refuse the transnational communication. Even Hojun, a wild geese father who maintains a very active communication with his family abroad points out such a weakness of transnational communication:

Although I always communicate with my family, […] when we have some troubles, then they can last for two or three days [longer than usual from Hojun’s standard], because one side refuses to communicate with another. […] Though we eventually have a conversation, it is possible that our communication completely stops. […] When we lived together in Korea, we had to see each other no matter what. But, we can now just live without any communication [unless we make an effort to communicate]. This is what I am concerned about.

Given this, while frequent and regular transnational communication is very helpful to maintain transnational family intimacy, it is still not enough particularly when the separation is lengthier. I find that the transnational father-children emotional ties are further reinforced (Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012) when wild geese fathers’ virtual co-presence is accompanied by their “moments of physical co-presence” (Urry 2003: 156). Therefore, in this section, I discuss how Korean wild geese fathers maintain and strengthen their transnational intimate relationship with their children abroad through their frequent and regular face-to-face encounters.
3-1. Overseas Flights: Frequency, Length and Cost

It is known that many Latino working-class transnational parents cannot frequently visit their families in their home countries because of their tight budget and undocumented immigrant status (Menjívar 2006; Pribilsky 2004; 2012; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012; For exceptions, see Mexican guest worker fathers in Schmalzbauer 2015). However, middle-class Korean wild geese fathers in my study not only can meet their families abroad more often but also spend a longer time than their working-class counterparts. Out of 33 wild geese fathers interviewed, four wild geese fathers with their families in one of the close Asian countries such as Singapore, Philippines and China meet their family about eight to twelve times per year. And they spend about three to seven days with their family abroad each visit. The other 29 wild geese fathers, whose families are residing in one of the far countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia, still meet their families on average 2.5 times a year. Specifically, among these 29 fathers, four of them meet their family less than once a year; seven fathers meet their family once a year; fifteen fathers meet their family two to four times a year; and three fathers meet their family five to seven times a year despite the long distance.

It is usually wild geese fathers who fly to the other side. It is a strategic decision to save travel costs, buying just one flight ticket for a father rather than buying two or three flight tickets for mother and children, the whole family residing abroad. Nonetheless, most wild geese fathers still spend a lot of money for the airfare. Men with their family in the closer Asian countries pay cheaper airfare but visit them more often, whereas men with their family in countries that are farther away visit them less often but pay much more per visit. Since many wild geese fathers have not expected that they would spend such a huge amount of money for their international transportation, they often describe this as throwing the money away in the air. Nonetheless, they
still regard it as the requisite costs that they have to pay to maintain their intimate relationship with their family abroad.

Wild geese fathers in my study present an interesting variation in their number of visits and the length of time spent together with their families abroad across their type of employment (Doherty et al. 1998). On the one extreme, there are some wild geese fathers who spend only about a week or two with their family each year. Particularly, in case of wild geese fathers who are businessmen or public officials, it is not so easy for them to have a long vacation approved by their employers. This is partly because of their busy work schedule. Yet, it is more importantly because of the hierarchical organizational culture in Korea, where supervisors do not like to allow their subordinates to have a long break (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute 2012).\textsuperscript{14} Thus, in order to stay longer with their families abroad, these wild geese fathers often combine their vacation time with one of the two biggest Korean holidays (i.e., the Korean New Year’s Day or the Korean Thanksgiving Day). Or, they drop by to see their family abroad during their international business trips. On the other extreme, there are some fathers who are professors, teachers, and business owners (e.g. doctors or architects). These fathers not only visit their families abroad more often than other wild geese fathers but also stay longer during each visit. During the regular semesters, professors and teachers can stay only about a week or two with their families abroad on each visit, like other wild geese fathers. However, during the summer or winter breaks, they spend a longer time with their family abroad for about a month or two per visit. Some professors also sporadically live together with their family abroad for about a year or two on a sabbatical.

\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, in the Expedia’s “Vacation Deprivation Study” (2015), Koreans are even designated as “the world’s most vacation deprived workers,” as they spend only six days off out of the given 15 days of the annual paid leaves. Given this, it is not surprising that wild geese fathers in my study stay only a week or two when they visit their family abroad.
On average, wild geese fathers in my study stay in the host countries with their family on average 40 days per year, while professors, teachers and business owners stay abroad with their families longer than two months per year. In addition, while it is much less frequent than their fathers’ visits, wild geese children (and their mothers) also go back to Korea to meet their fathers in Korea (e.g. once a year). Then, they usually stay in Korea for about one to three months during their summer breaks; considering the travel cost, mother and children tend to visit Korea during the summer break when they can stay longer in Korea. Accordingly, most fathers interviewed stay together with their family at least two weeks per year; and about one fourth of wild geese fathers in my study even stay together with their family about three to five months per year, combining both their visits abroad and their family’s visits to Korea.

3-2. Quality of the Visits

As much as it is difficult and costly to visit their children, wild geese fathers strive to spend the precious time with their children effectively. Some wild geese fathers are even actively involved in their children’s school activities during their visits. They attend educational sessions for parents provided by children’s school, PTA meetings and conferences. Some also arrange one-to-one consultation with their children’s teacher whenever they visit abroad to catch up with their children. Others become a member of private gatherings of local parents and socialize with them whenever they visit their family abroad. A couple of fathers also volunteer to serve as a room parent or provide a guest lecture for their children’s class during their short visits.

However, it is important to note that these exceptional wild geese fathers not only have much higher educational zeal than other fathers but also have experiences of living in the host countries with their family. Thus, they know the people as well as the system in the host
countries. In contrast, the majority of wild geese fathers in my study do not actively engage in their children’s schools during their visits. They are neither confident in their English nor familiar with the education system of the host countries. Therefore, these wild geese fathers tend to entrust their children’s education and school-related activities to their wives.

Regardless of their active involvement in their children’s schools, many wild geese fathers still try to perform their role as responsible fathers not only by spending money but also providing emotional and physical care of their children during their visits to their family abroad. With regard to economic provision, wild geese fathers often spend a lot of money in dining out with their children, buying gifts that their children have asked for, and traveling with their children. In particular, a short domestic trip with their family is a must for most wild geese fathers even if their visits are as short as only a week.

Wild geese fathers also provide emotional and physical care of their children during their encounters. Most fathers give rides to their children while they stay with their family abroad. They express their affection to their children by directly saying “I love you” in person or by hugging their children when they are together. Many fathers also try to have physical activities together with their children during their encounters such as playing basketball, soccer, tennis, bowling, boxing or golf, biking, or going out for a walk. A few fathers even feel happy when they cook for their children. Meanwhile, wild geese fathers also consciously try to have conversations with their children. Particularly, if wild geese fathers cultivate the same hobbies or cultural interests with their children such as music, dramas, movies or books, it is much easier for them to have conversations with their children without feeling much discomfort or awkward despite the long period of separation. Kanghyuk, a 51-year-old wild geese father, is a representative case. He intentionally listens to the Korean pop music that his two adolescent
daughters like. He also brings Korean bestsellers when he visits his family abroad in order to provide some common topics to discuss with his daughters. During his stay in Canada, he also watches the popular Korean music shows, soap operas, or movies that his wife has carefully selected and enjoys talking about them with his family. When his daughters visit him in Korea, he goes to the popular music singer’s concerts with them. By discussing and experiencing what his children like, Kanghyuk can maintain emotional connections with his children and overcome the spatial and temporal distance. Kanghyuk also makes it clear that his current intimate relationship with his children is the outcome of his intentional and endless efforts:

If I do not consciously make such an effort, I will be a totally stranger to them. […] By approaching my children with the same hobby or movie, I can maintain the [emotional] bond and communicate with them. Otherwise, when I meet them once in a while, although I can just watch TV and have meals together, I no longer have the ties with them. […] Yes, I am still intimate with them. But, it is now the outcome of my intentional efforts, while it was natural intimacy beforehand [prior to separation].

III. Changes in the Intergenerational Relationship

Many wild geese fathers in my study tend to maintain intimate intergenerational relationships with their children throughout transnational family separation. Nonetheless, there are some fathers whose emotional ties have weakened over time, while other fathers’ relationships with their children have improved through transnational separation. To explain such a variation, I analyze various factors of the transnational father-children relationships.

1. Child’s Age and Gender

Children’s age and gender matter. Previous studies argue that the negative impacts of separation are greater for younger children than older ones (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Schmalzbauer 2004). Younger children do not have clear memories of their
parents and need to rely on other adults to communicate with their transnational parents, whereas older children have more vivid memories of their parents and can directly communicate with their parents abroad (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014). In contrast, in my study, wild geese fathers tend to maintain more intimate relationships with younger children than older adolescent children, and feel it easier to recover their emotional ties with the younger ones than older ones. In the same vein, fathers with adolescent children, particularly boys, report more frequent intergenerational conflicts and confrontations.

These differences may reflect the unique intimacy patterns of wild geese families. Wild geese fathers tend to note that their children’s adolescence poses challenges that are not easy to handle from a distance. Nonetheless, it seems to be relatively easier to overcome for fathers with adolescent daughters than with adolescent sons. Wild geese fathers have more frequent transnational communication with their daughters than sons, and exchange their affections and attentions more comfortably with their daughters than with sons. Thus, wild geese fathers often report that they are closer to their adolescent daughters than adolescent sons. Seunghyun, a 48-year-old wild geese father with 22-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter well describes the difference between daughters and sons:

My older [son] is a little passive and silent, different from the younger [daughter]. My younger [daughter] approaches me and is friendly with me, but not the older one does so. It is more fun to raise my younger [daughter]. That is the reason why father needs a daughter. But, regarding my son, he seems to fend for himself.

2. Relationship Prior to Separation

The pre-migration relationship between father and children is critical in shaping their relationship during transnational separation. I find that wild geese fathers who had a good relationship with their children prior to separation tend to maintain good emotional ties with their
children through separation. For example, Dongwon (50 years old) wild geese father with a 17-year-old-son was very enthusiastic about his son’s education when he lived together with his family in Korea. He regularly met his son’s teachers, observed his son at school, attended his son’s performances, and served in his son’s school board committee whose members were all women except two men, including Dongwon. For seven years, he also left his office early twice a week and gave a ride to his son who played ice hockey. He also regularly went to a stadium with his son to watch the football games together. He provided intensive physical and emotional care of his son with a strong belief as such:

I see that [Korean] fathers tend to step back and entrust [their children’s education] to their wives. But, I did not do that. While mother’s role is important, children can do better with [their] father present.

When asked how he now maintains his emotional ties with his son abroad, Dongwon confidently responds:

Although I meet him occasionally, I can make up [our relationship] at once. It is possible because we spent a long time together when he was younger. Because we have a strong foundational relationship, my son knows well what kind of person I am and what I have done for him […]. He knows that his father pays great attention to him compared to other ordinary fathers. We also share many memories. Thus, although our relationship is sometimes instable, it can be soon recovered. I feel that we smoothly overcame the gaps during his adolescence thanks to what I have done so far (the time spent together and lots of shared memories).

Dongwon’s case well supports the importance of the pre-migration relationship for transnational fathers to maintain a close relationship with their children after separation.

3. Separation as the Turning Point, an Opening for Changes

Transnational family separation itself can offer an important turning point to many wild geese fathers to recognize the overlooked importance of their family (Dreby 2006; Montes 2013).
I find that a substantial number of wild geese fathers in my study still can re-build their emotional connections with their children after separation, even though they did not have such a close relationship prior to separation. For example, Sangmin (37 years old) did not like to spend much time with his two young sons (one elementary school student and another kindergartener) when he lived together with them in Korea. During weekdays, he was so tired from work. During weekends, even if he was going to spend just a few hours with his sons, he felt very tired and tried to make an excuse in order to spend less time with them:

[When we were living together] in Korea, I always just slept after coming home. I did not want to see my children. I just said “Good night” to them. I thought that I did a really good job when I brought them to the park on weekends just for twenty minutes. I was just very tired.

However, transnational family separation offers him a great chance to recognize the value of his family that he overlooked (Dreby 2006; Montes 2013). Now, he misses his family a lot. He also tries to re-build his emotional connections with his sons by providing an emotional and physical care of his children whenever he visits his family abroad. He constantly tells them, “I love you.” He always buys a lot of gifts and frequently dines out with his family. He also reads many bedtime stories to his children and plays together. He goes to museums and zoos, records every moment he spends with his children, and shares them with his children. Sangmin emphasizes that the quality of time he spends together with his children is more important than the quantity of time in maintaining his transnational intimacy with them, saying “Really, I feel that whenever I go to America for two weeks, we spend much more time together than we lived together in Korea. We really do.”

Similar to Sangmin, many wild geese fathers in my study admit that they tended to focus on their work, while overlooking their family life when they used to live together with family in Korea. They often felt bothered and tired when they had some family time with their children.
They grudgingly played with their children occasionally on weekends not because they wanted to do so but because their wives asked to do so. However, after transnational family separation, many wild geese fathers for the first time feel deep loneliness and miss their family abroad, similar to Mexican guest worker fathers in Schmalzbauer (2015). While they do not realize how lonely they are during busy weekdays, wild geese fathers become particularly emotional and sad during weekends and holidays when they are alone. Some fathers even suffer from severe depression and/or panic disorder like Latino transnational fathers (Dreby 2006; Schmalzbauer 2005, 2015). A few wild geese fathers even cried during the interviews while explaining how much it was heartbreaking to return to Korea alone after a visit to their family abroad. Thus, these fathers are highly motivated to approach their children and communicate with them. They also feel great joy and happiness when they visit their children and spend time together. Changsung, a 45-year-old businessman whose two sons are residing in Australia, positively defines his wild geese period as this: “It is an opportunity for my family to think about each other’s meanings.” In short, transnational family separation offers an important turning point to many wild geese fathers to recognize the overlooked importance of their family (Dreby 2006), reflect on their family relationships, and openly express their emotions. They would not have had such opportunities if they continued to live with their family (Montes 2013).

4. Transnational Communication and Face-to-Face Encounters

As I have already discussed in the previous sections, frequent and regular transnational communication (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Kilkey et al. 2014; Madianou and Miller 2011; Parreñas 2008; Ryan et al. 2009; Schmalzbauer 2008, 2015; Smith et al. 2004; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012) and face-to-face encounters (Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen
and Tymczuk 2012; Schmalzbauer 2015) are critical to maintain and strengthen wild geese fathers’ emotional ties with their children abroad. In addition, technology plays a critical to facilitate frequent and regular communication between transnational parents and children (Horst 2006; McKay 2007; Pribilsky 2004; Şenyürekli and Detznera 2009; Wilding 2006). However, transnational parents’ access to the advanced communication technologies is quite heterogeneous and varies by social class (Caling et al. 2012) and country’s infrastructure. As the middle-class professionals who live in one of the leading IT countries with the fastest internet connections in the world (Akamai 2015), Korean wild geese fathers are located in a much more advantageous position than the working-class transnational fathers from the less-developed countries. For example, Yongtae is a 43-year-old businessman who has been separated from his children for ten years. Nonetheless, he confidently states that he is still very close to his children, particularly to his daughter, to the extent that she can comfortably tell him her physical changes during at the age of puberty. He thinks that his deep emotional connections with his daughter can be achieved thanks to his constant communication and frequent encounters with her. He exchanges voice talks with his daughter several times a day to share each other’s both unimportant and important moments of life. He also meets his family on average three to four times a year. He goes to Canada two to three times a year on Korean holidays and stay there for about ten days each time, while his children come to Korea every summer and stay for two months. During their stay in Korea, he lives as a family man:

I make frequent phone calls. I also spend relatively… no… absolutely longer time with my children than other [wild geese fathers]. I stay together with my children in fact more than three months per year. [...] They are in Korea for two months and I go there too. While they are staying in Korea, I leave my office at 6PM.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Given that Koreans have the second-longest working hours among the 34 OECD member countries as of 2015 (Korean Times 2015), it is surprisingly early to leave office at 6PM for many businessmen in Korea.
and get home at 7PM. I don’t drink at all, and just spend all my time with them. I don’t think that my children feel that they grow apart from me.

5. Fathers’ Familiarity and Experience with the Host Society

Wild geese fathers who used to live together with their family in the host society tend to experience less cultural conflicts with their children, and maintain their intimate intergenerational relationship more easily. For example, Dongwook explains how his prior experiences of living together with his family in the United States helps him maintain his emotional ties with them during his wild geese period:

If I had just sent my family abroad and I stayed here, emotional ties with my family might have weakened. [...] However, I first lived there with my family for a year. And this time, I stayed there together with them for two years. Thus, when we talk each other, we are neither hesitant nor uncomfortable. When we talk, we easily understand what each other means to say. They tell me where they have been today and whom they have met. They tell me how delicious the food they had today, “Dad, you know this food which we ate together.” Although we cannot physically be together, we have a sense of coherence.

6. Obstacles to Improving the Intergenerational Relationships

So far, I have discussed how wild geese fathers maintain (and strengthen) close and intimate relationships with their children abroad during their transnational separation. However, it is important to note that wild geese fathers have not always cultivated good relationships or strengthened their emotional ties with children. Below, I discuss three obstacles to improving the transnational relationships between fathers and their children.

First, some fathers confess that they are greatly embarrassed by the mismatch between children in their mind and their children’s actual appearance with great maturity (Parreñas 2001). Despite their regular transnational communication, many wild geese fathers tend to continue to view their children as young ones at the time they first separated, and fail to acknowledge the
degree to which their children have grown to mature adolescents during their transnational separation. For instance, Jaehoon, a 42-year-old businessman has just reunited with his wife and a 13-year-old daughter after three years of transnational separation. He still vividly remembers how he was surprised when he first met his daughter at the airport one year after they had separated, because she had grown much more than he imagined. He even wondered, “Oh, is this the girl that I know?” He was also felt a sense of loss because he suddenly recognized that transnational family separation robbed him of the valuable time that he could have made many memories with his fast growing daughter.

Second, some wild geese fathers feel lonely and isolated even when they visit their family and spend time together. They often expected that they would be greatly welcomed by their family abroad during their encounters. They also expected that their family would re-organize all their schedules for fathers. Disappointedly, in contrast to their expectations, wild geese families often rejoice only a few days at their fathers’ visit and then return to their ordinary life even if their fathers made the visit after a long time of transnational separation. Woosung well describes his frustration and awkwardness as an unwelcomed visitor when he first went to Canada to meet his wife and sons:

When I went there by taking a flight for a long time, I had high expectations that they would treat me well and I would spend a lot of time with my children. I thought that everything would be organized centered on me. But, [when I got there] my children just said “Hello, Dad” and went to their room. [During my stay in Canada] I did not have much conversation with my children, and just felt awkward. […] In the morning, my wife gave children a ride and I stayed home alone. While I watched TV, I did not understand what people said. […] Then I watched a Korean video that my son borrowed. When my wife returned home, she gave me lunch. After lunch, I read a book. […] and then went to the park with a dog. Or I did some exercise [alone].

Third, some wild geese fathers even experience serious confrontations with their children during their face-to-face encounters. Wild geese fathers tend to have more conflicts with older
children, particularly with adolescent boys. They also tend to have more troubles with children who migrated at younger ages and have been separated for a longer period often due to cultural gaps. Given this, lengthy separation exerts negative influences on the transnational father-children relationships (Carling et al. 2012; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Menjívar 2006; Parreñas 2008; Smith et al. 2004; Waters 2009).

While the father-children tensions can be dormant during their separation, they often explode when wild geese family members physically encounter one another. Children in the foreign culture grow to understand less and less Korean-style authoritative fathers, whereas Korean fathers do not understand their teenage children growing more rebellious. Sangho, a 60-year-old businessman whose two adult children still live in Canada, well shows the change in the intergenerational relationship over the last 13 years of transnational family separation. According to Sangho, his children have quickly acculturated into the host society. Thus, whenever he visits his family in Canada, he is not treated as the respected father with authority but a bigot who is continuously reproached by his children for his cultural ignorance. When he had a seat at a restaurant before being seated, and when he talked loudly in a public space, his children scowled at him and hurt his feelings. When he tried to give educational advice to his children, his children disrespected him, “Don’t intervene it without knowing [the system].” He thought that his children talked to and treated him very impolitely and rudely. However, whenever he tried to discipline his children for their inappropriate attitudes, they stopped him by pointing out that he talked too loud and intemperately. With such constant conflicts over time, Sangho has been very upset about his children, no longer wanted to talk with them, and even questioned for what he had sacrificed his normal life during those years.
Jaeman, another 52-year-old wild geese father in his fifth year of transnational separation, also reports the similar kinds of intergenerational conflicts with his three sons. He strongly believes that his three sons would never have shown such defiant attitudes toward him, if they continuously lived together with him in Korea, regardless of how many directions he gave them as their father. Furthermore, Jaeman finds that he has been gradually isolated and excluded from his children even during his visits. In his first annual visit to Canada, his children willingly went out with him for shopping and provided necessary interpretation for him. In the second annual visit, his children seemed to be ashamed when he negotiated the price with a clerk at the mall as he had done in his first visit, and thus refused to interpret for him despite his several requests. So, they had a severe quarrel at the mall. In his third annual visit, his children no longer wanted to go out with him regardless of wherever they would go, because they felt uncomfortable to go out with their father. Consequently, he could no longer get along with his children. Mixed with frustration, anger and a sense of betrayal, he told his children as below, when he returned to Korea after his third visit:

I will never come back [to see you]. […] I have sent you here the money that I have earned very strenuously. How can you treat me like this! I am so annoyed. You will see if I ever come back!

While his wife tried to mediate the conflict between him and his children, Jaeman felt that his wife was totally on his children’s side. Since then, his discontent has kept accumulating and his transnational family relationship has not been recovered yet. Jaeman even bitterly admits that after confrontation, he is no longer happy to send remittances to his family abroad, even if he has not stopped sending money. While Mexican migrant fathers are estranged from their children when they cannot send remittances (Dreby 2006), wild geese fathers in my study keep sending remittances even if they are estranged from their family.
In general, wild geese fathers are disappointed and feel betrayed by their children, when their efforts and sacrifices for their children are not appreciated by their children, when their authority as father is challenged by their children, and when they are disrespected by their children who value the culture of the host society and English fluency more than Korean culture and Korean fluency.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter explores how Korean wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering and their intimate relationships with children change throughout transnational family separation. By far the most important element of responsible fathering in the transnational context includes sending remittances and gifts. My study corroborates that transnational fathers fulfill their breadwinning roles by sending remittances to their children who live apart (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007; Menjivar 2012; Nobles 2011; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004, 2012). Yet, I further demonstrate that sending remittances and gifts does not only fulfill their breadwinning roles. It also plays an emotional role (Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Horst 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007; Pribilsky 2004; Singh et al. 2012), as if it does for transnational mothers. This framework is beneficial to understanding transnational fathers’ economic provision beyond the simple male-breadwinner framework (Kilkey et al. 2014). In addition, I delve into the mechanisms that remittances and gifts differently shape the transnational father-children intimacy: while remittances’ emotional impact is often managed by mothers, gifts tend to more directly maintain the transnational intimacy between fathers and children. I also distinguish the different implications of sending remittances and gifts for transnational parents based on their class positions. I also confront the existing theory’s tendency to view Asian/Asian
American parents’ educational zeal primarily based on patriarchal Asian culture (Huang and Yeoh 2005; Kibria 1993; Lee and Koo 2006; Zhou and Kim 2006).

Next, I analyze how wild geese fathers fulfill their emotional roles through transnational communication with their children. My study confirms that frequent and regular transnational communication is critical to maintaining intimate relationships between migrant parents and children and overcoming the geographical and temporal distance (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012; Parreñas 2008; Ryan et al. 2009; Schmalzbauer 2008, 2015; Smith et al. 2004; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012). Through transnational communication, wild geese fathers not only express their love, care and attention to their children, but also play diverse roles such as tutors, mediators, counselors, and role models. Furthermore, friendship is highly emphasized in wild geese fathers’ definition of ideal fatherhood. I also demonstrate the central role of technology in positively shaping the transnational father–children relationships (Horst 2006; McKay 2007; Wilding 2006). Concurrently, I cautiously note that technology does not wield magical power to abruptly create intergenerational intimacy where it does not exist (Parreñas 2005a).

I find that face-to-face encounters are also important to enhance intergenerational intimacy among transnational families (Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012; Schmalzbauer 2015). There is not much knowledge on the fathering activities of transnational fathers during their face-to-face encounters. This is partly because many working-class fathers cannot easily return to their home countries due to their tight budget and undocumented legal status (Menjívar 2006; Pribilsky 2004; 2012; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012), and partly because many transnational fathers do not care for their children, even when they visit or live together with their children (Parreñas 2005b; Yeoh and Willis 1999) based on gendered expectations on
parenting (Carling et al. 2012; Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Menjivar 2012; Parreñas 2005a). However, by describing wild geese fathers’ diverse parenting activities during their family encounters, I demonstrate that some transnational fathers actually cross the strict “gender boundaries” (Parreñas 2008: 1070) and provide the emotional and physical care for their children at least during their encounters.

In conclusion, this study applies the responsible fathering framework to wild geese fathers’ transnational fathering practices, and advances the interdisciplinary knowledge of fathering across migration and family studies. It also suggests a more nuanced and balanced understanding of middle-class and Asian transnational fatherhood. While I do not negate the significant implications of transnational fathers’ resources (such as economic power and legal status) for their fathering capabilities, I argue that transnational fathers’ willingness and concerted efforts to maintain emotional connections with their children are equally important determinants of the quality of their fathering performance and intergenerational relationships. In addition, my analytical framework includes wild geese fathers’ emotions and thus contributes to improving the understanding of transnational fathers, who have been previously perceived as unemotional (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014).
CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

In the era of globalization, many middle-class Korean wild geese parents ambitiously adopt a transnational split household strategy to provide their children with better educational opportunities abroad. Conducting in-depth interviews with 64 Korean wild geese parents in the United States, Canada and Korea, I explore how wild geese parents’ relative gender status and parenting practices change throughout their transnational family separation.

I. Summary of Findings

In Chapter 4, I analyze the reasons why wild geese parents adopt a transnational split household arrangement. Wild geese parents have high expectations for their children’s education abroad: many wild geese parents strongly believe that education abroad can give their children English fluency and the cultural competency that are necessary for their children’s success as competent cosmopolitans in the competitive global market. Second, the transnational spousal separation of wild geese parents is justified by and reinforces the patriarchal gender role division between spouses (fathers as breadwinners and mothers as caretakers) (Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Menjivar 2012; Parreñas 2005a). Thus, even if some wild geese couples are dual earners with similar income in Korea, it is almost always wild geese mothers who give up their careers and accompany their children abroad as the better nurturers “by nature,” while fathers are expected to stay in Korea and serve the role of the primary economic provider for the family. Third, many wild geese mothers also pursue their own goals and interests (e.g., own education or career development) through transnational migration. However, regardless of what their official or hidden goals were, throughout my dissertation, I regard transnational spousal
separation as a critical triggering event that leads to the important changes in the patriarchal spousal relationships and gendered parenting practices of wild geese parents.

Chapter 5 discusses how wild geese mothers’ gender status changes after migration. To many wild geese mothers who managed husband- and children-centered lives in Korea, transnational spousal separation gives an important opportunity to deeply reflect on their taken-for-granted sacrifice as wives and filial daughters-in-law and reconfigure their patriarchal gender relations. Wild geese mothers tend to have greater decision-making power after migration. They also greatly enjoy that they can perform less housework without feeling guilty, as they no longer live together with their husbands (for the doing gender theory claims, see Gupta 1999; Hochschild 1989; South and Spitze 1994; West and Zimmerman 1987). In addition, in contrast to working-class transnational families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; Kyle 2000; Pribilsky 2004), remittances neither significantly enhance wild geese fathers’ relative status nor lower wild geese mothers’ status. Wild geese mothers feel it legitimate to ask their husbands to send remittances for their children’s education. Thus, remittances from husbands do not undermine wild geese mothers’ status but strengthen their power as the remittance manager. Wild geese fathers also feel strong economic obligation to send the maximum amount of remittances to their families abroad. As middle-class men who frame their children as “emotionally priceless” (Zelizer 1994: 209) ones, sending remittances is primarily the way of expressing wild geese fathers’ unconditional paternal love for and attention to their children abroad (Horst 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007), rather than the means of maintaining their patriarchal power over their wives.

The research shows how many wild geese mothers strengthen their gender status in their transnational households through the effective utilization of their new resources in the host
society such as 1) legal status, 2) employment and 3) additional education. First, being active agents of transnational migration and decision makers, wild geese mothers strategically choose (and change) their legal status to maximize not only their children’s interests but also their own, and to handle the changing immigration policies of the host countries. This finding challenges the prevalent notion that Asian migrant women are passive victims of migration (Chang and Darlington 2008; Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005). My study also empirically supports that the migrant women’s official legal status is a significant source of their leverage to renegotiate the patriarchal gender relations (Espiritu 2008; George 2001; Kim 2006; Lee 2013; Menjívar 2006; Ong and Azores 1994; Pessar 1986; Wong 2000). Furthermore, it demonstrates that migrant women’s degree of empowerment can vary based on the type of their official visa. A comparative analysis of wild geese mothers between the United States and Canada, although based on a handful of non-US cases, also demonstrates how the lives of migrant women with the similar economic and cultural backgrounds can be heterogeneously shaped by their choice of destination countries, and corroborates the importance of structural and institutional factors such as nation-state and its immigration and citizenship policies in shaping migrant women’s empowerment and adaptation to the host society (Bloemraad 2006; Menjívar 2006, 2012; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

In addition, I confirm that wild geese mothers’ paid employment, whether it is official or unofficial, greatly enhances their bargaining power during spousal separation because their additional income is helpful in managing the economic pressure of maintaining two transnationally split households (Blumberg 1991; Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986). However, it is important to note that only if they had official employment in their host countries, wild geese
mothers tend to keep maintaining their enhanced gender status after family reunification thanks to the economic power and social status attached to their new (often better) employment in their home country.

Wild geese mothers’ additional education in the host countries is also critical for their empowerment (Bianchi et al. 2000; Coltrane 2000; England 2000), as it enhances their employability in both the host country and home country. In particular, wild geese mothers’ expectations or plan for their future economic contribution to the family gives them power to overcome their current economic dependence on their husbands. These findings on wild geese mothers’ employment and education contribute to extending the existing literature, which has narrowly focused on the impacts of migrant women’s current economic contribution to the family (Blumberg 1991; Hertz 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994; Kibria 1993, 1994; Lim 1997; Min 2001; Ong 1994, 2003; Pessar 1984, 1986).

Comparing their mothering practices in Korea (before migration) and North America (after migration), Chapter 6 discusses how wild geese mothers try to achieve their educational aspirations while overcoming the unexpected challenges they encounter in the host society. Researchers in the United States have argued that the ideology of intensive mothering exclusively reflects the mothering practices of White middle-class women (Amott and Matthaei 1996; Collins 1994; Hattery 2001; Landry 2000; Lareau 2003; Thorne 1992). However, wild geese mothers’ active performance of intensive mothering (Arendell 2000; Hays 1996) both prior to migration and after migration demonstrates that it is a global norm among middle-class women across their racial/ethnic backgrounds and nationalities (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).
Achieving their children’s educational goals is very important for wild geese mothers, not only because it enhances their children’s future upward social mobility, but also because it is critically related to their current bargaining power and relative gender status within their transnational households. In particular, as they sacrifice their spousal relationship and future financial security for the sake of their children’s education, both wild geese mothers and fathers tend to find achievement and satisfaction through their children’s academic success.

Unfortunately, many wild geese mothers, who successfully performed the role of a competent educational manager for their children in Korea, encounter unexpected challenges to accomplishing their educational goals, because their structural disadvantages in the host society limit their access to the educational information and resources which were taken for granted in Korea. The support from social networks within their own ethnic community (e.g., KPA and churches) is found to be critical for wild geese mothers to overcome the challenges and fulfill the intensive mothering ideology. This finding confirms that the immigrant community of the same ethnicity is one of the most important resources for new immigrants (Espiritu 2008; Kibria 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; 1994; Menjívar 2006, 2012; Ong and Azores 1994; Zhou 2009).

Nonetheless, I point to the darker side of the ethnic community and describe how its resources and information are not equally available to all co-ethnic immigrants. In particular, I find that wild geese mothers are subject to stricter monitoring by their same ethnic community of their body, sexuality, and private lives, because of their marginality in their gendered status position within the family structure (i.e., women living separately from their husbands). Wild geese mothers can gain access to its resources and information only if they conform to their ethnic community’s patriarchal norms and rules, pass the strict and constant monitoring of themselves, and thus are eventually accepted as legitimate members of their own ethnic
immigrant community. In sum, Chapter 6 demonstrates the ambivalent impacts of the Korean immigrant community on wild geese mothers’ intensive mothering and offers a nuanced explanation of the complex interplay between immigrant social networks and middle-class Asian migrant women’s parenting and survival.

In Chapter 7, I explore how wild geese fathers perform responsible fathering through their fulfillment of economic and emotional roles in three ways: 1) remittances/gifts, 2) transnational communication and 3) face-to-face encounters. I also investigate how wild geese fathers’ intimate relationships with children change throughout the transnational family separation.

Wild geese fathers are fulfilling not only the breadwinning roles (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007; Menjivar 2012; Nobles 2011; Parreñas 2008; Pribilsky 2004, 2012) but also emotional roles (Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Horst 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014; McKay 2007; Pribilsky 2004; Singh et al. 2012) by sending remittances and gifts to their family abroad. This framework extends our understanding of transnational fathers’ economic provision beyond the simple male-breadwinner framework (Kilkey et al. 2014).

In addition, I confirm that frequent and regular transnational communication is critical for wild geese fathers to maintain intimate relationships with their children and overcome the geographical distance and lengthy separation (Carling et al. 2012; Haagsman and Mazzucato 2014; Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012; Parreñas 2008; Ryan et al. 2009; Schmalzbauer 2008, 2015; Smith et al. 2004; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012).

I also find that face-to-face encounters are important to enhance intergenerational intimacy among transnational families (Kilkey et al. 2014; Leifsen and Tymczuk 2012; Schmalzbauer 2015). My description of wild geese fathers’ diverse parenting activities during
their family encounters makes an important contribution to the literature, which has overlooked the fathering practices of transnational men due to the pervasive gendered expectations on parenting (Carling et al. 2012; Dreby 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Menjívar 2012; Parreñas 2005a). Indeed, my study clearly demonstrates that some transnational fathers actually cross the strict “gender boundaries” (Parreñas 2008: 1070) and provide emotional and physical care for their children at least during their encounters.

In sum, Chapter 7 applies the responsible fathering framework to wild geese fathers’ transnational fathering practices, and advances the interdisciplinary knowledge of fathering across both migration and family studies. It also suggests a more nuanced and balanced understanding of middle-class Asian transnational fatherhood. While I do not negate the significant implications of transnational fathers’ resources (such as economic power and legal status) for their fathering capabilities, I argue that transnational fathers’ willingness and concerted efforts to maintain emotional connections with their children are equally important to determine the quality of their fathering performance and intergenerational relationships. In addition, my analytical framework includes wild geese fathers’ emotions and thus contributes to improving the understanding of transnational fathers, who tend to be depicted as unemotional (Dreby 2006; Kilkey et al. 2014).

II. Limitations and Future Research

My dissertation has some limitations. While I aim to demonstrate the changing gender dynamics of transnational migrant families with a more gender-balanced framework, which I believe is effective for Chapter 6 (intensive mothering) and Chapter 7 (transnational fathering), Chapter 5 (gender status) is organized to reflect women’s perspectives more than men’s, as it is
focused on how wild geese mothers utilize new resources in the host society and enhance their gender status in their transnational households. While I have rich data for the analysis of wild geese fathers’ perspectives on the changes in their gender status, I found it best, in the short run to use this data for future research. Since this dissertation is focused on wild geese mothers’ empowerment through their transnational spousal separation, my future research can explore how wild geese fathers feel about their changing (often destabilized) gender status in their transnational households and how they counteract to negotiate such changes.

In addition, while I originally planned to write a separate chapter exclusively on wild geese parents’ changing housework patterns during their transnational family separation, and actually collected rich data for it, this topic is not discussed as a separate chapter in this dissertation. As my dissertation project progressed, many other important themes (e.g., social networks) emerged as more relevant to the changing transnational gender dynamics. Therefore, I discuss the changing housework patterns wherever appropriate throughout the dissertation, rather than in its own chapter. Given that household labor is not simply an indicator of gender (in)equality between spouses, but an important topic by itself, my future research will offer a more in-depth discussion of wild geese parents’ changing housework patterns. This research will also provide a unique opportunity to test whether the existing household labor theories (i.e. doing gender and relative resources), which have developed primarily based on the experiences of (married) couples who live together, apply to the couples who live separately across national borders.

My research does not fully discuss two interesting cases in my data in which wild geese parents’ gender roles are reversed. That is, in these cases, mothers remained in Korea and fathers accompanied their children abroad, whereas most wild geese mothers in the sample migrated
abroad to accompany their children and their husbands remained in Korea to economically support their families. These two cases are important and need further attention because of their uniqueness in that they overcome the patriarchal gender role division between spouses. Therefore, my future research will investigate why these wild geese parents did not follow the traditional gender path and how such differences shape their transnational family dynamics afterwards. It will be also interesting to see whether these wild geese parents share similar experiences of gender conflicts and struggles with other (typical) wild geese parents or have different experiences and dynamics.

I further suggest future research topics that extend my dissertation research. First, while my dissertation research focuses on the spousal power dynamics in the transnational split household setting, it is also important to investigate how transnational spousal separation leads to changes in spousal relationships, particularly in terms of the quality of their emotional intimacy and sexuality.

Second, I suggest a comparative analysis of Korean migrant women between the United States and Canada, given that the same (temporary) legal status (e.g., international students) can lead to different outcomes in migrant women’s lives between these two countries. It would be important to pay particular attention to the types of legal, educational, and employment opportunities available to new immigrants in these two countries. I am sure that this research will contribute to studies on the role of the national governments and their policies in shaping family relations, settlement, and integration of migrants.

Third, while I primarily focus on the impact of Christianity and churches on Korean migrant women, it may be also interesting to see how other religions (e.g., Islam or Buddhism) and religious communities influence diverse immigrant groups’ gender, family and socializing
dynamics. As my dissertation reveals, religion and ethnic religious institutions play an important role in shaping the lives of migrant women.

Fourth, while my dissertation discusses the changes in transnational family’s intergenerational relationship from the pre-migration phase to the during-migration phase, it is also important to see what happens in the post-migration phase (i.e., after family reunification). Such research can address the following questions: Does family reunification help enhance (or recover) emotional intimacy between migrant parents and children? What are the new challenges and issues that transnational families encounter once they finally live together? How do migrant children feel about their family reunification, particularly about their fathers, after a long separation?

Finally, given that most wild geese parents adopted the transnational split household arrangement in the strong hope of providing their children with better educational opportunities, it will be intriguing to find out what kinds and levels of academic achievements wild geese children actually achieve through their transnational migration. In addition, it will be interesting to see whether wild geese children are (dis)satisfied with their transnational migration because of their educational outcomes or other factors. If they return to Korea, do wild geese children successfully re-adapt to the Korean society? If they remain in the host society, are wild geese children successfully incorporated to the host society? What kinds of jobs do wild geese children get after finishing their education?

III. Conclusion and Implications

Overall, this dissertation research on Korean wild geese families contributes to the scholarships on gender, family and immigration, as it provides a more gender-balanced and
interdisciplinary framework to better understand the complex and changing gender dynamics of transnational migrant families. It also has important theoretical, methodological and empirical merits. This dissertation improves our understanding of the gender status and the parenting practices of middle-class migrant families, which are shaped and re-negotiated differently from the typical working-class migrant families by their migration goals (children’s education vs. fathers’ employment), by the migration leader (women vs. men), by the direction of remittances (home country to host country vs. host country to home country), and by the migration status (temporary vs. permanent). Also, this dissertation research takes into account wild geese parents’ experiences after family reunification as well as during family separation. This gives insights into both the short- and long-term effects of transnational family separation on their gender status and parenting practices. Above all, this research examines both women’s and men’s accounts, which is rare in existing studies of wild geese families, partly because of the practical constraint: researchers need to collect data in two different countries (i.e., wild geese mothers in the United States and wild geese fathers in Korea). This strength enables the dissertation research to provide a more balanced perspective on the ways in which gender relations and power dynamics of middle-class migrant families are re-negotiated, and a more comprehensive picture of both mothering and fathering practices. I believe this component overcomes the limitations in the existing studies of Asian transnational families, which tend to view gender as only women’s issues. In sum, this research gives new insights to readers who are interested in the issues of rapidly increasing transnationally-split families.
APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: Korean Wild Geese Families—Gender Dynamics of Transnational Split Households

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of it. This statement outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

The purpose of this project is to advance knowledge of the rapidly increasing but underexplored lives of Korean wild geese families.

This study collects data through: 1) in-depth interviews and 2) a possible follow-up using participant observation. The specific methods to be used for this study are explained below.

In-depth Interviews: I will ask you to share your experience and insight as Korean wild geese parents with the interviewer. I hope to elicit Korean wild geese parents’ accounts on (1) how their spousal relationships change and (2) how their parenting practices change after they live apart in two different countries because of their children’s education. I will ask you to compare your life in Korea with that in the United States.

Each interview, based on a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions, will last approximately 1~2 hours, be audio-recorded, transcribed and then analyzed by the researcher. During an interview, please be careful not to mention any other people by name. The interview will be conducted in a setting that is mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher, and at a time when both participants and the researcher feel convenient, with the language the participants prefer (either in Korean or English). I hope to elicit interviews with approximately thirty Korean wild geese mothers and thirty Korean wild geese fathers. If both spouses are participating in the project, the interview will be conducted separately at the different appointed times and locations. In addition, what each spouse says to the interviewer will not be shared by with the other spouse.

Participant Observation: I plan to conduct participant observation with twenty Korean wild geese parents, who will be selected among those who are already interviewed. If you are interested in joining the participant observation, please let me know at the end of the interview.

I would like to observe you either in your household settings or your informal gatherings. If you choose household observation, I will observe your typical day from the morning to the evening. I will first meet you in the morning, follow your everyday activities and leave your home in the
evening (by 8–9pm). If you invite me to attend your informal gatherings, I will join your socializing meetings and leave after that. After each observation, I will write field notes.

**Risk and Benefits:** I do not anticipate any risk in your participation other than that you may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions. If so, we can skip these questions. Your involvement will help generate a greater understanding of the undiscovered lives of Korean wild geese families in Korea and the United States. Hence, not only you but also others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained from this research. There is no cost to participate in this study.

**Compensations:** You will receive financial compensation when participating this study. I plan to provide you with $15 (or 15,000 Korean won) gift card at the time of the interview or participant observation. People who participate both in the interviews and participant observation will be compensated for both activities.

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me. Please contact me at any time at the address/ phone number/ email listed above. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany’s Office of Regulatory Research Compliance at 1-866-857-5459 or hsconcerns@albany.edu.

The following conditions will be met:

1) I assure you that all the information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Only the researcher, faculty advisor, the sponsor of the study, and the University at Albany Institutional Review Board may have access to the study data and information. There will be no way to identify names on the audio tapes, and participant’s names will not be available to anyone. Data will be listed under pseudonyms created for each subject. All data will be saved in password protected files on my personal computer. The results of the research will be used for publication in relevant academic journals or books.

2) For audio recording, no audio records will be used for any purpose other than to do this study. Since an mp3 player is used to record the interview, there will be no actual tape. There will be only mp3 audio files. These audio files will be saved as password protective files in my personal computer. But, at your discretion, these audio files will either be destroyed or returned to you.

3) Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled. You may choose not to answer any questions and may refuse to complete any portions of the research you
do not wish to for any reason. You should also be aware that the investigator may withdraw you from participation at her professional discretion.

Do you grant permission to audio record the interview?
Yes ______  No ______

Do you allow participant observation of your activities?
Yes ______  No ______

This agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or been informed of, the information about this study and hereby agree to participate in the study.

Respondent ___________________________ Date _____________

Researcher ___________________________ Date _____________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MOTHERS

My study is interested in the lives of Korean wild geese mothers in the United States. I want to assure you that what we talk about today is strictly confidential.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION
I would like to begin with some background information.
    How old are you?
    What is your highest educational level?
    What is your family’s annual income?
    - Please describe your social class background: i.e. upper, middle, and working class.
    How long have you been married?
    How many children do you have? And how old are they?
    When did you and your children come to the United States?
    How long have you been separated from your husband?
    What was your job before coming to the United States?
    What is your current job in the United States?
    What is your husband’s job?
    How do you make a living in the United States?

II. MOTIVE TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES
The next section focuses on probing your motives or reasons to come to the United States as a wild geese mother. I am very interested in your decision and the reasons to come to the United States as a wild geese mother.
    Why did you decide to become a wild geese family?
    Why did you choose the United States as your destination?
    Who first raised the discussion about the migration?
    Can you describe the migration decision-making process?
    - Were there any conflicts in this process? If so, how did you resolve it?
    Why did you (rather than your husband) come to the United States?
    If you had a job, what made you quit your job and come to the United States?
    How do you feel about your decision?

III. DESCRIPTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE
Now, I want to discuss your everyday life in the United States.
    What do you do on weekdays and the weekend? Can you describe your average day?
    How do you do when you have free time?
    What are the primary advantages and disadvantages, you have found, of being in the United States as a wild geese mother?
IV. CHANGE IN LIFE THROUGH MIGRATION
In this section, we discuss how your life has changed. In particular, I would like you to compare and contrast your lives in Korea and the United States.

Are there any changes in your life since you came to the United States as a wild geese mother? If any, could you please describe them?

How has your relationship with other people changed after you came to the United States?
  - For example, with your parents, with your parents-in-law, or with your friends.

How do you maintain your relationship with your family and friends in Korea?

Do you have any new friends in the United States? If so, how do you meet them and how do you maintain your relationship with them? What is the main way you socialize?

How has your quality of life changed after you came to the United States?
  - For example, are you more satisfied with your life or less?
  - What are the main causes for feeling more or less satisfied? Can you describe these in more detail?

V. SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP
In addition to a general description of your life in the United States, I would like you to discuss five topics: The first topic is the relationship with your husband; the second topic is your mothering; the third is housework; and the final topic is your temporary visa status and remittances. Let’s first explore your relationship with your husband.

How often do you meet your husband?
  - How often do you go to Korea? If you occasionally go to Korea, what are the main reasons for it?
  - How often does your husband come to the United States?
  - When you meet your husband, what do you do and where do you go together?
  - How do you feel when you meet your husband?
  - Please tell me how you think about the current number of meetings with your husband.

How do you communicate with your husband?

What do you talk about with your husband?
  - Is there any change of topic, frequency and time for communication since leaving Korea?
  - How is the quality of communication?

How does spousal separation affect your relationship with your husband?
  - What is the biggest change that you found in the relationship with your husband after you came to the United States?

Can you describe positive and negative aspects that you found as you live apart from your husband?
  - What are the best aspects of living apart from your husband?
  - What are the biggest difficulties you encounter in living apart from your husband?
Are there any problems or concerns regarding your relationship with your husband that were created after you came to the United States? If so, how do you resolve them?
Do you find any change in the quality of your spousal relationship?
Do you find any change in your bargaining power or relative status compared to your husband?

IV. MOTHERING
Now, let’s discuss your mothering in the United States.
Can you describe your overall relationship with your children?
Do you find any differences in your relationship with the children after migration? If so, what are the causes?
Do you find any differences in your parenting practices between Korea and the United States?
- Are there any differences in the time you spend with your children?
- Are there any differences in the work that you do for your children?
- If any, what are the main causes of such changes? If not, why?
Do you receive any support in the United States to help you with the extra responsibilities or children’s supervision?
- Do you rely on any emotional support in the United States? If so, from whom? How?
What are the positive and negative aspects that you found as you stay in the United States with your children as a sole parent?
- How has your sole parent situation affected your children, if at all?
Can you define the ideal mother? And the ideal father?
- Do you feel that you fulfill this ideal? Why/why not?
- Do you feel that your husband fulfills this ideal? Why/why not? If so, how does this work despite the distance?

V. HOUSEWORK
Now, let me ask you about your housework.
How many hours do you spend doing housework each day?
Can you describe what kinds of housework you perform each day?
Please, tell me about the division of household labor between you and your husband.
How did you share housework when you lived together with your husband in Korea?
- Are there any changes in the time and the types of housework you perform as you live apart from your husband? If so, what lead to such changes?
How do you share housework when you or your husband visits each other?
- Are there any changes in the time and the types of housework you perform compared to when you live apart from your husband? If so, what lead to such changes?
How do you feel about your current performance of housework?

VI. TEMPORARY VISA STATUS AND REMITTANCES
Finally, I would like you to discuss your temporary visa status and remittances (income sent by families in different countries).

What types of visa do you currently hold?
- Can you explain the reason why you hold that visa?
- How does your visa status influence your everyday life?
- How does your visa status influence your relationship with your husband?
- How do you feel about your visa status?

How do you make a living in the United States?
Do you receive any remittances from your husband? If so, how often do you receive remittances? How much do you receive each time?
- How do you use the remittances? Please explain percentage-wise.
- Do you find any differences in your pattern and the size of spending after migration?

Do you earn additional money? If so, how? And how much does your income contribute to your household economy? If not, why?
- Can you tell me how you feel about your current financial situation?
- How much do you rely on remittances from your husband?
- Has your economic dependence increased or decreased after migration? Does such a change have any impact on your spousal relationship?

When do you plan to return to Korea?
- Do you plan to return alone? Or will you return with your children? Please explain why.

VII. AFTER FAMILY REUNIFICATION
This part only applies to wild geese mothers who are currently living together with their husbands in Korea.

How do you feel about your spousal separation decision?
When did you decide to return to Korea? Why?
Can you tell me whether you achieved your goals through migration? If so, how? If not, why?
How does your migration affect your relationship with your husband after reunification?
How does your migration affect your relationship with your children after reunification?
Have you returned to your previous division of household labor tasks or time spent, or are these things different? Why?
Have you returned to paid work?

This was a very informative interview. Are there any topics or issues you would like to discuss further? Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FATHERS

My study is interested in the lives of wild geese fathers reside in Korea. I want to assure you that what we talk about today is strictly confidential.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION
I would like to begin with some background information.
   - How old are you?
   - What is your highest educational level?
   - What is your family’s annual income?
   - Please describe your social class background: i.e. upper, middle, and working class.
   - How long have you been married?
   - How many children do you have? And how old are they?
   - When did your wife and children go to the United States?
   - How long have you been separated from your wife?
   - What is your current job?
   - What is your wife’s job before she went to the United States?
   - How does your family make a living in the United States?

II. MOTIVE TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES
The next section focuses on probing your motives or reasons to become a wild geese father.
   - Why did you decide to become a wild geese family?
   - Why did you choose the United States as your family’s destination?
   - Who first raised the discussion about the migration?
   - Can you describe the migration decision-making process?
     - Were there any conflicts in this process? If so, how did you resolve it?
   - What did make your wife (rather than you) go to the United States?
   - How do you feel about your decision?

III. DESCRIPTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE
Now, I want to discuss your everyday life in Korea.
   - What do you do on weekdays and the weekend? Can you describe your average day?
   - How do you do when you have free time?
   - What are the primary advantages and disadvantages, you have found, of being in Korea alone as a wild geese father?

IV. CHANGE IN LIFE THROUGH MIGRATION
In this section, we discuss how your life has changed. In particular, I would like you to compare and contrast your life before and after family separation.
Are there any changes in your life since you began to live alone in Korea as a wild geese father? If any, could you please describe them?

How has your relationship with other people changed after you remained alone in Korea?
- For example, with your parents, with your parents-in-law, or with your friends.

What is the main way you socialize?

How has your quality of life changed after your family went to the United States?
- For example, are you more satisfied with your life or less?
- What are the main causes for feeling more or less satisfied? Can you describe these in more detail?

V. SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIP

In addition to a general description of your life in Korea, I would like you to discuss five topics: The first topic is the relationship with your wife; the second topic is your fathering; the third is housework; and the final topic is your remittances. Let’s first explore your relationship with your wife.

How often do you meet your wife and children?
- How often do you go to the United States? If you occasionally go to the United States, what are the main reasons for it?
- How often does your wife come to Korea?
- When you meet your wife, what do you do and where do you go together?
- How do you feel when you meet your wife?
- Please tell me how you think about the current number of meetings with your wife.

How do you communicate with your wife?

- What do you talk about with your wife?
- Is there any change of topic, frequency and time for communication since she left Korea?
- How is the quality of communication?

How does spousal separation affect your relationship with your wife?
- What is the biggest change that you found in the relationship with your wife after she went to the United States?

Can you describe positive and negative aspects that you found as you live apart from your wife and children?
- What are the best aspects of living apart from your wife?
- What are the biggest difficulties you encounter when living apart from your wife?

Are there any problems or concerns regarding your relationship with your wife that were created after she went to the United States? If so, how do you resolve them?

Do you find any change in the quality of your spousal relationship?

Do you find any change in your bargaining power or relative status compared to your wife?

IV. FATHERING

Now, let’s discuss your fathering in Korea.
Can you describe your overall relationship with your children?
Do you find any differences in your relationship with the children after they went to the United States? If so, what are the causes?
Do you find any differences in your parenting practices after your family went to the United States?
- If any, what are the main causes of such changes? If not, why?
How often do you communicate with your children? And how?
How do you interact and maintain emotional closeness with your children abroad?
How do you feel that you live apart from your children?
What are the positive and negative aspects that you found as you stay in Korea alone as a transnational father?
Can you define the ideal mothers? And the ideal fathers?
- Do you feel that you fulfill this ideal? Why/why not? If so, how does this work despite the distance?
- Do you feel that your wife fulfills this ideal? Why/why not?

V. HOUSEWORK
Now, let me ask you about your housework.
How many hours do you spend doing housework each day?
Can you describe what kinds of housework you perform each day?
Please, tell me about the division of household labor between you and your wife.
How did you share housework when you lived together with your wife in Korea?
- Are there any changes in the time and the types of housework you perform as you live apart from your wife? If so, what lead to such changes?
How do you share housework when you or your wife visits each other?
- Are there any changes in the time and the types of housework you perform compared to when you live apart from your wife? If so, what lead to such changes?
How do you feel about your current performance of housework?

VI. LEGAL STATUS AND REMITTANCES
Finally, I would like you to discuss temporary visa status of your family in the United States and remittances (income sent to families in different countries).
What types of visa does your wife currently hold?
- Can you explain the reason why she holds that visa?
- How do you feel about her visa status?
Do you send any remittances to your family in the United States? If so, how much do you send? And how often do you send remittances?
- How does your wife use the remittances? Please explain percentage-wise.
- Do you find any differences in your pattern and the size of spending after your family went to the United States?
- Do you earn additional money after your family went to the United States? If so, how? And how much does your additional income contribute to your household economy?
- Can you tell me how you feel about your current financial situation?
- How much does your family rely on remittances from you? Is this their only way of making a living in the United States? Or does your wife also work in the United States to earn additional money to support the family? If so, how? If not, why?
- Has your wife’s economic dependence on you increased or decreased after her migration? Does such change have any impact on your spousal relationship?
  - When does your family plan to return to Korea?
  - Does your wife plan to return alone? Or will she return with children? Please explain why.

VII. AFTER FAMILY REUNIFICATION
This part only applies to wild geese fathers who are currently living together with their wives in Korea.
  - How do you feel about your spousal separation decision?
  - When did your family decide to return to Korea? Why?
  - Can you tell me whether you achieved your goal through migration? If so, how? If not, why?
  - How does your family’s migration affect your relationship with your wife after reunification?
  - How does your family migration affect your relationship with your children after reunification?
  - Have you returned to your previous division of household labor tasks or time spent, or are these things different? Why?
  - Has your wife returned to paid work?

This was a very informative interview. Are there any topics or issues you would like to discuss further? Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTION GUIDELINE

1. Please keep confidential of all the interview contents. Protecting information of each interviewee is very important.

2. Please save each interview transcript as a docx format. Please do not save the transcript as a 97-2003 word version.

3. Please transcribe the interview word for word. Please NEVER summarize the interviewee’s answer.

4. Please refer to the sample transcript that I send you when you transcribe.

5. Format: Please use Times New Roman format, size 9, and insert the page number at the bottom of each page.

6. Please transcribe laughs, sighs as well. However, you do not have to spend too much time on minor single details. Please balance well between the detail of interview and the time you spend on it.

7. If you cannot hear well the conversation from the audio file while you are transcribing, please mark that part as [inaudible] and highlight it as yellow. Since I need to listen to it again, please specify the time of inaudible part.

8. Please send your transcript after you transcribe the interview. Then, please remove the audio files that I send to you as well as your transcript files from your computer. In order to protect the privacy of my interviewees, these files should be deleted.

9. After I receive your transcript, I will write a check and send it to you. The check will be payable to ***, as you requested. As we talked on the phone, I will pay $** per hour-length interview.

10. If you have any questions or concerns while you are transcribing, please feel free to contact me at my phone number or email.

11. By signing below, we both understand and agree the terms of our transcribing contract.

Interviewer: Se Hwa Lee  Transcriber:

Date:  Date:
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