Transnational Pursuit of Fuller Lives: LBTQ Migration, Family Building, and Gender Identity Affirmation in South Korea

by

Chelle Jones

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Sociology)
in the University of Michigan
2026

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Barbara Anderson, Co-Chair
Professor Jaeeun Kim, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Erin Cech
Professor Fatma Müge Göcek
Associate Professor Gayle Rubin

Chelle Jones

mlejones@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2402-8548

© Chelle Jones 2026

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Tom Brown.

Acknowledgements

There are so many wonderful people and programs to thank for their work to help me prepare this dissertation. I am grateful to the funders who supported the dissertation project. I was the recipient of a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Grant, the U.S. Department of State Fulbright Grant, and the Social Sciences Korea Consortium Human Rights Fellowship. I also received generous funding from the Center for the Education of Women+ Scholarship and the University of Michigan Nam Center's Core University Program through the Republic of Korea Ministry of Education and Academy of Korean Studies, Korean Studies Promotion Service (AKS-2016-OLU-2240001).

First, I could never say enough to thank my wonderful dissertation co-chairs, but I hope they know how deeply I appreciate all the effort they put into my training and wellbeing. **Barbara Anderson** has been an incredible advocate for me during my graduate studies, always thinking about my best interests and supporting me through the tough times while celebrating my successes. I always tell graduate students that critique is an academic love language, and **Jaeeun Kim** is the reason why. She spent so very many hours helping me improve my skills in all of the critical ways that have equipped me to produce important scholarship. I've never met an educator as dedicated to teaching others how to write effectively. The articles published out of this dissertation won awards, thanks to her training. Most importantly, she always makes me feel *seen*, in my writing, and as a *person*, I couldn't ask for a more invested mentor.

Next, I thank my dissertation committee members for their contribution to this work. **Erin Cech** ran the Gender & Sexuality Workshop in the Department of Sociology at a time when my ideas about gender accountability were forming. **Fatma Müge Göcek** taught the postcolonial theory course that helped me think critically about the Global North evaluation of South Korea in terms of its LGBTQ rights record. **Gayle Rubin** taught me to think about the history and geographies that shape LGBTQ space. So many educators have raised me up, but the five on this committee made my work possible, I am forever grateful for their instructive critiques and kind encouragement.

I fear there is not enough space or time to thank all of my colleagues and the interdisciplinary communities that contributed to my scholarship at the University of Michigan. My work had a few homes on campus, such as the Department of Sociology Gender & Sexuality workshop, Institute for Research on Women and Gender's Community of Scholars, the Sweetland Dissertation Writing Institute, the sociology department Professional Writing for Sociologists course, and the many Rackham Merit Fellow Write-Ins that I attended. I also found a home with the undergraduates I worked with in the Sociology Undergraduate Research Opportunity and Sociology Opportunity for Undergraduate Leadership programs. I mentored students - Margaret Beste, Adrian Beyer, Emily Garcia, Celia Morones, Alezeh Mumtaz, Victor Pastrana, Izziah Thabath, and Sethe Zachman – who worked with my original data. I'm grateful for their efforts. I am also grateful to the sociology department staff for their ongoing and critical support during my years of study. Departmental offices were always welcoming.

My friends were always supportive. If you are reading this, your name does not appear here, but hopefully I have made you *feel* the impact you have had on me. I'm grateful for the sexual migration study group. I especially thank my accountability partners, who kept me motivated as I crossed the finish line. I'm thankful for the sociology 2014 cohort that eased my transition into doctoral studies.

My family has done so much to encourage me. I can never adequately express my love and appreciation for your sacrifices over the years. Especially Bryan, my favorite editor.

Finally, my deepest thanks to the LGBTQ migrants and South Korean citizens who supported this dissertation by participating and sharing their experiences with me. I learned so much from my respondents and appreciated their encouragement, so much.

Table of Contents

Dedication ii

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract viii

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Queer Migration Literature 7

Multinational and Multistage Migration Strategies 9

Queer Family Building and Jigsaw Migration 12

Gender Accountability, Boundaries, and Queer Community Membership 14

South Korean Case 19

LGBTQ Rights and Queer Communities 19

Migration and Citizenship Policy 20

Public Safety and Access to Healthcare 21

Methods and Data 22

Ethnography and Participant Observation Online 23

Interviews 24

Reflection on My Positionality 26

Contributions 28

Chapter Overview 31

Chapter 2 LBTQ 'Jigsaw' Migration to South Korea 34

Introduction 34

Pieces in the Puzzle of Queer Family Migration 37

Sexuality, Class, and National Origin in Family Migration Policy 37
Family Migration without Family Reunification 38
LBTQ Migration in South Korea 42
Socioeconomic Policies Draw Migrants to Korea 42
Student Visas Enable Migration 45
Forum Shopping for Queer Kinship Rights 47
How Jigsaw Migration is Used to Assemble a Family 51
Unable to Cohabit Due to Weak Passports 54
Conclusion 55
Chapter 3 Outsider Exemption: Transgender Migrants and Gender Accountability in South Korea 59
Introduction 59
Gender Accountability, Intersectionality, and Boundaries 62
Healthcare Access and Transgender Migration 63
Korean Gender Ideology, Trans Rights, and Medical Tourism 64
Analysis 66
Affordable, Accessible, and Timely Trans Healthcare in Korea 66
Local Community that Affirms Gender Identity 68
Public Safety 70
TGNC+ Migrants as 'Exempt Outsiders' to Korea's Gender System 72
Being 'Exempt' from Family Expectations While in Korea 75
The Racialized Limits of Exemption to Gender Accountability 76
Conclusion 78
Chapter 4 Lesbian Community Building Strategies and Boundary Maintenance in South Korea 82
Introduction 82
Contextualizing the Rise of Lesbian Spaces in Korea 84

Competing Needs for Visibility and Safety 86
Boundaries and Exclusion in Queer Space 88
Safe Lesbian Community Building in South Korea 90
Seoul's Segregated LGBTQ Spaces 90
Gayborhoods: "No Women, No Trans, No Foreigners, No Army" 91
Spatial Safety Strategies in Lesbian Neighborhoods 94
The Importance of Lesbian Online Communities 100
Online Community Building Strategies 100
Private Online Networks 101
Membership Vetting 102
Dating and Privacy Tools 103
Safety Strategies and Boundary Maintenance 103
Conclusion 108
Chapter 5 Conclusion 111
Summary 112
Contributions 116
Scope of Generalization, Limitations, and Future Research 118
Appendix: Respondent Demographic Information 121
Bibliography 126

Abstract

My dissertation examines how trans, gender nonconforming (TGNC+) and lesbian, bisexual and queer women (LBQ) skilled labor migrants in South Korea negotiate different policy regimes governing sexual minority and migrant's rights, as they pursue employment, gender identity affirmation, maintain mixed-citizenship relationships abroad, and connect to local queer community kinship structures. I ask three questions: Why do LBTQ migrants choose South Korea, not known for LGBTQ rights, as a destination country? How do the gender, race/ethnicity, class, and national origin of LBTQ migrants shape their strategies to build families, despite the lack of local legal recognition? How do local boundary-making and membership politics affect LBTQ migrants' experience of gender affirmation and queer kinship in Korea? To answer these questions, I draw on 16 months of ethnographic research in South Korea's LGBTQ communities and 86 interviews with LBTQ migrants in South Korea conducted between 2015 and 2018, and participant observation in online LGBTQ forums since 2014. This dissertation highlights the complex strategies that LBTQ families and individuals employ to overcome constraints imposed by their fragmented citizenship, intersectional positioning in social hierarchies, and changing policies around the world regulating their access to employment, family formation, and healthcare.

I present several arguments in this dissertation to answer my research questions. First, I argue that Korea serves as an attractive destination for LGBTQ migrants both from the Global South and the Global North. Although queer migrants from countries where being LGBTQ is criminalized aspire to migrate directly to so-called LGBTQ-friendly countries in the West, they often find it prohibitively challenging because immigration controls discriminate on the basis of class, nationality, and sexuality. For LGBTQ migrants from the Global North, the push factors have to do with the enduring constraints on their LGTBQ rights, the discrimination they face results in underemployment and vulnerability to violence, and the challenges of accessing assistive reproductive technology and gender affirming healthcare. I also argue that LGBTQ migrants find Korea to be an attractive steppingstone country because although LGBTQ rights

are lacking, there is no criminalization of LGBTQ people, and South Korea is regarded as a relatively safer country with an advanced healthcare infrastructure that includes transition care. I further argue that the local lesbian community safety strategies contribute considerably to the feeling that South Korea is safer for LGBTQ people than some destinations in the West.

Second, I argue that South Korea's migration policy recruits educational migrants and high-skilled workers, via more generous visa-waiver regimes than in the West, making it easier for LGBTQ migrants to migrate legally to Korea, make their living, save for the future, and cohabit with their family members before pursuing onward migration to a country that recognizes their family rights.

Third, by forum shopping in nearby countries, queer migrants are able to access resources out of reach in South Korea and their countries of origin. I call this strategy 'jigsaw migration.' Jigsaw migrants use one country as a home base while they forum shop in other countries nearby to assemble the pieces required to have a fuller life. These puzzle pieces can involve accruing educational credentials, seeking employment or establishing a business, and accessing resources for family building.

Finally, I find that due to their 'exempt outsider' position in South Korean society, TGNC+ migrants are not held to the same gender norms as cisgender Korean citizens, enabling their desired gender performance. Boundaries based on national origin, race/ethnicity and class acquire greater salience, while their nonconformity in terms of gender and sexuality recedes, in their interaction with South Korean natives, subjecting them to a weaker degree of gender accountability.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on queer migration by pushing beyond the limited focus on Global South-to-North migration. Most of the literature on queer migration considers migration from the Global South to the Global North, but these cases can obscure the pathways of geographically- and resource- constrained migrants who cannot migrate directly to North America or Western Europe. Focusing on an unexplored case following the reverse route, namely, from the Global North, reveals the push factors that shape LGBTQ migration such as enduring inequalities in the Global North. This also reveals unexpected routes that LGBTQ migrants from the Global South pursue when they cannot relocate directly to Western Europe or North America. In South Korea they enjoy freedom from the criminalization of LGBTQ people they often experience in their origin countries.

My dissertation also contributes to queer and family migration literature by showing that queer families pursue multistage and multi-sited migration strategies, because they often exist outside of legal recognition due to the lack of same sex union recognition, which affects the direction and pace of their migration. LBTQ jigsaw migrants turn to employment and student visas, temporary visa runs to nearby destinations, and forum shopping among different legal and geographic jurisdictions to assemble their fragmented citizenship and build family or pursue gender affirming care.

Next, I contribute the jigsaw migration concept to the migration literature. Jigsaw migration reveals the inequality within the LGBTQ migrant population, based on queer migrant's intersectional positioning according to the axes of national origin, race/ethnicity, and class. I highlight how their intersectional position in multiple hierarchies determines the complexity of LBTQ strategies, such as how smoothly they can move to their desired destinations, how stable their plans can be, and whether or not they have to wait to achieve their goals, such as family building. The intersectional lens of the dissertation also enables us to examine how the primary frames such as race/ethnicity, gender, and class – which coordinate interactions, can shift the intersectional social positioning of migrants in their origin countries and Korea. Finally, I reveal that TGNC+ migrants from the Global North may enjoy less accountability to their gender if they relocate to a destination where they are viewed as temporary sojourners not held responsible for reproducing gender norms. Intersectionality and boundary studies help us uncover the membership politics of the local lesbian community, which prioritizes the safety of its members, yet still stives to achieve inclusion of migrants.

Chapter 1 Introduction

At an event for lesbian, bisexual, queer and trans women who love women in Seoul, I met a Burmese couple composed of a self-identified lesbian woman, Nan, and a transgender man, Arkar. Like many of the migrant transmen I spoke to about their participation in Korea's LGBTQ communities, Arkar confided that he was not sure whether he really belonged in a lesbian bar because he identifies as transmasculine. But, since several friends were attending this event, which was co-organized by a Korean and an American (me), he decided to enjoy a night out with his fiancé. Arkar expected that gender boundaries at the bars and clubs would be relaxed because of the mixed citizenship group of attendees, despite the usual membership politics of lesbian spaces in South Korea that exclude transgender patrons. And technically, Arkar's ID card, which is often used as a major screening mechanism at the entrance to lesbian bars, indicated he was assigned female at birth.[1] Arkar later told me why the couple came to Korea. They had hoped to build a family together, but this seemed impossible and unsafe at home in Myanmar. They tried to relocate to an LGBTQ-friendly country in the West, but they were unable to do so due to a lack of financial resources and necessary social networks. As an alternative, they relocated to South Korea, which they considered safer than Myanmar because there was no local policy criminalizing same sex behavior. Nan and Arkar migrated on separate work and student visas which facilitated the recruitment of skilled workers from elsewhere in Asia to work in tech and tourism industries. They hoped that the credentials they would accumulate in South Korea could facilitate their future migration to Australia or Canada. There, they hoped to marry and have children together, which was not possible in Korea, due to lack of recognition of same-sex marriage and restrictions on IVF and adoption that prohibited LGBTQ people from building families.

Another LGBTQ couple that I met shared their journey from the West to South Korea. This couple was composed of a self-identified Black lesbian American, Zuri and her Black transmasculine American partner, Isaiah, who initially also identified as a lesbian woman but later transitioned in Korea to be transmasculine. Despite having master's degrees, they both suffered underemployment and a lack of health care in the U.S. and decided to relocate to South Korea to teach English together, taking advantage of South Korea's skilled migrant labor recruitment policies. They were referred by a network of queer friends to an LGBTQ-friendly English school where they could answer South Korea's demand for 'native' English-speaking instructors. Before arriving in Korea, Isaiah wasn't sure that his gender presentation would be acceptable to locals. However, he found himself feeling safer and more comfortable with his gender presentation in Korea. His workplace felt TGNC-friendly. His physique, style and presentation also deviated less from the masculinities portrayed in South Korean media than of Black men in America. Moreover, in addition to accumulating financial resources, he was also able

[1] Arkar could not change his sex category on his ID card because this is not allowed in Myanmar, and could not change his ID in Korea because he is not a Korean citizen.

to access gender identity affirming healthcare at local clinics that were out of his reach in the U.S. due to their prohibitive cost and his fear of medical gatekeeping.

In the vignettes above, both Arkar and Isaiah came to Korea with their partners, using migration as a strategy to pursue resources to cope with discrimination they faced as transmen in their origin countries. In their origin countries, in both the Global North and Global South, these transgender men were unable to comfortably perform gender in ways that affirmed their own sense of self, and they feared violence and criminalization, which served as push factors for their migration. Both couples were able to cohabit in Korea because they came on separate working visas, which was possible because South Korean visas prove to be easier to access than those in more 'desirable' destinations like Australia or Canada. Moreover, both couples found that their sexuality and gender performances were more acceptable to locals in South Korea than in their origin countries. In addition, they encountered affordable healthcare access in Korea, which enabled further gender identity affirmation. Also attractive about their lives in Korea were their relatively easy access to the safety-focused LGBTQ+ communities they encountered as they sought to establish ties to locals and establish queer kinship networks.

The experiences of LBTQ+ migrants in Korea like Arkar and Isaiah pose an important puzzle that has been underexplored in the literature on queer migration. Queer migration scholarship suggests that the enactment of legal protections for LGBTQ people is an important pull factor for queer migration to the Global North. Korea, however, does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, nor recognize same-sex couples. Yet, the LBTQ migrants in my study not only choose to live in Korea but also feel more comfortable because of their gender identity affirmation and access to a vibrant lesbian community that is often inclusive of 'outsiders.' Why is this the case?

My dissertation examines how trans, gender nonconforming (TGNC+) and lesbian, bisexual and queer women (LBQ) skilled labor migrants[2] in Korea negotiate different social and

[2] My respondents all came to South Korea on labor, student, or diplomatic visas, but hail from a wide range of countries and are engaged in a variety of industries. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will refer to my respondents using the umbrella term 'migrant.' Some respondents might be more commonly characterized in the migration literature as expats, contract workers, diplomats, international students, alien residents, or marriage migrants, depending on the circumstances of their stay in South Korea.

policy regimes governing sexual minority and migrant's rights, as they secure employment, maintain mixed-citizenship relationships, pursue gender identity affirmation, and build a network of support abroad. I ask the following questions: (1) Why do LBTQ migrants choose South Korea, not known for LGBTQ rights, as a destination country? (2) How do the race/ethnicity, class, and national origin of LBTQ migrants shape their strategies to build families, despite the lack of local legal recognition? (3) How do local boundary-making and membership politics affect LBTQ migrants' experience of gender affirmation and queer kinship in Korea?

To answer these questions, I draw on 16 months of ethnographic research in South Korea's LGBTQ communities, online participant observation of online networks for LGBTQ people in Korea since 2015, and 86 interviews with LBTQ migrants in South Korea conducted between 2015 and 2018. I focus systematically on the following comparisons that reveal important intersectional differences in LBTQ migrants' lives in Korea: (1) comparison of LBTQ migrants' experiences by their country of origin; (2) comparison by their race/ethnicity, class, and gender identity, and (3) comparison of LBTQ migrant experiences to those of cisgender gay men and heterosexual women migrants as documented in the existing literature. The dissertation reveals the distinctive strategies pursued by multiply marginalized LBTQ migrants. The dissertation further sheds light on the complex racial, class, gender, and national origin politics that underlie social boundary making in Korea, which impacts the everyday life of LBTQ migrants. Finally, the dissertation reveals the complex safety strategies queer community members pursue to protect one another, creating and maintaining safe queer spaces and queer kinship.

I show that Korea serves as an attractive destination for LGBTQ migrants both from the Global South and the Global North, who envision South Korea as a steppingstone for their onward migration to a country that would recognize their LGBTQ rights. Although LGBTQ migrants from the countries where same sex sexual behavior and gender nonconformity are criminalized aspired to migrate directly to what they regard as more LGBTQ-friendly countries in the West, they often found it prohibitively challenging to migrate to these countries. Immigration controls discriminate against aspiring migrants on the basis of class, nationality, and sexuality, making it difficult for them to migrate. For LGBTQ migrants from the Global North, their push factors for migration out of their origin countries have to do with the enduring constraints on their LGTBQ rights, the discrimination they face that results in underemployment

and vulnerability to violence, and the challenges of accessing assistive reproductive technology (ART) and gender affirming healthcare. These LGBTQ migrants find Korea to be an attractive steppingstone country because, although LGBTQ rights are lacking, there is no criminalization of LGBTQ people, and South Korea is regarded as a relatively safer country than other countries they have lived in. More importantly, Korea's migration policy recruiting educational migrants and high-skilled workers, including those who can teach English as 'native' speakers, and more generous visa-waiver regimes, make it easier for LGBTQ migrants to migrate legally to Korea, make their living, save for future, and cohabit with their family members. Also important is the easily accessible and affordable healthcare, which includes ART and gender affirming care, in Korea or in nearby destinations like Thailand. However, LGBTQ migrants largely consider Korea as a temporary steppingstone, not where they want to permanently settle because of the lack of legal recognition.

The lack of legal recognition is why LGBTQ migrants who want to build or maintain family must develop innovative strategies, especially if their family comprises multiple citizenship holders. They pursue distinctive migration strategies that include both step-by-step relocations across countries and "forum shopping" in nearby countries-- the search for legal jurisdictions that may be favorable to one's rights claim-- to accrue economic and legal resources for onward migration. To capture this multistage and multisited migration strategy, I develop the concept of "jigsaw migration." Jigsaw migrants use one country as a home base while they forum shop in other countries nearby to assemble the puzzle pieces required to have a fuller life. These puzzle pieces can involve accruing educational credentials, seeking employment or establishing a business, and accessing resources for family building, such as ART, IVF, or surrogacy. Jigsaw migration reflects the uneven LGBTQ rights across the globe, which push LGBTQ migrants to seek other destinations to assemble resources denied in other countries. It also represents various privileges given to certain passport holders. LGBTQ migrants from the Global North, especially those from English-speaking countries, can leverage their citizenship and the symbolic capital that English language proficiency gives them to secure gainful employment in countries like Korea as "high-skilled" workers. This enables them to save money to afford to relocate to LGBTQ-friendly cities in the Global North. They also enjoy greater cross-border mobility for short-term trips for forum-shopping. In contrast, LGBTQ migrants from the Global South like Nan and Arkar find it more difficult to engage in this jigsaw migration

strategy. This difference reflects the importance of individual migrants' intersectional positioning in local and global migration hierarchies. The intersectional lens is key to understanding how local boundary-making and membership politics affect LBTQ migrants' experience of gender affirmation and queer kinship in Korea.

Intersectionality also helps us to see that public safety and gender affirming healthcare make Korea an attractive alternative destination for LGBTQ migrants. This in turn makes it easier for them to feel freer in performing gender as they desire in Korea than in their origin countries. This is because the boundaries based on national origin, race/ethnicity and class acquire greater salience, while their nonconformity in terms of gender and sexuality recedes. In their interaction with South Korean natives, these LBTQ migrations are subject to a weaker degree of gender accountability (as compared to LGBTQ Korean natives). To capture this phenomenon, I develop the concept of "outsider exemption" by combining the literature on gender accountability from 'doing gender' scholarship with the literature on primary frames from boundary studies.

However, intersectional positioning in local social hierarchies is also important in determining the degree to which LBTQ migrants' outsider exemption is stable or precarious. I contrast the experiences of LBTQ migrants from the West and Southeast Asia. For Southeast Asian migrants, although their racial difference from South Korean natives would seem to grant them outsider exemption, it was the case that the gendered racialization of Southeast Asian migrant women affects the precarity of their outsider exemption. Instead of merely being outsiders, they are held accountable to gender in ways that are shaped by the social positioning of Southeast Asian marriage migrants in Korean society and media. Southeast Asian migrants are treated to a more stringent form of gender accountability which makes their status as exempt outsider precarious. In contrast, for example, Black Americans still enjoy the prestige derived from their American citizenship at the same time that they may experience othering based on their race in Korea. The intersection of race/ethnicity, nativity, national origin, and gender/sexuality is also critical for understanding LGBTQ migrants' inclusion into and exclusion from queer community spaces in Korea and how they build a community of support, or queer kinship, in this context.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on queer migration by pushing beyond the limited focus on South-to-North migration. Most of the literature on queer migration considers

cases of migration from the Global South to the Global North, but these cases can obscure the pathways of geographically- and resource- constrained migrants who cannot migrate directly to North America or Western Europe. Focusing on an unexplored case following the reverse route reveals the push factors that shape LGBTQ migration such as enduring inequalities in the Global North that prevent LGBTQ people from fully enjoying their legal rights in their countries of origin. This also reveals unexpected routes that LGBTQ migrants from the Global South pursue when they cannot relocate directly to Western Europe or North America. In South Korea they enjoy greater legal rights because there are no laws in South Korea criminalizing LGBTQ people.

My dissertation also contributes to queer and family migration literature by showing that queer families pursue multistage and multi-sited migration processes, because they exist outside of legal recognition, which affects the direction and pace of their migration. Instead of taking advantage of family reunification provisions, LBTQ jigsaw migrants turn to employment and student visas, temporary visa runs to nearby destinations, and forum shopping among different legal and geographic jurisdictions to assemble their fragmented citizenship and build family or pursue gender affirming care. Finally, the jigsaw migration concept reveals the inequality within the LGBTQ migrant population, based on queer migrant's intersectional positioning according to the axes of national origin, race/ethnicity, and class. I highlight how their intersectional position in multiple hierarchies determines the complexity of LBTQ strategies, such as how smoothly they can move to their desired destinations, how stable their plans can be, and whether or not they have to wait to achieve their goals.

This dissertation brings an intersectional lens to the literature on social boundaries. The intersectional lens enables us to examine how primary frames – such as race, gender, and class, which coordinate interactions between insiders and outsiders – can shift the intersectional positioning of migrants. The high gender accountability TGNC+ migrants had experienced in their origin countries differs from the lower gender accountability they experience in Korea. In their origin countries, TGNC+ migrants faced discrimination and violence based on their gender nonconformity that often resulted in underemployment and other socioeconomic barriers to their gender affirmation. Notably, TGNC+ migrants from the Global North may enjoy less accountability to their gender places like South Korea, if they relocate to a destination where they are viewed as temporary sojourners not held responsible for reproducing gender norms. This

'exemption' from gender roles enables their freer expression of gender identity in the destination country.

Intersectionality and boundary studies also help us uncover the membership politics of the local lesbian community, which prioritizes the safety of its members, yet still stives to achieve inclusion of migrant clientele. The existing literature on anti-LGBTQ harassment and violence has not paid enough attention to how strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can themselves contribute to boundary exclusions within the LGBTQ community. I argue that analysis sensitive to intersectional marginalization based on race, class, or migration status helps us to reveal how strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can produce exclusion within LGBTQ and lesbian communities by making them difficult to access.

The remainder of this introduction consists of four sections: In Section 1, the review of literature, I lay out my key arguments and discuss the main bodies of literature that my dissertation builds upon. These include multistage and multination migration, 'doing gender,' and boundary scholarship. In Section 2, the Korean case presentation, I present the conditions that make Korea an attractive steppingstone destination for LGBTQ migrants by highlighting local LGBTQ rights, migration policy, public safety, and healthcare system. In Section 3, I summarize my data collection and analytic methods. I also discuss how my own social position affects both. After presenting the contributions of the dissertation in Section 4, I briefly lay out the chapter outline.

Queer Migration Literature

Queer theorists analyze how cisheteronormativity produces unequal legal, economic, and social opportunities for LGBTQ people. A robust literature on queer migration has grown out of this body of work, which makes two key points. First, the queer migration literature has shown that push factors driving LGBTQ migration derive from discrimination, persecution, and a desire to explore sexuality and identity more freely in a country imagined to be freer (Carillo, 2018; Howe, 2007; Brennan, 2004; Cabezas, 1999; Cantu, 2002), especially for queer migrants from the Global South. These queer individuals try to relocate to destinations where they have greater access to socioeconomic and healthcare resources, and/or more favorable LGBTQ rights regimes.

Second, the literature points out that family migration policies in many Western countries remain heteronormative (Canaday, 2009), making it difficult for LGBTQ individuals to migrate

to their desired destinations through family reunification provisions. Family reunification is only available to those whose blood ties or marriages are recognized, which is often a barrier for LGBTQ people, despite the increasing number of countries recognizing same sex unions and marriages (Kollman, 2016). Even policies that enable same sex couples to use family reunification policies may contribute to maintaining the dominance of white middle-class cisheteronormativity in the West (Luibheid, 2002; Bonjour & De Hart, 2013; Boucher, 2016; Giametta, 2017; Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018). Immigration officials scrutinize prospective LGBTQ immigrant families for evidence of whether a couple has 'come out,' been recognized by their family and friends, and lived together—practices which may not reflect the social norms of their origin communities (Seuffert, 2010). These legal criteria for migration disadvantage migrants from countries where there is a heavier social stigma attached to coming out or to premarital cohabitation.

These key insights are quite important to our understanding of queer migration. The existing literature, however, is limited in a few respects. First, the literature samples too narrow a range of cases to fully account for important trends in queer migration. Much of the literature on LGBTQ migrants focuses on migration to North America or Western Europe, reinforcing narratives of progressive 'LGBTQ-friendly' Western destinations. Less research follows the reverse route, that is, queer migration *out of* North America or Western Europe. Queer scholars have shown, that even in states that do enact LGBTQ rights policies, LGBTQ people continue to face worse outcomes compared to their heterosexual peers in mental health, socioeconomic wellbeing, and vulnerability to assault (Bosia, 2015). These challenges can drive migration. Engel (2016) refers to all these challenges as 'fragmented citizenship' whereby LGBTQ people are unable to fully enjoy their rights and social safety nets. These conditions can also serve as push factors for LGBTQ individuals to leave so-called LGBTQ-friendly countries, especially if they experience discrimination based also on race/ethnicity, class, and gender, as the example of Zuri and Isaiah suggests. As a result, we know little about the push factors of LGBTQ migrants out of the West.

Moreover, the existing research has not paid enough attention to how national origin and class, compounded by sexuality and gender, also operate as key axes of exclusion in queer migrants' access to LGBTQ-friendly destinations. National origin-based restrictions on visas can make it quite difficult for migrants with weaker passports, such as those from the Global South,

to migrate to destinations they desire. Nan and Arkar are from Myanmar, and their citizenship posed significant challenges to their plan to migrate to North America or Australia. This was because they could not establish sufficient funds to sponsor family migration, even if they had been recognized as married. Nor did they have kin in the West who could sponsor them.

In addition to national origin, intersecting socioeconomic and gender discrimination operate as key axes of exclusion. Migrant families with lower socioeconomic resources struggle to navigate the economic rationales that increasingly dominate Western migration regimes. This requires that they prove they will not become a burden on the state and have a reliable financial sponsor. This requirement particularly disadvantages women seeking to sponsor visas for their family members because gendered labor market structures make them less likely to be able to meet this sponsorship criteria (Kofman, 2018). These findings suggest that families headed by two women or that include transgender family members may especially struggle to meet not only the heteronormative cultural norms, but also economic criteria established in family migration policies. These findings point to the need for more research on families headed by two women or transgender sponsors that immigrant and mixed citizenship families may face intersecting socioeconomic and gender discrimination as they pursue family reunification even in countries that might be accessible or recognize their rights.

Multinational and Multistage Migration Strategies

How does South Korea emerge as an alternative destination in this context of heteronormative policy and immigration control that push people like Zuri and Isaiah out of the U.S. and make Australia and Canada hard to access for people like Nan and Arkar? When migrants cannot relocate directly to their most desired destinations, they have several options. They could give up and stay in place or they could pursue unauthorized migration. But they could also migrate in several steps leading up to a desired destination— a possibility that has long been neglected in queer migration scholarship that has focused largely on one-way migration that involves crossing a single border or circular migration between two countries (such as Mexico and the United States). South Korea becomes an alternative destination in the context of this last strategy, whereby LGBTQ migrants consider Korea as a steppingstone in their journey to ascend a perceived destination hierarchy step-by-step.

There is an emerging literature on this step-by-step migration. Scholars have begun to explore a distinctive migration strategy employed by capital-constrained migrants, who have

some resources, but not enough to directly and immediately relocate to the country they prefer. Rather than remaining at home or migrating without legal authorization, they pursue what sociologist Mary Anju Paul (2015; 2017) calls 'stepwise' migration, which consists of a series of relocations during which migrants acquire additional capital for onward migration. These aspiring labor migrants take 'stepwise' journeys to more accessible countries first, as they continue to pursue a desired destination country. They build additional "migration-facilitating capital" (Kim, J. 2018) in these steppingstone countries to make their next move to a more desirable destination.

Paul focuses on the stepwise journeys of domestic workers from the Southeast Asian region. This concept has also been applied to those who use coethnic ties that confer permanent residency or dual citizenship in ancestral home countries (Kim J. 2019; Harpaz 2019). However, we might critique the stepwise migration literature for assuming a linear progressive journey, when in reality the resources available to migrants dictate how well they can realize their goals. Sociologist Shanti Robertson (2019) provides an alternative concept that captures how multinational migration is often experienced as staggered and winding for what she calls "middling" migrants: "mostly skilled and educated, and predominantly from the middle-class in their home countries" (Robertson 2019: 172) but who are not sufficiently resourced to progress following the hierarchy of their desired destinations. For example, some aspiring labor migrants first pursue international degrees or study at language schools as a strategy to facilitate future migration and permanent settlement in what they perceive as more desirable destinations (Liu-Farrer 2009). This enables student-migrants to maintain a student visa status while accumulating educational credentials and work experience to eventually secure employment and permanent residency in the countries where they study or move onward to other destinations (Robertson and Runganaikaloo 2014).

Especially in countries that hesitate to formally recruit labor migrants in response to labor shortages, international education serves as a state-sanctioned pathway to recruit and train skilled migrant labor (Liu-Farrer & Tran, 2019). Canada and Australia stand out as examples of countries where this takes place. This 'education-migration nexus' enables student-migrants to maintain a temporary student visa status abroad while accumulating education and work experience to eventually secure permanent residency (Robertson & Runganaikaloo 2014). In the case of Australia, student migrants experience their lives as being in limbo. This is because they

must endure extended periods with only temporary visa status and frequently have to adapt their goals amidst changes in migration policy (Robertson & Runganaikaloo 2014). This is not the linear progression that the concept of 'stepwise migration' leads us to expect. It instead reveals the staggering and winding paths experienced by 'middling' education migrants being constrained by a lack of resources.

In sum, the concept of "staggered migration" emphasizes that multinational migration can be nonlinear, due to the various disadvantages and indeterminacy that migrants face and because migrants' aspirations and goals change as they experience this staggering. This insight is especially helpful for the analysis of LBTQ migration, as they often have to rely on various visa-types and experience suspension and frequent changes in their migration plans and aspirations.

What makes certain countries like South Korea attractive steppingstones to LBTQ migrants who cannot access LGBTQ-friendly destinations immediately and instead pursue multinational migration? These are likely to be countries that aggressively recruit international students or skilled workers, and also have a lower bar for admission for short-term travelers than top destination countries in the Global North. Migration routes through overseas education are shaped by migrant credentials and by the higher education institutions that pursue foreign students to promote 'globalization' of their campuses. Recent work shows that in this neoliberal context of higher education globalization, universities try to recruit international students to generate revenue, rather than to acquire talented future workers (Choi 2020; Kim S. 2023).

Lesser acknowledged is the fact that these migration regimes often privilege citizens of powerful countries in direct and indirect ways . For "high-skilled" labor migrants, cultural capital, such as skills and credentials, and changing industry demands are important to securing a work permit and employment visa. Work permit and employment visa application policies also evaluate migrants' socioeconomic status when granting or denying permission to sojourn abroad. These policies require that migrants provide their bank statements to show they have sufficient resources to immigrate. Yet, many countries apply different requirements for visa issuance according to migrants' citizenship status. For example, Australia ranks countries and establishes different levels of economic resources that they must demonstrate in order to migrate as students. This could mean that, for example, Indian students must prove they have three years' worth of living expenses, while those coming from Isreal only have to furnish proof of one years' worth of living expenses (Neilson 2009: 433). This kind of discrimination also applies in the Korean

case. For example, in Korea it is only those from eight 'English-speaking' countries that have access to work in the English education sector, even without having experience or expertise teaching English. More indirectly, skilled labor migrants from the West may benefit from the perceived prestige associated with their cultural background and educational institutions in the West (Igarashi and Saito, 2014; Lan, 2011). Thus, work permit and employment visas reproduce and amplify not only class hierarchies among migrants from the same country, but also a citizenship hierarchy among migrants from different countries.

Some LGBTQ migrants are able to strategically mobilize powerful passports to travel for short terms. For example, the United States offers visa-less permission for up to 3-to-6 month stays for travelers from 39 countries in Europe. Therefore, citizenship is a key resource in the pursuit of skilled migration. These findings have encouraged Jaeeun Kim (2018) to argue that citizenship operates as critical social capital in global mobility regimes.

My discussion so far suggests that, in the context of multinational and multistage migration, South Korea can emerge as desirable for several reasons, especially migrants who carry highly-ranked passports. First, South Korean universities aggressively recruit international students. Second, the local education industry emerges as a feminized and simultaneously high skilled migration route for would be English teachers. No matter their human capital, these policies advantage certain passport holders over others. And finally, Korea has looser visa policies for short-term travelers, offering 3-to-6-month visa waivers for citizens from 110 countries.

Queer Family Building and Jigsaw Migration

Although I have demonstrated how South Korea can emerge as a desirable destination for LGBTQ multistage migration, we have not addressed how queer families can be made and maintained in South Korea without a same sex marriage policy. To explore this phenomenon, I turn to the literature on forum shopping which I will bring together with the multinational migration strategies discussed in the previous section in order to develop the concept that I call 'jigsaw migration.' Put simply, queer migrants need access to a variety of resources in order to keep their families together in one destination. The pieces of this puzzle include using visas other than spousal visas in order to cohabit and traveling to secure marriage certificates, as well as accessing reproductive technologies like IVF and surrogacy. It is difficult to address all these needs in a single country because there are uneven and shifting policies around the world

governing LGBTQ family making, particularly when it comes to the ability to access reproductive technologies.

LGBTQ individuals' effort to access reproductive technologies overseas has been studied in the literature on medical tourism. The high costs of reproductive technologies in the West are fundamental to this trend. For example, IVF and surrogacy in the United States can easily cost over $150,000, encouraging U.S. citizens to seek opportunities to build families abroad. The costs of these reproductive technologies are even more burdensome for LGBTQ intended parents to overcome. Although IVF is often covered by insurance for infertile heterosexual couples, LGBTQ intended parents are rarely entitled to equal coverage under their health insurance (Cardenas, 2024). However, LGBTQ medical tourists seeking ART may face legal constraints because many countries ban the use of ART by unmarried couples or explicitly deny access to same sex couples. LGBTQ intended parents face additional hurdles in having their families legally recognized as they move across countries. LGBTQ intended parents report experiencing discrimination in clinics and courtrooms as they attempt to assert their parenthood (Nahman, 2011; Schwartz, 2016). For these reasons, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minority parents typically seek that both parents be listed on their child's birth certificate and are advised to also secure parentage orders or confirmatory adoptions for non-biological parents just in case their family rights are questioned by local authorities (Schwartz, 2016; Peña-Guzman & Crozier, 2016).

The existing literature on ART tourism treats LGBTQ migrants as privileged travelers without considering the legal and social contexts in which they must build families. Much of the ART tourism literature critiques power dynamics between surrogates and intended parents. Yet it has neglected to critically examine these economic, legal, and social restrictions that LGBTQ intended parents experience (Riggs & Due, 2013; Nahman, 2016). We must also note that medical tourism is an opportunity that is not distributed evenly among LGBTQ people. A hierarchy of wealth, citizenship, and gender conformity among others shape their access to jurisdiction shopping. Wealthier queer families are more likely to be able to pursue medical tourism. And if they carry a powerful passport, they are less likely to be questioned by immigration officials. Immigration officials can be especially onerous for TGNC+ migrants that do not conform to their assigned sex, or who don't look 'authentic enough' to pass for their gender identity.

As the preceding discussion on medical tourism suggests, queer migrant strategies may be more complex than stepwise migration strategies documented in the literature. It is because LGBTQ migrants may have to make simultaneous trips that cross multiple borders in pursuit of legal and medical resources to build families. In their case, the challenge does not simply lie in the fact that their citizenship or visa statuses differ from each other (Fix & Zimmerman 2001; Rodriguez 2016; Valdivia 2019). Because of their sexual minority status, the legality of their unions or parental relationships *themselves* is unevenly recognized across borders. Therefore, 'doing family' (Strasser et al. 2009:175) in this context means more than migrant families feeling "obliged to conform to the definitions of what is a 'good' family" in their host countries. Doing family requires establishing ties to multiple legal jurisdictions that govern labor migration, family relations, and access to medical resources very differently so that they can cohabit as a family even when their family is *not* legally recognized as such by the host county. For example, they cohabit using various types of student or employment visas rather than spousal visas, acquire marriage or birth certificates in another country, and pursue ART or adoption in still another country. These are the simultaneous trips that LBTQ people make in order to build families according to the jigsaw migration strategy.

"Doing family" in this context in fact resembles forum shopping (Helfer 1999). Just like human rights petitioners choose a national, regional, or international human rights court depending on where they expect their claims can be successful, LBQ couples choose different countries to get married, have children, accrue career or educational credentials, and establish their cohabitation and economic resources, which I call 'jigsaw migration.' Jigsaw migration is a multi-sited transnational strategy mobilized by those whose spousal relationship is not fully recognized by the law and/or who cannot meet sponsorship criteria in their desired destination. Jigsaw migrants reside temporarily in one country while simultaneously assembling resources through strategic forum shopping in other countries.

Gender Accountability, Boundaries, and Queer Community Membership

How do queer migrants to South Korea access gender affirming healthcare, perform gender as they desire, and cultivate a supportive community? On face, we might expect South Korea to be a difficult place to access healthcare resources and perform gender as desired. This is because South Korea is regarded as a gender conservative country in comparison with more progressive countries commonly studied in the queer migration literature (Shin 2014). It has been

documented that South Koreans generally experience a high bar and expectation to perform femininity (Lee 2013; Song 2020) and masculinity (Suh 2016). Moreover, given the conservative and anti-LGBTQ movements in Korea, we might expect that it would be more difficult to build supportive LGBTQ communities. And yet, these assumptions are not supported by the experience of my LGBTQ migrant respondents. My findings suggest that the conventional expectation may be grounded on overly simplistic assumptions that LGBTQ freedom only comes from the legal rights of queer people. We need a sophisticated understanding of the economic, social, and cultural conditions that make access to gender affirming healthcare, desired gender performance, and supportive community possible, particularly for migrants. We must explore how gender accountability operates in transnational contexts and better understand how distinctive local community-building strategies produce boundary politics that LBTQ migrants must learn to navigate.

To advance these important inquiries and explain the puzzle of LGBTQ migrants' experience of gender accountability in transnational contexts, I turn to the literature on gender accountability and present a new theoretical framework, 'outsider exemption.' Simply put, gender accountability is the expectation that people conform to their assigned sex and gender roles (West & Zimmerman 1987). Gender accountability is especially critical for LGBTQ people because their gender presentation may not accord with their assigned sex at birth or with the prevailing gender norms. This may open them to critique or violence from those who wish to enforce gender accountability. I argue that LGBTQ migrants in countries not conventionally seen as progressive locations may nonetheless feel a lower level of accountability to gender and feel freer in performing gender as they desire for three reasons: higher level of public security; better access to gender affirming healthcare; and the boundary politics that make migrant "outsiders" less accountable to gender.

Public safety and access to gender affirming care are critical but underexplored factors that shape how LGBTQ migrants experience gender accountability. High safety social contexts are associated with "more diverse ways of displaying gender," while unsafe spaces encourage "adherence to normative gender displays, and the use of blending in and masking strategies (Marques 2019:203)." A strong sense of safety is critical to TGNC+ migrants' experience of gender accountability. In countries like the U.S., there are progressive LGBTQ rights policies, but there are also conditions like high gun ownership and violence that make it feel less safe to

LGBTQ individuals. Transgender people in the U.S., in particular, face violence from an early age, endure its threat throughout their lives, and are at risk for a variety of different kinds of violence (Stotzer 2009, Wirtz et al. 2020). Transgender people also face gatekeeping in their healthcare that prevents them from being able to transition. There are significant barriers to gender affirming healthcare that TGNC+ people must overcome in what are usually considered progressive countries. These include long wait times to receive care, limited insurance coverage, financial burden, and gatekeeping by healthcare providers. Therefore, 'LGBTQ-friendly' countries may not have the best records for either safety or healthcare access for TGNC+ people. Such conditions make for high gender accountability to one's sex assigned at birth.

TGNC+ migrants feel freer in their gender display precisely because they are regarded – and importantly, see themselves – as outsiders to Korean society. This social position as an outsider means that their gender is no longer the main criteria by which they are evaluated by other people. Instead, other categories of identity come to the fore as most important in their interactions with locals. This dissertation will explore these phenomena by focusing on how migrants can be seen as 'outsiders' to local gender norms. This can paradoxically render their gender performances as more tolerable than in their origin countries because they are not held responsible for reproducing cultural norms. This demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the salience of gender, class, race/ethnicity, and national origin boundaries to carefully analyze how gender accountability affects the experiences of LBTQ migrants.

Studies of social boundaries are useful to our study of gender performance as it relates to migrants' status as insiders or outsiders in Korean society. Boundary studies provide tools to encourage us to examine the processes through which distinct types of categorical distinction gain or lose salience in different contexts. Boundary scholarship does so by examining how gender intersects with other categories of difference such as citizenship, class, and race/ethnicity (Lorde, 1984; Anzaldúa, 1987). Because boundary studies explicitly examine insider and outsider dynamics, the field can be productively connected to gender studies by considering the contexts in which gender shapes inclusion. Attention to gender accountability in this context promises to expose the constraints under which actors 'do gender' in terms of their national origin, class, and race/ethnicity, especially in the context of migration. Boundary studies therefore encourage deep engagement with the interactional context, identifying how and with what consequences gender accountability operates.

Among the tools that boundary scholarship provides, Ridgeway's primary frames are particularly useful for studying interactions. Primary frames are "categories of person perception" that serve as cultural frames and coordinate "behavior by associating category membership with widely shared cultural beliefs about how people in one category are likely to behave compared to those in a contrasting category (Ridgeway, 2009: 148)." When people act out of accordance with cultural beliefs, they face sanctions, or accountability to difference (Ridgeway 2019). For example, for the same behavior in a boardroom, a man might be regarded as 'confident' while a woman is regarded as 'bossy' and faces social sanctions for the way they lead a team. In this hypothetical, gender comes to the fore as the most important primary frame while status in the company hierarchy recedes in salience. Ridgeway posits that there are three common primary frames in the U.S.– gender, race, and class. It is unclear whether this trifecta is important in all (trans)national settings or how their relative salience may shift as individuals' cross borders.

By being 'outsiders' to a country's local cultural roles, migrants may experience simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility in terms of these various axes of difference. On one hand, their racial/ethnic and national origin difference may become hyper visible to 'insiders' to a society, but at the same time that their appearance as temporary sojourners can make them invisible 'outsiders.' Also rendered invisible may be their gender nonconformity, which paradoxically benefits them as it enables them to 'go stealth' and not have to 'come out' and make themselves visible as transgender. Focusing on boundaries reveals important 'insider' and 'outsider' dynamics that shape primary frames and the processes of accountability as migrants 'do' gender, national origin, class, and race/ethnicity.

These complex insider-outsider dynamics can also shape LBTQ migrants' access to and cultivation of queer community in their host countries. Understanding this requires that we explore local LGBTQ community boundary politics and their attempts to avert homophobic harassment by maintaining invisibility in the social sense. Community building is very important to LGBTQIA+ people because they struggle under compulsive heterosexuality and binary gender systems that organize social structures and interactions (Rich, 1980; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Overlapping systems of oppression based on gender, sex, and sexuality marginalize LGBTQ communities (Valentine, 2007; Collins & Blige, 2016). In this context, queer spaces can emerge as a welcome reprieve, important to their survival and wellbeing.

Much of the existing scholarship on lesbian community formation examines their establishment in cities in the Global North, presenting women's rights movements that fought for the right to occupy urban and gender segregated spaces as a key context from which lesbian communities grew. The existing scholarship on LGBTQ spaces, particularly those in North America, has shown that the history of queer spaces is tied deeply to visibility politics. For example, after the repeal of Prohibition in the U.S., gay bars prioritized safety and anonymity over visibility (Achilles, 1998). Early gay bars promoted safety by occupying less trafficked or undesirable locations, deploying physical barriers to observation, controlling space through interior hallways, enacting exclusionary practices, and relying on symbols and word of mouth to be found (Weightman, 1980). These strategies were challenged in the 1960s as city planners, police and investors transformed city spaces that previously hosted sexual activity into economic centers by cracking down on 'sexual deviance' in order to drive out LGBTQ people and businesses (Rubin, 1998). In response to the crackdowns, gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements engaged in visibility politics (Ghaziani et al., 2016). By the 1970s, however, San Francisco's LGBTQ community accomplished the founding of the Castro neighborhood, where gay bars publicly advertised their presence and a quarter of a million attendees celebrated an annual Gay Freedom Day Parade (Armstrong, 2002).

Reflecting this history, Western LGBTQ movements have long emphasized 'coming out,' and visibility has become particularly central since the 1990s (Fraser, 1999). Because of the focus on these strategies in the West, it can be difficult for scholars to understand the very different queer community-building and maintenance strategies in other historical and political contexts. This limitation also makes it difficult for scholars to examine how these distinctive local strategies affect not only local LGBTQ citizens but also LGBTQ migrants. This is like the vignette about Arkar that opens this dissertation: because he is a transgender man, he felt uncomfortable or at least uncertain about visiting lesbian bars.

Boundary politics matter in LGBTQ migrants' access to and navigation of community spaces in host countries. The community-building effort made by Korean lesbian social entrepreneurs focused on producing safe spaces for lesbians. But, these safety and visibility management practices also make it difficult for outsiders like my LGBTQ respondents to access and navigate lesbian space in Korea. Moreover, as transgender men, Arkar and Isaiah's claims to

queer space bump up against the sex segregation boundaries that divide lesbian, gay, and transgender communities in Korea.

South Korean Case

LGBTQ Rights and Queer Communities

South Korea underwent rapid economic, political, and social changes over the past 40 years, emerging as a highly developed society that is nonetheless still struggling to address social inequalities. South Korea's legal record on LGBTQ rights is somewhat mixed. On one hand, South Korea does not criminalize same sex sexual behavior, as is the case in many countries in the Global South. Interestingly, South Korea took several significant early steps in the international arena to signal support for LGBTQ rights. For example, Korea was the first nation in Asia to join several multilateral statements affirming LGBTQ rights. In 2006, it was the only nation in Asia to join the UN Human Rights Council statement supporting SOGI minorities.

On the other hand, LGBTQ rights protections, often available in the West, are lacking in South Korea. There are no national legal protections from employment, housing, education, or healthcare discrimination. Accessing mental and physical health resources may be high risk for LGBTQ people, as their sexuality might be reported to their parents without permission due to a lack of protective privacy policy (Bong, 2009). National medical insurance does not cover costs associated with procedures to affirm gender identity, so transgender people pay these costs out of pocket (Na et al. 2014). Although Korea does not explicitly ban LGBTQ citizens from serving in the mandatory 21-month military draft, acclimation and acceptance in the military can be challenging for LGBTQ people. Privacy violations for LGBTQ soldiers are compounded by laws that ban sexual relationships – even consensual – among soldiers (Bong, 2009; Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Legal and cultural understandings of gender and marriage also affect LGBTQ rights. The Korean constitution defines two and only two sexes, presenting a challenge to proponents of transgender rights and gay marriage (Bong, 2009). LGBTQ Koreans therefore face intense social, legal, economic, and cultural pressure to marry heterosexually and reproduce their family line (Moon, 2008; Kim & Hahn, 2006; Kimmel & Yi, 2004; Cho, 2009). For many LGBTQ Koreans, severing family bonds is a pressing fear (Kim & Hahn, 2006; Cho, 2009), because family relationships can be intertwined with one's economic wellbeing, physical health, and

access to social welfare. For this reason, it can be difficult for South Korea queer people to come out due to the social isolation they may face as a consequence of homophobia.

As a lesbian rights movement formed in South Korea in the early 1990s, it lacked alliances with either women's rights organizations or gay men's organizations. This shaped the context in which a queer kin network developed in Korea. Rising anti-LGBTQ evangelical Christian activism (Kim, N., 2016; Yi et al., 2017) targets lesbians with harassment and involuntary 'outing.' This is the backdrop against which a lesbian rights movement formed in South Korea. Christian anti-LGBTQ activists have organized a strong movement in recent years, participating in both local protests and transnational campaigns against LGBTQ rights (Yi et al., 2017). In addition, anti-LGBTQ groups lobby against LGBTQ rights policies and physically occupy spaces surrounding queer pride parades to violently disrupt their activities (Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2014). These anti-LGBTQ activists also target queer Korean individuals with harassment and involuntary 'outing' (Kim, N., 2016; Yi et al., 2017). And enduring homophobic threats mean that the local LGBTQ communities had to devise strategies to protect their members. As a consequence, they concentrated their resources in a lesbian gayborhood.

Migration and Citizenship Policy

In East Asian countries including South Korea, citizenship tends to be built on a notion of social membership that fundamentally intertwines ethnicity and nationality (Shin, 2006; Kim, J. 2016; Chung 2020). Ethnoracial 'others' are incorporated into the nation through their blood kinship and marriage ties to citizens, not through their territorial birth. South Korea's early migration policy emphasized family ties as the basis for inclusion, excluding long-term migrant laborers or other alien residents (Kim, H. 2007). South Korea is therefore often considered an 'ethnic nation' with a strong preference for co-ethnic immigrants, especially in the case of low-skilled migrants (Seol & Skrentny, 2009). But generally, low-skilled workers are discouraged from long-term settlement in South Korea. Meanwhile, nonwhite foreign residents, no matter their employment status, are marked as low-skill laborers in their social interactions with Koreans (Collins, 2018).

In the context of the falling birth rate, the Korean government has also established a so-called multicultural (*damunhwa*) policy and partnered with a marriage brokerage industry to recruit marriage migrant women. The share of international marriages to total marriages rose

from 1.2% in 1990 to 13.6% in 2005 (Lie, 2007). However, local media contributes to the social marginalization of marriage migrants by portraying them as economically motivated and untrustworthy (Chung & Yoo, 2013). This attitude extended to the children born to marriage migrants and their citizen spouses, suggesting that these biracial children might one day use their citizenship rights to sow political discord (Kim, H. 2007). Although marriage migration offers a pathway to citizenship, it does so while racializing 'multicultural' families. Both de facto and de jure categorization of migrants by visa establish racial and gender hierarchies among noncitizens in South Korea (Chung, E. 2019).

However, policies have changed over time, and among industrialized Asian countries, Korea's government stands out for recruiting selective immigrant groups, such as those included in its category of skilled laborers (Kim & Kwon, 2012). Recent policy shifts have made it possible for a greater variety of alien residents to achieve permanent residency, if they are high-skilled professionals (Chung, E. 2019). Korea is a well-known overseas labor recruiter targeting non-ethnic Korean high-skilled workers. High-skilled overseas labor recruitment emerged as the Korean government responded to the 1997 financial crisis. In the face of labor shortages and a rapidly aging society (Kim & Kwon, 2012), the government pushed for the "internationalization" of high-skill tech industries, research institutions, and higher education. The government worked to attract skilled migrant workers, particularly in technology sectors and English instructors by relaxing visa restrictions, abolishing entry quotas, and easing permanent residency requirements for skilled laborers (Lee, B. 2009; Kim & Kwon, 2012). Since 2003, South Korea's policies toward labor migrants have liberalized to the extent that, according to the letter of the law, 'skilled' workers enjoy most labor rights conferred on citizens (Kim, NHJ. 2008; Lee, B. 2009; Seol 2012). These conditions make South Korea an attractive destination for skilled labor migrants. Though skilled employment migration policies seem neutral, nationality, race, age, and gender figure prominently in the process, for example in the preference for White North American English teachers (Ahn, H 2014). White privilege in South Korea emerges from a long engagement with US military racial politics, as well as from idealized depictions of whiteness in international media content that circulates in South Korea, shaping local attitudes about race (Kim, N. 2006).

Public Safety and Access to Healthcare

I previously showed that public safety record and the ease of accessing affordable healthcare, including gender affirming healthcare, can be an important reason to make certain countries a desirable destination for LGBTQ migrants. South Korea is regarded as a travel destination with high public safety. Prominent travel blogs, such as the Lonely Planet Guide "Things to Know Before Traveling to South Korea[3]" cite its low level of theft and assault, relative to other countries. The same blog emphasizes that while LGBTQIA+ prejudice is common in Korean, it usually comes in the form of "curious – if misinformed – questions" rather "than any sort of open hostility."[4] South Korea is regarded as a safer context than some 'progressive LGBTQ-friendly' countries because of the widespread use of CCTV cameras to monitor the street, the legal system that discourages hate crimes, the low level of gun ownership due to civilians being unable to own them, and the lack of policies criminalizing LGBTQ people.

Korea also has a high efficiency, low-cost national healthcare system. Korea underwent a welfare state consolidation process after its economic crisis and significantly extended benefits coverage and addressed healthcare distribution inequalities across income and urban-rural divisions (Kim, YM. 2008). Within just 20 years, Korea extended coverage to over 95% of the population under the National Health Insurance Act (Kim, DS. 2010). As my dissertation will show, migrants express surprise at the low cost and high efficiency of the local healthcare system that mixes state regulation, societal financing (at 45%), and private provision (Böhm, et al. 2013). Costs are relatively low for transgender migrants who pursue treatment in South Korea as well. Sex reassignment surgeries in Korea average approximately $14,000 for transfeminine patients and $19,000 for transmasculine patients (Lee et al. 2018). These costs range upwards of $150,000 in the U.S. (Clary 2018). It often takes several years for transgender people in the U.S to be able to afford affirming care, if this is even accessible without travel to another state to visit a gender clinic.

Methods and Data

My research and analysis are heavily informed by intersectionality. Intersectionality is the theory that attends to the "critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally

[3] https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/things-to-know-before-traveling-to-south-korea
[4] https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/things-to-know-before-traveling-to-south-korea

constructing phenomena (Collins, 2015: 2)." According to Choo and Ferree (2010), the most promising intersectional approaches treat intersectionality relationally, namely, by identifying cases that show "a flow of knowledge and power across levels of social organization rather than a nested hierarchy of stratification processes (Choo & Ferree, 2010: 146)." I relied heavily on an intersectional lens to formulate my research questions, which drove my ethnographic observation and interview recruitment strategies, and likewise affected my analysis, thinking, and writing.

I use three methods – ethnography, qualitative interview, and participant observation online – to answer my research questions. Since 2015, I have spent a total of 16 months in South Korea conducting preliminary research and data collection for my dissertation. During four separate fieldwork visits, I collected archival material and conducted 86 semi-structured interviews with LBTQ migrants and 5 brief interviews of anti-LGBTQ activists at an anti-LGBTQ rally. The names of all respondents have been depersonalized to popular names in their region of origin, though not necessarily their country, in order to maintain their anonymity. I also conducted participant observation of English and Korean-language LGBTQ online forums, dating applications and chat rooms, and LGBTQ spaces in six Korean cities. The names of all venues have been anonymized in this text.

Ethnography and Participant Observation Online

I observed LGBTQ community life by frequenting lesbian, transgender, gay, and queer venues in six Korean cities over 16 months from mid-2017 through 2018. I resided in the Mapo district of Seoul and took monthly trips to visit LGBTQ spaces and events in five other cities: Busan, Daegu, Daejeon, Gwangju, and Jeju. I observed LGBTQ community public events and informal social gatherings; volunteered at queer culture festivals; visited SOGI organization headquarters to observe meetings, events, and everyday working life; and regularly patronized several LGBTQ bars, cafes, and nightclubs. In this dissertation, I draw on observations from lesbian-only and LGBTQ community spaces in these six cities in South Korea, including 45 bars, nightclubs, and small businesses; four Korean LGBTQ health and social service organizations; 7 Queer Culture Festivals; and numerous conferences and public events. I used ethnographic interview methods as I interacted with business owners, staff, volunteers, organizers, performers, and attendees.

After 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork in South Korea, and nearly 10 years of online participant observation, I have numerous threads of information at my disposal. Digital

ethnographic methods complement traditional ethnography by exploring the virtual communities and conversations available online and in mobile applications. From 2015 to 2024, I participated in online English and Korean language LGBTQ social media communities on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Naver, and Kakao apps.[5] In addition, I registered for four regionally popular dating apps for lesbians, and international dating apps such as Tinder and OkCupid. I disclosed my research topics to respondents in person and online (King, 1996) by prominently providing information about my research in all online profiles.

Interviews

Additionally, I collected 86 semi-structured interviews with LBTQ migrants to Korea and, if available, their Korean partners (see the Appendix for demographic characteristics of my interviewees). I recruited interviewees by posting calls for interview in online LGBTQ community forums and handing out flyers at festivals.[6] I also recruited using a snowball strategy by asking community leaders and gatekeepers to pass on information about my study to facilitate referrals. My respondents consented to interview and to the recording of their interviews using a tape recorder, which was erased after transcription to maintain their anonymity and privacy. I interviewed LBQ women and transgender and gender nonconforming transnational migrants to Korea from a variety of origin countries who had resided in Korea for at least one year. I also interviewed some Korean partners of LBTQ migrants. Because my university is in the United States and I am LGBTQ but not a Korean citizen, respondents seemed confident that I would keep their identities anonymous and agreed to speak with me.

There were a few cisgender gay men who responded to the recruitment call, and in most instances, I did not interview them, as they did not fall within the inclusion criteria for the study.

---

[5] Naver and Kakao are popular social media apps in South Korea.

[6] I recruited interviews by posting in English and Korean in the LGBTQ online forums in all major cities in South Korea, including Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan and Jeju. Moderators of these online forums posted recruitment fliers on my behalf in two LGBTQ spaces for foreign residents serving queer people of color and trans people of color living in Korea. I also posted the call for interviews in online forums for Korea-based feminists, expats, and neighborhood boards for areas of the city where LGBTQ people tend to socialize. Several business owners in LGBTQ neighborhoods in Seoul granted permission for me to post my call for interviews in English and Korean in their venues. The call was printed in a bilingual brochure circulated by a social organization for LGBTQ English speakers in Korea. Finally, I personally distributed the call as a flyer at Queer Culture Festivals in Seoul, Busan, Daegu, and Jeju.

However, I did interview 6 of these cisgender gay men, because they were local LGBTQ rights activists, organizers of online LGBTQ social spaces, or owned LGBTQ venues. As such, they sometimes provided an additional perspective on conflicts or events that my 80 LBTQ interviewees discussed during their interviews.

I made efforts to recruit interviewees that could reflect varying experiences among LBTQ migrants who had lived in Korea for at least one year. Variance on the dimensions of national origin, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic background help establish patterned pathways and motives answering my research question, namely, why these LBTQ migrants choose South Korea as a destination as they pursue upward social mobility. These interviews also highlight how migration policy regimes shape the migration opportunities, pathways, and strategies available to Global North and Global South LBTQ migrants, which I suspected also intersect with their race/ethnicity, class, and their position in the sexual and gender hierarchy. Gender and sexuality difference among respondents help me address what resources LBTQ migrants mobilize to adapt to cisheteronormative policies and socioeconomic inequality in their sending countries, other destination countries, and South Korea. Finally, respondents varied according to the relationship statuses they had held while living in South Korea. This variation helped me identify patterns, similarities and differences in opportunities, constraints, and strategies between single LBTQ migrants, LBTQ families, and married couples who are in same citizenship or mixed citizenship relationships, which intersect with their other statuses, such as national origin, race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexuality, and sex.

My respondents each hold unique intersectional positions in their origin countries and in South Korean society, and some of these positions have changed through the process of transnational migration. I delineate shared patterns among my respondents, and at other times to zoom in to contrast their experience based on one or more axes of identity, such as national origin, race/ethnicity, or sex. As such, several comparisons are possible, but my dissertation focuses on comparison among LBTQ migrants in South Korea by (1) country of origin and (2) by race, class, and gender identity. In the conclusion, I also compare (3) LBTQ migrant experiences to those of cisgender gay men and heterosexual women migrants, well documented in the existing literature on queer migration and women's migration.

Since few LGBTQ rights are formally protected under Korean law, I have changed the names of all interviewees, venues, and organizations. I use informants' self-identified gender,

sexuality, sex, migration status, national origin, class status, and race/ethnicity while striving to protect informant anonymity. I collected this information via a questionnaire and confirmed during my interviews. For ethical reasons and in accordance with my moral self (Young, 2013), I learned about and followed norms for community vetting and work to maintain the integrity of the safety practices and anonymity of venues I will discuss in Chapter 3 by leaving out some details. Throughout this text I also alter identifiable information to make it more difficult for fellow members of the LGBTQ community in Korea to identify my respondents.

Many of my respondents asked to stay connected after the interview or connected with me on social media sites. Several have reached out to provide unsolicited updated information about their migration and families. Others have shared updates to online forums that I continue to participate in. By combining traditional ethnography and participant observation in online LGBTQ spaces with semi-structured interviews of over 80 LBTQ migrants, I am able to follow some individual and family level strategies across a period of several years, learn about changes in status and resources, and examine migration, labor and healthcare policies that enable or compel participants to pursue the jigsaw strategy.

Reflection on My Positionality

I am a White American citizen who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community. I speak Korean at an advanced intermediate conversational level, and have lived, worked, and studied in Korea for eight years since 2006. When I was earning my MA at Seoul National University, I engaged in sexual violence prevention work in several ways, such as by co-founding a bilingual local chapter of Hollaback!, an international campaign against sexual harassment. We hosted a series of bilingual workshops and events and met Korean LGBTQ and women's rights activists. We held informational events for expats, international students, and alien residents, and were invited by four university human rights centers to deliver lectures to faculty and students about sexual violence prevention, including violence against LGBTQ people and ethnic minorities. After relocating to the United States for graduate study, I maintained our bilingual social media sites and continued to cultivate ties online in LGBTQ, women's, and migrant's rights forums. These activities facilitated my access to dissertation research sites in 2017. For example, some members of the Seoul LGBTQ community that I met through this earlier work as an anti-sexual violence educator later introduced me to several Korean LGBTQ

community leaders, who vouched for my data collection and facilitated additional introductions during my ethnographic research.

My position as both an insider and outsider generally helped my data collection. On the one hand, as a white American citizen, I am positioned as an outsider in South Korean society, though a relatively privileged outsider due to my citizenship status, race, and cultural capital. As an international student participating in a prestigious cultural exchange program, securing significant research fellowships, carrying a powerful passport, and attending a prestigious doctoral program in the U.S., my own journey to South Korea was facilitated by the significant academic and cultural hegemony of the United States.

On the other hand, as a member of the LGBTQ community, I am an insider to several LGBTQ and skilled labor migrant circles. This conferred nearly instant credibility among many fellow LGBTQ foreign residents residing in Korea. Moreover, unlike other non-Korean participants in local LGBTQ community spaces, my relative social capital, especially my rapport with several key gatekeepers in Korean LGBTQ community likely eased my access to lesbian and LGBTQ spaces frequented by Korean LGBTQ people. As a person who identifies as nonbinary, I was also invited to join small English language online forums for transgender, nonbinary and gender questioning people residing in South Korea.

I frequently visited lesbian venues in Seoul and Busan as a member of a group including migrants and also observed LBTQ migrants entering lesbian venues. Toward the end of my fieldwork, I also organized a series of six events and made group reservations for twenty Korean citizens and LBTQ migrants who would join me for a tour of three lesbian-owned businesses, and event I dubbed LesBiTTour. These activities meant that I could personally witness how the politics of membership operated in including or excluding LBTQ migrants.

However, linguistic limitations negatively affected my access to several groups of potential respondents. My high intermediate proficiency in Korean and ethnic outsider status limited my access to some spaces that operated exclusively for Korean LGBTQ people. To address these limitations, I attended public events hosted by these organizations and visited their informational booths at festivals to ask questions and acquire written materials. I was also fortunate that one of the key activists in Korean's transgender community is a close informant and longtime friend. Similarly, although I sometimes observed Chinese- and Vietnamese-speaking LGBTQ people in community spaces, I could not communicate with respondents who

did not speak Korean or English. If I had been able to recruit Chinese and Vietnamese respondents, I might have been able to make my arguments even stronger. China and Vietnam are the dominant sending countries of migrants to Korea. In the case of China, many migrants are ethnically Korean but Chinese citizens. If I had been able to recruit them, I might learn more about how gender accountability structures operate for ethnic insiders who are from a different country. Vietnamese migrants, for their part, would help illuminate whether or not they face heightened gender accountability due to their racialization as prospective mothers to Korean children.

There were also LGBTQ 'foreigner' communities that were complex for me to negotiate because I was not quite an insider in some cases. For example, although international websites like FetLife organize BDSM community meetings in South Korea, I did not participate in these spaces. Instead, when I asked respondents about their LGBTQ community activities, I asked follow-up questions to learn more about these groups. At times I was unsure of how to approach TGNC+ organizations. Because I do identify as non-binary, but not as transgender, and was assigned female at birth, I was somewhat cautious about joining online TGNC+ communities until I worked to establish trust with moderators or was invited by a member I had met offline. Similarly, as a White person, I did not experience the kinds of racism some of my interviewees reported. I did not join similar groups for TGNC+ people of color, or LGBTQ people of color. Instead, I rely on semi-structured interview respondents for information about these communities.

Contributions

My dissertation makes four contributions to the literature on migration and gender. First, I make a significant contribution to the literature on queer migration by pushing beyond the limited focus on South-to-North migration. Most of the literature on queer migration considers cases of migration from the Global South to the Global North, where there are presumably more progressive policies for LGBTQ people. The most commonly studied cases are queer migration across the U.S.-Mexico border and from Eastern to Western Europe. But these cases can obscure the pathways of geographically- and resource- constrained migrants who cannot migrate directly to North America or Western Europe.

Focusing on an unexplored case following the reverse route, queer migration out of the Global North/West, reveals the push factors that shape LGBTQ migration such as enduring

inequalities in the Global North. My respondents move from Global North countries with greater LGBTQ rights policies, to a country – South Korea – that has fewer LGBTQ rights policies. This suggests that laws protecting freedoms are not the only pull factor for LBTQ migrants. Instead, the favorable medical, social, and economic context draws Global North migrants to South Korea in pursuit of employment in order to save up funds and access other resources for their social mobility, family building, and gender identity affirmation. In the Global North/West, LGBTQ people experience what Engel (2019) describes as 'fragmented citizenship': based on their sexual orientation and gender identity minority status, they struggle to fully enjoy human rights policies, social safety nets, medical infrastructure, and economic opportunities.

This focus on an unexplored case also reveals unexpected routes that LGBTQ migrants from the Global South pursue when they cannot relocate directly to Western Europe or North America, where LGBTQ-rights policies are stronger. By examining an underexplored Asian circuit of queer migration, my dissertation contributes new understandings to the literature on LGBTQ rights and migration. I was able to study Southeast Asian LGBTQ people who migrate to South Korea. This case enables me to demonstrate that 'progressive LGBTQ-friendly' countries are largely inaccessible to those outside the Global North. In the face of this obstacle, instead of remaining in Southeast Asian countries that criminalize LGBTQ people, my respondents relocate to South Korea. This shows that Korea emerges as a more accessible destination for LGBTQ migrants fleeing criminalization in their home countries.

This case challenges progressive discourses that associate same-sex marriage policies with 'LGBTQ rights' to show that it is more than the legal right to marry that is necessary to ensure LGBTQ people can have full lives, rather than being second-class citizens. My work centers factors beyond the law to examine the medical, social, and economic conditions that enable fuller lives for LGBTQ migrants. These include access to high quality healthcare, including transgender healthcare and socioeconomic opportunities that enables migrants to settle and achieve relative stability in Korea. I show how Korea paradoxically becomes a socially 'freer' place to perform same sex desire and gender identity affirmation because my respondents are treated as 'exempt outsiders' to the local social norms around gender and sexuality.

Second, I highlight how the family migration literature is largely silent on the topic of queer migration. While the literature on queer migration does points out the challenges that heteronormativity pose for queer immigrant families, the existing scholarship cannot account for

the strategies that LGBTQ migrants mobilize when they cannot migrate as a family due to their sexuality, national origin, or class position. My dissertation fills the gap between these two literatures by proposing the concept of 'jigsaw migration.' Queer families pursue multistage and multi-sited migration processes because they exist outside of legal recognition, which affects the direction and pace of their migration. LBTQ jigsaw migrants turn to employment and student visas, temporary visa runs to nearby destinations, and forum shopping among different legal and geographic jurisdictions to assemble their fragmented citizenship and build family or pursue gender affirming care. I show that LBTQ couples in mixed citizenship families and individuals with some resources for transnational mobility, such as strong passports, education, and/or skills considered desirable, turn to strategies besides family reunification to build and maintain their families abroad, even if these countries do not recognize same-sex unions. Queer kinship in this context requires that LGBTQ migrants build ties in multiple legal jurisdictions in order to work or accrue savings, maintain family cohabitation, and access healthcare.

Third, the intersectional analytic complexity of this dissertation contributes to queer migration scholarship by responding to calls for queer migration scholarship to account for multiple intersecting inequalities operating based on national origin, race, gender, and class, as well as sexuality (Harper et al. 1997; Luibhéid 2005, Manalansan 2006). The jigsaw migration concept reveals inequality within the LGBTQ migrant population, based on queer migrant's intersectional positioning according to the axes of national origin, race/ethnicity, and class. Their intersectional position in multiple hierarchies determines the complexity of LBTQ strategies, such as how smoothly they can move to their desired destinations, how stable their plans can be, and whether or not they have to wait to achieve their goals. The intersectional lens also enables us to examine how primary frames that coordinate interactions can shift the intersectional positioning of migrants when they move from their origin countries to Korea. Notably, TGNC+ migrants from the Global North may enjoy less accountability to their gender if they relocate to a destination where they are viewed as temporary sojourners not held responsible for reproducing gender norms. Meanwhile, those from the Global South may experience relative safety by selecting steppingstone destinations that lack policy targeting and criminalizing the LGBTQ community. Yet the Global South migrants in my study experienced gender accountability in the form of gendered harassment based on the stereotypical assumption that they are poor women who would desire marriage with a Korean man.

Finally, intersectionality and boundary studies help us uncover the membership politics of the local lesbian community, which prioritizes the safety of its members, yet still stives to achieve inclusion of migrants. However, the safety strategies designed to protect the lesbian community also contribute to the difficulty LBTQ migrants and transgender people face when trying to access lesbian spaces. I used intersectional analysis to point out how marginalization based on race, class, or migration status reveal that strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can also produce boundaries within LGBTQ and lesbian communities that exclude 'outsiders.' Respondents from the LBTQ migrant community described the lesbian community as gender segregated and difficult to access. This may have driven the formation of 'foreigner-led' LGBTQ-inclusive programming in the Itaewon district.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 addresses the family reunification and queer migration scholarship head on. I ask, what strategies do LBTQ migrants mobilize as they try to maintain and build queer families despite intersecting constraints based on their sexuality, national origin, and class? Family reunification scholarship presumes cases where migrants have a marriage or blood tie to a sponsor, which overlooks the complexity of queer migration and queer kinship. Queer migration scholarship, meanwhile, has focused too much on a small number of cases of migration from the Global South to North, especially the U.S.-Mexico border, overlooking what might be Asian circuits of queer migration. I argue that despite an inhospitable legal regime, LBTQ migrants are nevertheless able to use Korea as a home base to build up their economic, legal, and medical resources for queer family building by forum shopping in nearby countries. I call this strategy 'jigsaw migration.' My intersectional analysis enables me to show that sexuality, class, and national origin work together to constrain migration opportunities for some LBQ mixed citizenship families. However, there are significant socioeconomic opportunities for some families, especially those with powerful passports. Finally, Korea is an accessible but temporary home base for LBQ migrants who seek to move on to destinations that would also legally recognize their families. This chapter contributes to the literatures on queer migration, flexible citizenship and multinational migration, and migration to and through Korea. I show that enduring socioeconomic inequality in the Global North can drive some South to countries with accessible migration policies and promising employment sectors. I also highlight how intersectionality shapes multinational migration and flexible citizenship by revealing the

complex migration strategies LBQ couples enact when they are legally constrained by heteronormative policies. Finally, this chapter exposes how migrant hierarchies based on sexuality and national origin shape migration to South Korea, contributing to scholarship on labor and family migration in East Asia.

How do local boundary-making and membership politics affect the exclusions and opportunities that LBTQ migrants encounter in Korea? Chapter 2 considers accountability to gender, as well as race, class, and national origin in migrants' interactions with South Korean society. Here we again examine how Korea provides an unexpectedly hospitable environment for LBTQ migrants. To answer, I bring together foundational scholarship on 'doing gender' with the boundary studies concept of 'primary frames' to theorize the 'exempt outsider' to Korean society. This chapter synthesizes these concepts to explore the insider/outsider boundary dynamics that enable gender identity affirmation by TGNC+ migrants. Because they are regarded as 'exempt outsiders' to Korean society, some TGNC+ migrants are able to perform their desired gender displays while facing little gender accountability. Race, class, and national origin come to the fore as gender recedes in salience in their interactions with Korean locals. In addition, Korea's advanced surgical sector and high public security create a less hostile environment for those seeking gender affirmation. However, outsider exemption itself can be precarious, depending on one's national origin and race. For example, TGNC+ migrants are generally invisible in Korean society, which means that they have limited social and political rights, but paradoxically this enables them to go 'stealth.' Meanwhile, Southeast Asian migrants are hyper visible and more likely to be held accountable for their gender assigned at birth due to the particularities of the racialization in Korea, which demands high gender accountability.

Chapter 3 examines how Korean lesbians build community safety into their networks and businesses. Unlike some Western cases, South Korea's lesbian community emerged in a context fraught with political upheaval and gender segregation, resulting in the marginalization of the lesbian movement. Korea's lesbian community faces an active and organized anti-LGBTQ movement, so safety and invisibility are community priorities. By enacting innovative strategies, lesbian social entrepreneurs are able to establish safe spaces. This chapter engages literature on LGBTQ community-building, queer kinship, safety strategies, and feminist technologies to reveal the conditions that shape lesbian organizing in Korea. I also consider the boundaries that are established, and exclusions maintained as a result of this effort to make spaces safe.

In the concluding chapter, I outline my contributions to the existing literature on queer migration, multinational and multisited migration scholarship, queer community building, and boundary maintenance. I discuss the scope conditions for two concepts – jigsaw migration and outsider exemption – and suggest avenues for future research on these concepts.

Chapter 2 LBTQ 'Jigsaw' Migration to South Korea[7]

Introduction

Queer migration scholarship tends to focus on migration to what are regarded as 'LGBTQ-friendly' Western destinations with progressive policies for LGBTQ rights. Seen in this light, South Korea is an unlikely destination for LGBTQ mixed citizenship families because of its lack of such policies. As a country that does not recognize same-sex unions, its immigration policies do not allow for dependent sponsorship of LGBTQ spouses, regardless of the sponsor's citizenship or visa status (Cho 2009). Korea nonetheless attracts LGBTQ mixed citizenship couples. Why do they choose Korea as their migration destination? What strategies do they mobilize as they try to maintain and build families despite intersecting constraints based on their sexuality, national origin, and class?

The two strands of literature best poised to answer these questions are family reunification and queer migration scholarship. However, studies of immigrant family reunification, largely based on heterosexual families, undertheorize the complexity of queer migration. Meanwhile, queer migration scholarship tends to focus on migration to countries that legally recognize same-sex couples. Rarer are studies that examine how LGBTQ families cope with the unevenness in the recognition of their various family rights across countries that govern LGBTQ rights in different ways. These literatures have paid less attention to how economic and legal barriers can constrain LGBTQ family visa sponsorship – even in countries that recognize marriage equality – and what kinds of strategies families mobilize to overcome these hurdles and cohabit together in one place. This chapter fills these lacunae by analyzing interviews with 58 lesbian, bisexual, and queer women migrants[8] (LBQ) who live in Korea, some while in mixed

[7] An earlier version of this chapter is published as: Jones, C. (2025). Jigsaw migration: how mixed citizenship LGBTQ families (re) Assemble their fragmented citizenship. *International Migration Review*, *59*(1), 444-467.

[8] 'Skilled' labor visa holders in Korea can be difficult to describe in the terms that dominate the migration literature. The categories 'expat' and 'migrant' do not merely describe people, but are

citizenship relationships. Synthesizing the existing literature, I argue that Korea provides a home base from which families can accrue economic, legal, and medical resources for family building by shopping around multiple jurisdictions. I call this distinctive transnational strategy "jigsaw migration." I further show that LBTQ migrants' access to these resources is shaped by their intersectional positioning in hierarchies of gender, class, national origin, and sexuality.

Korea is an understudied yet fruitful site to study LGBTQ migration. Like other advanced liberal democracies with advanced economies, Korea attracts international migrants. Moreover, Korea offers a distinctive migration pathway for 'skilled' workers, requiring just a BA degree to work in the education, travel, and tech sectors. In particular, Korea's labor migration and visa-waiver policies lend a distinct privilege to those from English-speaking Western countries, who can reside in Korea for months on a tourist visa.9 However, LBQ couples are not eligible for the family reunification policies available to heterosexual skilled workers who can bring their dependents. This combination of challenges and opportunities make Korea a strategic site to study alternative strategies that LBQ migrants mobilize when their access to family reunification policies is limited – both in countries that recognize same-sex unions and those that do not.

This chapter presents the following three arguments. First, intersecting hierarchies – based on sexuality, class, and national origin– constrain migration opportunities for LBQ mixed citizenship families. Persistent cisheteronormativity in migration policies constrains LBQ families unable to achieve full legal recognition even after they marry legally in one country. LBQ couples with low economic capital find it difficult to meet the income requirement for family immigration sponsorship imposed by many developed countries, especially those that recognize same-sex relationships. Furthermore, couples with different citizenships may face unequal opportunities to relocate based on the strength of their passports. For these reasons it is not easy for LBQ people to simply migrate to a desired destination in the West, even if one partner is a citizen of that country.

---

deployed discursively, socially, materially, and institutionally to signify and reproduce race and class-based worthiness and belonging in destination states (Kunz, 2019). I use the term migrant as a general descriptor for a group of respondents that have a variety of visa types, stay in Korea for short and long terms, and use a range of transnational strategies to relocate abroad.

[9] For a full list of countries that have visa waivers to South Korea, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. (n.d.). Retrieved March 13, 2023, from https://mofa.go.kr/eng/index.do.

Second, Korea affords significant socioeconomic opportunities to a certain group of LBQ couples attempting to cohabit. Korea's comparatively low bar for 'skilled' labor migration, especially in the educational sector, enables LBQ mixed citizenship couples to stay together – even without legal recognition – and accumulate resources to settle in their desired destinations in the future. In addition, Korea's highly efficient national healthcare system (Kim D. 2010) and its geographic proximity to other countries offering low-cost medical tourism for LGBTQ people also explain why LBQ families choose Korea as a viable steppingstone country and move later to a more desired destination.

However, due to the inhospitable legal regime for sexual minorities, LBQ migrant families in Korea must engage in a distinctive migration pattern to cohabit with their partners, raise children, and acquire legal recognition for their family, while achieving socioeconomic gains that might enable their onward migration to what they consider more desirable destination countries – my third argument. The literature on flexible citizenship, multinational migration, and forum shopping, developed in different migration contexts, helps us theorize this distinctive transnational strategy. I propose the concept of "jigsaw" migration, a multi-sited transnational strategy mobilized by those whose spousal relationship is not fully recognized by the law and/or who cannot meet sponsorship criteria in their desired destination. Jigsaw migrants reside temporarily in one country while simultaneously assembling resources through strategic forum shopping in other countries. By mobilizing jigsaw migration strategies, LBQ mixed citizenship families recuperate their "fragmented citizenship" (Engel 2019) and cope with legal and economic constraints on family building. However, this strategy is not available to those with weaker passports that provide considerable challenges to their cross-border mobility.

This chapter contributes to the literatures on queer migration, flexible citizenship and multinational migration, and migration to and through Korea. First, this chapter shows that enduring socioeconomic inequalities in the Global North drive some LGBTQ citizens in these countries to work abroad. In so doing, it expands the limited focus in queer migration scholarship on migration to 'LGBTQ-friendly' destinations in the West. Second, using insights from queer migration literature, I advance multinational migration and flexible citizenship scholarship by highlighting the complex migration and travel strategies that some LBQ families employ when they confront heteronormative family reunification policies and other constraints based on their intersectional positioning in social hierarchies. My findings contribute to scholarship on

transnational migration to South Korea by showing how migrant hierarchies based on sexuality and national origin affect mixed citizenship queer families, a topic largely unexplored in both the literature on labor migration and family migration. Finally, the chapter discusses how jigsaw migration enables queer migrants to establish queer kin networks.

This chapter proceeds with the literature review, first addressing inequalities based on sexuality, class, and national origin in family migration, and then discussing various analytic tools from the migration literature. Then I move on to analyzing a series of ethnographic vignettes to flesh out my arguments. I conclude by discussing the broader contributions of the chapter to the literatures on queer migration, multinational migration, and migration to South Korea.

Pieces in the Puzzle of Queer Family Migration

Sexuality, Class, and National Origin in Family Migration Policy

Cisheteronormativity produces unequal economic, legal, and social opportunities for LGBTQ people, a distinctive push factor for their migration to other countries (Carrillo 2018; Cantú 2002). Due to their sexual orientation and gender identity minority status, LGBTQ people struggle to fully enjoy equal rights, social safety nets, access to medical care, and economic opportunities in their origin countries in comparison with their heterosexual peers—what Engels (2019) called fragmented citizenship. However, when they try to migrate to a country imagined to be freer (Carrillo 2018; Cantu 2002) as a family unit, LBQ migrants face multiple forms of marginalization because the migration policy of many receiving countries tends to be built on heteronormative assumptions, disadvantages those lacking economic resources, and presumes male citizens in the Global North sponsoring dependent women migrants from the Global South. That is, sexuality, class, and national origin form an interlocking system of constraints for women sponsoring a same-sex partner. I unpack these elements one by one below.

First, heteronormative assumptions in migration policies, even in countries that recognize same-sex unions, pose significant challenges to LGBTQ families. Admittedly, the number of countries recognizing same-sex unions and marriages continues to increase (Kollman 2016), expanding available options for LGBTQ families to migrate. Moreover, such families may benefit from a "benevolent sexual culturalism" (Chauvin et al. 2021) and may not struggle as hard as heterosexual couples to prove their legitimacy if, for example, there is a large age

difference between partners. However, they may experience discrimination not necessarily in the form of explicit denial of their sexuality but in the form of "legal processes [that] presumed access to resources and subsequent routes to migration that queer and trans people simply did not and do not have (Brainer 2022: 3)." Furthermore, regulations pertaining to marriage and sexuality continue to constitute heterosexuality as a legal regime that organizes social relations (Canaday 2009). This means that same-sex couples are pressured to conform to heteronormative standards when they try to utilize family reunification.

Second, migrant families with lower socioeconomic resources struggle to meet the economic eligibility requirements that increasingly dominate Western migration regimes, and this tends to negatively impact LBQ couples. Increasingly, family reunification policies require that migrants prove they have a reliable financial sponsor and family economic resources to achieve residency or citizenship through family reunification (Hwang and Parreñas 2010). A recent study of LGBTQ couples pursuing family reunification shows that lesbian couples have more difficulty obtaining spousal visas than gay couples, largely due to financial challenges that women experience in the labor market (Chauvin et al. 2021). These studies suggest that LBQ families are likely to struggle to meet the economic criteria established in family migration policies.

Finally, national origin plays an important role in shaping the opportunities available to LBQ migrants from different countries. Some migrants can draw on privileges associated with their citizenship and residency (Ayoub and Bauman 2019). Such privileges may confer visa-less travel or dual citizenship that enables migrants to travel and settle abroad (Mau 2010). Other privileges include preferential employment visas, such as Korea's E-series teaching visa, which is available to citizens of just eight English-speaking countries.10 Generally, LBQ families with powerful passports are more likely than those with weaker passports to be able to settle in a destination together, even outside of legal recognition as a family. Meanwhile, women migrants from the Global South struggle to migrate or sponsor a spouse due to strict immigration quotas.

Family Migration without Family Reunification

[10] For South Korean visa policies, please see Koreta. "Korea Travel Requirements FAQ: Koreta." Korea Travel Requirements, http://www.kor-eta.com/faq.php?wr_cate=

Migration scholarship often focuses on migration pathways involving a single origin and a single destination. Recent studies, however, have shown that multi-sited and multistage migration strategies are mobilized broadly, not only by the economic elite (Ong 1999) but also by working class (Paul 2017) and 'middling' migrants, namely, those who are mostly skilled and educated and come from middle class backgrounds (Paul and Yeoh 2021; Robertson 2019). These multi-sited, multistage, and often temporary migration strategies help explain how LBQ migrant couples – locked out of family reunification regimes – maintain families in an unexpected destination. A series of concepts developed in this new line of inquiry, such as flexible citizenship, forum shopping, stepwise migration, and staggered migration, are particularly useful to illuminate LBQ migrants' distinctive strategies, which I call 'jigsaw migration.'

First, the concept of "flexible citizenship" (Ong, 1999) shows how families cope with political uncertainty by establishing ties in multiple destinations. Ong developed this concept to capture how elite families among Chinese diaspora leverage study abroad or strategic investments to acquire additional citizenships. Building on Ong's study, scholars have shown how ethnic ties which confer permanent residency or dual citizenship in ancestral home countries can be used for the same purpose (Kim J. 2019; Harpaz 2019). These studies show that individuals and families instrumentally pursue migration to multiple destinations or access to multiple citizenships to overcome various deficits in their original citizenship, such as disadvantages in their transnational mobility and citizenship rights (King and Skeldon 2010; Paul 2017; Joppke 2019; Harpaz and Mateos 2019; Bauböck 2019; Paul and Yeoh 2020; Wee and Yeoh 2020). Other studies expand Ong's work by revealing various advantages powerful passports can bring to their holders, such as visa-less travel (Mau 2010), temporary labor exchanges, and skilled worker recruitment for certain citizenship holders (Robertson 2014; 2019). These studies enable me to theorize the flexible strategies that LBQ migrants in Korea mobilize by drawing on their Korean ethnic background or passport power.

Ong's study is also useful because it centers how kinship networks shape and are shaped by flexible multinational strategies. However, as Trémon (2017) articulates, Ong's conceptualization of kinship remains too inflexible to illuminate how migrants work with, perform, and at times transform kinship norms and practices as they cross not only geographical but also legal borders. This critique is especially relevant to the flexible multi-sited strategies that

LBQ migrants in mixed status relationships mobilize. In their case, it is not simply that their citizenship or visa statuses differ from each other (Fix & Zimmerman 2001; Rodriguez 2016; Valdivia 2019). Because of their sexual minority status, the legality of their unions or parental relationships *themselves* is unevenly recognized across borders. 'Doing family' (Strasser et al. 2009:175) in this context means more than migrants families feeling "obliged to conform to the definitions of what is a 'good' family" in their host countries. 'Doing family' requires establishing ties to multiple legal jurisdictions that govern labor migration, family relations, and access to medical resources very differently so that they can exist as a family even when their family is *not* recognized as such by the host county. For example, they cohabit using various types of student or employment visas rather than spousal visas, acquire marriage or birth certificates in another country, and pursue IVF or adoption in still another country. 'Doing family' in this context in fact resembles what scholars studying human rights activism call "forum shopping" (Helfer 1999). Just like human rights petitioners choose a national, regional, or international human rights court depending on where they expect their claims can be successful, LBQ couples to choose different countries to get married, have children, accrue career or educational credentials, and establish their cohabitation and economic resources. Dominant kinship norms and practices are appropriated, contested, and transformed through these flexible strategies. In the transnational context of queer migration, this flexibility encourages queer kinship among members of the community.

Second, the concepts of "stepwise migration" (Paul 2011; 2017), "errance" (Zuluaga, 2015), and "staggered migration" (Robertson 2019) reveal the multistage migration patterns of migrants hoping to accrue resources for onward migration. Each concept, however, analyzes the purposefulness of the movement, the linear or non-linear nature of the movement, and the major resources harnessed by migrants differently. Paul (2011; 2017) demonstrates that it is not only economic elites that embark on multi-sited, multistage migration strategies. Working-class migrants pursue what Paul (2011; 2017) calls "stepwise migration," which consists of a series of relocations during which migrants acquire additional capital that might enable incremental movements along their desired trajectory. They build "migration-facilitating capital" (Kim J. 2018) in steppingstone countries before pursuing additional steps up their destination hierarchy. At the opposite end of this purposeful and largely linear movement (despite a few returns and setbacks) lies the "errance" of sub-Saharan migrants stranded in Dakar, Senegal. Zuluaga (2015:

591) develops the concept of errance to capture "the sense of aimless wandering" that these migrants experience while they are stranded in what they see as a transit country because they lack resources to overcome strict border control policies of European countries, their desired destination.

The multistage migration pattern of LBQ migrants in South Korea often lies between these two contrasting patterns of movement. On the one hand, as 'skilled' labor migrants, some of whom are from the Global North, LBQ migrants may possess much greater socio-economic, cultural, and political resources (such as their citizenship) than sub-Saharan African migrants in Senegal. While they may have to wait in steppingstone countries somewhat indefinitely and their movement may involve looping and divergent paths, they have a lot more control over their "waiting," than those who experience "aimless wandering." On the other hand, LBQ migrants in South Korea often have to rely on various visa-types and experience suspension and frequent changes in their migration plans and aspirations, unlike the migrants Paul examines. In this sense, Robertson's (2019) discussion of the 'staggered migration' of "middling" migrants in Australia most closely resembles the nonlinear multistage mobility pathways that LBQ migrants in South Korea experience. For example, some aspiring labor migrants first pursue international degrees or study at language schools as a strategy to facilitate future migration and permanent settlement in what they perceive as more desirable destinations (Liu-Farrer 2009). This enables student-migrants to maintain a student visa status while accumulating educational credentials and work experience to eventually secure employment and permanent residency in the countries where they study or move onward to other destinations (Robertson and Runganaikaloo 2014).

This literature on staggered migration helps theorize the complex advantages and disadvantages that 'middling' migrants face, including LBQ women migrants with educational credentials. Robertson's concept is also helpful to avoid making a teleological assumption about their migration trajectories. She emphasizes that migration is nonlinear, due to the various disadvantages and indeterminacy that migrants face and because migrants' aspirations and goals change as they experience this staggering. Jigsaw migration captures this non-linear character of migration as well as changes in aspiration and goals, which constitute the 'puzzle pieces' LBQ migrants work with as they attempt to build family.

LBTQ Migration in South Korea

The vignettes in this section show that LBQ migrants in relationships with other women were unable to sponsor the migration of a dependent either to their own countries of origin, to 'LGBTQ-friendly' destinations in the Global North, or to Korea where they currently live because of their sexual orientation and limited economic resources. Some turn to stepwise migration, using Korea as a steppingstone, while others deploy a more complex strategy that I call jigsaw migration, using Korea as a home base while simultaneously securing legal, medical, and economic resources in other countries by forum shopping. The vignettes also show that families nevertheless were able to stay together in Korea thanks to the relative ease of obtaining employment, student, and tourist visas. Each respondent's country of origin, however, played an important role in their differential access to various visa types, which may result in 'staggering' for those with weaker passports. Finally, the vignettes show that respondents pursue migration trajectories more complex than typical 'stepwise' migration observed among Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers or those who experience the 'staggered' migration discussed in the previous section. This was because they had to simultaneously forum shop to build families, a distinctive pattern in their establishment of queer kinship.

Socioeconomic Policies Draw Migrants to Korea

Korea's migrant labor policies draw 'skilled' workers such as English teachers. Alison (American, 40) is an English professor in a long-term cohabiting relationship in Korea with Areum (Korean citizen, 37). Alison and Areum married during a visit to the U.S. and have amassed the socioeconomic resources necessary to obtain Areum's spousal visa. However, like many respondents, they cite healthcare and housing costs as prohibitive to their family building in the U.S. As Alison put it, "[Back home] I spent a lot of time going, 'Wow, I'm really sick. I hope I don't die in my apartment.' And [in Korea] I've never felt that way, ever." Areum and Alison run a small business and set aside their profits as savings for their eventual relocation to a country that will recognize their union. The couple anticipate that Areum's labor opportunities may be restricted if they relocate, and she is sponsored by Alison. This means that for several years, they will have to draw on savings to afford housing and healthcare, even after paying legal fees to achieve residency, and the costs associated with having children, through IVF or adoption.

Several TGNC+ Americans in my sample cite healthcare as the reason they reside in Korea. Kay (transgender, Asian, American) is an ethnic Korean born overseas who uses they/them pronouns. Due to Kay's family ties in Korea, they were eligible to become a permanent resident, enjoying most rights afforded to Korean, including access to the national healthcare system and an indefinitely renewable F4 visa. Over drinks at a lesbian bar one night, Kay told me that Korea's healthcare system is one of the major reasons they decided to live in their parents' origin country. In Korea they have been able to afford several surgeries for a chronic condition that seriously affects their health. "In [North America] I couldn't go into massive debt for my [condition], so my life would be shorter (Kay, February 2018)." Compared to the care available in the United States, American respondents indicate that Korean healthcare is both accessible and much less expensive. Kay, who is a coethnic Korean returnee to Korea eventually married a Korean man with who they shared a common sexuality – asexual. They met through extended queer kin and decided to formalize their legal statuses in both Korea and the United States, where he was a graduate student. This meant that they were both covered on one another's insurance policies. This case shows the intersection of shared identity with instrumental use of migration policy.

Even migrants that were not co-ethnic returnees decided to live in Korea because of its national healthcare system. When asked why she decided to live abroad, Rose (American, 31) responded, "[Moving to] Korea was for the medical insurance, actually. I like to travel, which is why I've lived abroad. But Korea specifically was for medical insurance, and to travel."

But not all queer migrants in Korea have access to healthcare. American military personnel in Korea do not have access to Korea's national health care system and instead rely on American doctors on base. At the time of this study, they were also subject to Trump's 'trans ban' (Manuel, 2020). Nevertheless, Ivy (trans woman, White, American) a trans woman in the military who cannot come out at work and fears seeking medical support from military doctors, discovered a workaround by taking her wife's birth control:

> Okay. So, when I say I take hormones daily, I'm stealing my wife's birth control daily. Her prescription is what I take daily. I do not receive any prescriptions from a medical healthcare provider in my name, whatsoever.

Birth control pills are inexpensive (approximately $7 per month) and available over the counter without a prescription at pharmacies in Korea. As a result, some transgender women turned to managing their own hormones using birth control. They learned about these opportunities through their queer kin network and discussed online which birth control pills seemed to be most effective, working outside the American military medical establishment.

Korea's national healthcare system is also very important to Soyoung (Korean citizen, 37) because her fiancé Claire (American, 35) has a chronic illness, and treatment is less expensive in Korea than in the U.S. Soyoung cites this as the reason she fears relocating to America: "This is one of my worries, because as you know, if we go to America, it's expensive if you don't have insurance or have to pay for insurance, but here in Korea her treatments are not that expensive." Healthcare costs are important to LBQ migrants like these.

Also important are the relatively lower costs of rent in Korea as compared to other desirable destination cities in the Global North. Rebecca (British, 25) initially came to Korea to work and save money for future relocation to an LGBTQ-friendly city in Europe. She met her partner Ayoung (Korean, 26) in Korea, and they have discussed marrying and leaving together for Europe. When asked how long she expected this to take, Rebecca responded,

> I'm not sure. At the moment there is a vague plan to leave after a couple of years, and either move to Britain or to another country with my partner. But it's not certain. For the time being, both of us are to trying to save as much money as we can.

Rebecca points out that the low rental costs in Korea, as compared to the UK, enable her to make significant gains in her savings goals. Because she lives in Korea, she is able to save significantly on housing:

> So, in England, if I was earning the same amount, I would be able to save maybe 10% of my income and more, at least 50% of my income would be going to rent. Whereas in Korea, it's kind of like the opposite. Most of my income is going to savings, and maybe 25% is going to rent.

Rebecca comes from a below average socioeconomic background, so saving funds is very important to her short-term goals and eventual relocation to Europe, where she hopes the couple will be able to settle in an LGBTW-friendly city. In the meantime, she and Ayoung were

eventually able to move in together in Korea and began working on a Korean language learning app to make extra money as a side gig while teaching English.

Despite their marital rights not being recognized in Korea, socioeconomic considerations like healthcare, national health insurance infrastructure, and lower rents than they faced in their origin countries make Korea a desirable destination, at least for temporary residence, until migrants can afford to relocate to more expensive destinations in the West where LGBTQ protections are greater. On the other hand, each couple expressed concern about the long-term viability of Korea because they have no legal recourse if they face discrimination in employment or housing. This significantly inhibits their family building plans, as they fear instability in their legal status. Therefore, they continue to draw on low-cost housing and healthcare to save funds for future relocation and family building. This pattern is similar to marriage migration, except that rather than spending time apart in different countries waiting for a fiancé visa (Beauchemin et al. 2015), each couple cohabits together temporarily in a destination where they do not intend to settle long-term, because their union is not recognized. They will eventually have to forum shop to marry in another country or may follow the route typical to family migration literature and separate temporarily after securing a fiancé or spousal visa. But in the meantime, they make socioeconomic gains by residing in a country together where both can work and where they do not have high costs for healthcare.

Student Visas Enable Migration

Other respondents relied on visa status changes, particularly from tourist to student to worker, to enable them to cohabit in Korea with a partner for an extended time. This is often the case for migrants from Southeast Asian countries like Shuang (from Indonesia, 30) who used Korea's education-migration policies to train in a field and seek employment. Shuang fled Indonesia because of anti-LGBTQ violence and to escape parental abuse and attempts to force her into a heterosexual marriage. Due to visa restrictions, she could not migrate directly to what she refers to as "famously LGBTQ-friendly countries in the West" but was able to secure a tourist visa and then language study visa in Korea.

Unlike the noncitizen teachers discussed above, such as Alison and Claire, Shuang initially relied on a student visa because she was ineligible to work in Korea due to her weaker Indonesian passport, and lack of locally desirable 'skills.' However, after 14 months, she secured a full-tuition and stipend scholarship to a Korean university and began working in the tourism

industry. She also started exploring options for her next move and gained admission to a master's degree program in Europe. The change from tourist to student visa provided stability for Shuang, as it did for some of Robertson's 'staggered' migrants.

In the meantime, Shuang met and fell in love with Hattie (Swedish, age unknown) who was working at a European embassy. The two cohabited, and when Hattie's post in Korea ended, they decided to continue their engagement long distance until Hattie was financially ready to sponsor Shuang's fiancé visa in Europe. Meanwhile, because Shuang had already earned her bachelor's degree from a Korean university and spent several years as a worker in the tourism industry, she became eligible for permanent residency and citizenship in Korea. However, as her credentials, opportunities, and relationship prospects shifted, so did Shuang's opportunity to ascend her desired destination hierarchy. Her experience with a homophobic church made her conclude that Korea, "is not exactly the kind of society where I want to live for the rest of my life." She continued, "I was already in a relationship with [Hattie], and I got that scholarship [to study for an MA in Europe]. So, I decided, well Swedish is one of the best citizenships in the world. So, it's better to just change [my citizenship] directly to Swedish nationality." Shuang therefore merely extended her work contract in Korea while waiting for her fiancé visa, rather than pursuing Korean citizenship or a student visa to Europe.

Despite Shuang's relatively weak Southeast Asian passport, she was nevertheless able to use stepwise or serial migration strategies by studying in Korea, then applying to study and marry in a country that protects LGBTQ rights by marrying a Swedish citizen. Shuang's case reveals how important the student visa can be to jumpstart a longer-term migration career. As Raghuram (2000) discussed, this student-to-worker phenomenon is particularly common for women migrants, who are more likely to begin their migration on student visas rather than work visas. Because of her educational credentials, Shuang was able to work in the travel industry and became eligible for permanent residency after a period of five years.

Another queer migrant who used a student visa in order to live and work in Korea, was Sienna (Australian, 30). Sienna relocated to South Korea when her working holiday visa in Canada expired and was no longer renewable, after she had spent 6 years working in the tech industry in Canada. During her time in Canada, Sienna took a short vacation to South Korea, where she met her future fiancé, Eunkyung (Korean, 28). The two remained in contact and had a long-distance relationship until Sienna relocated to Korea on a tourist stay. Sienna came to the

city of Busan where her fiancé lived, and the two moved in relatively soon thereafter. After three months, her tourist stay expired, and she briefly traveled outside the country to renew her stay. Then, after spending six months in Korea, she decided to study Korean full-time on a student visa. Because Sienna did not have a bachelor's degree and was therefore ineligible to work in the English education industry, she came to be a full-time student at a Korean language institute in Busan. After six months' time spent studying Korean (having lived in Korea for a full year at the time), Sienna was eligible to work part-time in the service industry. She picked up a job at her fiancé's restaurant, exchanging her labor for the costs of rent, food, and tuition.

However, Sienna did not plan to remain a student indefinitely and planned to take the Korean language exam in order to hopefully be able to work in the tech industry, as she put it, "so right now all I'm doing right now, is just studying Korean. I'm just hoping to get my, I guess, my Korean ability up so I am able to attain a job here in the video game industry." She had been a 'digital nomad' in Canada during her working holiday and hoped to find a work contract in Korea despite not having a bachelor's degree. She reflected on her financial and employment situations, pointing out that,

> "So, for six years in Canada... Yeah, I was working I was pretty much only working, I ended up saving up a lot. Yeah, like a bit of money to sustain myself for a good amount of time so, but I think after [Korean language] level six I'll definitely need to, yeah, gainful employment."

Sienna planned to study through the advanced Korean language sequence, living off her savings, and helping at her fiancé's restaurant. This strategy was necessary because they were in a same sex relationship, if they were heterosexual, they could marry and Sienna could establish long-term residency in Korea. In the future, the pair plan to go abroad to get married, though they did not yet have a specific country in mind. This is a common strategy among the mixed citizenship couples I met through this study. In the next section I will discuss how they forum shop for their queer kinship rights.

Forum Shopping for Queer Kinship Rights

Due to their uneven access to political and civil rights in various parts of the world, some of my respondents in mixed citizenship relationships used forum shopping to legally consolidate their families. Mina (Korean citizen, 31) and Kelly (American, 32) cannot afford to migrate

directly to a country that recognizes their family as they cannot meet the sponsor income requirement due to Kelly's educational debt. They instead reside in Korea so they can build up savings, but they want to eventually immigrate to what they regard as an 'LGBTQ-friendly' Western country.

While in Korea, they traveled to the Philippines where they secured a marriage certificate, although the Korean government would not recognize this certificate. They were joined at their ceremony by their closest queer kin, a group of five Korean friends and queer migrants who reside in Korea but travelled to the Philippines to enjoy the festivities and celebrate the couple. The reason that the couple sought an overseas marriage certificate was that they believed it would decrease the length of time Mina must wait for sponsorship by Kelly who hoped to work as an au pair in Europe. Citizenship eligibility is important to their family building plans because they are saving up to adopt a child but are concerned about whether they can have equal parental rights in Korea. Therefore, they considered relocating to Europe where they would have equal parental rights over their children.

LGBTQ couples cannot adopt in Korea but can in the U.S. or Europe. The cost of adoption is currently prohibitive, so Mina and Kelly need two incomes to save up for the expense. In Europe, Kelly plans to work as an au pair while Mina works in the travel industry. Mina and Kelly's aspirations can be regarded as a case of potential stepwise or serial migration. However, their journey involved significant complexity such as forum shopping for a marriage certificate in order to maintain a legal relationship to one another as they relocate. Therefore, I regard this as a case of jigsaw migration to emphasize the simultaneity of living in one destination while accruing legal, medical, and economic resources in other countries. In summary, Korea functions as an affordable but temporary home base while LBQ migrants accumulate economic and legal resources through forum shopping for onward migration to a destination that recognizes LGBTQ family rights.

Respondents used Korea as a temporary steppingstone destination while seeking marital rights through forum shopping and accruing savings. Rose (American, 31) describes meeting her partner Bridget (Irish, 29) while they both lived abroad in Korea, working as ESL teachers. After dating for some time, they took a trip to the United States to get engaged and meet each other's families. Then they returned to Korea, but later took another trip to Copenhagen to get married. When asked why they forum shopped to Copenhagen, Rose indicated that it was a country that

would let them marry and that they could also travel for their honeymoon during a short recess from school. Unlike their heterosexual peers, they were not given time off for marriage. Copenhagen was 'convenient' as Rose put it,

> "We did it in Copenhagen because that was just convenient and … So, we just always wanted to get married, and I think it's really important, yeah to be able to have those documents and then for legal reasons, clearly when you get back to the States, to have those documents."

Even though it would not be recognized in South Korea, the couple wanted a marriage certificate that would enable them to have marital rights when they traveled to countries that do recognize same sex unions, such as the United States.

Other respondents emphasized how accepting their queer kin were of their relationship and family making in Korea. Tracy (American, 27) and Theresa (Canadian, 29) met in South Korea and forum shopped to Canada to get a marriage certificate, which was not recognized in South Korea, but made their travels elsewhere easier. They both worked as university professors in smallish towns in the North Gyeongsang region of Korea, commuting by bus daily to their separate universities. Tracy and Theresa lived a comfortable life but yearned to make a family. Fortunately, at that time, fertility treatments were accessible and affordable in South Korea.[11] So, the couple decided to have a baby together through invitro fertilization.

On their first attempt to find a fertility doctor, they were rejected because the Korean physician did not want to help lesbians get pregnant, yet he provided them with contact information for another doctor that he knew would provide the procedure. This second doctor that they visited was eager to help the couple conceive and particularly excited to help a lesbian couple for the first time, according to the couple.

In South Korea, same sex unions are not recognized nor is adoption by same sex parents. Tracy and Theresa worried about legal recognition of their family, and this is reflected in the fertility treatments they pursued and how they strategically manipulated Korean bureaucracy. First, they decided that Theresa would donate eggs to Tracy, who would give birth to their baby.

[11] Just a few years later, the Korean government policy shifted so that only married women could receive IVF.

This way, one parent was biologically related to their child, while the other would be listed as mother on the birth certificate. This way, they both held a legal claim to their daughter.

Second, the couple was paradoxically able to circumvent the law due to the illegibility of their 'foreignness.' They eagerly told me about how they creatively navigated the law by relying on their 'invisibility' as a queer couple. Nurses and doctors alike assumed that Theresa was a family member to Tracy, but not that they were a couple. This was also the case with staff at administrative offices in their region. The idea of a same sex couple simply did not enter into local's minds. This rendered Theresa's motherhood invisible, which surprisingly made it possible for her to be listed as a parent on the child's birth certificate. In Korea, birth certificates are not automatically issued at the hospital, instead births are registered at a local administrative office after the birth of the child. Tracy went to the local office and merely designated Theresa as the second 'parent' of the baby, relying on the administrative staff's lack of knowledge about typical gender and foreign names. According to Tracy, administrators seemed to take it for granted that the baby was born to a single mother or that the father was absent and issued the birth certificate without questioning the gender of the second parent.

Third, they travelled to the Canadia Embassy in Seoul which would issue a passport to their baby that recognized both parents, since they had legally married in Canada and had a birth certificate in Korean with both their names on it. With this passport in hand, they felt more confident about their legal standing as parents. This passport would also help facilitate their later relocation to Canada, where Tracy was recognized as a biological mother to their child and was issued a spousal visa with relative ease, after they had saved up funds for this purpose.

Interestingly, Tracy and Theresa's legibility as a couple was repeatedly called into question by strangers on the street. Their daughter, a beautiful doll-like child with goldilocks hair, was a hit in the public. According to Tracy, "*halmoni*[12] (grandmas) love our daughter." In these interactions, some 'grandmas' would indicate that they assumed Theresa was either Tracy's mother (despite their similar age) or sister or other relative, and not a joint mother.

Although Tracy and Theresa's pregnancy and parenthood were marked by invisibility in the society at large, their local community of Korean and queer kin recognized and celebrated

[12] *Halmoni* is the Korean word for grandmother, but is also a marker of age and status, frequently invoked by people who are not blood relatives to refer to elderly women in social and public situations.

their child. During her pregnancy, Theresa's coworkers, who previously had not known she was married, learned this fact, and celebrated their family with gifts. Over time, the couple grew particularly close to a few Korean colleagues, who became friends, and then kin-like. For instance, Tracy and Theresa would leave their baby to be watched by Korean friends that they trusted as 'aunties' to their baby.

Tracy and Theresa's efforts to be legally recognized did not all work, however. Tracy had the better benefits policy through work, so she informed her workplace that she wanted to put her family on her insurance. However, Theresa's application as a dependent was rejected because their marriage was not legally recognized, but they did succeed in putting the baby on Tracy's policy as a dependent. This was one of the pitfalls in their otherwise highly successful navigation of local Korean laws, which they bent and blended to their purposes when getting pregnant and delivering their child.

In the queer community, the baby was celebrated as well, although Tracy and Theresa's residence in a town away from the major cities where queer people congregate limited the extent of their kin network. This meant that the people they considered kin were a mix of Korean colleagues and foreign residents in Korea.

These examples illustrate the importance of queer kinship in the transnational space of migration. Tracy and Theresa relied on their queer kin for critical support during important transitions in their lives. Tracy and Theresa formed a tight knit circle of queer kin and Korean friend who formed kinship-like arrangements. However, the stories also highlight the importance of visibility and invisibility in enabling these processes. I present a more full-blown example of jigsaw migration in the following section.

How Jigsaw Migration is Used to Assemble a Family

The following vignette explains how a family of four used the jigsaw migration strategy to adapt to constraints and realize their desired migration trajectory while simultaneously building a family using forum shopping. Reidun (Norwegian, 42, they/them pronouns) left Europe and met their wife Mila (Belgian, 40) in Indonesia, a country that not only does not recognize LGBTQ rights but also punishes same-sex sexual behavior.[13] Early in their

[13] For a detailed description of Indonesia's policy shifts, see "Indonesia: New Criminal Code Disastrous for Rights." *Human Rights Watch*, 14 Dec. 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/08/indonesia-new-criminal-code-disastrous-rights.

relationship, the couple temporarily relocated to the U.S. for Reidun's career in the NGO sector but could not secure permanent residency for either of them due to the high cost of sponsoring a spouse by a non-citizen. They have also been unable to meet the economic criteria to sponsor immigration of their partner to either of their origin countries. The couple eventually returned to Indonesia, where Mila has maintained her own business for over a decade and where they could save up funds to start a family together. The first hurdle they had to overcome was getting married. The Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta refused to marry them without permission from the Indonesian government, an impossibility. So, the couple had to forum shop for a destination where they could marry legally – by visiting a Belgian embassy abroad.

The next step was to have children. Although a male friend (Indonesian, age unknown) who was queer kin to the couple, helped them conceive both of their children, for their prenatal care, childbirth, and postnatal care, the family forum shopped for nearby countries with good medical infrastructure that were rumored to be 'friendly' to same-sex couples. While based in Jakarta, the pair received IVF in Thailand, spent their pregnancy in East Timor, and gave birth to their first child in Bali. Because of rumors that the Thai government began cracking down on LGBTQ family building services, for their second pregnancy, they turned to Cambodia for IVF. One birth took place in East Timor, while the second birth took place in Indonesia. They forum shopped for four destinations in Southeast Asia for their family building, while using Indonesia as a home base. Their family building and queer kinship required significant transnational trips and migrations because of the complexity imposed by queer migration through countries that do not recognize same sex couples.

Reidun and Mila are legally recognized as a married couple in Europe thanks to the marriage certificate issued by the Belgian embassy, but their family members are paradoxically not all legally tied to one another because their joint motherhood is not recognized in either Norway or Belgium. Reidun and Mila did not list the biological father of their children on their children's birth certificates because they feared it would further entangle them in legal proceedings that impede their eventual return to Europe. Instead, they attempted another round of forum shopping for a birth destination that would list both Mila and Reidun as parents on their children's birth certificates. The children's biological father also provided documentation waiving his parental rights, but in Norway, this is insufficient to grant adoption rights to Mila as a noncitizen mother. In both Norway and Belgium, the children must come of age to legally

consent to their noncitizen mother as a legal guardian. Thus, despite considerable efforts, both mothers have only been able to be legally recognized as single mothers with two dependent children and a noncitizen wife in their origin countries. This 'staggers' their migration as they have to work to accrue the financial resources in Indonesia to bring their family together in a destination where they have full legal recognition.

However, violent anti-LGBTQ backlash in the mid-2010s drove their family to leave Indonesia. Reidun searched for employment opportunities in nearby countries so that Mila could maintain her business in Indonesia from abroad. Reidun found that the best employment, education, and healthcare opportunities for their family were in Korea and accepted a position with an NGO that sponsored their A-series working visa. Reidun sponsored their children who are legally recognized as their dependents. However, Reidun could not sponsor Mila because Korea does not recognize same-sex unions. Instead, as a Belgian citizen, Mila was able to rely on 'visa runs' on a 3-month visa waiver to stay in Korea before routinely exiting the country and returning on a new 3-month visa waiver. The couple feared that Mila might be questioned by immigration or even rejected after one of these 'visa runs.' They also worried that Mila might not be recognized legally as a mother to her two children, because in the Korean bureaucracy she is not recognized as such. Eventually, Reidun's workplace negotiated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make it possible to sponsor Mila on a diplomatic household visa, a visa typically given to household staff. This enables their family to cohabit all together in a single country. They stay in Korea where they rely on a legal document establishing Mina's right to parent their children, if anyone ever asks for proof of parentage (which at the time of interview, had never happened). This opportunity is available only to those who are diplomats or who work for international NGOs, though not for other types of visa holders. Queer kinship, in this case, required negotiating with the government to produce an exceptional status for Mila.

Despite the lack of legal recognition of their family, Reidun and Mila emphasize that they consider Seoul "a very LGBTQ family-friendly city" and "would recommend it to their friends." This is because they found an active LGBTQ community and many family-friendly activities for their family. They move between Korea and Indonesia to maintain Mila's business, as well as their ties with the biological father of their two children. But they hope to one day be able to afford to retire in one of their home countries. In the meantime, they shuttle between Southeast Asia and East Asia to maintain cohabitation, secure employment, and raise their children. This

pattern is considerably more complex than stepwise or staggered migration because of the simultaneity of their trips to nearby countries for marriage, childbirth, and economic security. Reidun choose Korea because it would be a safer country for their LGBTQ family, as compared to Indonesia. Furthermore, strict family reunification policies in Europe lock Reidun and their family out of Europe, until the children come of age to identify both Reidun and Mila as legal parents.

Unable to Cohabit Due to Weak Passports

Jigsaw migration was a strategy available to only some of my respondents, depending on the strength of their passports. Generally, migrants with similar qualifications who were from Global South countries struggled to find stable work and preferred visas in Korea, as compared to their Global North counterparts. This was due to Korea's construction of 'skilled' labor that discriminates against those from the Global South.

Aye (from Myanmar, 26) earned her bachelors and master's degrees in Korea on a student visa. Aye and her girlfriend Angelica (from the Philippines, age unknown) want to cohabit together, but they have been unable to do so. This is because Aye cannot find suitable employment opportunities in the Philippines, and Angelica lacks the skills in tech, travel, or teaching that would secure her an employment visa in Korea.

Instead, Angelica frequently traveled to Korea on a tourist visa to stay with Aye. However, unlike similarly situated jigsaw migrants in this study, Angelica was eventually denied a tourist visa to Korea due to her insufficient economic resources, and because she comes from a country that is ineligible for short-term visa waivers for tourists. Aye trained as an English teacher at a top Korean university, but because she does not come from one of the eight English-speaking countries preferred in Korea, she struggled to find work in Korea. Aye was unable to be a 'breadwinner' and sponsor Angelica in a destination in the Global North for similar reasons. The couple decided it was best for Aye to leave Korea and return to Myanmar, which would permit Angelica to visit more easily.[14] The couple recently posted on social media that they hope to relocate to Thailand so they can cohabit. They have a GoFundMe site raising funds for their relocation, to which members of their extended queer kin network contribute.

[14] This was before the military coup in Myanmar.

Unlike other couples in this study, both partners hold weak passports. Despite having educational credentials, and long-term study in Korea, Aye's Southeast Asian passport made it difficult for her to find sufficient employment to enact a jigsaw migration strategy due to Korea's construction of 'skilled labor' that favors those from Western destinations. She was likewise unable to enact a stepwise or staggered migration pattern and instead had to return to Myanmar due to a lack of options. Aye's journey was full of errance, with shifts, changes, and uncertainty in her and Angelica's access to visas. By contrast, Reidun and Mila embarked on purposeful waiting. This clearly illustrates the difference that national origin makes in their migration trajectories.

Conclusion

The significance of LGBTQ rights in shaping migration opportunities and trajectories is one of the most important subjects in the queer migration literature. This chapter reveals that class and national origin also constrain migration to many 'LGBTQ-friendly' destinations in the West. I have shown that LBQ couples in mixed citizenship families with some resources for transnational mobility, such as strong passports, education, and/or skills considered desirable, turn to strategies besides family reunification to build and maintain their families abroad in countries even if they do not recognize same-sex unions. I proposed the concept of jigsaw migration to capture these strategies. This concept highlights the multi-sited forum shopping strategies deployed by LGBTQ families that confront a lack of same-sex marriage recognition in many countries. LGBTQ families in this context instead seek to remain together in one destination while simultaneously acquiring resources from other countries for onward migration to an 'LGBTQ-friendly' destination.

This chapter makes three contributions to the existing literature on queer migration, multinational migration strategies, and migration through Korea. First, this study responds to calls for queer migration scholarship to account for multiple intersecting inequalities operating based on national origin, race, gender, and class, as well as sexuality (Harper et al. 1997; Luibhéid 2005, Manalansan 2006). By focusing on a seemingly unlikely destination country, my study challenges the progressive liberal freedom script (Manalansan 1995) – which assumes that LGBTQ legal rights in the West secure equity for sexual and gender minorities. In contrast, I show that persistent socioeconomic inequalities and restrictive immigration policy in the Global North manifest in underemployment, lack of support for mixed citizenship families, and costly

medical care, driving some LGBTQ citizens in these countries to work abroad. These factors can also make it difficult to sponsor their foreign spouses, again pushing them to migrate abroad to cohabit with their spouses. These findings highlight the uneven distribution of LGBTQ rights protections *within* the Global North according to other axes of inequality. Furthermore, although income requirements impact all mixed citizenship families of working-class background, the cumulative economic disadvantage and marginalization that LBQ minorities experience make it more difficult to meet the economic criteria for family reunification than male citizens sponsoring female non-citizen spouses. The liberal freedom script overlooks the interlocking constraints LGBTQ families experience in the Global North that push them to destinations where they have fewer LGBTQ rights.

Heteronormativity in family reunification policies constrain mixed citizenship LBQ families in Korea by prohibiting family or spousal sponsorship. "Doing family" in this context requires that LGBTQ migrants build ties in multiple legal jurisdictions in order to work or accrue savings, maintain family cohabitation, and access healthcare. This jigsaw migration strategy, however, is not easily available to LGBTQ migrants from the Global South, constrained by economic barriers, immigration quotas, and the discriminatory construction of 'skilled' labor that disadvantaged them over their counterparts from the Global North. These cumulative disadvantages suggest that intersectional inequalities based on sexuality as well as class and national origin negatively impact would-be queer migrants, particularly LBQ women. In this sense, queer migration scholarship will benefit from intersectional analysis that is attentive not only to sexuality, but also to other vectors of inequality.

Second, this chapter expands the flexible citizenship and multinational migration literatures by bringing them into conversation with queer migration scholarship. Through this synthesis, I was able to develop the concept of jigsaw migration to capture the transnational and simultaneously multi-sited strategies hitherto underexplored in multinational migration literature. By combining migration of various lengths and multiple destinations with forum shopping, LGBTQ families can maintain family residence and cohabitation even in countries where same-sex unions are not recognized and acquire resources to address their unmet needs. Unlike 'flexible citizens' whose families are dispersed among several destinations; jigsaw migrants mobilize flexible strategies to *stay together* as families without relying on family reunification policies.

Including an LGBTQ case in the literature on multinational migration literature also encourages us to consider the hitherto underexplored factor, namely, lack of legal recognition of family relationships due to sexual minority status, to better understand how LGBTQ people navigate constraints on their movement. This lack of legal recognition shapes multistage and multi-sited migration processes, affecting migrants' differing directions and their pace of migration, in particular. LBQ migrants turn to employment, temporary trips, visa runs, and forum shopping across multiple legal and geographic jurisdictions to make up for their fragmented citizenship and build family. Their intersectional position in multiple hierarchies determines how complex their strategies get, how quickly or smoothly they can eventually move to their desired destinations, how stably they can stick to their initial plans, and whether they wait.

Finally, my findings contribute to the burgeoning scholarship on transnational migration to Korea by analyzing migration policies and their unintended consequences through the lens of queer theory. This perspective yields insights about a group of migrants who have been underexplored in the existing literature: women who cannot access family migration due to their sexuality and instead rely on labor migration policies and other short-term visas to stay together with their family in Korea. The heteronormative marriage migration system in Korea treats female migrants married to Korean men as representative of multiculturalism in Korea, constructing their position at the top of the migrant hierarchy alongside high-skilled and overseas Korean visa holders (Chung 2020). This group has also attracted the most attention in scholarship on immigration in Korea (Choo 2016; Kim M. 2018). My study shows that heteronormativity excludes LBQ families from utilizing this much studied 'multicultural' policy. Instead, women migrants in same-sex partnerships turn to tourist, education, employment, or job-seeking visas in order to cohabit with family members. Not all LBQ families are able to mobilize visas in this way, however, as demonstrated by the case of LBQ Southeast Asian mixed citizenship families. My study therefore further highlights how local construction of 'skills' in labor migration policies and short-term visa regimes produce enduring discrimination based on national origin, regardless of human capital individual migrants may possess. Research on Chinese or Vietnamese LBQ migrants would help further highlight this important axis of inequality in transnational migration to Korea.

Although this study has focused on same-sex mixed citizenship couples situated in South Korea, the jigsaw migration concept and findings from my study have broader applicability. For

example, the jigsaw concept may be extended to heterosexual mixed citizenship families that cohabit in one country and forum shop in other countries while waiting to migrate together to another country. But this is likely to be a strategy best deployed by 'middling' migrants with relatively strong passports who can take advantage of visa waivers and easily access employment or educational visas, relatively speaking. Moreover, many other countries can operate as a homebase for LBQ migrants who mobilize jigsaw migration. Reidun and Mila's example shows that Indonesia played the same function until Indonesian policy cracked down on LGBTQ communities. Countries such as India, Japan, China, and the Philippines that do not recognize same-sex unions but have a similarly low bar for some forms of 'skilled' labor especially for migrants from the Global North would enable LGBTQ families to utilize jigsaw migration in a similar way to South Korea.

Chapter 3 Outsider Exemption: Transgender Migrants and Gender Accountability in South Korea[15]

Introduction

Gender accountability is the expectation that people conform to their assigned sex and gender roles. This can result in violence or harassment for transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC+) people (Stotzer 2009), who experience gender accountability under a forcibly imposed binary gender system (Westbrook & Schilt 2014). This can be particularly burdensome in settings that are less progressive or gender conservative (Na et al. 2014). South Korea is regarded as one such conservative setting (Shin 2014) and not considered an 'LGBTQ-friendly' country due to its lack of progressive legal protections for LGBTQ people. We would therefore expect high accountability for gender nonconformity in Korea. Yet, TGNC+ migrants, even those from the presumably more progressive and 'LGBTQ-friendly' West, report experiencing *less* accountability to gender in Korea than in their origin countries. Why is this the case?

This chapter seeks to illuminate the conditions that enable gender identity affirmation by TGNC+ migrants in a destination not regarded as 'LGBTQ-friendly.' I draw on sixteen months of ethnographic observation, participant observation in Korea's online LGBTQ forums, and 25 semi-structured interviews with TGNC+ respondents. I pay special attention to how TGNC+ migrants' real and perceived intersectional positioning in gender, national origin, class, and race/ethnicity hierarchies shifts as they move across countries. Bringing together the scholarship on 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman 1987) with the literature on social boundaries – in particular, the primary frame concept (Ridgeway 2011) – I analyze how 'outsider' status affects the primary frame through which Korean citizens read TGNC+ migrants' gender performances. Instead of gender nonconformity, national origin, class, and race/ethnicity come to the fore as the

[15] An earlier version of this chapter was published as: Jones, C. (2025). Outsider exemption: Transgender migrants and gender accountability in South Korea. *Gender & Society*, *39*(3), 458-484.

most salient categories of difference in their interactions with Korean citizens, *exempting* TGNC+ migrants from local gender roles and lessening their gender accountability.

To explain why TGNC+ people living in a country not notable for its LGBTQIA+ policies paradoxically experience less accountability to gender, this chapter develops the concept of 'exempt outsider.' Outsider exemption is the process by which an individual, not regarded as an in-group member, is not held accountable to group norms during interactions, such as prevailing norms around gender conformity. I argue that TGNC+ skilled migrants in Korea enjoy this exemption from accountability to gender, as their national origin, class, and ethnicity/race replace gender as a primary frame in their interaction with Korean citizens.

I examine TGNC+ migrants' experience of gender accountability in various institutional contexts such as gender clinics, public space, and the workplace. They experience less gatekeeping in Korea's informed consent gender clinics because doctors are more likely to accept their desire for surgery than typical doctors in the West who demand more gender accountability. In public spaces, Korea's low crime rate and migrants' perception of themselves as 'exempt outsiders' mean they feel safer affirming gender than they did in their origin countries. Finally, even in workplaces where some TGNC+ migrants fear the consequences of involuntary 'outing,' others feel that they can 'come out' because they are not held to the same norms as transgender Korean citizens. Such outsider exemption comes at the cost of being treated as temporary sojourners with limited impact on Korean society. However, this treatment is largely in line with the self-perception of TGNC+ migrants, who regard themselves as temporary migrants rather than permanent settlers. They therefore rarely contest or challenge their treatment as 'foreigners.'

Importantly, not all migrants – despite their 'outsider' status – enjoy the same degree of exemption in their gender accountability structures. This is due to the importance of their race/ethnicity and citizenship status. Although 'skilled' migrants are often presumed to be White, even those belonging to racial minority groups (Black and Asian respondents) report that they benefit from symbolic capital associated with their citizenship, if they are from the Global North. This enables them to perform gender in the way they desire, which was often out of reach back home, where they were minoritized in terms of their gender nonconformity. Korean migration policy also makes it easier for TGNC+ migrants from the Global North to access middle-class income and afford transgender healthcare in Korea. By contrast, the exempted status of

Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants has proved precarious. As noted in the existing literature (Lee et al. 2015, Kim, M 2018), female marriage migrants from Southeast Asia to Korea are seen as responsible for the reproduction of the nation and are therefore subjected to even more demanding heteronormative gender norms than Korean women. This affects Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants, who, regardless of their actual socioeconomic statuses, are associated more closely with marriage migrants rather than with English-speaking, (presumably) middle-class migrants from the Global North.

I contribute to 'doing gender' scholarship by synthesizing the literature on gender accountability with scholarship on boundaries, specifically that on primary frames. I show how due to TGNC+ migrants' 'exempt' outsider status, gender accountability recedes in interactions, while national origin, class, and race/ethnicity come to frame interactions more intensely. The salience of gender therefore varies in interactions and by context, particularly when one is viewed as an 'outsider' not responsible for reproducing 'insider' culture. TGNC+ migrants' privileged exemption from local gender norms is tempered by a general 'invisibility' in the social and political sense, but this enables them to 'go stealth,' or pass as their desired gender. In this context, TGNC+ respondents feel held to gender accountability less intensively than they had in their origin countries, where they risked violence if they performed gender as they desired.

Second, my approach makes for a strong intersectional analysis of gender accountability, showing different degrees of privilege and precarity experienced by those from the Global North and South. For example, for Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants, their presumed (low) class standing, and racialization in Korean society mean that they tend to face greater gender accountability than Global North migrants. Due to negative stereotypes about their presumed desire to marry Korean men, for Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants, their national origin, class, and racial/ethnic position can mean that gender remains salient in interaction. Nevertheless, my Southeast Asian respondents report that migration improves their LGBTQ rights, because of the lack of criminalization of same-sex behavior in Korea.

Third, by considering the role of migration and the varying impacts of migration policy in shaping access to living in Korea, I illuminate the conditions that enable gender identity affirmation by TGNC+ migrants in a destination not regarded as 'LGBTQ-friendly.' This reveals the conditions under which TGNC+ migrants' interactions with Korean locals result in being held less accountable to gender. These conditions include high public safety, migration policies

that enable access to middle-class income and symbolic capital, and a gender affirming transgender healthcare industry. This chapter suggests that social, economic, and medical conditions can make for a setting in which TGNC+ people experience less accountability to gender, despite a lack of the formal legal protections available in more 'progressive' countries.

This chapter proceeds as follows: I review the literature on gender accountability and boundary theory. Then I discuss issues in transgender migration and healthcare access. I analyze TGNC+ migrants' access to trans healthcare and their experience of public safety in Korea. I then introduce the 'exempt outsider' primary frame and analyze its impact on gender accountability structures. I conclude by discussing the contributions of the chapter.

Gender Accountability, Intersectionality, and Boundaries

An important critique of 'doing gender' scholarship is that most studies emphasize gender displays while overlooking the important interactional processes of gender *accountability* (Hollander 2013). This is an important shortcoming if we consider West and Zimmerman's claim (2009, 116) that "the key to understanding gender's doing is… accountability to sex category membership." West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that accountability to gender – routine policing of gender-appropriate norms and behaviors – should be situated in interactional and institutional contexts. In a similar vein, Hollander (2013) points out that while most scholars give passing attention to accountability, they only provide 'thin' conceptions of interactions and rarely discuss accountability in ways that adequately address context (such as how and with what consequences gender accountability operates).

Recent gender accountability literature has pushed for systematic examination of interactions to understand processes by which accountability is enforced. Hollander (2013: 10) proposes that accountability is a "three-part interactional system that produces gender": one's orientation to a sex category, the assessment of one's congruence with a presumed sex category, and finally, the enforcement of gender accountability. Notably, it is the knowledge that others will assess one's behavior that shapes one's thoughts and actions (Hollander 2013). Thus, even if there is no explicit external enforcement of gender boundaries, such as being threatened in a bathroom, there is still self-enforcement of gender accountability that shapes how one 'does gender' (shuster 2017). Furthermore, those with more power have greater entitlement to enforce gender norms (shuster 2017), holding others accountable to their criteria for respectable behavior and reinforcing social hierarchies around gender. This all suggests the need to address the 'thick'

context of interaction to understand how gender accountability is enforced as an interactional system.

Boundary studies provide tools to encourage us to examine the processes through which distinct types of categorical distinction gain or lose salience in different contexts. Boundary scholarship does so by examining how gender intersects with other categories of difference such as citizenship, class, and race/ethnicity. This addresses Hollander's critique by encouraging deeper engagement with the interactional context, identifying how and with what consequences gender accountability operates. The transnational context of migration offers especially rich possibilities for analysis. Migration is 'thick' with interesting interactions, as the transnational context is likely to change who becomes the external enforcer of gender accountability, how external enforcers read individuals' gender performance, how individuals anticipate they may be perceived by others, and the relationship and intersectional power hierarchy between these external enforcers and self-censorship.

Among the tools that boundary scholarship provides, Ridgeway's primary frames are particularly useful. Primary frames are "categories of person perception" that serve as cultural frames and coordinate "behavior by associating category membership with widely shared cultural beliefs about how people in one category are likely to behave compared to those in a contrasting category (Ridgeway, 2009: 148)." When people act out of accordance with cultural beliefs, they face sanctions (Ridgeway 2019), or accountability to difference. I argue that accountability to gender can be productively examined by synthesizing the gender accountability literature with the boundary literature on primary frames. Attention to accountability promises to expose the constraints under which actors 'do gender' in terms of their national origin, class, and race/ethnicity, especially in the context of migration. Focusing on boundaries reveals important 'insider' and 'outsider' dynamics that shape primary frames and the processes of accountability as migrants 'do' gender, national origin, class, and race/ethnicity. This chapter will explore these phenomena. In the sections that follow, I contextualize the transnational lives of TGNC+ migrants and their access to gender affirming healthcare, public safety, and workplace affirmation.

Healthcare Access and Transgender Migration

Transgender healthcare is important to the display of gender. Yet, there are significant barriers to affirming healthcare that TGNC+ people must overcome in what are usually

considered progressive countries. These include long wait times to receive care, limited insurance coverage, financial burden, and gatekeeping by healthcare providers. In some Western destinations, average wait times to start hormones exceed 18 months, followed by another 6 months waiting for surgical intake (van der Miesen et al. 2020). Since TGNC+ patients facing long wait times are vulnerable to distress and many turn to self-harm or suicide (Bailey et al. 2014), this is a pressing issue.

Economic barriers to medical care compound the challenges that lower income TGNC+ people face when seeking healthcare. In the U.S., insurance rarely covers transition health care and medication (Mayer et al. 2008). In the UK, although a free route to TGNC+ health care is available via the national healthcare system, the long wait time is a TGNC+ community concern (Pearce 2018). Korea's relatively efficient and low-cost gender affirming surgery industry, which is accessible even to non-nationals, then, is attractive.

Barriers to gender affirming healthcare also come from gatekeeping health care providers that limit access to transgender healthcare (Lombardi 2009; Nordmarken & Kelly 2014; Schilt & Lagos 2017; shuster 2016; Spade 2003). Gatekeeping doctors held respondents accountable for gender by questioning whether they are 'trans enough' (Garrison 2018). According to the U.S. Transgender Survey, 33% of respondents reported having negative experiences with a health care provider in the past year (James et al. 2016). Recent work reveals that gatekeeping is one of the reasons why TGNC+ patients turn to transnational strategies for their healthcare (Aizura 2018). In addition, medical and economic barriers often carry legal consequences for TGNC+ people, as many locales require that they receive medical interventions before accessing legal resources, such as birth certificate gender marker changes and name changes (Johnson 2015; Spade 2003). This makes access to transgender health care a significant resource in the pursuit of gender identity affirmation, driving some TGNC+ people abroad for their healthcare.

Korean Gender Ideology, Trans Rights, and Medical Tourism

In Korea, gender transition is legal, and there are no laws criminalizing LGBTQ people. Yet Korea's gender ideology (Kroska 2007) imposes significant challenges for insiders – such as TGNC+ citizens (Han 2007). The Korean constitution explicitly defines only two sexes, challenging proponents of transgender rights (Bong 2009). It is not surprising then that TGNC+ Korean citizens face legal, social, and familial barriers to their transition (Na & Choo 2011). They also suffer economic disadvantages due to the discrimination they experience in

employment (Lee et al. 2018). Finally, Korea's national medical insurance does not cover costs for gender identity affirmation, so these costs must be paid out of pocket (Na et al. 2014).

Despite these challenges confronting TGNC+ Korean *citizens*, there are factors that make Korea attractive to TGNC+ *migrants*. First, LGBTQ migrants from Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, where LGBTQ people are criminalized, find that the Korean government is less aggressive toward the LGBTQ community, as compared to their home country. Second, Korea's relatively open migration policies for high-skilled labor migrants, such as those working in the education industry as English teachers, make it attractive to LGBTQ migrants from the Global North as well (Jones 2023). This opportunity particularly favors those from English-speaking countries in the West, such as the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, UK, and Ireland. Such opportunities for labor migration are in short supply in other presumably LGBTQ friendly countries. This enables TGNC+ migrants to work and rapidly save funds to pay for healthcare that affirms their gender identity in Korea.

Third, as my analysis will show, even without insurance coverage, the costs of gender affirming care are much lower and the medical gatekeeping is much less severe in Korea than in other countries. In fact, transgender healthcare has become part of Korea's aggressive push to attract medical tourists, including those seeking the country's advanced aesthetic surgeries (Cho & Choi 2016). For example, the Soon Chun Hyang University Hospital website for transgender healthcare is entirely in English. Another clinic, Saint SRS, has a prominent English-language banner on its homepage declaring, "Patients from All Nations are Welcome!"

TGNC+ migrants who find Korea to be an attractive destination generally see their stay in Korea as temporary. They plan to live in Korea for a fixed period to accumulate savings while accessing affordable healthcare so that they can move on to what they perceive as more progressively LGBTQ-friendly countries. Korea's favorable visa policies and opportunities to work or study in the educational sector are appreciated especially by those from South Africa and Latin American countries who tend to face stringent immigration control when they try to move to Western destinations. While these factors explain why Korea is considered a desirable migrant destination for TGNC+ migrants, despite its gender conservativism and lack of legal rights for LGBTQ people, they do not explain fully why TGNC+ migrants in Korea experience less accountability to gender in their everyday life. To answer, we must examine the shifting salience of primary frames—the focus of this chapter.

Analysis

In this section, I first show that transgender healthcare in Korea is accessible and affects gender accountability positively by enabling affirming gender performances. Then I discuss why TGNC+ migrants experience the public sphere and workplace in Korea as safer for their gender display than in their origin countries. Finally, I synthesize the 'doing gender' literature with 'primary frames' to argue that TGNC+ migrants experience relative freedom from gender accountability, not due to any trans-friendly laws, but because they are treated as 'exempt outsiders' to Korea's gender system based on their national origin, class membership, and ethnoracial membership. The prototypical 'exempt outsider' in Korea would be White, (perhaps newly) middle class and carries a Global North passport. Those who are further from this prototype, especially Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants, experience greater precarity and gender accountability. This is because of distinct ways in which different migrant groups are racialized in Korean society.

Affordable, Accessible, and Timely Trans Healthcare in Korea

An important reason that TGNC+ migrants feel freer from gender accountability is because they find gender affirming healthcare more accessible in Korea, as compared to their origin countries. Several TGNC+ Americans in my sample cite healthcare as the major reason they reside in Korea. Compared to the care available in the U.S., American respondents indicate that Korean healthcare is both accessible and much less expensive.

First, the cost of gender affirming healthcare is much more affordable in Korea than in most respondents' countries of origin. Although gender affirming healthcare must be paid out of pocket in Korea, the costs are lower than in many countries in the West. Anna (trans woman, White, American) described her experience accessing hormones, writing "$232 for six months of HRT and a doctor's visit in Korea. Not bad." A trans woman living in the U.S. responded to Anna's post, "That's like [the cost of] one month of meds for me." Anna decided to start her transition in Korea rather than facing higher costs at home. Gender affirming surgeries in Korea average approximately $14,000 for transfeminine patients and $19,000 for transmasculine patients (Lee et al. 2018). These costs range upwards of $150,000 in the U.S. (Clary 2018). It often takes several years for transgender people in the U.S to be able to afford affirming care, if this is even accessible without travel to another state to visit a gender clinic. My respondents

decided that rather than spend their waiting time in the U.S. they would move abroad to work and accrue savings for healthcare.

Second, TGNC+ migrants faced less gatekeeping at gender clinics in Korea. Korean citizens with minor children are not allowed to legally transition until after their children come of age. Because unmarried TGNC+ migrants are not Korean citizens, they have no local family register documenting their children, thus they do not face this constraint. Moreover, the medical gatekeeping TGNC+ people face in the West is less stringent in Korea. Gatekeeping by doctors is an important external, or 'other-enforcement' (shuster 2017), means by which TGNC+ people experience gender accountability. But not only do Korean doctors prescribe HRT, they frequently make it as accessible, convenient, and cost effective as possible, such as by providing six months of medication at a time. Korean doctors accept patient's gender identity with little pushback, in contrast with the inadequate care provided by gatekeepers in the West (MacKinnon et al. 2020). For example, Veronica (trans feminine, White, American) discussed her experience accessing hormone therapy in Korea: "You get a letter from your doctor, you find somebody who is willing to do it, and then you just do it." She continued, "I felt that, had I just rolled up in Korea, I could have started this process without the psychotherapy [required in the West]." As Arlene (trans woman, White, Irish) puts it, "I've never seen too many [healthcare] roadblocks come up for me here."

Third, and relatedly, respondents favorably compared Korea's healthcare system to the long wait times elsewhere. Veronica points out that if she were to relocate to Canada, she would have to wait at least six months just to enroll in the national healthcare system to get in line for gender affirming healthcare, a process which took mere days after arriving in Korea. As Veronica put it,

> If I went home, I would be subjected to this ridiculous Western medical process." She pointed out that "it's even worse in Canada… as a non-resident of Canada, I would have to wait a year or six months before [insurance] resumed after living there.

After transitioning, Veronica left Korea and migrated to the Netherlands, which has very progressive LGBTQ policies. However, she is concerned about the long wait times to receive gender affirming care. According to Veronica,

> There is an 18-month wait list to see somebody for your induction meeting, followed by a six month wait list to have a psychological evaluation. And then, obviously, you then have to wait. So, we're talking about two years to even get through the initial process of being seen.

Such long wait times and uncertainty about whether they will be deemed 'trans enough' by gatekeeping doctors drive some to seek treatment abroad (Aizura 2018), even if they live in a legally LGBTQ-progressive country.

Online LGBTQ forums serve as a venue through which information about transgender healthcare in Korea is shared. Isaiah (transman, Black, American) received top surgery at a gender clinic in Korea and raved about the experience in forums, even writing an English-language 'how-to guide' for other TGNC+ migrants. A prospective migrant posted in the forum asking about hormone therapy in Korea. They received referrals to a "great" doctor, who "did a year of training at the San Francisco gender clinic recently so she will be well-versed on treating trans patients." Affordable, accessible, and timely transgender healthcare, while important, cannot explain why TGNC+ migrants also feel less gender accountability in other institutional contexts outside medical venues. This requires us to pay attention to the local queer community.

Local Community that Affirms Gender Identity

Participants in this study drew on local online and in-person communities to affirm their gender identity. As Andrew points out, "As small as it is, we have a pretty big [LGBTQ] community here. We have a lot of groups and support factors here also, and there are places for us to go that are safe spaces." Online communities serve several crucial functions for TGNC+ people in Korea. First, they offer access to queer kinship (Andreassen 2023). Queer kinship enables transgender cosmopolitan citizenship which has "afforded queer people a means to seek affinity beyond state borders and expose the failures of nations to afford visibility and respect to sexual and gender-diverse people (Romesburg 2012: 124)." It is the kin-like relations among LGBTQ people in Korea that enable TGNC+ migrants important access to solidarity and gender affirmation. These kin-like relations also make up for their political and social invisibility in the wider Korean society.

Second, the community is a source of information. Korea's online forums for sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minority and TGNC+ members are active with questions

about living in Korea. Approximately every month at least one TGNC+ person posts in the online group to ask for advice about transitioning in Korea. The forums also host information about local gender identity clinics and refer to specific doctors that are gender affirming. Online community members like Isaiah compiled English-language lists of doctors or medical centers where trans healthcare is available.

Third, Korea's queer online spaces are very trans-friendly. The most popular online forums for SOGI people living in Korea ban those who post discriminatory comments about TGNC+ people. These forums are also used to advertise performances and fundraisers to raise funds for post-surgical care of TGNC+ members. Due to the close-knit LGBTQ community, these posts can be particularly gender affirming because they are matched by in-person offline affirmation, as well. In other communities, there may not be bans on transphobic comments, even in LGBTQ forums.

Finally, Korea has an efficient and inexpensive public transportation system and high-speed trains connecting major cities to small towns. Thanks to this excellent public transit systems, respondents from all over the country were able to regularly frequent trans affirming queer spaces in cities like Seoul and Busan. For several respondents, weekends were spent visiting the LGBTQ neighborhood in Itaewon, Seoul and particularly trans-friendly venues like Zone Bar and Bar Together. Bar Together was[16] located at the top of what is locally known as 'Homo Hill' in Itaewon, across from a sauna popular with gay men. Bar Together was owned by a cisgender gay man who intentionally hired TGNC+ staff and allies to work in his LGBTQ-friendly bar. The memorable single stall bathroom was painted with the phrase "This is a fucking gender-neutral bathroom." In addition, Bar Together displayed artwork and photography from a prominent trans activist as part of its interior décor. The décor was designed by a local activist who also founded the English-language LGBTQ online forum.

The Zone Bar, located in the Haebangcheon neighborhood in Seoul also prominently displayed trans affirming décor, including pride flags and a mural affirming that "Everyone is welcome here." Zone Bar remains very popular among LGBTQ expats as well as Korean citizens who frequent the venue for live drag shows and games several days a week. The drag shows often featured TGNC+ performers and also regularly held fundraisers for TGNC+

[16] While the bar was open during my fieldwork, it unfortunately closed shortly thereafter.

community members undergoing transition. For those whose origin communities lacked a safe space for trans people, living in or near Korea's large cities provides more access to LGBTQ-friendly space than they were accustomed to before migrating from origin countries lacking accessible queer space. The local community plays an important role in affirming transgender migrants, but it is also the case that this community exists in a context of high public safety, the issue to which we now turn.

Public Safety

High safety social contexts are associated with "more diverse ways of displaying gender," while unsafe spaces encourage "adherence to normative gender displays, and the use of blending in and masking strategies (Marques 2019:203)." A strong sense of safety is critical to TGNC+ migrants' experience of gender accountability. Respondents emphasized how safe they felt in Korea due to its high level of public security, which they regarded as much safer than their countries of origin in general. Thus, they felt safer to behave in ways that affirm their gender identities without fearing violent reactions.

It is understandable that Southeast Asian respondents, often from countries known for their institutionalized transphobia, cited Korea's safety as important to their gender accountability structures. Aye (genderqueer, Asian, Burmese) told me:

> Since I lived here, in Korea I have more freedom. I didn't have to care about what time I go out, what time I come back. In Burma, as a *woman*, if you go out at night, you can't even go alone.

In Myanmar, where Aye is from, not only are there no protections for LGBTQ people, but LGBTQ rights are under attack and same-sex sexual behavior carries a prison sentence of up to 20 years. Recently in Indonesia there have been violent incidents targeting TGNC+ people. For Southeast Asian respondents then, Korea provides a safer setting to experiment with their gender performance than their origin countries where they may be held *violently* or *criminally* accountable for their gender nonconformity. Because of the high accountability to gender in these origin contexts, Korea emerges as a desirable and accessible destination to live in.

Notably, even transwomen and racial minorities from presumably more LGBTQ-friendly countries also report that they feel safer in Korea. Transwomen often refer to the gendered violence they felt exposed to in their home countries. Renee (nonbinary, White, French) pointed

out that "In France, [it's] not safe at all after dark, especially if you're a *girl*." Stella (genderqueer/transgender, White, American) similarly emphasized, "So as far as being able to be a *woman* walking around on a sidewalk at two o'clock in the morning in urban areas, I felt comfortable doing that [in Korea]." Although Korean women, who are insiders to the local patriarchal system, report fear of gender-based violence (Jung, 2013), LGBTQIA+ migrants frequently perceive the country to be far safer than their origin countries. This sense of safety helped many grow comfortable affirming their gender identity in public, such as by wearing gender affirming clothing and makeup.

Similarly, Black transmen emphasize the safety of Korea from the perspective of a racialized minority known to be especially vulnerable to violence (Staples and Fuller, 2021). Isaiah (transman, Black, American) reported that,

> I think that one of the biggest advantages of being a person of color in Korea, is knowing even if somebody has racism or discrimination towards me, my life is not going to be on the line because they aren't *armed and dangerous*.

For some non-White respondents, despite facing social discrimination due to anti-Black racism in Korea, they no longer feared physical violence because Korean civilians are not allowed to own guns. Andrew (transman, Black, American) reports that, in terms of his gender expression, Korea feels "A lot more safe than New York" which would usually be considered a much more gender-progressive setting than Korea.

By contrast, TGNC+ migrants do not always feel fully comfortable expressing their gender identity at work, as they are concerned about gender accountability. This does suggest the importance of formal rights, like an LGBTQ anti-discrimination law. This concern leads a few to self-enforce gender accountability by dressing neutrally or even to perform gender according to their assigned sex at work, engaging in what Marques (2019) refers to as 'blending in' or 'masking.' For others, this was an opportunity to be 'stealth' and not 'come out' as transgender. However, many of my respondents did not consider engaging in such strategies as a prohibitively problematic characteristic of their (temporary) stay in Korea. For some, being 'out' on the weekends while saving funds for future gender affirming medical care was sufficient; for others, they felt they would be similarly held accountable to gender no matter where they lived. Michael (trans man, White, American) commented: "I think, oh, one of the ways where I felt a little bit

more relaxed [about how I dress in Korea], is knowing that if I were living in America, I would *still* have to be closeted at work." Michael would remain closeted in the U.S. because he lived in a transphobic community where he feared both unemployment and violence, "I didn't feel safe."

Those who attempted their desired gender displays at work in Korea reported fearing potential career consequences, yet not fearing for their physical safety. For example, some transwomen, who wore light makeup such as foundation, mascara, neutral lip gloss, and painted their nails, reported that they rarely experienced gender accountability. Accountability came in the form of only light, nonviolent sanctions, like being asked to switch from bright nail polish to neutral colors, but their gender affirming behavior was not banned outright.

Not all respondents felt they were protected from gender accountability by being 'outsiders' in Korea. For example, transfeminine respondents were more likely to fear dressing femininely at work. Lee (genderqueer, White, Canadian) is a transwoman who does not pass or go stealth, instead she grows her hair and nails long but dresses gender neutrally, as she explains,

> "Well, part of the determination is I preemptively don't talk about being queer or trans. I don't dress femme because I know if I did, I would lose my job, right? If I came wearing a wig or with my makeup did, and I can't take that risk. So maybe it's unfounded because technically, I haven't done that at work, but I also feel like there's no laws protecting me… There's no anti-queer or LGBTQ discrimination *laws* in Korea that I know of, right? And so, losing my job is just not worth it, if that makes sense."

Lee fears losing her job if she dresses feminine, and fears that she would have no legal protections from employment discrimination, thus her perception of her exemption as a White English teacher in Korea is precarious. Nevertheless, she found socio-economic opportunities in Korea that made it worth working abroad. This included easy access to hormones which enable her to progress toward the gender display she seeks.

TGNC+ Migrants as 'Exempt Outsiders' to Korea's Gender System

TGNC+ migrants, especially those who are racially different from local citizens, tend to experience hyper-visibility in Korea. Paradoxically, this hypervisibility as racial/ethnic 'foreigners' renders less visible their gender nonconformity, which enables them to negotiate their gender presentation in affirming ways. They no longer stand out for gender nonconformity

as much as when they used to live in their countries of origin. Jay (transgender, Black, American) put it this way,

> One thing that's cool about Korea is that it's a very live-and-let-live, don't-ask-don't-tell kind of place. Especially with taboo subjects like sexuality and identity, people don't try to get in your business...not like in the US where some people wanna figure you out because they *have a problem* with you.

The lack of people (especially family) 'getting in one's business' was a welcome reprieve for TGNC+ migrants who had been under great gender scrutiny back home. Recent work suggests that this kind of reprieve makes it more possible for TGNC+ people to experiment with their gender affirmation (Stone & Gallin-Parisi 2024).

Vince (transman, White, Canadian) was more self-conscious than Jay about the fact that Korea is a "don't-ask-don't-tell kind of place" only for foreigners like him. Vince told me that living temporarily in Korea and saving funds while participating in its lively LGBTQ community supported his transition. He attributes this to his perception that 'outsiders' are not held to the same gender norms and face less discrimination than their Korean citizen peers:

> I know there is still a social stigma here around the queer community, which foreigners oftentimes don't have to deal with because we're *in* the Korean culture right now, but not *of* it. So, we're free to do as we please most of the time, and not have to worry about as much discrimination [as Koreans].

Although Vince did not reflect on to what degree his sense of privilege is attributable to being White, others made more explicit comments to that effect. For example, Blair (genderqueer, White, Irish) told me, "What I have noticed is that I don't know if it's because I'm White and I get celebrity status here, in a way, because I'm a White foreigner." Lee (genderqueer, White, Canadian) reported a similar sense of being an outsider to Korean society, yet simultaneously privileged as a White foreigner,

> I also absolutely experience tons of privilege here. And I'm treated very well and *treated more as a professional here* just because I'm White *and* a foreigner here, … It does contribute to a little bit of the outsiderness, but on the grand scheme of things, there's a lot more privilege that comes out of it. (italics added)

Note Lee's comment that she is "treated more as a professional" because of her race/ethnicity. Although White TGNC+ migrants no longer occupy a majority position in the racial hierarchy in Korea, rendering them minority outsiders, they are constructed as desirable migrants based in part on their Whiteness. In addition to Korea's entrenched racial hierarchy (Kim, NY 2008), migration policies and the education industry help to construct White migrants from the Global North as 'skilled' migrants (Chung, 2019) providing them with employment and economic opportunities not always available in their origin countries. They are often issued teaching or diplomatic visas and get to enjoy stable employment in respectable occupations like teaching or non-profit management. The middle-class income and savings they get to enjoy as a result enable them to afford transition related healthcare, further insulating them against accountability to their assigned sex.

This privilege, derived from and heightened by their national origin in English-speaking countries in the Global North, at times extends to non-White TGNC+ migrants as well. Although anti-Black racism is an acknowledged problem in Korea (Kim, NY 2008), my Black respondents from the U.S. and South Africa carried visas that would be less accessible to other Black migrants from developing countries. Some of them were keenly aware of the prestige attached to their national origins, the upward mobility it allowed them in Korea, and the freedom it gave them in terms of their gender accountability. Isaiah's (transman, Black, American) story is exemplary. Isaiah likes to 'come out' as trans to his university students if it "comes up organically" and views his gender identity affirmation as an important opportunity for students to learn about diversity:

> "I think over time I have come out to a fair number of students. … I look at is as part of their *global cultural education*, I'm not here just to teach basic English grammar and you know basic skills. I'm here to teach them how to be a better, open-minded human being and how to have an open mind." (italics added)

Isaiah believes that coming out to his Korean students is part of their 'global cultural education' which reflects his symbolic capital as an American abroad. If Isaiah were to work and 'come out' in a country in the Global North, it is unlikely that he would couch his discussion in terms of 'global cultural education.' However, Global North/West discourses on being

transgender mean that as an 'exempt outsider' he can invoke the hegemony of discourses associating transgender acceptance with progressive global culture (Camminga 2020).

Being 'Exempt' from Family Expectations While in Korea

Being 'exempt' from gender accountability is a highly contextual position of privilege for the respondents in my study. Parker's (Genderqueer, Asian, American) story illustrates how the 'exempt outsider' status, shaped by legal nationality and class status, enables even some TGNC+ migrants who are ethnically Korean to experience less gender accountability. Prior scholarship shows that Korean American returnees, who are often seen less as 'outsiders' than as ethnic 'insiders,' face pressure to conform to local gender norms in Korea. For example, the literature reports that female ethnic 'return' migrants tend to experience a more intense pressure than their male counterparts to perform femininity (Lee 2013; Song 2020). But Suh's (2016) study suggests that Korean American men also face pressure to conform to their assigned sex, and that while they may initially experience improvement to their social status as Americans in Korea, over time, their claims to hegemonic masculinity are fleeting and they struggle to compete with local men in the employment sector (Suh 2016).

But Parker's experience was different. Despite their Korean ethnicity, Parker reports usually being regarded as a 'foreigner' by most Korean citizens because they cannot speak Korean and they do not 'dress' or 'look' Korean (as they were frequently informed, especially by taxi drivers and grocery clerks). By not 'sounding or looking' Korean, Parker does not feel pressured to meet the expectations imposed on cisgender Korean women in general, so they do not self-enforce gender accountability. Instead, they fully embrace their 'foreigner' status and 'do foreigner' in their interactions with strangers, such as by using only limited Korean and by dressing quite differently than is typical in Korea. As Parker says,

> "In Korea, I'm not treated like a cis woman and I feel like I'm not expected to behave like they expect cis women to behave in Korea… Korean women I think have a lot of expectations on their appearance of how they should look and dress in work or outside anywhere, but those rules do not apply to me, and I think for the way I look… I don't know if a part of that is because I am a foreigner technically."

Interestingly, Parker reports that they experienced more pressure to conform to their female assigned sex in the U.S. This was because they grew up in a conservative family.

Working in the tech field in Korea enabled Parker to distance themselves from their conservative family and access gender affirming care, which was economically out of reach in the U.S. Given how locals treat them, Parker seems to fall into the category of 'outsider' often, perhaps *because* of their gender non-conforming appearance which makes them stand out as different from typical cisgender Korean women. This makes them feel comfortable presenting as gender non-conforming. Parker's perception of their own 'foreignness' meant that they felt exempted from the gender norms for their assigned sex. Perhaps if Parker spoke Korean or dressed more 'like a Korean' they would be more likely to be externally held accountable to conform to their assigned sex. The same might be true if they had conservative family members residing in Korea, holding them accountable to gender.

Other respondents similarly described the conservativeness of their family members and how they felt freer in Korea to perform their gender as desired. For example, Aye (26, genderqueer, Asian, from Southeast Asia) describes their mother's reaction to her short hair style,

> I went back home after graduating [from college in Korea] and still my hair was a little short. And [mom] said, 'You look like a boy.' I start getting my hair longer, not because of her. I was just out of the pixie cut phase, so I was getting it longer and then I bleached my hair super crazy, really white gray stuff. My mom started nagging about it. Back then I was so frustrated because I wanted to come out to [my parents] and she was even making a fuss about my hair. So, okay I can never ever talk to her about myself at all. We were fighting a lot back there.

Aye felt unable to come out to their parents because of their conservative reaction to Aye's hair style. While in Korea, Aye feels free to dress casually in gender neutral t-shirts and shorts and cut their hair short. Because they are away from family while living in Korea, they are held less accountable for conforming to their assigned sex. Unfortunately, despite graduating from a university in Korea, Aye was unable to find sufficient work and had to return to their country of origin. Aye did not benefit from the privileges afforded to those with more powerful passports and classified as White. If they had been born in one of the eight countries that Korea prefers for teaching jobs, they might have pursued a strategy similar to others cited in this study.

The Racialized Limits of Exemption to Gender Accountability

In Korea 'othering' is a racialization process that has colonial roots. According to Oh (2022: 3), due to "Western military power and colonial control, White people came to be seen as the top of a racial hierarchy… yet Koreans could take solace in believing that other races existed below them." Because of its' economic and developmental achievements, Korean citizens tend to view Korea as superior to neighboring Asian countries, and thus 'other' their residents as poor, underdeveloped, and backward (Choi 2024). Meanwhile, for co-ethnic returnees such as Korean Americans, the 'othering' process involves their racial/ethnic rejection in both the diasporic setting 'abroad' (America) and in the 'ethnic home' (Korea) that still treats them as 'outsiders within' (Kim, J. 2016; Suh, S. 2017; Kang 2021).

TGNC+ migrants from the West are able to enjoy their exempt outsider status more easily than those from Southeast Asia for several reasons. First, TGNC+ migrants from the West enjoyed a relatively warm reception in Korea, while those from Southeast Asia did not report the same. National origin is particularly salient for Southeast Asian migrants who are negatively constructed as less desirable migrants in Korea. Second, respondents on teaching or diplomatic visas enjoyed middle class lifestyles, relative to other migrant groups, and thus were able to afford transition-related healthcare further insulating them against gender accountability. Southeast Asian migrants in my study were more likely to be students, rather than employed and saving for transition. Finally, my Black respondents from countries like the United States or South Africa carried visas and cultural capital that would be less accessible to those from countries regarded by Koreans as 'developing' such as Ghana or Nigeria. Therefore, the 'exempt outsider' is a construct about race/ethnicity as inflected by national origin and perceptions of class.

Not all 'foreignness' offers the same level of exemption to perform gender as desired. This point becomes clearer if we consider Southeast Asian respondents. As mentioned before, Korea provides them with a safer setting to experiment with their gender performance than their origin countries, where they are often held *violently* or *criminally* accountable. However, Korean migration policy constructs Southeast Asian migrants in contradistinction to White, English-speaking, (presumed) middle-class migrants from the Global North. Indeed, TGNC+ migrants from the Global South, including those who are fluent English speakers with high educational credentials, experience greater constraints in acquiring favorable visas and securing employment in the educational sector, as Aye's migration trajectory mentioned above illustrates. Therefore,

they do not necessarily experience upward class mobility and may have less access to gender affirming healthcare in Korea.

Moreover, since the majority of working-class migrants and marriage migrants in Korea are from Southeast Asia, 'skilled' TGNC+ migrants who share Southeast Asian national origin and ethnoracial membership are often treated as *minoritized* and *stigmatized* outsiders in their everyday interaction with Korean citizens regardless of their human capital. This treatment leads not so much to freedom from gender accountability as to gendered harassment. Aye's (genderqueer, Asian, Burmese) experience is again illuminating. Aye's pants got wet, and they were approached by a Korean man,

> He said in Korean, "I will suck it [*ppal-ajulge*]" … but if you know the word he used, it has two meanings and I knew that, and he totally meant the [sexual] way. So, I confronted him and asked, "What did you say!" Other than that stuff he kept on saying … "Oh, why don't you marry a Korean man", after that. When he sees a Southeast Asian woman, he kind of like we will put in the category of like you come from a poor country, you come here to be married to Korean guys, it was so bad.

For Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants, moving to Korea can be an improvement in their LGBTQ rights, because there are no punishments for same-sex behavior in Korea. However, they experienced less of the outsider 'exemption' described by respondents from the Global North, including those who belong to minoritized racial groups. As Aye's interaction shows, Southeast Asian women in Korea are often treated according to the presumption that they are poor and desire marriage with a Korean man, subjecting them to heightened gender accountability. This shows that their outsider exemption is precarious. The case of Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants also suggests the importance of carefully considering complex intersectional positioning in examining the sometimes precarious 'outsider' status.

Conclusion

This chapter uses an intersectional analytic lens to bring together 'doing gender' and boundary scholarship to reveal the processes of gender accountability in the context of transnational migration. I demonstrate that accountability is an interactional and intersectional process that can involve both self- and externally imposed other- enforcement of gender norms, with varying salience of gender in interaction and by context.

This chapter sought to make three contributions to existing literature. First, by synthesizing gender accountability and primary frames, I show how transnational migration affects the primary frame through which Korean citizens read TGNC+ migrants' gender performances. Instead of gender nonconformity, national origin, class, and race/ethnicity come to the fore as the most salient categories of difference in their interactions with Korean citizens. Ridgeway argues that there are three common primary frames in the U.S.– gender, race, and class. My analysis reveals the salience of national origin, as well. This demonstrates that the salience of gender shifts in interaction, particularly when one is not seen as an 'insider' responsible for the reproduction of culture. We expect that 'insider/outsider' dynamics are gendered because women are tasked with reproducing culture (Anzaldúa 1987; Yuval-Davis 1997). Women are expected to conform to respectable 'insider' behavior (Collins 2004). Korean women are expected to perform a highly feminine display of gender (Kim & Li 2017). In contrast, the largely expat pool of migrants in my study enjoyed an 'exempt outsider' position in Korean society.

Freedom from local family ties and their 'exempt outsider' primary frame meant that TGNC+ migrants in this study perceived that they were not held to the same gender norms that Korean citizens face. This contrasted with the existing scholarship on the experiences of cisgender heterosexual overseas Korean returnees who did find they were held accountable to gendered norms in Korea (Lee 2013; Suh 2016; Song 2020).

Second, by examining accountability to gender, I expose the intersectional constraints under which actors do gender and how this connects to the privilege or precarity of their status. This chapter examines insider/outsider dynamics, revealing the complex intersectional positioning that makes the 'exempt outsider' dynamic possible. While many migrants with national origin, class, and racial/ethnic difference from 'insiders' might be considered 'exempt outsiders,' I distinguish the ways in which this construction affects TGNC+ migrants in Korea in terms of their national origin, class, and racial/ethnic difference. The combination of transnational context and intersectional analysis reveals how TGNC+ migrants from different racial and national backgrounds are treated differently as outsiders, largely based on temporal concerns over how long they are expected to be in Korea and historical legacies that racialize 'outsiders.' This is because Korea regards its' English-speaking, (presumably) middle-class migrants from the Global North as a symbol of progressive globalization. Even non-White

migrants from the Global North report benefitting from their national origin by being able to perform gender as they desire. This is because Global North migrants are perceived as temporary and 'exempt outsiders' to Korean society, and thereby have relatively more privilege to perform gender as desired, as compared to 'near' insiders, like Southeast Asian women. Southeast Asian TGNC+ migrants suffer from being constructed as less desirable migrants who are stigmatized because of the presumption that they will stay in Korea – making their outsider exemption much more precarious.

Third, I identify what conditions enable gender identity affirmation by TGNC+ migrants in a destination that is not regarded as legally LGBTQ-friendly. This condition is possible because transgender healthcare regulations are favorable to medical tourists. Respondents did not face the gatekeeping and expenses common in the West. TGNC+ people in this study found that public spaces were safe for 'doing gender' due to their perception of Korea's high public safety, especially as compared with their origin countries. Employment spaces were sometimes perceived as conservative, but gender policing was light. Recent work on transgender people finds that "less stringent external assessments at work and school produced self-reflection and gender experimentation" (Stone & Gallin-Parisi 2024) which was the case in my study. Respondents reflected on the fact that they were often *unable* to affirm their gender identity in their home country, especially due to fear of violence or criminalization. Therefore, their gender accountability structures differed in their home and host countries due to a shift in the primary frame by which they are perceived. And of course, for those who previously lived in countries that punish TGNC+ people, living in Korea improves even their legal rights. Therefore, Korea contrasts with countries like South Africa, which have excellent laws on the books, but discriminate against TGNC+ migrants (Gleckman-Krut 2024).

This all suggests that there may be destinations in the world that lack progressive laws, but have the social, economic, and medical infrastructure necessary to be good places for TGNC+ people to live temporarily and undergo transition due to being less held accountable to gender. I suspect this would be the case in contexts with advanced surgical industries that cater to transgender medical tourists, no criminalization of LGBTQ people, and accessible migration policies for 'skilled' workers such as teachers, such as Thailand, Taiwan, India, Brazil, and Argentina. These countries would also treat such workers as temporary sojourners, rather than contributors to the reproduction of the social fabric.

However, these conditions can be highly contextual and fleeting. There are conditions under which 'exemption' for outsiders might be withdrawn. The first condition under which their exemption might be withdrawn is if they have family members from their country of origin living in Korea. These family members would render them 'insiders' to family, and their gender accountability structures might remain similar to what they were in their origin country as a result. Parker's case reflects this kind of contextual explanation for their 'exemption' from gender accountability. Second, 'exemption' might be fleeting if TGNC+ migrants become members of Korean family networks, such as by marrying a Korean citizen. Finally, if TGNC+ migrants' stay in Korea is long term, they are more likely to grow closer to being an 'insider' and thereby face greater gender accountability.

Chapter 4 Lesbian Community Building Strategies and Boundary Maintenance in South Korea[17]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed that most of my respondents found South Korea (hereafter, Korea) to be a very safe place, generally safer than their origin communities, and that their safety was a high priority in their decision to stay in Korea. How did South Korea come to feel so safe to these queer migrants? To answer this question, I discussed the issue of general public safety in chapter 2. In this chapter, I further point out that since the 1990s, Korean lesbians have been building the safe spaces that my respondents so enjoy.

Korean lesbian leaders early on sacrificed the visibility of their organizations in order to become less conspicuous, and therefore safer from harassment and 'involuntary outing' by anti-LGBTQ activists. For migrants like Arkar, who I introduced at the start of this dissertation, Korea emerges as a much safer space because he does not feel the physical and legal threat of transphobia, which he had endured while living in Myanmar. Meanwhile, for Isaiah and other LBTQ migrants from the Global North, they found that they could accept this relatively low-visibility queer scene in part because it felt safer than LGBTQ space in their origin countries. However, these practices also make it difficult for outsiders like my LGBTQ respondents to access and navigate lesbian space in Korea. Moreover, as transgender men, Arkar and Isaiah's claims to queer space bump up against the sex segregation boundaries that divide lesbian, gay, and transgender communities in Korea.

My intersectional approach examines the overarching heterosexist context in which lesbian social spaces are maintained, and the relations of power among LGBTQ, feminist, anti-

[17] An early version of this chapter was published as: Jones, C. (2020). Balancing safety and visibility: Lesbian community building strategies in South Korea. *Journal of lesbian studies*, *24*(3), 272-285.

LGBTQ groups, and LBTQ migrants. Homophobia, violence against women, and a lack of allies drove lesbian social entrepreneurs to prioritize safety over visibility in building both physical and online communities. How do lesbians build networks and establish safe space under these conditions? What exclusions might local boundary-making membership politics and safety practices produce? To answer these questions, I draw on participant observation and ethnographic interview data. I visited lesbian bars and nightclubs in each city at least twice (20 in Seoul, 7 in Busan, 2 in Daegu) and discussed these topics with managers, staff, and patrons. I also observed online groups catering primarily to Korean lesbians, as well as online groups that included members of the migrant community that were in English.

In this chapter, I show that a history of anti-LGBTQ evangelical Christian activism compelled Korean lesbian social entrepreneurs to enact elaborate screening and safety practices to avoid 'outing' and harassment. Korean lesbian communities carefully manage information about geographic location to maintain secrecy and deploy elaborate processes to manage access and membership in their online forums and social media. These include: hiding venues in plain sight, screening patrons by ID cards, vetting new members by examining their online profiles and social network ties, displaying discreet online signals, and vouching for outsiders. These innovative safety strategies screen their clients on the basis of sex and whether they seem to accept local cultural codes related to queer spaces. The resulting boundary policing has consequences for LBTQ migrants. If they were able to gain access to the extended queer kinship network cultivated by these queer spaces, it helped LBTQ migrants cope with their fragmented citizenship in Korea. However, accessing these spaces proved challenging for most respondents in this study due to these safety strategies, this was especially the case for transgender people who have not yet changed their legal gender marker.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I first describe the context in which lesbian safe spaces in Korea were established. Then I discuss how the Korean lesbian movement leveraged technology and negotiated a lack of allies as they built low visibility queer women-only safe spaces in several cities and online. The internet and local civil society shaped the resources available to lesbian organizers in South Korea. I analyze the spatial tactics, technological resources, and interactional strategies that local lesbian social entrepreneurs continue to deploy as they balance needs for safety and invisibility in lesbian spaces. Finally, I discuss the boundary exclusions such strategies produce by examining the membership politics of the local LGBTQ

communities and their distinctive community building strategies. I conclude by discussing how these strategies affect LBTQ migrants in Korea. I explain the internal back-and-forth migration of LBTQ people to and from major cities each weekend, where they enjoy lesbian-built safe spaces. I discuss how queer migrants connect to and draw on these community spaces that offer queer kinship. Finally, I discuss how the safety practices and visibility management that make these lesbian spaces safer have the undesirable outcome of excluding some migrants from accessing lesbian community space in Korea.

Contextualizing the Rise of Lesbian Spaces in Korea

The literature on LGBTQ social spaces tends to focus on studies of queer communities in the West that formed under similar conditions, characterized by liberal democracy, early urban industrialization, and civil rights movements established in the mid-20th century. These studies do not explore the management of LGBTQ space in countries that underwent more recent and much more rapid political, economic, and technological shifts, like Korea.

The political, economic, and spatial resources for lesbian community establishment in such settings affect their visibility and safety strategies. In Korea, rising anti-LGBTQ evangelical Christian activism (Kim, N., 2016; Yi et al., 2017) targets LGBTQ people with harassment and involuntary 'outing.' Lesbian communities face the threat of homophobia and must also negotiate sex segregation and gendered norms within public spaces (Spain, 2014). Thus, lesbian communities enact strategies designed to offer protection from violence based on sexuality and gender. This is the backdrop against which a lesbian rights movement formed in Korea. However, as the movement it lacked alliances with either women's rights organizations or gay men's organizations. This shaped the context in which a lesbian-centered queer kin network developed to include even LGBTQ migrants to Korea.

In contrast to the Western cases well documented in the existing literature, Korean lesbian organizers established their community while navigating democratic transition from decades of military dictatorship, the rise of civil society, and the advent of the internet. Women's and lesbian rights movements in South Korea dealt with sex segregation in a period marked by rapid urbanization and political upheaval. The 1960s and 1970s ushered in major transformations in family life as the government pushed policies promoting rapid industrial urbanization. Heterosexist gender norms and sex segregation continued to dominate schools, workplaces, and family life. During this era of military dictatorship, a collective of hundreds of lesbian taxi

drivers formed (Kim Kwon & Cho, 2011). But at that time, lesbians had very few physical spaces where gatherings were possible, especially outside Seoul and outside college campuses (Kwon Kim & Cho, 2011). Stronger women's and LGBTQ rights movements emerged after a widespread democracy movement ended the military dictatorship. Korean civil society in the 1980s focused on democratization. A women's rights movement coalesced in the mid-1980s, but the legal, economic, and family dynamics constituting local gender relations continued to marginalize lesbians and obstruct alliances with women's and gay rights organizations. A decade later, the national economic crisis in 1997 made it even harder to organize lesbian-only spaces, but a few bars and a nightclub formed by the end of the decade.

Korean LGBTQ networks struggled under censorship through the 1990s and into the 2000s (Sanders, 2014). The government prohibited the distribution of materials that reference homosexuality (Kimmel & Yi, 2004), describing such content as "socially unacceptable (Bong, 2009)." Internet censorship laws barred access to overseas LGBTQ websites (Kimmel & Yi, 2004). Activists succeeded in legally challenging these policies (Seo, 2001; Bong, 2009), but censorship shaped the strategies available to lesbian activists through the early 2000s. The number of lesbian venues slowly grew during the 2000s, spreading rapidly since 2015 after a few prominent lesbian business owners retired.

In addition to the political and social changes just outlined, anti-LGBTQ Christian activists organized a strong local movement, staged large protests, and joined transnational campaigns against LGBTQ rights since the early 2000s (Yi et al., 2017). Anti-LGBTQ activists have been known to occupy the space surrounding local LGBTQ rights organizations to disrupt their activities (Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017) and target individuals with harassment and involuntary 'outing' (Kim, N., 2016; Yi et al., 2017). According to a 2004 survey of 561 lesbians in Korea, 37.6% reported that they struggled with coming out due to homophobia, 49.4% experienced fear due to their sexuality, and 22.5% experienced discrimination or harm due to their sexuality (Park-Kim et al., 2006).

Under these conditions, we might expect solidarity to emerge between women's and lesbian rights movement. However, according to a report by Lesbian Counseling Center (LCC) in Korea published in 2007,

> Most feminist organizations in Korea are ignorant of homosexuals or very homophobic. LCC [has] survived many conflicts with feminists. Feminist groups have excluded

> lesbians, and they have not considered the lesbian agenda as women's agenda (Park-Kim et al., 2007: 168).

Politically powerful women's organizations excluded lesbian organizations and activists, denying their application for membership and representation in coalitions, at important feminist events, women's studies academic organizations, and political campaigns. Feminist political advocacy organizations, women's rights lobbies, and feminist studies academic organizations excluded lesbians and refused to consider lesbian issues as part of a women's rights agenda (Park-Kim et al., 2007).

Furthermore, divisive gender relations also emerged within the LGBTQ community and a briefly unified umbrella LGB organization splintered by the end of 1993. Lesbian activists left to form a separate lesbian rights organization in 1994, citing gay male activists' emphasis on 'coming out' publicly, disagreement over the allocation of funds to projects serving gay men rather than lesbian women, and gay male activists' disregard of gendered sexual violence against lesbians (Lee, 1999). Although lesbian and gay organizations collaborated to host the first pride parade in 1999 (Han, 2018), lesbian activists worked alone for much of the 1990s and 2000s. This shaped LGBTQ spaces and limited alliances between lesbian, feminist, and gay organizations.

The growth of lesbian venues since the 1990s was the fruit of lesbian entrepreneurs' labors. The timing of this growth also coincided with the rise of new communications technologies, internet, that proved vital in shaping lesbian social spaces. Contemporary Korean society is densely networked and emphasizes deep ties (Yoon, 2016) and boasts the world's fastest internet speeds and highest per capita smartphone usage rates. Thus, during the early decades of Korea's LGBTQ community formation, local online forums and word of mouth advertising were key to directing newcomers to venues (Berry & Martin, 2003). These online networks were difficult to access outside of Korea (Berry & Martin, 2003), further isolating the local community from global LGBTQ rights campaigns, but provided space for lesbians inside Korea to socialize and form queer kin networks.

Competing Needs for Visibility and Safety

In this section, I engage scholarship discussing how LGBTQ communities establish space amidst homophobia and gendered violence. First, I examine the challenges associated with

visibility. Then I discuss marginalization, exclusion, and intersectional violence against lesbians. Throughout these reviews, I discuss two limitations of the existing literature. First, that some LGBTQ movements emphasize visibility and 'coming out,' obscuring the extent to which some LGBTQ movements in different contexts prioritize safety, shelter, and pragmatic activism (Chua, 2016) over visibility strategies. Second, the literature pays insufficient attention to how strategies designed to promote identity affirmation and safety may produce boundary exclusions among would-be members of the LGBTQ community, such as the LBTQ migrants in my study.

LGBTQ movements may struggle between competing needs for safety and visibility, particularly in settings where the risk of violence is high, or where LGBTQ rights are weak. 'Coming out' is a complex decision with different levels of risk for LGBTQ people who face discrimination compounded by gender-, class- and/or race-based oppressions (Fraser, 1999). Although LGBTQ visibility and 'coming out' have great salience in some settings, there are no universal processes for identifying and being identified as LGBTQ (Seidman, 1998). The visibility of LGBTQ spaces can render them targets for violence or deter visitors who prefer lower profile venues (Hanhardt, 2013; Hartal, 2016). Therefore, gay bars in high stigma areas continue to mask their visibility, providing no exterior indication that they are for queer patrons, employing security staff, and only advertising on private social media (Croff et al., 2017). These findings suggest that stressing visibility while overlooking other strategies is problematic and imposes a hegemonic ideal to which LGBTQ communities are expected to conform.

The Western academic emphasis on visibility and 'coming out' in LGBTQ studies stems in part from the prominence of Western cases in the literature, which can obscure cases where safety is critical to community building amidst an ongoing fight for LGBTQ rights protections. Scholarship limited to already highly visible cases undertheorizes the range of invisibility strategies that cultivate LGBTQ community growth. Important contributions expand this analysis to less researched cases, such as Myanmar, India, and Singapore (Chua, 2016; Dave, 2010; Tang, 2012), demonstrating how LGBTQ communities in these countries are compelled to manage their visibility for the sake of safety. Hartal (2016) shows how an LGBTQ organization in a high stigma area in Israel, while not entirely abandoning visibility strategies, must balance members safety and the harassment women face under religious policing of their bodies and dress. Henry (2018) reports a similar challenge in Korea, where LGBTQ Koreans are subject to a queer dilemma when they must weigh the personal risk of 'coming out' against their ongoing

marginalization in society. Stella (2012) finds that provincial Russian lesbian organizers do not consider highly visible events or gayborhoods empowering; instead, they regard their invisible occupation of public space as challenging its heteronormativity. Queer theorists have shown that invisibility can provide protected creative spaces to imagine and build queer selves and communities (Seidman, 1998).

Members of LGBTQ networks, many who consider one another queer kin, play a vital role in promoting one another's wellbeing, securing resources, and maintaining safe spaces for affirmation and care. Queer social entrepreneurs play an important role in building LGBTQ community spaces. They establish organizations and queer kinship networks that draw others to form a community, strengthen community identity, build a community-based political economy, and spread information about these resources via network ties (Harry & Devall, 1978; Murray, 1979). LGBTQ communities form these extra-familial systems to provide care work and support for their members (Carrington, 1999; Eng, 2010). This culminates in what Weston (1997) refers to as queer kinship, wherein queer families form as they "embrace friends; they may also encompass lovers, coparents, adopted children, children from previous heterosexual relationships, and offspring conceived through alternative insemination (Weston 1997: 3)." Queer kinship is important given the persistence of harassment and threat of 'involuntary outing' against lesbians in South Korea. Lesbian spaces are an important venue where queer kinship can emerge as ties between lesbians deepen.

Boundaries and Exclusion in Queer Space

Homophobia works in tandem with other axes of oppression, such as sexism, racism, and classism (Meyer, 2015), as well as discrimination based on national origin and migration status (Cisneros & Bracho, 2019; Masullo, 2015; Yue, 2013). Multiple sources of marginalization and exclusion affect Korean lesbian community building strategies. Sexism has been an important source of oppression that lesbian women face. Lesbian women have long sought safe spaces and safety practices that offer refuge from homophobia and patriarchal violence. The threat of sexual violence has been the greatest constraint on women's use of public spaces (Spain, 2014). Gendered violence shapes the contexts in which women organize gathering spaces to prioritize their bodily autonomy and protection from violence (Spain, 2016). This has also been the case historically for lesbians in the West, for example, in the early 1900s gay men could risk meeting with each other discreetly in public spaces (Chauncey, 1994), but it was very unsafe for women

to do so because of their hypervisibility and diminished access to public space. The existing literature on lesbian experiences in North America also shows that they have sometimes been marginalized or excluded from gay spaces (Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2015). Therefore, lesbians have tended to carve out separate spaces only for lesbian women and established hidden networks to socialize (McNee, 1984; Kennedy & Davis, 1997). Maintaining close ties in a tight network helped lesbian feminist communities survive after WWII under antifeminist and homophobic social climates (Taylor & Rupp, 1996). The existence of women's movements for the right to occupy public space and build women-only spaces have therefore been important resources for lesbian communities.

However, women-only spaces do not consistently welcome all women and may produce boundaries or exclusions based on sexual orientation, gender presentation, and sex. Most social spaces continue to be heteronormative (Skeggs, 1999) and presume that gender is binary and static; feminist and women-only spaces are not exceptions. Women's struggle for safe spaces can exclude those that do not meet normative criteria for group membership. Gender policing can be so extreme that sometimes even cisgender women are forced to offer proof that they belong in women-only spaces, if their bodies are not read as female (Browne, 2006). Recent work highlights enduring conflicts over the exclusion of transgender women from women-only spaces (Doan, 2007; Nanney & Brunsma, 2017; Rossiter, 2016; Earles, 2019). This issue came to a head in South Korea when a transgender woman was admitted to a women's college and protests against her admission erupted among students who self-identified as feminists (Kang J. 2020).

The existing literature on intersectional harassment has not paid enough attention to how strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can themselves contribute to making boundary exclusions within the LGBTQ community. I argue that analysis sensitive to intersectional marginalization based on race, class, or migration status can reveal how strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can also produce exclusion within LGBTQ and lesbian communities. For example, in the U.S. context, Hanhardt (2013) shows how local LGBTQ safety patrols the led by a majority of white cisgender gay men drew on crime laws and property value discourse to remove LGBTQ youth and people of color from 'their' protected territories. We should examine more thoroughly how, in the pursuit of safety, specific identities can be normalized for membership in LGBTQ space, reflecting local race, gender, and class boundary dynamics.

Safe Lesbian Community Building in South Korea

My respondents who own lesbian businesses emphasized that screening patrons and limiting their visibility to heterosexuals is important to protecting lesbian spaces from anti-LGBTQ and misogynist activists. They often referred to past incidents of bars being infiltrated by heterosexual women who were anti-LGBTQ activists and attempted to take photos and harass lesbian patrons. Several also discussed online lesbian networks that had been repeatedly infiltrated by anti-LGBTQ activists who took screenshots, then distributed these online, or subjected lesbian community members to involuntary 'outing' to their families and workplaces. Thus, lesbian social entrepreneurs adapted by sacrificing visibility for safer community space. Unfortunately, they could not rely on support from the broader LGBTQ community or the women's movement and therefore created lesbian-only spaces. For the migrants in this study, such spaces may be more or less familiar and comfortable. Some come from countries where women-only lesbian bars are norm, while others come from countries where lesbian bars are closing, or where it is more common to find bars catering to the whole queer community.

In the findings sections that follow, I first discuss lesbian exclusion from gay spaces in the cities of Seoul, Busan, and Daegu. I identify features of lesbian venues and private online communities that decrease visibility. These exclusions extend to LBTQ migrants, who are not welcomed into cisgender gay spaces. Local social entrepreneurs rely on community participation to maintain the integrity of low-visibility safety strategies. These strategies are implemented not only to deter infiltration by men and heterosexual women who may be anti-LGBTQ activists, but also to promote safety by minimizing visibility, screening members, restricting access to information about lesbian venues, and protecting the community from harassment. Finally, such strategies produce intentional or inadvertent boundaries that marginalize or exclude some who seek lesbian spaces such as transgender people and foreign residents.

Seoul's Segregated LGBTQ Spaces

In this section, I describe Korea's LGBTQ neighborhoods to illustrate how sex- and national origin-based boundaries shape LGBTQ spaces. Queer neighborhoods have formed in Seoul, Busan, and Daegu but social venues in these neighborhoods are generally sex segregated and sometimes exclude outsiders, such as 'foreigners' (*oegugin*). Distinct neighborhoods cater to

cisgender gay men or cisgender lesbian women, and typically peripheral streets within a neighborhood cater to transgender people, though it is difficult to distinguish transgender bars from venues where sex is sold, so my respondents rarely tried to enter venues marked 'trans (teulaensue).' The names of all venues have been anonymized in this text.

For example, Korea's oldest sexual minority neighborhood serves cisgender gay men and is located in the Jongno district of Seoul (Seo, 2001) and, as I will explain next, largely excludes women and foreigners. A second gayborhood in the Yongsan District of Seoul hosts numerous venues serving cisgender gay men, at least five bars that are all-gender inclusive, two lesbian-only bars, and a street full of venues operated by transgender Korean citizens. Finally, Seoul is also home to a vibrant lesbian neighborhood in the Mapo District. Busan and Daegu follow a similar pattern, with distinct areas where LGBTQ people socialize. These neighborhoods host sex- and sometimes national origin-based segregated venues.

Gayborhoods: "No Women, No Trans, No Foreigners, No Army"

Gay men's venues in the Jongno District and some in Yongsan are sex segregated and tend to deny or limit the entry of women, foreign residents (especially those in the military), and transgender people. Several LGBTQ women I interviewed reported being denied entry at gay bars in these areas, unless accompanied by Korean cisgender gay men. Bars in the Jongno gayborhood tend to exclude patrons not only based on gender but also based on national origin, through verbal communication, and even through written notices posted at the entryway. Blair (35, F, Irish) visited a bar in this area with two cisgender gay male tourists. She was informed by the bartender that "foreigners and women usually can't enter," but since the bar was currently empty, they could have a drink if they would leave after Korean patrons arrive. Alison (39, F, American) also tried to visit gay bars in Jongno but, "they said flat out 'No, you can't come in,' it is not a welcoming space for a female."

In contrast, the Yongsan District, situated in a multicultural area of the city and near a former U.S. military base, tends to receive foreign patrons, but persists in sex segregation. The gayborhood in Yongsan takes up roughly three streets and hosts a variety of entertainment, health, and social welfare resources for gay men; a few even provide multilingual services. LGBTQ social venues in this area of Seoul range from a small number of all-gender inclusive bars to those venues explicitly exclusive of women, transgender people, and foreign residents. During the several years that I observed the area, there were only four bars, all owned by

cisgender gay Korean men, who made it clear that their venues were all-gender inclusive. However, I also observed several venues that posted signs in Korean and English excluding potential patrons based on nationality, sex, or in some cases, ethnoracial membership. Some signs read 'no foreigners (*oegukin chulib geumji*)' while others specified in English 'No Southeast Asians,' or 'no army' to exclude U.S. military personnel.

When asked why these policies exist, some bar owners justified the exclusion based on 'safety' and perceived clientele preferences. In other words, cisgender gay men-built spaces where they could meet others like them in a safe setting. These policies arose because of the association of U.S. military personnel with bad behavior in bars, or because Korean clientele supposedly do not want to see foreign patrons in their bars. Some venues do not implement an outright ban, but rather deter women and transgender patrons by charging them double or triple the admission fee, while others deny their entry outright or instruct bouncers to maintain a quota strictly limiting their numbers. In addition, I witnessed and also personally experienced acts of sexual violence and the harassment of women inside gay nightclubs on several occasions.

Gayborhood Gatekeeping Against Lesbian Establishments

Spatially, the Yongsan District of Seoul is studded with several back streets on a hill filled with dozens of bars and nightclubs for cisgender gay men. This area, dubbed 'homo hill' by expats is located adjacent to a back street with dozens of transgender entertainment businesses and sex work venues. Bars in this area often implicitly suggest the gender of their preferred clientele by including it in the name of their bar, often as a pun. For example, a hypothetical bar named Homme Meeting would be rendered prominently in the Latin alphabet and transliterated in smaller Korean font (홈 미팅 *hom miting*). To Koreans with foreign language skills, homme signals 'male' clientele. In the Korean transliteration, the word meeting (*miting*) is suggestive of a blind date in the Korean language, while homme is obscured as the term home (*hom*) suggesting a home away from home for gay men in the know.

Gender hierarchies and sex segregation were pervasive in society in the 1990s, which shaped LGBTQ spaces and limited alliances between lesbian, feminist and gay organizations. I find that gender segregation continues to mark sexual minority social spaces, driving the exclusion of women from gay bars and clubs. So where do the women go? In Yongsan there are two lesbian venues situated a ten-minute walk apart. Bar Unni is a small lesbian-only cocktail bar which can serve up to 30 patrons at tables set for groups of four. Bar Diamond is a lesbian-

only gastropub which can seat over 60 patrons and has a mix of tables and bar stools. The rise and fall of a third lesbian establishment, Club Push, which I personally observed during my fieldwork, points to the gendered boundaries the lesbian community continues to face today.

Club Push, a lesbian dance club, opened for just a few weeks in Yongsan before permanently closing in 2018. The manager of Club Diamond introduced me to Club Push staff a few weeks ahead of their launch, as they trained for opening night. Club Push staff collaborated with nearby lesbian bar owners to cross-promote their businesses by temporarily serving as bartenders at both lesbian bars. Training under veteran lesbian bar managers not only prepared staff for opening night but enabled them to chat up prospective patrons and spread news about the new nightclub. The owners of both local lesbian bars hoped that a lesbian nightclub would boost traffic to their own businesses and enthusiastically supported the new club by posting flyers at the bar and in the bathrooms. As they hoped, Club Push was successful for about 4 weeks, crowded with women from 11 pm to 4 am every weekend. This briefly transformed the narrow back alley of a street full of gay bars and transgender sex worker's bars as dozens of cisgender women queued up to enter the dance club, walked outside to flirt or smoke, and visited the few all-gender inclusive and lesbian bars nearby. Some had even traveled from the suburbs and other cities just to visit Club Push, commuting up to four hours for the launch party.

The club hired male security staff to check IDs at the external door. Those marked female would be welcome to enter, while males were turned away. I arrived at the club early, hoping to observe opening night preparation before the club got too busy. Once my ID was checked and I was let inside, two female staff collected my 10,000 won ($9) admission fee, stamped my hand, issued me a credit card receipt, and gave me a welcome gift of customized hard candy. I descended a narrow black stairwell and drew back a thick black curtain to enter the club. Immediately inside the main space there were reserved booths and tables with bottle service. The rectangular dancefloor featured a wall of lesbian-themed image projections and several poles for dancing. Along the back wall, I greeted the bartenders I had previously interviewed and observed a DJ booth behind them. I was pleasantly surprised that I was familiar with the DJ, who often performs at LGBTQ and feminist events. With my hand stamped, I was able to switch venues every half hour or so, moving between the nightclub, the lesbian bar across the alley, two all-gender inclusive bars nearby and several establishments for cisgender gay men, capturing events

inside and outside the club and nearby venues. I relocated on a circuit to observe how the club opening affected other venues nearby.

The entry of a temporarily busy lesbian nightclub in Yongsan disrupted the typically male dominated space. The strong preference for sex segregation, particularly among cisgender gay men patronizing nearby businesses produced interpersonal conflicts and hastened Club Push's demise. While the club operated, I heard from several interviewees about cisgender gay Korean men vocalizing frustration at the influx of women onto 'their' street. Some bar owners and passersby merely expressed curiosity or confusion at seeing so many women. Others muttered rude comments such as, "it reeks of pussy (*boji naemsae*)" as they passed the club on the way to nearby gay men's bars and dance clubs. According to Kyungmin (27, F, Korean), a group of five cisgender gay men verbally confronted her on the street, yelling "There are too many vaginas on the hill, get out of here!" I met her immediately after this intimidating conflict and agreed to accompany her as she walked to another bar to meet friends. We tried to join a small group of her friends who were sitting on the patio of a nearby gay bar, Homme Meeting, but were refused entry by the owner and bartender. The bartender, whom I had never met before, angrily informed us that there were already too many women in the bar. Kyungmin's friends were already in the bar, and we insisted on sitting with them. The bartender immediately threatened to call the police, insisting that Kyungmin made his patrons uncomfortable and that she was a 'troublemaker.' We protested, explaining that we had not even been in his bar before, and eventually were able to join Kyungmin's friends in the bar. The bartender continued to make confrontational comments throughout our stay and was quite unfriendly. When I ordered a beer, he deceptively poured the most expensive beer on his menu and also upcharged our food orders. His complaints grew so tedious that eventually one member of the group started to cry over being treated poorly. This bar had not posted explicit entry restrictions barring women but turned to informal boundary maintenance via threats and harassing comments. Partnering lesbian bar staff also told me that Club Push staff received many complaints and criticisms from within the LGBTQ community. Under pressure and criticism, the club closed within a month and never re-opened.

Spatial Safety Strategies in Lesbian Neighborhoods

LGBTQ life in Korea is shaped by its militarized, patriarchal, and familist organization of social relations. Yet, South Korean lesbian communities in several neighborhoods have occupied

impressive social space and cultivated online networks spanning the nation. Due to the marginalization lesbians experienced in well-established gayborhoods, illustrated by the opening and closing of Club Push above, they eventually opened businesses in separate areas of Seoul and Busan, often near women's colleges. For example, located just 30 minutes away from Yongsan by subway in the Mapo District, lesbian social entrepreneurs established a thriving lesbian neighborhood. In the early 1990s Korea's sole lesbian organization *Kkirikkiri* expanded its membership, and several lesbian venues opened in Seoul (Seo, 2001). Several lesbian social entrepreneurs who established businesses in the early 1990s, retired recently after decades of community building and the Mapo District saw an uptick in lesbian-owned businesses opening since 2016. By my count, from 2016-2018 there were six lesbian nightclubs, over a dozen lesbian bars, and at least ten lesbian-owned businesses and restaurants in Seoul. Seoul-based lesbians also organized a co-operative for elderly, sick, or injured members lacking the care resources typically provided by family, a clear case of queer kinship among Korean citizens.

In Busan's lesbian neighborhood, there are at least six lesbian bars, a nightclub, and three lesbian businesses and restaurants. In Daegu there are two lesbian bars. In smaller cities, such as Daejeon, Gwangju, and Jeju there may be no lesbian owned venue or a single lesbian gathering space typically located near a cisgender gay men's venue. In the sections that follow, I analyze how lesbian venues and their staff strategically limit the flow of information, hide in plain sight, and implement practices to protect patrons and staff from exposure to harassment.

During my travels outside Seoul and Busan, I encountered geographically disconnected South Korean lesbians residing in smaller cities and towns who were aware of lesbian dating apps but were not familiar with lesbian service organizations, online communities, or the social venues available to lesbians in major cities. Several smaller cities in South Korea do not have dedicated lesbian social space, so I met rural lesbians on dating applications, at festivals or gay bars in nearby cities, or at LGBTQ-friendly bars owned and operated by heterosexual expats that primarily served straight expats, but hosted meetings of queer migrants and welcomed queer Koreans.

Although I typically went alone, I also visited lesbian venues on several occasions with groups of Korean and LBTQ migrants, and sometimes only with LBTQ migrants. Because I frequently visited bars in Seoul and Busan as a member of a group including migrants or observed LBQ migrants entering lesbian venues I could see how the politics of membership

operated. Toward the end of my fieldwork, I also organized a series of six events that I dubbed LesBiTTour and made group reservations for twenty Korean citizens and LBTQ migrants who would join me for a tour of three lesbian-owned businesses. Despite lacking identification that matches their gender identities, some of my transgender respondents gained entry to lesbian venues that check IDs, because they were part of the group and thus not screened by security. These events were the rare opportunity that transgender migrants had to enjoy lesbian space, as they were usually excluded on the basis of their gender marker remaining unchanged.

In this section, I discuss the safety strategies that are critical to local lesbian community maintenance which promote the feeling of safety that my migrant respondents so enjoy. Korea's lesbian community networks operate locally and simultaneously tie to at least one of two core urban poles (Seoul and Busan) via virtual networks that span the nation. I analyze how political homophobia and gendered social boundaries shape the strategies social entrepreneurs use to maintain lesbian community spaces. Lesbian social entrepreneurs enact safety strategies as they maintain geographic spaces and build online networks. To explain how Korea's lesbian community adapts to heterosexism and the threat of anti-LGBTQ harassment, I discuss how these venues manage their visibility yet grow in number and size as they maintain loyal patronage and build queer kin networks.

Limiting Public Access to Information

Operating in a legal environment that inadequately protects LGBTQ people from discrimination, lesbian institutions in Korea carefully curate the information they release to the public. A very small number of long-standing gay and lesbian bars are featured in English-language guidebooks for LGBTQ travelers, but much of the information about these venues is outdated and some of the clubs have long since closed. Even on Korean-language websites and maps, information about queer venues is quite limited. Rather than advertising publicly, it is more common that lesbian bars minimize the risks of infiltration and involuntary 'outing,' by managing access to information about their venues.

Most lesbian bars and organizations I observed deliberately made it difficult to find information that is typically public, such as venue address, hours of operation, and walking directions from a nearby landmark. Although lesbian social entrepreneurs maintained social media profiles and websites, they typically only list a contact phone number and, in some instances, provide only an anonymous Kakao chat application ID, rather than a phone

number. Even at the entrance to lesbian bars there is little information viewable and by only those who have been granted access to their secretive social media profiles.

Lesbian venues carefully manage both online and offline information about operating hours and location. Some lesbian bars do not have signboards advertising their location and can only be found by calling for directions. Photography is not allowed inside lesbian bars and clubs, and notices threatening expulsion and fines for snapping a selfie are posted throughout venues. Some clubs design special photo booths or areas where photography is allowed, but these are behind barriers that block any view of other areas such as tables or the dance floor. According to my respondents, these practices are in direct response to previous infiltration of lesbian bars by cisgender heterosexual women. Community members tend to share details only with people they trust not to advertise the information too widely. Limiting access to information is a coordinated effort to evade anti-LGBTQ and misogynist activists.

Hiding in Plain Sight

LGBTQ communities that deemphasize visibility should not be simply regarded as passively responding to social repression. Lesbian business owners in Korea actively build cultural respite from heterosexist society by deploying safety strategies in the design of their venues. Most bars use simple nondescript signboards. In contrast to neighboring (heterosexual) bars, they typically lack neon fixtures, tend not to be colorful or embellished with eye-catching decoration, and are located out of sight near the top of a building. A typical signboard is simple, with a distinctive local color pattern and code words legible only to those who have the local queer cultural resources to decipher its meaning. Lesbian bar signboards are often rendered in English, not to target an English-speaking audience, but to avoid garnering attention from the Korean public. Lesbian bars are rarely located on the first floor, typically occupying the top floor of a building, or in alleys away from major foot traffic and obscured from street view. Korean bars and clubs that cater to lesbian clientele utilize a variety of barrier structures at their entrances. They typically have tinted glass or lack exterior windows. Under the threat of homophobic and gendered violence, LGBTQ organizations and social venues manage their visibility to avoid being detected. For example, in the relatively migrant-dense Yongsan gayborhood in Seoul, one can find rainbow flags signaling some gay bars. However, in other Korean gayborhoods that are not as popular with migrants it is rather difficult to identify these

venues if one cannot identify the local cultural cues (such as local LGBTQ patterns in the color of signs and text) they use to signal to LGBTQ people 'in the know.'

Some lesbian bars even more elaborately mask their presence, cleverly remaining hidden in plain sight. The difficulty I had finding Bar Very Nice offers an excellent example. Despite my existing knowledge of masking mechanisms, I walked right by it on three separate trips to the neighborhood before finding its entrance. Bar Very Nice was in a four-story building that hosted PC game cafes (*PCbang*) targeting teenagers during the day. The building had a single cramped elevator lobby with a dark and dingy stairwell full of cardboard boxes. The walls were lined with advertisements for popular games and signage indicating the names of the PC game cafes, operating hours, and contact information.

On my first visit, I could not find any information about a Bar Very Nice and left. I visited again a few days later, and this time I noticed that off to the side near the dark stairwell, there was a single small sign for *Arcade* Very Nice. I entered the elevator, along with several teenagers, but there was no elevator button listing Arcade Very Nice and the placards numbering each floor ended at the third floor. Slightly embarrassed, I stayed in the elevator as it opened, and teens emptied into arcades on the second and third floors.

A week later, I ran into the respondent who had told me about Bar Very Nice at a drag show, and they reiterated the location, so I visited a third time. On this visit, I carefully examined the Arcade Very Nice sign. It did not indicate that Very Nice was a bar. Instead, the sign advertised an arcade, including pictures of games and snacks. The only information listed on this sign was a phone number for group reservations and in a small font indicated that it was located on the fourth floor and rooftop. However, once in the elevator, I confirmed once again that there was no placard listing for Arcade Very Nice. But on this visit, I entered the elevator and noticed there was an extra button, with no placard, floor number, or business name assigned to it. I pushed this button and was pleasantly surprised as the elevator opened to a cramped lobby full of chain-smoking women on the fourth floor of the building. There was not a single arcade game in the venue. In a neighborhood dominated by neon signs, lesbian bars rely on subtlety for safety and on word-of-mouth advertising to build a loyal following.

Patron Screening

Lesbian clubs often hire professional security guards from an independent company who are posted at their exterior entrance. These male security staff do not enter the club and are

responsible for turning away those who do not meet entry requirements, namely that they be women as defined by the gender marker on their official documentation. Many lesbian venues require patrons to present ID and bar minors and people without identification from entering. Most lesbian venues withhold information about their staff online and even use pseudonyms on nametags. These security measures protect not only patrons but also the exclusively female lesbian staff.

Some lesbian bars maintain boundaries and exclude men and heterosexual women by labelling their venues something along the lines of calling them 'alumni pubs.[18]' At these venues, staff ask new patrons, "Are you alumni?" Here, the term 'alumni' is code for lesbian if you are in the know. The owner of Bar Diamond told me that if men try to enter her bar, she points to the 'alumni pub' signs and tells them there is a reservation-only alumni event. This screening is also meant to discourage heterosexual women, as pointed out by the owner of Bar Vertigo. Those newcomers who figure out the local codes and symbols gain access to lesbian community spaces if they can provide the appropriate identification. However, screening may exclude queer newcomers and foreign residents who are unfamiliar with its use in lesbian networks, which I will discuss further later in this chapter.

Early Morning Safe Spaces

Korea is not immune to the gendered violence that women face worldwide. Local women fear for their safety, particularly as sexual harassment and sex crimes rise in areas of Seoul where women socialize, study, and work (Lee et al., 2017), including the neighborhoods I observed. My Korean citizen interviewees reported feeling particularly vulnerable when walking or taxiing home after a night of clubbing. Interestingly, some lesbian bars coordinate their schedules to remain open until public transportation resumes in the morning. These venues coordinate with nearby lesbian clubs so that women have safe spaces nearby to stay after nightclubs close at around 4am. These late-night gastropubs for lesbians even offer special discounted 'hangover prevention' menus from 4am to 6am. During my fieldwork, as lesbian night clubs emptied, I regularly spent the early morning hours jotting down fieldnotes and enjoying breakfast in these venues. I typically observed women napping at tables, sobering up, breaking up, or making up in

[18] This is not the real term used; I have changed the term to preserve the integrity of the vetting process.

the safety of a late-night lesbian bar until morning, when they could commute home on public transportation.

The Importance of Lesbian Online Communities

As previously mentioned, the internet was a key resource in Korea's LGBTQ movement development. Scholars have shown how online networks can provide a powerful means of LGBTQ community mobilization, information dissemination, and identity affirmation (Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Grov et al., 2014), especially in contexts where the social cost of coming out is high (Pettid, 2008). LGBTQ communications technology use in rural settings shows that not only social and cultural resources but also technological innovations shape the circulation of information related to LGBTQ identities (Hardy, 2019). Research in Turkey has also shown the importance of the internet to maintaining LGBTQ communities under politically homophobic conditions (Gorkemli 2012). By contrasting cities and towns in Russia based on internet access, Stella (2012) finds that in areas with limited internet access LGBTQ people are forced to rely more heavily on personal ties and community gatekeepers. Meanwhile, in the U.S. some transgender people describe the internet as a 'utopia' where they can experiment with their identity (Garrison 2022).

However, we must acknowledge the reality that communications technologies also offer spaces where LGBTQ people and women suffer violence, due to boundary disputes. For example, cyberviolence disproportionately targets LGBTQ people and women and is linked to offline violence against them (Backe et al., 2018). Women who speak out against cyberviolence are criticized in news media and urged to remain silent (Levey, 2018; Lumsden & Morgan, 2018). As such, online communities for marginalized communities face the challenge of being visible enough that prospective members can find them but protected enough that they evade those who would target them online. The extent to which safety or visibility is prioritized in online community building also varies depending on local resources and constraints as well as intersectional harassment online users experience. However, our knowledge of cyberviolence, lesbian community online mobilization strategies, and their consequences is largely limited to Western cases (Backe et al., 2018).

Online Community Building Strategies

Korea is a world leader in internet speed, access, and proportion of the population that use social media and smart devices. As previously discussed, until the mid-2000s many global LGBTQ sites were restricted or censored in Korea. Today, globally popular social media sites and LGBTQ mobile applications are accessible in Korea, but long-established local Korean-language SNS platforms like *Naver*, *Daum*, and *Kakao* serve as key community institutions online. Over the past five years, English and Chinese-language dating platforms have also provided space for multilingual LGBTQ community networks based in Korea. Korea's lesbian communities, however, have repeatedly suffered online and offline infiltration and 'involuntary outing' by anti-LGBTQ and misogynist activists. Under the pressure of heterosexism and without adequate legal protections, lesbians in Korea carefully manage the spread of information online about their community through clever use of the available technological innovations, again prioritizing safety over visibility. These strategies include maintaining private online networks, vetting new members, and enforcing privacy protocols online. These safety practices culminate in community-wide collaboration as members screen newcomers before sharing information, educate 'outsiders' about local privacy expectations, and work to contain access to protected information.

Private Online Networks

During 16 months of fieldwork, while carrying a passport with my assigned sex marker, I was never denied entry to a lesbian bar. But accessing online Korean-language lesbian communities was much more difficult. It was not totally an issue of language, although a language barrier of course exists, but more importantly, it was an issue of access. In a few instances, a Korean respondent paused and consulted a fellow Korean lesbian about whether they thought it was ok to share information with me before sending me invitations or facilitating introductions to local organizers. Early on, several urged me not to post information publicly online, though these warnings declined over the years as I became a more familiar face in the community and regular attendee at events. After some of my research respondents connected with me via social media, I decided to create new, depersonalized and private online profiles for research use so that I could better avoid revealing my research participants to the public via my personal profiles. Therefore, I had to explain my newly created profiles to moderators and prove my identity again to regain access under my new account identities. Respondents wanted proof that my accounts and social media presence had not been compromised.

An anonymous social entrepreneur built and maintained a private online community for lesbians in Korea for many years. Other local lesbian social entrepreneurs maximize the security settings on existing platforms to establish private online networks. These private forums provide information on a wide variety of topics from recommending lesbian-friendly gynecologists to dating advice and event notifications. On any given day, chat rooms with hundreds of queer women spanning the nation actively engage in conversation, on private local sites that register thousands of community vetted members. Thus, there are high stakes in protecting this information and preventing harassment, violence and discrimination from anti-LGBTQ groups. These sites and online communities cannot be found easily via searches online. This provides a first line of defense against harassment by narrowing access to information and invitations to word-of-mouth communication. Despite these measures, the infiltration of anti-LGBTQ activists into prominent lesbian social networks occasionally takes place. In such cases, those who run these online communities tend to shut down and reestablish sites under different names and with new, more rigorous security protocols.

Membership Vetting

Nearly all lesbian social media sites in Korea are password-protected and require a direct invitation or permission to view content, and even migrant lesbians have adapted to use these technologies and techniques to protect privacy, learning from their Korean queer kin. Lesbian online networks in Korea carefully manage their membership through elaborate vetting mechanisms and use codes. The most exclusive platforms require high effort screening mechanisms to discourage those with malintent. These platforms require that users scan and submit their official ID cards, record their voice, or even submit video evidence as proof of their identity. Several online forums and dating applications permit enrollment only after users respond to several screening questions. Moderators check whether a user profile was recently created and may request additional authenticated proof of identity to prevent infiltration by way of stolen or fake profiles. These platforms offer protocols for users to report other users whose accounts seem to be fake or compromised.

Accessing local lesbian networks also requires local knowledge of special signals, making it difficult for outsiders to find these closed and secret networks. Some social entrepreneurs will only accept social media followers or new members after carefully screening their profiles for evidence that they are ‘authentically’ members of the local lesbian community.

They may screen new members based on cultural and social cues, such as by reviewing common interests, mutual contacts that 'follow' or 'like' one's profile. Thus, to achieve membership in virtual spaces, one must display sufficient social, cultural, and linguistic capital. For example, I was able to access information about many bars, clubs, and businesses only after learning from my Korean respondents how to insert the appropriate local signals, such as coded emoticons, in my own social media profiles and applications. Finally, members of the community participate in enacting these vetting strategies by educating new members about their importance and encourage them to maintain the integrity of protective procedures. The community guidelines in lesbian online spaces explicitly prohibit 'outing' members or posting screenshots or information outside their sites. These practices, while intended to police sex boundaries and protect Korean lesbians, inadvertently exclude migrants who are unable to access queer space.

Dating and Privacy Tools

A variety of technological innovations allow lesbian couples to enjoy virtual intimacy while avoiding third party detection. Korean lesbians and their partners sometimes use local relationship management mobile applications that feature encryption and host secure albums. Messages and recordings are password protected and are equipped with elaborate settings so that couples can freely chat with less fear that they will be detected by third parties at work or when living with family. In addition, lesbian dating apps in Korea are equipped with security features such as automatic screen locking, password protection, two-factor authentication, remote deletion, and restrict screenshots. Rebecca (British, 25) and her Korean girlfriend used such a site to maintain a sort of relationship blog that tracked how many days they had been dating. The app was a secure space to hold their more intimate photos and for them to chat with enhanced encryption. These innovative vetting and security mechanisms adapt to the challenge of privacy and safety in a tightly networked nation that demands compulsory heterosexuality.

Safety Strategies and Boundary Maintenance

Heterosexual men are not welcome in Korea's lesbian bars. Some lesbian social venues in Seoul, Busan, and Daegu post staff near the entrance to deter men who accidentally stumble upon the venue. Gay men are also barred from entry unless it is a rare 'LGBTQ night' or they are accompanied by women who secured permission in advance from the owner. Two lesbian

gastropubs in Seoul post signs indicating that they are for women only, but do not reference sexuality. This leads to the question of whether heterosexual women are included.

Although the two gastropubs I mentioned above do not mention sexuality in their signs, Korean lesbian venues generally discourage heterosexual women from entering to maintain safe spaces and cultural respite from heteronormative society. I experienced a revealing instance in which an owner explained the unwritten rule that their bar was not for straight women. One wintry evening, I met Kay (27, biracial Korean American) in Mapo so we could go check out a new bar together. As we entered Bar Vertigo, the owner (37, Korean) approached us to ask in English, "Do you know where you are?" I responded, "Yes, Bar Vertigo." The owner subsequently mentioned that it was an alumni pub. We assured her, "We are alumni." Just in case her question had been too vague, or possibly because she was not certain I had understood, because I am not Korean, she asked directly, "Are you lesbian?" Once we affirmed our LGBTQ community membership and explained how I had come to know about this relatively new bar, the owner apologized for the awkward screening. She invited us in for a drink and chatted with us throughout the night. Either we did not read as LGBTQ, or because we were visibly foreign residents and could have wandered into the bar accidentally, the owner slipped out of coded language and resorted to asking directly if we were heterosexual. This interaction revealed the importance social entrepreneurs place on boundaries, screening, and sharing information about the privacy governing lesbian spaces in Korean cities.

Unlike some of the cisgender gay men's bars in Jongno and Yongsan that exclude patrons based on national origin, the lesbian bars in Mapo District seem to generally welcome foreign residents. It is unclear why this is the case. As a Korean-speaking, white American frequenting lesbian spaces, I never experienced or witnessed exclusion based on national origin or ethnicity. As explained in the preceding paragraph, Kay and I were not excluded from Bar Vertigo for being outsiders, but the owner did want us to understand the sexual identity boundaries that govern admission to her bar.

Some queer respondents described Korea's LGBTQ community as inclusive and inviting, as Aubrey (Lesbian, South African, 23) put it,

> "Especially here in Korea where it's strangers and you walk into a place and immediately you feel so welcome. And, when I walk into a LGBTQ cafe or a club or anywhere where

there's LGBT people, then, I just feel home, and I feel loved, and I feel accepted, and I don't feel that I have to be ashamed of who I am."

Not only did the space feel welcoming, but Aubrey also emphasizes feeling loved by queer kin. Tina (Asexual, Canadian, 35) agreed, again emphasizing the inclusivity of Korean queer space,

> "I feel that the community here is more inclusive than some others are, and I don't know if it's because of the culture around that's not always as welcoming that we just feel a lot more of a sense of community and need to stick together."

These respondents suggest that queer kinship cultivated in these spaces makes them feel welcome in lesbian space.

However, not all respondents felt the same. It is because they struggle to access queer space or were questioned about their belonging in Korean queer spaces. First, the use of local cultural codes to protect the community does make it difficult for those who struggle to find such venues, including foreign residents. Second, I also found that foreign residents were sometimes politely questioned about their sexuality. For example, bar staff occasionally asked in Korean if I was a member of the lesbian community (*lejeubieon ibnikka?*), if I knew I was in a lesbian bar (*lejeubieon ba inji arayo?*), or how I had heard about the bar (*uri ba eotteohge alge doeeosseoyo?*). Given the lack of outright exclusions, it seems that lesbian social entrepreneurs are most concerned with avoiding involuntary 'outing' or misogynistic threats to community safety, not with excluding patrons based on their national origin. Sexuality- and gender-based boundaries seem to be the driving force behind screening.

I witnessed another instance in which lesbian bar owners emphasized that their bar was not for straight women or men. Information about this bar was easier to find than some other venues, as this bar was featured in an English-language LGBTQ travel guidebook. The bar is small with about a dozen small tables and a few bar stools. I visited regularly, usually early in the evening, as it was a good spot to talk with queer women who had recently arrived on student, tourist, or working visas to Korea. It was easier to talk when I could saddle up to a bar stool in a relatively quiet bar, as compared to meeting potential respondents in a noisy club and following them outside to talk. On one occasion, a group of roughly a dozen foreign queer women and one queer man gathered at this bar without a reservation. The event was organized for foreign

residents by a queer woman of color who had recently arrived in Korea from Western Europe and did not speak Korean. The bar owner and bartender working that Sunday evening seemed anxious about the unexpectedly large group, and that a man was present. The English-speaking Korean bartender explained to the organizer that it was a bar for lesbians and that men were not allowed, although they permitted him to stay, and the group took up most of the tables in the bar. She also asked the party organizer to call for a reservation in the future so that they could better accommodate their numbers.

Some respondents described the LGBTQ community as segregated based on sex and difficult to access for outsiders. As Utama (Lesbian, Indonesian, 30) said, "I mean, yeah, they have the LGBT community, but it's kind of separate between the foreigner and the Korean. If you are foreigner, you cannot really have a ton of access." Utama specifically calls out how difficult it can be for outsiders to access the queer community in Korea. Imogen (Lesbian, Irish, 27) points out that the Busan and Daegu LGBTQ communities are particularly hard to access:

> "In Daegu and in Busan and in any other smaller places other than Seoul, if you're not Korean, you one, will not know where to go, and if you are with a Korean person, you're not welcome to go there. It's hard to know, they're secret for a reason, I don't blame the girls, I get it, I get it completely but it's not inclusive or accessible, to be honest."

Here Imogen points out that even visiting with a Korea person, she felt unwelcome in the lesbian scenes in Busan and Daegu. Laura (Lesbian, Brazilian, 26) had similar responses to my questions about the Korean LGBTQ community, "Well, I feel the LGBTQ community in Korea is very segregated, it's very separated. It depends on if you're a woman if you're a man, how do you perceive yourself, if you are Korean or not, very separated I would say, yeah." Here Laura is pointing out the sex segregation that dominates LGBTQ communities in Korea.

Outsiders to Korea's LGBTQ scene sometimes forged their own community near the Yongsan district. Laila (Queer, American, 23) points out that 'foreigners' lead programming in the Itaewon LGBTQ community, saying, "It's interesting because most of the things that I participate in are pretty much led by foreigners and I don't know enough about the queer community in Korea to know what's happening on the Korean side of things." Laila goes so far as to describe there being a 'Korean side' of things distinct from the 'foreign' led community. Some respondents even felt hyper visible in Korea's LGBTQ spaces, which made them uncomfortable, as Laura (lesbian, Brazilian, 26) says,

> The thing is if I go to, I don't know, Zone Bar or I go to Itaewon, I'm just a person. But if I go to a lesbian club in Korea, I don't feel like I belong. Everyone stares at you and they wanna get a feel, or maybe like a... I don't feel like I belong in that part of the Korean lesbian community.

Roberta (lesbian, Canadian, 42) pointed out the same issue, her hypervisibility in Korea's lesbian space:

> As a non-Korean you stand out so much that they can *see* you. I walk into a club, and I am *the* foreigner in the club. It's very obvious to anybody there that I'm not Korean. Now, I have had people be incredibly welcoming, like just coming up and talking to me, but now I speak a little bit of Korean. I do know when I first came that those conversations were always very brief. Like, "Where are you from?" And then that would exhaust their English, and I had no Korean so that would be the end of that. But that is a not... I don't think that's *racism* or anything like that. It's just an actual *language barrier* that can the make things quite difficult for non-Koreans to participate.

Roberta is careful to emphasize that she does not regard the exclusion as racism, but rather that it is based on her perception of language barriers. Laila had similar experiences in lesbian clubs,

> "I just got the sense that people were curious. Like, "What is this foreigner doing here?" … I feel like most people just kinda look at you like they're curious about what you're doing there, but not like, "Oh you can't be here," or "You're intruding our space." I didn't feel like that.

By being hyper visible in lesbian spaces, my respondents crossed a boundary. Some did not feel overtly unwelcome, while others were clearly made quite uncomfortable by their hypervisibility as foreigners.

Ethnoracial difference was not the only boundary that existed in Korean LGBTQ space. Sex assigned at birth also presented challenging boundaries for transgender respondents. It is legally possible, but challenging, to change one's gender marker in Korea. During my fieldwork, Korean law required parental consent before transgender Korean citizens could change their legal gender identity, whether or not they themselves were adults. While this policy was later

ruled unconstitutional by the courts in August 2019 (Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2019), current law continues to mandate that transgender adults changing their legal gender identity be unmarried and have no children under the age of 19 (Na et al., 2014). In this context, screening by official identification can produce trans exclusion for those who are unable or unwilling to submit to the bureaucratic procedures necessary to change their gender marker.

However, I argue that the exclusion of transgender people at the time was largely a consequence of the document-based vetting process broadly employed by Korean lesbian bars, rather than a product of transphobia, which is often the case in North America and Western Europe. When I invited some transwomen to these venues as part of a large group of lesbians and queer women, they gained entry despite lacking identification that matches their gender identity, because they were part of the group and thus offered exception to the usual boundaries. At four different lesbian venues in Seoul, I observed (and occasionally facilitated) transgender patrons securing entry when a mutual contact vouched for them. These transwomen and transmen had to rely on their companions at first to secure their access to these venues, but in rare instances, once they became known to bar and club staff, they were able to independently visit these venues. One transman in my study, Arnold (American, 28), who had dealt with bathroom policing mentioned earlier in this dissertation chapter 2, expressed some hesitation to me, saying that he was not sure if he belonged in lesbian spaces due to being a man, but that he loved women, so lesbian spaces were the only places that welcomed him (with his passport marking female as his assigned sex). Arkar similarly felt uncertain about his reception at a lesbian venue. These exceptions to formal policies screening based on gender suggest that lesbian venues do not necessarily aim to exclude transgender patrons. Rather, they respond to political homophobia and sexism when they establish procedures that screen based on the assigned sex that appears on official documentation.

Conclusion

Korean lesbians building space struggled against the external forces of homophobia and misogyny, common in many other countries. The fear of involuntary 'outing' is especially strong in the lesbian community in Korea. They must face not only relational but also socio-economic consequences of such 'outing' due to the Korean government's family-centered laws and a lack of LGBTQ non-discrimination policies. Marginalization of the lesbian community from both the

women's rights movement and gay men's organizations added another layer of challenge to lesbian community building. Nevertheless, lesbian communities in Korea have shown impressive growth since the 1990s, aided in part by the rapid development of communication technologies around the same time. This chapter has shown how this growth has been possible through a distinctive set of strategies that prioritize safety over visibility and maintain boundaries. It has also explored how these policies produce complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion for migrants and transgender Koreans.

Korean lesbian social entrepreneurs draw on their available resources to establish carefully protected and sometimes hidden safe spaces to cope with homophobia, misogyny, and marginalization. They try to minimize the risk of harassment and violence through strategies common in other gayborhoods documented in the literature, such as employing security staff and checking patron IDs. Bar staff promote safety by staying open until public transportation resumes and by redirecting men who wander in by labeling themselves 'alumni' pubs. They leverage technological innovation and deep network ties to advertise directly to already vetted community members in private community networks online and use privacy applications to minimize the risk of involuntary 'outing' or unwanted exposure. The spatial tactics, technological resources, and interactional strategies that local lesbian social entrepreneurs deploy as they strive to balance competing needs for safety and visibility resulted in impressively variegated lesbian social spaces in several cities. Visibility should not be regarded as the default strategy for community building, it is a strategic choice that suits particular conditions.

Taking an intersectional analytical approach focused on relations of power and marginalization helps to highlight how these strategic responses to harassment produce complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion from lesbian space. I have documented several instances of gay venues explicitly excluding patrons on the basis of sex and national origin, deploying quotas based on sex, or charging high admissions fees based on sex and national origin to maintain social spaces exclusively for cisgender gay locals. In contrast, lesbian community admissions screening practices emphasize safety rather than applying a sex discriminatory fee for access to LGTBQ space. But men are simply unwelcome in most lesbian spaces. The practice reifies binary gender boundaries and excludes based on sex, though some accrue the social capital to secure an exception to the policy. It is also difficult for foreign lesbians who lack knowledge of local cues or preexisting ties to find and navigate lesbian space.

Later industrialization and democratic transition affected both the civil society allies as well as socioeconomic and technological resources that were available for lesbian community establishment. In such a context, visibility politics can expose an already marginalized group to increased risk of intersectional harassment and discrimination. Innovative use of communications technologies, however, provide lesbian organizers with an alternative to high-visibility strategies. The Korean case provides an excellent example of some queer theorists' claim that invisibility can provide protected and productive spaces to imagine and build queer selves and communities (Seidman, 1998) rather than simply being a passive reaction to homophobia. By minimizing visibility and establishing an array of creative safety mechanisms to protect patrons and staff from harassment and violence, lesbian social entrepreneurs in Korea successfully established long-running safe spaces. Within just twenty years, the once small and marginalized lesbian social scene rapidly grew into dozens of lesbian-only safe spaces and organizations online and in city neighborhoods. These spaces were incredibly important to my migrant respondents who sought secure queer spaces where they could connect to queer kin networks.

Critics of the pressure to perform visibility politics point out that this pressure can be deployed as an ethnocentric Western standard to evaluate global LGBTQ politics and designate the East as homophobic (Manalansan, 1997). This is reflected in the maps of 'LGBTQ friendly countries' that rank Korea as low in its acceptance of LGBTQ people. Sites like Travel + Leisure Asia define 'LGBTQ friendly' as having social acceptance of the LGBTQ community, progressive laws providing a safety net for LGBTQ people, whether a country has legalized same sex unions, the quality of healthcare and recreational and social activities for the LGBTQ community.[19] Many such lists emphasize marriage equality as the standard for LGBTQ rights. Judged against such criteria, Korea usually ranks low on measures of LGBTQ-friendliness, though I would argue that such lists rarely explore local conditions in depth and instead reproduce the same list of a dozen or so 'LGBTQ friendly' countries, mostly those in Europe and North America. But a close examination of Korea's LGBTQ community reveals that it is more elaborate and dynamic than can be seen on a cursory glance.

[19] https://www.travelandleisureasia.com/global/destinations/most-lgbt-friendly-countries/

Chapter 5 Conclusion

I opened this dissertation with the stories of two transgender migrants whose lives in Korea illuminate the complicated attempts by LBTQ migrants to seek employment stability, transgender healthcare access, create queer kin networks, prepare for family making, and acceptance of their gender identities, all components of a 'jigsaw' migration strategy. Their countries of origin were very different – Arkar came from authoritarian Myanmar, where same sex sexual activity is punishable by up to 20 years in prison – while Isaiah came from the Southern United States, where despite having some LGBTQ rights, he faced violence for his gender presentation. I puzzled over why these two migrants, from radically different backgrounds, would both choose South Korea as their new home, as many of their LBTQ peers did. In Arkar's case, living in South Korea meant that he lived under significantly more progressive laws, simply because Korea does not criminalize LGBTQ people or behavior. For Isaiah, the story is a bit more complicated. Isaiah could not afford to live in an LGBTQ-friendly city in North America, so he turned to teaching in South Korea, where he had fewer LGBTQ rights on the books, but a much greater sense of freedom in his gender affirmation due to being an 'exempt outsider' to Korean society and its gender accountability structures. The particular social locations that each transgender man occupied shaped their access to community, and particularly to spaces intended for women, such as the thriving lesbian community in Korea. Because neither man had yet been able to legally change his gender marker on identification, they were able to pass into lesbian spaces without much difficulty. Lesbian transgender women, on the other hand, often faced exclusion from lesbian spaces unless vouched for by well-known community members. These opportunities and constraints made Korea a livable place, but both transmen desired to move eventually to an LGBTQ-friendly city in the West. For Isaiah, it was a matter of saving up funds for transition and relocating to such a city. But for Arkar, the situation was compounded by the difficulty of also trying to secure a visa to live abroad. Thus, both men found themselves taking an extended stay in South Korea where they were able to access favorable visas and temporary settle with their spouses and kin network.

Summary

I ask three questions in this dissertation: Why do LBTQ migrants choose South Korea, not known for LGBTQ rights, as a destination country? How do the gender, race/ethnicity, class, and national origin of LBTQ migrants shape their strategies to build families, despite the lack of local legal recognition? How do local boundary-making and membership politics affect LBTQ migrants' experience of gender affirmation and queer kinship in Korea? To answer these questions, I draw on 16 months of ethnographic research in South Korea's LGBTQ communities and 86 interviews with LBTQ migrants in South Korea conducted between 2015 and 2018, and participant observation in online LGBTQ forums since 2014.

In chapter 1, I began with the puzzle that Korea lacks the kinds of LGBTQ rights protections that both Arkar and Isaiah suggest are important to them in the long run but still is considered an attractive migrant destination. Like other respondents in this study, Arkar and Isaiah rather than migrating to a place with progressive LGBTQ rights policies, found that South Korea was a more *accessible* destination because it had a lower bar for 'skilled' labor than other desirable destinations in the Global North. This was because they had insufficient savings and lacked a marriage certificate that would enable onward migration to a progressive destination by sponsoring a spouse. After living in Korea for several years, they accrued the savings they needed and shopped around for nearby destinations where they could get married and seek other queer affirming legal resources.

I point out how the very countries with the most progressive LGBTQ-right policies can be economically inaccessible due to the high costs associated with sponsoring the migration of a dependent. I demonstrated how Korea provides a home base from which families can accrue economic, legal, and medical resources for family building by shopping around multiple jurisdictions, the strategy I call 'jigsaw' migration. Jigsaw migration is a multi-sited transnational strategy mobilized by those lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women whose spousal relationship is not fully recognized by the law and/or who cannot meet sponsorship criteria in their desired destination. Jigsaw migrants reside temporarily in one country while simultaneously assembling resources through strategic forum shopping in other countries. In addition, I showed that LBQ migrants' access to these resources is shaped by their intersectional positioning in hierarchies of gender, class, national origin, and sexuality. Chapter 1 reveals that homophobic

and socioeconomic inequalities in the Global North and South drive some LBQ citizens in these regions to work abroad, even in countries like Korea.

In chapter 2, I turned to the experiences of several transgender migrants – including Arkar and Isaiah – who specify that South Korea is a country where they feel less held accountable to their gender assigned at birth than when they had lived in their origin countries. This is an unexpected finding considering the prevailing attitude toward transgender people is stigmatizing, as it is in other countries. And yet, my respondents felt relatively safe to pursue their gender identity affirmation. But why?

This was for several reasons: First, Korean doctors rarely behaved like gender gatekeepers which meant TGNC+ migrants could relatively easily access care for their transition related needs. Second, they found Korea to have high public safety, meaning that they did not risk violence by performing their desired gender display. Third, they also found that due to their social position as 'exempt outsiders' they were usually not bothered by Korean locals even when they dressed in gender-identity affirming ways. I discussed how social boundaries, the 'primary frames' that organize interpersonal relations, shift across transnational migration. This demonstrated that in their home countries, my transgender respondents were held accountable for their gender presentation deviating from their assigned sex. But in Korea, because they are 'exempt outsiders' rather than in-group members, gender recedes as a primary frame organizing relations, just as race/ethnicity, national origin, and perceived economic class position come to the fore as the primary frames affecting interactions. This chapter contributed to the literature on boundaries by showing that the national origin of migrants is an important primary frame that organizes their relations with locals, and hence affects the salience of gender accountability. The dissertation revealed that not all nationalities are treated the same. Southeast Asian respondents pointed out that they were held to quite exacting gender norms of femininity because they were stereotyped as poor and desiring marriage with Korean men.

Finally, I asked how local boundary-making and membership politics affect the exclusions and opportunities that LBTQ migrants encounter in Korean queer spaces. In chapter 3, I describe the local lesbian community and its safety features. In chapter 3, I also situated the formation of the lesbian community in South Korea in terms of social boundaries. The local gay and women's rights organizations excluded lesbian organizers which contributed to their social isolation as the early movement formed. However, the internet provided an important resource to

organizers who were able to develop active message boards to connect across the country. Anti-LGBTQ Christian activists embarked on a campaign to involuntarily 'out' lesbians to their families and at work. As a result, lesbian organizers pursued low visibility tactics when establishing lesbian space. These strategies not only deter infiltration by men and heterosexual women who may be anti-LGBTQ activists, but also promote safety by minimizing visibility, screening members, restricting access to information about lesbian venues, and protecting the community from harassment.

However, these strategies contribute to the difficulty LBTQ migrants and transgender people face when trying to access the lesbian community. I used intersectional analysis to point out how marginalization based on race, class, or migration status reveal that strategies designed to cope with homophobic harassment can also produce boundaries within LGBTQ and lesbian communities that exclude 'outsiders.' Respondents from the LBTQ migrant community described the lesbian community as segregated and difficult to access. This may have driven the formation of 'foreigner-led' LGBTQ-inclusive programming in the Itaewon district. This 'foreigner-led' space was an important source of queer kinship for migrants like Isaiah, who underwent gender-affirming surgery and relied on queer kin for after surgery care.

These and other examples cited in this dissertation revealed the fragmented citizenship (Engel 2016) that LGBTQ people face in both the Global North and Global South. Their fragmented citizenship means that LGBTQ people struggle to fully enjoy the rights and social safety nets that should be available to them yet remain out of reach. This can happen for a variety of reasons, but discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are dominant reasons that LGBTQ people continue to struggle to enjoy their rights to housing, work, and family.

So how did the LBTQ people in this study manage to find stable employment while also accessing healthcare and family making resources? While there is an abundance of literature on migrant strategies for achieving a better life through upward mobility, the literatures most related to this case, family migration and queer migration, had not yet explored the distinctive and mulisited strategies deployed by queer migrants. The family reunification literature could not answer for the strategies of people whose marriages and parental sponsorship would not be recognized by the state due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. And because the queer migration literature has tended to focus on migration to destinations with progressive LGBTQ-

rights policies, scholars have been reluctant to explore the migration out of countries with progressive LGBTQ-rights policies or to explore the migration of queer people outside the West. By centering already highly visible LGBTQ communities in the West, the existing literature oversimplifies not only our understanding of how contextual constraints and resources shape lesbian community building but also how intersectional harassment, operating variedly in different contexts, shapes safety strategies and alliances.

In contrast, this dissertation focuses our attention on the *economic*, *social*, and *medical* conditions that can make for an environment in which LGBTQ people can strategically recoup their fragmented citizenship through multisited migration strategies. In South Korea, many of my respondents from the Global North had abundant economic opportunities that enabled them to save up for gender affirming surgery, the costs associated with having a child, or to save for onward migration to a city popular with LGBTQ people. These economic opportunities came in the form of an E-2 teaching visa, which is obtainable for migrants from eight English-speaking countries. Respondents from the Global South also found some employment stability – but in the travel and tech sectors. They lived as digital nomads and tour organizers after leaving Southeast Asian countries with repressive LGBTQ policies. The global South student migrants in my sample, however, had greater challenges in securing employment after graduation and were left in limbo about their status before returning home.

The social conditions in South Korea, particularly high public safety, were incredibly important to my respondents. Although Korean locals struggled with gender accountability and feared gender-based violence, my respondents said that Korea was much safer than their origin countries. Furthermore, because they are 'exempt outsiders' to Korean society, respondents were not held to the same gender norms as cisgender Korean citizens, allowing for a more affirming gender display. They no longer feared violence if they were affirming their gender through their dress and behavior. Even in workplaces – where we might expect more conservativism than from strangers on the street – most respondents felt relatively comfortable taking small steps to affirm their gender, such as by wearing light makeup, foundation or painting their nails. Only two out of twenty-five transgender respondents – Geun and Lee – reported being held accountable to gender by being asked to change their appearance for work, but even then, they were only asked to make adjustments, such as wearing more neutral nail polish, rather than being banned from wearing makeup altogether.

Finally, the minimal medical gatekeeping in Korea meant that transgender respondents were able to take significant steps toward their transition. Doctors were supportive of migrants' transition goals and rarely pushed back or made them feel as if they were not 'trans enough.' The Korean court system requires that Korean citizens not be married or have children of minority age (under 19), if they want to transition. This puts Korean citizens in a difficult situation where although there are laws protecting transgender rights, they are too restrictive for many transgender Koreans to enjoy. But for transgender migrants in Korea, they found a relatively welcoming and affordable space to pursue their transition goals. They may have suffered from some political invisibility, but this was either acceptable to them, or they felt insulated from responsibility for behaving according to their assigned sex precisely because of this low visibility.

Contributions

This dissertation makes three important contributions to migration scholarship. First, this study responds to calls for queer migration scholarship to account for multiple intersecting inequalities operating based on national origin, race, gender, and class, as well as sexuality. By focusing on a non-Western destination lacking some of the progressive LGBTQ rights policies, I challenge the emphasis on marriage equality as the barometer for the 'LGBTQ-friendliness' of a country. Inaccessible countries, after all, are not really all that LGBTQ-friendly if migrants cannot enjoy their progressive policies or seek status as refugees based on their experiences of discrimination. Instead, I suggest that underemployment, costly medical care, and lack of support for mixed citizenship families drive some LGBTQ citizens in these progressive countries to work abroad.

Second, the dissertation expands on the flexible citizenship and multinational migration scholarship by bringing them in conversation with the literature on queer migration. This synthesis enabled me to develop the 'jigsaw migration' concept to explain the complexity LBTQ migrants face as they attempt to assemble fuller lives. Rather than dispersing their families – as in the flexible migration literature – the respondents in my study work to stay together in one destination by hobbling together legal, economic, and medical resources.

And finally, I joined scholars of transnational migration to Korea, who recognize that this is a popular destination in Asia. But I overcome the cisheteronormative bias of the existing scholarship on migration to Korea by incorporating queer theories into my analysis. Doing so, I

expand the populations studied in the migration literature to include transgender and LBQ migrants in Asia.

The dissertation also makes two contributions to gender theory. First, I show how TGNC+ migrants are treated as 'exempt outsiders' from gender accountability to the local gender norms. This is despite TGNC+ migrants' pursuing gender affirming performances of their identity. In contrast, they had been held accountable to gender in their countries of origin. This shows how the salience of gender can shift across contexts and in interaction. While the existing scholarship on primary frames has emphasized gender, race, and class, my work highlights the salience of national origin as a primary frame, as well.

Second, my intersectional approach reveals that there are different degrees of privilege and precarity in the degree to which TGNC+ migrants can enjoy the exempt outsider status. This is because Southeast Asian women are differently racialized in South Korean society, as compared to their peers from the West. Korean citizens tended to treat Southeast Asian women as potential spouses for Korean men, hence they would be expected to reproduce the national character and are held more accountable to their gender assigned at birth. In contrast, migrants from the West are treated as privileged migrants in Korean society, owing to their likely middle-class lifestyles as teachers and diplomats, careers associated with prestige in Korean society.

Finally, the dissertation contributes to the queer community maintenance and queer kinship literature. I do this by highlighting the complicated safety strategies that lesbian social entrepreneurs devise to keep their queer kin and client base safe from scrutiny. In an impressive essay on Black queer youth queer kinship, Shange (2019: 48) discusses queerness as a "communal, rather than a solitary, process." This is because the queer Black youth she studies experience their sexuality as relational, experiencing their sexuality as a property of their relationships with other straight and queer youth. I build on such projects by demonstrating the communal aspects of Korean lesbian life, demonstrating how even LBTQ migrants, once they are able to access lesbian space, can enjoy safe and low-visibility queer community space. However, safety practices in place make it difficult for migrants to access Korean lesbian spaces.

The goal of this dissertation was twofold – first to explore an undertheorized community of LBTQ migrants living in a country where their rights were not recognized – and second, to push back against an overly legalistic assessment of 'LGBTQ-friendly' as being equated with 'having same sex marriage policy.' Scholarship on queer migration tends to focus on migration

to what are regarded as 'LGBTQ-friendly' Western destinations with progressive policies for LGBTQ rights, while neglecting to study destinations outside the West and those lacking progressive policies. And yet, LGBTQ migrants also travel to and through countries all over the world lacking progressive policies. By situating my study in South Korea, I was able to explore how in addition to progressive laws, LGBTQ people also see economic stability and social rights. I found that queer migrants deployed distinctive strategies in their 'jigsaw' migration trajectories, how their 'exempt outsider' status enabled them to perform gender as they desired, and how they access or struggle to access lesbian space in Korea.

Scope of Generalization, Limitations, and Future Research

Much study of LGBTQ migration has centered on migration to countries with progressive LGBTQ rights laws. Korea is not one of these cases. Amidst countries that progressively protect LGBTQ rights or those that crack down and criminalize LGBTQ people, Korea stands out as being in the middle in terms of LGBTQ rights. Instead of the progressive laws that draw queer migrants, as is well documented in the literature, Korea offers socioeconomic conditions that make it possible for LBTQ migrants to temporarily settle and build families or pursue gender identity affirmation. It is important to study the case of a 'middle' country like Korea, which does not have progressive laws nor criminalization of LGBTQ people, because many countries around the world fit this type, though we have focused on legally progressive countries in our study of LGBTQ migration. In this section, I will address the scope conditions explaining the contextualization and theoretical importance of the two conceptualizations – jigsaw migration and outsider exemption – that I offered in this dissertation. I will first address jigsaw migration, and then outsider exemption.

The socioeconomic conditions that drew jigsaw migrants include relatively accessible migration policy for "skilled" workers such as English teachers, high public safety, and access to healthcare. These conditions offered sufficient stability for queer families to settle temporarily in a country like South Korea. In other words, jigsaw migration is a strategy that depends on having sufficient socioeconomic resources to shop around other countries for favorable legal jurisdictions to access unmet needs, such as securing a marriage certificate or IVF. Countries such as India, Japan, China, and the Philippines do not recognize same-sex unions but have a similarly low bar for migration for some forms of 'skilled' labor. These and possibly other countries would offer similar socioeconomic conditions that enable jigsaw migration. It would

therefore be interesting to see if the 'jigsaw migration' that I discuss in this dissertation is a pattern that also emerges in these destinations.

According to my conceptualization of jigsaw migration, it is less likely that LGBTQ migrants in Taiwan, for example, would have to forum shop for their rights in nearby destinations because of key rights like same-sex marriage recognition which recently came into law. Analyzing legal and socioeconomic patterns as they emerge and shift would better define the scope conditions for jigsaw migration.

Like jigsaw migrants, TGNC+ migrants to Korea sought favorable social, economic, and medical infrastructure to address their fractured citizenship in their countries of origin. TGNC+ migrants faced underemployment and discrimination at home, but found they were not held to local gender norms in Korea because they were seen as outsiders. The scope of generalization for "outsider exemption" is more complicated than that for "jigsaw migration" because it is necessary to determine which countries might regard TGNC+ expats as outsiders, and therefore not regarded as reproducing the social fabric and not held to the local gender norms. There are other countries besides Korea that cater to transgender medical tourists, do not criminalize LGTBQ people, and have accessible migration policies for "skilled" workers. These include countries such as Thailand, Taiwan, India, Brazil, and Argentina. I encourage scholars with knowledge of these destinations to explore whether the 'exempt outsider' dynamic exists in these locations. Like Korea, these are destinations with advanced aesthetic and gender affirming surgical industries which attract transgender tourists. Therefore, LGBTQ migrants might be attracted to these destinations. And like Korea, it may be the case that locals in these destinations treat migrant expats as outsiders, and that therefore their gender presentation would not be regarded as important to the reproduction of the social fabric. It would be interesting to examine whether some migrant groups are treated like Southeast Asians in Korea, meaning that they are held to local gender norms, while White and Black migrants from the Global North, are not.

However, I also suspect that there may be conditions that erode this 'exemption' from gender conformity. First, if LGBTQ migrants have family members from their country of origin living in these destinations, it may be less likely that they are regarded as outsiders. Second, in these destinations migrants might be perceived as a threat, or as planning to settle down permanently, which might mean that locals stigmatize their gender identity and sexual orientation in order to discourage them from becoming permanent members of the society,

establishing hard boundaries for LBTQ migrants to navigate. Outsider exemption might be fleeting if migrants begin to integrate more deeply in the local community, such as by establishing family ties, future research could compare gender accountability for TGNC+ migrants who do and do not have family ties in their host country.

My language limitation made it impossible for me to interview respondents that did not speak English or Korean. If I had been able to access LGBTQ ethnically Korean Chinese citizens in Korea, I could have explored the case of coethnicity more rigorously. Because coethnic Korean Chinese citizens have easy access to visas and have racial proximity to native Koreans, they would have provided different findings to augment my discussion of race/ethnicity in the concepts of jigsaw migration and outsider exemption. I also would have liked to interview LGBTQ migrants from Vietnam, the second largest sending country of migrants to South Korea. I suspect that had I been able to interview more LBTQ migrants, particularly those from elsewhere in East Asia or in Southeast Asia, I would have been able to draw stronger contrasts between how they are treated in Korean society, as compared to LGBTQ migrants from the West. My findings suggest that migrants perceived as women from Southeast Asia are treated as hyper responsible for feminine dress and behavior, as their membership in Korean society is racialized by a multicultural policy that posits Southeast Asian migrants as desiring to settle in Korea permanently such as by marrying a Korean man. Similarly, I was able to interview ethnic Koreans from the West but would have liked to contrast their experiences with Korean Chinese migrants. I suspect that this comparison would have further teased out the complexity of the insider/outsider dynamic in South Korean boundary politics.

Appendix: Respondent Demographic Information

NAME	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Assigned Sex	Origin Country	Socio-economic Status	Race/ Ethnicity
Aada	she/her	Pansexual	Genderqueer	Female	Finland	Below	White
Alexis	she/her	Bisexual, Queer	Questioning, Woman, Cisgender	Female	USA	Average	White
Alison	she/her	Lesbian, Gay, Queer	Woman	Female	USA	Average	white
Anna	she/her	Lesbian	Woman, Transgender	Male	USA	Average	White
Arlene	she/her	Lesbian	Woman, Transgender, Nonbinary, Genderfluid	Male	Ireland	Average	White
Arnold	he/him	Queer	Transgender	Female	USA	Below	Latinx
Aubrey	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	South Africa	Average	white
Aye	she/her	Lesbian	Genderqueer	Female	Myanmar	Average	Southeast Asian
Ayoung	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Korea	Average	Korean
Betty	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average, single parent	White
Blair	she/her	Lesbian	Gender fluid	Female	Scotland	Below, Single parent	White
Bora	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Korea	Average	Korean
Eunoh	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Australia	Average, single parent	White
Geun	they/them	Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer	Non-binary / Genderqueer, Transgender, Transmasculine	Female	Korea	Average	East Asian - Korean
Hakeem	he/him	Pansexual	Man	Male	Pakistan	Average	Asian
Ida	She / Her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	USA	Average	White
Ilene	she/her	Pansexual,Queer	Woman,Cisgender,Gender fluid	Female	United States	Above	White, Jewish heritage

NAME	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Assigned Sex	Origin Country	Socio-economic Status	Race/ Ethnicity
Ilene	she/her	Bisexual	Woman,Cisgender	Female	Canada	Average	White
Imogen	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Ireland	Average	White
Irene	she/her	Pansexual,queer	Woman	Female	USA	Below	Cuban/ puerto rican
Irma	she/her	Bisexual, pansexual, Queer	Woman	Female	Germany	Above	White
Isaiah	he/him	Pansexual,queer	Non-binary / genderqueer, transgender, transmasculine	Female	USA	Average	Black
Iseul	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Brunei	Average	East Asian - Korean
Ivána	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	Spain	Below	Hispanic, white-passing
Ivy	she/her	Pansexual	Woman,Transgender	Male	USA	Below	White
Jacquenette	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Belgium	Average	White
Justine	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Below	White
Karl	he/him	Gay	Man	Male	USA	Average	White
Kay	they/them	Pansexual	Trans	Female	USA	Below	Korean, white
Kaya	She / Her	Pansexual, queer	Woman	Female	South Africa	Above	Coloured south african
Kelly	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average	White
Laila	she/her	Queer	Woman	Female	USA	Above	Black
Laura	she/her	Lesbian	Woman,Cisgender	Female	Brazil	Below, single parent	Afro latina
Lee	they/them	Queer	Genderqueer	Male	Canada	Below	White
Liz	she/her	Gay	Woman	Female	USA	Above	Black
Melissa	She / Her	Bisexual, pansexual, queer	Woman	Female	Usa	Average	White
Michael	he/him	Queer	Man	Female	USA	Average	White
Molly	she/her	Pansexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average	White
Monika	she/her	Queer, lesbian	Woman	Female	Austria	Average	Korean, greek
Olivia	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Australia	Above	White

NAME	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Assigned Sex	Origin Country	Socio-economic Status	Race/ Ethnicity
Parker	they/them	Queer	Genderqueer	Female	USA	Average	Korean
Patricia	she/her	Lesbian, bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average	White
Rebecca	she/her	Bisexual, gay, queer	Woman	Female	United Kingdom	Below, not raised by parents	White
Reidun	she/her	Lesbian, queer, homosexual	Woman, non-binary/genderqueer	Female	Norway	Average	White
Renee	them	Pansexual	Non-binary,Gender fluid	Female	France	Average	Spanish-French
Ria	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	USA	Above	Korean
Roberta	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Canada, Bermuda	Average, Single parent	Black: Light skinned
Rose	she/her	Queer	Woman	Female	USA	Below	White
Roxy	She / Her	Lesbian,pansexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average, single parent	Puerto rican
Ruby	she/her	Gay	Woman	Female	USA	Below	East Asian - Korean, South Asian, White
Sabiha	she/her	Pansexual	Woman	Female	USA	Average	Filipina, white
Safra	she/her	Lesbian,gay,queer	Woman	Female	Philippines	Below	Pacific islander
Sage	she/her	Pansexual	Woman	Female	USA	Below, single parent	White
Shuang	she/her	Lesbian,pansexual,queer,homosexual	Woman	Female	Indonesia	Above	Chinese
Simona	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Slovakia	Average	White
Sophie	she/her	Lesbian,queer	Woman	Female	Australia	Average	White
Soyoung	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Korea	Average	Korean
Stella	She / Her	Gay,queer	Non-binary / genderqueer,transgender	Female	USA	Average, single parent	White
TaeHee	she/her	Lesbian, queer, homosexual	Woman	Female	Korea	Average	Korean

NAME	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Assigned Sex	Origin Country	Socio-economic Status	Race/ Ethnicity
Tassia	she/her	Bisexual	Woman, Cisgender	Female	Brazil	Above	Latina and Hispanic
Theresa	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	UK	Above	White
Timothy	enter your own:	Gay	Man,Cisgender	Male	USA	Average	White
Tina	she/her	Asexual	Woman	Female	Canada	Average	White
Tomi	they/them	Pansexual,queer	Non-binary, Transgender, Agender	Female	USA	Average	White
Tomika	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	South Africa	Average	Black
Tracy	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	USA	Above	White
Ulivia	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Male	Mexico	Below	Mixed
Una	she/her	Lesbian,gay	Woman	Female	Ireland	Average	White
Uriel	she/her	Demi, heterosexual	Woman	Female	USA	Above	Mixed
Ursula	they/them	Pansexual, queer	Agender	Female	USA	Below	White
Utama	she/her	Lesbian,bisexual,pansexual	Woman	Female	Indonesia	Average	Asian
Valerie	she/her,they/them	Pansexual	Woman,Non-binary	Female	Ecuador	Average	Latin-European mixed
Vera	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Below	White
Veronica	she/her	Gay, but also demi	Transgender	Male	Canada	Above, Single Parent	White
Vince	he/him	Bisexual,queer	Man,Transgender	Female	Canada	Average, single parent	White
Zabrina	she/her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	Dominican Republic	Below	Latina
Zach	he/him	Queer	Man	Male	USA	Average	White
Zadie	She / Her	Lesbian	Woman	Female	USA	Above	White
Zakia	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	USA	Above	White
Zara	she/her	Lesbian,asexual	Woman	Male	USA	Above	White
Zayne	she/her	Bisexual	Non-binary	Female	South Africa	Average	White
Zella	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	South Korea	Below	Korean American
Zoey	she/her	Bisexual	Woman	Female	Canada	Average	White

NAME	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Assigned Sex	Origin Country	Socio-economic Status	Race/ Ethnicity
Zora	she/her, they/them	Queer	Woman	Female	USA	Average, single parent	White

Bibliography

Aizura, A. (2018). *Mobile subjects: Transnational imaginaries of gender reassignment*. Duke University Press.

Anzaldúa, G. (1987) Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco.

Ayoub, P. M., and L. Bauman. 2019. "Migration and Queer Mobilisations: How Migration Facilitates Cross-Border LGBTQ Activism." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 45(15): 2758–78

Bailey, L., Ellis, S., & McNeil, J. (2014). Suicide risk in the UK trans population and the role of gender transition in decreasing suicidal ideation and suicide attempt. *Mental Health Review Journal*, *19*(4), 209-220.

Bauböck, R. 2019. "Genuine Links and Useful Passports: Evaluating Strategic Uses of Citizenship." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45 (6): 1015–26.

Beauchemin, C., J. Nappa, B. Schoumaker, P. Baizan, A. González-Ferrer, K. Caarls, and V. Mazzucato. 2015. "Reunifying Versus Living Apart Together Across Borders: A Comparative Analysis of Sub-Saharan Migration to Europe." *International Migration Review* 49 (1): 173–99.

Böhm, K., A. Schmid, R. Götze, C. Landwehr, and H. Rothgang. 2013. "Five Types of OECD Healthcare Systems: Empirical Results of a Deductive Classification." Health Policy 113(3): 258–69.

Brainer, A. 2022. ""There is Absolutely No Discrimination Based on that Allowed": Marriage, Migration, and Equality Rhetoric as a Justification for Harm." Humanity & Society 46 (4): 571–93.

Bong, Y. (2008). The gay rights movement in democratizing Korea. *Korean Studies*, 32, 86-103, 213.

Byun, K., and M. Kim. 2011. "Shifting Patterns of the Government's Policies for the Internationalization of Korean Higher Education." Journal of Studies in International Education 15 (5): 467–86.

Camminga, B. (2020). 'The stigma of Western words': asylum law, transgender identity and sexual orientation in South Africa. In *Gender, Sexuality, and the Law* (pp. 70-87). Routledge.

Canaday, M. 2009. The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cantú, L. 2002. "De Ambiente: Queer Tourism and the Shifting Boundaries of Mexican Male Sexualities." GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 8 (1): 139–66.

Cantú, L. (2002). De ambiente: Queer tourism and the shifting boundaries of Mexican male sexualities. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *8*(1), 139-166.

Cardenas, B. (2024). Inconceivable: The Fight for Equality in Fertility Insurance. *U. Ill. L. Rev.*, 1013.

Carrillo, H. (2018). *Pathways of desire: The sexual migration of Mexican gay men*. University of Chicago Press.

Chang, K. S., & Song, M. Y. (2010). The stranded individualizer under compressed modernity: Korean women in individualization without individualism. British Journal of Sociology, 61(3), 539–564.

Chauvin, S., M. Salcedo Robledo, T. Koren, and J. Illidge. 2021. "Class, Mobility and Inequality in the Lives of Same-sex Couples with Mixed Legal Statuses." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 47(2): 1–17.

Cho, J. 2009. "The Wedding Banquet Revisited: "Contract Marriages" Between Korean Gays and Lesbians." Anthropological Quarterly 82(2): 401–22.

Cho, S. P. (2009). The wedding banquet revisited: "Contract marriages" between Korean gays and lesbians. Anthropological Quarterly, 82(2), 401–422.

Cho, S., & Choi, S. (2016). A preliminary study on the problems of the medical tourism activation policy and its political countermeasures: Focused on the identifying major issues using foreign case analysis. *Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 40(7), 165-181.

Choi, J. (2024). Making moral and economic inferior others: Everyday racialization of Asian migrants in South Korea. *Current Sociology*.

Choi, C.A. 2020. "Segmented Pathways of Educational Mobility: English Language Schools, Working Holidays, and Divergent Prospects among South Korea's Global Youth." *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 21(1): 40–63.

Choo, H. Y. 2016. Decentering Citizenship: Gender, Labor, and Migrant Rights in South Korea. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chua, L. J. (2016). Negotiating social norms and relations in the micromobilization of human rights: The case of Burmese lesbian activism. Law & Social Inquiry, 41(3), 643–669.

Chung, E. A. 2020. Immigrant Incorporation in East Asian Democracies. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Chung, E. (2019). Creating hierarchies of noncitizens: race, gender, and visa categories in Korea. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(12), 2497-2514.

Clarke, A., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Situational analysis in practice: Mapping research with grounded theory* (Vol. 1). Left Coast Press.

Clary, S. (2018, May 11). *Bottom surgery: Cost, recovery, procedure details, and more*. Healthline. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/bottom-surgery

Collins, P. H. (2004). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. Routledge.

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). Intersectionality. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Croff, J. M., Hubach, R. D., Currin, J. M., & Frederick, A. F. (2017). Hidden rainbows: Gay bars as safe havens in a socially conservative area since the pulse nightclub massacre. Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 14(2), 233–240.

Dave, N. N. (2010). To render real the imagined: An ethnographic history of lesbian community in India. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 35(3), 595–619.

Draught-Véjares, Darcie. 2023. "Multicultural at the Meso-Level: Governing Difference within the Family in South Korea." *Pacific Affairs* 96(4): 701–722.

Engel, S. M. 2019. Fragmented Citizens: The Changing Landscape of Gay and Lesbian Lives. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Fix, M., and W. Zimmermann. 2001. "All Under One Roof: Mixed-Status Families in an Era of Reform." International Migration Review 35 (2): 397–419.

Fraser, M. (1999). Classing queer: Politics in competition. Theory, Culture & Society, 16(2), 107–131.

Garrison, S. (2018). "On the limits of “trans enough”: Authenticating trans identity narratives." *Gender & Society* 32.5: 613-637.

Ghaziani, A., Taylor, V., & Stone, A. (2016). Cycles of sameness and difference in LGBT social movements. Annual Review of Sociology, 42(1), 165–183.

Gleckman-Krut, M. (2024). *The Rainbow Nation and the Gays it Excludes*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Han, W. (2018). Proud of myself as LGBTQ: The Seoul pride parade, homonationalism, and queer developmental citizenship. Korea Journal, 58(2), 27–57.

Han, Y. (2007). Jendeosahoeeseoui Teuraenseujendeo Ilgi [Reading Transgender in a Gendered Society]. *Munhwagwahak*, 49, 90–101.

Hanhardt, C. B. (2013). Safe space: Gay neighborhood history and the politics of violence. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Harpaz, Y. 2019. Citizenship 2.0: Dual Nationality as a Global Asset. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harpaz, Y. and P. Mateos. 2019. “Strategic Citizenship: Negotiating Membership in the age of Dual Nationality.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 45 (6): 843–57.

Harper, P., A. McClintock, J. E. Muñoz, and T. Rosen. 1997. Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender, Social Text, no. 52–53.

Hartal, G. (2016). The politics of holding: Home and LGBT visibility in contested Jerusalem. Gender, Place & Culture, 23(8), 1193–1206.

Helfer, L. R. 1999. “Forum Shopping for Human Rights.” University of Pennsylvania Law Review 148 (2): 285–400.

Hollander, J. (2013). “I demand more of people” Accountability, interaction, and gender change. *Gender & Society*, *27*(1), 5-29.

Hwang, M. C., and R. S. Parreñas. 2010. Not every family: Selective reunification in contemporary US immigration laws. International Labor and Working-Class History, 100–109.

James, S., Herman, J., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The report of the 2015 US transgender survey.

Johnson, A. (2015). Normative accountability: How the medical model influences transgender identities and experiences. *Sociology Compass*, 9(9), 803-813.

Joppke, C. 2019. "The Instrumental Turn of Citizenship." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 45 (6): 858–78.

Jones, C. (2023). Jigsaw Migration: How Mixed Citizenship LGBTQ Families (Re) Assemble Their Fragmented Citizenship. *International Migration Review* (0) (0).

Jung, K. (2013). *Practicing feminism in South Korea: The women's movement against sexual violence*. Routledge.

Kang, H. (2021). Being Othered, Embracing Others: Roots Migrants in "Multicultural" South Korea. *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, *4*(1), 116-143.

Kendall, L. (1996). Getting married in Korea: Of gender, morality, and modernity. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Kim, D. S. 2010. "Introduction: Health of the Health Care System in Korea." Social Work in Public Health 25 (2): 127–41.

Kim, J. 2018. "Migration-Facilitating Capital: A Bourdieusian Theory of International Migration." Sociological Theory 36 (3): 262–88.

Kim, J. 2019. "Ethnic Capital, Migration, and Citizenship: A Bourdieusian Perspective." Ethnic and Racial Studies 42 (3): 357–85.

Kim, M. (2018). *Elusive belonging: Marriage immigrants and "multiculturalism" in rural South Korea*. University of Hawaii Press.

Kim, N. (2008). *Imperial citizens: Koreans and race from Seoul to LA*. Stanford University Press.

Kim, N. (2016). The gendered politics of the Korean protestant right, 81–114. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kim, S. K. (2023). *Constructing student mobility: how universities recruit students and shape pathways between Berkeley and Seoul*. MIT Press.

Kim, S. K., & Kim, K. (2014). The Korean women's movement and the state: Bargaining for change. London, UK: Routledge.

Kim, Y., & Hahn, S. (2006). Homosexuality in ancient and modern Korea. Culture, Health & Sexuality, 8(1), 59–65.

Kim, N. H. J. 2008b. “Korean Immigration Policy Changes and the Political Liberals’ Dilemma.” International Migration Review 42 (3): 576–96.

Kim S. & Lee S. (2017). Hanguk Namseongi Seonhohaneun Yeoseongui Meikeueop Jeongdo Mit Yeoseongseong Insik Yeongu [Study on Korean Men’s Preference and Femininity Perception on the Level of Woman’s Makeup]. *Hangukdijainmunhwahakoeji*, 23.3, 91–102.

Kim, Y. M. 2008. “Beyond East Asian Welfare Productivism in South Korea.” Policy and Politics 36 (1): 109–25.

Kimmel, D. C., & Yi, H. (2004). Characteristics of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Asians, Asian Americans, and immigrants from Asia to the USA. Journal of Homosexuality, 47(2), 143–172.

King, R., and R. Skeldon. 2010. “‘Mind the Gap!’ Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 36 (10): 1619–46.

Kollman, K. 2016. The Same-sex Unions Revolution in Western Democracies: International Norms and Domestic Policy Change. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (KSLPSOGI). (2017). Human rights situation of LGBTI in South Korea. Retrieved from http://annual.sogilaw.org/review/intro_en

Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (KSLPSOGI). (2019). Daebeob-won teulaenseujendeo seongbyeoljeongjeong bumodong-uiseo yogu pyeji hwan-yeonghanda [Supreme Court abolishes parental consent requirement for trans gender change]. Retrieved from https://sogilaw.org/m/76?fbclid=IwAR1JkoIZLel7vBnR9RhZwLj8XlVX965WqSbuA_WFoNABx-IEKXuEJy_n_Y

Kroska, A. (2007). Gender ideology and gender role ideology. *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology*.

Kunz, S. 2019. “Expatriate, Migrant? The Social Life of Migration Categories and the Polyvalent Mobility of Race.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 46(11): 1–18.

Kwon Kim, H. Y., & Cho, S. P. (2011). The Korean gay and lesbian movement 1993–2008: From “identity” and “community” to “human rights. In South Korean social movements, edited by G. Shin and P. Chang, 220–237. Routledge.

Lee, B. 2009. “The Development of Korea’s Immigration Policies: Security, Accumulation, Fairness, and Institutional Legitimacy.” Korea Observer 40 (4): 763.

Lee, E., Kim, S. K., & Lee, J. K. (2015). Precarious motherhood: Lives of Southeast Asian marriage migrant women in Korea. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *21*(4), 409-430.

Lee, H. (2013). “I'm my mother's daughter, I'm my husband's wife, I'm my child's mother, I'm nothing else”: Resisting traditional Korean roles as Korean American working women in Seoul, South Korea. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 36, pp. 37-43). Pergamon.

Lee, H. S. (1999). Hanguk Lesbian Inkwonoondong-ui Yeoksa [History of the Lesbian Rights Movement in South Korea]. In Hanguk Yeoseong Inkwonoondongsa edited by H. Shin, K. Min, H. Lee, C. Chung, H. Lee, H. Jung, H. Lee and E. Kim, 359–403. Seoul: Hanwool.

Lee, H., Park, J., Choi, B., Yi, H., & Kim, S. (2018). Experiences of and barriers to transition-related healthcare among Korean transgender adults: focus on gender identity disorder diagnosis, hormone therapy, and sex reassignment surgery. *Epidemiology and health*, *40*.

Lee, S., and Y. C. Chien. 2017. “The Making of ‘Skilled’ Overseas Koreans: Transformation of Visa Policies for co-Ethnic Migrants in South Korea.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 43 (13): 2193–210.

Lee, Y. N., Park, J. H., Kim, B., Kim, D. J., Han, J. W., Han, K. T., & Kim, S. J. (2017). Violent crimes in a community and quality of life for its inhabitants: Results of a multilevel study in South Korea. Psychiatry Research, 257, 450–455.

Liu-Farrer, G. 2009. “Educationally Channeled International Labor Mobility: Contemporary Student Migration from China to Japan.” International Migration Review 43 (1): 178–204.

Liu-Farrer, G., B. S. Yeoh, and M. Baas. 2021. “Social Construction of Skill: An Analytical Approach Toward the Question of Skill in Cross-Border Labour Mobilities.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 47 (10): 2237–51.

Lombardi, E. (2009). Varieties of transgender/transsexual lives and their relationship with transphobia. *Journal of homosexuality*, *56*(8), 977-992.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.

Luibhéid, E. 2005. Introduction, Queer Migrations: Sexuality, US Citizenship, and Border Crossings. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.

MacKinnon, K. R., Grace, D., Ng, S. L., Sicchia, S. R., & Ross, L. E. (2020). “I don’t think they thought I was ready”: How pre-transition assessments create care inequities for trans people with complex mental health in Canada. *International Journal of Mental Health*, *49*(1), 56-80.

Manalansan, M. F. IV 1995. “In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma.” GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 2 (4): 425–38.

Manalansan, M. F. IV. 2006. “Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies.” International Migration Review 40 (1): 224–49.

Marques, A. (2019). Displaying Gender: Transgender People's Strategies in Everyday Life. *Symbolic Interaction*, *42*(2), 202-228.

Mathur, P. 2021. “Heteronormativity and Hierarchy of Relationships: The Case of South Asian Binational Queer Couples in Canada.” Jindal Global Law Review 12 (1): 55–82.

Mau, S. 2010. “Mobility Citizenship, Inequality, and the Liberal State: The Case of Visa Policies.” International Political Sociology 4 (4): 339–61.

Mayer, K., Bradford, J., Makadon, H., Stall, R., Goldhammer, H., & Landers, S. (2008). Sexual and gender minority health: what we know and what needs to be done. *American journal of public health*, *98*(6), 989-995.

Meyer, D. (2015). Violence against queer people: Race, class, gender, and the persistence of anti-LGBT discrimination. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Moon, H. (2008). Shin-jayujueui shidae nodonggwa kajokeui jaeguchohwa [Restructuring of labor and family in the era of neoliberalism]. Yeo/seong Eeron, gyeolho.

Moon, S. (2002). Carving out space: Civil society and the women’s movement in South Korea. The Journal of Asian Studies, 61(2), 473–500.

Na, T. Y. J., J. H. J. Han, and S. W. Koo. 2014. “The Korean Gender System: LGBTI in the Contexts of Family, Legal Identity, and the Military.” Journal of Korean Studies 19 (2): 357–77.

Na, Y., & Choo, H. (2011). Becoming a female-to-male transgender (FTM) in South Korea (pp. 48-57) in *Embodied Resistance*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Na, T., Han, J., & Koo, S. (2014). The South Korean gender system: LGBTI in the contexts of family, legal identity, and the military. *Journal of Korean Studies*, *19*(2), 357-377.

Neilson, Brett. 2009. “The World Seen from a Taxi: Students-Migrants-Workers in the Global Multiplication of Labour.” Subjectivity 29:425–44.

Nelson, L. C. (2000). Measured excess: Status, gender, and consumer nationalism in Korea. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Nordmarken, S., & Kelly, R. (2014). Limiting transgender health: Administrative violence and microaggressions in health care systems. *Health care disparities and the LGBT population*, 143-166.

Ong, A. 1999. Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ossman, S. 2004. “Studies in Serial Migration.” International Migration 42 (4): 111–21.

Oh, D. C. (2022). *Mediating the South Korean Other: Representations and discourses of difference in the post/neocolonial nation-state*. University of Michigan Press.

Park-Kim, S. J., Lee-Kim, S. Y., & Kwon-Lee, E. J. (2007). The lesbian rights movement and feminism in Korea. Journal of Lesbian Studies, 10(3-4), 161–190.

Paul, A. M. 2011. “Stepwise International Migration: A Multistage Migration Pattern for the Aspiring Migrant.” American Journal of Sociology 116 (6): 1842–86.

Paul, A. M. 2017. Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labor Market. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Paul, A. M. 2021. “Studying Multinational Migrations, Speaking Back to Migration Theory.” Global Networks 21 (1): 3–17.

Paul, A. M., and B. S. Yeoh. 2020. “Methodological Innovations in Studying Multinational Migrations.” Geographical Research 58 (4): 355–64.

Pearce, R. (2018). *Understanding Trans Health* (pp. 119-156). Policy Press.

Richardson, D. (2017). Constructing sexual citizenship: Theorizing sexual rights. In *Citizenship Rights* (pp. 433-463). Routledge.

Raghuram, P. 2000. “Gendering Skilled Migratory Streams: Implications for Conceptualizations of Migration.” Asian and Pacific Migration Journal 9 (4): 429–57.

Ridgeway, C. (2009). Framed before we know it: How gender shapes social relations. *Gender & society*, *23*(2), 145-160.

Ridgeway, C. (2011). *Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world*. Oxford University Press.

Ridgeway, C. (2019). *Status: Why is it everywhere? Why does it matter?*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Robertson, S. 2014. "Time and Temporary Migration: The Case of Temporary Graduate Workers and Working Holiday Makers in Australia." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 40 (12): 1915–33.

Robertson, S. 2019. "Migrant, Interrupted: The Temporalities of 'Staggered' Migration from Asia to Australia." Current Sociology 67 (2): 169–85.

Robertson, S., and A. Runganaikaloo. 2014. "Lives in Limbo: Migration Experiences in Australia's Education–Migration Nexus." Ethnicities 14 (2): 208–26.

Rodriguez, C. 2016. "Experiencing 'Illegality' as a Family? Immigration Enforcement, Social Policies, and Discourses Targeting Mexican Mixed-status Families." Sociology Compass 10 (8): 706–17.

Schilt, K., & Lagos, D. (2017). The development of transgender studies in sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *43*, 425-443.

Seidman, S. (1998). Are we all in the closet? Notes towards a sociological and cultural turn in queer theory. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 1(2), 177–192.

Seo, D. (2001). Mapping the vicissitudes of homosexual identities in South Korea. Journal of Homosexuality, 40(3-4), 65–79.

Seol, Dong Hoon. 2012. "The Citizenship of Foreign Workers in South Korea." *Citizenship Studies* 16(1): 119–133.

shuster, S. (2016). Uncertain expertise and the limitations of clinical guidelines in transgender healthcare. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *57*(3), 319-332.

shuster, S. (2017). Punctuating accountability: How discursive aggression regulates transgender people. *Gender & Society*, *31*(4), 481-502.

Shin, K. (2014). Sinjayujuuisidae Namseong Saenggyebuyangjauisigui Gyunyeolgwa Jendeogwangyeui Byeonhwa [Changes in Male Breadwinner Consciousness and Implications for Gender Relations in Korean Family]. *Hangugyeoseonghak*, 30.4, 153–187.

Song, J. E. R. (2020). A double-edged sword: Gender and intersectionality of Korean American ethnic return migration. *Asian Studies Review*, *44*(4), 579-596.

Spade, D. (2003). Resisting medicine, re/modeling gender. *Berkeley Women's LJ*, *18*, 15.

Staples, J., & Fuller, C. (2021). Adult sexual assault severity among transgender people of color: The impact of double marginalization. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *30*(5), 694-706.

Statistics Korea. 2019. International Migration Statistics in 2019. Accessed online: http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/pressReleases/8/5/index.board.

Stotzer, R. L. (2009). Violence against transgender people: A review of United States data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *14*(3), 170-179.

Strasser, E., A. Kraler, S. Bonjour, and V. Bilger. 2009. "Doing Family: Responses to the Constructions of 'the Migrant Family' Across Europe." The History of the Family 14(2): 165–76.

Stone, A. L., & Gallin-Parisi, A. (2024). What Happens when Gender Accountability is Reduced? The Experiences of Nonbinary and Genderfluid People During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Gender & Society*.

Stotzer, R. (2009). Violence against transgender people: A review of United States data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *14*(3), 170-179.

Suh, S. 2016. "Negotiating Masculinity across Borders: A transnational examination of Korean American masculinities." *Men and Masculinities, 20(3), 317-344*.

Tang, S. (2012). Transnational lesbian identities: Lessons from Singapore? Queer Singapore: Illiberal citizenship and mediated cultures, edited by A. Yue and J. Zubillaga-Pow, 83–96. Pokfulam, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Trémon, A. C. 2017. "Flexible Kinship: Shaping Transnational Families among the Chinese in Tahiti." Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 23 (1): 42–60.

Valdivia, C. 2019. "Expanding Geographies of Deportability: How Immigration Enforcement at the Local Level Affects Undocumented and Mixed-Status Families." Law & Policy 41 (1): 103–19.

Valentine, G. (2007). Theorizing and researching intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography. The Professional Geographer, 59(1), 10–21.

van der Miesen, A., Raaijmakers, D., & van de Grift, T. (2020). "You Have to Wait a Little Longer": Transgender (Mental) Health at Risk as a Consequence of Deferring Gender-Affirming Treatments During COVID-19. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 49, 1395-1399.

Wee, K., and B. S. Yeoh. 2021. "Serial Migration, Multiple Belongings and Orientations Toward the Future: The Perspective of Middle-Class Migrants in Singapore." Journal of Sociology 57 (1): 94–110.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, *1*(2), 125-151.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (2009). Accounting for doing gender. *Gender & society*, *23*(1), 112-122.

Westbrook, L., & Schilt, K. (2014). Doing gender, determining gender: Transgender people, gender panics, and the maintenance of the sex/gender/sexuality system. *Gender & society*, *28*(1), 32-57.

Wirtz, A. L., Poteat, T. C., Malik, M., & Glass, N. (2020). Gender-based violence against transgender people in the United States: A call for research and programming. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *21*(2), 227-241.

Yang, H. (2013). Colonialism and patriarchy: Where the Korean family-head (hoju) system had been located, Law and society in Korea. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Yi, J., Jung, G., & Phillips, J. (2017). Evangelical Christian discourse in Korea on the LGBT: The politics of cross-border learning. Society, 54(1), 29–33.

Yuval-Davis, N. (1997). Gender and nation: SAGE publications. *Gender and nation*, 1-168.

Zuluaga, J. E. 2015. "Errance and Elsewheres among Africans Waiting to Restart Their Journeys in Dakar, Senegal." Cultural Anthropology 30 (4): 589–610. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca30.4.07