CHASING DESIRES AND MEETING NEEDS: FILIPINAS IN SOUTH KOREA, MOBILE PHONES, SOCIAL NETWORKS, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INFORMAL LEARNING

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

As in most countries, transnational workers in South Korea face many difficulties living and working in their host country, including communication problems, cultural conflicts, discrimination, and abuse in the workplace. While attempting to navigate the difficult terrain of their host country, transnational workers are physically distant from their usual sources of social support in their communities of origin. Many transnational workers live in social worlds which are split between the expat communities in South Korea and their families and friends back home. To deal with these difficult circumstances in their host country as well as to stay connected with family and friends at home transnational workers are increasingly turning to mobile phone technology as a way to access sources of social support and to engage in informal learning.

This mixed-methods study, employing social network analysis and phenomenology, investigated a) how five Filipina transnational domestic workers used their mobile phones to develop and maintain mobile phone ego\textsuperscript{1} networks (MPENs), b) how the participants used their mobile phones to access social support, c) how the participants engaged in informal learning in the MPENs and d) what meaning these participants made of accessing social their MPENs. This study followed the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. I began the study by working with each participant to construct an MPEN of her 20 most important relationships maintained by mobile phone. This early quantitative phase informed a series of three in-depth semi-structured interviews which were informed by phenomenology. The MPENs were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify overall trends in the composition and structure of the

\textsuperscript{1} See Terms section page xiii for an explanation of the use of the term ego in this dissertation.
participants’ MPENs. Using quantitative data and the qualitative interviews, each participant’s MPEN was then treated as a case to explore how the participant used her MPEN to access social support and to engage in informal learning. And finally, I completed a phenomenological analysis to identify the meaning the participants made of the experience of accessing their MPENs.

The quantitative data showed that the participants’ MPENs were populated with people similar to themselves both in terms of nationality and socioeconomic status. The majority of MPEN members living in South Korea were friends, while those living overseas were almost exclusively family members. The participants used their MPENs to access emotional support as well and information and resources needed to meet their needs and pursue their desires. The case studies revealed the unique and creative ways these women used their MPENs to meet their needs and pursue their desires as well as to overcome some oppressive circumstances. The participants used their MPENs to maintain relationships with family and friends, to engage in informal learning, and to find resources to run a business, access linguistic and cultural knowledge, find employment, and exert their independence. Three themes were identified in the phenomenological analysis: security, being there, but not there, and to get the good, you have to take the bad. Security highlights participants’ efforts to adjust to a linguistic and cultural landscape where they have incomplete knowledge. The theme of security contains two subthemes: security derived from the ability to function unimpeded and security derived from a sense of belonging. The theme of being there, but not there deals with the complicated nature of maintaining relationships with loved ones at a distance. Being there refers to the ability to use mobile phones to reach across distance,
while *but not there* acknowledges the emotional turmoil that maintaining relationships at a distance entails. To *get the good, you have to take the bad* describes how being available to their MPENs often involved conflicting desires: the desire to maintain some valued relationships may necessitate unwanted communication and obligations.
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TERMS

Transnational workers:

Late in the process of writing this dissertation I moved from using the term migrant workers to using transnational workers. Although migrant worker is often used in the literature to describe my target population, I felt that the term was a misnomer when applied to the women in this study. For me it conveys a sense of being on the move from place to place. Rather than being on the move, I gained a sense that these women inhabited more than one place at a time. They live their lives across borders.

In this dissertation “transnational worker” refers to anyone who is working outside of the country where they were born and reared while still maintaining significant ties to their country of origin.

Desires and needs:

Although unaware while writing, I have used the terms “desires” and “needs” repeatedly, so frequently that I decided to use them in the title. I'll try to clarify what I mean by desires and needs.

When I write of desires I’m referring to that which the person is striving for, perhaps what is expected but almost always that which is not reached. When I write of needs I’m referring to what is necessary, without which life would be unbearable, perhaps not what is expected but which is almost always reached.
Ego:

The term *ego* is used throughout this dissertation. As this term can have different meanings in different disciplines, I will give a brief definition of my use of the term (see Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion). *Ego* as it is used in this dissertation comes from social network theory and refers to an actor or node around which an ego network or individual network is constructed. In this dissertation the egos are the participants in the study.
Dedication

To my children, Samantha, Joshua, Hollie, and Isabella.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Coming to the Question

My interest in the lives of transnational workers comes out of my personal experience living and working outside of my home country for much of the last fifteen years, the majority of that time in South Korea (hereafter Korea). Although my employment as a university instructor has shielded me from many of the difficulties which are so common to transnational workers (such as withholding of wages, long working hours, fear of government crackdowns and verbal and physical abuse), I have lived similar experiences as other transnational workers: language barriers, cultural conflicts, isolation from family and friends, lack of access to usual support structures and difficulty asserting individual rights.

In my experience living outside of my home country, I’ve found that informal social networks, often composed primarily of fellow foreigners, are an important source of informal learning and social support. These expat social networks allow newcomers to a country to have access to information on how to function in their new environment; this may range from how to open a bank account, to how to deal with cultural conflicts, to where to find food from home. In addition to being important sources of information, foreigner social networks also serve as stand-ins for community and family, performing functions usually associated with a local community, such as maintaining cultural traditions, as well as functions which are normally associated with family or close friends, such as providing social support (Thompson, 2009).
My interest in the role that mobile devices play in the social networks of transnational workers came out of my observations and conversations with my nanny. Over a period of about five years I employed, on a part-time basis, a Filipino woman, named Malaya (not her real name) to care for my children and do light housework. Through this relationship I gained some insight into the challenges which many transnational workers from less developed countries face in Korea and the importance of having access to a social network. For Malaya, her smartphone was an important tool which allowed her to stay in almost constant contact with her social network, whether sharing Facebook posting with her family in the Philippines, contacting potential employers or receiving text messages regarding a government sweep for undocumented workers.

While the importance of social networks for transnational workers has long been discussed in the literature (Curran & Saguy, 2013; Hagan, 1998; Johnson, 2013), studies examining how transnational workers use mobile devices have suggested that the immediacy and portability which mobile device afford has influenced how transnational workers interact with their social networks (Chib, Wilkin & Hua, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Thompson, 2009). Studies have shown that transnational workers use mobile devices to both create and maintain social networks in their host country (Law & Chu, 2008), which help the recently arrived worker to adapt to their new culture (Elias & Lemish, 2008) and provide help in times of need (Chib et al., 2013; Yang, 2008) -- as well as maintain ties with their social networks in their home countries, overcoming the spatial barrier to remain connected to their geographically distant social network (Thompson, 2009; Uy-Tioco, 2007).
Although access to a rich social network is often assumed to be a positive situation, there is also research which suggests that being in the kind of almost constant contact that mobile phones afford may have a negative side. Several studies have shown that mobile phones can be used as a way for employers to control employees. Employers may use mobile phones to keep track of their employees’ movements (Peng & Choi, 2013) and to issue orders on an on-call basis (Hsia & Smales, 2010). In addition to being in frequent contact with employers, regular contact with loved ones in their home country can also be a source of stress. While social networks are an important source of social support, social support is a two way street. Those who benefit from the social support provided by their social network may also be called on to provide social support to others. Several studies have found that women are called on to provide more emotional social support than men (Wellman & Wortley, 1990; Fisher, 1982, cited in Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Providing this kind of emotional support to family back home can be a burden to the transnational worker (Horst, 2006). In addition, the remittances sent back to family by the transnational worker is often an important source of income for family back home. Requests from home for financial assistance, which may be made at anytime due to the access mobile phones allow, can be another source of stress (Horst, 2006).

My personal experience living and working outside of my home country, my relationships with transnational workers and a review of the literature on transnational workers and social networks has brought me to this point where I am ready to explore how transnational workers use mobile devices to create and maintain their social
networks and how they experience their social networks influencing their lives in their host country.

The Context

In 2013, the UN reported that the number of people living and working in a country other than their country of birth had more than doubled over the last thirty-five years to 232 million or 3.2 percent of the world’s population. Approximately, sixty percent of these migrants live in high-income countries. Labor migration is an important issue in the East Asian region where most countries are either labor exporting or labor importing countries. Korea, which until the 1980s had been a labor exporting country, is now one of a small number of East Asian countries which are net labor importers (United Nations, 2013).

As the Korean economy rapidly developed in the late 1980s and early 90s, the country quickly moved from a net exporter of labor to a net importer. As the Korean economy expanded, wealthier Koreans began to shun so-called 3-D (difficult, dirty and dangerous) jobs, creating a need for foreign labor. This trend has continued to increase over the last two decades. In 2008 the number of transnational workers in Korea was estimated to be 688,300, more than double what it had been in 2001 (329,000) and over 100 times the number of transnational workers living in the country in 1987 (Gray, 2007; Park, 2010). According to the Ministry of Public administration and Security (2008, cited in Park, 2010) approximately 95 percent of these foreign workers were unskilled and almost a third undocumented. This trend is creating a growing pool of foreign labor in a
society which prides itself as being ethnically homogeneous and maintains an almost zero-immigration policy, outside of the limited stays allowed for transnational workers (Kim, 2009).

There is a great deal of research showing that transnational workers are among the most marginalized individuals in their host countries, often exploited at work as well as being disproportionately the victims of physical, verbal and sexual abuse (Koser, 2013). Korea is not an exception to this phenomenon. Several authors (Gray, 2007; Kim, 2009; Park, 2010) have discussed the difficulties that transnational workers face living and working in Korea, these include communication difficulties, cultural conflicts, discrimination, and abuse in the workplace.

Gray (2007) outlines three factors which contribute to the marginalization of transnational workers in Korea: economic, socio-cultural and political. The very reason that transnational workers are brought to Korea is perhaps the main contributor to their low status in Korean society. The vast majority of transnational workers in Korea are brought in to fill shortages in the dirty, difficult and dangerous (“3D”) jobs which Korean workers reject. Employed in sectors where Korean workers generally refuse to work and earning less than Korean workers creates an economic reality which places foreign workers on the margins of society (Gray, 2007).

In addition to economic marginalization, transnational workers have also had to contend with the dual obstacles of entering a society which has traditionally held a negative view of factory workers and the obstacle of being outsiders from the dominant culture. Transnational workers’ employment in jobs which are viewed with a certain amount of contempt by Korean society and being transnational workers from poorer
countries serves to amplify the low status position which foreign workers hold in Korean society (Gray, 2007; Park, 2010).

Marginalized by their economic status, transnational workers are also disadvantaged by their lack of access to the dominant value of racial homogeneity: being an outsider (Gray, 2007; Lee, 2006; Park, 2010). Although this experience of transnational workers being on the margin of society, outside of the dominant culture, is common in many countries, Korea’s history and culture create a context which severely hinders any attempt at assimilation into Korean society. Perhaps foremost among these is Korea’s history as a racially and ethnically homogeneous country (Lee, 2006).

Lee (2006) discusses the “boundary issue” in Korean society which refers to who are insiders and who are outsiders, and who might be allowed to be insiders and who are not allowed to be insiders. According to Lee (2006), this insider and outsider view of society is closely related to Korean society’s attitude toward foreign workers and Korean’s emotional response to transnational workers of different racial groups. Transnational workers who are not ethnically Korean and don’t speak Korean are classified as outsiders which maintains their positions on the margin of the dominant society (Gray, 2007; Lee, 2006).

While economic and socio-cultural factors account for much of difficulty foreign workers have in Korea, government policies which regulate the employment of foreign workers in Korea also serve to exacerbate transnational workers marginalization and exploitation (Gray, 2007; Park, 2010). Although there has been increasing recognition among the public and governmental bodies regarding the plight of foreign workers, the Employment Permit System (EPS), which was first introduced in 2004 and then unified
with the Work after Training Program for Foreigners (WATP) in 2007, creates a structure where foreign workers are likely to be exploited and further marginalized (Kim, 2009; Park, 2010). Under EPS transnational workers can only change employers with their employers consent and are limited to staying in the country for only five years, as long as their employer agrees to renew their contract each of those years (Gray, 2007; Park, 2010).

When an employer decides not to renew an employee’s contract, the transnational worker has one month to find new employment or leave the country. However, if the worker is offered a new contract but decides not to renew with an employer, she/he cannot look for a new job and has no option but to leave the country (Park, 2010). This control over workers employment options has resulted in employers extorting salary cuts from powerless workers and even insisting that the employee work for several months without pay (Park, 2010). With employers holding veto power over the worker looking for a better job and having control over his/her ability to remain in the country, transnational workers are often put in the position of either agreeing to unfair conditions or leaving their employer and becoming an undocumented alien (Park, 2010).

This picture of transnational workers living on the margins of society is not unique to Korea. Several scholars have documented similar patterns in other countries (Chib et al., 2013; Hagan, 1998; Menjivar, 1994). Transnational workers often follow others from their family, village or city to the host country in search of employment, and once in the host country settle into closely connected neighborhoods (Hagan, 1998; Menjivar, 1994). Denied access to resources associated with membership in the dominant culture, these
expat communities have typically relied on social networks composed of those physically nearby for social support (Hagan, 1998; Menjivar, 1994).

This picture of transnational workers being reliant on those with whom they have lived nearby is largely based on research conducted prior to the availability of affordable smartphones with easy access to communication throughout the world. The aim of this study is to see how this communication revolution brought on by the availability of affordable smartphones has influenced how transnational workers access and provide social support and engage in informal learning, specifically Filipino transnational domestic workers.

**Filipino Workers in South Korea**

There has been little scholarship which would help to shed some light on the situation of Filipino transnational workers in Korea. I was unable to find any studies which discussed domestic workers in Korea in any detail. One study which does detail the lives of Filipino transnational workers in Korea is Lee’s (2006) case study of Filipino factory workers in an industrial city south of Seoul.

In order to understand the experiences of these workers, Lee (2006) discusses two primary features: invisibility and temporary residence status. Similar to Gray’s (2007) analysis (discussed above), Lee (2006) sees the roots of Filipino workers’ marginalization in Korea in their legal, social and economic status. The Korean government’s immigration policy and Korean society’s attitudes toward race and foreign cultures contribute to Filipino workers’ disadvantaged status. The government’s policies which limit foreign workers’ ability to pursue economic gains and their length of stay in
the country coupled with Korean society’s view of Korea as an ethnically homogeneous country discourage Filipino workers from assimilating into Korean society (Lee, 2006). Filipino transnational workers are forced to live in what Lee (2006) describes as a state of “invisibility,” unable or unwilling to risk possible repercussions of becoming visible and asserting their rights.

Lee (2006) describes two dimensions of the invisibility of Filipino workers in Korea: imposed from without, by government policies and societal attitudes -- and self imposed, as a coping mechanism. Coupled with the previously discussed immigration and work regulation policies, there exists a sort of governmental benign neglect. Even in areas where there is a high percentage of foreign workers, there are few or no governmental programs designed to assist foreign born workers. What assistance that can be found comes for NGOs, usually religious organizations (Lee, 2006).

As noted earlier approximately a third of all transnational workers in Korea are undocumented, this percentage is likely true for Filipino transnational workers as well. As undocumented workers, many Filipinos are forced to live outside the official society to avoid deportation, working and being paid under the table, living in illegal apartments and using false identities. This form of self-imposed invisibility is a necessary coping mechanism (Lee, 2006).

While undocumented transnational workers willfully become “invisible” as a way to get by, many in Korean society also choose not to see the transnational workers among them as contributing members of society. Transnational laborers are necessary for the survival of many small factories and industries (Gray, 2007; Lee, 2006), and it is
a fairly common practice for middle class Korean families to hire Filipino domestic help as a way to expose their children to English. Despite the important role transnational laborers play in the work force, Korean society still holds a generally negative view of foreign workers, particularly those from developing countries (Kim, 2009).

The lives of Filipino transnational workers in Korea are filled with uncertainty, particularly for those who are undocumented. For most Filipinos who come to Korea, it is seen as a temporary situation (Lee, 2006). Typically, their goal is to earn some money and return to the Philippines. Government policies also help to ensure that transnational workers’ stay in Korea is temporary (Gray, 2007; Lee, 2006; Park, 2010). Those with valid visas may have to leave the country at the end of their contract, and undocumented workers run the risk of being arrested and deported at anytime. In addition to the constant threat of being deported, undocumented workers’ living situations and employment are also unstable. Many transnational workers move frequently between rooms which have been turned into illegal apartments. They also typically work several jobs without any job security. In addition, it is difficult for transnational workers to bring their families into Korea. For many, this creates a constant conflict between the need to earn money for their families and the need/desire to be with their families (Lee, 2006).

Filipino transnational workers live in circumstances where making a long term plan is at best difficult and where attempting to make social and economic advances is likely to be blocked. For many their social worlds are split between the Filipino community in Korea and friends and family back in the Philippines (Lee, 2006). In order to cope with these difficult circumstances, many Filipinos have turned to technology,
particularly mobile phones. For many Filipinos in Korea having a mobile phone is considered a necessity. Most do not have a residential phone and many do not have Internet access, so a mobile phone becomes the most common method of contact, both with friends in Korea and with family in the Philippines. Lee (2006) found that mobile phones had become such an integral part of daily life that it was not uncommon for transnational workers to spend a fifth of their salaries on calls and texts. Although the introduction of free or low cost services, such as Facebook and Skype, have changed the economic toll of using a mobile phone, the place that these devices hold in transnational workers lives has likely remained central.

Research Purposes

This study has three purposes: a) to describe the mobile phone ego networks (MPENs) of study participants, Filipino transnational domestic workers living in Korea; b) to investigate how the participants use their MPENs to access social support and engage in informal learning and c) to understand how these same Filipino transnational domestic workers make meaning out of their experience of accessing their MPENs. The results of this study will be a description of several aspects of the MPENs of each participant as well as a phenomenological interpretation of the participants' meaning and understanding of these MPENs. My research purposes are:

1. Construct a MPEN, defined as the 20 most important relationships, for each of the participants.
2. Describe the attributes of both the ego and the ego’s alters (see Appendixes 1 and 3).

3. Describe the nature of ego/alter ties.
   a. What is the strength of ego/alter ties?
   b. What language(s) do the ego and alter use to communicate?
   c. What are the egos’ patterns of communication with her alters (i.e. frequency, duration, method)?

4. Investigate the relationships between ego/alter attributes and the nature of ego/alter ties.

5. Identify how each of the 20 ego/alter relationships in the constructed MPEN is important to the ego (e.g. social support, obligation …).
   a. What flows through the ego/alter ties?

6. Investigate how participants use mobile phones to develop and maintain their MPEN.

7. Understand the meaning participants make out of their access to their MPEN.
   How do the participants, Filipino domestic workers living in Korea, perceive and describe their use of mobile phones to access their ego networks?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Social Network Theory

Although researchers have long been interested in social networks, over the last ten years the number of scholars who have been employing network theory in their research has been growing exponentially. Not only have the number of published articles using social network analysis increased dramatically, network theory is now being used over a diverse array of disciplines (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Despite the growing prevalence of research employing social network analysis, there is still some confusion as to what network theory is, and some scholars (Salancik, 1995, cited in Borgatti & Halgin, 2011) have argued that it is not a theory at all but rather a method. Borgatti and Halgin (2011) make the opposing argument that an actor's position in a social network can influence emotions, health, beliefs, politics and behavior (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Christakis & Fowler, 2009).

Although limited by our social contexts, we construct our social networks based on our preferences and opportunities. One of the most powerful guiding forces in the construction of social networks is homophily. According to this view, actors in a social network are similar to each other because individuals seek out those who are like themselves (Borgatti et. al., 2009, Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Research into the relationship between homophily and social networks has shown that the composition of social networks is influenced by racial, religious, and ethnic homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2008). However, homophily is not the only explanation for why actors in a network tend to be similar. The social influence or contagion model proposes
that network ties between actors shape beliefs and actions: the greater the proximity between two actors the greater the likelihood that one actor's beliefs or actions will be modified by the others (Knoke, 2011).

Early research on social networks often viewed social networks as being closely connected to a community which was tied to a geographic location: a school, a workplace, a village … (Wellman & Tindall, 1993). Social networks were seen as developing among people who had easy access to each other, most often with those who were proximate. While physical distance continues to be a major factor in the formation and maintenance of social networks, the less physical distance between people the more they interact (Mok, Wellman, & Carrasco, 2010), each technological advance (automobiles, the telephone, the Internet and most recently smartphones) has made distance less of an obstacle to communication, spatial proximity has become less of a requirement to the formation and maintenance of social networks. Wellman’s (1979) study of the social networks in the East York area of Toronto, found that the majority of participant’s “intimate” ties were with individuals outside of their neighborhoods. A study by Fischer (1982, cited in Mok et al., 2010;) conducted in Southern California lends support to the assertion that, even prior to the introduction of the Internet, physical proximity was less of a requirement for maintaining social ties than it may have been in the past. As Hampton and Wellman (2003) asserted, individuals’ social networks have become “glocalized,” no longer dependent on physical proximity.

In the section which follows I will briefly outline some of the assumptions underlying network theory, discuss the main concepts in the study of networks, and finally give an overview of the theoretical mechanisms in network theory.
Assumptions of Network Theory

The main assumption of network theory is that actors or nodes (individuals or groups) participate in social networks and that their position in that network, meaning how they are connected to other actors in regular patterns, is an important influence on the actor’s behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and performance (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Knoke & Yang, 2008). This relational view: the position an actor holds in a network and the structural relations which are maintained with other actors have consequences for the actor, is at the core of network theory. In general, the actor’s position in the network and relations to other actors provide opportunities and constraints (Borgatti and Foster, 2003). Knoke and Yang (2008) cite three underlying assumptions of network theory.

First, Structural relations are often more important for understanding observed behaviors than are such attributes as age, gender, values and ideology. ... Second, social networks affect perceptions, beliefs, and actions through a variety of structural mechanisms that are socially constructed by relations among entities. ... A third underlying assumption of network analysis is that structural relations should be viewed as dynamic processes. (Knoke & Yang, 2008, pp. 4-6)

Embedded within these three assumptions is the main tension in network theorizing and research: the relative roles of network structure and that of agency in determining perceptions, beliefs, and actions. Borgatti and Halgin (2011) discuss this issue in terms of network theory and theory of networks: “Network theory refers to the mechanism and processes that interact with network structures to yield certain outcomes,” while “theory of networks refers to the processes that determine why
networks have the structures they do ... who forms what kind of tie with whom” (p. 1168). These authors make the point that although they are discussed separately, these are not discrete concepts, and they go on to ask the question whether network theory must include a theory of networks. Concerns about making this separation include: 1. Is the separation an analytical one; in reality do the two processes occur together? 2. Can we correctly predict outcomes based on network structure without knowing the trajectory of the network, how it reached its structure? 3. The issue of endogeneity: are factors seen as causing the outcome in some way dependent on the outcome?, and 4. The issue of agency: if actors shape their social networks for certain outcomes, is it true that the network structure led to the outcome?

In terms of the present study this distinction between network theory and theory of networks is an important one. The aims of this study are to both describe the participants MPENs and to understand what these MPENs mean to the participants. Part of this later aim is to gain some understanding of how each participant’s MPEN was formed. Understanding how some ties were formed due to obligations (e.g. family ties) and how other ties may have been formed through the agency of the ego to access desired resources (e.g. language ability or access to job contacts) may add to my overall understanding of the participant’s MPEN and how it influences her life.

**What is a Network?**

Networks are made up of two main components: actors (also called nodes) and ties. Actors or nodes can be individuals, groups or large organizations while ties signify a relationship between actors/nodes. Ties interconnect to form paths which indirectly connect actors/nodes which are not directly connected. These ties will be of a specified
type, such as friendship or asking advice, so it is the researcher’s choice of type of tie and what actor/nodes to investigate which will define the network. If researcher A investigates the network of friends at a given school, it will look very different from researcher B’s network defined by incidents or arguments (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

Closely related to this issue of defining the network is that of boundary specification: where to draw the boundaries of the network. Laumann, Marsden, and Prensky (1989) propose that researchers generally bounded their studies by employing either a realist or a nominalist view. In the realist approach, the network is viewed from the vantage point of the actors. The investigator treats the network as a social fact because it is consciously experienced as such by the actors who compose it (Laumann et al., 1989). This experience of being part of a network may be the result of formal or informal rules which determine inclusion or exclusion. For example, the students in a high school would have no problem determining who is a fellow student of their school as opposed to students from another school. As Laumann et al. (1989) put it,

The realist strategy of setting network boundaries by definition assumes the proposition that a social entity exists as a collective shared subjective awareness of all, or at least most, of the actors who are members. (p. 21)

The second approach to boundary specification is the nominalist view. In this strategy, the investigator imposes a conceptual framework which serves her own purposes, there is no assumption that reality will conform to the investigator’s boundary specification (Laumann et al., 1989). In this approach the reality of the social network is
assumed to be mediated by the conceptual framework chosen by the investigator (Laumann et al., 1989).

Which of these two views the investigator uses to bound the social network should be determined by the research question and the theoretical framework (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

**Actors/Nodes and Ties.** As noted above, one of the basic elements of a network is actors/nodes. The actors/nodes in a network can be individuals, small groups, organizations or in some cases a mix of these types. For example, a researcher may be interested in a network of friends in a school (individuals) or a network of cliques in a school (small groups) or in a network comprised of a school board and unions (organizational) or finally a network comprised of teachers, the school board and the teachers union (mixed). Actors/nodes also have characteristics which researchers may be interested in, such as age, gender, race, or occupation (Knoke & Yang, 2008).

The actors/nodes in a network may have a relationship with each other; this relationship is called a “tie.” Ties connect pairs of actors; two actors connected by a tie is a dyad (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). There are three levels of analysis based on the number of actors and ties under consideration (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, 2013). The dyad is the most basic level of analysis in network analysis. A research question at the dyad level of analysis might be ‘do pairs of actors with friendship ties also develop advice giving ties?’ The next level up is the actor or node level of analysis; at the node level of analysis a research question might be ‘do actors with more kinship ties tend to live longer lives?’ The last level of analysis is at the
network level; a research question at this level of analysis might be ‘do disconnected friend networks with proximal ties tend to reduce the number of components over time?’

Network researchers tend to focus on two basic types of ties: states and events. State ties have continuity over an extended period of time. Although they may not last forever, their duration is open-ended. Some common state ties include kinship ties, role based relations (e.g. student/teacher), cognitive/perceptual relations (e.g. knows), and affective relations (e.g. likes or dislikes). State ties can also be measured in terms of dimensions such as strength, intensity, or duration (Borgatti and Halgin, 2011). In contrast, event type ties are discrete and can be counted. Some examples of event ties include email exchanges, business transactions, advice given (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Both state and event type ties can be seen as enabling and constraining the flow of something (e.g. information or influence) between nodes (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Ties can also be directed (i.e. potentially borrowing money or giving advice) or undirected (i.e. physical proximity), and they can be dichotomous (e.g. present or absent, whether two people are friends or not).

Ties between nodes can be conceptualized along a strong to weak dimension. The strength of ties can be measured in several ways: the strength of state ties might be measured using instruments which inquire about intensity of emotion, strength of bond or usefulness of knowledge; event tie strength is often measured by counting occurrences, such as email exchanges.

“Similarities” are a category of relational states (e.g. same spatial and temporal space, members of same club, same belief or attitude) which are sometimes used for
research purposes as proxies for social ties (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013). From a practical standpoint it can sometimes be difficult to discern actual social ties. When it may be impractical or impossible to determine if a social tie exists between two actors, these similarity relational states can be used to complete a network structure. The theoretical assumption can be either that these similarities are the precursors of developing social ties or that they are the visible evidence of social ties which exist (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013).

**Structure, Centrality, and Density.** Perhaps the most fundamental concept of network theory is that structure matters. Borgatti et al. (2009) gives the example of two teams composed of members with identical skills may perform differently depending on the patterns of relationships among the members. These relationship patterns may differ in a variety of ways. A network may be densely connected (many ties running directly between members) or loosely connected (many actors do not have direct ties to each other), ties may be strong or weak, and ties may be of different types. In the network theory view, all of these factors help to explain outcomes for the network. Also at the individual actor’s level, a nodes outcome may differ depending on its position in the network, whether the network is densely or loosely structured and depending on the nature of the ties. In the network theory view, “a node’s position in a network determines in part the opportunities and constraints that it encounters, and in this way plays an important role in a node’s outcomes” (Borgatti, 2009, p. 894).

Centrality is a widely studied concept at the node level. Centrality refers to a group of properties of a node which describe its position within the structure of a network. A common example is being directly connected to many actors in the network.
In theory someone who is centrally located in a network may be successful due to access to many of the resources available to others in the network. Another related concept is that of “betweenness” which refers to an actor which frequently lies on the shortest path between pairs of nodes, requiring information or other resources to flow through that actor. An actor who has a high level of betweenness may be in a position to control the flow of information and other resources (Borgatti et al., 2009).

**Theoretical Mechanisms**

As stated in the previous section, network theory holds that the structure of a network helps to determine outcomes for the network as a node’s position within a network helps to determine outcomes at the node level of analysis. In the following section, I will outline some of the theoretical mechanisms which have been proposed to help to explain the outcomes of networks and nodes.

**Node to Node Transmission.** The most basic explanation for explaining how social network variables influence outcomes is that of direct transmission from node to node. Whether the researcher is concerned with physical transfer of material resources, the transfer of information or node to node influence on behavior or beliefs, the basic idea is the same: something flows along a path from one node to another (Borgatti et al., 2009).

**Social Influence/Contagion Mechanism.** Closely related to node to node transmission is the concept of social influence/contagion mechanism. Some of the earliest research on social networks dealt with how individual actors were influenced by others in their social network (Moreno, 1934, cited in Borgatti, 2009). The idea of social
influence is that actor’s behavior, ideas and beliefs are influenced by the members of their social network. It has long been observed that members of a social network tend to be more similar to each other than they are to others outside of their social network (Borgatti et al., 2009). This influence that actors seem to have on each other is sometimes referred to as a contagion mechanism. In this view, the homogeneity which is frequently observed in social networks is the result of the flow of information, attitudes, and beliefs through ties among the different actors in the network. This differs from the idea of homophily which views the similarity between actors in a network as the result of actors seeking out those who are similar to themselves. Without conducting a longitudinal study, it can often be a difficult task for a researcher to discern where observed similarities are homophily or are the result of social influence (Borgatti et al., 2009, Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

**Adaptation Mechanisms.** A related idea to that of social influence is the idea of adaptation mechanism: nodes become increasingly similar as a result of experiencing and adapting to similar social network positions. "If two nodes have ties to the same (or equivalent) others, they face the same environmental forces and are likely to adapt by becoming increasingly similar" (Borgatti et al., 2009, p. 894). This mechanism differs from transmission in that the similarity between the two nodes arises from having similar relations to others and not from node to node transmission (Borgatti et al., 2009).

**Binding Mechanisms.** This concept is that social ties can bind nodes in ways which can create new entities whose properties can differ from those of the constituent nodes. For example, ego networks (to be discussed below) with structural holes may perform differently from those without structural holes. The lack of structural holes
allows the ego’s alters to communicate with each other and act as a single entity, while
the presence of structural holes prevents the ego’s alters from acting as one which may
give the ego an advantage in some tasks (Borgatti et al., 2009).

**Exclusion Mechanisms.** The exclusion mechanism describes how in
competitive situations two nodes may form a relation which excludes a third node.
Experiments with chain networks have illustrated this mechanism. Consider a five chain
network of a, b, c, d, and e where each node is allowed only to make pairwise deals
with those it has direct ties to. So node d can make a deal with node c or with node e
but not with both. A set of experiments conducted by Yamagishi, Gilmore and Cook
(1988) showed that nodes b and d enjoyed more power than a, c or e. Even though c
was more central in the network, nodes b and d were able to leverage the structurally
weaker nodes (a and e) to their advantage. The exclusion mechanism helps to explain
how changes in a networks structure far form a node can impact that node (Borgatti et
al., 2009).

**Ego Networks Versus Whole Networks**

In general, there are two types of network research designs, “whole networks”
and “ego networks.” Whole network design is what is more commonly thought of when
people discuss network theory or analysis. This research design examines a set of ties
among all actors in a defined set of actors. For example, a whole network analysis
might investigate the information sharing ties among employees of a company: who
shares information with whom. In a whole network design the researcher is able to see
not only who has ties but also who does not have ties, so who is included and who is
excluded. The “paths” through which information, or other resources, flow can become visible in a whole network design (Borgatti et al., 2013).

While a whole network design takes a kind of eye in the sky view of the network, an ego network design views the network from the position of a single actor or node, which is termed the “ego.” An ego network consists of the ego and other actors which the ego has ties with; these other actors are called the ego’s alters. So the ego is always at the center of an ego network. While ego networks can have the advantage of providing richer data about the ties local to the ego, this network design has the disadvantage of only accessing information regarding tie which exist and missing potentially important information about the lack of a tie between two actors (Borgatti et al., 2013).

For both of these network research designs it is important to remember that there is no single whole network or single ego network. As discussed above, the structure of the network, who is included and excluded as well as other features of the network will be defined by the researcher’s questions. Even when the researcher is working with a bounded group, two different research questions may reveal two very different networks (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

**Mobile Phones and Informal Learning**

The World Bank (2012) estimates three quarters of the people in the world have access to a mobile phone. The growth of access to mobile phones has been remarkable; from approximately 1 billion people with mobile phone access in 2000 to around 6 billion
in 2012, and approximately 5 billion of these users are in developing countries. According to the Pew Research Global Attitudes Project (2014), mobile phones are fully integrated into the daily lives of many people in the developing world. While this worldwide trend is impressive, Korea may be leading it. Korea is one of the most connected countries in the world, where mobile phone use is almost 100 percent and 81 percent of mobile phone users own a smartphone (Statista, 2015).

Mobile phones are increasingly becoming part of the landscape of the daily lives for people all over the world. This context of our daily lives is one of the qualities which distinguish informal learning from formal learning (Combs, 1989, cited in King, 2010). As King (2010) points out,

> In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, knowledge is increasing at lightning speed... informal learning opportunities make it possible for adults to tap the exploding information and learning resources of our times ... along with opportunities for worldwide collaboration with people of similar interests and needs. (p. 421)

Beginning with Tough’s 1971 study, multiple authors have demonstrated that most adults are engaged in ongoing informal learning (King, 2010). With the introduction of the Internet and affordable home computers in the early 1990s much of this informal learning shifted from traditional modes of communication to online technologies, and a decade later, as online social networks began to gain traction these virtual communities have become another rich venue for adults to engage in informal learning (King, 2010; Wiessner et al., 2010).
The World Bank (2012) and Pew Research Global Attitudes Project (2014) data suggest that, just as personal computers in the 1990s revolutionized how people engaged in informal learning in developed countries, mobile phones may be changing the way people engage in informal learning for all segments of the globe. Although the study of the relationship between mobile phone use and informal learning has not been extensive, several studies have found that mobile phones are frequently used for purposes of informal learning in a variety of settings (Wu et al., 2012). Gu (2014) found that Chinese workers in the foreign investment sector routinely used a variety of Web 2.0 tools to meet their informal learning needs. In a case study of 16 nurses working in rural South Africa, Primmer et al. (2014) found that the nurses effectively used mobile phones as tools which facilitated their informal learning in the areas of problem solving, reflective practice and life-long learning. In an ethnographic study also set in South Africa, Velghe (2013) examined illiterate, low income women’s use of mobile phones and their informal learning. The women in Velghe’s study used mobile phones to form communities of practice, develop basic literacy skills as well as to develop strategies to overcome the limitations imposed by their low literacy.

So what is informal learning? The typology of formal, non-formal and informal learning has been much discussed and debated with distinctions between these three types of learning drawn at different places by different scholars (Jones, Scanlon & Clough, 2013). Tough (1978) defined informal learning as “a deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skill.” Livingston (2000, cited in Clough et al., 2008) defined informal learning as “all forms of intentional or tacit learning in which we engage either individually or collectively without direct reliance on a teacher or externally organized
Livingston’s definition emphasized tacit or unintentional learning, which had been underestimated.

In an attempt to add some clarity to this discussion, Vavoula, Sharples, Scanlon, Lonsdale & Jones, (2005) present a typology of learning which divides the learning process according to who has control over the goals and processes of learning: control over the goals refers to the expected learning outcome, if one exists, and control over the learning process refers to the tools and methods used, see Figure 1:

![Typology of learning, Vavoula's et al. (2005)](image)

**Figure 1: Typology of learning, Vavoula's et al. (2005)**

By focusing on who controls the processes and goals of learning, Vavoula’s et al. (2005) typology contributes to the discussion of the division between formal and informal learning.

Prior to general availability and affordability of mobile phones informal learning was generally limited to occurring in face to face interactions or through technology which was limited to a physical location. The ubiquitous nature of mobile phones has changed this dynamic. Although face to face interaction can safely be assumed to still be an important source of informal learning, the affordances which mobile phones provide (i.e., mobility, access across temporal and spatial boundaries) means that
people are increasingly able to access those in their social networks via their mobile phones. In addition, as owning and using a smartphone becomes more affordable, these increasingly common devices are becoming the tool of choice not only for traditional uses of mobile phones (making calls and texting)) but also for a variety of affordances which were not available on the mobile phones of ten years ago, including accessing Web 2.0 technologies.

With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and the affordances these tools provide an increasing amount of the informal learning adults engage in is now taking place virtually in online social networks through the use of electronic tools, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (Garcia-Penalvo, Colomo-Palacios, & Lytras, 2012). Online social networks (OSN) provide a good match for the informal learning needs of adults; they are spaces where adults can ask questions, share information, get and give support and construct knowledge (Alexander, 2006). Perhaps most importantly, they are spaces which are user directed. Users can personalize their space and the interactions which occur in an OSN are determined by the users. Most social network sites support tools which allow users to interact collaborate and communicate in real time or asynchronously (Le Noue et al., 2011). These sites also allow users to share information through “tags” or “bookmarks”; users can also express their approval of information by using “like” features (Selwyn, 2007). Members of OSNs are no longer passive consumers of information, as in the pre Web 2.0 era (“one to many”), but are now collaborators in the creation and sharing of information. O’Reilly (2005, cited in Selwyn, 2007) argues that the notion of Web 2.0 refers primarily to what he has termed the “network effect” of current Internet applications; he goes on to called the worldwide
web of Web 2.0 technology as an active architecture of participation. Communities of
users add value to the web by collaborating in creative ways which would not be
possible for individual users (Selwyn, 2007; Alexander, 2006). Some of the main sites of
user participation on the web are OSNs, as spaces which value democratic forms of
communication OSNs seem to be logical sites to look for the occurrence of informal
learning and for adult educators to study and exploit these learning environments.

In countries like Korea where smartphones with Internet access are affordable
and common, these portable devices allow users access to online social networks
composed of people – who they may have never met face to face, to family and friends
living at a distance – who they cannot meet with face to face, as well as to those living
nearby – who they may meet with routinely. Understanding how people use
smartphones to access their social networks and what informal learning may occur
using this mobile tool is an important task for adult educators to undertake.

**Social Networks and Social Support**

One of the primary areas of study in the area of social networks and social
support has been the relationship between social support and physical and mental
health. In Cobb’s (1976) influential review of the literature on social support and health,
social support was found to provide a wide range of health benefits, from reduced
complications during pregnancy, to recovery from serious illness to healthy aging. The
link between social relationships and physical and mental health has been well
established (Smith & Christakis 2008), with numerous studies giving support to the view
that social support has a positive effect on physical and mental health (Cohen, 2004). As the connection between social relationships and physical and mental health became clearer, social scientists began to distinguish between network factors, such as integration and network density, and qualitative aspects of the ties which make up the social network, such as social support. This more sophisticated understanding of Social networks has lead social scientists to theorize three mechanisms which affect health: influence on behavior, social engagement, and access to material resources (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000).

Some authors have argued that the concept of social support is often confounded with other social network concepts, such as social capital, social integration network size or composition (Song, Son, & Lin, 2011). Although often connected to these network concepts, social support refers to the functional nature of the network tie and has been defined by Song et al. (2011, p. 118) as “the aid – the supply of tangible or intangible resources – individuals gain from their network members.” Song et al. (2011) view social support as “downstream” of these previously mentioned social network factors. In this view, the availability of social support is related to both the characteristics of the network as a whole and the presence and quality of individual ties.

Social support is often divided into three categories: emotional support, informational support, and instrumental support. Emotional support refers to the comfort, encouragement and expressions of caring which are available in an individual’s social network. This aspect of social support is particularly important when the tie is with someone with a degree of closeness to the ego. Informational support refers to the availability of advice or guidance in one’s social network; this may take the form of job
or house seeking advice. Instrumental support refers to the availability of assistance, material goods and resources in one’s social network (Chib et al., 2013; Song et al., 2011). Although these three types of social support can be conceptually separated, in practice all three may be present in a single tie.

One of the defining characteristics of social support is that it is intended to be caring and helpful. This sets social support apart from other characteristics of social networks which may have other intents. This distinction is easily seen in the difference between informational support and attempts to influence others’ thoughts or behaviors. While both may involve providing information, the intent of the later may not involve caring or respect toward the recipient (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

While correlation studies have supported the idea that social networks and the social support derived from social networks is beneficial to mental and physical well being, scholars have proposed two main models to explain these findings: the direct effects model and the stress-buffering model (Heaney & Israel, 2008). The direct effects model holds that there are benefits to being part of a social network, which allows for the access of social support, regardless of the presence of stress, while the stress-buffering model proposes that social support mitigates the harmful effects of stress (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

Figure 2 (Heaney & Israel, 2008) is a conceptual model which combines the direct effects model and the stress-buffering model to illustrate how social networks and social support might have positive influences on physical, mental and social health. The model can be read with Social Networks and Social Support as the starting point of a
flow which ends with health outcomes although many of the depicted relationships are actually reciprocal (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

Figure 2: The relationship of social networks and social support to health (reproduced from Heaney & Israel, 2008)

In Figure 2, pathway 1 shows the direct effect of social networks and social support is hypothesized to have on health. Supportive ties within a social network provide for the needs of belonging and companionship which may have positive effects on well-being and health regardless of the presence or absence of stress (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Heaney & Israel, 2008). The access to individual coping resources and community resources that social networks and social support can provide are depicted in pathways 2 and 4. Through these pathways, individuals may access new information, identify and solve problems. Pathways 2a and 4a represent how social support may provide a “buffering effect” against stressors. The buffering effect hypothesizes that
people with adequate access to individual or community social support will experience
reduce adverse effects from stressors (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

Pathway 3 depicts the relationship between social networks and social support
and the frequency and duration of stressors. For example, an individual with adequate
informational supporting ties may have access to information on employment
opportunities or childcare resources which may greatly reduce life stressors (Heaney &
Israel, 2008). Finally, pathway 5 shows the possible effects of social networks and
social support on health behaviors, such as maintaining medication regimes, seeking
help, and weight loss (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

While researchers have shown growing interest in the effects of social networks
and social support on a variety of outcomes, there has generally been a lack of studies
which attempt to examine the characteristics of social ties which make them more of
less supportive. Three possible explanations for this gap in the research have been
proposed: 1. researchers have generally been more concerned with outcomes of
support, 2. social ties are often assumed to be supportive, and 3. there has been a lack
of data suitable for the study of the characteristics of individual social ties (Song et al.,
2011). Song et al. (2011) has called for researchers to design studies which would allow
for the investigation of what types of social ties promote social support.

Using data collected in 1977-78 from individuals living in Toronto suburb of East
York, Wellman and his colleagues have written a series of papers which examine ego
networks and the characteristics of individual ties which influence the availability of
different types of social support (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Wellman & Wortley, 1990;
Wellman & Wortley, 1989). Wellman and Wortley (1990) examined five dimensions of social support: emotional aid, small services, large services, financial aid and companionship. They found that different dimensions of social support are only moderately associated with each other: different members of the social network provided different types of social support.

In an attempt to explain this finding, Wellman and Wortley (1990) investigated six characteristics of the social ties (strength, contact, interactions within groups, kinship, personal characteristics, and similarities and dissimilarities) and their relationship to the types of social support given. Their findings showed that only two of the six proposed social tie characteristics were associated with three of the five categories of social support: strong ties and parent-child ties. The authors also discussed how the characteristics of the social ties influence what type of support will be available: kin relations are associated with financial aid but not strong ties, companionship is found among friends and siblings not parents and children. With the possible exception of emotional support, which was provided substantially more by women, personal characteristics, similarities nor interactions in groups were associated with providing any type of social support. Agneessens et al. (2006) and Fischer (1982, cited in Wellman & Wortley, 1990) reported similar findings as Wellman and Wortley (1990). The findings of these studies seem to suggest that social support is a relational phenomenon, “the delivery of support is not based on who you know but on how you know them” (Wellman & Wortley, 1990, p. 581).
Transnational Workers, Social Networks and Mobile Phones

One of the byproducts of globalization has been the increased mobility of transnational workers. Attracted by potentially more attractive job opportunities with higher wages, an increasing number of workers have moved either permanently or temporarily to a host country (Chib et al., 2013). According to the UN report (2013) referenced earlier, the number of transnational workers has increased to 232 million with 60 percent of these workers moving to more developed regions.

Prompted by economic necessity or opportunity, transnational workers often take advantage of transportation networks to make the long journey to their host country (Chib et al., 2013; Hagan, 1998; Menjivar, 1994). These transportation networks are formed of people from the transnational worker’s home country, neighborhood and sometimes family. Early arriving transnational workers show the way for others to follow, informing those at home, who may wish to follow, how to make the journey and what to expect once they arrive (Hagan, 1998; Menjivar, 1994). On arrival, a new transnational worker is likely to already have some contacts with the expat community in their host country; these developed social networks provide the newcomer with resources as they adapt to their new host country (Hagan, 1998).

Although the relationship between the newcomer and more established transnational workers is often assumed to be a supportive one, studies have found that newcomers are sometimes exploited by their more settled contacts (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). This highlights the difficult realities that many transnational workers find themselves: displaced from their trusted sources of social support, they are
marginalized in their host country and often forced to rely on unproven sources for support.

While many new transnational workers turn to expat communities for social support, they find themselves in the difficult position of trying to adapt to new employment and living situations while interacting with a foreign culture; all without the usual social support from their known social networks. The term “transnational stress” refers to the common feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety which many transnational workers experience (Chib et al., 2013).

Migration stress is related to the unique stressors that people who are living in an unfamiliar environment face as they try to adjust to the demands of their host country (Chib et al., 2013). Transnational workers frequently report feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression and apathy (Chib et al., 2013). Numerous studies have cited factors which contribute to transnational workers’ experiences of migration stress, including homesickness (Ying, 1996), loneliness (Ryan & Twibell, 2000), financial difficulties (Yeh & Inose, 2003), job-related challenges (Wong & Chang, 2010), language barriers (Vedder & Virta, 2005), and social discrimination (Qui, 2009).

Several authors have made the connection between the access to social support and a reduction of stress during the migration process and an increase in the manageability of the adaptation process (Chib et al., 2013; Kamya, 1997). There is also support in the literature for the positive influence of social support on subjective feelings of well-being and the mental health among transnational workers (Elias & Shoren-Zeltser, 2006; Uy-Tioco, 2007). The literature on social support has consistently found that informal networks (relatives and friends) play a significant role in providing
emotional, informational, and instrumental support to transnational workers (Aroian, 1992; Chib et al., 2013; Hernandez et al., 2004; Leslie, 1992).

In the past, transnational workers sought social support from social networks composed of those physically near them, forming closely connected expat communities in their host country (Chen et al., 2011). With improved access to communication technology, transnational workers began to have additional avenues to seek social support. In the last decade several studies have found that transnational workers gain social support through the use of various forms of information and communication technologies (Chib et al., 2013). Chen et al. (2011) found that Chinese transnational workers in Singapore were able to effectively use the Internet to receive social support which had a positive influence on their socio-cultural and psychological adaptation. In two studies, Ye (2006 a, b) found that international students studying in the US were able to receive social support from online ethnic social groups and that those who reported receiving more informational and emotional support also reported less acculturative stress. While these studies help to establish the pattern of transnational workers and international students using new communication technologies to receive social support, these studies were all limited to computers.

Studies investigating transnational workers’ use of mobile phones have shown that mobile phones are used to access social support both in the transnational workers home and host countries (Chib et al., 2014). Roldan (2009) found that transnational workers in Malaysia used mobile phones to maintain connections with family and friends back home and to develop new social network ties in their host country. Participants reported that mobile phone use helped them develop a sense of belonging in their new
environment. Mobile phones made it possible to maintain trusted friendships despite lacking the time to meet frequently. Having a mobile phone was also important for work related matters; often employers would use mobile phones to pass on information to one worker, who was then to pass it on through the network of workers. Without a mobile phone a transnational worker might miss vital work related information.

The results of Chib’s 2013 study highlight the complex relationships transnational workers have with their social networks, social support and mobile phone use. This study found differences in the amount of social support received and the impact of received social support on reducing migration stress between male and female transnational workers in Singapore. Women received more social support and those women who received more informational and instrumental support reported lower levels of migration stress, while men received less social support and experienced higher levels of stress with increased mobile phone use and increased emotional support. While stressing the complexity of the roles social networks, social support and mobile phones play in transnational workers lives, Chib et al. (2013) caution researchers against viewing transnational populations as a homogeneous group and against making sweeping generalizations between populations or contexts.

In a qualitative study, Thompson (2009) investigated how transnational workers in Singapore used mobile phones to create and maintain social networks in transnational workers’ home and host countries. One of the main ways that transnational workers used mobile phones was to maintain relationships with family at home, some participants spoke and texted their family members daily. Like Chib (2013), Thompson (2009) found some gender differences: women-to-women communications
were more common than men-to-men or men-to-women calls or texts. The participants in Thompson’s study reported using mobile phones to maintain and in some cases start important intimate relationships at a geographical distance. One participant who had been in Singapore for 14 years described how before she had access to a mobile phone she could only write letters and heard news from her family about once a month. Now, she is in almost daily contact with her daughter and husband. Another woman reported having a romantic relationship lasting several years with a man she had never meet face-to-face (Thompson, 2009).

Thompson (2009) found that transnational workers in Singapore used their mobile phones to maintain their independence, to network with the expat community and to complete practical tasks. For some transnational domestic workers, who live with their employer, the silent nature of texting provided a lifeline to the outside world. In the case of these workers, they were forced to be immobile and under the surveillance of their employer, so the value of a mobile phone was not in its mobility but in the ability for the user to hide it from an employer and use it undetected (Thompson, 2009). Mobile phones also facilitated the creation of expat communities by allowing loosely connected networks of individuals to share information and make arrangements for events such as soccer games or celebrations. In this way mobile phones were used by transnational workers to connect with others from their home country living in Singapore and maintain cultural traditions from home (Thompson, 2009).

**Transnational Mothering and Mobile Phones**

As the participation of women in the labor force has increased in both developed and developing countries, two trends in the transfer of child care have been observed:
child care transfer by middle-class and upper-class families in developed countries to transnational women from developing countries, and the child care transfer by transnational women to kin (Peng & Wong, 2015). According to Ghosh (2009), women’s increased participation in the labor force and the gendered division domestic duties in developed countries created a gender-differentiated demand for transnational women from developing countries, resulting in a child care crisis in developing countries. With an increasing number of transnational women leaving children behind in their home country, these women are faced with a dilemma, how to meet their traditionally defined roles as mothers as nurturers across national borders (Peng & Wong, 2013).

Transnational mothers who do not conform to their cultures traditional notions on motherhood may face, what Chib (2014) calls, the “deviancy” discourse of mothering. Traditional mothering in the Filipino culture involves being physically present to feed, clothe and provide emotional support. Although transnational mothers are able to provide financially, these women suffer a sense of loss and guilt for not being a “good” mother (Uy-Tioco, 2007). In the Philippines there is a widely held belief that extended periods of separation from their mother leads to emotional and moral difficulties for the children (Parrenas, 2005). To combat this deviancy discourse transnational mothers must alter their child parent interactions and create a new meaning of mothering (Ping & Wong, 2013). In this context, transnational mothers have increasingly turned to their mobile phones as a tool in their efforts to mother their children (Ping & Wong, 2013).

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) defined transnational mothering as “circuits of affection, caring, and financial support that transcend national borders” (p.320). Predating general access to affordable mobile phones, these authors found that
transnational mothers had limited options open to them as they attempted to maintain ties with their children: sending remittances home and occasional letters and phone calls.

Ten years later with more affordable mobile phone access and at the cusp of the introduction of the first commercial smartphones, Uy-Tioco (2007) investigated how the availability of mobile phone technology changed transnational mothering practices among Filipina transnational mothers living in the US. For the women in this study, the appeal of using their mobile phones to maintain their mother to child relationships lies in the affordability and the ease of access, anytime and anywhere. Although international calls were prohibitively expensive, sending and receiving text messages proved to be an affordable alternative (Uy-Tioco, 2007). These transnational mothers used text messaging to assert their traditional mothering role as caregiver and nurturer, despite being physically distant from their children. Through text messaging these mothers were able to monitor their children’s day to day activities: what they ate, how they were doing in school, as well as their social activities. Text messaging their children multiple times each day also gave these transnational mothers a way to maintain a loving, nurturing relationship with their children. Many of the mothers reported texting to say good morning and good night each day as well as messages of love and support throughout each day (Uy-Tioco, 2007).

As the cost of owning and using a mobile phone decreased and the technology available in mobile phones improved, they have become one of the major tools transnational mothers use in their efforts to mother their absent children (Chib et al., 2014). Rather than being limited to text messages, transnational mothers could also use
voice and video calls as well as social networking sites (SNS) to communicate with their absent children and their care givers (Peng & Wong, 2013). As it became clear that mobile phones were playing an increasing role in transnational mothering, scholars became interested in the diversity and complexity of transnational mothering strategies and styles (Chib et al., 2014; Peng & Wong, 2013).

Transnational mothers most frequently use text messaging, voice calls and Facebook for transnational mothering (Chib et al., 2014; Peng & Wong, 2013). In addition to having a variety of communication modes to choose from, transnational mothers employ different transnational mothering styles (Chib et al., 2014; Peng & Wong, 2013): intensive mothering, collaborative mothering, and passive mothering (Peng & Wong, 2013). Transnational mothers who displayed an intensive mothering style tended to communicate with their children 3 or more times a day and to be actively involved in the day to day activities of their children (Peng & Wong, 2013). While intensive mothers believe that a mother offers something that no one else can, collaborative mothers believe that the mother should be in charge of mothering and work with the care giver in their efforts to mother their absent children. These mothers tend to stay in frequent contact with both their children and the care giver (Peng & Wong, 2013). The final group of transnational mothers who display a passive mothering style may feel stressed by their efforts to mother across borders (Peng & Wong, 2013). The child’s indifference or resistance to attempts at transnational mothering or the mother’s feelings of guilt may lead to a passive mothering style. These transnational mothers may adopt a pattern of limiting communication as a way to reduce stress (Peng & Wong, 2013).
Although the research on the role that mobile phones play in the social networks of transnational workers is still sparse, there is growing evidence that transnational workers use mobile phones to maintain relationships with family and friends at home while developing new social networks in their host country. Transnational mothering with its heightened levels of obligation and emotional content is a special case of social networks which are increasingly maintained using mobile phones. As mobile phones and increasingly smartphones have become ubiquitous among transnational workers, they have become a common resource used to access social support and meet obligations both with those nearby and at a distance.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

This study follows a mixed methods research design, using social network analysis and phenomenology, to accomplish the following research goals: a) to describe participants' MPENs, defined as the twenty most important relationships which are maintained using the participant’s mobile phone; b) to investigate how mobile phones are used to develop and maintain participants’ MPENs; c) to investigate how the participants use their MPENs to access social support and to engage in informal learning, and d) to gain an understanding of how the participants make meaning of their experience of accessing their MPENs. In this Chapter, I discuss the rationale for my approach to this study, the research design and the processes of collecting and analyzing the data.

The Research Approach

Why a Mixed Methods Approach?

My choice of a mixed methods approach begins with my “worldview” as defined by Creswell (2013), “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 6). My basic worldview is that of a pragmatist. According to Creswell (2013), a pragmatist is concerned with applications and solving problems. Instead of focusing on methods or a philosophical position, what is important to the pragmatist is what works. With this emphasis on solving and understanding the problem, all approaches which may lead to this end are considered legitimate in a pragmatic worldview. This fits in well with my approach to
research. For me the choice of methods or philosophical positions is important as far as they help to solve the problem.

Creswell (2013) advises that the research problem should drive the choice of method. If the problem is one of wanting to examine the relationship between variables, then a quantitative approach is called for. However, if the phenomenon is poorly understood because there has been little research into it then a qualitative approach is warranted. In this study, quantitative data may help to describe the participants’ ego networks and may shed light on how the participants develop, use, and maintain their MPENs, but it will not add to the understanding and meaning the participants make out of using their MPENs. An analysis of qualitative data would be needed for this latter purpose. As Creswell (2013) says, “A mixed methods design is useful when the quantitative or qualitative approach, each by itself, is inadequate to best understand a research problem” (p. 20). My worldview coupled with the nature of the task seem to make a mixed methods approach an appropriate one.

**Mixed Methods Research Designs**

Creswell (2013) outlines three basic mixed methods research designs: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential and exploratory sequential. The convergent parallel mixed methods design is the most basic of the mixed methods strategies. In this approach the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data and analyzes the data separately; the results are then compared to either confirm or disconfirm each other. It is assumed that qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information but that when compared the results should confirm each other. Rather than having qualitative and quantitative data confirm each other the explanatory sequential
mixed methods design uses quantitative data to guide a qualitative inquiry. In this approach the researcher first gathers quantitative data and then uses these results to guide or plan the second qualitative phase of the study. The intent in this design is to use the qualitative results to further explain or understand the quantitative data. The final of Creswell’s (2013) basic mixed methods designs is the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. This design employs a reverse sequencing from the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In this approach, the researcher first gathers qualitative data and then follows-up by gathering quantitative data. This design is often used to develop better instruments to generalize to the target population (Creswell, 2013).

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used in this study. The aims of this study were to describe the participants’ MPENs, to investigate how the participants used their MPENs to access social support and engage in informal learning and to then gain some understanding of what the MPENs mean to the participants’ lives. The quantitative portion of this study provided data: the structure and composition of the participants’ MPENs. This is valuable information, but without additional investigation it is superficial and does not provide a chance to investigate how the participants used their MPENs or to understand why the structure and composition is as it is or what accessing their MPEN means to the participants.

In this study, quantitative data was gathered in the form of survey questions. These survey questions were used to build a background and demographic description of each participant as well as the participants’ MPENs composed of the 20 most important relationships maintained by mobile phone. This initial phase of the study
attempted to answer the first five research purposes outlined in Chapter 1, as well as the sub questions presented in the same section. In short, the quantitative data described the participants’ MPENs. Also, the quantitative phase of the study guided the subsequent semi-structured qualitative interviews. The purpose of the qualitative phase of this study is to attempt to achieve the final three purposes of the study: to identify how each of the 20 ego/alter relationships in the constructed MPEN is important to the ego, to investigate how each participant uses her mobile phone to develop and maintain her MPEN, to understand the meaning each participant makes out of her access to her MPEN. The quantitative and qualitative phases of this study align well with the study’s purposes: to describe the participants' MPENs, to investigate how mobile phones are used to develop and maintain participants’ MPENS, to investigate how the participants accessed social support and engaged in informal learning in their MPENs and to gain some understanding of the meaning the participants make out of accessing their MPEN.

**Target Population and Sampling**

In this section I will discuss my target population, my use of purposeful sampling, my rationale for choosing a sample size as well as the process I used to recruit participants for this study.

**Target Population**

The target population for this study was Filipinas who were working in Korea as domestic workers at the time of the study: Filipina transnational domestic workers. Domestic worker was defined as someone whose primary employment was as a
cleaner, housekeeper or childcare provider, usually in an employer’s home. I adopted a loose definition of domestic worker, which included those who may work cleaning offices or other establishments. I made this choice because many of the women I spoke with worked several jobs and changed jobs with some regularity. All of the participants were working as housekeepers, childcare providers or office cleaners at the time of the study, and all of the participants had worked as either a housekeeper or childcare provider within a year prior to the time of our interview.

**Purposeful Sampling**

My decision on a sampling strategy for this mixed methods study was based on the ultimate aims of the study as well as practical considerations. In quantitative research one of the main considerations when choosing a sampling strategy is whether the sample will be representative of the target population, which allows the researcher to generalize results back to the target population. A form of random sampling is preferred for this purpose (Gall et al., 2007; Trochim, 2006). While in qualitative research the purpose of sampling is to select individuals or cases which assist the researcher in gaining a deeper understanding of the problem under investigation. A form of purposive sampling is the preferred method for this purpose (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In purposeful sampling the researcher selects individuals or cases which are likely to inform an understanding of the phenomenon.

Although the first phase of the study is quantitative, the purpose of this quantitative phase is to guide the qualitative portion of the study not to allow for generalization back to the target population. With this in mind, I chose a purposeful sampling strategy for this study. The goal of purposeful sampling is to include
individuals or cases which maximize the likelihood of uncovering information which contributes to the inquiry (Creswell, 2012; Trochim, 2006).

After deciding to use a purposeful sampling strategy, I needed to make a decision on what criteria I would have for inclusion in the study. In the qualitative phase of this study I employed phenomenology in an attempt to gain some understanding of the meaning the participants make out of accessing their MPENs. In phenomenology it is essential that all participants have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) advises researchers to select participants who are interested in understanding the phenomenon of interest and are willing to engage in lengthy interviews.

In general terms, I was interested in how people living outside of their own country, culture and linguistic community used mobile phones to access social support and engage in informal learning. As I outlined in Chapter 1, my personal experiences living outside of my home country and my familiarity with Filipinas working in Korea lead me to my target population: Filipina transnational domestic workers living in Korea. The phenomenon of interest was using mobile phones to access social support. The ubiquitous nature of mobile phones in Korea made meeting this criterion almost foolproof. In my selection of participants, I focused on those who seemed interested and eager to participate in the study.

**Sample Size**

In addition to sampling method, sample size is also an important consideration. According to Creswell (2012) there is no accepted number of individuals which should
be included in a phenomenological study. Dukes (1984) notes that the nature of the task in phenomenological research requires extensive study of a small sample: theoretically justifying a sample of one. The aim of phenomenological study is to uncover the necessary structural invariants of an experience. Through the process of bracketing it is possible to set aside the factors which would introduce distortions, making it possible to discover the invariants of an experience in a single case (Duke, 1984). However, the researcher is always in danger of seeing what he/she wants to see or to being taken in by the particulars of a single case (Dukes, 1984). For these reasons, Dukes (1984) recommends a sample size of between 3 and 10. Creswell’s (2012) review of phenomenological studies concurred with Duke’s recommendation, finding a range in sample size from 3 to 10. Morse (1994, cited in Sandelowski, 1995) suggests 6 participants as an acceptable number for a phenomenological inquiry.

While following others’ recommendations or what is commonly done is one way of deciding on sample size; perhaps a more sound method is to employ the concept of saturation. Developed from grounded theory the method of saturation advises the researcher to gather data until the categories or themes are saturated. This is the point when gathering more data reaches a point of diminished returns: no new information is being revealed (Creswell, 2012; Mason, 2010; Sandelowski, 1995). It is not the number of participants in the sample which is important but rather the information obtained from each participant (Sandelowski, 1995).

While the sample size should be large enough to achieve saturation, a sample size which is too large may undermine claims of a detailed analysis of the data (Sandelowski, 1995). Phenomenological inquiry is labor intensive, requiring in depth
interviews and extensive data analysis. Attempting such an analysis with too many participants is likely to be detrimental to the quality of the interviews and the data analysis (Sandelowski, 1995).

For this study, I choose a sample size of 5, for the theoretical reasons outlined by Dukes and the recommendations of Creswell (2012), Dukes (1984) and Morse (cited in Sandelowski, 1995). Practical considerations also played a role in my settling on 5 participants. Knowing the amount of time and effort that would go into this study, I felt that this was a number of participants that I could realistically devote the needed amount of time and energy to in order to complete the overall study. I feared, as Sandelowski (1995) suggests, that including too many participants would overwhelm my ability to engage in depth interviews and data analysis. Although I set my sample size at 5, I remained open to the possibility of adding additional participants if I did not feel I reached an acceptable level of saturation during my interviews. This proved to be unnecessary, as I felt comfortable that I reached the saturation point with the 5 participants in this study.

My initial screening criteria for inclusion in this study were 1, a native of the Philippines, 2, currently living in South Korea, 3, currently employed as a housekeeper, childcare provider or cleaner and 4, owns a mobile phone. With my inclusion criteria decided and sample size set at 5, I began to recruit participants.

**Recruiting Participants**

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, I began recruiting participants by responding to ads offering housekeeping or childcare services. As I
discussed in Chapter 1, many Filipinas living in Korea have overstayed their visas and face the possibility of deportation. It quickly became obvious that there was a high level of suspicion about my motives in recruiting for this study: one potential participant accused me of working for the Korean immigration office. After three weeks I didn’t have a single volunteer for my study. Fortunately, I was able to establish rapport through several emails with a woman named Avengel (not her real name). Although she decided not to participate in the study, she felt her spoken English wasn’t “good enough,” she posted a request for volunteers on a Facebook page frequented by Filipinas. Within a few days I had over one hundred messages requesting to participate in the study.

With a large pool of potential participants, all of whom met my inclusion criteria, I had to make some decisions as to who to include in my sample. Creswell (2012) discusses the sampling strategy of maximum variation. In this strategy, the researcher chooses some criteria which may differentiate potential participants and then selects participants who differ on these criteria. This sampling strategy maximizes differences between participants and increases the likelihood of viewing the phenomenon from different perspectives (Creswell, 2012).

Two factors which I thought might provide different perspectives on accessing an MPEN were age and time in Korea. With the speed that communication technology has developed over the last two decades, I felt that the age of the individual and the related familiarity with new technology might influenced both the composition of the MPEN and the meaning made of the experience of accessing the MPEN. To look at the different perspectives that age might provide, I purposefully selected participants who had a wide range in age; the five participants who eventually participated in the study ranged in age
from 26 to 57. I also felt that how long a person had been in Korea might also influence both the composition of an individual’s MPEN and their experience of accessing it. I believed this for several reasons. A longer period in a new country gives an individual time to adjust to the new culture and to develop both contacts which may provide forms of social support and to develop their own knowledge of how to meet their needs. Also, as a person lives outside of their country of origin their ties to people back home may weaken. To look at how length of time in Korea might influence the participants’ experiences with their MPENS, I purposefully selected participants who had been in Korea from 3 years to 20 years.

**Researcher’s Identity**

When doing qualitative research, particularly phenomenology, it is important for the researcher to self-examine experiences, values and beliefs and to be explicit in terms of her/his identity and position towards the phenomenon under investigation. Phenomenological bracketing requires the researcher to attempt to set aside all preconceptions and judgments about the phenomenon and come to the experience as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). In order to do this, I examined my experiences which may influence how I conceive of the experience and how I might relate to the participants. What follows are some aspects of my identity which I find relevant to my role as researcher in this study.
As a 3D Laborer

In my late teens and early twenties, I worked at a variety of so called 3D jobs. Among these jobs I worked as a furniture mover, health aide, landscaper, refuse collector, and fry cook. These jobs have little in common other than having low social status and working conditions which are dirty, physically demanding, and low paying. Being young, I didn’t feel that these working conditions were oppressive. I saw them as short-term situations on my way to something better. At the same time, I didn’t feel any pride in doing this 3D work, and I was aware that others looked down on this type of work. If someone asked me what I did, I’d respond with “I’m just …” and emphasize the temporary nature of my job.

During this same period, I worked other jobs which were in many ways equally unattractive as the 3D jobs mentioned above, but they also had aspects which I took satisfaction in, such as working in a group home for developmentally disabled adults or a crisis center for runaway teens. These were jobs with stressful working conditions and little pay, but they were also jobs I took pride in having. I’m fully able to understand what it is like to work in a low paying, underappreciated job, but I also understand that a person may find satisfaction and take pride in work that is of low social status, underappreciated, and low paying. I found while conducting the interviews and analysis that I had to set aside my expectations of how the participants might feel about their work and let them describe experiences.

As a Transnational Worker

I’ve worked outside of my country of origin for over a decade. In many ways I identify with and face many of the same struggles as the women in this study. Although
my position as a university professor affords me a certain amount of social status, I live outside of the dominant culture, and I function in a linguistic environment where I don’t speak the dominant language. As a transnational worker, I also experience the uncertainty of being in a country on a one year contract, which may or may not be renewed. Living in a foreign country I’m often socially isolated due to cultural and language differences. And being an outsider, I often have feelings of powerlessness.

One of the most challenging aspects of living outside of my home country is not adjusting to my host country rather it is trying to maintain relationships with family and friends at home. I am father of four children. My two younger children live with me in Korea; my two older children (now college age) live in the US. As this study progressed, I found that this experience of trying to be a parent at a distance was something that I shared with the women in the study.

There is also a positive side to living outside of my country of origin. There is a certain freedom one gains by being outside of your own culture and whatever restrictions it may impose. Being a transnational worker provides an opportunity to recreate your identity. Moving to a new country certainly poses many challenges, but it also affords the opportunity to leave some aspects of personal history behind. In this way being detached from home can be a freeing experience.

**Ethical Issues**

Creswell (2012) reminds us that researchers must be aware of and address potential ethical concerns during all phases of a study. The researcher is in control of all
decisions, large and small, during the research process, and it is important to consider how these decisions may create ethical issues. Following Creswell’s (2012) advice, I practiced self-reflection, transparency and honesty throughout the process of carrying out this study.

Prior to collecting any data, I received IRB approval. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that they could terminate their involvement in the study at anytime. All participants were monetarily compensated for their time. To protect privacy pseudonyms were used for all participants. Any details which might identify a participant were changed in the final report. All data was stored on a password protected computer in keeping with IRB guidelines.

Although I planned to ask participants about important relationships, I did not anticipate significant ethical concerns. Rapport with each of the participants was quickly established. The participants seemed to trust me and spoke freely about their families and friends. For the most part, these conversations did not seem upsetting although there was one issue which was shared by all of the women which was sensitive.

Unknown to me at the beginning of the study, all of the women in this study had at least one child who was living outside of Korea at the time of the study. While discussing this heart wrenching situation all of the women either became mildly upset and/or seemed to be concerned that I might be judging them. At times all of the participants seemed to make efforts to justify their decision to live apart from their children. I address this by reassuring the women that I understood how difficult it was
for them to not be with their children and that I support them in making such a difficult decision. I did not pursue further questioning once this issue was brought up, rather I let the participant tell me what they wanted and to talk about their children for as long as they wished. Some of the women seemed to be relieved to be able to discuss their worries about being apart from their children.

Although I did not anticipate the issue of participants living apart from their children, I feel that these conversations, while being emotional and sensitive, were not unduly upsetting and may have been welcomed by some of the women. I contacted each participant a few days after our final interview to ask if they had any questions or concerns, none did.

Quality of the Study

Although the approaches of judging the quality of quantitative and qualitative research differs, the question to ask when judging the quality of any piece of research is does the way the researcher conducted the study inspire confidence in the results. The quality of quantitative research is most often judged in terms of reliability, validity (internal and external) and objectivity (Gall, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed “trustworthiness” as the criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research. These authors go on to propose four components of trustworthiness as analogs of reliability, validity (external and internal) and objectivity in quantitative research: dependability, transferability, credibility and confirmability respectively. In phenomenology the quality of the research project, that allows the reader to have
confidence in the findings, lies in the quality of the phenomenological description. The sense of confidence has been referred to as the “phenomenological nod,” van Manen (1997, p.27). This refers to the sense that the description resonates with the reader, that he or she has or could have had that experience (van Manen, 1997).

Creswell (2012, 2013) suggests eight possible “validation” strategies to promote the quality of qualitative research: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich-thick description, and external audits. While acknowledging that employing all eight of these strategies may be impractical, Creswell (2012) recommends that a qualitative researcher use at least two of these validation strategies. I used five of these strategies to protect the quality of this study: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, member checking, and rich-thick description and clarifying researcher bias.

**Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation**

My engagement with each participant involved three interviews spread over three to five weeks. Spacing these interviews out over a period of weeks allowed me to reflect over what we had discussed and to develop lines of inquiry I wanted to follow-up on. During this period of engagement I was continually questioning my assumptions and trying to gain an understanding of the participant’s experience, which I attempted to clarify in the next interview.

My engagement with the participants continued through the data analysis and writing stages. For approximately six months following the final interviews, I was deeply
involved in transcribing the audio recordings, reading and re-reading of the transcripts as well as going through the stages of writing the phenomenological descriptions.

**Triangulation**

The construction of MPENs, with estimates of tie strength based on designated importance and frequency of contact, guided the qualitative phase as well as provided sources of data which allowed me to triangulate the qualitative data. In addition, I took notes during each interview and following each interview I spent some time reflecting on the interview, writing down what I thought was important and what I wanted to follow-up on in the next interview. These multiple sources of data allowed me to view the interview transcripts and the phenomenon as experienced by the participants from several perspectives.

**Member Checking**

I was engaged in member checking throughout the interview and analysis process. During each interview, I engaged in a process of reflective listening (Rogers, 1966) as a way to restate and clarify what the participants said. As state above, following each interview I spent some time clarifying my understanding of the interview material, and I began each new interview by checking with the participant to see if she agreed with my understanding of our previous interview. Finally, as I analyzed the data I kept in contact with the participants and checked with them as needed to see that they agreed with my interpretations.

**Rich-thick Description and Clarifying My Bias**

I placed these two strategies together because I feel that they cannot be separated in phenomenological research: part of writing the phenomenological
descriptions is becoming aware and then bracketing biases. Following the phenomenology research method outlined by Moustakas (1994) requires the researcher to bracket any presuppositions regarding the phenomenon of interest and to write rich-thick descriptions of the participant’s experiences. Clarifying my biases began before I conducted the first interview and it has been a continuing process throughout this study, right up to and including my writing of this final report. I followed Moustakas’ (1994) steps in writing the phenomenological descriptions found in the following chapter.

**Threats to the Quality of Social Network Analysis**

Borgatti et al. (2013) outline four types of errors which may impact the quality of a social network analysis: *omission errors, commission errors, edge/node attribution errors, and data collection and retrospection errors.*

*Omission errors* refer to missing alters or ties, while *commission error* refers to the erroneous inclusion of alters or ties (Borgatti et al., 2013). To guard against these types of errors, I went back to each MPEN map several times during the interview process to see if the participant wanted to make any changes. Participants tended to stay with their original constructed MPEN, only a few minor adjustments were made.

Estimating alter to alter ties is one area of the MPEN construction process which is open to probably omission and commission errors. During the construction of the MPENs, I asked the participants to estimate the presence or absence of alter to alter ties as well as the strength of these ties. It is unlikely that participants would know the presence or absence of all alter to alter ties in their MPEN or the strength of existing ties. Although there were almost certainly errors of this type made, I do not feel that they severely impact the quality of the study. It is my belief that the participant’s perception of
their MPEN, the presence or absence of alter to alter ties, is more relevant for this study than whether these ties actually exist. In this study, I was interested in how the participants used their MPEN and how they experience accessing it not in the actual transmission of information or other resources.

For example, an individual who perceives her ego network to be composed of alters who have close relationships with each other, where resources flow freely, may feel the pressure imposed by injunctive norms (Rimal & Real, 2005) to also provide resources or have an expectation that others will provide resources. Injunctive norms are based on an individual’s perception of social approval. As Rimal and Real (2005) point out, people often lack descriptive evidence of the behavior of others and must make judgments about social norms. In this study I gathered information on the actual resources which flowed from and to the ego through surveys and the qualitative interviews. The purpose of asking participants to estimate alter to alter ties was to gather information on their perception of their MPENs with the assumption that perceptions of the behavior of alters may influence how the participants used their MPENs.

*Edge/node attribution error* refers to falsely assigning a behavior or attribute to a tie or alter (Borgatti et al., 2013). As with omission and commission errors discussed above, participants are also unlikely to have perfect knowledge of the attributes of all alters in their MPEN. I don’t feel that edge/node attribution errors impact the quality of the study. What I was interesting in this study is how the participants use their MPEN, who they contact when they need social support. The aim of the study was to view the MPEN from the perspective of the ego. It may be that alters in an individual’s MPEN
may have resources which are unknown to the ego. However, the study investigated how the participants used their MPENs not how they might have potentially used them.

Finally, *data collection and retrospective error* refers to errors in the collection of data, particularly when individuals are asked to recall past behaviors. I asked participants to estimate their frequency on contact with each alter in their MPEN. Although I asked the women to look through their mobile phones as they made these estimates, the potential for errors in these types of retrospective estimates is notoriously high (Bernard et al., 1984; Borgatti et al., 2013).

Although it is unlikely that participants would have perfect knowledge of presence or the strength of all alter to alter ties in their MPEN or know of the attributes of their alters or be able to accurately recall their frequency of contact with each alter, because the purpose of this study was to view the MPENs from the perspective of the participants, I do not feel that these errors undermine the aims of this study. The aim of collecting the data described above was to investigate the ego’s perception of their MPEN: does the ego see her MPEN as being a dense group of closely connected alters or as a more loosely connected group? Who in the MPEN does she go to when she needs a certain type of support? What is her perception of the frequency of her accessing support? The value of this data is that it illuminates how the participant perceives her MPEN not that it represents an objective reality.
The Quantitative Phase

Why Social Network Analysis

The purpose of the quantitative phase of this study is to construct and describe the MPENs of five Filipina domestic workers living in Korea, and fulfill the first four aims of this study:

1. Construct a MPEN, defined as the 20 most important relationships, for each participant.

2. Describe the attributes of both the ego and the ego’s alters (see Appendixes 1 and 3).

3. Describe the nature of ego/alter ties.
   a. What is the strength of ego/alter ties?
   b. What language(s) do the ego and alter use to communicate?
   c. What are the egos’ patterns of communication with her alters (i.e. frequency, duration, method)?

4. Investigate the relationships between ego/alter attributes and the nature of ego/alter ties.

What drives my interest in this portion of the study is the basic assumption of social network theory that an actor’s position in a network will provide opportunities and impose constraints on the actor, so knowing the actor’s network position can be an indicator of outcomes for the actor (Borgatti et al., 2013). I want to investigate how the
participants use their MPENs and how the composition and structure of their MPENs influence their lives.

Social network analysis commonly refers to an approach which considers the “whole network” and analyzes the entire set of actors and ties in the network (Borgatti et al., 2013). However, for this study, I used a variant of social network analysis which considers a portion of the whole network from the perspective of the ego: ego network analysis. Ego network analysis considers a portion of the network with the ego at the center and alters which are connected by ties to the ego (Borgatti et al., 2013). In effect, the network is viewed from the standpoint of an individual (the ego) and encompasses only that part of the network which includes the ego and the ego’s alters.

As discussed above, Filipina domestic workers in Korea maintain a position on the margins of society. As “outsiders” they have limited access to sources of social support available to members of the dominant society as well as being confronted with economic, socio-cultural and political obstacles in their daily lives. As transnational workers in a host country, these women must develop sources of social support in order to function in their adopted/temporary home. In addition, they are physically removed from both usual sources of social support (such as friends and family members) and individuals who they may have an obligation to provide social support to. By using ego network analysis I was able to construct an MPEN for each participant and investigate the flow of social support to and from the ego from the point of view of the ego: Who does the ego turn to for emotional, instrumental and informational support? Who does the ego have obligations with to provide emotional, instrumental and informational support?
Also for practical reasons, ego network analysis was a useful method to address the aims of the quantitative portion of this study. The practical considerations which led me away from using whole network analysis and in the direction of ego network analysis were the amount of resources which would have been required to conduct a whole network analysis and the difficulty in defining the “whole” network. In addition to being a more workable option, ego network analysis had the advantage of viewing the network from the perspective of the ego, which aligned well with my research aims: to describe how the participants used their mobile phones to develop and maintain their MPENs and to investigate how they used their MPENs to receive and give social support.

Collection of Quantitative Data

In this section I outline the process I used to collect the quantitative data. I describe how the study’s participants and I constructed the ego networks, and I discuss the survey instruments I used to gather demographic data on the participants and their alters.

Constructing the Ego Networks: Ego Network Maps, Ego Network Grid and Surveys

After I identified five participants and received their consent to participate in the study, I scheduled an interview time for each participant. During this initial interview, I orally administered a survey designed to gather general demographic information on the participants (see Appendix A). In addition to administering the demographic survey, I used these initial meetings as a chance to build rapport with the participants. All participants were pleasant and cooperative throughout the interviews. They seemed to
care about the project and appreciate being asked about their lives. I took notes during all interviews as well as audio recording them.

Following the completion of the demographic survey, each participant and I began the process of constructing her MPEN. To construct the participants’ MPENs I followed the three step procedure, outlined in Borgatti et al. (2013), generating names, interpreting names and interrelating names. To aid in this process I used an adaptation of the ego network maps described in Bernardi and Halgin (2011), see Figure 3.

Figure 3: a blank ego network map designed for the construction of an ego network of people who are important to the ego (Bernardi, 2011).
**Step 1: generating names.** The purpose of name generating is to produce a list of names that can be used to develop the ego network (Borgatti et al., 2013). This step places a burden on the respondents’ memory; participants may have some difficulty remembering all of the relevant names, leading to errors of omission. To minimize errors of omission, Borgatti et al. (2013) recommend giving respondents support in completing their list of names. To support the participants I encouraged them to refer to their mobile phones for names they may have neglected to add. I also asked them questions to prompt them to consider people that they may wish to add to their list.

For the purposes of this study I asked each participant to generate names for the purpose of constructing an ego network consisting of the 20 most important relationships which are accessed through her mobile phone. To begin this process, I asked each participant to look through her mobile phone and identify all of the ways they might contact other people using their mobile phone (i.e. voice calls, text messaging, Facebook …). Together we constructed a list of the communication methods available on their mobile phone. Once we constructed this list, I asked the participant to name the people who they are in contact most frequently via their mobile phone. During this process, I encouraged them to look through their mobile phones to help them remember who they contacted and how often. At the end of this first step, we had a list of the ways they might communicate with their alters using their mobile phone and a list of the people they communicate with most frequently via their mobile phone. This first step of generating the names went smoothly with all five participants.
In the next step of generating the names, I asked participants to generate the names of the 20 people, from the pool of people who they frequently contacted by phone, who they had the most important relationships with.

The term “important relationships” may be interpreted in a number of ways. This ambiguity was intentional, as I wanted to investigate the resources which participants may access via their mobile phones rather than limit the social network to a single dimension. For example, I felt that it was possible that some participants would only focus on strong ties with family and friends, ignoring possibly important weak ties or ties of obligation. To encourage participants to consider a variety of ways that a relationship might be considered important, I provided the participants with a list of types of important relationships (see Appendix B). During this process, I encouraged the participants to look at the list of most frequently contacted people and to refer to their mobile phone as needed. I also reminded the participants of some of the different ways a relationship might be important while they completed this task: prompting them to include a variety of “types” of important people in their MPEN.

As I anticipated, the participants tended to focus on family in their lists of the 20 most important relationships maintained by mobile phone. Although the participants’ initial focus was on family members, with my prompting they also considered and included others who provided specific types of social support.

Once the participants had a list of the twenty most important relationships which they contact using their mobile phones, I asked the participants to write each name in the appropriate concentric circle on the ego network map (see Figure 3). All participants
completed this without difficulty although two women choose not to name 20 alters, including only 16 and 18 alters.

**Step 2: Interpreting the names.** In the name interpreter portion of the construction of ego networks the respondent is asked to clarify her relationship with each name in the ego network (Borgatti et al., 2013). Although I have set this apart as a second step, name generating and name interpreting were actually intertwined processes. I asked the participants to begin to interpret the names as they were placing the names on the ego network map through a “think-aloud” technique (Bernardi, 2011). As the names were placed on the ego network map, I asked the participant to describe how each relationship was important to her: “Why is this person near the center of the map? How is this person important to you? How does this person help you? ...” As mentioned above, I continued to prompt the inclusion of a variety of tie types by asking questions during the name generating/interpreting process. These questions were designed to help the participant consider ties where emotional, instrumental and informational social support may flow, as well as ties where the ego may have an obligation to the alter (see Appendix B). As I anticipated, all of the participants focused on family members as the most important relationships. Although with my prompting, the respondents were able to consider other types of importance and expand their MPENs beyond family and close friends.

Once the ego network map was completed, I orally administered a survey to gather demographic information on the ego’s alters as well as further information on the ego’s relation with each alter, particularly in regards to frequency and mode of contact (see Appendix C). This survey was in the form of straightforward information gathering
questions. However, this process often grew into conversations where the women began to tell me about their family and friends. There were instances where the respondents weren’t sure of some information about an alter, but generally they seemed confident in their knowledge.

**Step 3: Interrelating the Names.** In this phase of the project, I asked the participants to rate the amount of contact each of their alters has with every other alter. As Borgatti et al. (2013) point out this is a challenging task because the ego may have limited knowledge of the relationships between alters. To aid in this task, I used an ego network grid adapted from Bernardi (2011), see Figure 4. The names from the ego network map were written from 1 to 20 in the spaces provided. The respondent then wrote the number which best indicated her perception of the strength of the alter to alter tie.

During the construction of each participant’s MPEN, three types of quantitative data were gathered: 1. data on the method of contact between the ego and alters, as well as the content and type of ego/alter ties, 2. data on ego and alter attributes, as well as characteristics of the ego/alter relationship, and 3. data on the structure of the MPEN (e.g. alter to alter ties). These findings were used to guide the qualitative portion of the study.
Figure 4: Ego network grid with rating scale (adapted from Bernardi, 2011).
The Qualitative Phase: Why Phenomenology?

As discussed earlier, transnational workers live in a world which is uncertain; the stability which many people take for granted does not exist for many of the millions of transnational workers in the world. Employment, housing and even the ability to continue to live in the country where they currently reside are all fragile states for many transnational workers. Mobile phones are a relatively new tool which allows users to communicate without concern for spatial and temporal limitations. It is my belief that mobile phones have become a tool which transnational workers use to maintain some sense of stability in their lives: the stability that access to longstanding social ties in their home country may provide, access to a cultural community in their host country and access to information while they continually adapt to their uncertain surroundings.

The quantitative portion of this study shed light on how the participants used their mobile phones: who they communicated with and what types of social support was involved. Beyond this information is the question of what is the experience of being a Filipina transnational domestic worker who accesses her MPEN for social support and informal learning. This question of what is the experience of accessing their MPEN was at the core of this qualitative portion of the study.

In order to explore what meaning the participants made out of accessing their MPENs, I employed a guided interview approach informed by phenomenology. My reason for using a phenomenological approach was that the aim of this qualitative portion of this study was to get at the meaning that participants made out of their interactions in their MPENs:
What meaning do Filipino domestic workers living in Korea make out their lived experience of accessing their MPENs in their host country?

Phenomenological inquiry is an appropriate method to meet this aim, as it is the systematic attempt to understand the meaning of lived experience as understood by those who have had the experience (Van Manen, 1990).

While the collection of the quantitative data provided a picture of what the participants' MPENs look like (density, attributes of alters, nature of ties ...), it is through the gathering of the qualitative data that a deeper and richer understanding of what the lived experience of accessing their MPENs is for the participants: What meaning do these transnational workers make out of their experience?

**Phenomenological Inquiry**

Phenomenology as a discipline is usually traced back to Husserl with the publishing of his "Logical Investigations" at the beginning of the twentieth century. Husserl's work inspired a flurry of phenomenological writings during the following decades, resulting in a variety of phenomenological traditions. This diversity is apparent in the Encyclopedia of Phenomenology which lists seven types of phenomenology (cited in Smith, 2013).

Husserl (1913, cited in Moran, 2000) defined phenomenology as “the science of the essence of consciousness” as experienced from the first person point of view. For Husserl, the practice of phenomenology was not concerned with the experience with
empirical facts; the concern of phenomenological inquiry is with the “essence” of the experience, to describe the experience in terms of its essential concepts. Through an uncovering of the essence of a given experience, phenomenological analysis attempts to inform us of the ways that we would experience that form of conscious experience (Moran, 2000).

Phenomenology is the study of conscious experience from the point of view of those who have had the experience, and “intentionality” is the primary structure of an experience (McIntyre, 1989). Intentionality is the proposal that every experience is directed toward an object. Of interest in this study was the first person conscious experience of the participants’ accessing their social network via mobile phone. At the end of this study I hope I gained a better understanding of what it is like to be a Filipino domestic workers living in Korea accessing an MPEN.

**The Intentionality of Experience**

A primary aspect of different types of experience is their “intentionality,” a consciousness about and engaged with something (Moran, 2000; Smith, 2013). According to Moran (2000), one of Husserl’s main challenges in his formulation of phenomenology was to reconcile the divide which separates the subjective from the objective: “How does objectivity get constituted in and for consciousness?” While grappling with this problem over a twelve year period, Husserl developed a new understanding of the intentional nature of the structure of consciousness which provided Husserl with a radical understanding of subjectivity and a way to overcome the Cartesian subject–object divide (Moran, 2000). For Husserl, Intentionality is a central feature of all conscious experience: every act of loving is a loving of something, every
act of seeing is an act of seeing something. Conscious experience is an intentional act which is directed toward something; it is about something.

This directed nature of conscious experience is guided by or understood through certain concepts: thoughts, ideas, images … (Smith, 2013). It is through these concepts that meaning of experience is created. Whether or not the object exists, it has meaning and an existence for consciousness. How I conceptualize the object defines the meaning of that object in my current experience (Smith, 2013). This correlation between the intentional structure of conscious acts and their correlative objects (the noetic-noematic structure of consciousness) is at the core of Husserl’s conception of phenomenology (Moran, 2000; Smith, 2013).

**The noetic-noematic structure of consciousness**

Husserl proposed that the content of our conscious experience, intentional acts, are created by the interaction between two aspects of consciousness: the “noesis” and the “noema.” Both of these terms, noesis and noema, are derived from the Greek word “nous” meaning mind or intellect. In Greek, noesis refers to the operations of the mind: perceiving, believing, valuing, etc. Husserl adopted noesis to refer to the interpretive or meaning giving part of conscious experience. Noema in Greek refers to the thought or what is thought about. Husserl used noema to refer to the sense which is made of the experience: the meaning part of the conscious experience. Although exactly what Husserl meant by these two terms is still controversial, neither term refers to an external object, which is sometimes proposed; they both are kinds of content which together make up conscious experience (McIntyre & Smith, 1989; Moran, 2000).
In order to better understand the distinction between noesis and noema and objects in the external world, we need to discuss what Husserl calls the “real” and the “ideal” (or “intentional”) content. An experience is a temporal event which is part of what makes up a person’s stream of consciousness. Each experience is a complex event which is made up of various components. These components include real “quality” which makes it an experience of a certain kind and real “matter” which gives the experience a certain intentional character. The real content of an experience is the sum of the components of the experience which together make a complete experience. The real content of an experience is something which is associated with only that experience, occurring at a particular moment in time (McIntyre & Smith, 1989).

While the real content of an experience is tied to only one place and moment, it is possible to think of two people or the same person at different times as having the same experience, experiences with the same content. Unlike real content, Ideal or intentional content is not tied to a single experience occurring at a moment in time. Ideal content is an abstract structure which may be shared by different experiences.

As discussed earlier, Husserl characterizes noesis and noema as kinds of content which interact to create an experience. Noesis is part of the experience’s real content, that which is tied to the temporal event, interpreting or giving meaning to that event (perceiving, believing valuing, etc.); while the noema is the meaning or the sense the event for the person who had the experience. This meaning or sense of an event is abstract and may be shared across several events of the same type. Noesis is the process of interacting with a certain event, the real content of the event, while noema is
the meaning or sense of the event, an abstract entity or ideal content (McIntyre & Smith, 1989).

Through the simultaneous interaction of noesis and noema a meaning of or a sense of the object is created for the subject. And it is this meaning or sense of the object which puts the subject in an intentional relationship with the object. So for Husserl, all experience is intentional or directed toward something, however that something is not out in the physical world, even when a physical object exists, what directs conscious experience is the meaning or sense of the object which is created through the interaction of noesis and noema (McIntyre & Smith, 1989; Moran, 2000).

This concept of intentionality focused the qualitative portion of this study. Although the quantitative data guided the qualitative portion of this study, the qualitative interviews gradually moved away from investigating an object out in the world toward understanding the participant’s experience directed toward their sense of the object. The purpose here was not to investigate an objective reality, behavior out in the world, but to get at the meaning that the experience of accessing their MPENs had for the participants.

**Horizontalization**

Husserl recognized that in the intentional conscious experience there are always aspects of the object which are not directly perceived opening the possibility of new perceptions. When we perceive a tree, the other side of the tree is beyond our perception. He called this the “horizon” (Moran, 2000). Each experience contains horizontal layers of expectations, the horizon of anticipations, which may be either
confirmed or disconfirmed with further perceptions. An example Husserl used was that of perceiving an apple on a table. An initial conscious experience with this apple leads to the expectation that it may be eaten, but upon picking up the apple you discover that it is made of wax. This new perception alters your experience and creates a new horizon of anticipations which may be conformed or disconfirmed with further perceptions. As experiences may be future oriented, past experiences also endure into the present and may be subject to further reflections. This is the horizon of the past, which opens the possibility of reflecting on and having new conscious experiences of past perceptions (McIntyre and Smith, 1989; Moran, 2000).

The Epoche

Husserl came to believe that our ability to understand our conscious experiences was distorted by the way we engaged with experience in our routine lives. Our practical affairs, cultural assumptions and scientific knowledge present a barrier to our understanding of experience as it is given to us (Moran, 2000). For Husserl, this “natural attitude,” or the everyday way that we engage with our experiences, must be suspended in order for us to view the phenomena in a phenomenological way; this freedom from ordinary suppositions is the “epoche.” In the epoche we “bracket” all of our prejudgments in order to attend to the phenomena as it is given to us (Moran, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Through this process of suspending the natural attitude we are able to come to things as if for the first time.

Although all beliefs and pre-knowledge are set aside during the epoche, the experiencing person, the “I,” still exists. Moustakas (1994) quotes Husserl, “I . . . still exist as the doubter and negator of everything.” The experincer carries out the epoche
with an open mind which is unfettered by the natural attitude and free of any obligation to others. What appears to me in my conscious is what I know regardless of whether others perceive the phenomena differently. All which appears in the experiencer’s consciousness is available for self-referral and self-revelation (Moustakas, 1994).

My identity as a researcher made the epoche a challenging phase of this study. I came to this research project at least in part because identified is some ways with the research population, and I assumed I shared many experiences with them. Like my research participants, I also lived in a host country far from loved ones. And we shared the challenges of navigating an unfamiliar culture. One of the challenges for me in this study was to set aside my assumptions and experiences and to listen to what the women told me.

**The Phenomenological Reduction.** During the epoche the aim is to bracket all suppositions and attend to the phenomena as it is given, “return to the things themselves.” This first step in coming to know the phenomena as it appears is followed by the phenomenological reduction. In the reduction the task is to describe the experience, both external and internal, in textural language (e.g. rough and smooth, noisy and quiet, large and small) the qualities of the experience are the focus (Moustakas, 1994). The method of phenomenological reduction can be thought of as occurring in three steps: pre-reflection, reflection and reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

In conducting the reduction the experiencer begins with a process of pre-reflection by questioning all assumptions regarding the phenomena. In this way the world is bracketed and the phenomena can be attended to as it is appears in
consciousness, negating those aspects which may have been assumed to be present (Moustakas, 1994). At the end of this pre-reflective stage of the reduction, the experience will have a description of the phenomena just as it appears. Next the experiencer enters into a process of reflection: looking again and describing again and reflecting again. Every experience with the phenomena places the experience on the edge of new horizons, and with new perspectives these horizons are explored. Through this process of reflection, repeated experiences with the phenomena, the experiencer begins to identify the horizons and what is thematic in the experience, the essences (Moustakas, 1994).

This final stage of reflection reduces the phenomena to that which is pure and essential. Husserl emphasizes that the process of reduction does not inform us about what is out in the world, rather it allows us to return to the self and experience the phenomena from the vantage point of self awareness and self knowledge; we come to understand the essence of having the experience not the essence of the object out in the world (Moustakas, 1994).

The final challenge of the reduction is to describe in textural clarity the experience. While constructing a description of the experience, all experiences are granted equal value, constituents of the experience are linked thematically and the experience is described in full. Through the reduction the experiencing person arrives at a place of self-knowledge and a knowledge of the phenomena: knowledge of the nature and meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).
The Phenomenological Interviews

As Seidman (2013) points out, the purpose of a phenomenological interview is not to test hypotheses or to evaluate but rather to understand the “lived experience” of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. We interview because we are interested in the stories of others, because we recognize that we are not the center of the world and that others’ stories have importance (Seidman, 2013). While interviewing is used across many of the social sciences for a variety of purposes, the conversational interview, as it relates to phenomenological investigations, has two specific purposes: “1. it may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon, 2. The interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience” (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 66).

Seidman (2013) identifies four phenomenological themes which should be considered when planning and conducting phenomenological interviews: a. the transitory nature of human experience, b. experience is embedded in a perspective, c. the concept of lived experience, d. lived experience has a context. The first of these four themes is the transitory nature of human experience. Seidman (2013) discusses how we experience time in three stages, which pass in an instant: a) the will be, b) the is, and c) the was. This passing of time means that interviewers are always asking participants to reconstruct their experiences and the meaning they make of them.
While human experience is embedded in the flow of time, any meaning or understanding of a human experience is also embedded in a perspective. The phenomenological interviewer must ask the question: Whose understanding is it? The goal of the phenomenological interview is to come as close as possible to a subjective understanding, the understanding that the person who has had the experience has.

Both the temporal nature of experience and the subjective understanding of that experience are tied to the concept of “lived experience” (Seidman, 2013; Van Manen, 1990). The researcher attempts to guide the participants to reconstruct “their lived experience, to make the ‘was’ come as close as possible to what was the ‘is’” (Seidman, 2013, p.18). The researcher’s access to this reconstructed experience is primarily achieved through language: “The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36).

Finally, phenomenology is interested in meaning in context. In order to fully understand the meaning of an experience we must understand that experience in the context within which it was lived (Seidman, 2013). Using these four themes as a rationale, Seidman (2013) proposes a three interview series for phenomenological investigations, which I used in this study.

Each interview in Seidman’s (2013) proposed series of three interviews focuses on a different aspect of the participant’s reconstruction of the experience: interview one focuses on Life History, interview two on details of the experience, and interview three on reflection and the meaning of the experience. The goal of the first interview is to relay the context of the experience to the interviewer. In this interview the participant
may be asked to relay as much information about their lives up until the period they had experience of interest.

For this study, I asked the participants to discuss their lives in the Philippines, their family, how they came to live in Korea, what their lives in Korea are like and how they first came to own a mobile phone. All of the participants provided me with rich details of their life histories and current lives.

The goal of the second interview is to focus on the specific details of the participant’s lived experience. The participants are asked to reconstruct the details of the experience. During this interview participants are encouraged to reconstruct the particulars of the experience, in concrete details (Seidman, 2013). During this interview, I asked participants to describe specific instances when they used their mobile phone to access social support. I also used this second interview to get at the specifics of the relationships between the ego and her alters. For example, if the participant designated an alter as someone who they receive instrumental support from, I might have asked them to discuss a specific instance when they received social support from this particular alter.

The purpose of the third interview is to give the participants a chance to reflect on the meaning of their experience (Seidman, 2013). Meaning here refers to the connections that the participants makes between the experience and their life, in the case of this study between the accessing their MPEN and their life. A question in this interview might be phrased, “Considering what you’ve said about your life and contacting friends and family with your mobile phone, what meaning does contacting
people with your mobile phone have for you? Although the focus of this third interview was on meaning, the participants were asked to reconstruct meaning throughout these three interviews. But in this third interview meaning making is the explicit focus of the interview (Seidman, 2013).

This third interview was the most difficult for the participants. There seemed to be a sense that the meaning was obvious, “Why are you asking such a stupid question?” As a way to overcome this initial resistance, I asked the participants to return to specific events and describe how they felt at the time. By discussing several specific events and how she felt at the moment she experienced each one, each participant was able to consider the meaning these experiences had for her.

**Analysis of the Phenomenological Interviews**

For my analysis of the three interviews discussed above, I was informed by Seidman’s (2013) discussion on analyzing and interpreting interview material while employing a process similar to that outlined by Moustakas’ adaptation of Van Kaam’s method (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). All three of these interviews for each participant was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Beginning with the transcription process, I studied, reduced and analyzed the texts.

Studying the texts began during the transcription process. The act of listening carefully to the audio tapes allowed me to become more fully immersed with the interview process and the participant’s words. During this early phase of analysis, I used an inductive rather than deductive approach, as Seidman (2013) suggests: “the researcher cannot address the material with a set of hypotheses to test or with a theory
developed in another context (p. 119). I attempted to approach this process with an open mind to avoid imposing my ideas or hypotheses on the text. I found this process of continuing to bracket my assumptions and experiences difficult at times. Since many of my experiences were similar to those of the participants, I had to repeatedly listen to the recordings and read the transcripts to ensure that I was responding to the data and not my own ideas.

Once I completed transcribing the audio recordings and I felt that I was sufficiently familiar with the audio recordings and the transcripts, I moved on to the reducing phase of the analysis.

The first step in reducing the text is to identify expressions which are relevant to the experience (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013). To do this I went through the transcripts and identified meaningful units: clauses, sentences or small groups of sentences. Once each meaningful unit was identified, I went through the text and identified those meaningful units which seemed to be relevant to the experience: the horizons of the experience (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013). This stage of identifying the horizons of the experience involves determining the invariant constituents of the experiences. Van Kaam (cited in Moustakas, 1994) suggests asking two questions to determine if a meaningful unit is an invariant constituent of the experience: “Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?” and “Is it possible to abstract and label it?” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then the expression is likely an invariant constituent of the experience. If the answer to either of these questions is no, then the expression will be eliminated from the analysis. As Seidman (2013) notes, this process
involves the judgment of the researcher. During this process, I found myself returning to the text multiple times, checking and rechecking my decisions. After this process of elimination, I was left with horizons which are invariant constituents of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). (See Appendix D for an example of my coding process: the identification of invariant constituents, grouping into thematic labels and identifying core themes of the experience.)

After this initial step in reducing the interview transcripts, came the processes of clustering and thematizing. In this step, Moustakas (1994) recommends taking the invariant constituents which were identified previously and grouping them around thematic labels. This process is sometimes referred to as classifying or coding (Seidman, 2013). These early notes served as tentative labels which were merged with others or further separated down the line. Seidman (2013) notes that while creating thematic labels, the researcher must use her/his own judgment as to what constitutes a theme which is meaningful to the experience and separate from other themes which may be identified. Important questions to consider while creating the themes of the experiences are: How are the horizons connect as to justify being included under the same theme? and How are the horizons distinct as to justify being placed in separated themes? (Seidman, 2013). Moustakas’ adaptation of Van Kaam’s method (1994) suggests asking two questions to validate the invariant constituents and themes of the experience: “Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcript? And “Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?” (p. 121). If the answers to these two questions in no, they are not relevant to the participant’s experience and should be deleted (Moustakas, 1994).
While reading through the transcripts, I made notes, often single words, which seemed to sum up the core meaning of an expression. Some meaningful units seemed to belong in the same theme; others seemed to need a separate label or it was unclear if the expression fit in with a label that I had already identified. During this labeling process I created several clusters, each with a distinct label; I also created a few smaller clusters which were possibly related to a larger cluster, and I labeled some individual or groups of two or three expressions which did not seem to fit with other labels. Once I had labeled all of the meaningful units, I reread the transcripts looking for labels which should be merged into a larger cluster, which should be separated and assigned a new label and for others which should be deleted. Throughout this process I tried to remain aware of the need to keep my own ideas separate from the data. As with the earlier stage, I found myself returning to the data multiple times, checking and rechecking.

Moustakas (1994) sums up the early steps in phenomenological reduction as *bracketing, horizontalizing and clustering the horizons into themes*. In bracketing, the focus of the research is placed in brackets; everything else (the world, the researcher’s presuppositions …) is set aside, so that the focus is only on the research topic and question. While horizontalizing, the researchers initially treats every expression as having equal value. As the horizons of the experience are identified, expressions which are irrelevant to the experience along with those which are repetitive or overlapping are eliminated, leaving the horizons of the experience. These horizons are then clustered into themes with thematic labels. The final step in the phenomenological reduction is to
construct a textural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). With the thematic labels developed, I was ready to move on to this final step.

Moustakas (1994) recommends writing a separate textural description for each participant. In each textural description there is “an interweaving of the person, conscious experience and phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). Writing a textural description encourages the researcher to return to the thing itself with an open mind in a process of looking again and again with the aim of understanding deeper layers of understanding (Moustakas, 1994). The textural description should describe the phenomena in its totality with a differentiated description of the essential constituents (Moustakas, 1994). I followed Moustakas’ procedure and wrote a textual description for each of the five participants.

I continued to follow Moustakas’ (1984) procedures as I moved from the reduction phase to the process of constructing a structural description of the phenomena. The first step in constructing a structural description is to engage in imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). In imaginative variation the researcher explores possible meanings by utilizing imagination, varying frames of reference, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). The aim of imaginative variation is to create a structural description of the phenomena: the underlying factors which account for what is being experienced. This process attempts to answer the question: “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Imaginative variation moves from the facts to the essences of the experience.
In the process of imaginative variation all perspectives and objects are possible, whether real or imagined. In this process the researcher begins with a reflective phase where many possibilities are examined and explicated, and as the process continues he/she moves away from facts to meanings and essences. Moustakas (1994) outlines four steps of imaginative variation:

1. Systematic varying of the possible structural meanings that underlie the textural meanings;

2. Recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon;

3. Considering the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon, such as the structure of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others;

4. Searching for exemplifications that vividly illustrate the invariant structures themes and facilitate the development of a structural description of the phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99)

I found this process of imaginative variation to be useful. It allowed me to step away from the facts as they appeared in the transcripts and to set aside my preconceptions as I considered all possibilities. As I mentioned earlier, I struggled throughout this process to bracket my assumptions and experiences in order to attend to the experiences of the participants. It was during this process of imaginative variation that I felt I was truly able to do this.
The final step in phenomenological research is the “intuitive integration” of the textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the conscious experience (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher’s task in intuitive integration is to describe what is common or universal to the experience, the qualities which make the experience what it is: the essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). No matter how thorough the phenomenological analysis has been, the essences are never complete. Any representation of the essences of an experience is only for a particular time and place from a certain point of view for an individual. The result of intuitive integration is a unified description of the essence(s) of the experience. My descriptions of the essences of the experience can be found in Chapter 7 and my final phenomenological description in Chapter 8. (See Appendix D for an example of my coding process: the identification of invariant constituents, grouping into thematic labels and identifying core themes of the experience.)
Chapter 4: Describing the MPENs

In this chapter I discuss the cumulative findings from the quantitative phase of this study. To analyze the quantitative data I made frequency counts and calculated descriptive statistics by hand. I used the “Vennmaker” program to calculate all densities and to draw the network maps. First I report on the cumulative quantitative data using descriptive statistics. This is followed by a discussion of my interpretation of this quantitative data.

Quantitative Findings

In this section I present the cumulative results of the quantitative portion of this study: the constructed MPENs, data on the ego/alter and alter/alter relationships and the attributes of each ego and her alters. With this quantitative data I attempted to address the first four research purposes:

1. Construct a MPEN, defined as the 20 most important relationships, for each of the participants.

2. Describe the attributes of both the ego and the ego’s alters (see Appendixes 1 and 3).

3. Describe the nature of ego/alter ties.
   a. What is the strength of ego/alter ties?
   b. What language(s) do the ego and alter use to communicate?
c. What are the egos’ patterns of communication with her alters (i.e. frequency, duration, method)?

4. Investigate the relationships between ego/alter attributes and the nature of ego/alter ties.

In the early stages of this study, while I was working with these women to construct their MPENs, I was struck by how unique each MPEN was. Although there were some common themes, these were fewer than I had anticipated. As the study progressed it became apparent that each MPEN reflected the individual’s background, current circumstances and attributes. In an attempt to describe and understand the participant’s MPENs, I will present an overview of the quantitative data, followed by a case study of each participant’s MPEN in the next chapter, where I will discuss how I understand each participant’s context to be reflected in her MPEN.

Overview of the MPENs

As mentioned above, each participant’s MPEN is a unique reflection of her life history and present circumstances; this can be seen in the variety of MPEN structures which were constructed (to be discussed in Chapter 5). While each participant’s MPEN was unique, there were common trends across MPENs. In this section I will present an overview of the cumulative MPEN data: 1. location, nationality and family, 2. tie types and tie strength, and 3. mode of communication: languages and apps.

Location, Nationality, and Family. Overall, the participants named a total of 94 alters in their MPENs; two of the participants did not name 20 alters, naming 16 and 18 alters. All of the participants used their mobile phones to maintain ties locally and at a
distance. The majority of alters, 59, were located in Korea with all but 4 of the remaining 35 alters located in the Philippines. Of these alters who were located outside of Korea 77 percent were family members, while for alters located in Korea the proportions were nearly reversed, only 21 percent of alters located in Korea were family members (see Table 1).

<p>| Table 1 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Alters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Alters (94)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of Filipino Alters (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino family members (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Filipinos (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for Filipino Alters (71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages given are of the total number of alters.)

Filipinos accounted for 71 of the 94 alters, overwhelmingly the single largest identified group. Only 10 alters were Koreans; the remaining 13 alters were a mix of nationalities. Over half, 54 percent, of Filipino alters were located in Korea, and 18 percent of these alters were family members. Of the 46 percent of Filipino alters living outside of Korea 85 percent were family members, leaving only 5 non-family member Filipino alters who were living outside of Korea.

This preliminary data gives a picture of the participants’ as using their MPENs to maintain ties with those who are local (63 percent in Korea) and to a lesser degree with
those who are living at a distance (37 percent outside of Korea). Ties which were
maintained at a distance were primarily with family members; while ties maintained
locally were with more diverse alters. The participants’ MPENs were composed
primarily of alters like themselves (75 percent other Filipinos). Despite living in Korea,
few Koreans were included in the participants’ MPENs, only 10 (11 percent) alters were
Korean, and half of these were in a single participant’s MPEN. Of the 35 alters living
outside of Korea 28 (80 percent) were family members.

**Tie Type and Tie Strength.** Following the preliminary stage of analyzing the
composition of the constructed MPENs, I turned my attention to the nature and strength
of ties. Using survey responses and the early stages of the qualitative interviews to
clarify the survey results, I grouped the 94 alters in to four categories based on the
nature of the ego/alter relationships: family members, friends, resource providers, and
church member/leaders. These categories are not mutually exclusive, so a friend could
also be a church member and a person who provides a resource. In this presentation of
the data I have placed each alter in only one category based on the primary nature of
the relationship tie as expressed by the participant.

Family members were defined as any alter who the ego is or was related to, so
included in this category are ex-husbands. I also included in this category the father of
the ego’s children, even when the couple was never legally married. Friends were
defined as any alter where the ego described her relationship with the alter as being
primarily social. The category of resource providers was defined as those alters who the
ego discussed primarily in terms of providing resources, either instrumental or
informational support. The category of church members/leaders was defined as alters
who the ego knew from church and interacted with primarily about church related activities.

| Table 2: |
| Summary tie strength (as measured by importance) by relationship type and by location of the alter. |

**Tie Strength by Importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (94)</td>
<td>41 [44%]</td>
<td>34 [36%]</td>
<td>19 [20%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tie Type by Location By Tie Strength (Importance)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Living in Korea</th>
<th></th>
<th>Living outside of Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Less Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (94)</td>
<td>13 [14%]</td>
<td>28 [30%]</td>
<td>18 [19%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (40)</td>
<td>11 [12%]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (26)</td>
<td>1 [1%]</td>
<td>12 [13%]</td>
<td>10 [11%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Providers (21)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 [15%]</td>
<td>5 [5%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Members (7)</td>
<td>1 [1%]</td>
<td>2 [2%]</td>
<td>3 [3%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Tables 2 and 3 and graphically depicted in Figures 5 and 6, family members and friends made up the two largest groups, accounting for 43 percent and 28 percent of all alters respectively. Alters who primarily provide the ego with some resource made up 22 percent of all alters, and church members/leaders accounted for the remaining 7 percent. While the combination of family members and friends accounted for the largest portion of all of the participants’ MPENs, the distribution of family members and friends varied between participants (ranging from 63 to 90 percent
of alters). Two participants named more than twice as many family members as friends; while another two named more than twice as many friends as family members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary tie strength (as measured by frequency of contact) by relationship type and by location of the alter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ties Strength by Frequency of Contact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (94)</td>
<td>33 [35%]</td>
<td>40 [43%]</td>
<td>21 [22%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Location of Contact by Tie Strength (Frequency)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Living in Korea</th>
<th>Living outside of Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (94)</td>
<td>24 [25%]</td>
<td>27 [29%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>10 [11%]</td>
<td>1 [1%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6 [6%]</td>
<td>16 [17%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Providers</td>
<td>7 [7%]</td>
<td>8 [9%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Members</td>
<td>1 [1%]</td>
<td>2 [2%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages given are of the total number of alters.

In this study tie strength was measured in two ways: importance measured by which concentric circle on the ego network map (most important, important or less important) the ego placed each alter and the ego’s reported frequency of contact (daily, weekly or monthly) with an alter. The ego network map data shows that 44 percent of alters were designated as “most important” relationships, 36 percent as “important” and 20 percent as “less important.” Participants consistently placed family members in the
“most important” circle; in total 41 alters were placed in the inner circle and 38, 93 percent, of these were family members, and only two family members were not designated as “most important” relationships (see Table 2 and Figure 5).

Figure 5: Cumulative ego network map showing alters by relationship type, importance and location
Figure 6: Cumulative ego network map showing alters by relationship type, frequency of contact, and location

The second measure of tie strength, reported frequency of contact also showed that the participants tended to have strong ties with family members although the picture became more complicated. Almost half (46 percent) of family members are contacted daily, and family members account for 58 percent of all alters who are contacted daily. While no resource providers or church members and only one friend where designated as "most important" relationships by the participants, of those the participants estimated
they contacted on a daily basis 23 percent were resource providers and 19 percent were friends (see Table 3 and Figure 6). The discrepancy between the findings on these two measures of tie strength seems to suggest that the participants interpreted “important relationships” as being people who were important to them rather than people who provide social support although there is some crossover.

When looking at the data on family members, the ego’s distance from the alter seemed to have little effect on tie strength as measured by level of importance. Despite 72 percent of family members living outside of Korea, 95 percent of these ties were designated as strong: “most important” relationships. As discussed above, this seems to reflect the way the participants interpreted important relationships: valued people rather than providers of social support. However, when tie strength was measured by frequency of contact, the ego’s distance from the alter seems to influence tie strength: Ninety-two percent of family members who live in Korea were contacted daily (12 of 13 alters). Only 32 percent of Family members (9 of 28) who lived outside of Korea were contacted daily. Although all but 2 of these family member alters were designated as “important relationships.” I interpret these finding as reflecting the difference between “important” relationships and the exchange of social support. Although distance doesn’t influence the ego’s sense of the importance of a relationship, distance seems to influence how much the egos turn to these family members for social support. As mentioned above, the percentage of family members designated as having the strongest ties to the ego drops from 95 to 49 percent and resource providers and friends climb form 0 and 1 percent to 23 and 19 percent respectively when tie strength is measured by frequency of contact rather than level of importance. This data seems to
suggest that the participants turn to those physically close, both family members and others, for social support more than those who live at a distance (see Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 5 and 6).

**Languages and Modes of Communication.** In the previous two sections, I have discussed general trends in the composition and structure of the MPENs: who is included and the strength of ties (level of importance and frequency of contact) associated with different alter types. In this section I will discuss how these MPENs function in terms of language and modes of communication.

**Languages.** English was by far the most common language spoken by members of the five MPENs; all five participants spoke English and 98 percent of alters spoke English. Following English was Tagalog which was spoken by 74 percent of the members of the MPENs (including egos). In addition to Tagalog, each member of this linguistic grouping also spoke at least one local Filipino language. Korean was a minority language in the MPENs with only 10 percent speaking Korean as their primary language.

An interesting linguistic feature of the MPENs is that Korean was not the primary language used in any of the ties, despite three of the five egos speaking intermediate level Korean. Although English was the most commonly spoken language, only 7 percent of ego ties with Filipinos were maintained using English, 90 percent used Tagalog and 3 percent used a local Filipino language. Ego ties to non-Filipinos (24 percent of all ties) were monolingual, all being maintained in English.

This data reflect the primary language used in these ties, but it does not do justice to the linguistic diversity in ego to Filipino ties. Due to the level of linguistic
diversity present in these ties, the participants had some difficulty judging which language was dominant. The participants reported that when speaking to other Filipinos they usually used a mixture of Tagalog, English and a local language if a shared one existed. The participants related the Tagalog is the dominant language used with other Filipinos, with frequent codeswitching into English or a local language.

**Modes of communication.** Participants in this study used three modes of communication with their alters: text messages (using Facebook and Kakaotalk), traditional voice calls, and video calls (primarily using Skype). Nearly all ego to alter ties were maintained with a combination of text messaging, voice and/or video calls. The few ties which were maintain exclusively by only text or by video calls were on opposite ends of importance continuum, with ties falling at the less important end, such as employers, being maintained by text and those at the most important end being maintained by video calls, such as children. Overall, 96 percent of ties were maintained using text messaging (44 percent using Facebook messaging and 51 percent using Kakaotalk), 41 percent of ties used voice calls, 23 percent used video calls (primarily Skype).

The mode of communication was influenced by the location of the alter. Every tie with an alter in Korea was maintained using text messaging (46 percent using Facebook messaging and 73 percent using Kakaotalk), while approximately half of the ties with alters residing outside of Korea used text messaging (41 percent using Facebook messaging and 12 percent using Kakaotalk). Voice and video calls were used in similar percentages of ties regardless of location (64 percent for ties with alters in Korea and 62 percent for ties with alters outside of Korea). Although there were differences related to
location in the use of voice versus video calls, voice calls were used far more than video
calls when the alter resided in Korea (59 to 5 percent respectively); conversely, video
calls were used far more than voice calls when the alter resided outside of Korea (53 to
9 percent respectively).

What Flows from Which Alters through Which Ties.

Knowing that ties exist will only provide a partial understanding of an individual’s
MPEN. In order to gain some understanding of how the MPEN is used, we must also
have some knowledge of what flows through these ties. This is a complex task as each
tie may serve multiple purposes for both the ego and the alter. For example, a single tie
may provide the ego with emotional and instrumental support while involving obligations
for the ego. In addition to their multifaceted nature, many of these ties are also used to
define the ego’s identity, the ego’s social status and the ego’s relationships with others.
Below I give an overview of the findings on what flows through different ties. Following
this discussion, in Chapter 5, each participant’s MPEN will be discussed as a case; in
these discussions the complexity of many of these ties will become apparent.

To investigate what flows through the identified ego/alter ties I asked each
participant what she communicates about with each alter. Based on these responses I
placed each ego/alter tie into at least one category. The three primary categories are
the components of social support: Emotional support, instrumental support, and
informational support. In addition I developed three secondary categories: maintaining
relationships, mothering-at-a-distance and surveillance. As mentioned earlier, ties may
serve more than one purpose for the ego and/or alters. To accommodate this, several of
the ties were placed in more than one category.
As discussed previously, social support is often categorized into emotional support, instrumental support and informational support; these three categories of social support played prominent roles in the participants’ social ties. Emotional support is defined as comfort, encouragement and expressions of caring which are available in an individual’s social network (Song et al., 2011). The largest portion of identified social ties involved emotional support: 74 percent. Emotional support can flow from alter to the ego, in the reverse direction or in both directions (Chib et al., 2013; Song et al., 2011). Most ties involving emotional support were bidirectional, were emotional support flowed in both directions: 76 percent.

Instrumental support is defined as the availability of assistance, material goods and resources in one’s social network (Chib et al., 2013; Song et al., 2011). Instrumental support was present in 40 percent of identified ties, in 68 percent of these ties instrumental support flowed toward the ego and in 32 percent support flowed out to an alter. The majority of ties where instrumental support flowed out from the ego were with family members: 83 percent. These ties where the ego is called on to provide instrumental support to an alter were also often discussed as being a burden (this will be discussed in the next chapter). As might be expected, ties identified as resource providers, despite their fewer numbers, account for nearly half of the ties which provide instrumental support to the ego: 48 percent.

Informational support refers to the availability of advice or guidance in one’s social network (Song et al., 2011). Ties involving the flow of informational support accounted for 47 percent of the identified ties, 65 percent primarily providing information to the ego and 35 percent primarily involving information flowing from the ego to an alter.
The three subcategories only involved a small number of ties, maintaining relationships was involved in 14 percent of ties, mothering-at-a-distance in 13 percent, and surveillance in 3 percent. Although each of these categories could be subsumed within one of the social support categories, I have separated these into distinct categories because they each have a unique quality which makes it applicable to only certain relationships. Also identifying and investigating these three categories of ties added to my understanding of how these MPENs operate.

Maintaining relationships as a category of social ties refers to relationships which have a social status aspect or which involve some aspect of the ego’s identity or the identity of some portion of the ego’s social network; these qualities can be seen in 14 percent of the total ties. Some examples of these types of ties, which will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter, are an older sister maintaining social status with her younger siblings, a husband and wife maintaining their relationship and sense of family at a distance, and former co-workers communicating and maintaining their sense of professional identity and community.

Maintaining relationships can also have a negative aspect, involving an alter attempting to maintain relationships dynamics with the ego which are rejected or seen as undesirable by the ego. These attempts to maintain an undesired relationship dynamic was seen in 4 ties.

Mothering-at-a-distance refers to ties where the ego used her mobile phone to overcome the barriers of distance to continue mothering her children; this category is further divided into direct mothering-at-a-distance (between ego/mother and alter/child) and indirect mothering-at-a-distance (between ego/mother and an alter who in the ego’s
absence performs some tasks usually associated with parenting). The participants described ties involving mothering-at-a-distance in 13 percent of the identified ties, all but two with family members.

The category of surveillance refers to either the ego or an alter using their mobile phone to keep track of the movements of the other. Although keeping track of the movements of children is part of mothering-at-a-distance, surveillance as defined in this study does not refer to the protective way a parent keeps track of a child’s movements, rather it refers to a type of surveillance designed to either control the other or to protect oneself from that control. In these relationships a husband or an ex-partner may use a tie as a way of finding out where the ego is and who she is with. In a response to the attempt at control, the ego may also use the same tie to keep track of the movements of the husband or the ex in order to maintain some freedom of movement (this will be discussed in more detail in the case studies in the next chapter). This behavior was described in only two ties, each either a romantic relationship or a formally romantic relationship.

The Relationship Between Alter Types and Types of Social Support.

In this section, I discuss the attributes of alters which compose the four Alter types (Family members, Friends, Resource providers, and Church members/leaders) and what kind of social support (emotional support, instrumental support and/or informational support) is associated with each alter type (the subcategories of maintaining relationships, mothering-at-a-distance, and surveillance will be discussed in next chapter).
Family members were defined as any alter who the ego is or was related to, so included in this category are ex-husbands. I also included in this category the father of the ego’s children, even when the couple was never legally married. The overwhelming majority of family members, 35 of 40 provided the ego with emotional support, 14 provided instrumental support and 10 provided the ego with informational support. Emotional support was provided by family members regardless of where they lived and tended to be bidirectional. The location of the alter influenced the direction of instrumental and informational support between by family members: instrumental and informational support between family members living in Korea tended to be bidirectional, while instrumental support associated with family members living outside of Korea flowed almost exclusively from the ego to the alters and informational support associated with family members living outside of Korea primarily flowed toward the ego (see Table 4).

The five family members who were not designated as providing emotional support are noteworthy because these relationships were characterized as being a burden by the ego. In these ties the alter expected or requested instrumental support from the ego (primarily financial) and/or emotional support; or the alter attempted to control the ego in some way (i.e. surveillance). These relationships will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The category of family members included ties to 8 minor children; direct mothering-at-a-distance was involved in all of these ties. These relationships provided the egos with emotional support, but they also required the egos to provide emotional, instrumental and informational support. For some of the women in this study mothering-
at-a-distance was a primary function of the MPEN and both a positive and a negative aspect of the MPEN for the ego. Being able to contact their children at a distance was a valued aspect of their MPEN for all five of the participants, but trying to take on the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship types and social support flowing from or to the ego by location.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource providers (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource providers totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church members/leaders totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals by location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals cumulative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

responsibilities of parenting at a distance also took a toll. While all of the women struggled with the emotional aspects of living separated from a child, two of the participants also spoke of the stress of trying to parent on a day to day basis at a distance (this will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter).
Friends were defined as any alter where the ego described her relationship with the alter as being primarily social. Similar to family members, friends primarily provided emotional support; each of the 26 friend alters was designated as providing emotional support. Unlike family members, there were no friend alters who the ego describe in terms of being a burden. Although the participants did relate providing different types of support to friends, this support was usually reciprocal. Slightly over half (54 percent) of friend alters also provided the ego with instrumental or informational support or both (see Table 4).

The category of resource providers was defined as those alters who the ego discussed primarily in terms of providing resources, either instrumental or informational support. The composition of this category changed as the interviews progressed. Four alters who I had originally placed in the friend category I later reclassified as resource providers based on how the ego describe her relation with the alter. These resource providers might be friends with a specific resource or others who may only be in the ego’s MPEN because of the resource they possess, such as an employer or a real estate agent who finds part-time work for the ego. Granovetter’s (1982) insight that weak ties may be useful suppliers of resources due to the diversity they bring to a social network seems applicable here. Over half (52 percent) of the resource providers were non-Filipinos who provided resources which would be difficult for a Filipino in Korea to possess, such as cultural knowledge and employment or business opportunities. The alters in this category provided the egos with a variety of resources, including language skills, cultural knowledge, help finding work, job related information, and conflict
mediation. Only two alters which were identified as a resource providers were located outside of Korea (See Table 4).

The category of church members/leaders was defined as alters who the ego knew from church and interacted with primarily about church related activities. Although this category had much in common with members of the friends category, they are represented as a distinct category because their activities are almost exclusively associated with the church. Also this category of church members/leaders included four alters from the US and Japan, while the friends category is almost exclusively Filipino. The church members/leaders category had the most even distribution over the three types of social support: 5 providing emotional support, 4 providing instrumental support, and 6 providing informational support. (See Table 4)

Discussion

The quantitative findings of this study are in line with much of the research on social networks and social support. A consistent finding in previous research, which was also support in this study, is that strong ties, particularly kinship ties, tend to be more likely to provide support (Wellman & Frank, 2000; Wellman, 1979; Wellman & Wortley, 1989; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). As discussed above, family members were overwhelmingly designated as “most important” ties and they were the majority of the alters who were in contact with the egos on a daily basis. These intimate family ties were primarily associated with bidirectional emotional support although the location of the alter influenced the type of social support provided or received. All eight of the adult family members living in Korea provided the egos with instrumental and informational
support as well as emotional support. Of the 28 ties with family members living outside of Korea 11 were associated with the egos providing instrumental or informational support to the alters. This data suggests that while family ties tended to provide the ego with emotional support regardless of location. Only family ties located nearby tended to provide instrumental and informational support to the egos, and family ties located at a distance tended to receive far more resources from the egos than they provided. This relationship between social support and obligation is something I explored in the interviews, to be discussed in Chapter 5.

Although tie strength measured by importance was not influenced by distance, when tie strength is viewed in terms of frequency of contact -- egos have more contact (stronger ties) with alters who live in Korea than those who live outside of Korea regardless of category. This seems to suggest that alters who are nearby are called on to provide more social support. Not surprisingly, this trend is strongest for instrumental and informational support, with 44 of the 53 ties associated with providing instrumental and informational support to the ego residing in Korea. This finding is consistent with research which has found that alters who live nearby are more frequently associated with providing instrumental support, particularly for everyday support (Wellman, 1979; Wellman & Wortley, 1989; Wellman & Frank, 2000).

Granovetter (1982) argued for the importance of weak ties with socially-heterogeneous alters in social networks: the ego’s ties with dissimilar alters provide resources which may not be available to the ego or alters who are similar to the ego. The analysis of the quantitative data seems to support Granovetter’s position. Overall the MPENs were populated by a majority of alters who were similar to the egos, 75
percent were other Filipinos. Only 43 percent of alters who were designated as resource providers were Filipinos while 85 percent of alters who were not designated as resource providers were Filipinos. The Filipinos who were primarily resource providers tended to have a special skill or resource, such as speaking Korean or access to a car. While non Filipinos designated as resource providers tended to possess resources which would be difficult for a Filipino working in Korea to access, such as knowledge of culture, access to employment opportunities or resources to run a business.

The quantitative data suggest that the participants use their MPENs to maintain relationships with family and friends (almost exclusively other Filipinos) and they receive and provide emotional support through these ties. The majority of alters living outside of Korea are family members, while the majority of alters residing in Korea are friends. Ties with family members living in Korea and friends tend to involve bidirectional support. However there is a tendency for a large number of ties with family members living outside of Korea to involve instrumental and informational support which flows from the ego. Alters designated as resource providers and church members/leaders were the most dissimilar from the egos, and these groups provided more diverse types of support than family members or friends. In the next chapter, I will discuss each MPEN as a case study which was informed by the quantitative data as well as the qualitative interviews.
Chapter 5: The MPENs as case studies

After analyzing the quantitative data I came to understand that each participant’s MPEN fit uniquely to her life circumstances. Although general trends existed, as discussed in Chapter 4, in order to understand the unique nature of these MPENs I had to try to understand each women’s life circumstances, her needs, her desires, and the obstacles she faced. In these case studies I used the quantitative data gathered on each participant’s MPEN and my understanding of the MPEN (developed from the qualitative interviews) to investigate how each MPEN developed and how the participant used it to meet her needs, desires, and obligations.

In this Chapter I present brief profiles of the five women who participated in this study, as well as some context of their lives and how they came to live and work in Korea. For reasons of confidentiality all names have been changed as well as potentially identifying details. Although it was necessary to change some details in order to shield the participants’ identities as well as other individuals, I have attempted to remain true to the stories they told me.

Although each woman in this study had a unique story to tell, there were several common features to their backgrounds as well as significant differences. The five women in this study were born and grew-up in the Philippines and are currently living in Korea employed as a nanny, housekeeper, and/or cleaner. While they all migrated to Korea before age 40, their ages range from 26 to 57. They are all mothers with children ranging in age from 1 to 22. In addition, each of these women has made the difficult decision to live separate from a child for a significant amount of time while living and working in Korea. Two participants had children living with them in Korea; both of these
Table 5:
Summary of quantitative data on individual MPENs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of alters</th>
<th>Density (Ego’s perception of relationships between alters)</th>
<th>Strength of tie, as measured by importance</th>
<th>Strength of tie, as measured by frequency of contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>13  2  3  15  1  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>7  7  2  7  9  0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>7  7  6  5  15  0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>5  7  8  4  7  9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>9  7  4  4  8  8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of alters</th>
<th>Location In Korea/out of Korea</th>
<th>Nationality Filipino/Korean/other</th>
<th>Ego’s type of relationship with alters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>16/1/1  13  2  3  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8/8</td>
<td>8/2/6  7  3  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18/2</td>
<td>14/5/1  6  12  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>16/0/4  6  4  5  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>17/2/1  8  5  2  5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

women also had a child living in the Philippines. All were documented residents of Korea, two were permanent residents (having married Korean citizens) and the other three were in the country on work visas. Two were married, two were separated or divorced and one never married. One earned a four year university degree and another
earned a vocational nursing degree; a third completed high school before entering the workforce and the other two ended their education before graduating high school. Two have lived and worked in several countries and have been employed as professionals, while for the other three working as a nanny/housekeeper has been their primary career path.

Mary

Mary is a 30 year old married mother of three children, with a son age ten, a daughter age eight and, another daughter age one. She lives with her older two children and her sister. Her husband works in a Korean factory and lives several hours by bus from the Mary and his two older children; he sees them on weekends. The couple’s youngest daughter lives in the Philippines and is cared for by Mary’s father with the help of a nanny. Mary describes her family as being close despite being split between the Philippines and Korea. Her father, brother and youngest daughter live in the Philippines (her mother is diseased) and the rest of her immediate family as well as her in-laws reside in Korea.

Mary grew up in a semi-rural area of the Philippines with her younger brother, older sister and both parents. She relates doing well in school but due to finances further education was not an option. After graduating from high school, she got a job as a cashier in a department store. She met her future husband through friends and married six months later, at age 18. She describes a close relationship with her husband, “He’s my best friend.” The couple had their first child, a son, when Mary was
20 and a daughter two years later. Mary describes this as a happy time in her life although finances were always a concern.

When the couple married, Mary’s in-laws had already been working in Korea for several years. With his parents’ encouragement, Mary’s husband found work in a Korean factory and migrated when Mary was 22. Around this time, Mary’s older sister also migrated to Korea to work as a nanny. Mary waited until her daughter was old enough to go to daycare before making the same move. She came to Korea on a tourist visa, and with the assistance of her sister-in-law, she found work as a nanny and childcare for her two children.

In the five years Mary has been in Korea she has had several jobs as a nanny and/or housekeeper. When I met her she was working fulltime cleaning offices for the Kenyan embassy as well as several part-time jobs. She describes a rather grueling work schedule, often working seven days a week. On weekdays she works from 8 am to 4 pm at the embassy. After work, she takes public transportation home and cares for her children. Often she will leave them with her mother-in-law before leaving to work other part-time jobs cleaning offices, private homes or restaurants in the evenings. These additional jobs are short-term, lasting from a single day to several weeks or months on occasion. Typically, she will finish her work day between 10 pm and 1 am. Her weekends are also taken up with part-time work, usually working on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Mary’s husband works in a factory two hours by bus from Mary and the couple’s two older children. The family is together only on weekends, even this time together as a family is interrupted by the need for both parents to work part-time jobs. A little over a
year ago after Mary gave birth to her third child, she and her husband made the difficult decision to send their new daughter to live with relatives in the Philippines. Mary relates how heart wrenching making this decision was, but that she felt she had no good options. If she kept her daughter with her, she would be unable to work.

After talking with Mary I came away with the impression of a woman who was constantly being pulled in different directions, by conflicting obligations and by spatial and temporal limitations. A major tension in Mary’s life was between maintaining family relationships, including her obligations to raise her children, and meeting her financial obligations.

Mary’s MPEN is extreme by several measures. Her perception of the networks density is almost complete at 0.993. Not only does she feel that almost all of her alters know each other, in her judgment three-quarters of the ties between alters are close. Her relationships with her alters are also typically strong bonds: over 70 percent of alters are family members, who were placed in the “most important” relationship category; and she reports having daily contact with 82 percent of her alters, more than double the next highest participant. Only two of her alters are non-Filipinos; six of her alters, all family members, are located in the Philippines. The majority of her ties involve providing emotional support, which is bidirectional in most instances. Many of her ties also involve instrumental support; much of this involves Mary supporting others in her MPEN. She also receives instrumental and informational support from others in the form of finding extra work and childcare. The ties which Mary discussed the most were those which involve “mothering-at-a-distance.” These were measured as strong ties by both importance and frequency of contact. The quantitative data gives the picture of a tightly
knit MPEN which is dominated by strong bonds between family members or other Filipinos who come from similar backgrounds as Mary.

**Migration: Links in a chain**

Chain migration (Massey, 2012) refers to the influence that an individual’s social network may have on the decision to migrate and her later adjustment to the host country. Transnational workers and potential transnational workers are able to draw on the experiences and knowledge of kin, friends and others from their community who previously migrated to the host country. Having trusted information about what to expect in the host country as well as network connections already in place in the destination reduces the risk and costs for the transnational worker. While the idea of chain migration primarily refers to the linking of those in the host community with those in the community of origin as a catalyst for new migration, to a lesser extent it also refers to how transnational workers remain connected to their community of origin through the sending of remittances and continued obligations (Massey, 2012).

Mary’s migration to Korea is a classic example of the chain migration model, illustrating both the positive and negative aspects of this experience. Mary’s migration was preceded by that of her in-laws and later by her husband and sister. Mary waited until her children were old enough to attend school and then she and her children made the moved to Korea. Before arriving she had multiple trusted sources who were able to inform her what to expect before she decided to migrate. On arrival, she had a well established social support network. With her husband working in a factory outside of Seoul, she moved in with her sister-in-law in the same building where her mother-in-law
lives. Her sister-in-law introduced her to an employer who was able to sponsor her visa. This migration chain greatly reduced Mary’s risks involved in migrating to Korea.

Figure 7: Mary’s MPEN map showing strength of ties based on importance. The lines between alters indicate Mary’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

One aspect of chain migration is that the new arrival often joins a preexisting community through her social network. Mary’s MPEN reflects this chain migration process. Twelve of her alters are family members six in Korea and six in the Philippines. These 12 strongest ties are evenly distributed across the two countries, and all of these
ties were in her social network before she migrated to Korea. Of her remaining alters only two are non-Filipino. Over the five years she has been in Korea, Mary has remained connected to the same core group as she was before her migration.

Figure 8: Mary’s MPEN map showing strength of ties based on frequency of contact. The lines between alters indicate Mary’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

This kind of social network where the transnational worker maintains strong bonds connecting alters who are similar to the ego and excluding dissimilar alters is often referred to as ghettoization (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008): the traditional view of expat communities as closely knit groups of expats sharing an enclave. Mary’s MPEN
shares many of the qualities of these expat spaces without the spatial limitations. By using her mobile phone, she is able to maintain her ties with her sister-in-law, living in the same apartment, with her husband, living in a city two hours away and with her family members living back in the Philippines. While this densely connected MPEN provides social support, Mary has little contact with people who are dissimilar from herself. Social networks such as Mary’s have been seen as sources of strong social support but also as possibly limiting opportunities (Ryan et al., 2008).

Social Support

While scholars have shown that individuals tend to provide social support to those who have provided them with social support in the past (Wellman & Frank, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999), dense social networks with strong ties have been linked with a norm of providing social support, even between individuals who do not have a history of providing each other social support (Wellman & Frank, 2000). Mary’s MPEN, composed primarily of family members with strong ties, seems to fit this model. Many of her ego to alter ties are involved with bidirectional social support, but she also has ties with alters where she feels an obligation to provide social support. These ties, where social support flows primarily in one direction -- from ego to alter, create a burden for Mary.

This network of kin eased Mary’s transition into Korean society by providing emotional support as well as informational and instrumental support in the form of assisting with childcare, finding employment, and completing day to day tasks. As the term chain migration implies, each individual is a link in a chain which connects the host country with the transnational’s community of origin. For Mary, as well as many other
transnational workers, the opportunities in the host country meant obligations to those she left behind. These obligations are often financial and emotional (Horst, 2006).

Once she settled into her job in Korea, Mary began to provide financial assistance to her father and occasionally to her brother in the Philippines. Her father was unable to work due to a heart condition, so she saw helping him as a family obligation. She denied that this is a burden for her, accepting it as an unavoidable obligation. In the excerpt below she discusses her obligation to her father.

No, it isn’t stressful. What’s the word, I think it’s my obligation to take care of him because he doesn’t have work now because he’s sick. A Filipina will not say everything to our husband. But he will say you have a family you must take care of them. If my father needs medicine and I have money, what can I do? I have to give him money. How could I not?

Although she denies that providing financial support to family members is a burden, she went on to discuss how this financial obligation causes stress in her life. Her salary was enough to support her and her children, but having to meet the financial needs of family members in the Philippines forces her to find extra work. Below, Mary describes the tension with her children working part-time jobs causes.

They like, ‘Mom why you have to work.’ Every time, especially on Sundays. If my father needs money, I have to work part-time. If it’s Sundays, my kids are like, “Mom why you have to work, we have to go here and here. I leave them in the morning because if I leave them after they wake up they won’t let me go.
Despite her denial, during our interviews Mary’s mixed emotions toward meeting her financial obligations toward her father became obvious. She described being torn between sending her father money because it is her familial duty and feelings of resentment she has towards her father.

He has this heart problem and I hear my dad was drinking. But he cannot drink. So he doesn’t take care of himself. So sending money is hard; I don’t always know where to get money. I’m not a machine. I only get my salary once a month, so if I send money once you need to… I cannot send it again because I have kids here.

I do not say to my husband how much money I send to my family.

Four months after my mom died he get a new wife, so and they have daughter.

In the above section, Mary touches on two of the main resentments she has towards her father: his drinking and his remarrying so soon after her mother’s death. She seems to feel that he is not doing enough for himself, at least not taking care of his health as he should, and she shows some anger that some of the money she sends him is going to his new wife. She also forcefully voices her frustration with the line, “I’m not a machine,” and later pointing out that her first responsibility is to her children.

Access to a mobile phone enables Mary and her father to communicate daily. He is able to ask for help whenever he needs it, and she is able to respond to his requests as quickly as possible. Although this is a very efficient arrangement, it is one which weighs on Mary. Her one year old daughter is living with her father, so in order to maintain contact with her daughter she has to communicate with her father, which she
does several times throughout each day. In effect, she is forced to have daily contact with one of the major sources of stress in her life.

The stress of providing support was not limited to financial support; Mary also discussed the stress of providing emotional support to her family in the Philippines. Both her father and brother would call her when they have problems. She feels that they don’t understand how stressful her life is in Korea or that she has problems too.

Sometimes when I’m so tired and pissed off, I want them to talk to me, without hearing any problems from there.

I have my moments, I’m not breaking but I’m tired. I have problems here and I don’t want the problems from there too.

As with responding to her father’s financial requests, the mobile phone gives her family almost unfettered access to her, in the excerpt above she describes how she is unable to shield herself from their demands for emotional support. She feels like she cannot put limits on their calls other than to ask them not to call or text her while she is working, “I tell them just to make sure I’m not at work because I don’t want to discuss problems while I’m at work.” Her mobile phone puts her in the position of always being available for her family, even though she feels they abuse this access.

Her ties to her husband provide a more balanced exchange of emotional support. Despite living in different cities and only seeing each other on weekends, by using the mobile phone they are able to communicate throughout the day and provide each other with emotional support.
When he’s pissed off with his boss he calls me. Things he can’t talk to his co-workers. I’m his best friend. So those things, little things and big things. It’s very important. …

I had a problem with my employer, before. I’m so pissed off. I just sent him a message, can you call me when you have time?

Then he will call me, I just go to my room and just cry. I’m so tired I don’t want to work here. Not every time. Sometimes when I have a bad day, I just need someone to talk to.

In the above excerpt, Mary describes how she and her husband use their mobile phones to support each other throughout the day, to talk about the daily challenges that they can’t talk about to anyone else. The emotional support she receives from her husband is very important to Mary. She works long hours, often without any peers to talk to; being able to access the support her husband provides during the work day helps her combat feelings of isolation and hopelessness.

Mary also uses her mobile phone to access instrumental and informational support from her sister-in-law and her mother-in-law, as well as others in her MPEN. As mentioned above, in order to meet her financial obligations she often has to find extra work. Below, she describes how she uses her mobile phone to find work when her father asks for money.

Sometimes my father will say he needs money. I have to get it now. I text my sister-in-law and my friend to find me work. They text me where I can work that night and I ask my mother-in-law to watch my kids. Before I get
home I have a job for that night, and I can send my father money the next day.

Although her obligations to her father are a source of stress, the excerpt above shows how Mary’s MPEN assists her in meeting her immediate needs and reduces her stress. Even when confronted with an immediate request for money, she is able to access her MPEN to find work and childcare with minimal time or effort.

**Mothering-at-a-Distance**

The most challenging aspect of Mary’s day to day life was caring for her three children. During our interviews, she repeatedly returned to discuss her efforts to care for her children, and this is the one issue which caused her to show emotion. Her two older children, and son 10 and a daughter 8, live with Mary and attend school in Seoul. A year ago after giving birth to her youngest daughter, Mary made the difficult decision to send her daughter to live with the child’s grandfather in the Philippines. Mary explained that she had to do this so she could continue to work and provide for her family. This separation has been very difficult for Mary; several times during our interviews she became visibly upset when talking about her youngest daughter.

Use of her mobile phone allows Mary to mother-at-a-distance with all three of her children. Although she lives with her two older children, Mary’s long work hours require her to be away from her children for much of the day, including the busy times when they are getting ready for school and returning from school. Mary uses her mobile phone to supervise her older children during the periods when she cannot be with them. With her younger daughter Mary uses her mobile phone to maintain her relationship with her daughter and to supervise those she has entrusted to care for her. First I will
discuss how Mary uses her mobile phone to mother-at-a-distance with her older children and then with her one year old daughter.

Mary bought both of her older children mobile phones, so she would be able to communicate with them at any time, except during school hours (They are not allowed to have their phones on during school hours). In the following excerpt, Mary describes her morning routine with her children.

In the morning I need to be at work at 8 o’clock. I wake them at 7 and leave them at 7:30, so on the way to work I’m calling them. Have you made your bed, have you brushed your teeth. Then at work I call them, OK go to school, is everything fine. Then at 8:30, I’ll go to the bathroom, so my boss can’t hear, and call them again. …

They are not allowed to use their phone at school, so I don’t talk to them until 2 o’clock. But I call anyway. If I don’t get an answer, I know they are in school and everything is OK.

Then I am clear, I can relax and work.

This excerpt reveals how much Mary relies on her mobile phone to mother her children. Not only does she rely on the communication via mobile phones to supervise her children in completing their morning tasks and in getting to school, she also relies on this communication to provide herself with peace of mind, so she can go on with her workday. She calls her children as a way of reassuring herself that they are OK, “But I call anyway. If I don’t get an answer, I know they are in school and everything is OK.” Using her mobile phone, she is able to know exactly where her children are throughout the day, even when she cannot talk to them.
An important affordance of the mobile phone for Mary is the ability to use it undetected, “I’ll go to the bathroom, so my boss can’t hear, and call them again.” The ability to use her mobile phone in secret allows Mary to mother her children when she isn’t present, without interrupting her work schedule, and allows her to work with a clear mind, “Then I am clear, I can relax and work.” This ability to use her mobile phone in secret is also an important part of her tie to her daughter in the Philippines.

Mary’s pays for a nanny to care for her one year old daughter who lives with her grandfather in the Philippines. By using Skype video calls, Mary is able to talk to and see her daughter at times throughout her work day. During breaks she is able to openly video call with her daughter, but she also able to secretly communicate with her daughter while working, “My phone is in my apron and I can see and talk to my daughter while I’m working.” Mary discusses how important this is for her during her long work days, “when you are so tired … And talking to your daughter while working makes you more energetic.” She describes talking to and seeing her daughter as a way of reminding herself of why she is working in Korea, justifying the sacrifices she is making and giving her motivation to carry on.

Just as ties involving social support can have positive and negative aspects, ties involving mothering-at-a-distance can also be a mixed of joy and sadness. In this excerpt, Mary describes a Skype call when her daughter called her “mama” for the first time.

Oh my Gosh! It was just two days ago when I heard her talk to me like “mamma”. Ooohhh gosh it makes me cry when I’m at work. I really want to
go home and hug her. You know, I want her to come here very soon. First talk, I'm not there. First step, I'm not there, only Skyping.

Mary values these Skype calls with her daughter. She sees them as an important avenue of communication which allows her to maintain and develop her relationship with her daughter while still providing for her family. While she derives great joy from seeing and talking to her daughter, these calls also open up the wounds that she keeps under wraps most of the time. Skyping with her daughter brings her closer to her daughter while highlighting what she is missing and the distance between them.

Me: So, when you’re talking to her on Skype, it sounds like (Mary interrupts)

Mary: I’m home!

Me: You’re (Mary interrupts)

Mary: It’s bad because I can’t touch her, I can’t hug her (She tears up and stops talking.)

This interaction nicely illustrates the conflicting emotions Mary has to balance every day and how using her mobile phone brings those emotions to the fore. She wants to see and talk with her daughter as often as she can. While doing this brings her joy, it also forces her to confront the sadness she feels living apart from her daughter.

As mentioned above, during our interviews Mary seemed to be in a constant state of being pulled between two obligations: caring for her children as a nurturing parent and providing financially for her children and extended family. Mary’s MPEN reflects the tension between these obligations.
Through her MPEN Mary is able to access emotional support from her husband and other relatives. She emphasized the importance of the emotional support she receives from her husband and youngest daughter; when she feels like she can’t go on, these are the people she turns to. She also receives informational and instrumental support through her MPEN which allows her to find extra work and childcare. And perhaps most importantly her MPEN allows her to mother-at-a-distance, for all three of her children.

While being able to access her MPEN anytime anywhere is important to Mary, “I can’t leave home without my mobile phone,” this access can also be a burden, being unable to escape from her obligations, particularly those to her extended family in the Philippines. The tension in Mary’s MPEN is most evident in her ties to her father and youngest daughter. She “needs” to stay in frequent contact with her daughter for emotional support and to maintain/develop their relationship. However, in order to access this important source of support, she must also put herself in position to provide social support to her father, which is a source of stress.

Jane

Jane is a 43 year old mother of two, with a ten year old daughter and a three year old son. She is separated from her husband, who lives in Hong Kong with their two children. Jane grew up in an upper middle class family in the Philippines with her two younger sisters and both parents. All three of the siblings have completed college; Jane earned a degree in business and has held managerial positions in several companies. Her father founded and runs a successful construction business.
Jane has an extensive travel history, living and working in several countries prior to her current stay in Korea. In her late 20s, she was working in Brunei where she met her future husband. The couple married and moved to Hong Kong, where their two children were born. In Hong Kong, the couple lived a comfortable life with Jane’s husband working in the financial sector while Jane was employed as a regional manager of a business school. They separated three years ago, and after losing temporary custody of her children (“He had all of the money, so I couldn’t fight him.”) Jane took a job as a nanny in Korea.

Jane made her first of several visits to Korea in 2009 on a business trip. Before accepting her first position as a nanny in Korea three years ago she weighed her options and felt that Korea is a place she would enjoy living. Presently she works as a nanny for a French family living in Seoul. She works three days a week, 6 to 8 hours a day. In contrast to all of the other women in this study, she does not take on any part-time work as a nanny or housekeeper. Instead, she devotes her spare time to her business ventures. Her primary business interest is selling items to the expat community; she also sublets two apartments on short-term leases. She is doing well enough financially that she is able to hire her own housekeeper three days a week.

While speaking with Jane, I was struck by how she conveyed a sense of being in complete control, of both the interview process and her life. One thing which set Jane apart from the other participants was that she addressed me by my first name. This would not normally be noteworthy, but she is the only woman in the study who used my first name. The other woman in this study addressed me as “sir,” despite my repeated requests to use my first name. This sense of equality, which was established by the
terms of address, was also evident throughout the interview. Jane always politely answered my questions, but she also asked questions of me, giving the interview a conversational quality.

Jane’s decision to come to Korea was not made out of financial need. For her living in Korea is one of several acceptable options. Her father would like her to return to the Philippines to work for his company, and her husband has pleaded for her to come back to their marriage. For Jane living in Korea is a choice she has made willingly and does not regret. Although she does regret not being with her children, she takes responsibility for this decision and feels it is best for the time being. She talked about others (i.e. her father and estranged husband) wanting her to make other decisions, but she embraces her life in Korea as the life she wants to live, despite what others may want of her.

This sense of control over her life does come into conflict with her relationship with her 10 year old daughter. Jane has promised her daughter that she will return to Hong Kong to be with her next year, so despite what she wants, Jane plans to return to Hong Kong next year although she says she will not return to her husband.

Jane named 16 alters in her MPEN, and her perception of alter to alter relationships gave her MPEN a density of 0.258, giving it the second lowest density of the five study participants and putting it in sharp contrast with the extreme density of Mary’s MPEN. Three of her alters had no relationship with anyone else in her MPEN, and there was one clique consisting of 3 alters. She placed seven of her alters, all family members, in the “most important” category, seven in the “important” category and
the remaining two in the "less important" category. Although her MPEN had the fewest alters of the five participants, she reported contacted all of her alters at least weekly, 7 daily and 9 weekly. The two measures of tie strength, placement in one of the categories of importance and reported frequency of contact, showed some incongruity.

Figure 9: Jane’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on importance. The lines between alters indicate Jane’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

Jane reported that daily contact with only two of the alters which she placed in the “most important” category, her two sisters. She reported being in daily contact with 5 of the 9 alters placed in the “important” and less important” categories; 4 of these 5 alters were
connected to a business Jane runs in addition to her work as a nanny. Her MPEN consisted of 7 family members, 6 ties which supplied resources, and 3 friends (see Table 5 and Figures 9 and 10)

Figure 10: Jane’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on frequency of contact. The lines between alters indicate Jane’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

The location of the alters in Jane’s MPEN were evenly split between Korea (8) and other countries (8), 4 in the Philippines, 3 in Hong Kong and 1 in Ireland. Jane’s MPEN is the only one of the 5 participants not to have a majority of Filipino alters; 6 of
her alters are Filipino, 3 are from Hong Kong (I have identified her two children as natives of Hong Kong), 2 are Korean and the remaining 4 are Nigerian, American, French and Belgian. The final alter is a collective made up of buyers, expats living in Korea, for her online sales business (discussed below).

One of the qualities which set Jane’s MPEN apart from the other women in the study is the lesser role ties involving emotional support play. While 7 ties were identified as involving some aspect of emotional support, only 3 were identified as primarily involving emotional support, her parents and a friend. She identified 8 ties which involved instrumental support, 5 of these involved running her business, 2 were giving instrumental support to her sisters and 1 was with her ex-husband which involved resolving conflicts. An interesting aspect of the ties with her family of origin, her parents and sisters, involved maintaining her place as the oldest child. Her ties with her children, a daughter 10 and a son 3, involved mothering-at-a-distance.

The quantitative data on Jane’s MPEN suggests a loosely connected network where many alters were not fully integrated in the MPEN, having few or no ties to any other alters. The ties which Jane judged to be most important were all family members, but these were not the ties she communicates with most frequently. She reported 5 of the 7 alters which she communicated on a daily basis as being people who provided resources for her business, while 8 of the 10 ties to family members or friends are accessed on a weekly basis. The time she spends using her MPEN seems to be primarily devoted to obtaining instrumental and informational support to run her business.
Migration: Making a new start

As mentioned earlier, Jane lived in several countries prior to coming to Korea. For her, migrating to Korea was one of several attractive options. Jane made the decision to come to Korea following the end of her marriage. She and her now ex-husband lived an upper middle class lifestyle in Hong Kong. She was employed as a regional representative for a educational firm and her ex-husband was employed as a financial advisor. After leaving her husband and losing custody of her children, “He had all the money and lawyers; I couldn’t win,” she felt that she needed to get away from her ex-husband. She had visited Korea several times for her work and felt that Korea was a place that she would feel comfortable living while she sorted out her next step. She found employment as a nanny more for the visa it provided than for financial necessity.

Unlike the other women in this study, Jane’s only financial obligations were to pay for her living expenses. She also saw her work as a nanny as a way to achieve other things not as a career. Once she arrived in Korea, she began to look for ways to make money which did not involve working as a nanny or housekeeper. She began buying items and then selling them online to the expat community; she also rented two apartments which she sublets for additional income.

Her MPEN was developed around two primary desires: her buying and selling business and maintaining relationships with her family. Of the 7 alters she reports contacting daily, 4 are people who provide resources for her online business. These transactions are the most frequent communication she has on her MPEN. Jane only named two friends in her MPEN. One of these friends helped her get her online business started and is still a frequent source of information about how to run her
business, and the other was a woman who made several purchases from Jane. Through these financial transactions they developed a friendship.

Her family and a cleaner she employs are the only Filipinos in Jane’s MPEN. Jane has cultivated relationships with people who come from different backgrounds and can provide different resources and information. She is critical of the Filipino expat community, feeling that they stay too much to themselves and limit their possibilities.

“I talk to Filipinas all the time that they can be more than a nanny. There are opportunities out there, but they only think in terms of finding a good employer and sending money home.”

Jane does not feel limited by her nationality or employment. Much of her MPEN reflects her desire to improve her situation and open new opportunities for herself.

The second major desire Jane has is to maintain her relationships with her family. This desire can also be seen in her constructed MPEN. She placed all of her family members in the “most important” category although her two sisters are the only family members who are contacted on a daily basis. Her desire to maintain these family relationships through her MPEN can be divided into two categories: mothering-at-a-distance and maintaining status within her family. Below, I discuss how Jane has built and maintained her business and then I return to her relationships with her family members.

**Resources to Build a Business**

As noted above, the majority of the daily communications Jane has within her MPEN have to do with her online buying and selling business. She started this business soon after arriving in Korea with the help of her friend Anderson. Anderson also buys
and sells items online although to a lesser extent than Jane currently does. He provided much of the early information which Jane has used to make her business successful, and he still provides Jane with information on what items are selling for what prices.

This business involves selling items, usually used items, on several Facebook pages which are dedicated to buying and selling in Korea. Most of the people who sell on these pages are selling items which they cannot take with them when leaving the country. Instead of selling her own items, Jane buys items from three suppliers. In addition to posting items for sale, she has used this space to develop a customer base. Individuals will contact her with requests, and she responds to these requests by trying to acquire them from one of the 3 suppliers she works with.

Her business is run entirely through her mobile phone. She speaks with each of her suppliers several times a day using voice calls. These calls are negotiations about prices and items the suppliers may have and items her buyers are looking for. Buyers contact her using Facebook posting and private messages. Because both buying and selling is time sensitive, Jane must always be able to contact her suppliers and potential buyers. Being out of contact may mean losing a sale and money. Her mobile phone makes it possible for Jane to be in continual contact while working or going about her daily tasks.

I can conduct my business anywhere, any time with my mobile phone, even when I’m working. …

It would be impossible without a mobile phone. I would have to sit in front of a computer all day, I couldn’t work. I have to be in contact with my
suppliers throughout the day. My buyers will go to someone else if I can’t get back to them right away.

By using her mobile phone to develop an MPEN which includes resources devoted to running her business, Jane has been able to make extra money while avoiding working long hours, as many transnational domestic workers do.

It is interesting to contrast Mary and Jane’s MPENs. The composition of Jane’s MPEN was developed through her agency: she had goals she wanted to achieve and she developed relationships which would assist her in reaching those goals. She sought out suppliers who could meet her customers’ needs. As well, she used her mobile phone to foster relationships with buyers who continue to use her services. Her alters were developed and maintained because they provided unique informational or instrumental support. On the other hand, Mary’s MPEN was developed around family relationships; she had little control over the composition or structure of her MPEN. Her alters are similar to her and provide a great deal of emotional support but little unique informational or instrumental support.

Mothering-at-a-Distance

Jane’s 10 year old daughter and 3 year old son live with their father in Hong Kong. Her attempts to mother-at-a-distance are complicated by her ex-husband. Neither of the children have access to mobile phones or computers except for when they are supervised by their father. His control of communication between Jane and the children allows him access to Jane, whether she wants it or not. He uses this access to try to convince her to come back to him. In this excerpt she describes the tension this causes, “He uses our phone calls to try to get me back. It always ends in a fight. I try to be
respectful; he’s the father of my children. But it never ends up well.” Partially because of the difficulties with her ex-husband, Jane limits her calls to her children to once a week.

In respect to these calls, her mobile phone is a necessary tool to communicate with her children, but her ties to her children also involve ties to her ex-husband. She cannot contact her children without also contacting her ex, and she cannot eliminate contact with her ex without also losing contact with her children. She describes her dilemma this way,

The phone is like a leash. He knows where to find me and knows that I have to keep that line open to him. … I want to call my children. At the same time I dread it

In addition to dealing with conflict with her ex-husband during her attempts to mother-at-a-distance, Jane also must navigate her children’s reaction to the divorce and her separation from them. Jane tries to focus her conversations with her children on their activities how they are doing in school or what they did that day, but her separation from them and from their father often becomes an issue. Her 3 year old son doesn’t understand what has happened between his parents, but he accepts that this is the way things are.

My son is only 3, so he doesn’t understand much of what is happening.

With him is it is easier; he sort of accepts the way things are. He misses me and I miss him, but there aren’t other expectations from him.

However, Jane’s 10 year daughter is angry about the divorce and blames her mother for being away. Jane’s conversations with her daughter are often emotional,
It’s very hard, my daughter is angry. … She is old enough to understand some of what is happening, but not everything. She wants me there and can’t understand why I’m not there.

I want to be with them, but I can’t right now. It makes me cry.

Jane’s attempts at mothering-at-a-distance may more accurately be portrayed as maintaining a presence in their lives. Because of the barrier that her ex-husband imposes, she is unable to have free access to communicating with her children. She is distressed by this situation. She feels that as her daughter gets older she has to be with her. Although she does not want to return to Hong Kong, she has promised her daughter that she will return next year.

Living Life

As mentioned above, Jane’s move to Korea was not a necessity but a choice, a choice she made among several options. For Jane, Korea offered a lifestyle that she wanted. The life that she has chosen is at odds with the life her family wants for her and conflicts with the status within her family that Jane wants to maintain.

As the oldest child, Jane enjoys a certain amount of status in her family. To maintain that status she has lied to them about her current situation. She has told them that she is still working as a regional representative, keeping her work as a nanny a secret. When she talks with her father a recurring theme is his pressuring her to return home and work for his construction company. Maintaining the lie about her employment makes it easier for her to remain in Korea and live her own life.

They don’t even know that I work as a nanny. No one in my family knows.

… They wouldn’t like it. I’m the oldest child so I should set the example for
my sisters. My parents want me to come home and help run the family business. They wouldn’t like me being a nanny.

Living away from her family of origin allows Jane the freedom to live the way she wants, while having access to her family through her mobile phone allows her to maintain her place in her family.

My father is old and he wants me to live a certain way, but that isn’t what I want. … The distance is better. It makes it easier for me to have my own life as I want it. On Skype I’m able to make them happy.

Maintaining her status within the family is not limited to her father; Jane is also concerned with her status with her two younger sisters. She describes her relationship with them as being one of an older sibling who is relied on for guidance, “I’m the oldest, so they look to me for advice. We talk a lot about their problems and I give them advice.” As with her parents, using her mobile phone to communicate with her sisters allows her to live her life without losing status.

### Accessing Community on Facebook

Although not part of her constructed MPEN, Jane is member of several community Facebook groups. She has used her involvement in a group dedicated to expats living in her neighborhood to push for social change in her community. Jane lives in a neighborhood of Seoul which is popular with foreigners, and many of the local businesses cater to this market. Members of this Facebook group will ask questions, share information and discuss problems.

During our talk, Jane related two community issues which she became involved in on this Facebook group. The first occurred during the Ebola outbreak in Western
Africa during the summer of 2014. Jane happened to see a sign outside a neighborhood café/bar banning Africans. She took a picture of the sign and posted it on the Facebook page. She relates what happened with some pride.

I was so angry. I took a picture and posted it on the neighborhood Facebook page. People got involved and the bar owner took the sign down and apologized. He had to. His business was ruined; no one would go to that bar. It became a big issue in our neighborhood. … I felt good about that. People got involved and educated each other and the bar owner.

Jane sees herself as a leader. Using her mobile phone to confront this situation allowed her to take a leadership role. While relating this incident, Jane describes how she felt empowered, “It felt good to be able to do something and see such quick action”

Jane is also involved in combating women being harassed on the streets in her neighborhood, and again she uses her mobile phone and the neighborhood Facebook page to confront this harassment.

Men harassing women is an ongoing problem in my neighborhood. Saying things as you walk by, “you look good, I'd like to ….” Sometimes they will follow me up the street. It doesn't matter what I say or do.

Jane has responded to this behavior by creating a forum on the neighborhood Facebook page. In this forum women can write descriptions of harassers, what they are
doing and where incidents occurred, “We post descriptions of men who harass and what they do, so that other women will be warned. And we can vent our frustrations” She acknowledges that this problem is ongoing, but she feels the forum gives women a place to communicate and support each other.

I didn’t ask Jane about her involvement with these neighborhood issues. She brought them up at the end of the interview. It seemed to me that she was proud of these activities and that she saw them as empowering.

Angela

Angela is a 26 year old mother of three, married to a Korean National. She has an eight year old son from a previous relationship who lives in the Philippines with his grandmother, as well as two children, a three year old daughter and a four year old son, with her husband. Her younger children live with Angela and her husband in a suburb of Seoul. Angela dropped out of high school when she became pregnant at age 17; she tried to go back to vocational college several times but never completed a program. While in the Philippines she worked as a cashier and waitress. Angela met her future husband while he was visiting a friend in the Philippines. After a brief courtship, the couple married and moved to Korea four years ago.

Presently, Angela lives in an upper middle class neighborhood of Seoul with her husband and two younger children. She describes her husband as being jealous and controlling and their relationship as growing increasingly difficult over their four years of marriage. He becomes extremely jealous whenever there is a single man at any
gathering, asking questions, "Why is he here?" "How do you know him?" Despite initially being supportive of Angela's relationship with her oldest son, once the couple married Angela's husband would become extremely angry if she tried to have contact with her son or any other relatives in the Philippines.

Her husband does not want Angela to work or to attend activities outside of the home, instead wanting her to stay at home and care for their children. For the first year of their marriage, Angela did not know the pass code for their apartment complex, forcing her to remain in the apartment unless her husband accompanied her. Despite her husband’s attempts to control her, Angela has slowly etched out a life for herself, mostly without her husband’s knowledge.

Once her children were both in school, Angela began to venture out on her own. She presently attends Korean language and culture classes at a local activity center. Through these classes as well as other venues she has been able to build a network of friends. After nearly a year without talking to any friends or relatives in the Philippines, she has re-established contact with her son and mother, without her husband knowledge. In order to make money for her own use and to send back to her son and mother, she works part-time jobs, also without her husband’s knowledge. Because Angela has had to develop a life in secret, her mobile phone has played a vital role in her adjustment to life in Korea.

After talking with Angela I was left with the impression of a woman who felt trapped in her present life but was trying to improve her situation as best she could. She related feeling depressed by her circumstances, often crying wondering what she was
doing in Korea. Her husband’s controlling behavior forced her to live a double life. She
goes out and enjoys some freedom while he is at work. In this aspect of her life she
expresses relative satisfaction. She is able to assert her desires and attempt to build
something for herself: learning Korean so she can function more fully in society and
working so she can gain some financial independence. In contrast, in her life with her
husband, which is devoid of the type of affection or bonding which most people might
hope for, “There is no sweetness between us,” her efforts seem to be focused on
overcoming barriers and keeping the peace. Despite the difficulties in her marriage, she
expresses no resentment toward her husband; instead she talks about her hopes that
things will improve in the future, “I’m trying to learn his culture, so I can understand him.
Maybe someday …”

Angela’s perception of the density of her MPEN was the lowest density in this
study, only 0.179. In addition to the low density, her perception of the ties between
alters was that most had only had contact with each other once or twice. Despite being
loosely connected, Angela’s MPEN was geographically compact, with 18 of her 20
alters living in Korea, in the Seoul area. The remaining two were her 8 year old son and
her mother living in the Philippines. Fourteen of her alters are Filipinos, 5 are Korean
and 1 is Swedish. Her MPEN includes 6 family members (her son, mother, husband and
3 in-laws), 14 friends and 2 alters who were designated as resource providers.

She judged 13 alter to alter ties as strong (know each other well or having close
contact) and 14 as weak (have met once or twice). Angela’s placement of her alters in
the three categories of “importance” was almost evenly distributed: 7 were designated
as “most important,” 7 as “important,” and 6 as “less important.” Tie strength as
measured by frequency of contact closely matches tie strength as measured by designated importance. Angela reported having daily contact with 7 of her alters: her husband (designated most important), 3 of his relations (designated most important), her son and mother (designated most important), and a friend (designated important); Angela reported being in contact with all other alters at least once a week (see Table 5 and Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: Angela’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on importance. The lines between alters indicate Angela’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.
A finding which is surprising considering the overall low density and number of weak ties between alters is that 16 of the ego/alter ties were seen as primarily involving emotional support. Five ties also provided Angela with instrumental support and two with informational support. Angela’s tie to her husband involved what I have termed “surveillance”: using a mobile phone to keep track of another’s whereabouts. In the case of Angela and her husband this surveillance went both ways (this will be discussed below).

![Figure 12: Angela’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on frequency of contact. The lines between alters indicate Angela’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.](image-url)
Overall, Angela’s MPEN is a loosely connected group dominated by friends which provide her with emotional support, primarily in the form of social gatherings. Ties to her husband’s family involve instrumental support primarily to do with living in Korea. An interesting aspect of Angela’s MPEN is the lack of ties to her family and to people living outside of Korea. In the following section I will give my understanding of how Angela’s MPEN developed as it did.

**Migration: Marriage, control and adapting**

Angela’s MPEN can be seen as an adaptation to some difficult life circumstances. She married her husband, a Korean national, after a brief courtship and then migrated to Korea. Angela describes her husband as changing once they came to Korea, becoming jealous and controlling. He would become angry if she tried to have contact with her family in the Philippines, including her son. And for her first year in Korea she did not know the pass code of her apartment building, so she only left her apartment in her husband’s company. Angela’s MPEN developed in this oppressive environment, and her mobile phone has been integral in her efforts to gain some level of independence.

Angela was afraid to use her home computer or phone for fear that her husband might be able to trace her activities. She had no contact with her son or any family members in the Philippines for a little over a year. Once she got a mobile phone, she began using Skype to make video calls with her mother and son in the Philippines, when her husband wasn’t home. When her second born turned a year old, she began to take him out to explore her neighborhood. During these outings she would meet people and add them as Facebook friends or to her Kakaotalk list. In this way, her MPEN
developed by adding alters in a rather haphazard manner, most of her alters did not know each other.

Once her two younger children were in preschool Angela enjoyed more freedom of movement. In a typical day, she takes her children to school and then attends classes at a community center, meets friends for lunch or works a part-time job. Her MPEN has evolved to include 5 types of social support: surveillance with her husband, receiving instrumental support from her husband’s family, receiving and providing emotional support primarily with friends, receiving informational support primarily from two resource providers and mothering-at-a-distance with her son and mother.

**Surveillance: For control and freedom**

Although communication with her husband accounts for only a small percentage of Angela’s mobile phone use, this relationship defines much of her MPEN. As discussed above, Angela’s husband is controlling and jealous, attempting to limit her contact with friends and family. One of the ways he attempts to control her is by keeping tabs on her movements through her mobile phone. His contact with her is primarily through Kakaotalk with occasional voice calls, and consists of him asking her where she is, what she is doing and when she will be home, “he sends me a message what am I doing. Asking where I am and always checking me."

As she became more comfortable living in Korea, Angela began to exert her independence by attending Korean language and culture classes at a community center, working part-time jobs and meeting friends. Her husband disapproves of all of these activities, so she does them without his knowledge. In a similar way that her husband uses Kakaotalk to monitor her location, Angela uses her mobile phone to keep track of
her husband’s schedule, “I run here and here, I send him a message, so I know when he will get home, I run to get home before he does.”

**Instrumental Support: Marital and cultural issues**

Although Angela’s relationship with her husband is difficult, her husband’s family provides her with a great deal of instrumental support, primarily to do with her marital relationship and with living in Korea. Her sister-in-law provides a great deal of instrumental support by acting as a go between with Angela and her husband. The two women talk on Kakaotalk daily and by voice occasionally. Their conversations are primarily about daily events, Angela’s children and problems with her husband. Her sister-in-law is supportive of Angela in her marital difficulties and often gives her advice on how to handle these issues as well as talking to her brother for Angela.

One area of support that her sister-in-law, as well as other members of Angela’s husband’s family, provides is guidance on how to navigate Korean culture and society, both in regards to her husband and daily living. When Angela finds herself in a situation she doesn’t understand, such as a cultural conflict or something as mundane as filling out forms, Angela will contact a family member via Kakaotalk.

Sometimes when we have a problem, when I need something or I don’t understand they can explain to me. I’m 4 years now but it’s hard for me. I have other friends who have been here for 6 years, 10 years. But they still the same like me. I’m still trying to communicate with them and trying to understand their culture.

Although she appreciates the support she gets from her husband’s family, she still has some communication and cultural difficulties with them. Her sister-in-law, who is married
to an American and seems to be more aware of intercultural difficulties, seems to be an important resource for Angela.

Angela also receives more mundane instrumental support from her in-laws, such as when she has difficulty completing a task or finds herself in some misunderstanding. She describes how she might send her sister-in-law a picture of a product which she isn’t sure of its use. Although she speaks some Korean, she also relies on these ties to help translate more complex interactions from time to time.

**Emotional Support**

Accessing emotional support is a complicated process in Angela’s MPEN. Due to her husband’s controlling behavior, she is unable to access usual sources of emotional support, such as family and long time friends in the Philippines. Instead she has adapted by relaying on her husband’s family and a loosely knit network of friends for emotional support, both of these groups prove to be inadequate.

As discussed above, Angela’s in-laws have been supportive in her adjustment to married life and living in Korea. They also serve as a valuable source of emotional support although this is limited in some ways. Angela communicates with her husband’s sister, brother and cousin on a daily basis, primarily through Kakaotalk. This communication frequently focuses on Angela’s problems with her husband; her in-laws often discuss ways they think may help to resolve these difficulties. In the process of providing Angela with instrumental support they also provide emotional support; she feels that they care for her and that she is not alone.

Although Angela’s in-laws try to be supportive, they focus on the cultural conflicts and ignore some possible root causes of the problems. So an unfortunate by product of
the instrumental and emotional support provided by her in-laws is that Angela believes that the solution to her marital problems is in her learning more about the Korean culture. In the excerpt below, Angela is discussing her trying to follow her in-laws advice.

We’ll sometimes it’s really difficult, sometimes when they told me, I’m just confusing and sometimes it’s really very difficult and I try to understand and I listen and try and listen but sometimes it’s just so stressful.

Although her in-laws care for her and want to help, the help they offer invalidates her needs and rights. She is put in the position of trying to understand Korean culture to fix her marriage and when this does not work she is left with no support, “I feel like I’m trapped with him and trying to understand him always and what should I do.” She is left feeling powerless and unsupported despite her in-laws good intentions. Through tears she says, “Sometimes I cry, why I’m here so just keep praying and be strong like that, so … (her voice trails off and becomes inaudible).

A second source of emotional support is her network of friends. She has one friend, Myeong, who she discusses her marital problems with. As with her in-laws, Myeong is Korean and tends to focus on the cultural conflict rather than the underlying marital dysfunction. The rest of Angela’s network of friends is made up of rather casual friends who she communicates with on a weekly basis through Facebook. She will see these friends occasionally for lunch or some other social occasion, but they are not people who Angela considers emotionally close. These friends provide Angela with a social outlet, a chance to forget about her unhappy situation, but they do not provide the kind of emotional support often associated with those who are emotionally close to the ego (Song et al., 2011).
Her husband’s controlling behavior has forced her to cut ties with all of her friends from before she was married and most of her family, the usual sources of emotional support. The emotional support available in Angela’s MPEN comes from her in-laws, who interpret her problems through the lens of cultural conflict and push Angela to change, and casual friends, who Angela does not feel close to. When I asked her who she talks to when she feels upset about her situation, she replied, “Just myself, yea just myself and cry.”

**Informational Support**

Angela receives informational support of different types through two groups in her MPEN: her Filipino friends provide her with information about social events and two of her friends provide her with employment information. Because Angela feels that she has to keep much of her life secret from her husband, she primarily uses her mobile phone to access all of these sources of informational support.

Angela’s network of Filipino friends living in Korea is the largest group in her MPEN, accounting for over two thirds of her alters. Although numerous, Angela does not judge them to be among her more important ties by either of the measures used in this study. In addition, the most connected of these alters to the rest of the MPEN only has ties to 5 other alters, and alter to alter ties in this group are predominantly weak. This loosely connected group of weak ties provides Angela with information on social events in the Filipino expat community, parties and dinners where she can socialize with other Filipinos. She describes how important these gatherings are for her, “We can get together and throw a party, less stressful for us. No worrying, just fun.”
Over the last three years, Angela has used her MPEN to help her become more independent. One way she has exerted her independence has been by working part-time jobs without her husband’s knowledge. She relies on two friends to help her find work. By using Kakaotalk, Angela is able to learn of a job, accept the work and find directions to the job; all without fear that her husband will interfere.

**Mothering-at-a-Distance**

Due to her husband’s attempts to prevent Angela from contacting her son, mothering-at-a-distance poses unusual challenges. Not only must she attempt to maintain her relationship with her son at a distance, she must undertake this difficult task while keeping any communication with her son or mother secret from her husband. She uses Facebook messages and Skype on her mobile phone because this allows her to have more control, “If I use the computer or home phone, he might see it. I’m scared he might find out. I use Facebook because I can delete without him knowing.”

She messages her son almost every day and talks on Skype about once a week. Their communication is mostly about daily events. She finds this unsatisfying, but hopes that it will get better. In this excerpt she describes her situation and hope for change,

He (her son) doesn’t like it. I hiding and call him as much as I can, you know. Now, we talk almost every day. But sometimes on weekends if my husband is home I can’t talk to him. We have some communication now.

So hopefully, we can meet some day.

Angela believes that without her mobile phone and the secrecy it provides she would not be able to contact her son at all, “Before (meaning before she got a mobile phone), I couldn’t talk to him. Now we communicate with my phone.”
While talking about her relationship with her son, she becomes tearful and discusses her feelings of being “trapped” between staying with her husband and her two younger children and her desire to be with her older son. Unable to find a solution, she uses her mobile phone to keep in contact with her son as much as she can. And despite the anguish this situation causes her, she listens to the advice her in-laws give and tries to remain hopeful,

It is very sad that I have the long distance with him (her son), but hopefully someday I can learn more about their culture (her husband’s culture) and maybe meet him (her son) again.

Marie

Marie is a 31 year old mother of two, a nine year old son and a seven year old daughter. She came to Korea a little under four years ago on the recommendation of a friend. Her friend was leaving her job as a nanny to get married and arranged for Marie to take her job. Marie grew up in a rural province in the Philippines. In her teens she dropped out of school and moved to Manila to find work, where she worked as a cashier and waitress.

When she was 20 years old she became romantically involved with an older man. This relationship lasted for seven years and produced two children. She describes it as an abusive relationship, "He is an ex-military officer, so he did anything. He could slap me in a restaurant, whatever he wanted." Her decision to move to Korea was in large part motivated by a desire to leave this relationship, "I wanted to fix my life." Despite her
efforts to distance herself from this relationship, her ex still attempts to control her as much as he can, trying to convince her to return to the Philippines and becoming jealous over what he suspects she might be doing.

Presently, Marie lives alone in a district of Seoul popular with expats. She still works as a nanny for the same family who sponsored her four years ago and supplements her income with part-time cleaning or childcare jobs. A typical work day for Marie involves working eight hours at her primary job as a nanny and then working an additional four to six hours cleaning or babysitting in the evening. She sends money to her ex for her son and she also sends money each month to her parents. She does not view sending money home as a burden, “I don’t mind sending the money. When I have extra I send some. They never ask; it is just something I do.”

My impression of Marie is that of a woman who is enjoying living as she pleases. She speaks a great deal about going out with friends, “Sometimes we just do crazy fun things. … I like living in Korea much more than the Philippines.” However, her demeanor changes when she talks about her children. While discussing her relationship with her children and being away from them, she becomes tearful. Because of the difficult relationship with her ex, maintaining a relationship with her children has been a challenge.

Marie’s perception of her MPEN was that of a moderately dense network, density of 0.316. The locations of alters is close to being evenly split between Korea and the Philippines, 11 and 9 respectively. As with most of the women’s MPENs, Filipinos dominate Marie’s, 16 out of 20 are Filipinos, 3 are Americans and 1 is Japanese. Almost
two thirds of Marie’s alters are friends, 6 are family members, 5 are members of her church and 3 are designated as resource providers.

Figure 13: Marie’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on importance. The lines between alters indicate Marie’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

Marie judged ties between alters as being fairly evenly distributed between having close contact and seeing each other from time to time (see Table 5). Her placement of alters in the three categories of “importance” was fairly evenly split, with 5 designated as “most important,” 7 as “important,” and 8 as “less important.” Strength of ego/alter ties as measured by frequency of contact follows this same pattern, with Marie
having contact with 80 percent of her alters weekly or less frequently. Although the frequency of contact was related with location rather than designated importance, all alters who were contacted daily were located in Korea while none of the ties judged to be “most important” were accessed daily. The alters in Marie’s MPEN provide her with a variety of resources, and most of the ego/alter ties involve more than one type of support.

Figure 14: Marie’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on frequency of contact. The lines between alters indicate Marie’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.
Marie and Angela’s MPENs share some similarities: both are dominated by friends who provide emotional support in the form of socializing and both have men who use the mobile phone for surveillance. Despite these similarities, these two women use their MPENs in different ways. After talking with Angela, I came away with view of her feeling very much alone in a MPEN of superficial ties. Marie gives the impression of a woman who is engaged with her social network and derives much pleasure as well as resources from her alters. As with Angela, knowing how Marie came to Korea helps to explain her MPEN.

**Migration: Following a chain to escape**

Marie came to Korea 4 years ago as a way to escape an abusive relationship and to “fix” her life. Marie took advantage of a chain migration pattern, similar to Mary’s in that she followed a trusted person although in Marie’s case it was a single friend not multiple family members. Marie’s friend was leaving her nanny job to get married; this friend was able to get Marie hired to replace her. Marie accepted this offer as a way to change her life and get out of the 7 year abusive relationship. On arrival in Korea, she had a trusted friend, and access to a social network. Her MPEN became centered in Korea, only maintaining routine contact with a few family members and two alters who assist with mothering-at-a-distance.

One of the interesting features of Marie’s MPEN is the relatively few family members she has included, out of seven siblings she included only one and she does not list her mother in her MPEN. Unlike the other women in this study, Marie receives little emotional support from her family members. The one exception is her father who she calls her best friend. Marie explains this pattern as being the result of her leaving
home in her early teens to work in Manila. As a teenager in Manila, she began to rely on
her network of friends for different types of social support rather than her family; this
pattern has been reproduced in her current MPEN in Korea.

Marie’s MPEN developed to meet two primary needs: mothering at a distance
and adjusting to life in Korea. Except for her father, who provides a great deal of
emotional support, all of her alters located in the Philippines are involved in her efforts
to mother-at-a-distance. While her tie to the father of her children also has to do with
mothering-at-a-distance, there is also an element of control and surveillance in these
contacts. Her alters located in Korea primarily provide emotional, informational and
instrumental support. The emotional support comes in the form of socializing (ties with
friends) or supporting her as she deals with her separation from her children (ties with
church members); the informational and instrumental support is concerned with finding
part-time jobs (a tie with one resource person), matters related to her church (ties with
church members) and Korean culture and language (ties with two friends who are also
resource providers).

**Mothering-at-a-Distance**

As with all of the women in this study, how to maintain her relationship with her
children at a distance was a major concern for Marie and one of the primary functions
she undertakes with her MPEN. For Marie, mothering-at-a-distance is complicated by
her difficult relationship with the father of her children. Marie’s children live in Manila
with their father. They do not have access to a mobile phone, so Marie must go through
their father whenever she wants to contact her children. Jane’s thought of her mobile
phone being a “leash” also seems to apply to Marie’s situation. Her ex wants her to
come back to him and frequently uses her calls to their children as a way to attempt to control her behavior. At times he has limited her contact with her children as a way to force her to come back, “He says no one can take care of the kids, only I (Marie) can, so he tries to force me to come back.” And like Angela’s husband, Marie’s ex uses the mobile phone as a way to keep track of her movements and who she is with, “If I don’t answer the phone, he is jealous. … If I answer the phone, he asks who I’m with.”

Marie feels that her ex treats their children well, but that he doesn’t keep up with their school work. To make sure her children don’t fall behind in school, Marie stayed in frequent contact via Facebook messenger with her children’s teachers. In this way she is able to find out how they are doing in school, if they need anything and about any upcoming events. She will then pass this information on to her ex, “this is happening at school, so you need to fix it or you need to go there and … whatever you can do.” Because she feels that she cannot rely on her ex to follow-up on the information she passes on, Marie also keeps in contact with several friends in Manila who help her care for her children. Below, Marie describes how she contacts a friend when her children need something,

She is a really close friend, even if I need, I cannot send money, she will give it to them until I can send it. If they have something happening and their father won’t go, she will go to be with them.

By using her mobile phone, Marie is able to access her children’s teachers to remain up to date on her children’s school work and by accessing her network of friends she is able to see that her children get what they need without having to rely on her ex.
Emotional Support

Marie receives emotional support from three primary sources in her MPEN: her father, church members and friends. Her father and church friends provide support and encouragement around issues with Marie’s children and her ex, Marie calls her father her best friend. She talks to him by voice calls on average once a month. Although these calls are infrequent, she describes them as being very important to her. She is able to talk to her father about her difficulties with her ex and her sadness at being separated from her children, “He gives me advice, most of the time my father is the one I can rely, I can cry, I can show my emotions to my father.”

Another source of emotional support is Marie’s church members. She has fairly frequent contact with a group of five friends from church; this group is composed of 3 Americans, 1 Filipino man and 1 Japanese woman. She stays in contact with this group by voice calls and Kakaotalk. As with her father, Marie discusses her problems with her ex and missing her children with this group, “They are like a real family, even my personal problems I can cry and I can show my real emotions to them. If I miss my kids and I need somebody they are just around.”

Marie also has a network of friends who are not involved with her church. This network of friends extends beyond the 20 people she named in her MPEN; geographically many are located inside and outside of Seoul, where Marie lives. This group serves as a main source of her social life, “We talk about some crazy thing, just for fun.

“Most of them call me to make plans for the weekend or to stay with me on the weekends because I have a place here.” Marie lives in an area of Seoul which is popular with the expat community. Partly because of being close to social events, Marie
plays a central role in this network of friends. When discussing these friends and the experiences they have had, she becomes obviously more cheerful. Through these friends she is able to enjoy both the company of friends as well as a place of importance within her group of friends.

**Informational Support**

Marie describes receiving informational support in a variety of areas from multiple sources in her MPEN. As discussed above, she receives information from her children’s teachers which allows her to participate more fully in her children's lives. In addition, her brother keeps her informed on her parents' health, her group of church friends keep her informed on church related matters and her other friends keep her informed on social events.

An important source of information is a friend named Eden who is who Marie contacts when she needs extra work. She describes Eden as “connected,” meaning that she is in contact with people who are offering work. Although Marie placed Eden in the “less important” category, she describes the important role this tie plays in her life. “When I really need money, I can always rely on Eden. She knows people and can get me work when I need it, every time.” Marie contacts Eden on a weekly basis using Kakaotalk, primarily about employment.

**Instrumental Support: Money and language**

Money and language are two important forms of instrumental support which flow through Marie’s MPEN. Marie provides financial support to her brother, parents and children back in the Philippines. Her assistance to her brother is limited to emergencies. Although he doesn’t ask for money often, when he does it is on short notice. Each
month she sends her parents money. She describes this as an unspoken agreement with her parents, “We understand, when I have money I send them some. They never ask for money.” She admits that having to work extra hours in order to send money to her family is stressful, but she voices no resentment of having to do this, “I send what I can. It’s not that much, just what they need.”

Sending money to her children is complicated by the difficult relationship she has with her ex. When she contacts him it is about their children but these calls often turn into arguments, “Mostly it’s about money for my kids and how I want him to handle my kids. But it turns into bad times.” Marie attempts to avoid these arguments by going through her friend, Irene, who lives near her children. When Marie’s children need money for school supplies or clothes, Irene will buy them what they need and get reimbursed later. Although Marie is not able to completely bypass her ex, this arrangement has reduced the stress on Marie.

Marie does not speak Korean, so she relies on a friend, Eugene, to act as a translator from time to time. Eugene works in a factory in a town outside of Seoul. Marie’s most frequent need involves her landlord. Her apartment is in an older building and needs frequent maintenance. When she is unable to convey her needs to her landlord, she will call Eugene, before or after his work shift, to translate for her. Other times when she cannot understand a label on a product or a sign, she will send Eugene a picture for him to translate. She describes Eugene’s language skills as being a vital resource for her.
Sarah

Sarah is 57 years old, divorced with a 22 year old son. She is the oldest participant in this study and has been in Korea the longest (over 20 years). Sarah is trained as a nurse and had worked in Saudi Arabia and Libya before meeting her husband, a Korean national. Although their marriage lasted less than a year, it produced a son. Already separated at the time of her son’s birth, she sent her son to live with relatives in the Philippines while she remained in Korea to work. She obtained employment in a factory but left it after a short time, feeling that it was difficult work and didn’t pay well. Having permanent residence status, due to her marriage, she does not need to find an employer in order to obtain a visa, instead working whatever job paid the best. She says that being free to work better paying part-time jobs has worked well for her.

Sarah has lived in Korea for over 20 years working as a nanny/housekeeper. During that time her son has been raised by relatives in the Philippines. Currently, she works a flexible schedule. Her primary job is as a nanny three days a week for a Swedish family with a three year old boy. She supplements this income with part-time work as needed. She says she has all the work she needs and usually helps friends find work.

Her social life in Korea revolves around her church community. She is deeply involved in the leadership of the church, planning activities and assisting other church members with employment and housing. Sarah takes some pride in being a resource person for many people in her church.
Like Jane, Sarah didn’t see coming to Korea as a necessary decision. She had the option of working as a nurse in the Philippines or in the Middle East. We discussed her thinking in making the decision to stay in Korea. She explained that it was the best way for her to provide for her son while remaining close enough to see him when needed. If she had taken a job in the Middle East, she would not have had the freedom to return to the Philippines anytime she wanted. And working as a nurse in the Philippines was not as financially beneficial as working in Korea.

Although she describes her life in Korea in positive terms, she tears up when discussing her son and how she has not been part of his life in the way she would have liked. She related the following while discussing how she enjoyed caring for her employer’s 3 year old son, “I love spending time with him. It isn’t like work. He is like my son. I never got to be with him (her son) since he was two months old ….. I … (tears up and stops talking).” She also discusses the frustration she feels at not being able to forge a closer relationship with her son, “I know when he has troubles, but he won’t tell me. I try to talk to him, but he talks to my cousin instead” Sarah’s cousin was one of the relatives who helped to raise her son.

Talking with Sarah left me with the impression of a woman who enjoys her life in Korea. She speaks of being a resource for others, helping people find work or housing. She also works closely with her church leaders planning activities. She seems to hold some status as an unofficial leader in her church community, a role she seems to enjoy. Several times during our interviews, we were interrupted by phone calls from church members who were requesting help of some kind or another. Sarah always apologized for the interruption, but she also seemed happy to be of assistance to others. This
desire to help others was also displayed at the end of our interviews. She tried to refuse payment for her time, saying that she was happy to help. Although she reluctantly accepted payment, I suspect she may have been happier if I hadn’t paid her.

Sarah perceived the density of her MPEN to be a moderate 0.315. Her MPEN is primarily composed of Filipinos, 17 of her alters are Filipino, 2 are Korean and 1 is Swedish. These alters are evenly split between being located in Korea and out of Korea. Her relationships with her alters are primarily family members and friends, 8 and 7 respectively, 4 are designated as resource providers, 2 are church leaders and the remaining alter is her employer. The two measures of strength of ties show opposite patterns. On the importance measure Sarah designated almost half (9 of 20) of her ties with alters as “most important.” While on the frequency of contact measure, she reports contacting only 4 of her alters on a daily basis.

Migration and MPEN Development: A longtime resident

Sarah has lived in Korea for over 20 years, by far the longest period of any of the participants in this study. Like Jane, Sarah has spent most of her adult life living outside of the Philippines and coming to Korea was one of several options for her. As a trained nurse, Sarah had lived in Saudi Arabia and Libya prior to marrying a Korean native. Although her marriage lasted less than a year, it produced a son. When her son was less than 2 years old, Sarah decided to send her son to the Philippines to be cared for by relatives while she stayed in Korea for work. Her decision to stay in Korea, and give up nursing, rather than return to work in the Middle East was based on her desire to be closer to her son.
Figure 15: Sarah’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on importance. The lines between alters indicate Sarah’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

Sarah’s time living overseas predates smartphones and easy access to the Internet. She describes her early experiences living in Saudi Arabia and Libya as being almost completely isolated from family and friends back home, only having contact with family members through monthly letters. When she left her son in the care of her cousin in the Philippines to work in Korea, communicating between the two countries was
Figure 16: Sarah’s MPEN map showing tie strength based on frequency of contact. The lines between alters indicate Sarah’s perception of alter to alter ties. Green = close relationship; Red = frequent contact; Blue = occasional contact. The ties between alters which were judged to have only met once or twice are not shown.

limited to letter writing and expensive phone calls. Sarah seems to appreciate the ease of communication available through smartphones more than the other women in this study. In this excerpt, Sarah is discussing how communicating with her family in the Philippines has changed since she got a smartphone.

Before I was all alone, now I can see how are they, how is their health, how they live. Sometimes I greet them with their birthday, special day, or anniversary. Any problem I want to know because I want to lift them up in
prayers like that. It makes me happy to know how they are and to help when I can. Now we talk every night when I’m done with my work. We never write letters now, no need. It makes me happy to know how they are doing.

Sarah has lived in the same neighborhood of Seoul and belonged to the same church since 1995. During that time she has put down deep roots in the Filipino expat community and her church, where she is a layperson leader. It is in this context of a well established member of a local community that Sarah’s MPEN developed. She describes how she initially used her mobile phone, and later smartphone, to communicate with people located near her. As overseas calling became more affordable she used her smartphone to increase contact with her son and other family members living outside of Korea. In the last few years, as overseas calling and texting has become essentially free and she has become more proficient with using her smartphone, she has expanded her MPEN to include friends and family members who she had not contacted for years.

As a well-established person in her community, Sarah has become a resource person in her community and church, providing informational and instrumental support to those who have newly arrived. She has developed much of her MPEN to meet this role as a resource person. Four of her alters are primarily resource providers although much of the assistance they provide is passed on to others in Sarah’s social network. Another area of activity in her MPEN was around church activities. The significance her church has for Sarah is evidenced by her designating two church leaders as “most important” relationships. Sarah serves as a conduit for bidirectional informational and instrumental support flowing between the church leaders and members of the
congregation. Bidirectional emotional support flows through her ties with family in the Philippines. Recently, Sarah has used her MPEN to reconnect with nurses she worked with many years ago in Libya and Saudi Arabia. These ties have opened up emotional support with a network of friends she has had no contact with for over two decades.

**Betweenness**

Betweenness refers to an actor’s position in a network which makes it likely that information or other resources will flow through the actor (Borgatti, 2013). Sarah held a position in her network which made it likely that resources would flow through her to others in her MPEN: resources toward newcomers and the bidirectional flow of social support between leaders of her church and the congregation.

**Helping Newcomers.** Although her MPEN of her most important relationships doesn’t show it, Sarah seems to be in a position with a high degree of “betweenness” of a larger undefined network. Through this position she is a prime provider of informational and instrumental support to newcomers to her church and neighborhood. In her work with her church Sarah helps newcomers to Korea and/or to her church find work, housing and generally adjust to the community. Using her mobile phone, she is able to keep in contact with her resource providers -- which include a realtor, an employee for a phone provider, a repairman and a driver – the leaders of her church and newcomers to her church. Sarah occupies a position where communication between anyone in these three groups is likely to go through her.

When a newcomer arrives, the church leaders put the newcomer in contact with Sarah. She is then able to contact the resource providers in her MPEN to assist the newcomer. She is able to contact a realtor to find housing and part-time work. An
employee for a telecom provider helps the newcomer with phone and Internet service. A Filipino driver and repairman provide a variety of services from taking the newcomer to appointments, to making minor repairs, to moving items. Sarah seems to take some pride in the way she is able to help others and the important role she plays in her community.

**Connecting the Church Leaders and the Congregation.** Sarah also serves as a conduit for the bidirectional information flow between her church leaders and members of the congregation. When the church leaders want to pass information on to the congregation, they contact Sarah who will either post it on Facebook or contact individuals. Sarah also assists the flow of information from members of the congregation to the church leaders. When a member of the church needs support, Sarah will get this information to the church leaders when she feels it is necessary.

**Reconnecting with an Old Social Network**

Sarah’s mobile phone has allowed her to find and reconnect with former coworkers. Through Facebook, Sarah found two women she had worked with in Libya and Saudi Arabia over 25 years ago. Finding these two former co-workers allowed Sarah to reconnect with her network of friends from her late 20s and early 30s. This is a group of women who had been very close, living and working together in a foreign country, but had lost contact with each other. Today, they talk on Facebook a couple of times a month. They talk about each other’s lives and other woman from their group of friends. Sarah describes these as very positive relationships in her life. She feels like she has found a part of her past life that she thought she had lost. As well as
reconnecting with her old friends, she also talks about reconnecting with her past identity as a nurse through these women.

**Discussion**

These case studies demonstrate the dynamic nature of the formation and maintenance of the participants' MPENs. While homophily plays a central role in the composition of these MPENs with all -- except Jane's -- being dominated by fellow Filipinos, there is also evidence that individual agency was also at play as participants formed their MPENs in ways which allowed them to provide the necessary resources to overcome constraints imposed either by alters in their MPEN or by life circumstances, as these women strived to achieve their individual goals. In addition, these women's stories show how the affordances provided by mobile phones enabled them to maintain ties which would have been otherwise difficult to continue.

**Homophily and Identity**

One of the most consistent findings in social network research is that of homophily: the tendency for people to have ties with people who are similar to themselves (Borgatti et al., 2013). Consistent with these findings, the women in this study (excluding Jane who will be discussed below) also had a strong tendency to form and maintain positive ties with people who were also Filipino (76 percent), female (65 percent) and the same socioeconomic class -- worked as nannies, housekeepers or other manual laborers (82% of alters in the workforce). Overall these four women used their mobile phones to maintain ties with family and friends in the Philippines (35
percent of all ties) or to develop and maintain ties with people in Korea who were similar to themselves (69 percent of all ties located in Korea).

Jane’s MPEN seems to be an exception to the trend. While attempting to match the attributes of Jane’s alters to her attributes, it seems that the formation of her MPEN has not been influenced by homophily as it is usually defined as a set of fixed attributes. The only Filipinos in her MPEN are her housekeeper and family members living in the Philippines, and no one in her MPEN works as a nanny, housekeeper or manual laborer, other than the housekeeper she employs.

As I attempted to explain the composition of Jane’s MPEN I was informed by the literature on discourse and identity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2011). The literature on discourse and identity rejects the position that identity is solely a set of fixed categories, instead locating identity in public discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In this view an individual’s identity is not an attribute or set of attributes but is a discursive construction situated in social interactions (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The constructionist framework outline by De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg (2011), proposes that phenomena which is usually viewed as internal (e.g. intentions, agency, emotions, identity) or external (e.g. marriage, class, gender) are more accurately viewed as intersubjectively reached agreements which are historically and culturally negotiated (Bamberg, et.al, 2011). From this view of identity as being constructed in local discourse contexts, identity can be defined as “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.586).

Bamberg et al, (2011) outlines three dimensions of identity construction through discourse: agency, integrating and differentiation between the self and others and the
navigation of sameness and change. Agency refers to the assumption that the choices speakers make, how they say what they say, are indexed in ways that allow the listener to interpret and make sense of how the speaker is presenting who she is. Although the speaker’s sense of self is important, identity is not simply a system of self-classification but something which is constructed through discourse (Bamberg et al., 2011).

The second of Bamberg’s et al. (2011) dimensions of identity construction, integrating and differentiating self and other, refers to how the linguistic choices a speaker makes index themselves as either the same as or different from others. The sociolinguistic view, that linguistic variation is reflective and constructive of social categories (Gumperz, 1982; Lobov, 1972) has influenced the development of this dimension of identity construction. Through stylistic and linguistic choices speakers position themselves in relation to the social groupings they aspire to or belong to (Bamberg et al., 2011).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) with its attention to power relations adds an important aspect to this dimension of identity construction. In the CDA view, identities are explored in terms of power spaces, where discourse practices may play a role in the creation and maintenance of oppressive relationships between groups. The identities that individuals attempt to create in discourse, either as part of a group or as separate from other groups, may add to this (Bamberg et al., 2011).

The third of Bamberg’s et al. (2011) dimensions of identity construction, the navigation of sameness and change, refers to the challenge of integrating our lives into a more or less coherent narrative which balances the extremes of no change at all and one of radical change. Individuals may attempt to construct an identity of themselves as
being the same despite drastic changes in behavior or circumstances, or they may attempt to construct a changed identity without objective evidence of change. These narratives have little to do with actual events rather they are attempts to construct an identity which either highlights continuity or change is the individual’s social positioning (Bamberg et al., 2011).

Drawing on the concepts described above, I’ve interpreted the composition of Jane’s MPEN (a composition which would not be expected given her personal attributes) as a reflection of her attempts at constructing an identity which rejects that of the Filipina ex-pat community and is more in line with an “international identity.” Evidence for this interpretation comes from our interaction during three interviews, her description of her interactions with other members in her MPEN and her unsolicited discussion of the Filipina ex-pat community.

Terms of address have long been of interest to scholars interested in the relationship between language and social relationships. Speakers make choices of which address term to use depending of the social context (Keshavarz, 2001). And the choices speakers make may signal different levels of social distance (Gan et al., 2015). In highly stratified societies, such as the Philippines, address terms are used to signal respect and social distance for those of a higher social position and solidarity for those in a more similar social position to the speaker (Dumanig, 2014; Gan et al., 2015).

In the Philippines “sir” and “ma’am” are commonly used when addressing those who are not relatives, particularly those who are older or of higher social position (Dumanig, 2014). Gan et al. (2015) examined the choice of address terms made by Filipina domestic workers when addressing their Malaysian employers. Their results
showed that the use of honorifics was the preferred form of address. Only one of the twenty participants in their study addressed their employers using first names. In addition, this individual only used first names with her employer at the employer’s insistence. The participants related that using honorifics was the appropriate way to show politeness (Gan et al., 2015).

I observed the pattern of address described by Dumanig (2014) and Gan et al. (2015) during my interviews. Despite my repeated requests to use my first name, all of the participants called me sir throughout our interviews, except Jane. In sharp contrast from the other women I interviewed, Jane addressed me by my first name from our first email correspondence throughout our three interviews. This pattern of address violates Filipinos cultural norms, which reserves the use of first names for those who have a close relationship (Dumanig, 2014; Gan et al., 2015). Sociolinguists have long noted that the use of familiar address terms, such as first names, often reflects a sense of equality in social relationships or an attempt to move a relationship to a more equal footing (Keshavarz, 2001; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014).

In addition to using familiar address terms, Jane also used questioning as a way to establish equality in our relationship. At several points in our interview, her responses to my questions were followed by her posing questions for me: after I asked her about her sisters in the Philippines, she asked me if I had any siblings, and after we discussed her children, she asked me about my children. I interpreted this pattern of asking questions coupled with the use of familiar address terms as evidence that Jane was using our discourse to negotiate an identity different from that of a Filipino nanny. This negotiation of her identity was also apparent while discussing her relationships with her
present and past employers. She describes both of these women as being good friends. When discussing her current employer, she says, “We talk every day by Kakaotalk and voice calls. Sometimes we talk about work, but mostly we just talk about life. She is more of a friend than an employer. We talk about our kids, shopping everything.” And when discussing her former employer, “We talk every week by Skype. Pearl is a good friend. We talk about how she is going, how her son is, life.” Jane sees these relationships as being of equals despite the employer/employee relationship. This is unusual in Filipino culture, where it would be appropriate to maintain social distance between employers and employees (Gan et al., 2015).

As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) discuss, the most direct method of constructing identity is to evoke identity categories into discourse. By taking a stance which positions the individual as either similar or different from the identified categories, the individual creates a discursive resource for the construction of a desired identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). In the above examples, Jane has used familiar address terms to position her identity as similar to myself and her employers. At the end of our final interview, she takes a few minutes to give me her unsolicited opinion of the Filipino ex-pat community. During this exchange, she clearly attempts to construct an identity which is separate from the Filipino community.

Let me tell you about Filipinas. They think alike. All they think of is in terms of being a nanny. I try to educate them that they can be more, that there are opportunities out there, but it is their mindset. Something in the way they think. They can’t see anything else. They don’t try to improve themselves.
In this excerpt, Jane has identified a category, which on the surface she is a member of, the Filipina community in Korea. Rather than identifying as a member of this category, she has taken an evaluative stance toward the identified group, Filipinas in Korea, and by choosing to use “they” instead of “we” she has positioned her identity in juxtaposition, as something other than the typical Filipina in Korea: They are like this; I am not.

Although the composition of Jane’s MPEN does not seem to be strongly influenced by homophily when homophily is viewed in terms of fixed, observable categories, if homophily is viewed in light of the view that identity is constructed in discourse, homophily has strongly influenced who she has included in her MPEN and who she has excluded. Jane has spent most of her adult life outside of the Philippines (Brunei, Hong Kong and Korea), in expat communities. Her pattern of acculturation is one of assimilation (Berry, 1997) into a global culture (Jensen et al., 2011). According to Berry (1997), one of the primary forms of acculturation is that of assimilation where the individual embraces the new culture and rejects their original culture. Above, I have argued that Jane has embraced the culture of the global expat who migrates out of choice rather than necessity and rejected the identity of a Filipina transnational domestic worker. She actively constructed this global expat identity during our interviews and the composition of her MPEN reflects this identity. Viewing her identity in this light, her MPEN is strongly influenced by homophily.

**Making Opportunities and Overcoming Obstacles**

Much has been written about how new communication technologies are used to overcome the spatial and temporal limitations. While the women in this study used their
mobile phones to overcome these limitations, the more interesting finding from these case studies is the variety of ways these women developed their individual MPENs and exploited features of their mobile phones to meet their needs and desires. I’ve divided the discussion to follow into two sections: “using affordances” and “finding resources.” Although this distinction is somewhat misleading -- affordances are useless without resources and resources cannot be accessed without affordances – I’ve made this distinction as a way of adding clarity to my discussion not to imply that these categories do not intersect.

**Using Affordances.** As mentioned above, a frequently exploited affordance of mobile phones is the ability to cheaply communicate over distance. All of the women in this study used their mobile phones to maintain and nurture relationships with friends and family in other countries. My conversation with Sarah highlighted the importance of this affordance for these women.

At 57, Sarah is the oldest women in this study and has lived outside of the Philippines for the longest period -- over 30 years, of which the last 20 has been in Korea. During our interviews, she described the impact developing technologies have had on her ability to communicate with family in the Philippines and her quality of life while living as an expat. I asked her what it was like living in Korea before mobile phones:

It’s a big difference. Before there was no communication with my family or friends. We wrote letters once a month that was all. They seemed so far away, and it was lonely here. Now, we can talk anytime, anywhere. We can talk a long time. We are so close than before....
At night time, when I’m done with my work, we are free to talk. So we are calling each other. We talk about plans to see each other. I know how my son is doing if he needs anything.

In this excerpt, Sarah is able to put the ease of communication which mobile phone afford into context. When she first came to Korea, she was only able to communicate with family and her son through letters and rare phone calls. She describes herself as feeling isolated from family and friends in the Philippines, adding to her feelings of loneliness and her worries that her son was OK. Although none of the other women’s stays in Korea go back to a time when mobile phones were not widely available, all of the women express similar sentiments about the importance of easy communication with family, particularly children, overseas. As Marie put it, “Without my mobile phone, it would be impossible for me to live here.”

In addition to utilizing their mobile phones to keep in contact with loved ones at a distance, the women in this study also used several other affordances of their mobile phones to employ strategies designed to meet their needs and desires. Two of the primary ones were being mobile and always available and communicating in stealth,

**Mobile and always available.** Perhaps the most obvious affordance of mobile phones is their portability. People all over the world find mobile phones an almost indispensable part of their lives precisely because they allow us to stay in contact with others while on the move. The women in this study were no different; they all took advantage and valued being able to contact those important to them while carrying out their daily routines. For the most part this mobility allowed the women to stay connected
with family and friends while giving and receiving social support although for Jane and Mary being mobile and available has a more significant impact on their lives.

One of Jane’s principle interests is building her business of buying and selling items online. She runs this business through her mobile phone, communicating with buyers and sellers throughout the day. In the following excerpt she describes her reliance on her mobile phone to conduct her business.

It is all done with my mobile phone. I contact suppliers and post items on Facebook pages. People pm me if they are interested in what I have or if they are looking for something. I can conduct my business anywhere, any time with my mobile phone, even when I’m working. … It (without a mobile phone) would be impossible. I would have to sit in front of a computer all day, I couldn’t work. I have to be in contact with my suppliers throughout the day. My buyers will go to someone else if I can’t get back to them right away.

In the above excerpt, Jane is clear that having a mobile phone is a necessity for her to run her business. This business is important to Jane for additional income, but it is also an aspect of her identity. As discussed above, Jane constructs an identity which is separate from her work as a nanny. For her being an entrepreneur is part of that identity.

Mary’s life in Korea is complicated by her responsibilities as a working mother. Each weekday morning she must leave for work before her children leave for school. Her mobile phone allows her to “mother-at-a–distance” during her commute to work. Below, she describes her morning commute.
In the morning I need to be at work at 8 o’clock. I wake them at 7 and leave them at 7:30, so on the way to work I’m calling them. Have you made your bed, have you brushed your teeth. Then at work I call them, OK go to school, is everything fine. Then at 8:30, I’ll go to the bathroom, so my boss can’t hear, and call them again.

Below is her response when I asked her to imagine what it would be like without her phone.

Oh my gosh, I don’t know, It would be so crazy, especially in the morning.

My son doesn’t want to brush his teeth and my daughter will call me, “Mom Mom, Kiko doesn’t want to brush his teeth or eat.”

Then they are fighting, you know.

On the phone, you’re in the middle of a fight, but they’re on speaker. So I can hear both of them. And make sure they are ok. It’s like I never left the house.

In the above excerpts, Mary clearly relates how important being mobile while still in contact is to her ability to care for her children. In the section below, she describes how she uses her mobile phone to check on her children’s welfare.

They are not allowed to use their phone at school, so I don’t talk to them until 2 o’clock. But I call anyway. If I don’t get an answer, I know they are in school and everything is OK.

Then I am clear, I can relax and work.

Here Mary is describing how she uses her mobile phone to keep surveillance on her children without actually communicating with them. And importantly, this
surveillance allows her to know her children are in school and safe, so she can concentrate on her work.

**Stealth.** Whether in a theater, at work or a classroom, the stealth capabilities of mobile phones are something that millions of people routinely take advantage of. Transnational workers in Korea, as in other countries, often find themselves confronted with oppressive circumstances caused by their employers, their minority status or their personal relationships when being stealth is necessary. In many situations, communicating in secret may be an effective way for transnational workers to circumvent the efforts of those who would limit their communication or in other ways oppress them. Several features of mobile phones allow for stealth communication. The compact size and mobility of mobile phones allows users to easily hide their mobile phone on their body and step out to quickly make or answer a call, often without the knowledge of others. In addition, by using various text features or video a user can communicate silently, allowing the user to stay in contact with others while under direct observation of an employer or spouse.

At work was the most common place women reported using stealth communication. Marie reported how she interacts with her friends in Korea while at work, “We text each other all day, making plans for the weekend. Just crazy stuff, nothing important.” Socializing by text messages while at work was frequently discussed by all of the participants in this study. The extent that keeping their activities secret was important varied depending on their work situation and their relationship with their employer. In all cases, texting allowed for private communication, but keeping it a secret
that they were texting was not always important. The experiences of Mary and Angela highlight the importance of these stealth affordances.

For Mary, stealth communication allowed her to feel connected to her one year old daughter throughout the workday. While working as a cleaner at the Kenyan embassy, Mary was able to Skype with her daughter in the Philippines. By placing her phone in her apron and turning the volume down, she is able to maintain a Skype connection to her father’s home and her daughter. She describes Skyping with her daughter:

My phone is in my apron. When I’m tired or pissed off, I can look at her. It gives me energy. It makes being here OK. I know that she is OK and I’m doing the right thing for her. I can keep on working, and it’s OK.

In this excerpt, Mary voices some of the frustration she feels living and working in Korea and her doubts that she is doing the right thing being away from her daughter. While talking with Mary, it is obvious that she is torn between providing financially for her family and wanting to be with her daughter. Being able to furtively look in on her daughter while at work allows her to assuage her feelings of doubt and to continue with her work.

In Angela’s case it was the mobility afforded by her mobile phone and her ability to have complete control over her mobile phone which allowed her to keep her communication with her son and her working part-time jobs a secret from her husband. Unable to talk to her son or to arrange for part-time work in her husband’s presence, Angela would make these calls while out for a walk or while her husband was at work. Although her husband worked fulltime – leaving Angela alone for much of the day – she
was afraid to use her landline or her home computer for sensitive communication because her husband might check the history. Using her mobile gave her physical control over the device and allowed her to delete the history as needed.

The women in this study took advantage of the affordances provided by mobile phones to overcome obstacles which might otherwise prevent them from giving or receiving various types of social support. They used inexpensive or free modes of communication, such as Skype video calls or Facebook messenger, to maintain their relationships with family and friends living at a distance. Each woman had a unique story of how this type of communication provided them with social support and allowed them to be separated from family, especially children, while maintaining these relationships. They used the mobility and availability that mobile phones provide to stay socially connected to friends, run a business or mother-at-a-distance. This affordance provided a means to give and receive social, informational and instrumental support at the time and place it was most needed. And some of the women used the ability to communicate in silence to maintain relationships while at work or to avoid the oppressive actions of others, providing an avenue to give and receive social support.

**Accessing Resources to Meet Needs.** While the affordances of mobile phones allowed these women to maintain ties of different types in various situations, the ties the women cultivate where often ones which provided resources which helped the women overcome obstacles to their desires and needs. Many of the ties in each individual’s MPEN were developed and maintained for what I’ll call "organic" reasons: the tie develops and is maintained because of the relationship between the ego and alter. These organic reasons may be because there is an expectation or obligation between
the ego and alter, such as with family members, or because both individuals find keeping in contact as mutually enjoyable, such as with friends. While these organic relationships often provided important resources, the ego and the alter do not maintain their tie only to exploited an available resource the other possesses.

Other ties are developed and maintained by the ego precisely because the alter possesses a resource which is useful to the ego: the ego-alter tie helps the ego solve a problem or to gain something desirable. These ties which are primarily resource providing would quickly fade away if the resource ceased to be available or was no longer of use to the ego. Each woman in this study had at least one tie which was primarily a resource providing tie. Overall, 22 percent of the reported ties where discussed primarily in terms of providing resources. I grouped these resource providing ties into three broad categories: related to work or business, language and culture, or mothering-at-a-distance. In the following section, I will discuss some examples of how these ties were developed and used.

The most common area where ties provided resources to the ego was in the area of work or business. All five women had at least one alter who primarily provided resources in this area. Most commonly this person was a Filipina who was able to connect the ego to people who needed short-term help, and these ties were maintained through Facebook postings and messages. Three of the five women spoke of knowing at least one person who had “connections” and could always find them part-time work. Sarah was one of the exceptions. She described herself as one of those people who had connections, who people could contact for part-time work. One of her alters, a Korean real estate agent named Ms Kim, was a primary source of part-time work. Ms
Kim was a reliable source of recently vacated apartments which needed cleaning and newly arriving people who need cleaning or childcare help. Sarah would typically take the jobs she wanted and then pass on the others to people she knew, primarily church members.

Rather than work part-time cleaning or as a nanny, Jane focused on running her online buying and selling business. Her MPEN included four alters which were completely resource providers: three suppliers and the collective alter of buyers. Communication with suppliers was primarily conduct through voice calls while communication between Jane and potential buyers occurred primarily on Facebook.

A second common resource provided through specific ties was information on Korean language and cultural. Marie, who has been in Korea a relatively short time, relied on her MPEN for this kind of knowledge. Not having any Koreans in her MPEN, Marie relied on a fellow Filipino, Eugene, for assistance with language and culture issues. Eugene worked in a factory about two hours by bus from Marie’s home. Marie used Kakaotalk to communicate with Eugene and ask him for translation help. Shopping and dealing with her landlord are two common situations when Marie needed Eugene’s translation skills.

At times while shopping, she would be unsure what a product is for or how to use it. When this occurs, Marie takes a picture and sends it to Eugene, who is able to translate the information for her. Marie also relates frequent communication and cultural difficulties with her landlord. When this occurs, Marie schedules a time when Eugene and her landlord are available and has Eugene translate using the speaker phone on
her mobile phone. Being more knowledgeable about Korean culture in addition to his being able to speak Korean, Eugene acted as a mediator in these conflicts.

A third resource provided through specifically developed ties, is mothering-at-a-distance. Marie also provides an interesting example of this. Marie’s two children, ages 7 and 9, live with their father in Manila. This situation presents significant obstacles for Marie. She has a difficult relationship with her ex and does not feel that he is as attentive to their children’s school work as he should be. To overcome this, she has developed a support system in Manila which includes one of her longtime friends, Irene, and her children’s teachers. Using Facebook messages, Marie contacts her children’s teachers at least once a week to check on their progress and to see if they need anything. Irene lives in Manila near Marie’s children. Whenever her children need something, Marie contacts Irene who makes sure they get it.

I want to know what is happening with the school. I communicate with the teachers all the time to see how my kids are and what they need. He (meaning Marie’s ex) doesn’t talk to the teachers; I do. I tell him, this is happening at school, so you need to fix it or you need to go there and … whatever you can do.

But I don’t know if he will or not. Irene is who I can count on. I tell her and she gets whatever my kids need. Even if she has to pay and I pay her later, she gets it to them. And if something is happening at school, I tell her and she will be there.

The above excerpt shows how dependent Marie is on her MPEN to mother-at-a-distance. She feels that she cannot rely on her ex to care for their children, so she uses
her MPEN to communicate with surrogates, who keep her informed and help her meet her children’s needs. As she says later in the interview, “I couldn’t live here without my phone. I would worry all the time. Now I know my kids are OK.” In this example, Marie’s ties to the teachers are maintained only for the purpose of receiving informational support. Although Irene is a longtime friend, the tie between Marie and Irene has been strengthen because Irene is able to supply instrumental support in the form of providing for Marie’s children.
Chapter 6: Informal Learning in the MPENs

Vavoula’s (2005) typology of informal learning (discussed in Chapter 2) divides the learning activity into two areas of control: control over the learning processes and control over the goals of learning, and informal learning is categorized as either intentional or unintentional based who has control over the processes and goals of learning. In intentional informal learning the learner has control over the process and the goals, while in unintentional or tacit informal learning the process and goals are unspecified. Although interest in mobile learning has grown in recent years, there has been relatively little literature investigating mobile informal learning, particularly in regards to learning goals which are not connected to a formal educational setting or are unspecified (Clough et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2012).

Much of the available research on informal mobile learning investigates how learners accessed electronic sources, such as e-books, blogs or wikis or how learners used affordances of their mobile phones, such as writing notes, making audio recording or taking pictures to pursue their learning goals (Clough et al., 2008). While these are important sources of informal learning, one of the purposes of this study was to investigate how the participants engaged in informal learning in their MPEN, defined as the 20 most important relationships which are maintained by mobile phone. Rather than investigating how participants used their mobile phones to access information or used affordances to collect data, the purpose of this study was to investigate how participants engage in informal learning while collaborating with other people in their MPEN.
As Vavoula et al. (2005) point out, informal learning can be difficult to identify and measure. Informal learning is not typically planned or structured; it is often opportunistic without defined boundaries signifying “before” or “after.” Also, informal learning outcomes may be different for each individual: different individuals are likely to construct knowledge differently from similar experiences (Vavoula et al., 2005).

At several points during our interviews I asked each participant to describe what they learned through their MPEN. All of the participants had difficulty answering this question. The only experiences which were interpreted as learning experiences by the participants were incidents of what Vavoula et al. (2005) describe as intentional informal learning, such as learning of work opportunities or learning about Korean labor laws. I interpreted this difficulty in talking about their informal learning experiences as reflecting the general difficulty that exists in identifying informal learning. In the discussion which follows, in most cases I have interpreted the participants’ descriptions as learning experiences; the participants did not identify them as learning.

To aid in this discussion I have employed Schugurensky’s (2000) typology of informal learning. This conceptualization of informal learning identifies two main categories, intentionality and consciousness, and then identifies three types of informal learning: self-directed (similar to Vavoula’s et al. (2005) intentional learning), incidental (similar to Vavoula’s et al. (2005) unintentional learning) and socialization. In self-directed informal learning the learner engages in a learning project with a purpose and awareness. It is both intentional and conscious. Schugurensky (2000) illustrates self-directed learning with the example of a person who wants to learn about a historical event and sets out to research the event. Incidental learning involves the learner
learning from an experience without any prior intention of learning something. It is unintentional but becomes conscious following the experience. Schugurensky (2000) gives the example of a person watching a documentary and learning historical facts which they were not previously aware. Socialization refers to the internalization of values, attitudes, behaviors, etc. that occurs during everyday life. The learner had no intention of engaging in learning and is unaware that she has learned something (Schugurensky, 2000).

In this chapter, I discuss how the participants used their MPENs to collaborate with their alters to engage in self-directed informal learning, incidental informal learning and socialization.

**Self-directed Informal Learning**

As discussed above, self-directed informal learning is both intentional and conscious, meaning the learner knowingly engages in a learning experience with the goal of learning something (Schugurensky, 2000). In this study the participants described self-directed informal learning in five areas: financial, family, social life, official business and culture.

**Financial**

All five participants in this study engaged in self-directed learning in the area of finances, most commonly in regards to finding extra work to meet financial obligations but also in term of running a business and financial planning. Four of the five participants routinely engaged in learning about part-time work from an alter. All four of
these women had one or two alters in their MPEN who they would seek out when they needed extra work, and all but one of these alters was another Filipina.

Due to her obligations towards her father and her two children who live with her, finding extra work for Mary was often an urgent matter. She relied on her sister-in-law and a friend when she needed part-time work. She described them as having "connections" to employers who were looking for short-term workers. In this excerpt, she described learning from her landlord that she had an outstanding water bill and that her water was about to be turned off, "So I called my friends to find extra work, so I got the connections through my friends and called people and got the work to pay my bills." Learning about part-time work goes on nearly every week for Mary. She routinely works extra jobs, which she learns of through her MPEN. Occasionally an unexpected financial need arises, such as her father needing money or an unexpected expense for her children. When these financial emergencies arise, she is able to quickly learn of work opportunities through her MPEN.

Marie and Angela describe similar accounts of self-directed learning aimed at finding part-time work although there situations are less urgent. Like Mary, both of these women send money home to family, but unlike Mary their financial needs are rarely immediate. Marie describes the process she goes through to learn about part-time work.

I send money to my parents every month, not a lot just what they need. So I’m always looking for part-time work, mostly babysitting. I have a couple of friends who know people. When I need extra money I call them. They always know someone who needs a babysitter or cleaner.
Angela describes a similar process, “I need to make money to send to my mother and son. So I call my friends. They get me work as a cleaner, so I make the money I need.

All three of these women are able to turn to alters in their MPEN to learn of work when they need it and meet their financial obligations. Similar to these women, Sarah also learns of part-time work through her MPEN although the learning she engages in is often passed on to others. Sarah is in frequent contact with a Korean real estate agent, who has steady supply of newly vacated apartments which need cleaning and newly arrived people who may need a nanny or housekeeper. There are enough work opportunities for Sarah to meet her needs and for her to help others in her community to find work.

Unlike the four women discussed above, Jane did not take on any part-time cleaning or childcare work. She focused on her online buying and selling business to supplement her income. Jane describes an extensive process of self-directed informal learning that she engaged in to learn how to start her business and to continue to profit from it. She first learned of the opportunity to sell online to the expat community through her friend, Anderson, who also sells items online.

He has given me advice about suppliers and pricing, how to contact people. He just knows a lot about the market and what will sell and what won’t. My business has grown a lot thanks to his help.

Through Anderson Jane learned how to start her business. He put her in contact with suppliers and taught her how to contact buyers. Learning about her business was an ongoing process. She routinely contacted Anderson when she wanted to learn about
what items might be in demand or how to price an item. As she became more involved in her business her self-directed learning expanded beyond Anderson to include her three suppliers and a few buyers who have become friends. From her buyers she learns what is selling at the moment, and from her suppliers she learns of new items which may be available and current prices. By continuously seeking out new information from both her suppliers and buyers, she is able to maximize her profits and better meet her buyers’ needs.

Two of the participants, Mary and Sarah, also engaged in self-directed informal learning aimed at learning about financial planning. Within Mary’s MPEN was a Korean financial planner, Ms. Kim. Mary met Ms. Kim when she did some work for her, and the two struck up a relationship. Mary and her husband have agreed that the money she makes is to be used for the family’s immediate needs, and the money he makes is to be invested for their future. Ms. Kim handles these investments. Mary keeps in contact with Ms. Kim on a monthly basis to learn about how the family’s investments are doing and to learn about any new investment opportunities. Like Mary, Sarah also engages in self-directed learning about financial planning. At 57, with her son on his own, Sarah was planning for her retirement when she will return to the Philippines. Although not included in her MPEN of her 20 most important relationships, Sarah used her mobile phone to engage in learning about financial investments. She is in frequent contact with a financial advisor and real estate agent in the Philippines. During the period we had our interviews Sarah was in the process of signing the papers to buy a condo in the Philippines, which she plans to rent out for extra income.
Family

All of the women in this study used their MPEN to learn about the health and wellbeing of family members, particularly children and parents. This was an important area of learning because it allowed the women to set aside their worries about family members and at times to make decisions to respond to a family member’s situation.

As has been discussed previously, all of the women in this study lived apart from at least one child and the wellbeing of their children was a primary concern for all of the women. Being apart from their children was difficult but being able to learn of how their children were doing eased the situation. Learning about children’s wellbeing came through three sources: teachers, other family members and the child.

Mary and Marie kept in contact with their children’s teachers in order to learn how they were doing in school. In the following excerpt Mary and I discussed how she uses her mobile phone to learn about her children’s well being while they are at school.

When my son fell on the monkey bars, my daughter find out the first time she open the mobile phone and she called me.

“Mom, Kiko is sick he fell on the monkey bars.”

So I call her teacher, and the teacher and she is taking care of my son, and after lunch when my boss go, I go to school and see that he is OK.

It wasn’t a major accident, but I want to make sure he is OK.

So all of the teachers, I have all of their numbers. Every day we communicate, so if there’s a problem I can contact them.
By using her mobile phone Mary knew that she could learn about her children’s wellbeing at anytime, allowing her to work without worry. Similar to Mary, Marie used her mobile phone to learn how her children were doing in school and of anything they might need. This source of learning allows her to feel more involved in her children’s lives and to better meet their needs.

Other family members were valuable sources of learning about both children and parents. The participants living apart from their older children tended to rely on the children to learn about how they were doing. As discussed previously, far from being simple learning experiences, these were complex interactions full of powerful emotional content. Mary used Skype to directly observe her 1 year old daughter, learning in real time about her daughter’s wellbeing. At the other end of the age continuum, Sarah offered another perspective on her informal learning with her 22 year old son. She tried to engage her son to learn about how he is doing and his life, but she was often rebuffed, “I know he has problems, but he will not open with me. Only my cousin.” Sarah’s cousin raised her son. Here Sarah voices her sadness and frustration that her relationship with her son isn’t closer. She wants to learn about his life from him, but she is forced to contact her cousin. This both frustrates her learning aims and prevents her from maintaining her identity as a mother.

Three of the five participants related learning about their parents’ wellbeing through a sibling. Mary’s father had a heart condition, and she didn’t trust that he was always honest with her about how he was doing. In the following excerpt she describes how she enlisted her brother’s assistance to learn about her father’s wellbeing.
When I ask my father how he is doing, he just says OK. He won’t tell me if he is sick. My brother is my stress reliever for my dad, because if I’m stressed about my dad I always call him. I talk to him and ask him can you go there and visit dad. Then everything is fine.

Unable to learn of her father’s condition directly from him, Mary goes through her brother to learn what she wants to know.

Jane’s father had a mild stroke last year, and like Mary’s father he is reluctant to discuss his health with Jane. In the excerpt below, Jane discusses the situation.

He doesn’t understand that his health affects the rest of us. If he gets sick, I need to be ready to go home. But he won’t talk about it. He just says he is strong and not to worry. Of course I do worry, and I need to know how he is. Fortunately, my sisters are nearby, so I can find out how our parents are doing. We talk almost every day, so I know how everything is at home.

Both Mary and Jane rely on siblings to learn about the wellbeing of their parents. This is an important source of learning for them because it allows them to work in Korea without the constant worry over their parents’ health. It also allows them the peace of mind to know that if there is a problem they will be informed as quickly as possible.

**Social Life, Official Business, and Culture**

The final three areas were the participants engaged in self-directed informal learning were social life, official business and culture. Social life refers to making plans to meet with friends and planning social events. All of the participants engaged in this area of learning. It usually involved friends living in Korea and was carried out over
Kakaotalk. Often these conversations occurred at work. They served as both learning experiences and as a distraction from a monotonous work day.

Official business refers to learning how to get things done in Korea, such as applying for visas with immigration, seeking healthcare or filing taxes. Although this type of learning was undertaken infrequently, because there were consequences for getting it wrong, it was an important area of learning. The participants engaged in this type of learning with a trusted alter or through an expat Facebook page. On these Facebook pages an individual can post a question and wait for others to respond. Although none of the participants discussed seeking this type of learning often, they did relate that it was a needed area of self-directed informal learning.

Only two of the participants, Marie and Angela, discussed learning about Korean culture. As discussed previously, Marie had frequent conflicts with her landlord, which she partially attributed to cultural differences. When one of these conflicts arose she would contact her friend Eugene, another Filipino, to discuss the conflicts and attempt to learn more about Korean culture in order to understand and resolve the conflict. Angela was the most directly involved with Korean culture and as a result engaged in the most self-directed learning about Korean culture. Her motivation to learn about Korean culture was primarily to improve her relationship with her husband. When she and her husband had a conflict she would contact her sister-in-law or brother-in-law in an effort to learn what the problem was and attempt to fix it.
Incidental Informal Learning

Incidental informal learning refers to learning experiences when the learner had no intention of engaging in learning but came to realize she had learned something after the experience (Schugurensky, 2000). As I noted above, the participants did not typically interpret their interactions within their MPEN as learning experiences and didn’t identify any learning experiences that would fall into the category of incidental informal learning. I found occurrences of incidental learning to be particularly difficult to identify and evaluate. However, considering that the participants engaged in hundreds of texts, voice and video calls a day, it seems likely that they engaged in multiple occurrences of incidental informal learning which were not identified as such. Despite the difficulty in identifying incidental learning, after going over the transcripts multiple times several occurrences of incidental learning became apparent.

All of the participants in this study were involved in occasional opportunistic learning experiences. For example, Angela’s interactions with her husband and in-laws were frequent opportunities for incidental learning about Korean culture. Also, Marie’s use of her friend Eugene as a translator allowed her to engage in incidental learning about the Korean language and shopping.

Jane described incidental informal learning while operating her online business. During the day to day running of her business she was in frequent contact with suppliers and buyers. The majority of these interactions involved an item and determining its value, both to her and a potential buyer. Each interaction with a buyer added to her knowledge of what was selling in the market, and each interaction with a supplier
increased her knowledge of what items were available to buy and then sell. Through these ongoing interactions with suppliers and buyers Jane was constantly adjusting her knowledge to maximize her potential profits.

As was discussed previously, Angela used her MPEN to help her find some level of independence from her emotionally abusive husband. As she learned to avoid her husband’s control, Angela has engaged in an ongoing series of incidental learning experiences as she developed a life for herself. One area she learned to exploit to her advantage was her husband’s attempts to track her movements. Her husband would frequently call or text to find out where she was or who she was with. This surveillance frightened Angela; she was afraid that he might come home while she was out and become jealous. To guard against this, Angela began to use her husband’s surveillance calls to check on his schedule, asking when he would be home and where he was. It was through incidental learning that this practice developed. After engaging in a period of incidental informal learning, Angela feels confident that she knows her husband’s activities well enough to make sure she always gets home before him.

Jane also engaged in incidental learning when she used the neighborhood Facebook page to protest a local bar owner banning Africans during the Ebola outbreak (discussed in Chapter 5). In this instance, the learning was on the community level, as Jane related, “People got involved and educated each other and the bar owner.” She was also involved in incidental learning in the community Facebook forum on combating sexual harassment (discussed in Chapter 5). Through online discussions the women in Jane’s neighborhood learn from each other strategies for dealing with sexual harassment on the street.
Socialization refers to the internalization of values, attitudes, behaviors and skills (Schugurensky, 2000). During socialization the learner has no intention of learning something and is unaware that learning has occurred. Although socialization is usually an unconscious process, it is possible for the learner to become aware that learning has occurred in retrospect. For example, when exposed to a different social environment the learner may become aware that they have gone through socialization which does not match their current environment (Schugurensky, 2000).

The construction of identity through discourse (discussed in the previous chapter) is closely related to Schugurensky’s (2000) concept of socialization as informal learning. By virtue of their living in a country which is not their country of origin, each of the women in this study was placed in an environment which allowed or forced them to become aware of their own socialization. In addition to becoming aware of their socialization, they have also become unmoored from the environment in which they were socialized, where their identity was formed. Scholars of transnationalism and identity construction have highlighted the multiple and hybrid identities that transnational workers maintain (Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Lai, 2010; Simoes, 2006; Vertovec, 2001). Transnational workers inhabit social worlds which cross borders, nationality, class and ethnicity. While doing so, they move fluidly and often without awareness between a complex array of identities (Ghosh & Wang, 2003). In this section I argue that the women in this study have gone through or are going through informal learning during which they navigate what Bamberg et al. (2011) refer to as sameness and change: they construct an identity which maintains their identity in a new context or construct new
identities to match their new social environment, which they move between in different contexts. Although this informal learning certainly occurs outside of the participants’ MPENs, their MPENs are a site of the informal learning of identity construction.

**Sameness Versus Difference**

Bamberg et al. (2011) propose that one dimension of identity construction is the choice between continuity and discontinuity, at the extremes between no change at all versus radical change from moment to moment and from context to context. These extremes present a dilemma where the individual must balance these extremes while constructing an identity which allows for some change while maintaining some form of continuity. During the process of migration the women in this study navigated this dilemma of sameness versus difference while learning ways to “be” in a new place and time while still maintaining a sense of self that is recognizable and acceptable to themselves and others.

**Navigating Multiple Identities**

Through their MPENs the women in this study lived in divided social worlds: physically living in Korea, where the majority of their alters resided, while being able to reach out to or be reached by those outside Korea. While navigating this split social world, the women in this study engaged in informal learning as they learned to construct new identities, which allowed them to adjust to their life in Korea as independent women who took on the important role of breadwinner, while maintaining societal expectations of the identity of a dutiful Filipina daughter, sister and mother (Lai, 2010).

Three of the participants, Mary, Jane and Marie, related having extensive contact with their fathers through their mobile phone. Each of these relationships illustrated a
different aspect of the tension between learning new identities in Korea while attempting to meet societal/family expectations of being a Filipina daughter.

In Mary’s case the identity she maintained with her father was in conflict with the identity she constructs in other aspects of her life. As discussed above, in my interactions with Mary she came across as a hardworking and responsible woman who not only takes care of herself but also her children and financially provides for her father. This seems to be the identity she constructs in much of her life, yet in discourse with her father a different identity is constructed.

With my father he is always are you doing this and that. Are you working? Are you taking care of the kids? Yes I'm working. Yes, my children are good. It is like I’m still a little girl and he need to tell me what I’m doing. I try to tell him, but he won't listen. I’m an adult.

In this excerpt, Mary relates her frustration at not being able to construct a new identity as a responsible adult with her father. He constructs his identity as a supervising father. Leaving Mary the choice of remaining a dutiful daughter, as Filipino society expects, and accepting this father/daughter dynamic or of making a radical change by rejecting the father/daughter dynamic her father constructs and also rejecting her identity as a dutiful daughter. While the above excerpt illustrates the contradiction this dynamic creates for Mary, she is unwilling to make the radical change in her identity Mary opts to maintain continuity in her identity with her father despite the contradiction it creates with her identity in other areas of her life.
Similar to Mary, Jane’s relationship with her father had tension between Jane wanting to be a dutiful daughter and her wanting to live her own life. Jane’s father wants her to return to the Philippines to help run the family business, a successful construction company. Jane enjoys the life she has built in Korea and has no desire to return to the Philippines. In the following excerpt, Jane discusses her father’s expectations of her, her role in the family and how she lies to them to avoid conflict.

We usually talk about him wanting me to come home. My father wants me to take a position with his company.

He doesn’t understand why I stay here. They don’t even know that I work as a nanny. No one in my family knows.

They wouldn’t like it. I’m the oldest child so I should set the example for my sisters. My parents want me to come home and help run the family business. They wouldn’t like me being a nanny.

The distance is better. It makes it easier for me to have my own life as I want it. On Skype I’m able to make them happy; they think I’m still a regional manager.

In the above excerpt, Jane discusses the tension between her being a dutiful daughter and older sister and what she wants for her life. She constructs an identity for her family, even though this requires her to lie, which continues her identity as a dutiful daughter and older sister. Like Mary, she is unwilling to make a radical break in her identity with her family, instead living her life as she wants while maintaining an identity
with her family which appeases her father and maintains her status as the older sister in the family.

For Marie maintaining a traditional dutiful daughter relationship with her father posed no conflict with the new identities she has constructed while living in Korea. She describes her father as her best friend, “He gives me advice, most of the time my father is the one I can rely, I can cry I can show my emotions to my father.” Marie came to Korea to “Fix” her life by escaping an abusive relationship and becoming more independent. She feels she has accomplished her goals. Although her ex attempts to interfere in her life, she feels removed from that relationship and enjoys her freedom. She is independent, able to financially provide for herself, her children and her parents; She relates enjoying her life in Korea, “I would rather live in Korea than the Philippines,” and her new found freedom in her social life, “Me and my friends, we just do crazy things, so much fun.”

This independent, carefree identity Marie constructs in Korea is in contrast with the identity of a dutiful daughter who needs her father. As part of her role as a daughter, she sends money to help her parents every month in addition to helping her father raise money for charity work he organizes through his church. Although these activities may be done to fulfill societal expectations, Marie embraces her identity with her father as a daughter who needs his care. Unlike Mary and Jane, Marie has no desire to break with this identity; she maintains this continuity in her identity for herself not because of societal expectations, and at the same time constructs a new identity as an independent young woman in Korea.
These three examples illustrate how transnational workers construct new identities as they navigate their new social environments and how they use their MPEN to maintain identities with family members in their country of origin which are socially acceptable. In the following section, I discuss how the women in this study constructed identities as transnational mothers when maintaining a traditional identity of mothering was impossible.

**Transnational Mothering: Learning New Identities**

The traditional role of motherhood often includes themes of nurturing, protecting, caring and socializing (Chib et al., 2014). Women who deviate from this traditional role of mothering may be subject to what Chib et al. (2014) refer to as the “deviancy” discourse of mothering, which says that mothers who do not meet societal expectations are harming their children. According to Parrenas (2005), there is a general belief in the Philippines that extended periods of separation from their mothers threaten children’s wellbeing. In an attempt to resist the deviancy discourse, transnational mothers challenge this traditional view of mothering with themes of financial support and nurturing from afar (Chib et al., 2014). As with many transnational mothers (Chib et al., 2014; Lai, 2010), the women in this study struggled to learn new identities as mothers which would satisfy themselves and meet societal expectations.

Unable to be physically present with their children each woman in this study used her mobile phone to assist in learning to redefine her identity as mother. During our interviews all of the women became concerned about being seen as a “bad” mother, the deviancy discourse. Each woman told me how difficult making the choice to be apart from their children had been and that they hoped they would be reunited with their
children soon. All of the women explained their decision to be apart from their children in terms of the money they made and how it would improve their children’s lives, except for Jane -- who also told me that working in Korea was for the best. I identified three strategies the women used to help them construct their identities as transnational mothers: intensive, suppression and remote control.

In intensive mothering the transnational mother attempts to stay in almost constant contact with her children with frequent text messages and calls (Chib et al., 2014). Mary employed a strategy of intensive mothering in her attempt to construct an identity as a transnational mother to her youngest daughter. Her daughter was cared for by Mary’s father and a nanny who Mary employed. Mary’s intensive mothering consisted of frequent text, voice and video calls to her father to check on her daughter’s wellbeing. In addition, Mary had her father leave his computer on during the day, so she could make a video call at anytime and see and hear her daughter. During our interviews, Mary felt the need to justify being apart from her daughter, stating several times that it was the only way she could make extra money for her family. She also says that she will bring her daughter back to Korea as soon as she is old enough to go to daycare. Mary has constructed her identity as a transnational mother with the themes of intense contact, financial support and for only as long as necessary. Although this identity construction is not satisfying for Mary, it is her best effort to resist the deviancy narrative and her own longings to be a more traditional mother to her daughter.

A seemingly opposite identity construction from the intensive mothering of Mary is the suppression identity or what Lai (2010) terms forgetting and what Chib et al. (2014) termed passive mothering. Lai (2010) argues for the importance of forgetting in
the lives of transnational workers, particularly mothers. Forgetting becomes a survival mechanism for mothers who have left children behind. These mothers must compartmentalize their lives in order to function. Thinking about children who are far away is simply too painful and makes carrying out a day to day routine impossible (Lai, 2010). I’ve used suppression to describe this strategy for identity construction. In the stories the women in this study told me their children were never far from their thoughts. Rather than forgetting or being passive, it seemed to me that these women engaged in an active attempt to suppress thinking about their children. Jane, Angela and Sarah described what I term suppression as a strategy of transnational mothering identity.

In the excerpt below, Jane has nicely illustrated the suppression strategy of transnational mothering. She is secure that her children are OK. Thinking about them all the time is too painful, so she suppresses her thoughts between phone calls.

I know that they are being well taken care of. If there was any problem their father would call me. It’s difficult not being with them, but thinking about it all the time only makes it worse. When we talk I cry. Then I try not to think about being away from them between calls.

Angela talks about her less successful attempts to suppress thinking about her oldest son who lives with his grandmother in the Philippines, “When I think about him I just cry to myself. Why am I here? There is nothing I can do, so I pray and try not to think.”

Both of these women expressed the pain that is associated with being apart from their children. Employing the strategy of suppression seems to be a resignation to their
powerlessness in the situation and an acknowledgment that dealing with the absence on a day to day basis is too painful.

Sarah also employed a strategy of suppression during the 20 years she and her son were apart. Unlike the other women, her son is now an adult and most of his childhood occurred prior to affordable overseas communication. So her experiences provide a different perspective on the construction of an identity as a transnational mother.

It is so much better now. We can talk anytime we want. At night after I’m finished with my work we usually talk about our day. It was so hard before no talk only letters. I try not to think about then. It was too hard and lonely. But he has graduated now and has a girlfriend. So I can be happy.

In this excerpt, Sarah describes how her strategy of suppression applies even to events from years ago, “I try not to think about then. It was too hard and lonely.” Despite her regrets over the situation she takes solace in the fact that her son is doing well, “But he has graduated now and has a girlfriend. So I can be happy.”

Jane, Angela and Sarah used suppression as a strategy to construct their identities as transnational mothers with themes of being secure in the knowledge that their children are being well cared for, suppression only means avoiding pain (not forgetting their children), hope that things will improve in the future.

Chib et al. (2014) refers to remote-control parenting as transnational mothers who rely on and attempt to supervise surrogates to provide care for their children and act as a proxy for presence for intensive mothering. Marie employed a strategy of
remote-control mothering combined with suppression in her construction of her identity as a transnational mother. Marie relied on friends, teachers and her ex to be surrogate caregivers for her children. As described in the previous chapter, through her MPEN she receives information how her children are doing in school from her children’s teachers. When her children need something or have an event, Marie is able to contact friends or her ex to see that her children’s needs are taken care of. Jane, Angela and Sarah all had caregivers who they felt secure in the knowledge that they were meeting all of their children’s needs. Although Marie feels her ex treats their children well, she was not confident that he would keep up on their school work or attend school events. This lack of security that her children’s needs were being taken care coupled with a desire to be more intensely involved in her children’s lives lead Marie to rely on remote-control mothering.

She also spoke of suppressing her thoughts of her children as a way of dealing with the pain of being apart.

Every time we talk I’m happy, but after it’s really sad. I’m happy that I can give them what they need and support, but I’m sad that we are so far apart.

(begins to cry) It’s so hard. I try not to think about it.

In this excerpt, Marie has nicely summarized the themes associated with the strategy of suppression: making sure her children get what they need, pain and the avoidance of pain. Marie constructed an identity as a transnational mother with themes of being intensely involved through surrogates and suppression.
The women in this study all struggled daily with their decisions to live apart from their children. In order to make this situation palpable they have constructed identities as transnational mothers which employ different themes than those of traditional mothering, such as nurturing, protecting and caring while being physically present. As transnational mothers they constructed identities of mothering which closely resembled traditional mothering; unable to be physically present they all ensured that their children are nurtured, protected and cared for although they employ different strategies. They also redefined the identity of a mother as providing for financially and building a future. Despite their efforts to construct new identities as mothers, they are not satisfied. Each woman expresses pain, guilt and remorse associated with living apart from their children. It seems that despite their attempts to avoid the deviancy discourse of motherhood, they struggle not to place this label on themselves.

**Identities Reflected in the MPENs**

Identity construction viewed as informal learning is at least in part dependent on our social environment (Schugurensky, 2000) and in discourse with others (Bamberg et al., 2011; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Viewing identity construction as a social process which is influenced by those around us leads to the possibility of using ego networks as a tool to investigate the identities that we construct. In this section I briefly discuss my interpretation of two of the participant’s identities (based on the qualitative interviews) and how their identity constructions were reflected in their MPENs. I choose these two participants to discuss because I feel that I have a good understanding of the identities they constructed and these identities are reflected in their MPENs. In this discussion I hope to show that ego networks have the potential to be
used as a tool to investigate how identity construction, as an informal learning process, is influenced by our social environments.

Mary’s MPEN is dominated by family members with strong ties. Her MPEN could be described as a space where everyone knows each other well. Based on her MPEN, it’s not surprising that Mary presents herself as a traditional Filipina. She uses “we” when discussing Filipinas. She has a strong sense of family obligation despite the burden these obligations impose, she meets them. Her MPEN is populated by the same people it might have been if she had never left the Philippines. My interpretation of her identity construction is that of a dutiful Filipina daughter, wife and mother. These features can be seen in her fulfillment of obligations toward her father, the close relationship she has with her husband and her intensive mothering of her children, particularly her youngest daughter. Her Identity construction occurs in a social environment where there are strong social norms. She expresses one of these norms while discussing her obligations to her father.

A Filipina will not say everything to our husband. But he will say you have a family you must take care of them. If my father needs medicine and I have money, what can I do? I have to give him money. How could I not?

In this excerpt, Mary has provided a window into the norms of her social environment. It is in this environment that she constructs an identity as a traditional Filipina dutiful daughter and mother.

Jane’s MPEN is composed of two main clusters. One composed of family members living in the Philippines and Hong Kong, and the other composed of alters
associated with her business. The only alters she contacts daily are her employer, alters associated with her business and her two sisters. No one in Jane’s MPEN knows more than 6 other alters, and the only Filipinos are her family members and her housekeeper. Her MPEN is a loosely connected group of alters who likely don’t know many of the other alters. My interpretation of her identity construction is that of an international expat (this is discussed in some detail in Chapter 5). While she constructs an international identity outside of her family, with family members she continues to construct her identity as that of a dutiful daughter and sister. The cluster of family members and the loosely connected nature of her remaining MPEN provide clues to her duel identity constructions. She is able to construct alternative identities without causing conflict with either social group and without paying the price of radically changing the identity she constructs with her family.

My argument here is that examining an individual’s MPEN can provide clues as to the social environments which influence their construction of identity. Having said that, I don’t want to state my case too strongly. While I believe that these two examples illustrate that identity construction is a process of informal learning which takes place in our social environments and that using ego networks can provide a window on these social environments, further investigation would be needed to make stronger statements.
One of the purposes of this study was to gain an understanding of the meaning that these five women make out of accessing their MPEN: What is their lived experience? During our interviews I asked these women what it meant to them to have access to a mobile phone. They all agreed that they couldn’t imagine their lives without the ease of communication that their mobile phones provide. Marie indicated that she couldn’t live in Korea without her mobile phone, “I don’t know if I could live here without my phone. Without my phone I couldn’t talk to my kids.” She went on to equate having her phone with being with her friends, “My phone is my friends, when I wake up every morning I always grab my phone. I need it.” Mary agreed that her mobile phone was a necessity although she presented a more complicated picture, touching on the price she pays for the convenience of having a mobile phone, “I think I cannot live without my smartphone. … But sometimes I want to get rid of my phone because I don’t have time to myself or with just my kids.” Having begun working overseas at a time before affordable mobile phones or easy Internet access, Sarah was able to put the ease of communication provided by mobile phones in context, “Before there was no way to talk, only letters. It was lonely, but now we can talk anytime anywhere.”

It was clear from my interviews that the women in this study used their mobile phones extensively and felt that having a mobile phone improved their lives. These women used their mobile phones as a tool to help them overcome the challenges of living in their host country as well as living away from loved ones. For these women one aspect of having a mobile phone roughly aligns with accessing instrumental and informational support to help them function in their host country: using the mobile phone
as a tool used in meeting their day to day challenges of finding work and navigating a foreign linguistic and cultural landscape, as well as maintaining their social lives. Another aspect of having a mobile phone is that it allowed these women to be in frequent contact with loved ones at a distance. This easy access to loved ones was valued by all of the women, but it complicated their lives, requiring them to have some contact which they might prefer to avoid.

As I worked with the women in this study, it became clear that accessing their MPENs was a not a simple matter. What may have initially appeared to have been straightforward communication was often complicated by hidden meanings, competing motives and unfulfilled desires. As we moved through the interviews and I analyzed the interview data, clear themes emerged. I identified three broad themes and two sub-themes in the data: Theme I: Security, with the sub-themes of a) security derived from the ability to function unimpeded, b) security derived from a sense of belonging; Theme II: There, but not there and Theme III: To get the good, you have to take the bad. In the following sections, I discuss each of these themes and sub-themes.

**Theme I: Security**

All of the women in this study related experiencing the theme of security, and it was discussed as a recurring theme in a variety of contexts. This experience of a sense of security was so common that is seemed to pervade all other aspects of accessing their MPENs. Most commonly the women in this study expressed the theme of security as a general sense of connectedness to others like themselves, similar in background, in language and in culture. Through this sense of connectedness with similar others the
women gained a sense of security in their ability to perform day to day activities, in their identities, and in their sense of self worth while living in their host country.

As transnational domestic workers in Korea the women in this study live in a world of uncertainty. They must navigate a foreign cultural and communicate in a language environment where they are second language users. This lack of cultural and linguistic competence can put them in situations they don’t understand and are ill equipped to manage. These women are outsiders in Korea and cannot rely on the usual linguistic and cultural knowledge to guide their day to day lives. This kind of social insecurity was compounded by a sense of discontinuity of self. As discussed in Chapter 6, as transnational workers these women inhabited multiple identities; they constructed identities which both provided them a sense of continuity of identity while also constructing identities which allowed them to function in their new roles as transnational domestic workers in Korea. In an environment which provided these women little security, their mobile phones helped them to access social support from their MPENs and provided a sense of security.

All of the participants in this study related multiple times that accessing their MPENs provided them with a sense of security. Challenges to the participants’ sense of security came from two broad factors: a lack of linguistic and cultural capital and being physically distant from parts of their expected social networks. Being linguistic and cultural outsiders exposed the participants to a range of challenges to their sense of security, from being sexually harassed on the street to conflicts with a landlord to the rather mundane issue of trying to find the correct product at the local store. In addition to being linguistic and cultural outsiders, migration to Korea also disrupted the
participants’ social networks causing them to live apart from portions of their expected social networks, such as kin and long time friends. Being apart from these usual sources of social support jeopardized the participants’ sense of security by increasing feelings of isolation and threatening their sense of identity.

In the following sections, I discuss the two subthemes of the theme of security: 1. security derived from the ability to function unimpeded and 2. security derived from a sense of belonging.

**Security Derived from the Ability to Function Unimpeded**

Living as a linguistic and cultural outsider can pose a threat to an individual’s sense of self as a competent person. Even routine encounters and carrying out simple tasks are fraught with the potential for failure. Faced with the insecurity caused by the prospect of violating cultural norms or being unable to function effectively are common occurrences for these transnational domestic workers. All of the women in this study turned to their MPENs to regain a sense of security derived from the ability to function unimpeded.

In the excerpt below, Marie discussed her frustration of going shopping and not being able to read the labels and the resulting threat to her sense of security as a competent person:

When I first come to Korea sometimes I buy the wrong thing because I cannot read the labels. I get home and try to use it and then I know I bought the wrong one. I have to go back to the store and try to return it or just lose the money. My Korean isn’t so good, so I feel stupid trying to get
my money back because of my own mistake. I try to explain, they don’t understand me. I usually just lose the money. 

In this excerpt, Marie expresses feelings of powerless, not only is she unable to find the right product, but she faces losing her money or the embarrassment of trying to exchange the product by explaining her mistake to the shopkeeper. Marie is quite expressive when she speaks; her feelings of frustration, embarrassment and anger came across in her facial expressions and tone of voice.

Her facial expression and tone of voice change to convey a sense of confidence when she discusses how she has managed to overcome this problem: “I just take a picture and text it to Eugene. In a few minutes, he texts me what it says.” Eugene is a Filipino friend of Marie who works in a factory outside of Seoul. He speaks and reads Korean and often acts as a translator for Marie. As Marie told me about this issue and how she solved it, her words and embodiment clearly showed her sense of empowerment. Although she doesn’t speak Korean, her MPEN provided her with the ability to share and use Eugene’s knowledge of Korean. By accessing knowledge from her MPEN she was able to feel more secure in her ability to function more efficiently in Korean society.

Accessing Eugene’s linguistic knowledge didn’t always result in feelings of empowerment for Marie. Marie discussed having frequent conflicts with her Korean landlord. These conflicts are exacerbated by the linguistic divide. Marie described these conflicts and how she works to resolve them:

He never fixes anything. The water goes out and I have to complain and complain to get him to fix it. And sometimes he wants money and I don’t
know what for. If Eugene isn’t working, I call him to talk to my landlord. He can translate for me and help me.

While describing her problems with her landlord and how she accesses Eugene’s linguistic knowledge, Marie does not convey the same sort of increased confidence as she did while describing shopping. There is a sense that she is happy to be able to solve the immediate problem but not that she feels empowered by the resolution.

I interpreted these two opposing reactions as revealing different aspects of the security that is obtained while accessing knowledge through her MPEN. In the shopping situation, she is able to go about her business and only contact Eugene if needed: she is in control and the fact that she needed help was only known by her and Eugene. However, during her conflicts with her landlord, she is “forced” by her lack of ability to speak Korean to contact Eugene in order to resolve the conflict. She has less control over both the process and the outcome, and her lack of control is known to her landlord. Although in each of these situations Marie is able to resolve her problem by accessing Eugene’s linguistic knowledge, her experience of these two situations is quite different. In both there is a sense of relief. She is able to resolve the problem in both instances and in that sense gain a sense of security. In the shopping instance her security was coupled with empowerment – she was able to function unimpeded. While relying on Eugene to resolve conflicts with her landlord resulted in security, she could resolve the conflict -- it was coupled with disempowerment, she had less control over how the conflict is resolved.

Mary expresses another aspect of gaining security derived from the ability to function unimpeded while discussing using her MPEN to mother-at-a-distance. In the
excerpt below, she discusses using her mobile phone to see that her children have arrived at school safely.

Then at 8:30, I'll go to the bathroom, so my boss can’t hear, and call them again.

It lets me know that everything is OK. That they are at school and they are OK. They are not allowed to use their phone at school, so I don’t talk to them until 2 o’clock. But I call anyway. If I don’t get an answer, I know they are in school and everything is OK.

Then I am clear, I can relax and work.

In this excerpt, Mary described how she uses her mobile phone to maintain a sense of security that her children are OK. Obtaining this information is important to Mary for two reasons. First, knowing that her children are safe at school allows her to gain a sense of security, “I can relax,” and continue with her work. Second, being able to check on her children’s wellbeing increases her security in her identity as a mother. As discussed in Chapter 6, Mary uses a strategy of intensive mothering while she constructs her identity as a transnational mother. This same intensity is present with her two older children who live with her. Mary responds to my asking her about the importance of being a mother, “It’s everything. Family is all that matters to a Filipina. And my kids are everything to me. They are why I’m here.” In this excerpt, Mary hints at the importance her identity as a mother holds for her. Maintaining this identity as a mother is both a societal norm, “Family is all that matters to a Filipina,” and personal need, “They are why I’m here.” For Mary being in Korea is a sacrifice, one she is willing to make for her children. Using her MPEN to intensely mother her children is a strategy which allows
her to feel secure in the knowledge that her children are OK and to improve her sense of security in her identity as a mother.

For Marie using her MPEN to gain a sense of security while mothering-at-a-distance was more about ensuring they had what they needed than ensuring their safety. As discussed in Chapter 5, Marie used her MPEN to learn what her children needed at school and to access resources to provide for her children.

I want to know what is happening with the school. I communicate with the teachers by Facebook. … My friends in Manila help me keep an eye on my kids. Even when I cannot send money, they will give it to them until I can send it.

In this excerpt, Marie explained how she uses her MPEN to provide for her children. While these interactions help her to feel secure in the knowledge that her children are getting what they need, like Marie, they also help Marie feel secure in her identity as a mother, “It is so hard being away from them. I know I am doing the right thing. I know they have what they need.” Here Marie touches on the two aspects of security involved in these interactions: knowing her children are provided for and maintaining her identity as a mother. Using her MPEN allows her to function in these areas, providing for her children and constructing an identity as a transnational mother, despite the barriers imposed by distance.

Mary and Marie’s stories provide a sense of the sub theme of security derived from the ability to function unimpeded which is associated with overcoming the limitations of distance to ensure the wellbeing of their children which also allows them to maintain some security in their identities as mothers.
Jane describes a different aspect of this sub theme of security: asserting her rights. When living in a culture that is not your own it can be difficult to assert your rights or to even know what your rights are. Jane related two instances where she felt her rights were violated and how she used her mobile phone to reassert her rights.

Last year during the Ebola outbreak in African a café/bar in my neighborhood posted a sign banning Africans from the bar. It was obviously racist and ignorant.

I was so angry. I took a picture and posted it on the neighborhood FB page. People got involved and the bar owner took the sign down and apologized. He had to. His business was ruined; no one would go to that bar. It became a big issue in our neighborhood.

In this excerpt, Jane described how she felt offend by the bar owners actions and how she responded. Although her rights weren’t directly affected, the posting of this sign violated her sense of justice. She immediately took action using her mobile phone and was able to resolve the situation.

Below she discusses how she felt about being part of the reason the bar owner removed the sign.

I felt good about that. People got involved and educated each other and the bar owner.

It was an obvious problem which was solved quickly. It isn’t always so easy.

Jane was not only describing her satisfaction with the removal of the offensive sign, she was also expressing her satisfaction with the formation and her inclusion in
neighborhood activism. By using her mobile phone she was able to not only be part of a community but to mobilize that group to action. Being part of this community allows her to assert her rights and to be secure in the knowledge that she can access this community again if needed.

As Jane noted, not all problems are so easily resolved. She went on to discuss the situation of men sexually harassing women in her neighborhood.

Jane: Men harassing women is an ongoing problem in my neighborhood.

Saying things as you walk by, “you look good, I’d like to ….” Sometimes they will follow me up the street. It doesn’t matter what I say or do.

Me: What do you do?

Jane: We have a forum on line devoted to the harassers. We post descriptions of men who harass and what they do, so that other women will be warned.

Me: Do you post their pictures?

Jane: No, under Korean law we could be arrested for defamation even for telling the truth, so we can only describe what happens.

The problem doesn’t go away but at least we warn each other, and it gives us a way to vent our frustrations.

In this excerpt, Jane described how women in her neighborhood have gone online to combat sexual harassment. Although this effort has not ended the harassment, this online community, accessed by smartphones, provides a sense of solidarity for the women, “The problem doesn’t go away but at least we warn each other and it gives us a way to vent our frustrations.” In this line, Jane acknowledges that the group’s efforts do
little to solve the problem, but the women are able to develop a sense of community and support each other.

In these two descriptions, Jane has conveyed the sense how she was able to assert her rights through the development of online communities she accesses with her smartphone. The bar owner’s sign and the harassment of women are issues which she could not have addressed alone, but the connectivity afforded by mobile phones allowed her to access a community to address the situations. This sense of being part of a community which can be accessed with her smartphone provides her with a sense of security that she can define and assert her rights through this community.

**Security Derived from a Sense of Belonging**

Living in Korea mean that these women are often seen as outsiders from the dominate culture. Being linguistic and cultural outsiders can create a sense of insecurity and isolation. The women in this study all used their MPENs to gain *security derived from a sense of belonging*.

Perhaps none of the women in this study was more committed to understanding Korean culture than Angela. Married to a Korean man and having two children in Korea, she sees her future in Korea. Despite the difficulties she has with her husband, she has made an effort to assimilate, hoping that this will improve her marriage. As part of her effort to assimilate, she has taken Korean language and culture classes at a local community center. Despite her efforts, cultural conflicts and misunderstandings occasionally occur.

Below, Angela discusses contacting her sister-in-law or brother-in-law when she finds herself in a situation she doesn’t understand:
Sometimes when we have a problem, when I need something or I don’t understand they can explain to me. I’m 4 years now but it’s hard for me. I have other friends who have been here for 6 years, 10 years. But they still the same like me. I’m still trying to communicate with them and trying to understand their culture. … sometimes it’s really difficult, sometimes when they told me, I’m just confusing and sometimes it’s really very difficult and I try to understand and I listen and try and listen but sometimes it’s just so stressful.

In this excerpt, Angela voiced her frustration and confusion with Korean culture as well as her appreciation for her sister-in-law and brother-in-law for helping her to adjust to it. Although her understanding of Korean culture and language is far from complete, her efforts to assimilate have helped her to grow closer to her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, “They are always there for me.” By soliciting and receiving support, Angela has become less of an outsider. This is evident in how her sister-in-law has become an intermediary in her marriage problems.

Sometimes my husband and I have communication problems, a lot and I try to tell my sis-in-law because she understands me. I try to tell her the problem and she tries to help me from my husband and my mother-in-law. Because since we came here we always fighting.

She can translate with my husband what I feel. He thinks he is always right and I have no rights.

In this excerpt, Angela has described how being able to access her sister-in-laws cultural knowledge has provided her with a sense of security. Despite her marriage
difficulties, she has a confidant in the family, someone who understands her point of view and will stand up for her. This support helps Angela feel like she belongs and doesn’t have to endure her situation alone.

In the excerpt below, Angela describes how she feels about her marriage and how she deals with it.

Angela: I feel like I’m trapped with him and trying to understand him always and what should I do.

Me: What do you do when you feel trapped?

Angela: Sometimes I cry, why I’m here so I just keep praying and be strong like that, so … (pauses as she cries) Sometimes I talk to m sister-in-law, she understands.

The support she receives from her sister-in-law doesn’t resolve anything or improve her marriage. However, it does provide her with a sense of belonging: there is someone else who understands and supports her. In a difficult marriage while living in a culture which is not her own, Angela often feels isolated and “trapped.” By accessing her sister-in-law and brother-in-law with her mobile phone, Angela is able to gain a sense of security in the knowledge that she is not completely alone. Her in-laws have accepted her and support her: she belongs, even if her belonging is incomplete.

All of the women in this study live in divided social worlds, none more so than Angela. Due to her husband’s controlling behavior, she has been forced to conduct much of her life in secret as she has struggled to develop an independent life. The result of this process can be seen in her MPEN, which shows four clusters of alters: her in-laws, her son and mother and two small clusters of friends. Her strongest ties are to
her family members, but her sense of closeness is limited with both her biological family and her in-laws. With her son and mother her contact is limited because of her need to hide all contact from her husband, and her closeness with her in-laws is limited by culture, language and their loyalty to Angela’s husband. Her ties with her friends are not strong as measure by importance or by frequency of contact. Despite these weak ties, Angela turns to her friends to develop a sense of belonging.

   I’m just by myself. There is not sweetness between us. I cry and try to ignore my husband, just by myself. And I do Facebook in the night time talking with my friends. Because they know my situation and they think my husband is really jealous. I know I can talk to my friends when I’m alone.

   I’m talking, alone crying.

In this excerpt, Angela relates a sense of security she feels knowing that when she feels isolated and distressed she can reach out to her friends through her MPEN. This connectedness to people who understand her situation helps her to get through difficult times. Although she is searching for a sense of belonging, her attempts are not entirely successful, “I know I can talk to my friends when I’m alone. I’m talking, alone crying.” Here she acknowledges that her friends are available to her but she is still alone and crying.

   Marie also describes turning to members of her MPEN when she feels isolated. In her case, she turns to her church community for a sense of belonging. She describes the members of her church as being like a family, “Like a real family, even my personal problems I can cry and I can show my real emotions to them.” Through her church Marie is able to gain the security of belonging to a community.
Marie gains a different sort of belonging through her relationship with Sayuri, a member of Marie’s church. Marie and Sayuri are prayer partners. When Marie is feeling lonely and missing her children she calls Sayuri for support, “She is always there to talk. We understand each other. She is away from her family too.” In this excerpt, Marie describes how talking to Sayuri provides her with a sense of belonging. Being from Japan, Sayuri is also an expat in Korea. Living away from their countries and families, they share some of the same feelings of isolation. Her relationship with Sayuri provides Marie with the knowledge that she is not the only one who feels isolated at times. This validates Marie’s feelings and allows her to feel secure that others feel just as she does.

Sarah also related a sense of security she gains by belonging through accessing her MPEN. In Sarah’s case, she gains a sense of belonging through connecting to her past life and identity. In the following excerpt, Sarah describes the sense of security she derives from her connections to old friends in her MPEN. These friends are nurses she worked with in Libya over twenty-five years ago. Contact with these friends connects her to her past identity as a nurse and to a past network of friends.

We talk about once a month about our personal life and her personal life
and my personal life.

About her daughter, her problems and her husband, like that.

I knew her in Libya. We were very close then. She is back in the Philippines.

We talk about old friends, how are they where they are, now.

It’s really nice because we knew each other before when we were working
with each other.
Sometimes we didn’t see each other for a long time, then we see each other again, feel connected on Facebook, we found each other, and other friends.

In this excerpt, Sarah is relating her feelings of belong she has gained through reconnecting with a group of women she worked closely with many years ago. While Angela’s attempts to assert a sense of belonging were aimed at relieving her feelings of social isolation and distress, Sarah used her connections with old friends to develop a sense of belonging which stretches back to her identity as a young nurse living overseas for the first time, “Sometimes we talk about old times and tell old stories. The things we did.” Sarah takes obvious joy in these relationships with her old friends, smiling as she discusses her old friends.

Functioning and belonging are aspects of security which many people may take for granted when living in their own countries and cultures. However, when living in a foreign country and culture completing day to day tasks and having a sense of belonging may all be challenged. At times when their sense of security was challenged, the women in this study were able to use their mobile phones to access resources through their MPENs which improved their functioning, gave them a sense of belonging and ultimately allowed them to feel more secure.

**Theme II: Being there, but not there**

When the women in this study made the decision to migrate to Korea, they all left family at home. One of the most frequently discussed as aspect of their mobile phone use was accessing these strong ties with the loved ones who lived in another country.
While mobile phones allowed these women to see and talk with their family members, this contact was not the same as being in the same location. Having contact by video calls was desired and valued, but there is a negative side to maintaining important relationships in this way. All of the women discussed the complicated emotions these calls brought up, particularly with their children.

The five women who participated in this study had many things in common, but perhaps none had more effect on their lives than the experience of living separated from their children. All of these women had at least one child living overseas at the time I interviewed them, and although Sarah’s son was now an adult, mother and son had spent almost their entire lives living in different countries. This experience of living apart from a child dominated most of my interviews. It was the one subject that all of the women brought up independently and returned to repeatedly. In addition to being an area of concern, this is also an issue which was emotional to talk about: three of the five participants became tearful while discussing their relationships with their children.

The theme of “Being there, but not there” refers to the ability to use mobile phones to overcome the barriers imposed by distance, to communicate and maintain relationships with loved ones who were not present. While the “Being there” aspect of these interactions was highly valued, there was also the negative aspect of “but not there.” This negative aspect of communicating with loved ones at a distance highlighted the distance between them, like opening a wound that never fully heals. This theme of “Being there, but not there” was most pronounced in the women’s communication with their absent children.
All of the women said they primarily used Skype or Facebook video to communicate with their children living outside of Korea although Facebook messenger was also used on occasion. This ability to both speak and see their children was important to the participants. They described talking to their children on video chat as an important source of social support. This contact allowed them to maintain their relationships with their children and to reassure themselves that their children were being well taken care of. For Mary, Skyping with her one year old daughter motivated her for her work day as well as helping her to justify living away from her daughter. In the following excerpts she describes how she feels while Skyping with her daughter while at work:

I’m working, it’s just that when you are so tired … And talking to your daughter while working makes you more energetic … (After Skyping) I can see that she is OK. I know I’m supporting her well. I think it’s best for me to send her there because I’m sending money back. I can work part-time.

Several times during our interviews, Mary spoke of feeling exhausted from the constant pressure to work long hours and to care for her two older children who live with her. Missing her daughter adds to this stress and makes her question her decision to continue working in Korea. Skyping with her daughter reassures her that her daughter is doing well and enables her to develop and maintain a relationship although not as close as she would like.
While being able to Skype with her daughter buoys Mary emotionally, these calls also take an emotional toll. In the excerpt below Mary and I were discussing what it was like for her to Skype with her daughter:

Mary: Oh my Gosh! It was just two days ago when I heard her talk to me like “mamma”. Ooohhh gosh it makes me cry when I’m at work. I really want to go home and hug her. You know, I want her to come here very soon. First talk I’m not there. First step I’m not there, only Skyping.

Me: So when you’re talking to her on Skype, it sounds like (interrupts)

Mary: I’m home

Me: You’re (interrupts)

Mary: It’s bad because I can’t touch her; I can’t hug her. (Begins to cry)

In this excerpt, Mary beautifully describes the emotional complexity involved in mother/child relationships which are maintained at a distance. She starts by expressing feelings of joy at the thought of hearing her daughter’s first words. While recounting this experience, she smiled and took an open posture, clearly enjoying the telling. Just as quickly as this joy appeared it was overtaken by sadness: “First talk I’m not there. First step I’m not there, only Skyping.” Countering the joy of feeling like she is home there is the sadness of knowing she is not really home: “I can’t touch her; I can’t hug her.” For all that these video calls provide Mary, they are also reminders that she is not with her daughter.

All five women in this study talked about having similar experiences as Mary: while access to a smartphone allowed them to bridge the distance between themselves and their children, these video calls also brought to the fore the emotional pain they
lived with being separated from their children. For the women with older children, these interactions included the complexity of the hurt and anger their children felt over being apart from their mothers.

All of the women with older children spoke of their video calls being in some way devoted to explaining to their children why they moved to Korea. For Marie, as with Mary, her video calls with her children are both happy and sad events: “Every time we talk I’m happy, but after it’s really sad. I’m happy that I can give them what they need and support, but I’m sad that we are so far apart.” In this excerpt, Marie voices her tension between wanting to be with her children and needing to be in Korea in order to provide financially for them. This is a common theme for all of the women: I don’t like the way things are, but it is for the best. And I’m doing the best I can.

While all of the women struggled with their decisions to be away from their children, this tension became more acute while talking with their children. In the following excerpt, Marie responds to my asking her if her 7 and 9 year old children understand why she is in Korea.

Yes, they understand, they need to study and they need more money, they are trying to understand, but sometimes they cry. They telling me I wish we had money like that... It’s really hard for me and for them.

As the above excerpt shows, Marie’s children are aware of the reality that sometimes parents need to live apart from their children to earn money; they know other children in similar situations. For Marie, knowing that her living in Korea is hurting her
children causes her to question her decision to migrate. Like Mary, Marie’s video calls to her children enable her to feel closer to her children as well as highlighting the pain of being apart. Unlike Mary, Marie, as well as the other women with older children, must also face the same conflicted feelings in their children.

During our interviews I was struck by the way these women describe being away from their children as a burden. Each woman became visibly upset while discussing her children and three broke down in tears. Even Sarah, whose son is 22 years old, seemed to lose her voice and stopped talking while discussing being apart from him for most of his childhood. For these women, the decision to live apart from their children seems to be something which is constantly in the back of their minds, weighing on them. All five women frequently came back to the issue of being apart from their children, relating how difficult it is and giving reasons why it is for the best.

This overarching concern with being apart from their children and attempting to maintain these relationships is both alleviated and exacerbated by the ability to make frequent video calls. All of the women talked about the importance of these calls in maintaining their relationships with their children, how these calls seemed to eliminate the distance at least for a time. Through these video calls they were able to check in on their children’s welfare and see that they get what they need. The women were able to see that the sacrifices they were making were coming to some good: their children were able to go to school and receive the material support they needed. This helped the women to continue working in Korea. Perhaps most importantly, these calls bring joy to the women, allowing them to be part of their children’s lives on a day to day basis. At
least for a brief time the distance separating them disappears and as Mary put it, “I’m home.”

As mentioned earlier, these women also pay a price when they make these video calls. For every moment of feeling like “I’m home” there is the looming realization that the distance has not disappeared, as Mary put it, “I’m not there, only Skyping. … I can’t touch her, I can’t hug her.” In addition to forcing them to confront their own feelings of loss, these video calls also force these women to be confronted by their children’s feelings of abandonment.

While video calls do bridge the barrier of distance, these calls between mother and child are far from simple interactions. These women’s experiences of interacting with their children by smartphone include feelings of joy, as I expected, but also guilt, loss, rationalization and reassurance. Each woman negotiates all of these both within herself as well as with her children. These video calls might be viewed as recurring events which bring to the fore the tension between needing to be apart to provide for their children and the desire to be with their children that these women live with every day. While all five women expressed the feeling that video calls made them feel closer to their children, as Marie said, “I couldn’t be in Korea without a smartphone,” there was also the unanimous feeling that these calls were emotional and difficult.

**Theme III: To get the good, you have to take the bad**

The theme I’ve called “being there, but not there,” discussed above, shows how communicating with loved ones at a distance is an emotionally complicated matter. Similarly, this third theme, “to get the good, you have to take the bad,” refers to how the
experience of being available to your MPEN is also complicated by conflicting desires and relationships. Four of the five participants talked about the desire to have frequent contact with some alters (primarily their children) forced them to have unwanted contact with other alters (primarily caretakers of their children). These unwanted encounters included arguments with ex-husbands, surveillance, obligations to provide support and attempts to maintain previous relationship dynamics.

As discussed above, using their mobile phones to make frequent video calls to their children was a highly prized, although emotionally complicated, activity for these women. Of course these children do not live alone, and keeping in contact with their children required frequent contact with the children’s caretakers. For Jane, calls to her children include a mandatory conversation with her ex-husband. Jane came to Korea as a way to put some distance between herself and her ex-husband. She describes the situation like this: “The phone is like a leash; he knows where to find me and knows that I have to keep that line open to him.” While Jane wants to maintain a good relationship with her ex, she feels that he abuses this access: “He uses our phone calls to try to get me back. It always ends in a fight. I try to be respectful; he’s the father of my children. But never ends up well.” In these excerpts Jane describes her frustration with being forced to maintain contact with her ex-husband while he is using this contact to try to talk her into coming back to the marriage. She would prefer to keep their relationship limited to discussing their children, but he won’t allow that. She has resigned herself to the situation: “I want to call my children. At the same time I dread it.” Her mobile phone allows her to have frequent contact with her children, while maintaining these relationships also forces her to maintain the undesired relationship with her ex.
Marie describes a similar situation with the father of her children. One of the main factors in her decision to come to Korea was to escape the abusive relationship with the father of her two children. Like Jane, all of her calls to her children have to go through their father:

He is important because he is the one who is next to my kids. I need him to communicate with my kids. He tries to get me to come back to Manila. He says no one can take the kids, only I (meaning Marie) can so he tries to force me to come back.

In this excerpt, Marie describes how her ex tries to get her to come back to him by playing on her desire to care for her children, “He says no one can take the kids, only I (meaning Marie).” Here he is saying that she is the only person who can properly take care of their children, so she should come back. Marie voices a similar experience to Jane’s: needing to maintain the relationship with her ex in order to keep contact with her children, despite that relationship being used against her desires for independence. Both women are placed in a position of being pressured to maintain former relationships whenever they contact their children.

The need to keep communication open to her children’s father prevents Marie from completely escaping that abusive relationship:

Before because of his jealousy, it was easy for him to slap my face even when we were out in public. … When I came to Korea I told him that I wanted to fix my life, and he said it’s OK. But when I came here, his words are different from the way he act … If I don’t answer the phone he is jealous. … He call and ask where I am who I’m with.
Although she doesn’t have to fear for her safety, Marie describes a pattern of continued emotional abuse which she is unable to end for fear that she may have difficulty maintaining contact with her children.

Like Jane and Marie, Mary is also forced to have frequent contact with the caretaker of her daughter while maintaining her relationship with her daughter. In Mary’s case that caretaker is her father. Like many relationships between parents and their adult children, Mary’s relationship with her father is a complicated one. Mary describes him as being a heavy drinker who is unable to work due to a heart condition. Mary voices some resentment over his remarrying a few months after her mother’s death. Her father and his new wife have a young child. Mary becomes visibly angry discussing his health and drinking, as she feels he is being selfish for not taking better care of his health. Despite having some conflicted feelings toward her father, she supports him financially. She denies resenting sending him money:

“I think it’s my obligation to take care of him because he doesn’t have work now because he’s sick. … I need to send him money for medicines and everything. If my father needs medicine and I have money, what can I do? I have to give him money. How could I not?”

Although she denies resenting this obligation, she does talk about the stress her relationship with her father causes her:

Yes. He has this heart problem and I hear my dad was drinking. But he cannot drink. So he doesn’t take care of himself. So sending money is hard; I don’t always know where to get money. I’m not a machine. I only
get my salary once a month, so if I send money once you need to… I
cannot send it again because I have kids here.

In the above excerpts, Mary indirectly relates her resentment toward her father. She feels that supporting him financially is her obligation, but she also resents that he doesn’t take care of his health and drinks too much. Her desire to care for her family pushes her to send money to her father, but in order to earn enough money to support him financially she must work on the weekends, taking time away from her children.

The kids don’t know. They like, “Mom why you have to work” Every time, especially on Sundays. If my father needs money, I have to work part-time. If it’s Sundays, my kids are like, “Mom why you have to work, we have to go here and here.”

Throughout our interviews, Mary denied that helping her father was something she resented. In the following excerpt she gives a glimpse of the stress this relationship causes her:

Sometimes when I’m so tired and pissed off, I want him to talk to me, without hearing any problems from there.

I have my moments, I’m not breaking but I’m tired. I have problems here and I don’t want the problems from there too.

Here Mary is talking about providing emotional and financial support to her father. Her life in Korea is stressful and she doesn’t want the added stress of dealing with her father’s problems. She wouldn’t say this to him and is reluctant to discuss her resentment openly.
One area where Mary is open about her resentment toward her father is how he speaks to her like she was still a child. Despite her supporting him financially, she feels that he often speak to her as a father correcting an irresponsible child. In the following excerpt, she discusses how her father will check to see that she is working when she Skypes her daughter:

My dad is always like, “Are you working?” Yes, I’m working! It’s like he thinks I’m not working or he needs to make sure I’m at work. I just need to talk to my daughter. I’m not a child.

Here Mary is relating how having frequent contact with her father forces her to maintain some of the negative aspects of their father/daughter relationship. She is unable to completely break free from the role of daughter, as her father sees her.

This theme of “To get the good, you have to take the bad” refers to how these women are forced to have interactions they would rather avoid. For Jane it means arguing with her ex-husband; for Marie maintaining contact with an abusive ex, and for Mary it means maintaining a relationship with her father where she is called on to provide financial and emotional support while having her adulthood questioned. For these three women, these forced contacts made contacting their children a more complicated matter than it might have otherwise been. Jane and Marie only talked to her children on average once a week, at least in part to avoid the negative aspects of forced communication with their exes. Mary didn’t feel the need to reduce the frequency of calls to their children, but she did discuss the increased stress that these forced contacts caused. For all three of these women, this forced contact prevented them from leaving aspects of their life that they would rather move beyond.
Chapter 8: Discussion

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings of this mixed-methods study of how five Filipino domestic laborers, who were living and working in Korea, used their mobile phones to access their MPENs. This chapter presents a discussion of the quantitative findings, how the participants used their MPENs, the informal learning which occurred in the MPENs and my understanding of what meaning the participants made out of using their MPENs. Following these brief summaries, I discuss the implications and limitations of this research and conclude by presenting some suggestions for future research.

Describing the MPENs

The purposes of the quantitative portion of this study was to construct and then describe the MPENs, defined as the twenty most important relationships maintained by mobile phone contact, of the five participants. Although the composition and structure of each participant’s MPEN reflected her unique circumstances, there were common features present in all of the participants’ MPENs.

The majority of ties were maintained with alters living in Korea (63 percent) with the remaining alters living primarily in the Philippines. The majority of ties were maintained with other Filipinos (76 percent), almost exclusively family members and friends. Of alters located outside of Korea, 97 percent were Filipinos and 77 percent were family members. Alters located in Korea were a slightly more heterogeneous group, 64 percent were Filipinos and 21 percent were family members. This data
suggests that the participants tended to use their mobile phones to maintain ties with a variety alter types locally and with family members at a distance.

The majority of ties were with kin and friends. These ties were overwhelmingly involved with the bidirectional flow of emotional support. All ties with friends involved bidirectional emotional support as well as the majority of ties with family members. An interesting exception to this trend involved a subgroup of family members living outside of Korea. Several of the participants felt an obligation towards some family members who lived in the Philippines. These family members requested instrumental support, usually financial, from the participant. Providing this financial support was often a burden to the participant, requiring her to work extra hours, and was generally a source of stress.

While alters located outside Korea were predominantly family members involved in emotional support, alters located in Korea were a more heterogeneous group involved in providing more varied types of support. The majority of alters living in Korea were family and friends involved in bidirectional emotional support. Unlike family members living outside of Korea, family members residing locally provided instrumental and informational support as well as emotional support. This trend of being sources of multiple types of support also held true for friends living locally. There was a strong tendency for alters who were designated as primarily resource providers to reside in Korea (90 percent). This group was also the most dissimilar from the participants, only 43 percent of resource providers were Filipinos. The Filipinos who were designated as primarily resource providers tended to have a special skill or resource, such as speaking Korean or access to a car. While non-Filipinos designated as resource
providers tended to have access to resources such as knowledge of Korean culture, access to employment opportunities or material resources.

The quantitative data on the MPENs tends to be aligned with much of the previous research on social networks and social support. Previous researchers have found that there is a strong tendency for ego networks to be populated with alters similar to the ego (Borgatti et al., 2013; Wellman & Frank, 2000). This tendency towards homophily was also found in this study with 76 percent of alters being other Filipinos. In a series of studies Wellman and his colleagues (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Wellman & Frank, 2000; Wellman & Wortley, 1989; Wellman & Wortley, 1990) found that strong ties, particularly kinship ties, tend to provide more social support, despite distance from the alter, while ties living nearby are more often associated with every day types of support. This study supports these findings. Family members were associated with emotional support as well as financial support (flowing from the ego), while those ties living nearby were more often associated with a variety of types of social support, including small favors. This study also supports Granovetter’s (1982) argument for the importance of weak ties with socially heterogeneous alters. Of alters who were designated as resource providers 57 percent were non-Filipinos and none of these alters were designated as “most important” relationships.

How the Participants Used Their MPENs to Access Social Support

While the quantitative analysis identified some common trends across the five MPENs, the qualitative interviews both confirmed these trends as well as revealed the
idiosyncratic ways that each participant developed and used her MPEN as she attempted to meet her needs and desires, often overcoming obstacles in the process.

The most frequent way the participants used their mobile phones was to give and receive emotional support. Alters located in Korea involved in emotional support were predominantly friends who both provided the ego with emotional support as well as received emotional support from the ego. These interactions focused on day to day activities, communicating about work and children, and scheduling social events. The importance of these ties was exemplified in Marie’s statement, “My phone is my friends.”

Alters living outside of Korea were almost exclusively family members involved in the exchange of emotional support. Sarah was the only participant whose stay in Korea began before the general availability of mobile phones or smartphones. Her experience of living a way from loved ones at a time when communication was infrequent and expensive gives her greater context to appreciate the ease of access to loved ones living in the Philippines her mobile phone affords.

It’s a big difference. Before there was no communication with my family or friends. We wrote letters once a month that was all. They seemed so far away, and it was lonely here. Now, we can talk anytime, anywhere. We can talk a long time. We are so close than before….

Although valued by all of the participants, this ease of access also has a dark side. Ties to alters living outside of Korea were primarily with family members who were designated as “most important” relationships. These important ties to family members
often include a sense of obligation which may be a burden to the ego. Mary’s relationships with her brother and father were examples of such ties. Mary receives emotional and informational support through these ties, but she also feels obliged to provide emotional and financial support. Although she accepts this obligation as something she must do for family members, she does express some frustration at her inability to control their access to her.

No, because … what’s the word, I think it’s my obligation to take care of him …

Sometimes when I’m so tired and pissed off, I want them to talk to me, without hearing any problems from there.

I have my moments, I’m not breaking but I’m tired. I have problems here and I don’t want the problems from there too. I tell them just to make sure I’m not at work because I don’t want to discuss problems while I’m at work.

The excerpt above is part of Mary’s response when I asked her if it sending money home was stressful for her. Although she answered “No” to my question, as she elaborated the level of stress that these obligations create became clear.

In addition to ties to family members and friends, typically involving emotional support, all of the participants maintained ties to alters who could provide specific types of support which might otherwise be difficult to access. These ties were almost exclusively with alters living in Korea and often these were weak ties with alters who were dissimilar form the ego. Unlike ties to friends and family members, many of these resource providing ties were maintained primarily or solely because of the resource they
can provide. In Jane’s MPEN nearly a third (5 of 16) alters were maintained primarily or solely because they provide resources necessary for her to run her business. Although not comprising as high of a proportion of the other MPENs, all of the participants’ MPENs had ties which were designated as primarily providing access to resources, such as Korean language and culture, access to jobs, a car or child care. These resources were usually used by the ego. However, in Sarah’s case, she acted as a go between for alters with resources and other alters who desired these resources.

While it wasn’t surprising that the participants used their MPENs to access different types of social support, one of the interesting findings from this study is how these women used different affordances to overcome obstacles to meeting their desires and needs. One of the areas where needs and desires meet with obstacles was in the participants’ efforts to mother-at-a-distance. Four of the women in this study had minor children living outside of Korea, and for all of these women their efforts to mother-at-a-distance were frustrated in some way.

In Marie’s case her efforts to mother her absent children were complicated by their father’s, who was their primary caregiver, lack of attention to their day to day needs, particularly in regards to their education. In order to ensure that her children received what they needed, Marie enlisted the assistance of a friend who lived near her children and her children’s teachers. Marie related how she stays in contact with her children’s teachers. If the children needed anything or had an event, Marie contacts her friend who will get them what they need or attend the event. By expanding her MPEN to include these resource providers, Marie was able to effectively mother her absent children.
The ability to use a mobile phone without being detected was also an important feature which allowed Mary and Angela to mother their absent children. Confronted with very different obstacles in contacting their absent children, these two women used the stealth aspect of their mobile phones to overcome these obstacles. Mary wanted to stay in contact with her one year old daughter in the Philippines while working. Unable to openly use her mobile phone while working, she would make a Skype connection to her father’s computer and place her mobile phone in her apron. This allowed Mary to see her daughter throughout the day, even while working. This contact put her mind at ease and gave her motivation to continue with her work, “My phone is in my apron, and I can see her. Just being able to see her makes me feel like I can keep working.”

In Angela’s case, the obstacle to her having contact with her child came from her husband, who objected to her having contact with her son from a previous relationship. Angela was able to use a combination of stealth, mobility, and having control over her mobile phone to reestablish and maintain contact with her son in the Philippines. Angela didn’t have a mobile phone for the first year she lived in Korea. Afraid her husband might be able to trace her activities if she used her home phone or computer, she had no contact with her son in the Philippines for over a year. Once she got a mobile phone she began to call and text her son when her husband was out. Although she was still fearful that her husband would discover their communication, she has been able to reestablish and maintain a relationship with her son.

The participants used their mobile phones in the expected ways to overcome distance to stay in contact with family and friends. While these ties were important sources of emotional support, I found it interesting to discover the creative ways that
these women used their mobile phones to overcome obstacles in their lives. From Jane using her mobile phone to build her business and exert her sense of social justice to Angela using her mobile phone to thwart her abusive husband’s attempts to control her, all of the women in this study used access to their MPEN as a way to empower themselves and improve their lives.

Informal Learning in the MPENs

Although none of the participants related their activities in their MPEN as learning, it became clear as this study progressed that the participants’ MPENs were rich sites of informal learning. As I analyzed the transcripts it became clear the all of the participants engaged in self-directed informal learning, incidental informal learning, and socialization (Schugurensky, 2000).

Self-directed Informal Learning.

I identified five areas where the participants engaged in self-directed informal learning: financial, family, social life, official business, and culture. In the area of finances, all of the participants engaged in self-directed informal learning in order to earn extra money. Four of the five participants engaged in learning around finding part-time work to meet financial obligations. This typically involved learning of part-time work through an alter who had “connections” to people who were hiring. These sources of informal learning were important because they allowed the participants to have a sense of financial security. If any of them found themselves needing money, they knew they could find work quickly, usually the same day.
The fifth participant, Jane, routinely engaged in informal self-directed learning while running her online buying and selling business. She learned how to start her business from a friend, who also buys and sells online, and she continues to contact him routinely on her mobile phone for information about the market. She is also engaged in a continuous process of informal learning as she interacts with her suppliers and buyers. Through these interactions Jane learns from her buyers what items are in demand, and from her suppliers she learns what items are available for what price. This learning enables her to maximize her profits while better serving her buyers.

Two of the participants, Mary and Sarah, also engaged in informal learning about financial planning. Mary contacted a Korean financial planner about once a month to discuss ways that she had her husband could prepare for their financial future. She then discusses this information with her husband by text message or voice call. Like Mary, Sarah is also preparing for her financial future. At 57, she is preparing to retire and return to the Philippines in a few years. Although not included in her MPEN of her 20 most important relationships, she is in frequent contact with a financial planner and a real estate agent in the Philippines. These important sources of information have allowed her to buy income property and to prepare for her retirement.

Family was another area where all of the women used their MPENs to engage in self-directed informal learning. This area of learning most often involved learning about a child’s or parent’s wellbeing. Most often the participants learned of their loved ones condition through another family member although learning about their children often came directly from the children. This area of learning was important to these women
because it allowed them to continue working in Korea knowing that if anything was wrong with their loved ones that they would quickly learn of it.

Mary and Marie also used their MPEN to keep in contact with their children’s teachers to learn of and issues which needed their response. Mary primarily used these contacts as reassurance that her children were OK while at school. Marie used her contacts with her children’s teachers to learn about how her children were doing at school and of anything they might need.

To a lesser extent, the participants were also engaged in self-directed informal learning in the areas of social life, official business, and culture. Learning in the area of social life refers to making plans to meet with friends and planning social events. All of the participants engaged in this area of learning which was usually conducted over Kakaotalk with friends in Korea. Official business refers to learning how to get things done in Korea, such as applying for visas, seeking healthcare, or filing taxes. Although this type of learning was undertaken infrequently, it was seen as an important area of learning because of the potential for negative consequences if matters were not handled correctly. Only two participants, Marie and Angela, discussed self-directed informal learning directed at learning about Korean culture. Marie turned to a Filipino friend for this area of learning, often when she was having a conflict with her landlord. Angela frequently engaged her in-laws to learn about Korean culture in her efforts to improve her marriage.
Incidental Informal Learning

As I discussed in Chapter 6, incidental informal learning was difficult to identify and evaluate. Considering the hundreds of texts, voice and video calls these five women made each day, there were likely many occurrences of incidental informal learning which were not identified. Some of the areas of incidental informal learning which I did identify included language and culture, Jane’s learning about the market while running of her business, Angela’s learning to track her husband’s movements and thus gain some level of independence, and Jane’s use of Facebook to get involved in community learning around a local bar owner banning Africans during the Ebola outbreak in 2014 and fighting against sexual harassment in her neighborhood. In all of these examples the women engaged in opportunistic learning which was only recognized as learning after the fact.

Socialization

Another area of informal learning is what Schugurensky (2000) referred to as socialization: the process of internalizing values, attitudes, behaviors and skills. In Chapter 6 I discussed Schugurensky’s (2000) concept of socialization in terms of identity construction. The women in this study lived in divided social worlds: physically living in Korea but also having extensive contact with family in the Philippines through their MPENs. Navigating these split social worlds required the women to engage in informal learning as they constructed new identities which matched their lives in Korea as financially independent women, while maintaining old identities with family members, allowing them to meet societal expectations as a dutiful Filipina daughter, sister and mother.
Perhaps the most formidable challenge facing these women in the area of identity construction was how to construct an identity as a transnational mother. According to Chib et al. (2014) women who do not meet with societal expectations of what a mother should be are faced with the “deviancy” discourse on mothering. The women in this study engaged in informal learning in an attempt to construct an identity as a transnational mother which met societal expectations and satisfied themselves. I identified three strategies that these women employed as they constructed their identities as transnational mothers: intensive, suppression and remote control.

Intensive mothering refers to a mother who interacts directly with her children at a distance in an effort to maintain a traditional identity of a mother as nurturer, protector and care provider from a distance (Chib et al., 2014). Mary engaged in intensive mothering in her efforts to develop her relationship with her one year old daughter (see Chapter 6).

Suppression refers to the mother’s pushing thoughts of her children out of awareness in an effort to avoid the pain associated with being separated from her children. Jane, Angela and Sarah all engaged in forms of suppression. In the excerpt below, Jane succinctly states the strategy of suppression.

I know that they are being well taken care of. If there was any problem their father would call me. It’s difficult not being with them, but thinking about it all the time only makes it worse. When we talk I cry. Then I try not to think about being away from them between calls.
For the women who used suppression it was only a partially successful strategy. Angela describes her attempts at suppression, “When I think about him (her 8 year old son in the Philippines) I just cry to myself. Why am I here? There is nothing I can do, so I pray and try not to think.”

Remote-control parenting refers to mothers who control surrogates to indirectly provide care for their children. Marie employed a strategy of remote-control mothering as she constructed her identity as a transnational mother. Using her MPEN she was able to contact her children’s teachers to find out how and what they were doing in school, and she was able to mobilize friends and her children’s father to provide for her children. Remote-control mothering allowed Marie to feel secure that her children were being well taken care of and allowed her to mother intensely through surrogates. Despite the partial success of this strategy, she still felt the need to use suppression as a way to avoid the pain of being separated from her children.

The women in this study engaged in the process of informal learning which allowed them to construct identities as transnational mothers in opposition to the traditional identity of motherhood. While they were unable to be physically present to meet the traditional themes of mothering, they constructed identities as transnational mothers with themes of ensuring for their children’s wellbeing, providing financially and building a future. Despite their efforts to construct new identities as transnational mothers, they were not fully satisfied, expressing pain, guilt and remorse associated with living apart from their children.
What is the Experience?

The final phase of this study sought to answer the question “What is it like for a Filipina domestic worker to access her MPEN?” The final step in a phenomenological analysis is to write a final phenomenological description which summarizes the meaning and essences of the experience as described by those who have experienced the phenomenon and interpreted by the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). The following is my final phenomenological description based on my conversations with the five participants and my phenomenological analysis as described previously.

To be a Filipina domestic worker living in Korea accessing her MPEN is to renegotiate the relationships between being present and absent between being alone and with others and between being an insider and an outsider.

To be physically absent is also being partially present. Communicating via mobile phone bridges the spatial divide, but it does not eliminate the distance. Despite the distance between family and friends, it is possible to stay in intimate contact, to know how loved ones are doing, to maintain those important relationships. This communication allows for peace of mind and is a reassurance that the sacrifices of being physically absent are worthwhile. While this communication with loved ones is a source of solace, it is also a source of distress. Being in frequent communication with loved ones who are physically absent makes it difficult to escape the sense of loss.

To be alone is to not be alone. Having access to a MPEN means there is always someone to help. This ability to contact others provides a sense of
security. When the participants felt lonely, frustrated, confused, or angry, they could call on others who understand how they felt and were willing to offer help. When they were isolated by language or culture, there was someone available who spoke their language and was of their culture. When they were confused and unsure of what to do, there was someone there who could provide insight and guidance. Whether physically alone or socially isolated in a room of strangers, being alone was a state that could be ended at anytime by accessing their MPEN.

To be an outsider is only a matter of perspective. Living in a context where they were the “other,” accessing their MPEN allowed the participants to flip this dynamic. The participants described finding community in their MPEN in a context where they were often viewed by others as outsiders. Whether at work, riding a bus or walking down the street, the participants were able to challenge their status as an outsider by accessing their MPEN. By accessing their MPEN they were able to recast an insider--outsider dynamic opposite that imposed by their physical surroundings.

I discussed this description with all of the participants. The general response was one of agreement. As I’ve discussed previously, I share many life circumstances with the women in this study. I found as we discussed this description and what it means that we were giving each other the “phenomenological nod.” There seemed to be a clear understanding between us.
Implications

The purposes of this study were to describe the MPENs of the five participants, investigate how the participants used their MPENs, and to gain some understanding of the meaning these women make out of accessing their MPENs. The results of this study showed that the participants developed, maintained and used their MPENs in ways that helped them pursue their desires and needs, often in the face of imposed obstacles. For these women, accessing their MPENs provided vital sources of social support and informal learning. Having a mobile phone was seen as a necessity by these women for both performing day to day activities and maintaining relationships at a distance. From the adult educator’s perspective, these MPENs can be viewed as informal learning networks, and mapping these MPENs allows the visualization of the flow of information and spaces where knowledge was constructed.

While constructing and investigating the MPENs of these five women, I came to know the challenges they faced, the goals they strived for and, the resources -- material, emotional and informational -- available to them. Throughout this process I was impressed at the creativity and resourcefulness of these women. While they all faced obstacles which impeded their striving, they showed the ability to use their MPENs in ways which allowed them to pursue their desires and meet their needs. Although all of these women had regrets and disappointments, they were able to create lives which they can be proud of and which allowed them to take care of themselves and those they care about. This study showed that the participants’ MPENs were rich sources of social support and informal learning, but it also showed that despite the resources available these women were often frustrated in their attempts to fulfill their desires. As an adult
educator, I’m interested in how my practice can improve the lives of others. The remainder of this section attempts to answer this question: What are the implications of this study for the practice of adult education?

To answer this question I looked at three levels where an adult educator might be concerned: individual, network and community. The ego network approach places the focus of the investigation on the point of view of the individual; with this in mind I will begin my discussion of the implications of this study at the individual level.

The quantitative portion of the mixed method design employed in this study allowed, through the construction of MPENs, for the identification of sources of social support, informal learning and obligations; while the qualitative interviews, allowed for the identification of strategies and practices that the participants employed in their daily lives. This study has shown that describing and understanding the social networks of individuals can be an effective tool in identifying resources, both available and needed, as well as strategies and practices. Once this level of description and understanding has been reached, it is easy to imagine how identifying available resources, searching for additional resources and taking advantage of learning opportunities would naturally follow (Bernardi, 2011).

Angela’s case provides an example of how this kind of intervention at the individual level could be beneficial. Angela draws resources from her MPEN, primarily her in-laws, to help her manage her relationship with her husband. While her in-laws are well meaning, they tend to couch her marital problems in terms of cultural differences, which leaves Angela feeling that she must adjust to Korean culture in order to improve
Angela’s MPEN reveals that most of her closest ties are with her in-laws. She has a large number of Filipina friends, but these friends form a loosely knit group who are primarily involved in socializing. None of her Filipina friends are married to Koreans. The mixed method approach taken in this study showed that her relationship with her husband was a major concern for Angela, and her strategy to address this issue was to access her in-laws as sources of social support. While this strategy provided Angela with some benefits, it also encouraged her to have a limited perspective of her marital problems. It seems that Angela would benefit from being in contact with other Filipinas who are married to Koreans. Adding people who have had similar experiences to her social network would create opportunities for learning and added sources of social support which may benefit Angela. In this way constructing an MPEN and understanding how an individual uses it can serve the purpose of a needs analysis which may guide learning.

Learning at the network level may be used to address common negative behaviors, such as drinking, gambling in the network or to foster the spread of positive behaviors, such as health practices, through the network. Informed by the body of research on social influence in social networks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Christakis & Fowler, 2009) and the Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) model (Bertrand, 2004; Rogers, 2003), it would be possible to use the information gathered from the construction of MPENs, as well as other ego networks, to foster changes in the social networks.

To promote social change at the network level the MPENs could be used to identify influential alters, in DoI terms “opinion leaders.” These influential members of the community would then be recruited into the program to serve as peer educators,
who communicate the desired message to the social network. Although social network analysis was not used, the Stop AIDS program is an example of a highly successful safer sex education program in San Francisco in the mid 1980s which used the DoI framework (Bertrand, 2004).

MPENs, or other ego networks, could be useful in the design and evaluation phases of a program designed to promote social change. In the design phase, knowing the density of the network and the strength of ties would inform the level of resources needed. For example, a highly dense network with close ties, such as Mary’s, may require fewer resources than a loosely knit network with weak ties, such as Angela’s. During the evaluation phase, knowing who communicates with whom and how frequently may help to explain observed change or lack of change.

While conducting this study, I became aware of some issues, common to all or most of the participants, which were difficult for many of the participants to access resources to address, such as mothering-at-a-distance, finances, language, and cultural differences. For situations where it may be difficult for each individual to have access to appropriate resources it may be best to create or mobilize community resources. These community resources might be physical spaces such as childcare co-ops, online spaces such as Facebook groups, or networked resources among affected individuals.

Constructing MPENs, or other ego networks, may be useful in identifying resources in the community as well as individuals who may benefit from community resources. For example, resources on how to save and invest money may be useful for many Filipino expats. While constructing the five MPENs for this study, two individuals
with some knowledge of finance were identified, Jane and Mary’s financial advisor. A Facebook group dedicated to helping Filipina expats to learn about saving and investing their money could be formed, and Jane and Mary’s financial advisor could be invited to join the group. Through this newly formed online community participants could learn strategies to improve their financial situations.

The combination of social network analysis and semi-structured interviews offers a powerful method of understanding the social world of individuals and groups. Social network analysis allows for the investigation of social support and informal learning within an individual’s ego network as well as exploring the potential for developing new sources of support and learning. Qualitative interviews allow for the identification of strategies and practices employed on a day to day basis. These types of information can be useful for the adult educator who is interested in fostering changes at the individual, network and community levels.

**Limitations of the study**

The most obvious limitation of this study was the small sample size (n=5), far too small to make statistical inferences. The choice of sample size was largely determined by the qualitative portion of the study. While the small sample size limits any statistical generalizations which might be made, limiting the number of participants allowed for the development of thick, rich descriptions -- so vital to qualitative inquiry. Regardless of the benefits of limiting the sample size, the small sample size limits any claim which might be made about the larger population.
While the small sample size precludes making any claims from the quantitative data about a broader population, the qualitative findings cannot be generalize due to the lack of generalizability inherent in all qualitative inquiry. In order to investigate the experiences of the participants in depth, the phenomenological inquiry was focused on my interpretation of the participants’ interpretation of their lived experience. Another investigator working with different participants may have come to different conclusions. If this study has been worthwhile, the reader may have a new understanding of the phenomenon. The reader may also have more questions about the phenomenon after reading this study than before.

A third limitation occurs in the collection of the quantitative survey data and the construction and description of the MPENs. The survey data and the ensuing construction of the MPENs were based on the participants' perceptions. As noted in the quality of the study section in Chapter 3, the participants were not likely to have complete recall of the frequency of contact with alters, nor are they likely to have perfect knowledge of alters' demographic information or alter to alter relationships. Although it is likely that omission errors, commission errors, edge/node attribution errors, and data collection and retrospection errors (Borgatti, 2011) occurred in the construction of the MPENs, I do not feel that these errors severely threatened the quality of the study (see Chapter 3 for my discussion).

The criteria for my participants created another limitation for this study. In this study I included only Filipina domestic workers living in Korea, limiting the study by gender, nationality and socioeconomic status. Including men, other nationalities and a
variety of occupations may have revealed different trends in the quantitative data and additional phenomenological themes.

A final possible limitation of the study may be the use of English to conduct all interviews. From my perspective, all five participants had no difficulty expressing themselves in English. Our conversations were fluid and natural. Of course language involves more than simply expressing ideas; language is also used to form groups, creating solidarity and exclusion (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). All participants grew up speaking three languages: English, Tagalog and a local Filipino language. Although English is widely used in the Philippines, it is typically used in more formal situations such as education or business. Also, Penfianco (2008) wrote of the “fear of English” that many Filipinos have when speaking with a native English speaker. I felt the participants and I quickly established rapport and that they felt comfortable telling me their stories. While this may be true, I cannot rule out the possibility that using English created some social distance between us that may not have existed if the interviews were conducted in Tagalog or a local Filipino language. The reasoning behind this limitation could also be extended to culture, gender and socioeconomic status. My identity as a white American male may have influenced the study in some ways.

**Future Research**

The small sample size of this study, suggest several areas of possible investigation. First, the cumulative quantitative data suggest several trends which influence the composition, structure and use of the MPENs, among these were the
influence of homophily, the lack of weaker ties maintained at a distance and the reliance on proximal ties for a wider variety of social support. Although these findings are consistent with earlier scholarship, further investigation with a larger sample size would be needed to make any general statements regarding their validity in the context of this study.

As noted above, the method used to construct the MPENs, with its reliance on the participants’ perception and memory, left the results open to a variety of errors types. Future research might attempt to minimize the reliance on participants’ perceptions and reduce the burden on their memory by using a diary approach to construct the ego networks. In this approach, the researcher would ask the participants to take notes each time they communicated with someone in their MPEN, reducing the chance of errors of omission and commission.

One of the primary reasons for constructing MPENs in the study was to facilitate the investigation of sources of social support and informal learning. In the construction of the MPENs participants were asked to only consider individuals they had important relationships with, excluding other possible sources of informal learning webpages, blogs and Facebook pages. While looking at MPENs constructed only of other individuals was consistent with my interests in undertaking this project, including other possible sources of informal learning may give a fuller picture of the informal learning which takes place in mobile phones networks.

In this study I focused on Filipina domestic workers living in Korea. A fruitful avenue for further research might be to include a wider variety of participants: men,
other nationalities and people from a range of socioeconomic levels. For example, including men as participants may reveal different patterns of MPEN composition and use, as well as new themes. While recruiting for this study, I tried to include diverse participants from the target population in order to gain different perspectives on the phenomenon. Expanding this diversity beyond the target population may have given new perspectives on the phenomenon as well as MPEN composition and use.
References


Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). The network basis of social support: A network is more than the sum of its ties. *Networks in the Global Village, 83-118.*


Appendix A

Participant’s Demographic Information Survey

Age: ____________________

1. Employment history:
   Current:
   Past in Korea:
   Prior to coming to Korea:

2. Family history (marital status, children, parents living, Where do relatives live?):

3. Languages:
   What languages can you speak?
   What languages can you read and write in?

4. Experience with communication technology
   What types of mobile devices do you own?
   Do you own a computer?
   Do you have Internet access at home?
   How long have you used the Internet?
   How long have you owned a mobile phone?

5. Residence history:
   What countries have you lived in, when, length of stay?
   When did you first come to Korea?
   When did you begin your present stay in Korea?
Appendix B

Generating Names Questions

1. To generate names of those who are most frequent contacts, the participant will be asked to
   a. Look through your phone and tell me the people you contact the most often on your mobile phone.

2. To ensure that the participants don’t focus on only one type of relationship while generating the names of people who are the most important to them I will go over with the participant a list of ways that a relationship might be important to them:
   a. Some relationships might be important because they make you feel better
      i. Someone you seek out when you are lonely.
      ii. Someone you seek out when you want to talk.
      iii. Someone you seek out when you feel frustrated by life in Korea.
   b. Some relationships might be important to you because they give you information you need.
      i. Someone you might seek out if you were looking for a new job.
      ii. Someone you seek out when you need information about a doctor or dentist.
      iii. Someone you might seek out if you needed to find a new neighborhood or city.
   c. Some relationships might be important to you because they help you do things.
      i. Someone you might seek out if you needed to borrow money.
      ii. Someone you might seek out if you need to move something heavy.
      iii. Someone you might seek out if you needed a place to stay.
d. Some relationships might be important to you because they need something from you.
   i. Someone you would feel guilty about not contacting.
   ii. Someone who might contact you if they needed something.
   iii. Someone who depends on you.
Appendix C

Alter Information Survey

Nationality: __________

Age: __________

Occupation: __________

Residence: __________

1. How did you come to know X?
2. How long have you known X?
3. What languages does X speak?
4. What language do you and X use to communicate?
5. How often do you and X communicate?
6. How do you communicate with X (face to face, voice call, text message/chat, Facebook, other)?
   a. Give percentages for each?
   b. On average, how long to spend communicating with X?
7. What do you and X usually communicate about?
Appendix D

Example of Data Analysis

Below is Segment of the transcript of an interview I conducted with Mary. I've reproduced it here to illustrate the process I took while identifying core themes of the experience of accessing an MPEN while communicating with loved ones at a distance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript: divided into meaningful units</th>
<th>Invariant Constituents Grouped in Thematic Labels</th>
<th>Core Theme of the Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Tell me about Skyping with your daughter.</td>
<td>Joy, connection</td>
<td>Being there, but not there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Oh my Gosh! It was just two days ago when I heard her talk to me like “mamma”.</td>
<td>Sadness over separation</td>
<td>Being there, but not there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Ooohhh gosh it makes me cry when I’m at work.</td>
<td>Longing for what is unattainable</td>
<td>Being there, but not there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. I really want to go home and hug her.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. You know, I want her to come here very soon.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. First talk I’m not there. First step I’m not there, only Skyping.</td>
<td>Dis appointment over what’s missed</td>
<td>Being there, but not there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. But I know I’m supporting her well. I think it’s best for me to send her there. Because I’m sending money back. I can work part-time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. You had to send her home because of work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Yes, sometimes my old employer asks me to work at night. And I wouldn’t be able to do that.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. So when you’re talking to her on Skype, it sounds like (interrupts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
M. I’m home!  

Joy, connection  

Being there, 
but not 
there

J. You’re but then (interrupts)

M. It’s bad because I can’t touch her, I can’t hug her  

Disappointment over what’s missed  

Being there, 
but not 
there

J. Mm Mm

M. And then sometimes I get really pissed off because I’m on my lunch break. It’s my time and then they aren’t there because the Internet in the Philippines are not that strong, right?

J. Mm Mm

M. It’s like I can’t work until I see her again.

M. Then they are on again. And I see her and everything is OK. I can work.  

Connection  

Being there, 
but not 
there
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Education
The Pennsylvania State University, Doctor of Philosophy, Adult Education, 2016
San Francisco State University, Master of Arts, English (TESOL), 2002
California State University, Sacramento, Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 1983

Teaching and Research Experience
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea, Assistant Professor 2012 – Present
The Pennsylvania State University, USA, Research Assistant 2010 – 2012
  Assisted in the redesign of two Masters level online courses.
  Teaching assistant for an online Masters level course.
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Hanseo University, Korea, Assistant Professor 2009 -- 2010
American University of the Middle East, Kuwait, Instructor 2008
Sangji University, Korea, Adjunct Professor 2007 -- 2008
Kwangdong University, Korea, Visiting Professor 2006 – 2007
Sunchon National University, Korea, Assistant Professor 2005 – 2006
Beijing Normal University at Zhuhai, China, English Lecturer 2004
Portland Community College, USA, Volunteer English Instructor 2003 – 2004
Berkeley Adult School, USA, Teaching Assistant 2001

Academic Publications

Thompson, M. M., & Wrigglesworth, J. W. (2013). Students and Teachers as Ethical Actors. In Handbook of Distance Education.

Selected Non-academic Publications

  Young readers’ series for EFL students (60 books).
Improving Listening Skills, Level 1 to 5. WorldcomELT, 2010.
  Listening skills series for elementary school EFL students (5 books).
  TOEFL iBT reading series for high school students (4 books).
  Listening series for EFL learners from middle school to adult (5 books).
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Basic Skills for the TOEFL iBT 3, Listening. Compass, 2008.
  TOEFL iBT study book.
  Reading skills series for EFL learners (3 books).