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Migrant Children: A Qualitative Study on Korean-Chinese and Korean-Vietnamese Children Returning to Their Mothers' Homelands

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As Korean society integrates more and more into the global village at large, South Korea receives migrants from far more diverse backgrounds. Korean researchers studying topics related to migration and families have so far focused on the Korean children of "marriage immigrant" mothers in Korea, or born outside Korea and returning in late childhood or adolescence. The Korean government's policy for these migrant children has also been exclusively geared toward children immigrating to Korea in late childhood or adolescence. As return or circular migration is on the rise worldwide, the number of children born in Korea and returning to the place of their parents' origin, children who immigrate to Korea and again return to their place of origin, and children who are left behind in Korea by their Korean parents who have migrated elsewhere in the world. In other words, the number of migrant children with Korean backgrounds and living outside Korea continues to grow.

In the vast majority of cases, children themselves do not choose to migrate, but must follow the decisions made by the adult members of their families. Children whose parents migrate globally for social and economic reasons often find themselves in vulnerable situations. Some are compelled to adjust to new living environments, as their parents separate, or divorce

and remarry others to form new families. Migrant children face a variety of other issues as well, including the uncertain nature of their legal status, the difficulties and discrimination they face due to differences in culture and language, and the lack of appropriate care and protection found in a family (often newly formed as a result of their parents remarrying). The double challenge of having to adapt to the new society and the new family environment complicates the prospects for these children growing into well-adapted and thriving citizens.

As divorced, widowed, or otherwise returning marriage immigrants bring their children back to Korea, research with a focus on the transnational networks of migrant families and changes in their structures has been growing. Few studies, however, have explored the specific difficulties that Korean migrant children experience in adaptation and development as they return to the places of their parents' origin. Neglecting these Korean migrant children abroad may exert adverse effects on relations with Southeast Asia, with which the South Korean government has been working toward improving economic relations. This study thus sheds light on Korean migrant children who have returned, with their parents, to Yanbian in China and Vietnam - two major places of origin for many marriage immigrants.

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II Korean-Chinese Children in Yanbian, China

1. Overview

This study identifies the specific issues and difficulties confronted by (1) Chinese marriage immigrants who have returned from Korea to Yanbian and their children, and (2) children born of Korean fathers and *joseonjok* mothers in Yanbian. Rather than enumerating statistics and giving technical descriptions, this study draws upon qualitative research methods, such as in-depth personal interviews with research subjects and focus group interviews (FGIs) with experts, to uncover the realities they face. Research data was gathered in the months of June and July 2018. Interviewees were recruited with the help of a teacher working closely with migrant children at a high school in Yanbian. The chosen Yanbian-based marriage migrants were interviewed in depth across a wide range of subjects pertaining to their backgrounds and experiences with parenting children across numerous age groups, from toddlers to high-school graduates. Determining specific developmental issues faced by migrant children in adolescence, children in secondary schools and their parents was the central subject of analysis.

After assuring them of anonymity and obtaining their consent, the author interviewed the guardians of 10 migrant children (biological mothers and fathers, maternal grandparents,

maternal aunts) using a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews mostly took place at quiet cafes or restaurants near the interviewees' homes, for 90 to 120 minutes each time. For additional inquiries and clarification, the interviewees were later contacted via telephone or instant messenger (WeChat). The questions asked concerned the human capital at the disposal of Korean migrant children living in Yanbian, their family backgrounds, reasons for returning to China and living conditions in Yanbian, future goals, difficulties of parenting and education, the pros and cons of growing, as children, in China, and desired forms of policy support from the Korean and Chinese governments. Table 1 lists the specific attributes of interviewees, marriage migrants and their children surveyed for this study.

〈Table 1〉 General Attributes of Interviewees, Marriage Migrants and Their Children

Case	Interviewee				Marriage migrant and child				
	Relationship to child	Age	Residence	Years of care	Marital status	Age	Residence	Education	Child's gender (age)
1	Maternal grandmother	70	Longjing	18	Divorced-remarried	47	Seoul	Middle school	Male (18)
2	Maternal grandfather	72	Taowen	12	Divorced-remarried	38	Suwon	Middle school	Female (15)
3	Mother	48	Yanji	18	Widowed	48	Yanji	University	Male (18)
4	Maternal aunt	48	Yanji	12	Divorced-remarried	44	Seoul	College	Male (18)
5	Maternal grandmother	65	Yanji	12	Widowed-remarried	40	Ansan	Middle school	Female (16)
6	Maternal grandmother	73	Yanji	14	Married (first-time)	45	Ulsan	High school	Female (16 and 17)
7	Mother	45	Yanji	17	Married (first-time)	45	Yanji	University	Male (13 and 17)
8	Family friend	45	Yanji	5	Married (first-time)	43	Seoul	High school	Female (12 and 17)
9	Maternal aunt	61	Yanji	15	Married (first-time)	55	Seoul	College	Female (17)
10	Father	47	Yanji	10	Married (first-time)	47	Yanji	High school	Male (7 and 10)

The FGIs were held twice, on July 10 and 20, 2018, targeting leaders of local Korean societies, teachers working with migrant children at schools, and researchers specializing in the migration of *joseonjok* (Chinese nationals of Korean descent), and gathering their opinions on the realities for Korean migrant children and needed support.

2. Korean-Chinese Children in Yanbian: Backgrounds

In order to understand the predicaments faced by these children, we need first to understand how their Korean fathers and *joseonjok* mothers met and married, and where their children were born. This study divides these Korean migrant children into five groups. The first group are children born out of "sham" marriages. Much about this kind of marriage fraud has been publicized in the media over the years. "Brokers" or facilitators of marriage migration began to crop up when *joseonjok* faced significant restrictions in gaining legitimate entry into Korea. Women participating in these scams would purchase fake identities of themselves and fictitious mothers and disguise their way into immigrating to Korea. An interesting fact about these sham marriages is that more involved women who had already been married than women who had not. There is a sizable population of women in Yanbian who got divorced "on paper" from their real husbands so that they could obtain the

"marriage visa" and enter Korea. Note that 30.5 percent of all marriages that took place between Korean men and *joseonjok* women between 2000 and 2008 involved *joseonjok* women remarrying. These sham marriages began to disappear when the Korean government introduced a series of measures to control the entry of *joseonjok* Koreans. Few, if any, of these marriages take place today.

The second group concerns children who are born in arranged marriages in Korea. The majority of the cases surveyed for this study concern these children. International marriages are usually perceived in Korea as unions of women from impoverished regions marrying men from more affluent ones. The men, in these marriages, are significantly disadvantaged—financially struggling, older, etc.—to marry women of the same nationality. In five of the 10 marriages surveyed for this study that fall into this category, a number of risk factors undermining the prospects for stability in marital life was present from the beginning, such as the financial incompetence of the men involved and the "generational" difference between the much older men and their younger wives. Four of these marriages ended in widowhood or divorce, and the single remaining marriage has the wife work full time as the husband has completely lost the ability to earn a living. The most decisive threat to these marriages, however, is that the men and women entered them in a hurried manner, without taking the time and

effort to get to know each other. Of the marriages examined in this study, Case 3 had the shortest interval between the first encounter and marriage. The husband and wife married less than one month after first meeting. But the other marriages aren't too different: either the husband and wife married after just a few months, or after a few dates over a span of less than a year. The almost nonexistent foundation of shared understanding and emotions served to amplify the couples' differences resulting from cultural backgrounds, lifestyle preferences and values. These marriages almost inevitably broke up, leaving the children to suffer the most.

The third group involves children born to parents who met in China and immigrated to Korea to raise their families. This form of international marriage, based on courtship, is relatively rare, given the circumstances and practices of the day. All the wives in these cases went to prestigious universities, and met Korean men of relatively good standing (similar in age and educational background) in China. The wife in Case 7, for example, has been happily married and enjoying good relations with her Korean in-laws, aside from minor opposition registered by her father-in-law, who was worried about the kind of prejudice that his son would encounter in Korean society for marrying a *joseonjok* woman. In Case 3, too, the mother enjoyed high esteem from her in-laws, and was able to finish her studies and acquire the professional license she needed to achieve and

maintain a full-time career. Her mother-in-law assumed the duty of caring for her grandchildren so that the daughter-in-law could continue to work. The good relations continue even though the woman's husband died in 2009.

The fourth group consists of children born to parents who met and settled in Korea. The only couple making up this group married after normal courtship. Although they are not affluent, the husband and wife have withstood various challenges together and work hard in Korea to raise their family together. Their two daughters live with the wife's parents in China, but the parents remain strongly attached to their children and involved in their education. Moreover, they maintain very good relations with the wife's mother. During the interview, the old lady could not stop bragging about how good her daughter and son-in-law had been. The grandmother herself was dedicated to ensuring the healthy growth and development of her granddaughters. This case was impressive for the strength of the family bond evidenced by the members.

The fifth group consists of children born to parents who met in China and settled in Yanbian. Yanbian is home to the largest *joseonjok* community in China. It is also a self-governing province. A significant number of Korean-born Koreans have settled here to do business or continue their studies, finding the Korean-speaking environment and customs to their liking. A local Korean association has over 5,000 registered members

today. Quite a number of Korean-born Korean men who have migrated to Yanbian have married local *joseonjok* women and settled in the region. Of the incumbent executives of the Korean association, at least three married *joseonjok* women and are running their own businesses in Yanbian.

3. Marriage Migrants' Children and Their Issues

A. Causes and Processes of Migrating to Yanbian

We need to identify the causes for which Korean-born children of Korean fathers and *joseonjok* mothers have moved away from their parents and to the homeland of their mothers. In particular, we need to understand who made the decision and how the process occurred. There are mainly four causes that led the children of marriage immigrants to move to Yanbian.

1) Breakup of Parents' Marriages

Of the cases surveyed for this study, four involve *joseonjok* mothers who were left, either by divorce or the death of their spouses, to raise their children alone. Compelled to work full time and unable to find proper local care for their children,

these mothers ended up sending them away to their parents or relatives in Yanbian. In another case, the Korean father, on the brink of divorce, sent his children to Yanbian.

The majority of *joseonjok* women who end up divorcing their Korean husbands struggle financially to raise their children, lacking the alimony and child support from their estranged husbands. In Case 1, the woman divorced her husband due to irreconcilable differences, and the father has been given custody of the children. The husband and wife have maintained relatively amicable relations since divorce, periodically engaging in communication over matters of their children's growth. Yet the wife remains the sole financial supporter for the children, refusing to argue any further with her ex-husband over the costs of raising and educating them. In Case 4, the wife divorced her husband after he had an extramarital affair. She is still traumatized by the incident, and has forced her children to cut all ties with their father. In both cases, the *joseonjok* mothers revealed that they held no expectations of financial support from their ex-husbands. Their experiences confirm the general statistics obtained under the National Immigrant Family Survey (NIFS) of 2012, which showed that only 9.5 percent of immigrant mothers received child support after divorce or separation.

With divorce leaving them the sole persons responsible for earning a living for and educating their children, many *jo-*

seonjok women are compelled to remain in Korea where they can continue to work in decent jobs and earn stable income. As there are no other relatives upon whom they can rely for the care of their children, these women end up sending their children back to their own parents in China so that they can continue to work and send money home. Unlike marriage immigrants from Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, *joseonjok* women are better able to remain and work in Korea even after their marriages end because they are given special status as "overseas Koreans." Their ability to speak the Korean language and familiarity with Korean customs also work in their favor as they look for work on the Korean job market.

Notwithstanding the two mentioned cases in which the mothers try their best to work full time and support their children, not all marriage immigrants continue to fulfill their responsibilities towards their children after their marriages break up. In one case, the mother left her child in the care of her own father in Yanbian after she was widowed. The majority of *joseonjok* men, especially of the older generation, are very conservative and strongly believe that chores are the exclusive purview of women. The grandfather in this case, however, had already skillfully raised his own daughter and son since his wife had moved to Korea to work and earn a better income in the late 1990s. The mother in this case therefore trusted that her own father could capably raise her child on her behalf. After

remarrying, however, the mother seldom inquired into her child's wellbeing, focusing, instead, all her attention on her new family.

There was another case in which the mother sent her children to her parents in China so she could look after her bedridden husband and earn income for the family. Unfortunately, the woman's husband died and left her in significant debt that she alone could not pay off. These circumstances have driven the woman into a state of severe depression. Feeling no strong ties to anyone and anything in the world, the woman has become apathetic even towards her own children and her mother. Her children—whose experiences will be discussed further below—remain in the care of their maternal uncle and grandmother, having little contact with their mother.

In one case, the children faced great difficulties after their parents broke up due to the husband having an extramarital affair, and neither parent has stepped up to raise and support the children. Extramarital affairs by husbands often end up debilitating their wives, who have immigrated to Korea for marriage, in physical, social and emotional terms. Some women are brave enough to divorce their unfaithful husbands, but others end up obsessing over their husbands even more strongly, out of fear of social stigma or due to other complicated personal reasons. Marriage immigrants lack extensive networks of friends and relatives capable of giving them support, and are

very much dependent on their husbands for various aspects of their lives. Extramarital affairs therefore make these women feel extremely humiliated, deprived, and lonely, so much so that they end up abandoning all care and responsibility for their children in some cases. The unfaithful husbands, no longer attached to their spouses or families, often try various ways to keep the children away, and end up sending them to their mothers' hometowns in China, arguing that Chinese education will be good for their future prospects.

2) Financial Difficulties

NIFS 2012 showed that "irreconcilable differences in personality" was the most common reason given for divorce or separation among immigrant families (48.1 percent), followed by "economic incompetence" by the husband (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012). At one time, the Korean government began encouraging and facilitating international marriages for rural Korean men. In the early years of this policy, numerous *joseonjok* women came over to Korea to marry Korean men who earned little income and were much older than they. In one case surveyed for this study, the woman married a man who is 10 years her senior, and completely unable to earn a living due to his poor health. Nevertheless, she remains determined to keep her family together, as she took a

vow to love her husband in good times and bad and there are children involved. The women is the sole income-earner in her family and works in local diners. Her older sister, interviewed for this study, attributed the woman's decision to her good nature. Her daughter, who is with her relatives in Yanbian, has great empathy for her mother and understanding of her mother's decision.

3) Education

Korean parents are notorious for being zealous about their children's education, and the "wild goose family" phenomenon has risen in prominence as a social issue over the last decade or so. Wild goose families refer to those whose fathers remain in Korea and continue to work so that their wives and children can live and study abroad, mainly for the children to learn English and gain overseas experience. They are, in other words, the result of family strategies to secure the best possible education for their children, who can be found all around the world, but most notably in English-speaking countries and Southeast Asia. In recent years, however, more and more Korean wild goose families have been sending their children to China.

Three of the cases surveyed for this study are such families. In two of the three, the mothers have accompanied their children to China. In the remaining one, the mother was born and

raised in Yanbian, and decided to entrust her children in the care of her own parents in Yanbian mainly for the education. This Yanbian-born mother and her Korean husband maintain middle-class lives in Korea by running their own business, and are heavily invested in the education of their children. In other words, this family is a paradigmatic example of the wild goose family phenomenon, with the relatively well-educated and well-earning parents investing aggressively in the education and future of their children and following through with a very well-defined plan to that end. In Case 7, the husband works at a major airline in Korea and is able to afford the frequent trips between Korea and China. Her husband's ability has enabled the mother, herself a graduate of a good university in China, to focus entirely on the education of her children, all the while maintaining strong ties with all family members.

The parents who send their children to China for education expect that, by enrolling them in primary and secondary schools there, their children will be able to master the Chinese language and be better positioned to enter good universities and good workplaces.[1)]

1) Children born to Korean fathers and holding Korean nationality enjoy two advantages in entering university. They can enter either Chinese universities under the "international students" category, or Korean universities under the "special cases" category. The international students category in China allows non-Chinese students to enter universities, even prestigious ones, upon passing a document review and tests on a few subjects that are relatively easier than the standardized college entrance examinations taken by Chinese students. Korean universities, too, reserve admission capacities for the children

4) Family Business

In one case, the Korean husband had been operating his own business in Yanbian since before getting married, so the children were also born and raised in the region. Two Korean owners of relatively well-known restaurants in Yanbian have also married *joseonjok* women and opted to stay in Yanbian to raise their families rather than returning to Korea. Because the children in these cases have the advantage of living with both parents at home and their fathers are active in the local Korean community, they enjoy more active exchange with Koreans in the region and live in circumstances quite distinct from the children of other marriage migrants.

B. Family Characteristics

We need to determine who the primary caretakers are for children who live in Yanbian away from their parents and what "family" means to them. Except for the cases in which the children live with either their mothers or both parents, the majority live with their maternal grandparents. In this section, we divide our cases into three groups depending on the strength of

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of "overseas Koreans" as special cases. Prestigious Korean universities, including Seoul National University, Yonsei University, and Korea University, admit these children under three-year or 12-year categories, depending on the number of school years the children have completed in China.

the bond between (1) the parents and the children, (2) the parents and the grandparents who care for the children, and (3) the siblings.

1) Separated, but United, Families

There were two cases surveyed for this study in which the children lived with their mothers. In both cases, the parents maintain relatively good marital relations and the children remained strongly attached to their fathers and paternal grandparents. In both cases, the parents had met and dated in China, migrated to Korea to raise their families and lived there for 10 or 14 years, returning to China out of strategic calculations for the education of their children. The mothers in both cases had gone to prestigious universities in China, while their husbands also had good backgrounds in terms of education, occupation, and financial means. The parents were therefore committed to each other and their families, with the mothers enjoying relatively good relations with their Korean in-laws as well. In Case 3, in particular, the mother has been widowed, but the good memories she has of her husband and in-laws sustain good relations between her and her in-laws as well as between her children and their paternal families. The strength of the bond between the husband and the wife, between the wife and her Korean in-laws, and between the parents and the

children is the main factor that has contributed to the relative success of these families, exerting positive effects on the psychological wellbeing and development of the children.

Successful examples are also found in Case 10, in which the Korean husband maintains his business in Yanbian so that his family members can all live together, and Case 6, in which the two daughters live with the mother's parents while the mother and father continue to work hard in Korea in the hope of securing a good education for their daughters. These successful cases, however, are a lucky minority, while the majority of separated migrant families struggle with a variety of issues, including financial difficulties, the psychological insecurity of the children, and family estrangement and conflict.

2) Children without Families

Three of the children surveyed for this study were struggling with destabilizing family issues, involving estrangement from their parents and conflict with their grandparents. In one case, the greatest fear of the grandfather, interviewed for this study, was that his granddaughter might hear of her mother having remarried and given birth to a new child. His granddaughter was already traumatized enough by the fact that her paternal grandparents had effectively disowned her since her father's death. The news of her mother's new marriage and baby could

even further traumatize her, as reckoned by the grandfather. The old man took great pity on his granddaughter, but also found it increasingly difficult to care for her, given his age and poor health. In another case, the child was also struggling with a sense of abandonment by his parents. The estrangement between the wife and the husband exerts profound impact on the psychological development and character of pre-pubescent and adolescent children, and childhood experiences with family discord can continue to haunt them well into adulthood. Recall Case 5, in which the mother had originally sent her child back to her parents in China so that she could look after her bedridden husband. The husband's death has left the wife in enormous debt and a state of self-neglect. The woman has not been in contact with either her children or her own mother for years. The grandmother, interviewed for this study, expressed doubts about the meaning of life in general, confessing that her granddaughter, now a teenager, is rude and ungrateful. The child herself was plagued with a constant sense of loneliness and insecurity, while her grandmother was filled with anger at both the mother and the child. Both the grandmother and the granddaughter seemed to be in urgent need of counseling. Upon hearing that the author of this study is a professor at a university, the grandmother even begged the author to meet with the child in person and "give her a lesson."

3) Children without Fathers

Recall the two cases in which the mothers divorced their husbands when their children were still young and have since returned to China. In both cases, the children had few memories of their estranged fathers, and expressed their love and gratitude for their long-suffering mothers by hardening their stance of complete indifference to their fathers. In one case, the mother had remained single for many years and only recently remarried when the interview took place. She had strong affection for her son. In Case 4, the child was eager to do well in school and attain material success so as to please his mother and maternal aunt, the two women whom he viewed as having sacrificed so much to raise him. He was excited about his plans to tutor local children during the summer holidays and use the money to buy a flight ticket to Korea so that he could visit his mother there. Absence of the fathers may have left some indelible hurt on these children's psyche, but their strong bond with their mothers still exerted positive impact on their growth and development. Nevertheless, further observation and analysis are needed to determine how the absence of their fathers has affected them, and whether they need counseling and therapy.

C. School Life and Future Plans: Unending Skepticism about Past Choices

1) Choice of Schools: *Joseonjok* Schools or Mainstream Chinese Schools?

Of the 14 children surveyed for this study, those of primary school age were enrolled in *joseonjok* schools, while three of the secondary students were attending mainstream Chinese schools without having attended lower-level *joseonjok* schools. Another three had attended *joseonjok* elementary and middle schools and were now attending mainstream Chinese high schools (one had attended a mainstream Chinese elementary school for a few months, before transferring to a *joseonjok* school). Two had attended *joseonjok* elementary, middle, and high schools. One had gone to an international elementary school in a nearby metropolis and then returned to Yanbian and attended mainstream Chinese middle and high schools there. One was attending a *joseonjok* kindergarten, and two others were attending a *joseonjok* elementary school. One had gone to a mainstream Chinese elementary school and was now enrolled in a mainstream Chinese middle school. The last had gone to a *joseonjok* elementary school and was now attending a *joseonjok* middle school. The general trend is that the children of marriage migrants in Yanbian attend *joseonjok* elementary

and middle schools, and move on to mainstream Chinese high schools, as they are believed to offer better chances to enter college. In July 2018, for example, there were only four Korean international high school students who had graduated from Yanbian High School 1, a *joseonjok* school, while this multiplied to 29 for Yanbian High School 2, a mainstream school.

Mainstream Chinese high schools are more popular than *joseonjok* schools because the parents who send their Korean children to the former hope that their children will master the Chinese language and become better equipped to compete on the global job market. Most interviewees repeatedly said that children who came to China should strive to learn the Chinese language.

Yet children who used to go to schools in Korea and migrated to China in their school years are not as well adapted to Chinese schools than children who had been attending schools in China since first grade. Relocating to China and transferring to schools there lead numerous students to struggle to adapt and can become a major source of discord with the parents. The mother in Case 3, for instance, continued to insist that her decision to enroll her son in a Chinese school was a "mistake." She had not foreseen that her son would have so much difficulty adjusting to the new environment. She had to force her son to study and remain on track, but the process was exhausting for both mother and son. Learning the Chinese language is

still a great source of stress for the child. Other children who had been attending Chinese schools since first grade, however, had no such trouble.

2) Academic Performance and Peers

The majority of the children surveyed for this study have little interest in academic success, but enjoy going to school. Chinese students have to undergo a rigorously competitive process to enter Yanbian High School 2, but international students are relatively free of such competition.[2] The *joseonjok* community in China, however, boasts of great zeal for education. The mothers, grandmothers and aunts who raise Korean-born children harbor great hopes for their education and future success. Many of these children are therefore under constant pressure to excel at school and go to good universities.

Joseonjok make up only a small minority of the 56 ethnicities found in China today, but they are distinct and well-known for their dedication to the education of their children. The focus of parenting undergoes a major shift as children become old enough to enter school. In infancy and early childhood, love and adequate care can help children grow healthy and thrive.

2) In 2018, Yanbian High School 2 ended up accepting 800 students in a total student body of 9,602. The competition was quite intense. Yanbian High School 1, on the other hand, accepted 430 new students into its student body of 1,835.

By the time they enter school, however, parents have to play a much greater role in ensuring their proper education. The grandmothers interviewed for this study all agreed that it was far easier to feed, bathe and raise the children than to educate them. They lament the fact that, given their old age and lack of relations with other parents, they are unable to help their grandchildren with homework, select the best possible cram schools, and obtain information necessary to go to good universities. The biggest obstacle was the inability of these *joseonjok* grandparents to communicate with the teachers at the mainstream Chinese schools in which their grandchildren were enrolled. This inability to communicate bars these grandparents from obtaining information on the educational progress of their grandchildren and participating actively in their education. It also serves to deny the grandparents information on education, which may affect the grandchildren's academic performance. The mainstream Chinese schools in Yanbian have tried to solve this problem by recruiting *joseonjok* teachers and putting them in charge of managing international students from Korea. Nevertheless, the education of children in Yanbian not living with their parents is a serious problem warranting policy and expert support.

Another important issue is the relative lack of discipline that children receive when they live with their grandparents. Grandparents in general dote on their grandchildren. Tasked

with raising grandchildren in the absence of their parents, they take even greater pity on the young children, and find it difficult to muster the courage and will to discipline their grandchildren rigorously.

The majority of the children surveyed for this study nonetheless enjoyed good relations with their peers and friends. None answered that they had ever been discriminated against at schools. The children in Cases 4 and 9, in particular, had even been elected to their respective student councils, and their strong leadership enabled them to enjoy good relations with teachers and peers alike. In addition, Chinese students at their schools are favorably inclined toward "Koreans" and do not hesitate to invite Korean students into friendship. As a self-governing province of the *joseonjok*, Yanbian offers a favorable environment for Korean migrant children. Interviews with these children and their experiences at school encourage us to revisit our old prejudices, some of them quite hateful, against the *joseonjok*.

3) Higher Education and Future Plans

In 2018, five of the 18 Korean-born children of *joseonjok* mothers enrolled at Yanbian High School 2 had gone on to pursue higher education at Korean universities, while the remaining 13 entered Chinese universities. While a significant

number of students submit their applications to universities in both Korea and China, Chinese universities are the more popular choice for those admitted in both countries. Whatever the backgrounds of these children, they and their guardians all hope that the children will go to Chinese universities and find careers, whether in Korea, China or elsewhere, that will help them make the most of their linguistic and cultural background. This hope enables migrant Korean children to turn their relative disadvantaged status into an advantage.

When asked what their biggest concerns would be if and when their children return to Korea, the vast majority of guardians interviewed for this study picked "prejudice and discrimination in Korean society." Many of these interviewees also expressed concern that the children's lack of education in Korea might not give them the necessary "connections" they needed to thrive and succeed in Korea. Finally, they also worried that the lack of exposure to Korean culture and education might raise the cultural barriers the children would face.

D. Confusion over Identity

Let us now turn our attention to the national identities of Korean migrant children in Yanbian, and what Korea and China mean to them.

1) Korean Nationality

Two of the 14 children surveyed for this study had held dual Korean and Chinese citizenship. However, they relinquished their Chinese nationality upon entering university. In other words, all 14 are Korean nationals. All were aware of their Korean nationality, and the boys were also aware that their Korean citizenship meant they had to serve in the Korean military later on. Because they had had to renew their student visas annually, they were well aware of the unique situation of their nationality and status in China. Nevertheless, the majority of these children identified China more as their "home" than Korea.

2) Korea: A Strange Fatherland

In all cases except three, the children had few memories of Korea. They traveled there once a year or every two years to visit their mothers or parents, but they could not spend much time with their working parents in Korea before returning to China. Parents, and the Korean fathers and paternal relatives particularly, serve to reinforce these children's national identity as Koreans. In Case 7, the children did not live with their father, but retained strong ties with him, and as a result, to Korea as a whole. The majority of the children sent to China, however, are from single mothers who have either divorced their

husbands or become widowed. In consequence, they maintain few ties to their paternal relatives or Korea. Because their mothers mostly work in jobs that involve significant physical labor and pay relatively little, they find it difficult to afford little more than the living expenses and bare education of their children. It is unimaginable that these mothers would be able to invite their children to Korea, give them a tour, and help them explore Korean customs and sentiments. Not surprisingly, these migrant Korean children end up growing up "Chinese," despite their Korean nationality.

3) Rejected by Both Korea and China

Korean migrant children living in Yanbian lack the security of status, as they are neither fully Korean nor fully Chinese. The majority of Korean schools in China provide education according to the Seventh National Curriculum of the Korean government, and organize diverse activities and programs, including visits to Korea, to help children learn about Korean history and culture. The children of marriage migrants, however, are denied even this opportunity. Korean schools in China require that applicants' parents be Korean nationals and have a secure status of stay in China, such as with working or business permits. Korean migrant children, who are mostly separated from their parents, are therefore unable to enter these schools.

Officials at the Korean consulate-general, executives of the local Korean association and other such governmental and nongovernmental organizations have all answered that they had had little contact with Korean migrant children. Such children have little experience with gatherings of Koreans, too. Koreans have the tendency to regard marriage migrants and their children as "non-Korean." The interviews with Korean migrant children, however, revealed that these children identified themselves as "Korean nationals" even as they failed to become or remain "fully Korean." These children are not "Chinese," either, as they lack Chinese citizenship. Their in-between status has served to deprive them of policy attention and support. They are indeed treated as "strangers" by both Korea and China.

III

Korean-Vietnamese Children in Vietnam

1. Overview
2. Causes behind Migration of Korean-Vietnamese Children to Vietnam
3. Life for Korean-Vietnamese Children Living in Vietnam
4. Policy Support for Korean-Vietnamese Families in Vietnam: A Mixed Review

III Korean-Vietnamese Children in Vietnam

1. Overview

This study also explores the backgrounds and legal status of Korean migrant children living in Vietnam, and the series of issues they face in family and school life, growth and development. The aim is to identify the needed forms of policy support from both the Korean and Vietnamese governments for these children. The main subjects of this analysis are the children of Korean fathers and Vietnamese mothers—international unions that have multiplied rapidly in this day and age of globalization, and particularly as the relations between Korea and Vietnam continue to grow stronger. Most of the children surveyed for this study were born in or after 2000. They are all enrolled in primary or secondary schools. As they are at key stages of development, support from families and society at large is critical for them.

In-depth interviews were held with 10 mothers raising children in Vietnam. To elucidate the particular struggles faced by Korean-born children of Vietnamese mothers, five cases in which both parents are Korean were also added to the analysis. The interviews were mostly held at either the interviewees' homes or nearby cafes. Most of the interviews in Hanoi, in par-

ticular, were held at a café frequented by Koreans and located in a Korean-populated community. Supplements to the interviews were obtained via telephone and text messages. All 10 interviewees are women born in the 1970s and early 1980s, and were married in the 2000s. They are now in their 30s and 40s. They were interviewed with respect to the family backgrounds, reasons for living in Vietnam, what their opinions are of the quality of life in Vietnam, and the specific issues their children encounter at school and in growth and development. The questionnaire used for the interview contained 20 questions, designed to reveal the achievements and shortcomings of policy support available for Korean migrant children and their families with Vietnamese backgrounds.

〈Table 2〉 Basic Information on Interviewees

Case	Year of birth	Occupation	Education	Marital status	Residence	Number of children
1	Mid-1970s	Office worker / self-employed (graduate school / freelance)	Graduate school	Married	Hanoi	2
2		Lecturer (university / office worker)	Graduate school	Married	Ho Chi Minh	4
3	Early 1980s	Manager (restaurant/hair salon), interpreter (university/self-employed) (high school/hair salon)	University	Divorced / remarried	Ha Tay	2
4		Business owner (graduate school / office worker)	University	Married	Hanoi	1
5		Housewife (university / office worker)	University	Married	Ha Tay	4
6		Self-employed (restaurant / language school / tour guide business) (university)	University	Widowed	Hanoi	1
7		Lecturer / language school owner (graduate school / freelance)	Graduate school	Married	Hai Phong	1

Case	Year of birth	Occupation	Education	Marital status	Residence	Number of children
8		Office worker / interpreter (university / self-employed)	University	Married	Hanoi	1
9		Restaurant employee (high school / part-time)	High school	Married	Hanoi	3
10		Self-employed (tailor) (high school / unemployed)	Middle school	Married	Hanoi	3

2. Causes behind Migration of Korean-Vietnamese Children to Vietnam

A. Korean Fathers' Occupations

Their fathers' occupations are one of the main reasons Korean-born children move to Vietnam. Their fathers are mostly employees of Korean companies, organizations or government who are appointed to posts in Vietnam. Some have fathers who are already in Vietnam and found stable sources of income there before dating and marrying local women, and who no longer have plans to return to Korea. In a minority of cases, unmarried Korean men move to Vietnam in search of work, and end up courting and marrying local women, then settling in Vietnam as a result of their marriage. In one case, the family wanted to return to Korea, but decided to remain in Vietnam, lest the father be unable to find a suitable job in Korea. Opportunities for Korean investors, business owners, and jobseekers are on the rise in Vietnam thanks to growing economic relations with Korea.

B. Discord between Vietnamese Mothers and their Korean In-Laws

Lack of good relations between Vietnamese mothers and their Korean in-laws is another major reason Korean-born children of those mothers return to Vietnam. The relations between mothers and their in-laws have been less than comfortable both in Vietnam and Korea throughout history. Vietnamese women who marry Korean men desire to avoid unnecessary conflict with their in-laws, and opt to return to Vietnam as a way to manage things.

The decision, made by Vietnamese women, to return to Vietnam and make only occasional visits to in-laws in Korea is regarded as an act of courage on the part of the women. This is because most Vietnamese women would much prefer to live in Korea than their home country, had it not been for their in-laws. In one case, the Korean in-laws of the interviewed Vietnamese mother were graduates of prestigious universities in Korea of high social status and earning high incomes. The husband and wife themselves were also well-educated and had great careers in Korea. Moving to Vietnam meant that the husband had to give up his stable career and get by with part-time work in Vietnam. Nevertheless, the couple decided to return to the wife's country, along with their children. Discord with the in-laws may not be the foremost reason for re-migration to

Vietnam for these couples, but it is definitely one of the push factors that lead such couples to take that route.

C. Discrimination

Moving to Vietnam to manage conflict with Korean in-laws is accepted as an understandable decision among Vietnamese. Moving to Vietnam, out of the fear of (possible or actual) discrimination against the children, is a policy question that merits our attention. According to a study on immigrant families in Korea, non-Korean women who settle in Korea after marrying Korean men are generally very satisfied with the quality of life and policy support available in the country. Yet they face discrimination against marriage immigrants in society at large. The interviewees returned to Vietnam because the country is favorably disposed toward Koreans and does not discriminate against them, whereas the same cannot be said of Korea.

In Case 7, for example, the Vietnamese mother decided to bring her child to Vietnam to shield her against discrimination by Koreans and thereby ensure her chances at uninterrupted and successful development. Case 2 is similar to Case 7 in that both the husband and wife are well educated and the Korean in-laws are well-off. The Korean in-laws in this case operate a sizable business and possess means for a comfortable living. The husband and wife lived in a luxurious, large apartment,

and had little to worry about in terms of finances and careers. Yet they resettled in Vietnam, despite the difficulties of finding suitable careers guaranteeing income stability. The prospects were darker for the husband. As a result, the husband stayed behind in Korea, while the wife relocated to Vietnam with the children.

The desire to protect children against discrimination by Koreans and to maximize their chances at growing into loved and well-adapted adults is not the top reason, but is an important factor that prompts Vietnamese women to return to their home country. Families that move to Vietnam for economic or financial reasons usually have Korean fathers who struggle to find work and earn sufficient income in Korea. Families that move to Vietnam due to discord with Korean in-laws and/or out of a fear of discrimination against their children and its impact on their development have fathers who are well educated and enjoy much better prospects for careers and quality of life in Korea than in Vietnam. It is also important to note that discrimination in Korean society, the need to learn and adapt to Vietnamese culture and customs, and the desire for a more loving environment in proximity to the mother's family and relatives are not the decisive factors, but are still important in leading Korean-Vietnamese families to move to Vietnam.

3. Life for Korean-Vietnamese Children Living in Vietnam

A. Care from the Maternal Side of the Family Rather than from Mothers Themselves

The majority of Korean-Vietnamese families living in Vietnam today have come out of a natural courtship between the husband and the wife. The children from these unions grow and thrive amid much love coming from both the paternal and maternal sides of the family. Vietnamese women also play leading roles in their families. Their Korean husbands, whether in Vietnam with them or working in Korea, continue to work and serve as the main source of income, while the Vietnamese wives mainly take care of chores and raising the kids. However, the majority of Vietnamese mothers also work, whether part time or full time, and take active part in a variety of other activities outside the home. Vietnamese wives in union with Korean husbands therefore always play the more vocal role on matters of both finance and emotion. The children of such mothers therefore receive quite different care and parenting from that received by the children of Korean parents in Vietnam. Because their Vietnamese mothers have to work or are otherwise busy, the children spend much more time with their maternal grandparents and relatives and/or Korean fathers. A fathers' absence can therefore be felt all the more

acutely for these children, who do not receive the kind of dedicated and hovering parenting that the children of Korean mothers are used to. Vietnamese mothers, too, are aware of this difference in parenting style.

Busy mothers occupied with earning income and social activities—and who play an indispensable role in keeping up the family finances—are the central characteristic of Korean-Vietnamese families that have resettled in Vietnam. Because the mothers are so busy, the children are left to rely on a variety of other sources for education and parenting, including schools, tutors, maternal relatives, children's centers and other organizations. Compared to Korean mothers, Vietnamese mothers spend considerably less time with their young children into adolescence. Even compared to the average Vietnamese mother in major cities, who is better educated and earns considerably more income, the mothers of Korean-Vietnamese children in Vietnam spend significantly less time with their children due to their preoccupation with occupational, social and even family activities. These mothers tend to have more children and cannot spend much time on each child. The bond between these mothers and their children may therefore seem even weaker than that between other mothers and their children. Furthermore, because the Vietnamese mothers want their children to go on to higher studies in Korea and maintain ties with Korea into their adulthood, they have a different focus

on the education and overall development of their children than other families. The bookcases in the interviewed Korean-Vietnamese families contain fewer books suitable for the ages of the children than is the case for other Vietnamese or Korean families with children in similar age groups. Some children can read and borrow books only from schools or charity centers run by Koreans. They also lack the means to acquire books on their own. The two main factors complicating the healthy development of these children are therefore the shortage of time spent with their own parents and families, on the one hand, and the lack of Korean communities supporting them, on the other.

B. School Life

1) Tuition

The majority of Korean migrant children living in Vietnam are in a situation where their parents cannot adequately support them through school. Even the few families with relatively high incomes need both parents to work hard because they have numerous children for whom the parents are eager to secure the best possible education. Except for a family that has only one child and earns a high income, and is therefore capable of investing heavily in the child's education, the vast ma-

jority of the interviewed families identified the difficulty of funding the education of their children as their foremost concern. The problem especially takes a toll on divorced, single-parent, multi-children and unemployed families. The financial burden of tuition has grown so much for some of these families that they struggle to make ends meet on a daily basis.

Financing the children's education is a major concern not only for struggling families, but also for relatively well-to-do ones. Families with high and stable incomes seek to enroll their children in Korean or Vietnamese international schools, with ambitions of sending them abroad to the United States, the United Kingdom or Europe for further study. The Vietnamese mothers bear a significant burden of earning a family income and covering tuition.

Each family is different. They have different levels of income, face different sets of challenges, and have set different educational goals for their children. Whenever families set higher goals for the education of their children than their current income and financial situation can afford, however, parents must work hard all the time to meet those goals. This is especially true in Confucian societies like Korea and Vietnam, where the educational achievement of children is regarded as an indicator of success. Korean-Vietnamese families are not immune to this societal current. The families interviewed for this study were willing to invest every penny in the education of their children.

Some were even willing to sell the only houses they lived in to afford better education.

2) Language Barrier and Adapting at School

Before they enter school, young Korean migrant children living in Vietnam either stay at home or attend daycare and kindergartens. Many children are able to stay at home thanks to maternal grandparents and relatives, who live nearby and devotedly look after them. Keeping preschoolers at home is a popular choice because there used to be only one or two international preschools serving these children in the past, with strict limits on the number of children admitted. Korean preschools, moreover, charged much higher fees than Korean elementary schools. The monthly fees for each child enrolled in a Korean preschool is well over VND 10,000,000, which the vast majority of families in Vietnam find impossible to afford. Furthermore, the only Korean international school in all of Vietnam is located in Hanoi. Families living elsewhere therefore cannot help but send their children to Vietnamese kindergartens and elementary schools.

Because the majority of Korean migrant children in Vietnam receive care at home from their Vietnamese grandparents and attend Vietnamese schools from early on, they are mostly quite fluent in the Vietnamese language. In some families, the chil-

dren are also urged to speak Korean at home so that they can grow up bilingual. Families that have made advance decisions to enroll their children in Korean schools begin investing in enhancing the children's Korean proficiency years before they actually enter the schools, inviting Korean tutors to their homes for lessons. Such families are few in number. Children who mostly speak Vietnamese at home and graduate from Vietnamese kindergartens are more fluent in Vietnamese than Korean. Children whose parents have invested in Korean lessons or who are born to Korean parents and have relocated to Vietnam speak better Korean than Vietnamese.

Speaking two languages at home before entering school enhances the prospects of the children's bilingual development. However, while they may be able to speak both languages, they are not on par, in terms of linguistic development, with either Vietnamese children or Korean children at the same age. These children may also experience linguistic confusion, unable to master the command of either language. Supposedly "bilingual" children therefore experience difficulty with school tasks after they enter either Vietnamese schools or Korean ones. They may excel at subjects like math and English, but find it difficult to attain to the same accomplishments in subjects that require skilled use of either language. Some children may also struggle in math classes because they are unable to understand the mathematical terms and concepts. At Korean schools, they are

taught the Korean words for these universal terms and concepts up until third grade, and are afterward encouraged to use math dictionaries suited to each grade. Even in using such dictionaries, however, these children struggle because their command of the Korean language is imperfect.

By transferring from Korean to Vietnamese schools, these children can avoid such difficulties, and can also rely on additional emotional and financial support from their Vietnamese mothers and maternal relatives. Children who so transfer between schools are urged by all family members to catch up academically to their classmates as soon as possible.

Their inability to use either Korean or Vietnamese masterfully can interfere with Korean-Vietnamese children's ability to perform well on subjects like social studies and sciences. The discrimination they experience at Korean schools serves to discourage them further from actively enjoying school life. Discrimination against these children stems from discrimination against Vietnamese marriage immigrants. Such discrimination serves to limit the children's ability to make friends, engage in extracurricular activities, and even seek and obtain private lessons, and may end up undermining their academic performance.

As they grow older, Korean-Vietnamese children experience even greater difficulties at school and in friendship. For one thing, academic requirements grow more numerous and difficult as students go up in grade, and the required level of Korean proficiency

also increases. Children themselves grow more cognizant of the subtle forms of discrimination they face at Korean schools, while the practice of speaking Vietnamese at home deprives them of more and more opportunities to enhance their Korean and expand their Korean vocabulary. As a result, Korean-Vietnamese children tend to switch to Vietnamese secondary schools after attending Korean primary schools. Depending on their future goals and family finances, children enroll in either Vietnamese schools or international schools in Vietnam.

C. Anxiety with Social Status and Perception

The foreign population in Vietnam has been growing steadily since the Doi Moi reforms in the 1980s. Vietnamese tend to equate foreigners with wealth. There even used to be a dual price system, with lower prices offered for Vietnamese and higher (sometimes even double) prices reserved for international buyers. The system has disappeared for the most part by now, but still remains in certain types of transactions. At any rate, the prevailing opinion in Vietnam is that foreigners enjoy a higher quality of life and more luxurious living than locals. The number of houses, vehicles and commercial establishments catering exclusively to foreign clienteles has multiplied. The majority of the places frequented by foreigners offer better services at higher prices. Korean-Vietnamese families strive to

project an image of distinction, prestige, and affluence, doing their best to have their children perceived as "different" and "privileged."

Although their mothers are Vietnamese, children born in Korea to Korean fathers are regarded as "foreigners," and are not immune to the typical perception and envy of Vietnamese of "wealthy foreigners." Moreover, Koreans are active on the Vietnamese business and investment scenes, and many Vietnamese like Korea and try to emulate Koreans. The Korean Wave has seeped into the daily lives of Vietnamese, and Koreans are generally perceived as affluent and generous. Marrying a Korean husband is regarded as a key to improving one's quality of life and joining the upper-middle class in Vietnam. The reality is much more varied and can even be quite grim, but Vietnamese wives raising Korean-born children in Vietnam are keenly aware of their society's perception and struggle to project the expected image.

4. Policy Support for Korean-Vietnamese Families in Vietnam: A Mixed Review

Of the organizations supporting Korean-Vietnamese families in Vietnam, the three most well-known ones are the Korean-Vietnamese Family Association (KVFA) in Hanoi, the Korean Women's International Network (KOWIN) and the

Korean International School in Hanoi. These organizations organize a variety of programs, projects, and activities to support Korean-Vietnamese families, with financial support from the Vietnamese embassy to Korea, local Korean associations, the Overseas Korean Foundation (OKF), Shinhan Bank, Woori Bank, and other governmental agencies, NGOs and NPOs, and corporations in Korea and Vietnam. As the majority of interviews for this study took place in Hanoi and the adjacent region in northern Vietnam, much of the information discussed herein concerns that part of the country. These organizations provide opportunities for exchange with Korea and Korean community-oriented activities, assistance with consular processes, Korean language classes, free classes, and scholarships for the children of Korean-Vietnamese families.

The support from these organizations plays an important role not only in helping the families financially, but also supporting their emotional wellbeing. The activities of the KVFA, in particular, have indeed changed parental perspective on the education, identity, and national affiliation of their children. Parents have come to understand better that they play a pivotal role in helping their children establish and develop their identities. Korean-Vietnamese families that had initially settled elsewhere in Vietnam migrate to Hanoi and the nearby cities simply for the sake of finding better Vietnamese public schools for their families. The KVFA's activities have made parents rethink this

practice, and opened their eyes to the importance of helping children recognize themselves as Korean as well as Vietnamese. Their activities have had an especially enduring effect on the view of Vietnamese mothers on their children's education.

Notwithstanding the significant support these Korean organizations provide for Korean-Vietnamese families in Vietnam, some have also identified the shortcomings of their activities. Scholarships awarded to students enrolled at the Korean International School have been quite handy for financially struggling parents. These scholarships and need-based financial aid have been distributed by the schools based on the material support provided by Korean businesses and organizations and the applications of parents. They are provided toward the end of the year, which means all students, irrespective of financial difficulty, are required to pay the same tuition up front for the year. Families often struggle greatly to support their children through this process, and spend most of their time worrying because they are unsure, until the end of the year, whether they will receive scholarships. Scholarships may finally be granted, but the pleasure they bring hardly compensates for the pain and anxiety that the parents have had to struggle with throughout the year. Furthermore, not all eligible families participate in the activities of the KVFA. Families with stable sources of income and means to solve problems on their own hardly ever participate.

There are limits to the parts that the Korean International School, the KVFA, KOWIN, and other such organizations can play toward ensuring the financial, emotional and educational wellbeing of Korean-Vietnamese children. Even the best efforts of these organizations fall short of satisfying the needs of every participating family. Nevertheless, these organizations continue to provide a wide range of support, including financial aid and donations, free classes, free public libraries, opportunities to visit Korea, visits to struggling families, assistance with consular processes, and coordination of information exchange. Individual Koreans living in Vietnam also actively volunteer to help these families out.

IV Conclusion

IV Conclusion

The general pattern among Korean-Chinese children in Yanbian is that they were sent away to live with their mothers' families in Yanbian quite early in their childhood, and that they tend to complete their entire education, from elementary school to university, in China. The children are compelled to relocate to China and separate from their mothers due to the divorce of their parents or the death of their father, and consequently struggle with a broad array of psychological and emotional issues. Yet the Korean government and society hardly pay any attention to these children simply because they do not live in Korea. Maternal grandmothers and aunts are the almost only source of support these children can count on. Although they hold Korean nationality, they cannot even imagine asking the Korean government for help.

This study is significant in that it is the first attempt in the Korean research community to analyze and understand the predicaments faced by children of Korean fathers and non-Korean mothers who struggle to survive in their mothers' homelands. This study finds that the majority of unions between Korean men and their *joseonjok* wives from Yanbian are formed for practical, rather than romantic, purposes, and that the brittleness of the bond between the husband and the wife

often leads to the breakup of their marriage. Relatively few marriages are born out of natural courtship and romance, but those that do tend to last longer and be more stable. The vast majority of the children analyzed for this study, however, relocated to Yanbian following the divorce of their parents or due to the financial inability of their parents to care for them in Korea.

Most of the Korean-Chinese children sent to Yanbian live with their mothers' families. The stronger the bond between mother and child and also between the mother and her original family, the fewer the issues the child experiences in growth and development. Family discord and conflict, on the other hand, have exactly the opposite effect. Children struggle with a sense of abandonment, while grandparents are angered at the irresponsibility of their daughters and the ungratefulness of their grandchildren. There are few, if any, resources available to help reduce the anxiety and discontent these families suffer. Being *joseonjok*, these families are dedicated to the education and academic success of their children, and some continue to carry out ambitious plans for the future of their children. Yet most grandmothers who care for these children lament the fact that they are not capable of providing adequate support for their education. Korean-Chinese children living in Yanbian also find it difficult to maintain their identity as Koreans. Having severed ties with their fathers and the paternal side of the fam-

ily, these children are Koreans in name only, unfamiliar with Korean culture and society. They experience little discrimination in China, and fear that, should their mothers come back to drag them back to Korea, they will have to deal with prejudice in Korean society. Korean government support for immigrants has been almost exclusively focused on marriage immigrants and their children living in Korea. It is time for Korean policymakers to introduce specific and substantial policy measures that address these issues afflicting Korean-born children living in their mothers' countries.

The mothers of 10 Korean-Vietnamese families living in Vietnam were also interviewed in depth as part of efforts to survey the living conditions for Korean-Vietnamese children. In most cases, the women had married their Korean husbands after courtship and romance. The children either held Korean nationality alone or dual Korean-Vietnamese citizenship, but their mothers had decided to return to Vietnam for a variety of reasons, including the father's work, discord with Korean in-laws, and a desire to shield their children from Korean prejudice. Interestingly, most of the interviewed Vietnamese mothers were quite well-educated, holding either university degrees or vocational college diplomas. They were active and heavily engaged in income-earning and social activities, serving as the foundation upon which their Korean-Vietnamese families could rely. Given how busy their mothers are,

Korean-Vietnamese children mostly receive the care and support they need from their Vietnamese grandparents and relatives. This means that the children are raised and educated in ways that are Vietnamese rather than Korean.

Close relationships with their Vietnamese relatives mean that these children learn to become much more proficient in Vietnamese than Korean before they enter school. As a result, by the time they start Korean schools, they struggle due to the language barrier. This linguistic difficulty is a major factor that contributes to the growing number of Korean-Vietnamese children returning to Vietnam and attending Vietnamese schools. Yet, given the lack of infrastructure for learning Korean in Vietnam, these children either are limited to the free Korean classes or pay high fees for private tutors. Their inability to speak good Korean also keeps these children isolated from their peers at Korean schools. They may perform well in subjects like mathematics and English, but struggle to catch up in subjects like social studies and science. As they grow older, Korean-Vietnamese children become more aware of their unique predicament, and continue to struggle with schoolwork, which grows all the more difficult as they move up in grade. Accordingly, numerous children switch from Korean international schools to other international schools or local schools in Vietnam. Enrolling children in Korean or international schools, however, can significantly burden parents, particularly when

they have two or more children to support. Although the tuition for a good education can run prohibitively high, the Korean and Vietnamese parents do their best to help their children succeed at school. Additional support from Korean communities in Vietnam and paternal relatives in Korea is essential to help these children maintain ties to Korea and their Korean identity. It becomes especially difficult for the children to retain their identity as Koreans when their mothers have separated/divorced from their Korean husbands, when their Korean fathers have died, or when their Korean fathers remain in Korea to work, yet struggle financially.

To reduce the difficulties that Korean-Vietnamese children encounter at school and in daily life in Vietnam, adequate proficiency in the Korean language before they enter school is needed. The Korean kindergartens in Vietnam charge fees comparable to those for immigrant children living in Korea. More attention and support are needed from Korean governmental agencies, organizations, corporations and individual donors, however, to establish kindergartens that charge fees more in line with the local standard of living. Additional financial aid is also needed for Korean-Vietnamese families so that their children can continue to attend Korean kindergartens in Vietnam. Furthermore, programs for visiting Korea regularly, including summer camps, should be organized to enable these families and their children to maintain their ties with Korea

and learn about Korean culture, history and customs. Policy support for immigrant families should not be confined to families living in Korea, but be extended to Korean-born children of immigrant mothers living abroad. Vietnam is an important "strategic partner" of Korea and the relations and exchange between the two countries continue to grow stronger, with an increasing incidence of intermarrying. Setting up systematic channels of support for Korean-Vietnamese children in Vietnam, such as immigrant support centers, will contribute to further strengthening the partnership between the two countries.

In addition, more research is needed to achieve an integrated perspective on the current realities and issues faced by Korean-born children that have returned to their immigrant mothers' homelands. Diverse and well-executed studies are critical to identifying more effective policy solutions. This study provides analysis based on only a handful of Korean-born children and their mothers living in the mother's country of birth. It therefore lacks representativeness. For example, the majority of the children and mothers included in this study's Vietnamese sample are either those that have been separated from their fathers due to the breakup of their parents' marriage (in Vietnam) or those that have unwillingly separated from their fathers, who continue to work in Korea. The other substantial group of Korean-Vietnamese children who have returned with

their mothers to Vietnam (mostly the southwest region) because the family could not sustain itself in Korea has been omitted from the scope of this study. The children of this other, excluded, group are in even more vulnerable situations, lacking the proper paperwork for legal status in Vietnam and struggling with great financial difficulties. Hyundai Motors has been supporting Vietnamese women who have returned with their children from Korea to Vietnam since 2016 under the company's Korea-Vietnam Care Project. The company set up a care center in Can Tho in 2018. A research project recently took place, which involved interviewing and surveying the Vietnamese women registered with this center and raising their children in Can Tho and Hau Giang. A number of Korean newspaper companies have also dispatched reporters to the center to report on the difficulties these families face in parenting, living, and learning. Nevertheless, we still need far more support and attention towards organizing more systematic and realistic studies, expansive in scope and sample, to better understand the struggles of these children.