

## How Much Stress Working Wives in Commuter Marriages Experience? A Comparison to Working Wives Living with Husbands

With rapid economic expansion and wives' career aspiration, commuter marriages, a special case of dual-earner couples where wives and husbands live separately, are on the rise. Using a recent cross-sectional data in South Korea, the study examines how much stress wives in commuter marriages feel and what factors are associated with their stress levels. For analyses, I compare these working wives in commuter marriages to working wives living with husbands. I find wives living without and with their husbands do not differ in their levels of stress, implying that this new living arrangement can provide psychological benefits as well as mental burdens. Also I find that wives in commuter marriages report higher levels of stress when they live with elementary school children and fathers at home while it is not the case to their counterparts.

## How Much Stress Working Wives in Commuter Marriages Experience?

### A Comparison to Working Wives Living with Husbands

The wife and the husband in some married couples live apart during various lengths of periods for several reasons such as educational goals, incarceration, familial obligations, military services or career opportunities. A commuter couple refers to a married dual-earner couple in a living arrangement form that the wife and the husband live in separate residences due to their occupations at least part of the week (Bunker et al. 1992, Gerstel and Gross 1984, Winfield 1985). One spouse resides near his or her workplace and away from their family home because the commuting distances are too long to travel on a daily basis. In general, both the spouses in each couple consider one home as the primary residence and the other as the satellite residence, particularly when there are children to the couples. Hence, commuting spouses routinely divide their time in two separate residences, mainly during weekend. While occupational reasons play a major role in the decision for this locational organization of households, familial and residential situations also form an important part (Green et al. 1999b, van der Klis and Mulder 2008). Other terms to indicate this unconventional arrangement include ‘two-location marriage’ (Kirschner and Walum 1978) and ‘dual-resident marriage’ (Schvaneveldt et al. 2001).

Some couples live separately although wives remain to be full-time homemakers. Such marital couples are called as “split household families” in Taiwan (Glenn 1983, Liu and Chiang 2012) or “*tanshin funin*” in Japan (Bassani 2007). Married women in this form manage the main household and caring for children alone when husbands do not stay together, which is similar to wives in commuter marriages. But they do not be worried about balancing work and family. Working wives in two-location marriages have to concentrate work presentations by day and helping with children’s homework by night. Hence the two groups of wives living apart who are at work and out of work may be qualitatively different in terms of the subjective well-being, the primary interest in this study. Therefore, I focus on commuter couples that both the spouses are employed.

## LIERATURE REVIEW

### *Recent Expansion of Commuter Marriages*

If husbands in dual-earner couples should relocate far away or obtain promising job opportunities in other regions, wives conventionally give up their own jobs and settle down with their husbands, sometimes with less desirable jobs in new areas (Bielby and Bielby 1992). If working wives get good offers but have to go to other states or countries, they usually decline without reservation. But around the late 1970s, some married women, armed with high education and ambitious aspiration, entered into professional and managerial positions. Facing the same dilemma between work and family, they refused to follow the traditional life path and adopt a commuting lifestyle (Gerstel and Gross 1984). Some marital couples lived separately due to military duties or temporal immigration (Kirschner and Walum 1978) and so geographical separation between the spouses were not new to the public as well as academic circles. But couples at the upper classes added new variant to this concept of spousal separation and sparked empirical research on this newly emerging living arrangement (Gerstel and Gross 1984, Winfield 1985).

Since then, significant economic changes force marital couples at wider ranges of social stratum to consider this dwelling style. Many post-industrial societies undergo a process of geographical scaling up at the national and global level. In the face of fierce competition, corporations and companies expand themselves beyond their traditional regional areas and widen their target ranges of customers. At the same time, many corporations develop the worldwide networks of tightly interlocked chains ranging from exploitation of raw materials to provision of products to customers. Addition to economic restructuring, some other changes fuel the trend of business expansion. Innovations in communication technology enable even medium and small-sized business enterprises to engage in global networks. Through budget airlines and high-speed train systems, individual workers can travel long distances in a routine fashion. Governments actively conclude trade liberalizations, which facilitate unrestricted overseas expansions and set pivotal preconditions for the scaling-up of mobility. Accordingly the need is increasing for workers who are mobile over long distances (Hardill 2004, Scott 2006).

Parallel to economic structural shifts, more and more marital couples do not hesitate to grab employment opportunities far away and willing to comply with the precondition of living separately. Increasing women get diploma of higher educational institutes and pursue occupational success even after they get married and give birth. When husbands move for business reasons or take jobs in other regions, some employed wives do not refuse to become 'trailing spouses' but stay put and try to realize their own career aspirations (van der Velde et al. 2005). Or since moving up often requires moving around at the career worlds, married women who set their sight on corporate advancement opt to live apart with their husbands (Guillaume and Pochic 2009, Valcour and Ladge 2008). Husbands also are more supportive of their spousal career decision than the old generations. They cherish more liberalized attitudes about women's social life and are sympathetic to married women's aspiration. Facing unstable job situations, they want to share financial responsibility with wives and so even conservative husbands do not want to interfere in wives' pursuit of career success.

In contrast to couples willing to accept this unconventional living arrangement, some couples have little leverage in their decision to live separately. When assigned to far-off or overseas offices, some workers are afraid that their denial of assignment can be interpreted to be low commitment and loyalty. Clearly, those under the pressure of job loss find it hard to reject the bosses' decision to relocate. Also economically vulnerable couples seeking more earnings or benefits can realize that their persistence to living together limit their employment opportunities and lowers their earnings compared to what they could earn in their individually optimal locations (Boyle et al. 2001, Geist and McManus 2012). A series of worldwide recessions and slow recoveries in many developed countries aggravate the economic worries of marital couples located down at the social ladder. Hence increasing double-income couples have to adapt to conflicting locational demands of their careers.

In addition to career aspiration and economic vulnerability, commitment to family well-being should also be taken account (Mulder 2003, Mulder and Hooimeijer 2013). When spouses, especially husbands, have to relocate, the other spouse may hesitate to follow them because it takes a great deal of energy and money for the whole family members to accompany the leaving parent and settle down in an unfamiliar area. Particularly if assigned to overseas branch offices, children have to experience

the difficulty of accustoming themselves to uncomfortable environments, unfamiliar customs and foreign languages (Dupuis et al. 2008). Parents with children of school ages compare their place of habitual residence and new working areas extensively to make sure whether new neighborhoods are good for children's education and development (Swain and Garasky 2007, Sweet et al. 2005). If mothers and fathers in dual-earner couples are not sure if new areas are clearly better choices and placements to other regional or foreign branches are often temporal, one parent decides to stay put, entering the commuting life (Challiol and Mignonac 2005, Van Der Klis 2008).

Finally, dazzling progresses in transportations such as faster trains and planes can enable commuting spouses to visit the family home more often. Glaring developments in technology including high-speed internet connections and increasingly capable mobile devices help working parents contact their spouses and children in the opposite side of the earth whenever they want. As a result, more and more working couples come to think positively about short-lived separation. Hence, it can be predicted that the form of commuter marriages will spread rapidly all over the world (Forsyth and Gramling 1998, Adams 2004). In line with this prediction, empirical research reports or speculates that the commuter marriages are on the increase in many countries, including the U.S. (CONLIN 2009, McBride and Bergen 2014), German (Reuschke 2010), Great Britain (Green et al. 1999a), Israel (Lustick 2011), Malaysia (Li et al. 2014), Hong Kong (Lau et al. 2012), Japan (Bassani 2007) and South Korea (Kim 2001).

#### *Stress Levels for Working Wives in Commuter Marriages*

As commuter couples are on the rise and gaining visibility, researchers are interested in the subjective well-being of wives in this emerging form of living arrangement because this arrangement can lead to intensive juggling of work and home commitments on single-parent days for home-based parents, in many cases, mothers (van der Klis and Karsten 2009). Working wives in commuter marriages have to confront two or more incompatible expectations from several social roles without spousal instant supports, leading to the general speculation that these employed married women experience much more distress than those living with husbands (Bunker et al. 1992).

They have to deal with hectic schedules from family and work responsibilities and face severe gender asymmetries in the allocation of household and childcare when husbands are not around. Even when they are with husbands at the main household, commuting husbands are often of no help because they do not understand the details and dynamics of what is happening at home. Also married women living at the family residence full-time have to experience substantial changes in daily rhythms according to the presence and absence of the commuting spouse. In addition, this living arrangement can bring some emotional issues for married women because they do not have their partners by their side when they feel lonely or want to share daily emotions. Moreover, this arrangement can cause some economic burden to commuter couples. It is expensive to pay for second residence as well as extra household items and so many dual-earner couples do not consider this lifestyle as long-term financial gains in spite of advantages associated with commuting lifestyles (Jackson et al. 2000). Another reason to focus on couples in high-ranking posts, besides to a large part of the entire commuter couples, is that they are expected to be under relentless pressures from heavy workload.

But it should be noted that regular independent residence can provide some benefits that married women living with husbands cannot anticipate. Wives in commuter marriages can manage their schedules and energies without spousal interference, especially when they do not have children. Hence they can concentrate on occupational careers, enjoy personal leisure activities and form and extend social relationships on their own. In a word, they can realize individual career and life preferences within the framework of the partnership and family (Jackson et al. 2000, Van Der Klis 2008).

In fact, contrary to the general presumption, comparison of two groups of working wives – those in commuter marriages and living with husbands – suggests that wives in commuter marriages are generally satisfied about the current arrangement. Bunker et al (Bunker et al. 1992) report that dual-earner commuters feel greater satisfaction from work than dual-earner couples in a single residence. Landersman and Seward (2013) report that the vast majority of commuter couples are satisfied or very satisfied with their communication with their partners, involvement with children, division of labor and leisure with partners. But these studies use data from convenient samples consisting of highly

educated and financially stable respondents. If marital couples who have little leverage for their decision to take this unconventional arrangement due to economic situations or lay-off threat are relevantly represented in the samples, different conclusions may be reached. Consistent with this possibility, Fuller (2010), utilizing the data from the National Health Interview Survey, an annual cross-sectional survey of the non-institutionalized population in the United States, finds that marrieds and commuters do not differ in psychological distress.

### *Explanation of Stress Levels for Working Wives in Commuter Marriages*

Studies examine potential factors that may be associated with the subjective well-being for female spouses in commuter marriages. Above all, accumulating research on commuter marriages agrees that those in good financial conditions can cushion their difficult situations to a great extent, decreasing levels of distress they perceive about life (Gerstel and Gross 1984, Groves and Hormwingerd 1991, Jackson et al. 2000). With economic resources, they can move to safer residential areas to live free from fear of crimes, hire domestic workers to get lots of practical support to management of everyday life and send children to private schools with rich after-school curriculums.

Occupational features play an important role in how much stress working wives feel about the domains of family and work. In addition to salary ranges that are a key component of financial conditions explained above, amounts of office hours and flexibility of work schedules can exacerbate or alleviate the role conflicts shouldered on employed wives who cannot expect immediate spousal contributions. Superiors' or coworkers' appreciation and consideration can help them deal effectively with emotional difficulties resulting from regular absence of husbands. Employment instability can haunt wives burdened with the sole responsibility for cares of children.

Husbands can relieve working wives in commuter marriages of a great deal of distress (van der Klis and Karsten 2009). Married women can consult their husbands living separately about small and serious matters through cellphones, emails, SNS and videotelephony and accordingly, have a sense of togetherness with their spouses. Similarly, frequently visiting husbands can understand better difficulties that married women have to deal with and help them with everyday hassles or chores

around the house. Children feel reserved or lukewarm toward fathers after a period of separation and so even when fathers return home, mothers still take care of their children alone (Rabe 2001).

Therefore, fathers who stay apart but remain on good terms with children can be to mothers' great relief. Wives in commuter marriages who live apart for substantial periods may feel less stress because they are used to living without husbands around, suggesting that periods of separation can matter to their subjective well-being.

Mothers in commuter marriages are effectively single parents while fathers are away and so often encounter problems that single parents experience. Thus the bringing up of children usually put them under a lot of stress. In particular, the attention should be paid to children's life stages. Preschool children require mainly extensive and manual cares from parents. As children grow old and enter elementary schools, parents should turn their attentions to children's academic progress, righteous characters and social relationships. Especially while children are in middle and high schools, parents are concerned chiefly in school records and aptitude development. Different kinds of the main developmental tasks and issues through the children's life courses may have different implications to the psychological statuses of mothers without substantive shares from commuting fathers.

Parents or parents-in-law living together can offer practical support to wives in commuter marriages (Haour-Knipe 2011). Parents can care for grandchildren or clean the dishes while mothers are busy at work, which can be greatly relieved to those experiencing role conflicts every day. But at the same time, parents or parents-in-law can be another burden to married women without husbands at home, especially in Confucian cultural societies. Especially if commuter relationships carry on longer than expected, the lack of warm support can have severely detrimental implications for the subjective well-being of employed wives in commuter marriages. Empirical studies report that support from extended family members for those in long-distance relationships are often absent or undermined (Pistole et al. 2010).

As researchers such as Reuschke (2010) or Rhodes (2002) points, recent studies are based mostly on qualitative designs or convenient samples (e.g., academic couples or professional workers) so that conclusions are applicable only to specific groups. But as many developed countries go through

economic scaling-up processes at the global as well as national levels, maintenance of two households becomes viable or unavoidable options to wider ranges of social groups. However, little is known about who those in commuter marriages are in general and how they feel about this form of living arrangement compared to the married living together. In other words, the current research fails to catch up with rapidly changing reality about this emerging living arrangement.

### *Korean Context*

In the 1960s and 1970s, many Korean construction workers in the Middle East had to take this unconventional residential pattern at least for a couple of years. Also commuter marriage was a temporary option for married workers considering career changes or enhancing career opportunities. Still the scale in the past was negligible compared to the current trend. However, since the 1990s, the form of maintaining two locational households has been established as a newly visible lifestyle in Korea. Statistics Korea announces that married couples living separately, which includes mainly commuter couples, accounts for 5.9%, 7.5% and 10.0% of all the married couples in 2000, 2005 and 2010 using the census data.

With recent advent of economic globalization, large Korean corporations vehemently tap into the world markets and enthusiastically promote organizational glocalization, rising to be world-famous enterprises. Many medium and small-sized firms have also jumped on the bandwagon. As a result, Korean companies have hunted for applicants willing and capable to work beyond the borderline. Additionally, in order to ease the population centralization around the Seoul metropolitan area, the Korean government relocates the administrative capital from Seoul to Sejong City and most public institutions to all over the country. Consequently, many husbands and wives employed at the public domain have to decide move to new offices alone or with spouses and children. The Korean government also offers tax privileges, favorable loans and other benefits in order to disperse places of business to the providences. In responses, numerous firms move factories or offices from densely populated areas. Hence, some workers at these companies are asked or forced to leave for unfamiliar regions.

As employment opportunities spread to the all over the country and foreign countries, it is increasingly difficult for the wife and the husband to seek satisfactory jobs at the same geographical area in South Korea. At the crossroads, more married females in professional fields or executive positions are reluctant to accompany their husbands relocated far away or willing to seize advancement opportunities in foreign countries. Also workers at the middle and low ranks accept the demand of relocation and temporary separation from spouses and children. They may place more emphasis on lucrative chances or exotic preferences in their decision for commuting patterns. But at the same time, they have to attach more value to managerial decision than family due to fear of unexpected lay-off or unfair disadvantages.

In Confucian societies including South Korea, children take predominance in parental life planning including adoption of commuting lifestyles (Bassani 2007, Kim 2001). In South Korea education is essential to achieve high social status (Seth 2002) and one of parental, especially maternal main roles is to support children's educational endeavors in order to enhance children's chance to succeed in later years, maintaining and enhancing the social position of the family's line (Abelmann 2003). In East Asia, many parents in commuter marriages report that mothers and children decide not to relocate because it would handicap children's education and development (Bassani 2007). Especially, Seoul is the center of almost everything from politics and economy to education and other social matters. Hence even though the husband is relocated or gets a job outside the metropolitan area, even the housewife hesitates to follow him, much more if she has school-aged children.

South Korea has some unique features driving emergence and expansion of commuter marriages. With relatively small gross area and developed transportation systems, Koreans can reach anywhere in the country within a quarter of a day. Therefore, commuting parents can return to the family homes at least during every weekends and so commuter couples are called 'weekend couples' in South Korea (Kim 2001). Also almost all children as well as adults carry their own smart phones and wireless internet networks are installed in most areas nationwide. Fathers living away can communicate and even talk face-to-face through video call functions such as FaceTime with mothers or children

anytime and anywhere. Frequent visitations and direct communication can make commuting parents connected with family members while they are away.

## STUDY

With industrial expansions at the national and global levels, more married dual-earner couples face career opportunities that are geographically far away from each other. As commuting pattern becomes an at least short-lived option for married couples from the various social strata, this living arrangement has recently attracted academic attentions. Based on in-depth interviews of professors, office clerks at major companies or public sectors, employees at the international organizations, studies focus on stress levels that wives in commuter marriages feel because these women usually take the responsibility of rearing of children and management of households in addition to their job duties.

In comparison to wives living together with husbands, this study answers 1) how much stress wives in commuter marriages feel and 2) what factors are associated with their levels of stress. I analyze a recent cross-sectional data set in South Korea, where commuter couples has been gathering pace around the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By using nationwide representative survey data set, this study can add to the literature on commuter marriages that collects information chiefly from middle-class commuter couples or those from specific occupational clusters and so fail to provide conclusions applicable to the general commuter couples.

## METHOD

### *Data*

The data for this study come from the Social Survey in 2012 (hereafter SS). The SS is an annual representative cross-sectional survey conducted by the Statistics Korea in order to track down personal views and social concerns of the Koreans. Core questions regarding five out of ten broad issues – family, health, environment, education, income & consumption, welfare, culture & leisure, safety and social participation – are included every year and so each broad issue can be covered on a

two-year basis. In response to newly emerging social concerns, some items are added to the core questionnaire. Question items regarding family members living separately are supplemented to the section on family since 2006. I opt to use the most recent SS including the family issue.

Trained interviewers of the Statistics Korea collect information from all the household members ages 13 or over from 17,424 households selected through multi-stage area sampling from May 23 to June 5 in 2012. Also the household header of each household provides basic demographic facts about household members under 13. Married respondents are asked whether their spouses live apart and if yes, are asked about the main reason for separation. The seven responses are work, study (schools or employment preparation), family troubles, health, support for children's education, military service and others. This study uses information from 280 working married women in their 20s to 50s who report that their husbands live apart because of work. These employed wives are compared to 4,397 working wives who are of the same age range and live together with husbands.

### *Measures*

As an index of the subjective well-being, this study examines stress levels that working wives feel. Respondents in the SS answer how much stress they have in general during the last two weeks on a four-point scale consisting of 'not at all,' 'a little,' 'much,' and 'very much.' I note out that this variable is based on subjective assessment rather than objective observances or measures like the CES-D scale and so can be affected by different standards or expectations. For example, working wives living apart from and together with husbands may interpret their own psychological health in different ways. I consider this possibility at the discussion.

Several social and economic characteristics are associated with how stressful working wives in commuter marriages feel that their life is. Economic resources are evaluated through household incomes that employ an eight-point response scale ranging from under 100 to over 700 (in 10,000 Won). Education attainment is assessed by a six-point Likert-typed scale from elementary schools to graduate schools. Occupation is made up of five categories: managerial/professional, office, service/sales, manual labor and agricultural. The numbers of mothers and fathers at home are included

in the models of stress levels. Children are divided by education – preschool, elementary schools and middle/high schools – and then controlled for. While the information on how often husbands contact or visit their spouses or how much they help with household tasks is not available, working wives in commuter marriages are asked whether husbands live in domestic or foreign areas and the periods of separation on a six-point Likert-typed scale from less than six months to more than five years. Married women in the sample are divided to three age groups: those in their 20s and 30s, in their 40s, and in their 50s. Subjective assessment of health on a five-point scale is controlled for in the models of stress levels.

### *Plans of Analysis*

I show descriptive statistics of employed wives living away from and together with husbands in South Korea (Table 1). Table 1 can provide a rare snapshot of these rapidly emerging marital couples due to economic globalization and women’s career aspirations. Next, I show how much stress employed married women in commuter marriages feel compared to their counterparts living together with husbands (Table 2). Then for the sample of working wives in commuter marriages and living with husbands separately, I estimate ordered logistic regression models of stress levels in order to examine whether some socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures are associated with stress levels that these two groups of married women experience (Table 3). For the analysis shown at the Table 3, I use individual weights provided by the Statistics Korea.

## ANALYSIS

### *Working Wives in Commuter Marriages and Living with Husbands*

I show the descriptive statistics for wives in commuter marriage and their counterparts in South Korea.

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Table 1 about here  
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Wives in their 40s, maybe those with one or two children of school ages at home, account roughly for half of married women in commuter marriages. Working married women in commuter marriages are more concentrated in this age range than their counterparts living with husbands. But at the same time, there are substantial proportions of young women in this sample as well. Women's age at marriage is 29.4 years old in South Korea in 2012 and newly married women in their 20s and 30s have to adjust themselves to new life with new life partners who are out of reach for the most part of the week. Also one of four wives enters the twilight years of their life without their spouses, reflecting the recent trend that economically desperate middle- and old-aged people go to far-off areas or other foreign countries to secure or get their positions (van der Klis and Mulder 2008). While the age distributions of the two groups differ, the subjective assessment of health does not. On average, both the groups fall on above the middle of the health scale.

Working wives in commuter marriages are more educated than working wives living with husbands. Roughly one out of three ( $32.8\%=25.7\%+7.1\%$ ) wives in commuter marriages obtain four-year college diploma. Consistent with educational differentials, they are located higher at the occupational ladder, with especially higher rates of proportions for managerial and professional jobs. These women may think that quitting high-quality jobs in order to follow their husbands to be too risky for their occupational careers and family economic stability (van der Klis and Mulder 2008). More than half of working wives in commuter marriages have services or labor positions that are characterized by long hours, low wages and unstable statuses in South Korea. Contrary to education and occupation, home earnings are less for commuter households than their counterparts but it may be because some wives in commuter marriages rule out financial contributions from husbands living separately.

The numbers of children at home do not differ to the working wives living apart from and together with husbands, which may be resulted from the tendency that when parents decide to maintain two residences, children usually end up with staying together with mothers. On average, the two groups have less than one child to take care of, reflecting that the fertility rates in South Korea are extremely low (Westley et al. 2010) and especially employed wives give less births than their

counterparts (Kim 2014). Table 1 indicates that only a few working wives live with parents, much less with fathers. The SS does not distinguish the parents and parents-in-law but it is not common that married women live together with their own parents at home (Ham and Song 2014). Fewer employed married women stay together with other adults such as siblings and relatives.

Husbands for nine of ten women in commuter marriages stay in South Korea. Surely, the rest cannot meet their spouses very often because these husbands live abroad. I find that more than six out of ten wives in commuting couples (62.5%=21.4%+ 21.1%+ 20.0%) maintain two households for less than two years, which confirms that many dual-resident couples consider commuting arrangement as an transitional alternative to the nuclear family (Kirschner and Walum 1978, Magnuson and Norem 1999) and that many couples reunite within several years (Van Der Klis 2008). But it is noteworthy that a significant portion of wives in commuter marriages take time apart more than 5 years.

*Stress Levels for Working Wives in Commuter Marriages and Living with Husbands*

Table 2 shows the stress levels for working wives in commuter marriages and staying with husbands.

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Table 2 about here  
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Results suggest that wives in commuter marriages under a lot of stress. Eight out of ten married women in this living arrangement report that they experience ‘much’ or ‘very much’ stress during the last two weeks. But I hasten to emphasize that married women living together with husbands also feel the similar levels of stress about their general life. The chi-square test fails to reach statistical significance level (Multivariate analysis employing whether in commuter marriages produces the same results. Check out the Appendix). Consistent with the research using a nationally representative sample in the US (Fuller 2010), this study also finds that the two working wife groups do not differ in their levels of stress, suggesting that married women in commuter marriages feel both psychological benefits as well as burdens in their unique lifestyle.

Then who among these wives feel more stressed? In order to test the associations of some potential factors with stress levels about general life, an ordered logistic model is estimated for a nationwide representative sample of working wives in commuter marriages. I also show the logits for the working wives living with husbands to compare the two groups. Because the sample size for the married women in commuter marriages is rather modest, a generous level at .10 is also marked below in addition to conventional levels of .05 and .01.

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Table 3 about here  
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Previous research reports that wives in the later life stages are more desirable for the commuting lifestyle because they are more likely to be relieved of child-caring responsibility and have established careers (Gross 1980, Anderson 1992). Consistent with these studies, I find that young working wives experience higher levels of stress about general life. In fact, a similar tendency is observed for working wives living with husbands. But I emphasize that the generational gap between the young wives in their 20s and 30s and older wives in their 50s is much larger for commuter couples (check Appendix to see the significant interaction term between commuter marriages and 20s and 30s). These young females have to strengthen the intimate bond with their husbands and adjust to new life as married women. But the wife and the husband in commuter marriages have less face-to-face interactions and some of its deficits are not compensated for by mediated communications (Mok et al. 2010). These young wives may find it difficult to develop and maintain ‘togetherness’ when apart (Pistole et al. 2010, Holmes 2004). As expected, wives in commuter marriages and poor health feel much distress. Clearly absence of spousal practical and emotional supports exacerbates their fatigues and exhaustions resulting from their bad health.

Supporting the proposition that occupations have some implications to how much stress wives in commuter marriages feel, I find that compared to the reference group, women with services/sales and labor jobs (at the marginal level) are more stressed about general life. Coupled with unstable positions and low wages, they are often bothered by capricious customers and unreasonable bosses but cannot

talk their stresses away with husbands at night. Those with white collar or highly qualified jobs (at the marginal level) complain high levels of distress. They have to work through the night to meet the deadline with children staying alone at home or make decisions that shapes the fate of their divisions or businesses. Burdensome work duties can be so stressful if they cannot expect spousal consolation and support on a day-to-day basis (Groves and Hormwingerd 1991).

Results suggest that children's life stage is significant when considering the subjective well-being of mothers in commuter marriages. While working mothers living with husbands and preschool children or middle/high school children feel stressed, working mothers in commuter marriages feel higher levels of stress at the marginal level only when their children are in elementary schools (check Appendix to see the significant interaction term between commuter marriages and elementary school). As children begin to attend schools, mothers should educate their children to conduct decent behaviors and develop good personalities. Maybe mothers in commuter marriages fret over the sole responsibility for children's development. Wives in commuter marriages who live not with mothers but with fathers report higher levels of stress, although co-residing mothers and fathers does not matter to the subjective well-being of married women living with husbands. While grandmothers are both resources and burdens to women in commuter marriages, grandfathers who are used to patriarchal social systems and take daughters-in-law's caring for granted tend to aggravate role burdens that these women have to deal with.

Many studies propose that greater economic resources help wives without husbands under the roof deal with every day and home duties without the smallest strain because commuter marriages are expensive to maintain, with added costs for housing, maintenance and transportation (Kirschner and Walum 1978). However, amounts of household earnings are not associated with levels of stress for wives in commuter marriages in South Korea. The literature points out that married women whose husbands visit the family home frequently are more satisfied about the general life and the current lifestyles. But wives with husbands in foreign countries and as a result visit rarely do not differ from their counterparts with husbands in South Korea in their levels of stress. whether husbands are away for a long period does not seem to matter to the subjective well-being of wives in commuter marriages.

## CONCLUSIONS

With rapid regional expansion of companies, active movement of wives into the labor market, and unstable job market situations, commuter marriages are on the steady rise in many developed and developing countries. Using a recent nationwide representative sample in South Korea, this study contributes to the literature on this bursting living pattern among marital couples. Compared to wives in the common form of living arrangements, those with tertiary educations and in prestigious positions and those in their 40s and so maybe with school ages children are more observed in commuter marriages, underpinning the frequent selections of these women by previous research.

At the same time, Table 1 confirm the argument that an obvious overrepresentation of highly-qualified workers with children is observed in the literature on commuters (Green 1995, Reuschke 2010). Wives in different life stages and lower social standings also account for sizeable portions of the final sample and have their own unique issues and concerns. Wives at the early life stage are commonly characterized by strong preference in fair gender role allocation. Can these young female adults handle the bulk of housework and child-rearing and still maintain quality relationship with commuting husbands? Everyday interactions are much more crucial in marital satisfaction for couples at the empty nest, given that they are free of the responsibility for children and other social roles (Boerner et al. 2014). How can older wives in commuter marriages interact with husbands and preserve 'togetherness' after separation? Surely the literature on commuter marriages are interested in marital relationship, but studies focusing on wives in wider age ranges can enrich our understanding of the dynamics of marital quality among commuter couples. Also working wives in lower social standings cannot adjust a multiple of business tasks for their convenience or turn to paid household services. Transportation expenses through their husbands' frequent visits can be too much to them. With limited economic resources and spousal supports, how can they manage to deal with the burden of multiple roles? The literature should meet the changing demographics of commuter couples and raise some research questions that are relevant to these relatively ignored groups.

It is well known that employed married women suffer mentally, physically, and emotionally

greatly from balancing work and family life. By extension, working wives who cannot expect spousal supports and involvements on a day-to-day basis are often pictured as stressed and taxed heavily. But these women can apply themselves up to their careers without reading husbands' countenance, in particular when there are no children to care for. They can manage their daily schedules at their will and socialize with whoever they want. This independent lifestyle can be strongly attractive to young female adults who value individual tastes. I find that married women living without and with their husbands at home in South Korea do not differ in their levels of stress, implying that this newly emerging living arrangement can provide the pros and cons to employed married women. Some wives may regard this locational arrangement as such an attractive lifestyle that they hope to maintain for many years (Green 1997). But caution should be used in interpretation of Table 2. As I point out earlier, working wives in the two groups may differ in their expectations about everyday life. Married women in commuter marriages may poise themselves to much harsher conflicts and burdens when couples determine to live in separate households. In order to resolve this potential bias, I suggest that more objective measures should be employed.

Mothers with elementary school children in commuter couples report higher levels of stress although the same mothers living with husbands do not. Even well-behaved children sometimes need to be disciplined, for example, for refusing to take in enough vegetables or being addicted to smartphones. The full responsibility for children's behavioral development always sits heavily at these mothers' hearts. Also taking care of fathers can be exhausting and annoying to some wives in commuter marriages although analytic results suggest it is not to wives living with husbands. Husbands can mediate between fathers and wives at home and help their wives in harmony with in-laws. Hence women may find it hard getting along well with fathers-in-law without husbands at home.

Wives in commuter marriages experience stress more from work life than home life and those in white collar and service or sales jobs report higher levels of stress, supporting the literature emphasizing some occupational features as the major risk and protective factors on the subjective well-being for wives in commuter couples (Gustafson 2006, Landesman and Seward 2013). Researchers argue that degrees of control at work have a positive impact on psychological

adjustments (Lau et al. 2012) and family-friendly work policies help mitigate deteriorating influences of work-related travels (Jesmin and Seward 2011). Unfortunately the SS does not ask about these working conditions. In order to delve into implications of occupations to commuter couples, future research should look at details of occupational features. Also due to the conventional survey design to limit to household members, this study cannot look into the half of the full story – husbands living apart. More complete studies on the subjective well-being of married women in commuter marriages would investigate husbands' economic contribution and frequencies of visits and contacts in addition to residential areas and separation periods.

Table 1. Variables Descriptions and Distributions

		Working Wives in Commuter Marriages	Working Wives Living with Husbands	$\chi^2$ or t values
<u>Age</u>	20s or 30s	24.3	29.2	6.26*
	40s	47.9	40.2	
	50s	27.9	30.6	
<u>Health</u>	(1=very bad, 5=very good)	3.4 (0.80)	3.4 (0.80)	0.58
<u>Education</u>	(1= elementary, 6=graduate)	3.7 (1.28)	3.3 (1.29)	4.40**
<u>Occupation</u>	Managerial/Professional	30.0	20.6	29.75**
	Office	12.9	15.5	
	Service/Sales	32.5	30.9	
	Labor	22.5	23.0	
	Agricultural	2.1	10.1	
<u>Household Incomes</u>	(1=under one million, 8=over seven million)	3.6 (1.81)	3.9 (1.76)	2.64**
<u>Children</u>	Total	0.87 (0.93)	0.87 (0.96)	0.02
	Preschool	0.19 (0.50)	0.22 (0.53)	0.82
	Elementary	0.28 (0.57)	0.29 (0.60)	0.30
	Middle/High	0.40 (0.67)	0.36 (0.65)	0.97
<u>Parents</u>	Total	0.08 (0.31)	0.08 (0.31)	0.25
	Mothers	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.25)	0.94
	Fathers	0.03 (0.16)	0.02 (0.12)	1.19
<u>Other Adults</u>		0.03 (0.17)	0.02 (0.16)	0.73
<u>Husbands' Location</u>	Domestic	92.1	--	
	Foreign	7.9	--	
<u>Periods Living Apart</u>	(1=less than 6 months, 6=more than 5 years)	3.2 (1.74)	--	
	N	280	4,397	

Note: Variable means and standard deviations in the parentheses are presented  
+ p < .10, \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

Table 2. Stress Levels for Working Wives in Commuter Couples and Living with Husbands (%)

	Working Wives in Commuter Couples	Working Wives Living with Husbands	$\chi^2$
Not At All	0.7	2.0	3.18
A Little	18.9	20.9	
Much	67.9	65.1	
Very Much	12.5	12.0	
N	280	4,397	

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3. Logits from the Ordered Logistic Regressions of Stress Levels for Working Wives in Commuter Marriages and Living with Husbands

	Stress Levels	
	Working Wives in Commuter Couples	Working Wives Living with Husbands
Age (vs. 50s)		
20s or 30s	1.107* (0.495)	0.420** (0.112)
40s	0.288 (0.389)	0.272** (0.092)
Health	-0.473** (0.166)	-0.598** (0.043)
Education	0.003 (0.151)	0.046 (0.036)
Occupation (vs. Agricultural)		
Managerial/Professional	1.973+ (1.148)	0.568** (0.157)
Office	2.304* (1.157)	0.557** (0.153)
Service/Sales	2.339* (1.082)	0.898** (0.133)
Labor	1.773+ (1.075)	0.626** (0.133)
Household Incomes	-0.119 (0.089)	-0.033 (0.020)
Children		
Preschool	0.015 (0.312)	0.153* (0.074)
Elementary School	0.486+ (0.273)	0.010 (0.058)
Middle/High School	0.253 (0.227)	0.130* (0.056)
Parents		
Mothers	-0.443 (0.629)	-0.109 (0.134)
Fathers	1.864* (0.822)	0.184 (0.260)
Number of Other Adults	-0.422 (0.798)	0.270 (0.203)
Husbands in Foreign Countries	-0.003 (0.465)	-- --
Periods of Separation	-0.047 (0.080)	-- --
Log Likelihood	-218.714	-3901.062
N	280	4,397

Note: Standard errors are given in parentheses  
+ p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

APPENDIX

Table A1. Logits from the Ordered Logistic Regressions of Stress Levels for All the Working Wives

	Stress Levels		
Age (vs. 50s)			
20s and 30s	0.425** (0.110)	0.461** (0.109)	0.461** (0.109)
40s	0.277** (0.089)	0.276** (0.089)	0.274** (0.089)
Health	-0.587** (0.041)	-0.585** (0.041)	-0.586** (0.041)
Education	0.043 (0.034)	0.043 (0.034)	0.042 (0.034)
Occupation (vs. Agricultural)			
Managerial/Professional	0.584** (0.155)	0.578** (0.155)	0.580** (0.155)
Office	0.583** (0.151)	0.584** (0.151)	0.577** (0.151)
Service/Sales	0.928** (0.132)	0.924** (0.132)	0.915** (0.132)
Labor	0.635** (0.132)	0.635** (0.132)	0.630** (0.132)
Household Incomes	-0.037+ (0.020)	-0.037+ (0.020)	-0.036+ (0.020)
Children			
Preschool	0.145* (0.072)	0.145* (0.072)	0.143* (0.072)
Elementary School	0.028 (0.057)	0.002 (0.058)	0.029 (0.057)
Middle/High School	0.135* (0.054)	0.136* (0.054)	0.136* (0.054)
Parents			
Mothers	-0.125 (0.130)	-0.116 (0.131)	-0.118 (0.130)
Fathers	0.331 (0.249)	0.328 (0.249)	0.191 (0.260)
Number of Other Adults	0.241 (0.197)	0.226 (0.197)	0.234 (0.196)
Commuter Marriages	-0.135 (0.153)	-0.091 (0.146)	0.010 (0.135)
Commuter Marriages*20s and 30s	0.729* (0.301)		
Commuter Marriages*Elementary School		0.570* (0.242)	
Commuter Marriages*Fathers			1.445+ (0.759)
Log Likelihood	-4129.907	-4130.106	-4131.089
N		4.677	

Note: Standard errors are given in parentheses  
+ p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

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