DISSERTATION

BELONGING: IDENTITY, EMOTION WORK, AND AGENCY OF INTERCOUNTRY KOREAN ADOPTEES

Submitted by

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Sociology

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY TANYA LEE KAANTA ENTITLED BELONGING: IDENTITY, EMOTION WORK, AND AGENCY OF INTERCOUNTRY KOREAN ADOPTEES BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BELONGING: IDENTITY, EMOTION WORK, AND AGENCY OF INTERCOUNTRY KOREAN ADOPTEES

This phenomenological study examines the experiences of adult Intercountry Korean Adoptees who lived in Seoul, Korea and Colorado at the time of the study. The research draws upon data gathered through participant observation and 31 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Through an inductive theoretical approach, this study attempts to fill the gaps in the existing literature by providing a conceptual framework to better understand the complexity and the dynamics of intercountry identity formation. Unlike the identity development literature on racial minorities, intercountry adoptees cannot rely on the most basic membership criteria by which non-adoptees may define identity such as family, community, ethnicity, or culture.

For intercountry adoptees, none of these taken-for-granted membership criteria is stable enough to claim ownership. In their struggle to anchor the shifting identity markers, intercountry adoptees assume different roles and play the part that is consistent with it. However, their unique status as adoptees fundamentally conflicts with societal norms about belonging, complicated by the socially ascribed master statuses, such as race, class, gender and other constructions of difference, which accentuate their "unbelongingness."

Building on the sociology of emotions, this study posits that the intercountry adoptees' struggle for acceptance and a sense of belonging elicits much emotion work. I situate the varied emotional management efforts in the context of culture and structures that mediate rationally-conceived emotional responses tailored appropriately to certain interaction contexts. In the process of managing conflicting emotions between socially-ascribed feeling rules and true emotions, intercountry adoptees undergo transformative experiences that frame their sense of identity. This dissertation analyzes the ways that intercountry adoptees navigate through their identity formation and how this in turn shapes their actions and agency.

The goal is to improve social theory regarding the identity formation of intercountry adoptees using adult rather than children's voices. It also suggests identity is dynamic rather than linear or progressive. Further, the research introduces some contextual issues influencing identity formation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Case Number K-9048

Intercountry adoption is a very personal topic. According to the Holt Adoption Agency, I am case number K-9048.[1] My adoption papers show that I was abandoned at the City Hall in Taegu, Korea, on October 27, 1975. There is no other information about my true date of birth, nor do I have a family name. My Korean name, Baik Hap, which means White Lily, was given to me by the orphanage staff and, not so coincidentally, it is the name of the orphanage I stayed for the next 3 months. When I came to the orphanage I weighed just about 10 pounds, measuring only 22 inches. They had estimated my age to be 3 months, but my understanding is that when babies come into the orphanage malnourished, it is often difficult to accurately assess the age of a baby. It's an arbitrary birthday and an approximate age. My files state that I was a fretful baby and, when held, I would stop crying. My bowel movements were deemed thin, but they wrote that this would not be a concern with loving attention and appropriate nutrition. I babbled a lot, liked to be played with and held. This is all the information I have about my time in Korea. For many Korean adoptees, this impersonal medical information is the only

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[1] K refers to "Korea" and the number, 9048, denotes the actual count of children adopted through Holt. Thus, I am the 9,048th orphan received by the Holt Adoption Agency. In Korea, I was placed in the White Lily Orphanage, with the case number 3115.

tangible link that exists between the life they had in Korea and the life brought on by intercountry adoption.

In December 1975, I left Korea with an adult Korean travel companion and met my new parents at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York. From there, we journeyed back to Connecticut where I would live for the next 17 years of my life. My parents relay the story that they adopted me because they wanted a healthy girl. After having three biological boys, and adopting a sick little girl through operation baby-lift from Vietnam who immediately passed away upon entry into the U.S., my parents' efforts to adopt a little girl increased. I do not remember very much the first few years, but my parents divorced when I was three-years old. Since then, my brothers and I lived with my mother and saw my father every other weekend. I recall that this separation was not amicable on my mother's end, but my father never spoke ill toward my mother. When I turned five, my mother married my stepfather. Two years later my mother passed away from an overdose of pills,[2] and my father obtained full custody of all of the children. We moved in with my father shortly after her death, and he remarried some two years later to the woman I call my mother today.

During these formative years I grew up in a small, rural community in Connecticut where I was often the only person of color in my class. My classmates would call me "Chinese" with "dirty knees," and they would tell me to "go back to China where you belong." When I was seven, a teenage boy stalked me for months and physically assaulted me. He was later sent to a juvenile detention center. I know these experiences

[2] The coroner's report states that the cause of death was suicide from an overdose of pills.

pained me deep inside and made me very uncomfortable with my "Koreanness." It was not until middle school that I encountered other people of color, but the number of racial minorities still remained very low despite three other towns contributing to the larger student population. By the time I graduated from high school, our senior class had one Asian American, four African Americans, one Hispanic, and one Native American out of 105 graduates.

In college, I became more active in issues of diversity and advocacy. I championed equal rights for everyone, except for being vocal about Asian or adoptee concerns. It was difficult for me to talk about my identity having grown up wishing that I was white like my family members and all of my friends. My parents simply did not think to incorporate any Korean culture into my life, nor did I have any close Asian friends. Despite my active advocacy work on campus, I developed an eating disorder in my attempt to have some control over my body. I received help and began the recovery during my junior year in college. Later that year, I studied abroad in East Africa and immersed myself into its culture, learned to speak the language with confidence and discovered my love for exploring new cultures. I went onto graduate school to work in student affairs in higher education, but I was still not ready to really investigate what it meant to be Asian. Slowly, though, I warmed up to other Asians and enjoyed talking to other adoptees. Graduate school was the first time I "hung out" with other Asians; it was the first time I fell in love and met the man who would become my husband, and also the first time I returned to Korea. This dissertation, in some ways, is a story of my life, but, in other ways, it is an effort to understand the diversity of experiences among those who share the commonality of being adopted from Korea.

Dissertation Argument

Intercountry adoption between South Korea and the West began during the 1950s immediately after the end of the Korean War. However, academic literature on intercountry adoption from South Korea is slim. Most of the literature concentrates on the identity development of Korean adoptees, particularly in the United States (Feigelman and Silverman 1984; Kim 1977; Simon and Alstein 1992; Huh and Reid 2000; Yoon 2004) and Europe (Hjern 2002; Hjern et al. 2003; Hjern 2004; Hjern et al. 2006). These studies often focus on either children or parents of adoptees with only a few studies actually using voices of adult adoptees (Meier 1999). Adoptee identity is often subsumed under the larger study of racial identity development, which uses a linear model that fails to capture the complexity of the identity formation process. Finally, these studies neglect the centrality of emotions in forming identities.

This study attempts to fill the gaps in the existing literature by providing a conceptual framework to better understand the complexity and the dynamics of intercountry identity formation. Unlike the identity development literature on racial minorities, intercountry adoptees cannot rely on the most basic membership criteria by which they define identity. In fact, non-adoptees may form their identity in terms of their primordial connection to the family, community, ethnicity or culture, and race. For intercountry adoptees, none of these taken-for-granted membership criteria is stable enough to claim ownership. In their struggle to anchor the shifting identity markers, intercountry adoptees assume different roles and play the part that is consistent with it. However, their unique status as adoptees fundamentally conflicts with societal norms

about belonging, complicated by the socially ascribed master statuses, such as race, class, gender and other constructions of difference, which accentuate their "unbelongingness."

Building on the sociology of emotions, my study posits that the intercountry adoptees' struggle for acceptance and a sense of belonging elicits a tremendous amount of emotion work. I situate the varied emotional management efforts in the context of culture and structures that mediate rationally-conceived emotional responses tailored appropriately to certain interaction contexts. In the process of managing conflicting emotions between socially-ascribed feeling rules and true emotions, intercountry adoptees undergo transformative experiences that frame their sense of identity. Thus, this dissertation analyzes the ways that intercountry adoptees navigate through the treacherous terrain of identity formation as they move in and out of the four dominant elements of the identity formation process: avoidance and denial, crisis and exploration, negotiation, and redefinition.

A History of Intercountry Adoption from Korea

More than 150,000 adopted Koreans have been dispersed since the end of the Korean War throughout fifteen countries in Europe, North America and Australia (Hubinette 2005), with the majority (about 60-to-70 percent) going to the United States (Sarri et al. 1998; Selman 2002). According to the US Department of State the U.S. issued 238,892 visas for adoption from 1990-2007.[3] The portion for Korea constitutes

[3] http://www.travel.state.gov/pdf/FY07AnnualReportTableVIII.pdf

31,415.[4] The intercountry program between South Korea and the United States began as a response to the increasing predicament of unwanted mixed-race children of military soldiers and the war orphans during the 1950s (Sarri et al. 1998). A formal adoption practice began with the presidential order of January 20, 1954 that established Child Placement Services[5] (later renamed Social Welfare Society or SWS), providing exclusive services for intercountry adoption (Sarri et al. 1998). In 1955, Harry Holt adopted eight children and established the Holt Adoption Program the following year as a private agency inspired by the Christian ethics.[6] In the 1960s Holt expanded the services to include children with special needs and disabilities, and the program opened a post adoption services center in 2008. In addition to Holt and Social Welfare Society, two other orphanages emerged that provide children for intercountry adoption between South Korea and the West.

Korea Social Services (KSS) was established in 1964, ten years after the Holt and Social Welfare Society, in order to provide support for orphans and facilitate family placement in Europe and North America. KSS has placed over 20,000 children abroad since its inception. Currently KSS has programs for post adoption services, youth development programs for orphans, and counseling services for families in addition to their adoption programs both domestic and international. Finally, Eastern Social Welfare

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[4] 939 U.S. visas were issued in 2007 for adoption. http://www.travel.state.gov/pdf/FY07AnnualReportTableVIII.pdf

[5] In addition to providing for orphans, the organization currently runs a rehabilitation center for children with special needs, and an unmarried mother's shelter. http://www.sws.or.kr/english/sub_01.php

[6] http://www.holt.or.kr/holten/main/view.jsp?c_no=001003

Society was established in 1972 with the goal of helping orphans and placing them for adoption. Presently, their services have expanded to include care for children, elderly, and people with disabilities.[7]

Intercountry adoption between South Korea and the West is not simply just a result of war. This is apparent in the fact that adoption still persists some fifty-six years since the Korean War ended, despite Korea's rapid rise to economic prosperity. Intercountry adoption between Korea and the West is still a large part of the current economic welfare system in Korea. The revision of the Special Adoption Assistance Act in 1994 underscores the importance of adoption as a part of the welfare services for children who need homes. The Korean government had hoped to reduce the number of international adoptions by 5 percent each year since 1994 with the ultimate goal of ending international adoption (Lee 2006). Currently, the Korean government promises to end international adoption by 2011 or 2012 by offering various incentives for domestic adoption (Kim 2008). As of 2006, efforts to increase domestic adoption in Korea are showing signs of success with a total of 68,939 children adopted domestically. Moreover, the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs in Korea announced that, in 2007, more adopted children were placed in Korea (724 children in the first half of 2007, accounting for 59% of the total 1,223) than overseas (Kim 2008).

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[7] The Korean Family Law and the Special Adoption Assistance Act in Korea regulate the legal process of adoption (Lee 2006). These laws were aimed at providing means to maintain family lines and estates, and adoption was seen as a private matter with little state intervention (Woo 2002). http://www.eastern.or.kr/english

Key Contextual Issues

Economic and Political Contexts of Intercountry Adoption

The intercountry adoption program in Korea began in part due to the lack of economic resources to provide for abandoned or orphaned children in the 1950s. However, as Sarri et al. (1998) note, South Korea's economic welfare today contrasts vastly to the economic conditions of the post-war period. "South Korea now has the political and economic resources to provide its own comprehensive and effective system of child welfare services" (Sarri et al. 1998). The first wave of adoptions started as a humanitarian effort to find homes for children up until the mid-1970s (Lovelock 2000). The second wave of intercountry adoptions, however, incorporated more economic reasons: the increased infertility rates among Koreans and the opposite trend found in the United States and Sweden led to a higher demand for children (Selman 2002; Lovelock 2000; Masson 2001; Weil 1984).

Korea's adoption program came under scrutiny during the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics. The American press rebuked Korea for "exporting its greatest natural resource" abroad (Kim 2003). By 1980, the new Korean government had decided to deregulate the adoption process, which allowed the adoption industry to thrive economically, surpassing the 70,000 mark during the decade (Hubinette 2005). Korea's adoption program transformed into a lucrative business industry with an annual income of $15-20 million as well as a cost effective way to address social welfare problems (Hermann and Kasper 1992; Sarri et al. 1998; Kim 2003). Critics charged that children were being sold like commodities, and the ripe conditions of both sending and receiving countries perpetuated the practice (Hubinette 2004). In response, the government

introduced a plan to phase out adoption and encouraged domestic adoption in Korea with tax incentives and family benefits. However, the IMF crisis in 1997 led to projections that doubled the number of children from in-state care from 1996-1998, leading the South Korean government to change its policy of restriction of overseas adoption (Kim 1999).

In the aftermath of the IMF crisis, South Korea returned to economic stability and in 2002 announced a new plan to end overseas adoption (Kim 2003). However, the amount of money South Korea spends on social welfare is still lagging behind other economically advanced nations. Over the past 20 years, South Korea's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased per annum from US $140 billion to $887.4 billion.[8] In spite of this, Korea's social welfare spending as a percentage of GDP is half that of Japan and the United States, and about a third of the average for European countries. Critics of intercountry adoption additionally claim that it has a negative impact on child welfare systems because it "diverts professional resources (social workers, lawyers and courts) from the needs of many children to service a few foreign applicants" (Masson 2001). Triseliotis (2000) alleges that if the money used for adopted children was directed towards children's services in sending countries, then a larger number of children's lives could be improved.

South Korea's adoption program also has fluctuated according to domestic and international politics. Countries that send children, like Korea, are often under the sphere of influence of more rich, powerful countries like the United States (Hubinette 2005; Masson 2001). After the establishment of Child Placement Services in 1954, the Korean

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[8] http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/214664.html

government created a private government-regulated network of agencies linked to entities in the United States to place children abroad (Sarri et al. 1998). On the receiving end, the United States shifted their orphans program from the Department of State to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the Department of Justice (Lovelock 2000). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1961 created permanent provisions for adopted children immigrating that did not include the recommendations made by the Leysin Principles.[9] The United States government made their position clear on intercountry adoption by excluding these guidelines, making intercountry adoption from Korea more attainable (Lovelock 2000). [10] Considering the South Korean government's policies regarding intercountry adoption, western countries that aided the South during the Korean War coincidentally receive the largest numbers of children from South Korea.[11] Hubinette (2004) contends that the continuous practice of intercountry adoption from Korea is a manifest symbol of dependency and undergirds a racial hierarchy on an international level. Tizard (1991:746) goes a step further: "the practice is a new form of colonialism, with wealthy Westerners robbing poor countries of their children, and thus their resources."

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[9] A report made by a group of experts that met in Switzerland to study the problems of intercountry adoption of European children that consisted of 12 principles serving as a guide for caseworkers working on inquiries prior to adoption, and which did not endorse intercountry adoption but saw it as a last resort until 1993 (Lovelock 2000).

[10] Sweden, another country with considerable numbers of international adoptees, also created a national government sponsored council in the 1970s that served as the central public agency to facilitate the adoption process. This central agency also determined the foreign activities that adoption agencies may partake, which were active in finding adoptable children (Weil 1984).

[11] From 1953-2001, the number of Korean babies adopted out of Korea- USA: 99,061; France: 10,923; Sweden: 8,622; Denmark: 8,417; Norway: 5,806; Netherlands: 4,056; Belgium: 3,697; Australia: 2,837; Germany: 2,351; Canada: 1,543 and Switzerland: 1,111. See (Hubinette 2004).

The economic and political contexts of intercountry adoption demonstrate that the exchange is not simply between the adoptive family and the child. These factors bring to light the reasons why the intercountry adoption has traditionally originated from economically poorer and politically weak countries to the most powerful nations in the world. This trend is no historical accident, but it must be viewed in the context of longstanding relationship between the sending and receiving countries. If politics and economics provide the framework for intercountry adoption, then the issues of culture pertaining to gender, family and race serve as ideological links that bind the countries together.

Cultural Impact on Intercountry Adoption

The intercountry adoption program from South Korea is facilitated by cultural and ideological factors. Rooted in a Confucian tradition Korea has maintained a strong adherence to two values in particular: status hierarchy and consanguine family ties (Kim 2003). [12] Historically, Koreans only adopted from a paternal kin if the head of the family line did not produce a son (Chun 1989). Creating an orphan and adoption program in Korea after the onset of the Korean War represents a new approach to adoption. The types of children relinquished for adoption in Korea shifted with the times. The majority of the first adoptees were biracial children of Korean mothers and U.S. and European military fathers who were seen to be racially unfit to remain in Korea (Hubinette 2004). The 1970s ushered in a rapid industrialization and moments of economic decline, which

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[12] Confuciansim was propagated in the sixth-fifth century by Confucius as a way of living with certain values and social codes (Lee 2006). Korea in particular emphasized the patriarchal lineage as a blood tie, and the hierarchal order between men and women (Kim 2003).

resulted in poor families giving up children for adoption. By the 1980s, however, the children from unwed parents accounted for more than 80% of the adoption cases (Hyoung 1997).

In Confucian culture, women's chastity is considered an important moral duty (Kim 2003). Koreans, therefore, look down upon pre-marital sex, at least as a matter of cultural pride and identity, and the children born from such unions are, by extension, viewed as immoral, sinful, and stigmatized (Hyoung 1997; Kim 2003). These women who become pregnant are encouraged to either have an abortion or give their baby up for adoption because society will shun both the mother and the child, and the mother will lack economic resources to raise a child (Hyoung 1997). The cultural importance on blood-relatedness also further stigmatizes children who are viewed as the symbol of illegitimate unions. The patriarchal attitude towards women absolves the father from taking ownership of their financial or economic responsibility (Kim 2003), which places enormous pressure on the mothers to care for the children. These cultural beliefs underlie the social-welfare policies of South Korea, as demonstrated clearly by its refusal to impose legal and financial responsibilities on the father (Kim 2003). These cultural factors, therefore, reproduce the structure of intercountry adoption in Korea (Rothschild 1988).

International adoption also underlies an imbalance of power between nations. Hubinette (2005) argues that western colonization of the weaker political nations of the East establishes a basis for a one-way direction in adoption. In the post-War era, the Korean government viewed intercountry adoption as a "goodwill strategy to develop political ties to, and trade relations with, important Western allies," while "upholding a

rigid and morbid patriarchal norm system for the Korean society as a whole" by ridding and cleansing the country of impure and disposable children (Hubinette 2005: 230). Regardless of the origins, the ideology underlying international adoption today mirrors the view that "West is best" and that the Westerners have the "right" to adopt children for paternalistic and humanitarian reasons.[13] Today, the continuing rise in infertility rates in some Western nation-states, and the scarcity of adoptable white children fuel intercountry adoption. The perception that intercountry adoption is a form of humanitarian outreach serves as an ideological foundation for popularizing the practice. When celebrities, such as Madonna and Angelina Jolie, adopt children from the remote areas of the world, it becomes highly sensationalized and assumes an "in vogue" status.[14] In many of these highly visible adoption cases, race implicitly assumes the subtext of exchange. Despite some debate as to the role of race in matching adoptive parents with children (Kim 1978; Sarri et al. 1998; Masson 2001; Hubinette 2004), there is a paucity of literature on the impact of race and culture in the formation of adoptee identities.

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[13] Indeed, my own adoption was done in the name of humanitarian efforts. In December 1975, I was adopted by a Catholic/Protestant Caucasian family living in Connecticut. They already had 3 boys from their marriage and wanted a little girl. They also wanted to help save an "oriental baby from poverty." I later found out that my parents adopted a little girl from Vietnam through the Operation Baby-lift program a year prior to my arrival. Unfortunately, she was very sick prior to adoption, and baby Julie passed away a month after her arrival to the United States. My parents were devastated and went on a mission to appeal the adoption agency to be allowed to adopt another little girl. After many letters to the agency and newspapers, my parents triumphed and were offered a "healthy" girl from South Korea.

[14] By the late 1980s, in the united States, one out of every twelve married couples were infertile according to the US Center for Health Statistics, with two million couples wanting to adopt but only 20,000 healthy children were available for adoption, a 100-to-1 ratio (Rothschild 1988).

Intercountry Adoption and Social Change

Given the constraints imposed on the adoptees, it is easy to think of them as victims of circumstances. Culture, politics, economic motives and the ideology of "unbelongingness" profoundly shape the contents of their identity formation. However, many of the adoptees who have grown up are now finding ways to share their experiences, thereby taking the first step to transform those aspects that adversely impact their identity formation. In 1986, the first organized group of adopted Koreans was created in Sweden called the Adopted Koreans' Association (Hubinette 2004). Transnational organizations sprang up shortly thereafter with the aid of technology (Kim 2003). By 1994, a transnational organization in Europe formed, and by 1999, the first International Gathering of Adult Adopted Koreans took place in Washington, D.C. (Hubinette 2004). Currently, there are several regional gatherings within the United States, and the international committees help to organize an annual meeting.

On an individual level, adopted Koreans are making their voices heard through various avenues like music, art, writing, film, photography, and research (Hubinette 2004). In academia, research on intercountry adoption is beginning to make an impact (Bergquist et. al. 2003; Palmer 2005; Hubinette 2004, 2005). Our research demonstrates that we are "active agents" of social change seeking to inform the public about the complexity of intercountry adoption and empowering the lives of the adoptees worldwide (Hubinette 2004). For the first time, adult adoptees are expressing themselves instead of being silenced and becoming passive observers of international adoption programs. This new wave of adult adopted Korean scholars are redefining their identity and deconstructing the ideologies that reproduce their marginality.

In 1998, G.O.A.'L (Global Overseas Adoptees' Link), the first and only non-profit organization created and run by adult Korean adoptees, was established in Seoul. Services from G.O.A.'L. include birth family searches, post-reunion support, translation and interpretation, Korean language tutoring, language scholarships, Korean language classes, organizing conferences, parties, fundraisers, cultural events, professional and social networking, lobbying for improvement of adoptees' rights in Korea, support for visas, banking, cell phones, accommodations, employment, newsletters, and medical support.[15] Other organizations have developed in Korea designed to help out Adoptees that include International Korean Adoptee Service (InKAS) and KoRoot.[16]

Some organizations have been created that are more political in nature. Adoptee Solidarity Korea (ASK) was created by adopted Korean adults in 2004 that were living and working in Korea. ASK is an organization that examines intercountry adoption from a broad social, political, and human rights perspective. Arguing that intercountry adoption is no longer necessary, they note that continuing the practice only highlights

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[15] http://www.goal.or.kr/eng/

[16] InKAS, like G.O.A.'L. provide services that aid Korean adoptees stay in Korea. InKAS is a non-profit organization InKAS, established in 1999 on the basis of the founding principles of Christianity of MokPo GongSaengWon (an orphanage established in 1928), and is working for the welfare and rights of international adoptees and their families. InKAS is working to build a bridge to connect adoption societies in 14 different countries (USA, Canada, Australia, and 11 European nations) with Korean society through international exchange programs. Services include: Korean language scholarships, online Korean language scholarships, birth family search assistance, motherland tours, guest house and homestays, education development, volunteer services like interpretation, translation, guides, transportation, medical support, consultation support, international exchange, and publications. http://www.inkas.org. KoRoot was created upon the idea of neighborly love originated from Christian ethics, and seeks to assist all our sons and daughters who had been adopted out of unfortunate circumstances from the country of their birth in the past. They feel they need to help adoptees gain proper view and insight into the birthplace of theirs and provide the best arrangement possible during their stay in Korea. They provide low-cost rooms, help establish a network that interconnects adoptees worldwide to promote exchange of ideas and information, promote awareness among local citizens regarding Korean adoptees sent overseas, plan activities during an adoptee's stay, hold annual conference and seminars. http://www.koroot.org

Korea's need to create alternative forms of social support for the underprivileged and a need to redefine its economic priorities.[17]

Dissertation Overview

Based on extensive interviews with adult Korean adoptees living in Colorado and South Korea , this dissertation identifies key factors that impact the identity formation of intercountry adoptees. These primary data demonstrate that the process of identity formation is an extremely painstaking one; it involves a rational assessment of the relationship between the self and society in their struggle to define who they are by negotiating cultural and structural factors that frame their action contexts. The following chapters briefly illustrate the varied dimensions of the project.

Chapter two reviews the literature that seeks to explain the identity development of intercountry adoption and provides a more integrative approach to understanding and explaining the complex process of identity formation of intercountry adoptees. Chapter three lays out the methodologies undergirding the research project, explaining the research setting, data collection methods, and the challenges of conducting emotionally taxing research. Chapter four identifies the four main elements of identity formation of intercountry adoptees. Unlike the existing theories on racial identity development, this chapter shows the fluidity and the circularity of identity formation. Chapter five situates the identity work as an active process that involves management of emotions. Building on the sociology of emotions, this chapter details how adoptees try to take control over the emotional responses appropriate to certain interactional contexts. Chapter six expands

[17] http://www.adopteesolidarity.org/

upon the theoretical discussions of the preceding chapters by highlighting the importance of agency and the consequent effects of social change. Finally, chapter seven concludes with further theoretical and policy implications pertaining to intercountry adoption with concrete suggestions for the adoptees, families, and agencies.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review situates the identity formation of intercountry adoptees in the context of the existing identity development literature. Because identity issues cut across various theoretical boundaries, the primary goal of the review is to tease out sociological and its allied theories that are relevant and useful in formulating an integrative framework. In particular, the review focuses on the various branches of the theories on identity development, ethnicity and race, emotion management and structuration.

Understanding identity formation of Korean intercountry adoptees is a multi-layered process. The memories of abandonment and the painful process of transplanting their lives in the care of another family form the foundation of their identities.[18] These core issues are compounded by the diversity of experiences in the families, schools, communities and workplaces. Often the intersectionality of race, gender, class, disability and ethnicity issues mediate the quality of those encounters that impact how they

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[18] Verrier (1993) talks about a primal wound that exists when babies are taken from their biological mothers. She notes, "A child separated from its mother at the beginning of life, when still in the primal relationship to her, experiences what I call the primal wound. This wound, occurring before the child has begun to separate his own identity from that of the mother, is experienced not only as a loss of the mother, but as a loss of the Self, that core-being of oneself which is the center of goodness and wholeness. The child may be left with a sense that part of oneself has disappeared, a feeling of incompleteness, a lack of wholeness. In addition to the genealogical sense of being cut off from one's roots, this incompleteness is often experienced in a physical sense of bodily incompleteness, a hurt from something missing." http://www.nancyverrier.com/pos.php

formulate conceptions of the self. In these various encounter settings, they define who they are by the very act of their struggles to find appropriate responses and actions that the circumstances demand. These efforts require tremendous amount of energy and emotion management skills, particularly when there is a conflict between how they are expected to think, act and feel and their inner thoughts and feelings. As they journey through their lives, intercountry adoptees experience a rollercoaster of emotions, moving in and out of the various psychological states, which include denial and avoidance, crisis and exploration, negotiation and redefinition. These experiences do not constitute a linear process but are contingent upon structural and cultural factors that frame the implicit rules of encounters.

Identity Theory

Identity theories describe the social nature of self (Hogg et al. 1995).[19] George Herbert Mead asserts that "society shapes self shapes social behavior" (Stryker and Burke 2000: 285). Self is an "organized collection of attitudes, values, memories, purposes, and behavioral tendencies," which changes and reorganizes itself over time as a person interacts with society (Handel 1993:132-133). Cook (2000) notes that this change is a

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[19]Other social identity theories exist, such as social cognition theory rooted in psychology of how we store and process information (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Howard 2000). Within the social cognition camp lies the social identity theory (Tajfel 1974, 1978; Turner 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986). According to Tajfel and associates, social identity is "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that group membership" (Tajfel 1981: 255). Thus it is basically a theory of the creative role of the collective self in group and intergroup experience (Hogg and Ridgeway 2003). In addition, Jackson and Smith (1999) introduced a framework to classify conceptual definitions and operationalizations of social identity based on four primary dimensions of social identity: perceptions of the intergroup context, attraction to the in-group, interdependency beliefs or common fate, and depersonalization.

function of cultural and historical shifts in meanings and values. In short, the self is a social process of interaction that is both active and creative (Wallace and Wolf 1999).

The identity formation of international adoptees can be understood from different perspectives. The structural approach relies on the concept of role identity, whereby a person emerges from a role played within the "complexly differentiated but nevertheless organized" society (Stryrker and Serpe 1982: 206). Understanding self and identity is not just something that happens externally but also internally. Stryker and Burke (2000) examine the internal process of self-verification, which involves the formation of identity based on the interaction between shared symbols and behavior (Burke and Reitzes 1981). These identities are not linked to particular behaviors but, rather, to the meanings of the behavior and the effects that the behavior has on other meanings in a situation (Burke 2004). Social attributes germane to international adoptee identity development, such as ethnicity, constitute an important dimension of an identity (Burke 1991). Behavior is then treated as a function of the relationship between perception of a situation and the self-meanings held by the individual wherein behavior can also change to match meanings perceived (Stryker and Burke 2000).

The second approach focuses on identity construction and negotiation (Nagel 1994, 1995; Waters 1990; Cahill 1986), which incorporates Goffman's (1963) theory of self presentation and impression management. Negotiations are vital to how individuals develop common definitions of situations, and identities are thus intentional social constructions that individuals create through interaction (Howard 2000). Kaufman and Johnson (2004) draw on situational identity negotiation concerning the social reality of stigma to better understand identity negotiation and disclosure among gays and lesbians.

This perspective informs how the cultural stigmatization of certain class of people operates in similar ways as that of adoptees.

Identity development for international adoptees is not confined only to the individual. Cerulo (1997) argues that a shift away from the traditional focus of the "self" toward the collective promoted research on issues of ethnicity, agency and social movements, and interpersonal relationships (Cook 2000). This theoretical perspective explains the shift from an individual to a collective identity, whereby adult Korean adoptees from around the world are coming together in a political manner to address issues central to identity development and intercountry adoption (Hubinette 2004).

Ethnic and Racial Identity

One of the main concerns of intercountry adoption is that the adoptee is usually placed in the home of adoptive parents who are of different race (Huh and Reid 2000). In psychology, scholars (Phinney and Alipuria 1990; Phinney and Chavira 1992; Phinney 1996; Phinney and Alipuria 1996) have devoted to the study of ethnic identity.[20] For Erikson (1968), ethnic identity includes feelings of ethnic pride, a sense of group membership, attitudes toward one's ethnic group, and the extent to which an individual is secure in his or her identity. Phinney (1996) also studies how a person's physical

[20] Research to understand the changing racial composition of the United States and how one ethnically self-identifies, salience, impacts on self-esteem, and achievement permeates the fields of psychology and social psychology (Phinney and Chavira 1992; Phinney and Alipuria 1996; Smith et al. 1999; Chavous et al. 2003; Gong 2007). Martha Bernal and associates conducted a study to understand ethnic identity emergence in Mexican-American children. They observed that age and language knowledge influenced when ethnic identification began, and the extent of ethnic identification, use of ethnic role behaviors and ethnic knowledge and preferences (Bernal et al. 1990).

attributes, i.e. race, impacts one's life chances and a sense of identity.[21] She developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), which is a popular measure of ethnic identity, but these studies neglect the social factors that influence identity.

In contrast, Fredrik Barth[22] (1969, 1998) studied the social construction of racial and ethnic identities. Since then, social constructionists have emphasized the importance of how ethnic groups "shape and reshape their identities … out of the raw material of history, culture and pre-existing ethnic constructions" (Cornell 2006:366). Nagel (1994:153) asserts that all facets of ethnicity are a reflection of both individuals and groups that continuously "negotiate, revise and revitalize" the ethnic boundaries. From this perspective, race and ethnicity are socially ascribed categories that assume particular cultural meanings and significance in day-to-day encounters. Misidentification of intercountry adoptees, who, for instance, do not identify with being Asian, could trigger insecurities and dissonance.

According to Omi and Winant (1994) the concept of race signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different phenotypes of human bodies. Like Barth, they argue that racial formation is a social creation that can be transformed,

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[21] Phinney (1996)describes the three major aspects of ethnicity with relevance for psychology: (1) cultural values, attitudes and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups; (2) the subjective sense of ethnic group membership held by group members; and (3) the experiences associated with minority status like discrimination, prejudice, and powerlessness.

[22] The study of ethnic groups and boundaries derives much from the groundwork done by Fredrik Barth (1969, 1998). Barth (1998) defines ethnic groups from an anthropological perspective to which ethnic groups often self-perpetuate biologically, share fundamental cultural values, make up a field of communications and interactions, and have a membership that identifies themselves and helps in their identification by others constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (p.10-11). Barth (1969, 1998) found these to be social constructions wherein the boundary itself is viewed as more significant than the cultural elements contained within the boundary. For further analysis, see (Sanders 2002).

inhabited, destroyed and recreated (Omi and Winant 1994). By definition, race and racial identities are unstable and subject to political contest. However, the supposed flexibility of race does not imply that people can solve the problem by simply thinking differently. Bonilla-Silva (1996) calls for a more structural approach to dealing with the preponderance of racism. He critiques the ideological and cultural approaches to racism that emphasize irrationality of racist behavior. Instead, he proposes a more general concept of racialized social systems where "economic, political, social and ideological levels are structured partially by the placement of actors in racial categories of races."[23]

Asian American Identity

Much of the literature on Asian American identity examines the second generation or first generation immigrant populations. The importance of Asian racial identity in the existing literature signifies the extent to which race continues to shape people's identities (Leong and Chou 1994; Yeh and Huang 1996; Min and Kim 2000; Lien et al. 2003; Okamoto 2003). This, however, presents a significant problem for the American-born children of Asian descent who may not readily identify with what being an Asian means. The utilization of "Asianness" as a cultural concept conflates race and ethnicity. That is, Asian Americans grow up in the U.S. ethnically and culturally as Americans, but the emphasis is still placed on the racial category, Asian. To talk about

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[23] Loveman (1997) argues that Bonilla-Silva's theoretical framework has three critical pitfalls: (1) confounding categories with groups, (2) reifying race, and (3) maintaining an unjustifiable distinction between race and ethnicity. For a more complete synopsis of their debate see (Loveman 1997; Bonilla-Silva 1996, 1999).

“Asianness” in terms of culture is to completely misidentify Asian Americans. They are culturally Americans, not Asians.

Confounding race and culture is a principal source of misidentification. Many Asian Americans confront these issues when they are asked frequently, “where are you from?” as though they do not quite belong. Kibria (2000) found that second generation Korean and Chinese Americans resisted being seen as Asian because it clashed with their own self-identification. The perception of Asians as “foreigners” or as monolithic people compel them to downplay their “ethnic distinctiveness.”

Intercountry Adoptee Identity

Although there are similarities between Asian Americans and intercountry adoptees of Asian descent, the context of their experience is qualitatively different from each other. Growing up in a racially heterogeneous family heightens the racial issues, particularly when the child is the only one who stands out. In a society where race implicitly and explicitly accords privileges and opportunities, the differential treatment one faces in day-to-day social encounters provides a basis for questioning one’s place in the world. Triseliotis (1997) found that many international adoptees have difficulty coping with racial and ethnic discrimination. Westhues and Cohen (1997) echoed this view, arguing that adoptees are likely to encounter unpleasant experiences than their siblings due to their racial and ethnic backgrounds. These experiences contribute to lower self-esteem (Lanz et al. 1999) and the overwhelming feeling of isolation (Yoon 2004). The lack of community of supporters, such as family and peers, who could relate to their experience, makes their situation qualitatively different from other Asian Americans.

Some of the studies conducted outside the U.S. underscore the mental health and the social maladjustment issues of intercountry adoptees.[24] In order to address these challenges, some scholars have highlighted the importance of proper socialization in developing healthier emotional well-being. In Yoon's (2001, 2004) study, he found that parents' positive support for their children's Korean ethnic heritage yielded a positive sense of ethnic pride. Lee et al. (2006) shows that parents' sensitivity to race and active involvement in cultural issues positively impact the child's development of identity.

A vast majority of the literature on identity development for inter-country adoptees centers on children (Kim 1977; Kim et al. 1979; Westhues and Cohen 1998; Lanz et al. 1999; Huh and Reid 2000; Yoon 2004). Many of these studies, however, are not based on actual interviews, but they rely on the interpretations of parents, practitioners, and scholars. Recently, more scholars have begun to incorporate the voices of adult adoptees in their research on intercountry adoption and the experiences of adoptees (Meier 1999; Westhues and Cohen 1998; Palmer 2005; Hubinette 2007; Yngvesson 2002; Kim 2003). As Meier (1999) notes, mature adoptees have the ability to self-reflect, allowing researchers to focus more on the voices of the adoptee rather than the impressions of adoptive parents or researchers own interpretations of children's voices. Meier (1999) emphasizes that "the developmental differences between a 16-, a 22-, and a 35-year-old adoptee can be vast" (p. 17). In his study on adopted Korean young women, Palmer (2005) found that the women in his study often grappled with the

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[24] See the following studies by country: Swedish studies (Hjern et al. 2002; Lindblad et al. 2003; Hjern et al. 2004; Vinnerljung et al. 2006), Dutch studies (Verhulst et al. 1992; Verhulst and Versluisdenbieman 1995), and a Canadian study (Westhues and Cohen 1998).

necessity of having to assimilate into the white dominant culture of their community and their family. This assimilation was reinforced by peers who frequently denied any racial difference, yet the women were keenly aware of their differences. Palmer (2005) notes how these women wanted to feel invisible so that their differences would not be pronounced.

Finally, Wilkinson (1995) developed a model of adaptation for Korean adopted children. The model discusses the five stages of identity development: (1) *Denial* where children actively ignore and refuse to acknowledge their Korean heritage; (2) *Inner awakening* refers to a sense of openness toward recognizing other Koreans and passively objects to Korean culture; (3) *Acknowledgment* means embracing cultural heritage in positive ways; (4) *Identification* occurs when they look for other Koreans and try to correlate each others' experiences; and (5) *Acceptance* is when adoptees feel at ease with their Korean identity by accepting who they are. These stages of identity development are considered typical, though not all Korean adoptees may experience all of these stages.

Similarly, Huh and Reid (2000) identified a four-stage model after studying 40 Korean adopted school-aged children: (1) *Recognizing and rejecting differences,* (around age 4 to 6) - When children learn that they are different, they are unable to understand what it means to be Korean and reject their own differences while wanting to look like their peers and family; (2) *Beginning of ethnic identification,* (around 7 to 8 years old) - Adoptees realize that their physical characteristics remain constant, and the adoptees gain more understanding of Korean culture and why they are different from their family. Parental role is considered extremely important at this stage; (3) *Acceptance of difference versus ethnic dissonance,* (around ages 9 to 11) - When adoptees begin either to embrace

their differences and identify as Korean American or to play down their differences and identify as only American; (4) *Integrating Korean heritage and American culture,* (around age 12 to 14) - When adoptees are able to integrate both their Korean ethnicity and their American rearing. Adoptees have more internal drive to explore Korean related activities, have a greater awareness of stereotypes, and have more ethnic pride based on cultural awareness rather than differences. Adoptees may begin to show interest in identifying as Korean.

These models provide an insight into stages that adoptees may experience. However, the models assume a linear progression either backwards or forwards. Moreover, Huh and Reid's (2000) model assumes that adoptees enter into these stages within an age range, which may be problematic if some adoptees never even reach stage four even as adults.

Sociology of Emotions

The sociology of emotions, particularly the concept of emotion management, provides an important framework for understanding the process of identity formation of intercountry adoptees.[25] The sociology of emotions centers on how social factors affect what people feel, think and do about what they feel (Hochschild 1979). Thus, the concept of emotion management centers on the act of trying to manage emotion by surface and deep acting (Goffman1967), cognitively change images or ideas, implicitly control

[25] The sociology of emotions combines theoretical insights from various fields in sociology and psychology, including phenomenology, symbolic interaction and exchange theories. In phenomenology, an emphasis is on understanding how people construct meaning through day-to-day interactions that have an immense impact on our lives.

physical symptoms of emotions, and intentionally alter expressive gestures in order to internalize the appropriate feeling (Hochschild 1979: 561-562). The central facet of the theory is the interplay between socially expected rules about how people should feel (or feeling rules) and their true feelings. Resolving these conflicting feelings requires tremendous energy and labor, and often their expectations collide with their actual experiences. Intercountry adoptees define their sense of self in their struggle to come to terms with such conflicting emotional demands.

The sociology of emotions literature combines theoretical insights from various fields in sociology and psychology. Turner and Stets (2006) provide a summary of the emotions literature into five separate categories: (1) dramaturgical (Goffman 1967; Scheff 1988; Hochschild 1983), (2) symbolic interactionist (Denzin 1985; Burke 1991; Johnson 1992; Shott 1979; Smith-Lovin, 2007), (3) interaction ritual[26] (Collins 2004), (4) power and status (Thamm 1992; Gimlin 1996; Lovaglia and Houser 1996), and (5) exchange theories of emotional dynamics (Lawler and Yoon 1993, 1996, 1998; Lawler et al. 2000). For the purpose of this dissertation, the dramaturgical and the symbolic interactionist approaches will be utilized.[27]

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[26] Collins (2004) borrows from both Durkheim (1965) and Goffman (1959, 1967) to develop an interaction ritual theory. Turner and Stets (2006) summarize that Collins saw Goffman's (1967) encounter as an inclusive interaction ritual where emotional energy is created and maintained throughout encounters connected together in time and space, and these encounters are also microfoundations of macrostructure.

[27] Power and status theories involve documenting the effects of power and status on the creation and expression of emotions (Turner and Stets 2006). When there is power, positive emotions emerge, and when power is lost, negative emotions are elicited. Thus when higher-status members have positive experiences, they influence lower-status members to have more influence on the group, and when lower-status members experience negative emotions, they try and reduce the status of higher members (Lovaglia and Houser 1996). Exchange theories argue that when payoffs exceed costs, individuals experience positive emotions, and when payoffs do not exceed costs individuals experience negative emotions. In their study on network structure and emotion in exchange relations, Lawler and Yoon (1998) found that networks

Dramaturgical theories focus on how cultural norms inform particular social behaviors. These appropriate emotional responses create a frame of reference for impression management (Turner and Stets 2006). Actors negotiate between the feeling rules and their actual feelings; they must manage emotion either to reduce the discrepancy or to internalize the socially expected feeling rules (Turner and Stets 2006). Symbolic interactionist approaches to emotions see self and identity as the main impetus behind emotions. Turner and Stets (2006) note that individuals seek to confirm their global self-conceptions and their context-dependent identities in all aspects of interaction. When self is verified by others, it results in positive emotions; whereas, when self is not confirmed, emotions like anxiety, stress, shame, and guilt arise (Turner and Stets 2006). Scheff's (2003) works builds upon Cooley's (1922) concept of the looking-glass self, wherein positive emotions like pride and negative emotions like shame arise from seeing oneself from the point of view of the other. Shott (1979:1321) provides a useful way to think about how the theory of symbolic interactionism applies to emotion work: (1) the study of the actor's definitions and interpretations of action context, (2) human behavior is emergent and continually constructed during presentation, (3) actions of individuals are influenced by their internal states and impulses in addition to external events and stimuli, (4) social structures and normative regulation are the framework of human action rather than its determinant.

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containing both equal and unequal power relations will have internal pockets of cohesion that are more likely to occur in equal relations because of the positive feelings produced by successful exchanges.

Structural Properties of Intercountry Adoption

Identity formation of intercountry adoptees is fundamentally a social process. Actors actively participate in social exchanges through interpretation of action contexts, anticipate each other's responses, and reproduce the context for future interactions. Despite the social constraints imposing upon their actions, social norms are not external to actors themselves. In fact, they constitute the vital component of human agency and social change.

In order to capture the dynamics of the process of social change, I rely on Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration. According to Layder (1989), the structuration theory attempts to move beyond the subject-object, agency-structure dualisms dominant in social science literature. It does so by defining social systems as "reproduced social practices" whereby the "structural properties" are instantiated at the moment of action. All human actions involve recursive monitoring of actions, meaning people are able to take into consideration the anticipated responses of the actors in given contexts, thereby reproducing and transforming the social norms of interaction. Each actor brings to the action contexts what Giddens calls rules and resources that constitute both constraining and enabling properties.[28] Power is generated and exercised when actors utilize the rules and resources to bear on interactions.[29]

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28 Drawing from phenomenology and ethnomethodology, rules refer to generalizable procedures that humans enact or reproduce in their daily practices. Rules can be normative and have a sanctioning effect, proscribing what we can or cannot do in society. Resources consist of two kinds: allocative and authoritative. For more discussion, see Giddens (1984).

[29] Giddens (1979, 1984) conceptualizes power as capacity to transform and bring about a desired outcome. Because rules and resources embody constraining and enabling elements, actors utilize power in

Rules and resources have significantly constrained intercountry adoptees. Culturally, Korean adoptees were seen as shameful, illegitimate children. This notion of illegitimacy is transferred from the actions of the mother, who is perceived as having the primary responsibility of caring for the child. The decision to give up that child rests with the mother, while the father is absolved of any wrong doing. These implicit social norms are embedded in social policies pertaining to adoption, social welfare, and economic development. The adoptee who had a very little say in the decision-making process bears the brunt of social stigma associated with being abandoned. Throughout the course of their lives, adoptees must negotiate various social rules that inform proper behaviors. The struggle to come to terms with these rules unfolds the emotion management process, the beginning of their identity formation.

Intercountry adoptees, however, have used various resources to help transform perceptions, attitudes and social norms. In academia, the emergence of research by and about intercountry adoptees demonstrates a shift away from serving merely as objects of research toward taking ownership of their experiences and lives. Adult adoptee gatherings and other forums for exchanging ideas heightened consciousness and solidarity, thereby pressuring the Korean government to make necessary changes. Many adoptees have returned to Korea to live and to initiate media campaigns and advocacy work on behalf of all adoptees.[30] Their efforts have yielded changes in policies

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all action contexts. Access to these rules and resources, however, vary depending upon where actors are strategically situated.

[30] The formation of the following groups demonstrates this well: GOAL (Global Overseas Adoptee Link) and InKAS (International Korean Adoptee Service).

concerning the procedures for birth parent searches, the right of adoptees to work and reside in Korea, the recognition of international adoption as an important social issue.[31] As a consequence of these efforts, the Korean government is beginning to address the needs of single mothers (Kim 2003; Hyoung 1997).

Conclusion

This review of literature demonstrates the interconnectedness of the theories and concepts across various disciplinary boundaries. The key issues that define identity formation of intercountry adoptees include the political-economic context of international adoption between South Korea and the U.S., the cultural norms that inform the attitudes towards the adoptees, the manner in which adoptees negotiate issues of abandonment, difference and "foreignness" that contribute to their sense of "unbelongingness," and the tremendous emotion work in trying to rationally deal with dissonance arising from feeling rules and their inner feelings. In the process of working through the complex terrain of emotion work, intercountry adoptees demonstrate agency and contribute to social change.

In order to analytically describe the process of intercountry identity formation, I utilize the concepts and theories from the sociology of emotions, including phenomenology and symbolic interaction, an integrative theory of structure and agency, and the racial identity development theories.

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[31] The establishment of the National Adoption Day in 2006 reflects a greater recognition and awareness about adoption issues.

CHAPTER III

METHODS, DESIGN AND SETTING

My research spanned from June 2006 to September 2008, which included a two-month stay in Seoul and Incheon, South Korea, conducting in-depth interviews and engaging in participant observation. The interviewees include adult Korean adoptees, social workers, adoption workers, and post-adoption service providers living in Korea and Colorado. Interviewing intercountry adoptees and the various service providers is full of methodological challenges. Building rapport and trust with the participants, and handling highly emotional responses were an emotionally draining experience. This chapter elaborates upon these methodological issues and challenges.

Sampling: Locating Intercountry Adoptees

Using purposive sampling was essential for this study because it is a technique designed to reach populations that are not readily available or difficult to find (Becker 1998; Creswell 1998; Fowler 2000), such as adult Korean adoptees. The primary purpose of my visit to Korea was to gather stories and experiences of adoptees living or visiting Korea. Their decision to return to Korea was quite fascinating, given that they would have surely experienced cultural shocks and emotional storms. This group of adoptees represents an important piece of the puzzle concerning the identity formation of

intercountry adoptees. Interviewing them in Korea greatly expanded the scope of my sample population who now included people from Europe and North America.[32]

In order to begin the research, I located a nonprofit organization run by adoptees called Global Overseas Adoptee Link, or GOA'L, in Korea.[33] As a participant observer of the organization, I attended its functions and meetings, and interviewed adoptees and the administrators. The combination of the participant observation technique and the face-to-face interviews added "rigor, breadth, and depth" to my investigation (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2). Using this site as my research operation base, I combined the snowball sampling technique by branching out into contacts in other parts of Korea. Specifically, I worked with GOA'L to get the word out about my project in order to solicit participants for the study. They sent out a mass email to all intercountry adoptees on their mailing list prior to my arrival. The cover letter clearly explained the objective of my research, and it provided a legitimate outlet through which I could introduce myself to them.

In the United States, I interviewed a diverse group of adoptees who have had varied experiences with Korea. One such group includes those adoptees who decided not to return to Korea. This group of adoptees allowed me to compare and contrast the reasons why some stayed behind while others returned.[34] I relied on Asian Pacific

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[32] This method reflects an attempt to cover "a full range of variation in some phenomenon" (Becker 1998:71).

[33] I knew about this organization from my previous travels in Korea in 1999 when I had met one of the creators of G.O.A.'L. when the organization was newly formed. I had sent an initial letter of inquiry to the organization, and the six staff workers contacted me back to say how excited they were to speak with me. I developed immediate rapport with the agency's core workers who became my key informants.

[34] There was in fact a third group of adoptees who returned to Korea but who are not currently living there.

American Student Services office at Colorado State University to send out emails to the various student organizations and to students on their listserv. The cover letter introduced the study, and they put out a call for participants. Similar to my time in Korea, I used purposive and snowball sampling to obtain participants for the study. The formal interviews were conducted from February 2007 to January 2008, but the follow-up questions lasted through January 2009. Most of the interviews were done face-to-face with the exception of two webcam and telephone interviews.

Interviewee Profile

I interviewed a total of thirty-one individuals: twenty-five adult Korean adoptees, and five Korean and one American service providers of intercountry adoption. They include one Korean government official in the social welfare council, one Korean social worker who works with birth mothers, three adoption workers in two different adoption agencies in Korea, and one Korean post-adoption services organizer. Five of the adoptees in Korea also were involved with post-adoption organizations in Korea. Gender and nationality composition of the interviewees was diverse: seven male and eighteen were female[35]; five from various European countries, such as Denmark (1), Germany (1), Switzerland (1), and Sweden (2); and North America, including Canada (1), and the United States (19). Their ages ranged from 20-to-40, with fifteen of the adoptees in their 20s, eight in their 30s and two in their 40s. Twenty adoptees had returned to Korea and

[35] One rationale for the disproportionate numbers of females may be due to the fact that a majority of children adopted out of Korea were girls until recently where the trend has switched and currently more boys are being adopted than girls from Korea. Hence the numbers of adult Korean adoptees would have been adopted in the 1980's and earlier when girls outnumbered boys (Hubinette 2004).

ten had lived in Korea longer than four weeks. Eleven had found birth family in Korea, six had searched but did not find any family, two said they desired to search but had not yet done so, one had contact with their foster family in Korea, and three mentioned no current desire to search for birth family. Three of the adoptees were only children in the adopted family, thirteen had siblings who also were adopted from Korea but not biologically related, two were adopted with their biological siblings, and nineteen had brothers or sisters who were their adoptive parents' biological children. Two of the adoptees have biological children of their own, and one adoptee has a child on the way.

Three of the adoptees were fluent or conversationally proficient in Korean, eleven spoke Korean as a child (though only three of these can still speak it after taking classes and teaching themselves the language), six were learning basic Korean, three had some exposure to Korean, and eleven had no exposure to the Korean language. All the adoptees were fluent or conversationally fluent in English, one was fluent in Danish, two in French, two in Swedish, and two in German. Eighteen of the adoptees identified as single and never married, one was married to a Korean national, four were divorced and currently single or dating, and since the interviews, two adoptees were engaged to Asian Americans. One adoptee identified as gay/lesbian and two identified as having a physical disability.

Of the six informants who were members of organizations related to intercountry adoption, five are female and one male. Three are social workers, one is a nurse and director, one is a minister, and one is a government official. None of these informants have adopted children. Five have biological children. Three are employed at adoption

agencies in Korea, one works with birth mothers, and another runs a home for adoptees returning to Korea.

Research Design: Interviews and Participant Observation

The research design of this project primarily integrates in-depth interviews and participant observation based on phenomenological and ethnographical frameworks. Secondarily, the research combines these ethnographic data with sociological literature on identity development and emotion work within broader social contexts and processes. It is a worthy noting fact that researchers engaging in interpretive sociological endeavors bring their biases and preconceptions to their work.[36] Indeed, the ethnographer does not report truths or facts, but is actively constructing interpretations of their field experiences (Taylor 1999). Despite these limitations, the interviews and participant observation methods combined with theoretical and macro-sociological approaches to understanding a phenomenon provide an important balance of research methodologies.

The interviews were semi-structured with ample opportunities for the interviewees to freely express ideas (Spradley 1979). We engaged in conversations, and their responses elicited additional questions and dialogue. The interview method is consistent with Burgess' (1982:107) work, whose aim is to "provide opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply… to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience." This structure afforded me an opportunity to cover a wide range of issues in greater depth (Hyman 1954).

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[36] Emerson (2001:27) discusses that ethnographers are not simply describing the way of life of individuals as embodied in their behaviors, beliefs and attitudes, but they too are engaging in "theory-informed re-presentation" of the observed.

Although the interviews were semi-structured and informal in nature, each interview began with a brief introduction, covering the purpose of the study and my role as a researcher. Participants signed the consent form at this time and were provided a copy to keep. I also asked permission to record the interviews, while reiterating the fact that their identity would remain confidential. My human subjects protocol required that I provide the interviewees with the names of therapists and organizations, should any of the interviews experience psychological distress during and after the interviews. The names of these contacts were listed in the consent form.

Two of the interviewees expressed a desire not to be recorded. Careful notes were taken instead. Of the interviews conducted in Korea, two were done over the internet with a webcam. In Colorado, I conducted in-person interviews and also utilized phone and webcam interviews. These interviews generally lasted between one and three hours, though some interviews lasted up to six. Three of the interviews spanned two days, as there was not enough time to finish the interview in one meeting. All of the interviewees received a copy of the transcribed interviews, and the follow-up questions and answers were conducted via email, phone and in person. Interviews took place in a variety of locations in Seoul, Korea. Locations include: the G.O.A.'L headquarters in Seoul, parks, restaurants, coffee shops, a participant's home, the participant's place of employment, and via webcam. Interviews in Fort Collins and Denver, Colorado took place in classrooms at Colorado State University, restaurants, coffee shops, residences, places of employment, and via webcam. All of the locations were chosen by the participants.

The interviews with the adoptees all began with brief personal information, including their age, education, hometown, and family members. This introduction was a

good way to begin the dialogue and to build rapport with the informants.[37] The core of the questions focused on the environment of their upbringing, the self-definition of their identity, the perspective on the adoptee community, and for those in Korea, the reasons for coming back to Korea. Questions for non-adoptees in Korea addressed the history of intercountry adoption, the social welfare and adoption policies, and the broad cultural factors influencing adoption. I was particularly interested in learning about the system of intercountry adoption and identifying the key social, economic and cultural factors that continue to fuel intercountry adoption. The interviews in Colorado followed a similar format as in Korea. The only difference was that, for the adoptees who had not returned to Korea, I wanted to understand specifically their perspectives on returning to Korea.

As a participant observer, I attended social gatherings, meetings, conferences and outings with individuals and groups of adoptees. I also kept in-depth field notes. Schwartz and Merten (1971:280-281) argue that the participant observation method allows the researcher to grasp "the symbolic nexus between thought and action in a particular social milieu." My experience in Korea involved close and intimate interactions in the "routines, rhythms and intricacies" (Emerson 2001:18) of their day-to-day activities.[38] I kept extensive field notes describing my interactions, emotions and feelings, and the overwhelming sense of loneliness I felt living there. My motivation was

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[37] Whyte (1982) demonstrates the importance of creating a comfortable environment in which the interviewees could discuss deeply personal issues.

[38] I attended adoptee conferences, organization meetings, social gatherings, film presentations, and special events. I used public transportation, walked, rode subways and taxis, ate at Korean restaurants, attended parties and celebrations for adoptees, went out to clubs and karaoke bars (popular in Korea), cooked Korean food, met adoptees on university campuses, went shopping for clothing and goods, and communicated using limited Korean language skills like many of the adoptees I interviewed.

to utilize the "thick description" method to provide details of their experiences with a focus on their emotional responses. Thus, I also recorded conversations, sights, smells, images, facial expressions, body languages, and clothing styles.

Data Analysis

Like most qualitative research, data analysis is a dynamic, interactive process that occurs over the life span of the research and analysis (Becker and Geer 1982; Weiss 1995). The process involves a constant tug between original research questions and the interview data, adjusting and fine-tuning the literature. By the time the fieldwork was completed, I had already done a great deal of analysis. After transcribing the interviews, the informants read them over and offered clarification and additional thoughts. In the process of transcribing the data, I incorporated new questions for analysis. The data were open coded (Neuman 1994); it was revised multiple times (axial and selective coding) as new categories and themes emerged (Miles and Huberman 1984). As I recoded the second and third time around, I rearranged my codes according to the categories and themes. I also visually looked at the pages of coding like a bar graph, noticing the themes and categories that emerged the most from the different pages of data. Additionally, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984), I incorporated a write-up on my reflections.[39] These themes from the first round of interviews in Korea laid groundwork for constructing conceptual categories and incorporating new questions for the later

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[39] My approach to coding is old-fashioned in that I use a pen, paper, and type out my coding on the computer into a word document. I do not use any qualitative research coding software, as I find that coding by hand allows me to become more intimate with the data. This is especially helpful given the fact that in qualitative research, I am the research instrument (Cassell 1977; Malinowski 1989).

interviews. Linking these themes and conceptual issues together allowed me to develop a more coherent understanding of the phenomenon within the existing theoretical literature.

Methodological Challenges

As an adoptee I was able to relate to their thoughts, feelings and emotions; but, as a researcher, I needed to situate these experiences analytically in sociological literature. Other methodological challenges surfaced as I prepared to implement the research. First was regarding the research design and obtaining a sample of participants. I was under quite conservative constraints outlined by our human subjects board at Colorado State University. The nature of my research was deemed a possible psychological risk to adoptees, in that it may bring up difficult feelings or emotional pain for adoptees. Given this assessment, the human subjects board required that I have a therapist or organization available in each area that I was conducting research. Thus I needed to secure collaboration from a therapist or post-adoption service organization in every state that I would interview adoptees from. This became a logistical nightmare and not very realistic given the time constraints of the human subjects board deadlines and when I would begin my research.

Hence, I needed to confine my research to the state of Colorado and to Seoul, South Korea. Unfortunately, this excluded interviewing potential informants from any other state in the United States, unless I had interviewed them while they were in Korea. Because my research sites were confined to Colorado and Korea, I could not capture the experiences of adoptees from other states. Place and location again influence the challenges I encountered conducting this study in Korea. The proximity between my permanent residence and Korea was a challenge. I had to limit my time in Korea to a

single visit due to financial constraints and personal issues. Ideally, I would have liked to return to Korea again to establish another contact point with those who participated in the first round of interviews. Fortunately, the technological aids facilitated a second round of interviews using the Internet and telephone communications.

In ethnographic research, one of the biggest challenges is gaining the confidence and trust of the interviewees (Lofland and Lofland 1995). My research was no exception. My status as an adult Korean adoptee added to the complications of the study.[40] Cassell (1977:413) points out that an observer of the same group may not be able to locate "the basic assumptions, the values and beliefs a group takes for granted," which represent "crucial data" for introducing "change that is consonant with a group's self definition and relevant to its needs." Balancing between the need to identify with adoptees and my role as a researcher was difficult, but it did not take away from the quality of research. In fact, it was an enriching experience.[41]

Each time I spoke with an adoptee in Korea about the research, they immediately placed me outside of the adoptee circle until I explained more about my personal experiences in Korea. I often had to explain that this was not my first time to Korea but my third, and that I also had lived in Korea in 1999 for close to seven months. For many of these adoptees, living in Korea was driven by very emotional and personal experiences, and to have someone interview them who did not have a passion to live

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[40] Cassell (1977) and Emerson (2001) discuss the difficulties inherent in researching individuals who are similarly situated as the researcher.

[41] For a discussion on the paradoxical role of a researcher, see Thorne (1983) and Kleinman (1991).

there like they did was viewed as fake and an "imposter" so to speak. Because I had lived and worked in Korea seven years prior to my research, some adoptees were willing to share their stories with me. Moreover, my stay for this research was for an extended period of time, beyond the standard one-two week whirlwind tour. I was there for two months to conduct research and experience Korea again with a much larger and organized adoptee community than my first time around.

Inter-subjective understanding of adoptee experiences is an emotionally taxing task. But, in the end, they quite naturally opened up to me. This is a great advantage of "insiders," who, as Zavella (1996:116) asserts, "are more likely to be cognizant and accepting of complexity and internal variation, are better able to understand the nuances of language use, will avoid being duped by informants who create cultural performances for their own purposes, and are less apt to be distrusted by those they study." However, as Baca Zinn (2001:161) has reflected on her own studies with Chicano families, "minority researchers conducting studies in their 'own' communities may experience problems common to all researchers as well as dilemmas imposed by their own racial identity."

While I was conducting interviews in Colorado, however, these issues never really arose. The adoptees who agreed to partake in my study were quite willing and open to sharing their stories about their experiences. Moreover, these adoptees did not put me through a rigorous screening process to determine if they wanted to continue in the study, as many adoptees had done while I was in Korea. I felt that the adoptees in Colorado were excited to find another adopted Korean to share their experiences. Additionally, a few expressed how they felt drawn or almost obligated to help out with the research

project, knowing that finding adult Korean adoptees for the study might be a difficult task. This rang true, given the fact that I was limited to the state of Colorado.

Qualitative research does not necessarily use the language of validity and reliability; rather we talk about credibility, dependability, trustworthiness and transferability (Guba and Lincoln 1985). In order to maximize the dependability of the interviews, I had employed a triangulation method by utilizing different data collecting techniques, such as the participant observation, the in-depth interviewing, and the literature review on the topic (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Additionally, I had the participants read rough drafts of my description of their actions and words. Giving them opportunities to comment on their own thoughts ensured accuracy of their intended ideas.

The central question pertaining to the credibility of the interview data is whether or not the stories are trustworthy and accurately reflect the reality. To this, Becker (1970) raises an interesting question: do the informants have cause to lie? My assessment is that while the participants did not always accurately reflect their true feelings, they had few reasons to state falsehood intentionally. Establishing a sense of trust and rapport with the adoptees greatly reduced the possibility that their articulations would be inconsistent with their inner feelings and thoughts.

CHAPTER IV

IDENTITY FORMATION OF KOREAN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTEES

The current literature on intercountry adoption is sparse.[42] Of the articles that address intercountry adoption, the majority focuses on identity development of adoptees (Kim 1977; Wilkinson 1995; Triseliotis 1997; Westhues and Cohen 1997; Meier 1999; Huh and Reid 2000; Yoon 2004) and tacitly accepts a linear model that assumes a progression from one stage to another.[43] Huh and Reid's (2000) four stage model of identity development demonstrates this well by showing how an adoptee progresses from the first stage of avoidance to the final stage in which one learns to accept the heritages of both cultures. This chapter argues that the identity formation of intercountry adoptees is not a linear process but contingent upon social and cultural factors that shape the context of interaction, thus frame the way the adoptees think of who they are in relation to society.

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[42] In Sociology, Fisher (2003) observes that the scholarly research on the topic is close to non-existent; in other disciplines, the studies are sporadic at best.

[43] Studies focus on children and parents' perceptions of adjustment (Kim 1977; Feigelman and Silverman 1984; Lee 2006) with emphasis on emotional well being and adjustment (Kim 1977; Feigelman and Silverman 1984; Yoon 2004), and relationships with peers and family (Simon and Alstein 1992; Westhues and Cohen 1997; Yoon 2004). These studies incorporate postmodern theories of adoptees living in a third space (Hubinette 2007), influence of place (Meier 1999) and peer and family relations (Palmer 2005). They also center on how adoptees negotiate identity and assimilation in a dominant white culture (Meier 1999; Palmer 2005; Hubinette 2007, 2008).

The identity formation of Korean intercountry adoptees reflects their struggle to find meaning and order in the midst of chaos. The fact that intercountry adoptees cannot readily claim membership to the most basic social unit such as family, community and ethnicity, represents the source of conflict. Their denial of the Korean heritage is perfectly logical, as many associate the feeling of abandonment with the culture of their birthmother. Additionally, being Korean plays a constant reminder of their difference from their adoptive family. In order to assimilate fully into the family where they could feel safe and secure, they are compelled to distance themselves from anything that could make them stand out or different from their adoptive family.

For intercountry adoptees, the obvious racial difference between them and the adoptive parents presents an ongoing problem because they are unable to resolve the contradiction that they are different from the rest of the family. In their minds, they have to be white in order to be accepted fully into the family. In schools and communities, their sensitivity to racial differences heightens because they are made aware of their racial identity. Although culturally they are Americans, they are judged based on their outer appearances. Other identity markers, such as ethnicity, gender and the construction of other differences, intervene and complicate their effort to fit into a group. These master statuses frame the action contexts of intercountry adoptees of who must negotiate the social and cultural norms in their effort to stabilize their identity. When the contexts of these social encounters continually change, intercountry adoptees experience transformations in their psychological states based on their assessment of who they are in relation to the society. This chapter captures the manner in which intercountry adoptees respond to these social and cultural norms in their effort to anchor their identity, and

identifies the four dominant experiences of the intercountry adoptees. These include: Denial and Avoidance; Crisis and Exploration; Negotiation, and Redefinition.

The Four Elements

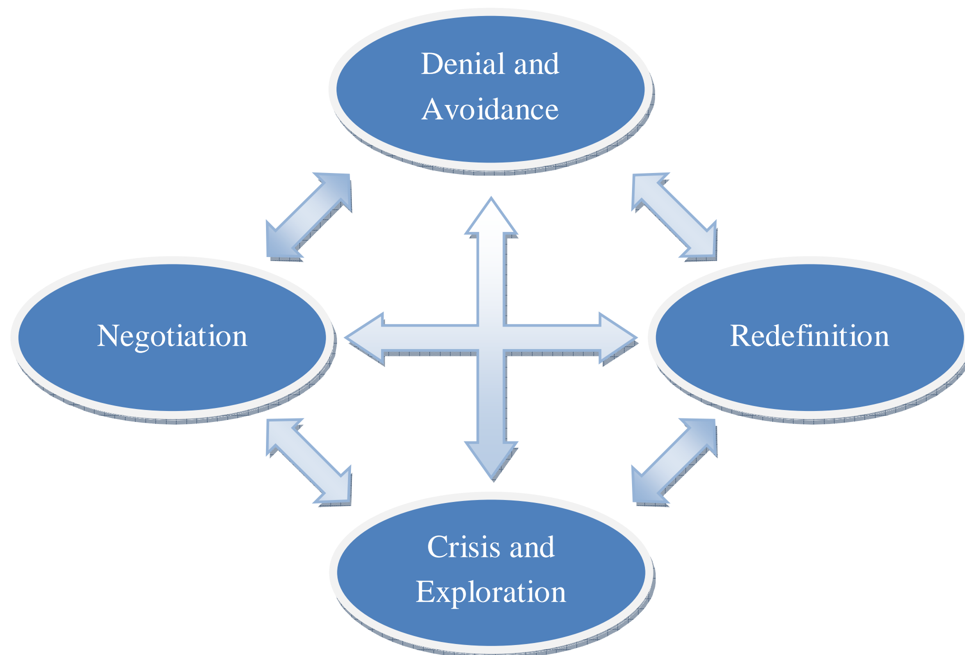

Figure 1 The Four Elements

Denial and Avoidance

Korean intercountry adoptees often deny the painful memories associated with adoption by severing ties with their Korean heritage. They do so in a number of different ways: avoiding other Asian people and activities relating to Asia or Korea, expressing discontent toward their physical features, and believing they are white or wishing they could be white. Resisting Asian groups may turn into outright hostility towards Asians. The expression of hostilities is a reflection of the pervasive stereotypes about Asians on the one hand, and the desire on the part of the adoptees to suppress those aspects of their identity that remind them of abandonment, on the other. At the heart of their denial of

“Asianness” or “Koreanness” lies the desperate longing for acceptance, a place where they can anchor their identity.

Adoptees’ effort to dissociate themselves from other Koreans, Asians and adoptees stems from deep-seeded fear of being identified as different from their immediate family members. Their adoptive family serves as their identity anchor, but the factor of racial difference could destabilize the relationship between them. The fear may turn into hostility or hatred toward other Asians when their ethnicity or race is repeatedly questioned. Eric, an adoptee from Colorado reflected:

> In terms of doing any type of research or interacting or talking about my ethnicity or my culture was just the last thing I really wanted to do…the last thing that I wanted anybody to do was to look at me and say “oh, it’s that Asian guy.

The fear of being singled out because of their race, which is something they cannot change and have no control over, is likened to another act for which they had no say: the act of being abandoned and adopted. Reminders of their “Asianness” often frustrated them. As Heidi, an adoptee living in Korea, described: “I tried pretty much to avoid anything Korean or Asian or anything with adoption because it made me feel terrible.” Many adoptees were unable to articulate the source of their frustration and pain, but their need to distance themselves from their “root” culture naturally emerged in order to dissociate themselves from the very culture that abandoned them in the first place.

When others tried to get them to appreciate their adoptee heritage, this angered them even more because they associated Korean heritage with the source of their pain. Kristy, an adoptee from Colorado, commented about rejecting organizations and social events that brought other Asians or adoptees together. She revealed how there were organizations for Korean families that “tried to get us together every month to three

months, and they had Korean food and they would do dance and stuff like that and I always hated them…I remember always feeling weird around other Asian people when I was younger." Dana, another adoptee from Colorado, shared similar feelings about being forced to go to the Heritage Camp, which is the largest summer camp for Korean adoptees. Rather than make her more proud of being Korean, these events created the opposite effect of wanting to avoid Korea. She explained: "I stopped going to the Heritage Camp after I got home from Korea when I was ten because I didn't want anything to do with Korea until about a year ago." The memories of abandonment in Korea were indelibly, though perhaps subconsciously, imprinted in their minds, and it made sense for them to reject a culture that could potentially destabilize their sense of self.

Adoptees emphatically expressed a desire to blend in with the rest of their family. In a society where racial attitudes are pervasive and implicitly embedded in every social encounter, the adoptees' desire to become like their white family reflects the basic need to belong to a family. In order to compensate for the difference, the adoptees try to change the way they think about their racial identity. For Keira, an adoptee living in Colorado, she tried to "trick" people into thinking that she and her adopted mother shared the same blood. Similarly, Vanessa, another Colorado adoptee who wanted so desperately to have blonde hair and blue eyes, tricked herself into thinking that she is white. She commented: "I felt like I am white." Darlene from Colorado, who considered herself "the whitest Asian girl," reiterated a common desire among adoptees to be simply free from unspoken commentary about their essential qualities that make them different from their family. Keira, who also discussed the social stress of trying to fit in, explained the

common struggle of many adoptees: "I think a lot of people, especially teenagers, want to be like everyone else. To me, everyone was White…not knowing about my Korean heritage or language also attributed to this. I had nothing to hold onto from my 'Asian side'." Heidi explained further: "growing up, I just wanted to be like everyone else and I didn't want reminders of being different, so I just flat out avoided stuff until I was a senior in college…mostly I just hated being different." Like so many adoptees, Keira and Heidi's inability to deal effectively with the conflict between their past and present realities compelled them to deny their past and assimilate into the adoptive family. Being different meant that they were not quite accepted.

In order to fit into their white community, adoptees tried to convince themselves and others that they may look "different but they are the same" as their white family and friends. When others point out her "Asianness," Ann, living in Colorado, felt compelled to defend her rightful place within the white community. She often "made a joke out of it" and dis-identified with her Asian status. Gwen, who was adopted to Colorado added: "Yeah, I was brought up in a white neighborhood. I saw myself with a white family and adopted the western culture. It just offended me when someone pointed out that I was different…because I want to be American white, I didn't want to have to know that I had this horrible childhood [in Korea]." Unfortunately, denying who they were on the outside created internal conflict when they were consistently judged by how they look. Anger surfaced for adoptees when they repeatedly tried but failed to convince others that they were just like everyone else in the community. For those who were older when they were adopted, this blatant reminder of being different also brought back painful memories of their childhood in Korea. As long as our sense of "Americanness" is defined in terms of

"whiteness," the intercountry adoptees will likely fail in their struggle to free themselves from the ideological trap.

The stereotypes of Asians as perpetual foreigners (Wu 2002) contribute to the paradox. Ann declared: "I've become internally racist against Asians and often don't identify as that, as a master identity…I think I never identified with my Asian heritage." The representations of Asians as outsiders whose culture is perceived to be inferior to American culture are sometimes reinforced in the home. Teresa, remembered:

> I was basically shipped off to this foreign country into the white family who ended up being very abusive verbally and physically and emotionally…made us feel like so worthless, I mean they basically did tell us we were worthless. You know they were always saying that, and growing up I hated myself, thought I was inferior to everyone else, because you're growing up in an all white environment. But then also, not only was I experiencing racism outside the home, it was racist inside the home. People make fun of you and call you names and stuff and that's pretty hurtful, but then when your own family is calling you ugly and you should be ashamed from where you came from, and force you not to speak the language, forbid you, and cut your hair and all that stuff to basically erase your identity. It has a big impact on you as a child and it makes you, inevitably internalize things.

Though not all of the adoptees experienced this extreme level of racism and reinforcement of negative stereotypes in the home, just the mere act of excluding or ignoring the culture in the home could reinforce the message that their culture and heritage is inferior. It is not surprising that adoptees try to deny this racial aspect of their identity when they have constant reminders at home reinforcing the negative Asian stereotypes.

The lack of representation of Asian celebrities in media adversely impacts the confidence level of adoptees concerning their outer appearances. Wanting to look like white celebrities reinforces their desire to suppress their "Asianness." Keira commented on how such acts of dis-identification is a form of self-loathing: "I hated being Asian…I

couldn't be beautiful unless I was White. All the pretty actresses I saw were White and all the girls that were being asked out in my class were White. I know I couldn't be White but perhaps I tried to grab onto this identity, or part of my identity, just to have one." Mike expressed similar sentiments: "I hated all Asian people. I thought they were the ugliest beings on this planet. Silly, weak, ugly, nerds…I wanted to be Curt Cobain." Both Keira and Mike illustrate how much the media instilled in them an insecurity driven by their inability to fit into the dictated White standard of beauty. Their fear of being associated with this negative stereotype manifested itself into hatred towards their racial identity, leading them to dream of being a White celebrity.

Adoptees also develop a fear of being associated with the stereotypes that manifest high expectations for Asians. Eric described his time in high school and college: "I really hated talking to other Asian kids…I think a part of me was really scared…, people assuming the fact that I was really good at math…or I was an engineering major." To be sure, when Eric received a "C" on a math test, his teacher commented on how he thought Eric should, as an Asian, do "better, always doing better," like the other Asians in the school. Exchanges like these infuriated intercountry adoptees because they know that these social expectations are clearly misplaced.

Experiences with discrimination directed at adoptees contributed to dis-identification and disengagement with other Asians. Dana remembered how upsetting it was when "people would do this with their eyes [Dana is pulling at the ends of her eyes to make them squinty]…and it made me more jealous of my brother because he was white and he fit in." Mike also recalled how being "different," or being seen as a foreigner meant he could be "beaten up" by white supremacy groups. These negative

societal perceptions of Asians make adoptees want to distance themselves from them. After all, they have no tangible connection to Asia or Korea; their adoptive family is their anchor, but the society's refusal to accept this reality creates an irreconcilable tension within them. They are forced to choose either an American or an Asian side, but this obviously is not something that they alone can decide. Many had chosen to be accepted as Americans by denying their Asianness, but the externally imposed racial identity of the intercountry adoptees makes it impossible.

Crisis and Exploration

Korean adoptees experience crisis when an event triggers something inside them to question who they are, and this causes them to try to reconstruct a new identity. The first aspect of crisis implies dissonance adoptees experience between social perceptions and their inner feelings. Managing these conflicts occur in multiple ways: dealing with the repressed identity; confronting racism and devaluation of Korea culture; and, coping with pressure to explore their Korean heritage. The crisis represents the beginning of the identity exploration process whereby they try to affirm the suppressed side of their identity. They raise these questions because they seek to find meaning in their lives, and they do so in a variety of ways: changing locations, learning the language and "becoming" Korean, confronting birth families, spending time with Asians/Koreans, working within the realm of adoption, activism, and mentoring other adoptees.

Adoptees start to confront the feeling that their life has been a "cover up." James, an adoptee living in Korea, recalled how he "just burst out crying" for having repressed the abandonment issues for twenty-five years. James, like other adoptees, came to a point in his life when it was too emotionally difficult to continue pretending to fit into the white

society. The feelings of “rootlessness,” “being alone,” and having “no family support” contradicted their longing to attain “comfort, acceptance, and inner peace.” Matt, an adoptee from Europe, explained when life is difficult, the desire to find “roots” becomes stronger: “always looking for reasons why you are alone…and there is hope to find your real family that loves you.” For him, he equated finding roots as a means to search for unconditional love that was non-existent and unnatural with his adopted family. Similarly, Gwen felt that she had reached a “low point in her life” when she was unable to explain the “reasons for being here.” When Matt and Gwen were given up for adoption, they undeniably internalized the pain that accompanies being severed from biological family and culture, never fully able to reconcile the differences due to their appearance and supposed “nature” in the new environment.

Some adoptees experience external pressure from friends and family to explore their Korean heritage. Over time, the continual encouragement allowed adoptees to take interest in their Korean heritage. Kristy, an adoptee who described herself as having, “no identification with Korean culture” until she was 18, cites her parents’ repeated “strong encouragement” to visit Korea as the beginning point of her exploration. For others, confronting racism is another way in which they deal with their repressed identity. Julie had gone through her adolescence trying to fit in with her family by denying her differences and devaluing Korean culture by avoiding it. When she finally realized that she was “actually different from everyone,” she decided to confront some of the embedded issues regarding her identity that was entirely separate from the White world in which she had immersed. For Julie, the blatant “racial slurs” she received from strangers growing up in the mid-west, triggered an emotional response that caused her to

rethink of her identity. Mike, realizing he shared similar experiences as his new friends who were "dark skinned" immigrants from Iran, began exploring his Korean identity after recognizing that his "similar experiences" were "all caused by racism." These interactions with other "immigrant" friends provided a safe space to examine his experiences with racism and discrimination.

When adoptees become parents, the experience invokes new questions about their responsibility to teach their children about the Korean heritage and their repressed identity. Having thoughts of becoming a parent necessitates examining their own identity as it relates to their adoption experience. This is a major challenge of adoptees that were brought up by white parents. Bethany throws a string of questions concerning how she lacks the ability to teach her [daughter] about Korea: "how would this reality affect her biracial daughter? Would she embrace both parts of her identity?" Entering into a new role as a parent has Bethany experiencing crisis as she revisits concerns with her racial and adoptee identity that her parents failed to address. Hence, making it even more important for her to examine her own identity in order to prepare herself when she needs to help her daughter address similar concerns.

The relationship between adoptees and their own children adds another layer of complexity to their own sense of self. For them, having their own children represented the first biological link. Lori, who had two surgeries and a full hysterectomy, sheds an interesting light on the whole question of losing connections to family and abandonment:

> I had a really hard time dealing with it and trying to figure out why…I was feeling a big loss. Because I had a dream that I got rid of a baby and I became more sympathetic for my birthmother. And then when I had the hysterectomy, I dreamt that I was pregnant and the doctor went and tore out the baby and wouldn't let me see the baby and took it away from me.

> Now I am trying to deal with a lot of biological issues and not having a biological connection.

Lori confided that she never really thought about her birthmother before the surgery, but she now finds herself confronting issues regarding the meaning of family and the terrible sense of loss stemming from the realization that she would never be able to have a biological connection to someone. This experience caused her to feel "sympathy" toward her birthmother.

Changing the location of their residence often triggers opportunities to confront their identity in new ways. A sense of place and community plays a critical role in framing the context of exploration and discovery. Joseph, an adoptee from Europe, recalled how going to college afforded him the opportunity to meet other adoptees for the first time. College represents a new social space where adoptees could feel safer to entertain those piercing questions about who they are. Nikki, who spent most of her pre-college years "trying to be with white American friends," reflected that in college she began to confront and challenge the parent-child relationship. For others, simply moving out of their hometowns into larger metropolitan areas and cities was a profound experience. Mike, for instance, mentioned that "the turning point" in his life was when he moved to a larger city where his life started anew.

For intercountry adoptees, returning to their place of birth is perhaps the most emotionally challenging experience. Korean adoptees return to Korea for a variety of reasons, and it opens up the "Pandora's box" of deep-seeded emotional issues. Gwen returned to Korea because "thoughts and feelings" stirred up urging her to find her "roots." Heidi, who was working full time at a language institute in Korea, reflected that returning to Korea filled "this big empty blank thing" in her life. As well, Teresa

recognized that by going to Korea, she was able to confront this "Pandora's box" of identity issues "that are a part of you" rather than "always wondering" about one's Korean heritage. Julie, reflecting on a homeland tour to Korea, expressed excitement and elation about "being with all the other people like me, with stories like mine…looked like me…and I never had that before and I think it was amazing being in Korea, don't get me wrong, but it was even more amazing being with like fifteen other Korean adoptees just like me." Returning to Korea is a dramatic way for adoptees to find meaning, "trying to understand what happened" and accepting the consequences that were "made without their consent." Being in Korea provides a natural space to check out their heritage and find the important piece of the puzzle that has been missing in their lives.

One of the most tangible things an adoptee can do to affirm their Korean identity is to learn the Korean language. Their inability to speak the language represents a loss of culture and family for the adoptees. Adoptees immerse themselves in Korea in order to learn the language, thereby affirming their status as a "true" Korean and communicating with their birth family. They do so in order to "feel more Korean" and to "have people respect" them as authentic Koreans. This was the case for Natalie. She remembered: "I had it in my head in order to feel more Korean or be accepted by Koreans, I would have to speak Korean." Adoptees try to attain these language skills in order to assuage the insecurities they develop over the years of constant repression towards their Korean heritage. By attempting to learn the Korean language, they are experimenting with the idea of becoming Korean. Learning the language, however, elicits a new set of emotions. This "burden" of relearning the language has hit Teresa on a "very personal level" as she began communication with her family.

Confronting identity is often intimately linked to searching for the birth family. The search process could be a cathartic experience as they try to satiate something inside them about the questions of abandonment and the meaning of family. However, the primordial connection to the biological "family" complicates their feelings toward them. Eric declared how he was "ready to make some transitions" in his life while acknowledging "this guilt that I never felt enough to look for my birth family, like it was there in the background and I needed to do something to address it." Eric's guilt for not wanting to find birth family arises from the unspoken expectation that all adoptees need to search for birth family. Again, the burden is ultimately placed on the adoptee to seek out answers to the questions relating to their abandonment. The search for birth family also stems from adoptees' inability to feel at home in their adopted family. They are constantly faced with questions about their fit, intimating perhaps their true "home" is with their biological family. Matt reflected: "I look to find someone I belong to…because I think every man has an interest in pursuit of where we come from with parents, so most of the people, they know where they come from so they don't think about that." The racial differences of the adoptees remind them of the "unnatural" relationship to both the adoptee and society, thereby compelling them to find the authentic family ties through a biological search.

The search for the birthmother inadvertently but ultimately place blame on the mother for abandoning them, but they also ironically rely on the mother to heal their pain. Dana, after years of attachment therapy, placed strong emphasis on meeting her birthmother, dreaming up "fantasies about what she was going to be like" as she opened herself up to confront her mother. David focused on learning Korean so that he would be

able “to talk to my mother in Korean,” and Lori became “sympathetic” for her “birthmother” after she found out she would no longer be able to have children of her own, focusing a new search for a “biological connection” towards her birthmother. Societal norms rooted in our culture implicitly demand that mothers exhibit unconditional love, protection, and responsibility toward their children. Koreans, too, place all responsibility on the pregnant mother, absolving men of responsibility toward their children and forcing women to bear the consequences of abortion or adoption (Kim 2003). This became evident when Mike began his search for his birth family. He realized that the adoption agency in Korea only maintained a brief record of the mother without reference to the father. Thus, it is not surprising that many adoptees look toward the birthmother simultaneously as a target of their blame and as a source of reconciliation.

Intercountry adoptees often view their adoptee-centered identity through the lens of race, ethnicity, gender and other difference constructions. They try to peel off layers of these socially constructed, master statuses by moving in and out of the overlapping identity markers, which complicate rather than address the core adoption issues. Thus, organizations that promote racial and cultural understanding of minorities naturally attract adoptees who wish to explore and understand the complexity of their identity. For Teresa, exploration of her identity began with the acknowledgement that she shared similar experiences of racism with other people of color and particularly other Asians. Participating in students of color organizations provided a point of entry where adoptees felt less intimidated to explore their identity questions. For Ann, joining an Asian group was a “huge leap” for her because she had spent all of her life trying to erase “Asianness” and internalizing the negative attributes of being Asian.

Adoptees also situate themselves in settings where they could meet other Korean adoptees as they begin to explore more of what it means to be Korean and adopted. For Teresa, this deeper and more personal level of exploration started in college where she began to think "of Korea" and "this issue of adoption." When adoptees begin to explore their deep seeded issues pertaining to adoption, they naturally seek comfort and camaraderie with those who have similar experiences. However, the experience is not always positive. Carly shared how this inquiry process also has its frustrations. She observes: "Surely I have had my frustrations with Korean culture and long discussions with my Korean friends about that, but for the most part, it's been good." Carly recognized that even though her friendships with Koreans have brought her closer to learning more about her identity as a Korean adoptee, it also affirmed the cultural differences that are not so optimistic, which made her feel uneasy. Unquestionably, growing up in a western society instills different values from Korea about sexism, family, and race; all topics that adoptees must face when they confront crisis.

While interacting with other Asians, Koreans and adoptees indicates a desire on the adoptees' part to confront some of their identity issues, they still experience distress and discomfort because it goes against a lifetime of actions used to deny the Korean adoptee identity. Dana shared:

> I didn't want anything to do with Korea until about a year ago. I got involved with A___[Asian American student office on her campus] last year and I didn't really fit in there and I didn't meet any adoptees. I felt like I needed to start facing my history. I had to redefine myself and ask myself why I was running from being Korean and an adoptee when it is who I am.

Though Dana sought to answer questions about her identity, she still felt distress being surrounded by other Asians. This discomfort, as she revealed, arose from the pain

she has felt regarding her “history” of being adopted. Recognizing how her discomfort stems from her unwillingness to redefine herself as a Korean adoptee, she still placed herself in connection with other Asians in the hope of finding a common experience that affirms her identity.

For others, confronting crisis also takes the form of investing time and energy into starting research on intercountry adoption as well as working for adoption related agencies, including the adoption agencies, the post adoption services, and the adoptee organizations. As adoptees enter adulthood, they begin to conduct some of their own research on adoption as they begin evaluating their place within the family, their community, as well as on a larger scale globally. Heidi discussed how she “ended up doing a project in class on adoption.” She was inundated with resources on the internet recalling about the “stuff on the web that hadn’t been there when I was younger.” With the aid of technologies, adoptees are able to tap into resources within the safe haven of their own home or room. For adoptees like Ann, exploring her Asian identity is a “struggle” that begins with small safe steps. Ann said she hopes she will be able to “tackle” and “be ok with my sense of identity” by the time she finishes graduate school. Adoptees approach some of the peripheral issues surrounding their adoption by conducting research and reading about other race and adoption studies. This option provides a less threatening way to explore their own life situation by being able to compartmentalize the first exploratory steps as academic work rather than as emotional work.

Some adoptees convince themselves that the pain from losing their birth family is replaced by the opportunities they have in their adopted country. Internalizing this

rhetoric propagated by adoption agencies, adoptees often find a way to give back. Nikki recalled how the “opportunity” to work “at an adoption agency” was met with “great expectations.” She noted how she “was thinking it would be a great opportunity to give back to an organization that provided so many opportunities.” When adoptees begin searching for answers about their own adoption experience, it makes sense for some to place themselves in a position where they can explore first hand some of the intricacies behind adoption, trying to search for explanations that speak to losing their first family. Working in post-adoption services, specifically those run by adoptees or by non-adoptive parents, also provides a natural setting to confront more personal identity questions. These agencies enable adoptees to gain access to information on birth searches, translation services, language tutoring, and social outlets connecting adoptees. Hence David found himself “first volunteering,” and then ultimately “working full time” at an adoptee-run organization.

When adoptees realize where they fit in the larger context of intercountry adoption, some engage in activism as they continue to experiment with multiple layers of their own identity. These adoptees question adoption in a critical way in their attempts to contextualize the experience of racism and alienation growing up in all white homes and communities. Teresa commented: “I don’t think I could have grown up thinking I’m white and that’s okay, because I had experiences of racism and feelings of alienation and because I knew I was aware of the unequal social structures that exist in the US…I wanted to learn about how it related to race and also adoption.” Indeed, when adoptees see the connection between the larger macro structures like culture and economics and intercountry adoption, they are drawn to activism and advocacy work. Working with

other adoptees possibly as mentors created an almost therapeutic outlet for them to think reflexively about their experiences in the context of helping others. Dana pointed out that mentoring "offers them something from your own experience…I wish I would have had someone to hang out with that looks like me." By making sure these younger adoptees have more support as an adoptee and "less questions" about their "identity," adult adoptees are able to be much more retrospective about their own questions of race, abandonment, loss, and identity.

As demonstrated by the multitude of experiences, adoptees undergo a crisis of identity when they are able to recognize the dissonance between what they want to feel and the socially ascribed notions about who they are. At the center of this paradox is their longing to anchor their identity, some place where they can feel at home without having to constantly question if they belong. In the course of exploring their identity, they situate themselves in settings where they could test out the multiple layers of master statuses that complicate their adoptee identity. It is important to note that not every adoptee wishes to explore their identity; many simply choose not to entertain questions about their identity.

Heidi, Kristi, Gwen, Nikki and Amy are caught in a cultural dichotomy where none of their American or Korean identity fulfills their life. They are still trying to negotiate multiple, often contradictory, identities in a society that does not allow adoptees to claim both. The difficulty of integrating both of their American and Korean identities is a reflection of our larger society that cannot handle the hybrid of ethnic identities, forcing adoptees to choose one or the other. Indeed, they often find themselves trying to entrench themselves completely into Asian culture while maintaining a distance from association with white communities. James and David both talked about how they "over

adapted" in order to be "200% Korean" wanting "everything to do with Asia and Korea." Though they now have found themselves in a more balanced space trying to negotiate and incorporate both of their Korean and western identities, they spend a great deal of energy trying to reverse an entire lifetime of rejecting their Asianness by overcompensating exploring what it means to be Asian and Korean. Again, in a society that offers little support for hybrid cultural identities, it is not surprising that the adoptees' identity "pendulum" swings to both extremes between their Korean and Western cultures.

Negotiation

In the course of their identity exploration, adoptees negotiate meaning within the social and cultural contexts of interaction. The consequences of these experiences result in an array of outcomes, including disappointment, deeper crisis, and further discovery. These encounters shape how they view themselves in relation to society. In this process, they work through stereotypes, question different identities, and reevaluate the meaning of belonging to groups such as American, European, Asian, Korean, or adoptee.

Adoptees begin to dig deeply and reflexively about their experiences by analyzing and confronting the contradictory societal expectations. For Heidi, her "life changing trip to Korea enabled her to confront the model minority stereotype that had been guiding her life choices. She noted: "I was wrapped up in this identity of being this smart perfect Asian girl…and I was subconsciously always looking to explain that part of myself. Who am I? I didn't wanna ask those questions, and it was just easier to fill a stereotype." Upon returning home from Korea, something clicked inside her. She commented: "I was just going to start doing things for myself. And, exploring my Korean adoptee identity…allowed me to walk away from med school. I wouldn't have been strong

enough to do it earlier." The trip to Korea helped her recognize how popular stereotypes about Asian kids in the U.S. are unrealistic, but, more importantly, it gave her the confidence to examine who she is in alternative ways.

Kristy also recalled how her trip to Korea helped her explore and affirm her "Koreanness," which she had tried to push aside growing up in the United States. Her efforts to learn about what it means to be Korean created an inner conflict that challenged her previous notion of being an "American." She explained:

> So just being over there and trying to fully immerse myself and I just tried to push away the whole American thing and really identify with the Korean side. But, when I got back to the States, I couldn't really go back to the same life before because it was a struggle. I didn't think I could pick up where I had been and so it was an adjustment period trying to decide where I was supposed to be, and then a feeling of am I Korean or am I American? And trying to figure out and identify with that Korean part and make them come together because all my life I had grown up trying to be American. That was the biggest hardship.

The new problem for Kristy is finding ways to integrate a new understanding with the old self. While Kristy struggled with the shock of reentry into the American culture, Gwen had experienced for the first time in Korea the contradictory feeling of being a racial majority but knowing she does not belong culturally. The experience of being in a country where she could blend in with the majority was extremely therapeutic for her. In the U.S. her racial status had defined her as an outsider, but in Korea she could "pass" as a Korean. These experiences, however, begged the question: "Am I American or Korean?" Amy, who is now living in Korea, agreed that going to Korea was an escape from living in an all white community, but remained pessimistic about what all that means. She elaborated:

> I just don't think that adoptees are ever able to be happy. There's the abandonment issue, and I have low self-esteem. I don't like myself all the time, and I used to hit myself because I was just in so much pain…I think

> it's horrible to live in all white communities, and it really messes up adoptees even more. This is one of the reasons for returning to Korea. I think adoptees who do return to Korea to live don't have very good experiences growing up and are very disgruntled with the adoptee experience.

Not all adoptees return to Korea, but some find a way to work for an adoption agency that can provide more information about the adoption process. Initially, many work for agencies because they are usually represented in a positive light. They believe that working for the agencies is a way for them to give back what they have gained as adoptees. However, for Nikki, her experience there compelled her to question the rhetoric she was told as a child about the necessity for her adoption. She recalled:

> I think I was fed that line…after a time I was very disillusioned by all the politics involved at the agency and it really was like a business...But one good thing came out of working there, I was able to learn about the adult adoptee community…I learned about the 2004 Gathering…so that brought me here to Korea.

Realizing that the profit motive is the driving force of the adoption agencies, rather than giving children "opportunities," made her reflect upon how she had internalized these ideologies as a child. Asking critical questions about her role at the agency compelled her to seek out another outlet for exploring her identity: the adoptee community.

Although returning to Korea is a dramatic way to discover their "root" identity, it does not necessarily lead to affirmation of their "Koreanness." In fact, many adoptees experience rejection and readjust their initial attitude toward Korea. They become painfully conscious of the fact that the Korean society and culture does not reflect their fantasies about being accepted; they remain on the margins in their country of birth. This realization completely reorients their attitude, and they begin to dis-identify again with

anything Korean. For Mike, the cultural differences, particularly his inability to speak Korean, made him realize that he does not quite belong. He implored:

> Because you want to love Korea, you want to love it all. And you certainly want to be a part of it. Which is impossible if you can't speak the language and as an adoptee, it is even more tough, 'cause you never get that second change. It will never be enough for us looking like Koreans…So that's the saddest thing about it all. We will not fully belong here too. We are all the time somewhere in the middle. You're an adoptee…that's it.

He left Korea feeling defeated because his hopes of being accepted into the Korean society never materialized.

Unlike Mike, Lori had vivid memories of Korea prior to her adoption. When she returned to Korea, she realized that all of her images of Korea were simply in her mind and did not reflect the reality. The inconsistencies left her feeling like a stranger in someone else's land. Lori explained:

> When I saw Korea from the airport, it was so surreal. Nothing like I remembered. That is why, a big reason why I didn't like Korea. It made me lose some memory of what I remember Korea being like. Nothing was familiar. This is where I was born, but it felt like I lost a lot of Korean identity when I went to Korea. It's like they ruined it. It made me really sad and I couldn't find anything. I thought I was more Korean before I went to Korea but now I realize that I'm not really Korean because I didn't like most of the food…the attitude, they are very ethnocentric. If you don't speak the language you are ostracized. That part was very disappointing because before I was very proud, but now I don't want to be Korean…I remember thinking, I felt like all of us were products the country could make money off of us. A product of Korea to make money and get out of the slums of war, and Korea did make a lot of money off of us, that's another reason why I don't like Korea.

Because Lori's identity as a Korean was wrapped up in the memories of a six-year old, when she returned to Korea as an adult and realized it was not the same, it ultimately shattered the identity she had created over the years, leaving her angry, sad, and wanting to run from the "ruined" notion of Korea and ultimately her identity.

Janice also felt good about being included in the racial majority, but it was too superficial for her to anchor her identity. Besides, it was her "Americanized" cultural self that stood out among the Koreans, which ironically placed her as an outsider. Janice explained:

> In general the trip was good, but I still felt out of place. I felt everyone knew I wasn't obviously from there, and that was weird and then when I did meet my birthmother, I saw her. She was just a tiny little person, five feet tall, and I'm five-foot-four, and we didn't fit in because of how we dressed and acted. It's just a strange thing because that's where you come from but not what you know.

Not ready to quite embrace Korea, Janice's insecurities about her Korean identity centered on overwhelming cultural differences. The compelling desire to reunite with her birthmother overshadowed the things that give substance to cultural concepts like family and community.

Interactions with birth family do not always follow the "storybook" happy ending images that we see on television shows. For Natalie, meeting her birthmother was far removed from the fairy-tale like depiction of the reunions. Natalie found herself awkwardly confronting her birthmother, and she was surprised by the painful emotions it unleashed. She confided: "the reality is that it can be really awkward. So now that I've done that, people ask me if I've met my birth family and now I can say yes, but I don't want to talk about it with people. It's kinda painful." After meeting her birthmother who declined to keep in touch, she concluded that "my idea of family is not people I'm related to, but my family who are with me, people who are always around me." Realizing that her initial hope of sharing a biological connection with her birthmother will not occur, she negotiated the experience in relation to her concept of family so that she does not have to confront the painful reality of being abandoned twice by her birthmother.

In many of these encounters, adoptees learn that their biological mothers are not ready to meet them. This could have a devastating impact on them. Dana recalled the experience:

> It was devastating because I was ten at the time, and I had all these fantasies about what she was going to be like and what my life would have been like. I don't think I have recovered to this day. We came so close and were standing outside her door and I wasn't asking for anything, I just wanted to see her or even a picture. And it's been really difficult and I've done a lot to process that to this day, but it's definitely been really difficult…

This forced her to recognize how unrealistic her expectations were about being reunited with her birthmother. Because she had interpreted this encounter as a second abandonment, she consciously distanced herself from anything that would remind her of Korea.

Similarly, when his birthmother refused to see him, Mike entered into a state of deep depression, reigniting the profound feelings of loneliness, anger, and mistrust. He shared:

> I realize that being abandoned and sent away is a different thing [than someone with handicaps], I feel lonely sometimes, cynical sometimes, sometimes very angry. But mostly, it has given me some answers why I have so hard time keeping good relationships with people, why I can't trust people. Every time I meet another human being, it's like that…Right now I don't feel that I can be engaged with any questions about adoption. The news about her that I received has made me feel that I don't want to come back to Korea and I don't want to be associated with any adoptee community for now.

Confronted with the hard realization that the woman whose role is to love unconditionally has failed him twice, it shatters any prospect of rebuilding a family with the birth family. He finds no meaning in trying to work hard to reestablish family ties or even to relate to other adoptees.

Mike and Dana both held onto the hope that by finding their birth family, they would be able to fill a void in their lives and to work through the pain of their initial abandonment. When the encounters did not materialize as they had hoped, the adoptees either redefined a sense of family or disengaged from Korea and adoption as an act of self-preservation. Lori and Janice, too, had their preconceived notions shattered from their visit to Korea. They found themselves in an awkward position where their desire to be accepted as Koreans in the Korean society did not come true. When their experiences did not live up to their expectations, they easily turned away from the culture that had rejected them. They are now confounded by the realization that they belong neither in their adoptive and birth countries.

These events trigger an identity negotiation process whereby they begin to assess the meanings associated with the concepts that define their identity. The notion of family is central to their identity development, but, for many, such a concept is further destabilized by the experiences that contradict their understanding and desires. The incongruity of experiences based on the conflicts of race and culture in both the adoptive and birth countries compounds the problem of defining a coherent understanding of belonging. Some of the adoptees, however, find a way to navigate through a complex of emotional hurdles and cultural barriers.

Redefinition

In redefinition, adoptees have affirmed an aspect of their identity with a feeling of confidence and more inner peace. This element, however is transitory, like the other elements, and does not necessarily incorporate a redefinition of all aspects of an adoptee's identity. Redefinition is contingent upon intervening social and cultural

structural factors that an adoptee encounters throughout their lifetime. For example, an adoptee may be at a place of peace in terms of being viewed as an Asian, but still be struggling with abandonment issues related to adoption. Adoptees redefine their group membership as an adoptee, Korean, Westerner, and combined their Korean and Western cultures. They are more readily accepting of their current life situation with birth and adopted families, acknowledging where they realistically are in terms of their identity exploration.

Continually fighting a "foreigner" status in both their adoptive communities and in Korea, adoptees redefine their sense of membership and belonging. Living in a Western country with a predominantly Caucasian population, their race will always betray their membership in a western society that views them as a "foreigner" (Takaki 1998). Hoping to be accepted in a country where they physically look like the majority, adoptees are disheartened to learn that they will never quite fit into this Korean culture either, having grown up culturally Western, and lacking the language skills and cultural knowledge. Not belonging in either culture leaves adoptees negotiating in a new space as an adoptee. Joseph and Mike simply articulated:

> Joseph: I am an adoptee. I'm not Korean, I'm not [European].
>
> Mike: So, that's the saddest thing about it all. We will not fully belong here too. We are all the time somewhere in the middle. You're an adoptee…that's it.

Both Korean and Western societies' betrayal of adoptees leaves them feeling a rejection of both these cultures in favor of a "third space," as Hubinette (2004) discusses, where an identity revolving around the experiences as a transnational intercountry adoptee is the only true membership they can occupy where they will be completely accepted.

Instead of removing membership to both their birth and adoptive country, some adoptees, recognizing they will never identify 100 percent with either culture, try to come to a compromise where they incorporate both cultures. Understanding that they are "a product of both cultures," adoptees' re-definition incorporates aspects of both Korean and Western cultures, acknowledging membership towards a larger Korean Diaspora, and feeling comfortable with where they are in terms of their identity process. They come to the decision on their own, which is an empowering experience. Rather than having others tell them how to feel and what to do, they have taken ownership of creating their own experiences and defining their reality.

Heidi defined her Koreanness as a representation of the physical attributes of race that define her culturally as an outsider in the American context. She recognized the unfair expectations placed on adoptees who are perceived as "not being Korean enough" precisely because culturally she is not Korean but American.

> After living in Korea, I realized that I define my "Korean-ness" as my blood and my appearance, much more so than my culture. I feel very culturally American (although a racial minority in America). However, I dislike it when people accuse adoptees of not being "Korean" enough. I think we are forever indelibly Korean from being born there and being caught in a transnational system and industry of adoption that Korea willingly participated in (and we did not).

Heidi no longer feels compelled to fit into preconceived notions of what a Korean is and what constitutes an American. Recognizing the unique aspects of being born to one culture and raised in another, she can take aspects from each based on how she feels her experiences have defined her rather than having others define who she is supposed to be.

After Eric visited Korea, he was able to put to rest his concerns about having people misidentify him as a Korean rather than as a "Korean American." He recognized that he shared a common experience as part of the Korean Diaspora. He claimed

membership to this group which gives him a sense of pride rather than shame where there is no question regarding his rights to this membership. He also felt a sense of relief that he no longer has to "choose" between cultures or feel "trapped" between them because he now associated himself as part of the unique community of Korean Adoptees.

> I see my part as part of the Korean Diaspora but I also see I was culturally American but I am proud of being an adoptee. You have unique experiences…the pride stems from the fact that I am part of a unique community and unique history…And actually the more I think about it, it makes complete sense to me as why I feel proud. Because I think, with myself and other people, we felt trapped between two cultures and we're never really sure which cultures we belong to, are we Korean, American? Like my friends, are they Jewish? Culturally? Religiously? I think a lot of Koreans feel like they have to choose or are trapped because they feel like one side may not accept them or both sides won't accept them, so I think with the adoptee community now, we have made the choice to say, this is our community, we have a unique story, unique voice, a community we created for ourselves. With me, I have chosen to make myself a part of, it's very powerful because you don't have anyone choosing for me, it's a choice I made for myself.

It is not surprising that Eric feels a sense of pride and empowerment. He is able to make his own decisions about who he is without having non-adoptees tell him how to define himself. His ability to proactively define a sense of self is "powerful" in that it represents, for the first time, a capacity to take ownership of his identity.

Some adoptees become comfortable with the realization that they are, as James notes, "a product of both…Western and Asian cultures." This comfort allows the adoptees to feel a sense of "balance" and "pride." For Kristy, going back to Korea and meeting her birth family helped bring some closure about her past, allowing her to "feel better about who I am." While she still has some longing about living in Korea, she recognized that accepting her situation as an adoptee, and a minority, combined with her experiences in Korea, "helps strengthen" her and feel a sense of pride for embracing both American and Korean cultures.

After visiting Korea, some adoptees come to the realization that their fantasies regarding Korea are just that, fantasies. This realization helps them overcome their longing for something that cannot exist: growing up in Korea with their birth family. Understanding that adoption muddies their ability to ever recapture that Korean family portrait, adoptees can at least begin to accept their life situation and move forward. They also feel a sense of relief that they no longer feel drawn towards disclaiming their Korean heritage.

Dana reflected on how her experiences in Korea were educationally meaningful in helping her deal with emotional issues. She was able to finally put in perspective her fantasies about her birthmother while taking away from the trip the empowering experiences of finally feeling a sense of belonging. These experiences helped bring her to a place of peace with her adoptive family and life in America:

> Even though it was horrible not meeting my birth mom, I did get a lot out of the trip [to Korea]. I had all these fantasies about how it could have been and I think it was really important for me to put those into perspective. It helped me to accept my life here and my family here…but it helped me in my adolescence. There's nothing like that feeling that you belong somewhere in the world and you're not alone. That was really powerful. I'll never forget that. And I got to meet one of my four foster moms and the doctor that delivered me, and I look back at the trip as painful but I also go a lot out of it.

Dana has not forgotten the trauma of being rejected the second time by her birthmother, however. She added: "part of me is just so traumatized that I'm not sure I'll ever get back there, because there is just a lot of emotion and going back with the possibility of a third rejection."

Janice, after spending so much energy on avoiding her Korean heritage, has made peace at the moment with being different, realizing that she is now more aware of the race issues, and "happy" that she can still claim her heritage as a "positive thing."

Adoptees like Dana and Janice, who are able to experience Korea and confront their fantasies against the realities of their current life situation, are able to put to rest some of their unrealistic expectations about "what could have been" in Korea. They take away from the experience some positive perspectives on Korea and their heritage and accept their current situations

Redefinition for adoptees does not always incorporate embracing Korean culture. In fact, the fear of confronting the negative aspects of Korean culture and adoption, including racism and abandonment, gives the adoptee "permission" to disengage with Korea. For Lori, returning to Korea had the opposite effect of integrating Korea into her identity. Prior to her trip, Lori was proud of being Korean, though upon her return to Korea, it made her feel less Korean as she learned more about the ethnocentric aspects of the culture. In addition, because her definition of what is "Korean" did not mesh with what she feels is the societal definition of being "Korean," Lori felt even more alienated:

> I don't feel Korean at all, except for the fact that I like kimchi. But even in Korea I didn't like all the Korean food. I don't feel Asian at all. So it's hard because honestly I don't feel like I fit in anywhere, not Korean, not totally American. I have a disability, but I'm really independent… I thought I was more Korean before I went to Korea but now I realize that I'm not really Korean because I didn't like most of the food. But even the attitude, they are very ethnocentric, very. If you don't speak the language, you are ostracized. That part was very disappointing in being Korean because before I was very proud, but now I don't want to be Korean.

Lori's fear of confronting loss and abandonment has paralyzed her into a strict definition of what it means to be "Korean" and how she can never fit into the confines of that definition. Fueling her disappointment in her "root" country, the negative aspects of ethnocentrism and xenophobia further made her want to separate rather than attach to the culture. Lori did, however, recognize the connections between "her loss of a biological link" with her negative perspectives on Korea.

Ann, like Lori, is not at a place where she identifies with Korea, albeit for different reasons. Ann's fears of confronting all of the issues related to abandonment and "that can of worms" about her adoption has resulted in her "internalized racism" and "repression" of her Asian identity. Recognizing how she is unable to confront these issues by making up excuses. She admitted:

> I think there's always something that comes up that I get really excited about again that always takes priority over me getting involved with the Asian community because it's something that I have repressed. So I haven't even done anything right now about it. I think what I found through my experience is that I'll eventually approach it when I have time and when I feel I am able to do it and really comprehend and dedicate the time and energy toward that research and towards my Asian identity and right now I'm ok with that.

Indeed, Ann finally resigned herself to the fact that she will live with the repression and hopes to approach it again when she makes it a priority in her life, and can come to a place when she can overcome the fear of the pain embedded in being adopted and abandoned.

The fear of having to deal with all of the repressed emotions and pain involved with their adoption often leaves adoptees, like Ann and Lori, redefining themselves apart from the very culture that reminds them of why this implicit fear arises in the first place.

Identity Formation as a Dynamic Process

To illustrate how identity formation is dynamic, ongoing, and non-linear, I present an analysis of one of the adoptees in the study. Mike, an adoptee from Europe, began his understanding of being an intercountry Korean adoptee in denial and avoidance. Noting how he "hated other Asians" and viewed them as "silly, weak, ugly nerds" illustrates the internalized hostility and anger he felt towards himself about not being able "to fit in."

Mike suggested the confines and narrow mindedness of his small hometown made him want to "fit the norm…fit in."

Mike experienced the element of crisis when he was confronted with a positive image of Asians that contradicted the negative internalized messages he had growing up as a child. Leaving his small hometown to attend a university in a large city, he was immediately approached by photographers and model scouts. This interaction caused Mike to experience crisis as it represented the first time being Asian was viewed as a positive trait. This new knowledge made Mike question his identity and learn more about his Korean heritage. He noted, "the turning point in my life and my view of Asians was when I came to [city]…I was getting an offer to be a part of some commercial movies and work as a photo model…and I was like, someone thinks I am good looking." He also processed the reality that he thought "Asian women were good looking." Negotiating this new perspective on Asians brought him back into crisis and exploration where he began learning more about Asian movies, admitting that he liked them, and then met his first Korean adoptee shortly thereafter. The interaction with this adoptee resulted in more negotiation of the information he had on what it meant to be an adoptee. He recalled,

> I read an article a year before that he had wrote when he told that adoptee people have a shorter way to commit suicide than other nationals, because of their adoption, and I remember I started to cry when I read that, cause I think adoptees are so unaware of all the common things we share…and Asian people still are presented in negative ways.

Instead of anger and vitriol towards Asians, Mike redefined his position as feeling sad and sorry for Asians and adoptees. He also redefined how he viewed himself going from "ugly" to "good looking" though he reveals at the time, it was:

> first that I was good looking, then my identity as an Asian came later because I think some don't have the power, the support to dare confront their identity as an Asian. As well, I think it's very hard and painful, so I

> think some people can't cope with it. I don't believe that they are not interested. I think we all are. But the main reason must be the racism against Asian people.

Mike then had an encounter with another immigrant at school who experienced racism. They discussed their similar experiences and realized that racism was behind an abundance of their negative experiences and negative self-image. "We started to talk and we could recognize similar experiences and it was all caused by racism, we were treated a certain way because of how we looked. I also discovered that myself but it got more reliable when I found out that other people felt the same way." Mike negotiated this new information that racism was the impetus behind some of the pain of his childhood and the self-hatred he internalized for so long. Wanting to break from this damaging self-image, he entered into more crisis and exploration, entrenching himself in "Korean films" in order to see examples of "beautiful Korean couples living in a modern house with a modern attitude, and I identified with the man." Seeing Koreans as "beautiful" and "modern" was negotiated with past images of "weak" and "silly" with beautiful and modern winning out. Mike then redefined his self image to include Korean as he began to identify with the men in the Korean movies.

Replacing negative Korean images with positive ones led him back into crisis and exploration because he realized he felt a dissonance with his past actions of denying his Korean identity and his newfound realization that having pride and interest in Korea can be enriching. He recalled: "I have so many wasted years where I didn't do anything interesting with my life. So when I decided I want to go to Korea, it all came down pretty fast…and the experience was lovely." The positive experience in Korea prompted Mike to return again to Korea and conduct a birth search. His second time in Korea, however, was "much worse. I was there for two months and the first two weeks I wanted to go

home every single day." Mike talks about the difficulties of belonging in Korea, and how he realized, "we will not fully belong here too." Mike negotiated the experiences he had the second time in Korea where his identity as a Korean was questioned because he "couldn't speak Korean" and how his white girlfriend was "treated like a film star." Recognizing the unequal treatment and distance Koreans displayed towards Mike caused him to redefine himself no longer as Korean or European, but rather just "an adoptee."

During his birth search, Mike's expectations and hopes of a reunion was shattered by the news that his birth mother had no wish to see him, which ultimately reopened wounds of abandonment that influenced his initial denial and avoidance of his Korean identity. He negotiated that the pain from this second abandonment outweighed any positive benefits he received from engaging with and learning about Korea and the adoptee community. Hence he redefined his position apart from adoption, adoptee communities, and Korean communities and back into the element of denial and avoidance. He noted,

> Right now I don't feel that I can be engaged with any questions about adoption…I've never learned anything from her, because I still haven't heard anything from her. The news about her that I received 1 ½ years ago, has made me feel that I don't want to come back to Korea and from that result I've felt that I don't want to be associated with any adoptee community, for now.

Mike's story is one that illustrates how identity is dynamic and recursive rather than linear and progressive. The situational interactions in his life prompted Mike to enter in and out of the various elements as he negotiated new information, experienced crisis and exploration, redefined himself, experienced more crisis and exploration, continual negotiation and redefinition, and ultimately reentered denial and avoidance.

Conclusion: An Ongoing Process of Identity Formation

The identity formation of intercountry adoptees provides a description of the different elements that adoptees experience throughout their lives. This process is an ongoing, recursive one that continues throughout the lifetime of an adoptee, and depending on the social factors they encounter throughout life, these factors will influence how they process their identity. Adoptees undergo different experiences based on the substance of encounters.

Carly, a driving need to understand and be understood by others impacted her actions that situate her in various cultural and social spaces in both Korean and Western societies. Hence she acknowledged that she will continue to explore how this understanding forms her identity and brings about "closure and growth." She explained:

> I've acquired this insatiable need to understand. I feel a lot of who I am as an adoptee has to do with being misunderstood. I also think misunderstanding plays a role in adoption in Korea (culturally speaking). Thus, for me, my understanding is my therapy. And understanding allows closure and growth.

Carly is still involved in an ongoing process of understanding who she is as an adoptee. Identity for Korean adoptees is not so much a development from one beginning stage to a final end stage; rather, it is an ongoing self-assessment process that involves reflexivity, exploration, negotiation, crisis, discovery and redefinition. Intercountry adoptees respond to the varied social and cultural contexts of interaction, in order to retain a semblance of balance and consistency in their lives. The dramatic ups and downs of emotions they experience is a reflection of the contradictory societal norms impinging upon the identity development of intercountry adoptees. As Gwen notes, "I was seeking comfort, acceptance, and inner peace. There were thoughts and feelings stir up that I felt I

needed to go back to my roots to discover who I am, was. Till this day I think about my past, trying to understand it and to accept it, whatever that might be."

CHAPTER V

THE EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

Tightly interwoven into the fabric of identity formation of intercountry adoptees are emotions. Korean adoptees are compelled to manage emotions because there is a fundamental conflict between social expectations and their inner feelings. The social expectations that inform us how we should feel in certain action contexts are referred to as the feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979). These rules are further mediated by the master social statuses of Korean adoptees, such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. This chapter demonstrates that intercountry adoptees define their identity by the very act of engaging in emotion management work, as they navigate through the socially ascribed feeling rules and mediate social and cultural norms.

A defining feature of intercountry adoptee identity rests on their ability to deal effectively with the basic fact of adoption. Unlike the identity formation of racial minorities, adoptees must constantly struggle to find appropriate social entities to which they can anchor their identity. These social organizations include their family, community, nationality and race; for intercountry adoptees, each of these identity markers is a contested terrain where they could easily be excluded. The difficulty in answering the simple question, “who are you?” is indicative of the shifting identity markers that reflect their social marginalization. This profound sense of “un-belonging” represents the source of identity crisis, but their identity is compounded and complicated by cultural ascriptions of master statuses. Non-adoptees seldom question the most basic

social unit to which they belong, but for adoptees, these basic social organizations represent identity fault lines where they must actively negotiate and legitimize their fit in the group. Needless to say, intercountry adoptees regulate their emotional responses in circumstances where their identity is called into question.

The different ways that Korean adoptees manage their emotions are explained through the lens of Hochschild's (1979, 1983, 2003) theory of emotion management. The theory consists of four main elements: surface acting, deep acting, ideological shift, and alternate feeling rules. Despite its strengths, the theory does not adequately capture the emotion work of intercountry adoptees. Adoptees, for instance, not only try to negotiate feeling rules associated with particular interaction contexts, but also manage multiple, *contradictory* expectations that shape their fractured identity. This fractured identity stems from their inability to claim membership to groups that the majority of the population take for granted. In order to make sense of multiple layers of emotions and feeling rules, intercountry adoptees create *parallel realities* where they are able to file away and retrieve the appropriate emotion responses.

Surface Acting

Surface acting occurs when adoptees suppress their own feelings in order to act out the latent feeling rules during a social exchange (Hochschild, 1979). For intercountry adoptees, the relevance of surface acting is manifested in their interaction with the adoptive and birth families, and through their emotion work on race and culture in day-to-day social interactions. These represent a few, but critical, encounter contexts in which intercountry adoptees form their sense of identity.

The theme of salvation or saving a child shapes the dynamics of intra-familial relations within the adoptive family. Whether intentional or not, the underlying message is that their parents saved them from an unfortunate circumstance. This notion reflects the paternalistic attitude of the U.S. toward Korea as embodied in images of lifting babies out of the war-torn countries under the guise of humanitarianism. In their attempt to avoid the second abandonment, many Korean adoptees exhibit feelings of gratitude and appreciation while suppressing their feelings of depression and ingratitude. The feelings of abandonment directed at the birth family and adoption are a bit more complex. In Korea, the cultural perceptions about blood ties complicate the general attitude toward adoption. The mother and child are blamed for being immoral and impure, respectively, but these generalized attitudes conflict with the emphasis on blood relations. The co-presence of contradictory social expectations becomes visible when adoptees reunite with the birth family. Adoptees must negotiate between these culturally specific feeling rules that further complicate their feelings of abandonment and the hope for reuniting with their family. In the face of race and cultural expectations in the generic process of everyday encounters, adoptees experience constant misidentification that becomes the source of tension. Adoptees display humor when they are misidentified, but in reality, they resent the assumptions people have as it forces them to question their identity and where they belong, rather than feel rooted.

Adoptive Family

Intercountry adoptees struggle to define their place within the adoptive family, especially when they stand out racially from the rest of the family members. When Korean adoptees are reminded that they are the subject of a benevolent act, this creates a

division within the intra-familial relations. The message of salvation implicitly devalues the culture and birth country of the adoptee and it causes the adoptees to distance themselves from anything that could link them to Korea.[44] These paternalistic attitudes of the United States toward Korea simultaneously elicit an unspoken expectation from adoptees that they should be grateful for the generosity of their adoptive family. Yet, the true feelings of an adoptee are very complicated. They may feel appreciative on one level but have deep resentment for being placed in a situation where they are forced to confront the reality that they are different from the rest of the family. This tension between society's expectation for adoptees and their actual feelings of resentment for being told that they don't quite belong compels them to engage in surface acting. They do so in order to fit in and to ground their identity with the adoptive family.

Bethany had a strong desire to be close to her adoptive family, but she confided that her adoptive parents were quite abusive with words. She spoke of the dilemma she felt toward her adoptive family: "It was always about her, which is sad; [my mother] always kind of threw back in my face what they did for me like I didn't deserve it and I owe them, which, of course, as a child, is hurtful." Bethany "kinda" feels "sad about" separating herself from her adoptive parents, but she opts to sever her ties with them

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[44] Examples are rampant on the internet as links to intercountry adoption discuss how parents can save a child from poverty, destitution, and even death with celebrities like Madonna and Angelina Jolie making "humanitarian efforts" in vogue. As ABC News reported on October 1, 2005, Jolie managed to get Zahara out at 6 months old. She was one of the lucky ones…"The reason these children are placed with international families is because they cannot be cared for in their country of origin," she added. When Jolie arrived back in the U.S. from her last adoption trip, the cameras started clicking again. She and little Zahara graced the covers of numerous magazines, and the public took note: http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Story?id=1175428&page=1. Articles like this one tug at our emotional strings, establishing very clear societal conventions suggesting the best option is to remove the children from their country and be "lucky" enough to be adopted into the United States.

because of the "toxicity" of the relationship. The decision to completely leave the family is never an easy one to make, given that they have no viable place to turn to for family support. However, for Bethany, it was obvious that she had been harboring negative feelings toward her adoptive parents for some time. She later talked about how she felt a bit of "satisfaction" knowing that her adoptive parents have not yet met their granddaughter. In her quest to find her "roots," Bethany began an active search for her "true" parents in Korea.

For many adoptees, the fear of abandonment heightens when they must move from one family to another. Lori, who was adopted for the second time at the age of nine, had to hold back the tears in order to present herself to look more adoptable in front of the new adoptive parents. She recalled:

> Both adopted and foster parents were abusive. I remember wishing I was a biological child to be like them…I was kind of glad to be out of that situation but at the same time I was sad that my [adoptive] mom didn't want me anymore. I was ready to move on because I was always looking for my new family. I remember trying to be strong and hiding my tears at night so I would be adopted by the family I was with at the time...I was so ready for a family; by the time my parents and sisters came, I just embraced them as my family with no hesitations. It took me until high school to get over the whole situation. I went through many years of depression and coming to terms with my past.

Lori felt compelled to appear cheerful even though her inner feelings were quite complex. Despite the painful memories of abuse, Lori wished that she was their "biological child" so that she would be "like them." This is not surprising because the abandonment experience is much more powerful than any abuse she might have experienced as an adoptive family member. In order to cope with depression from repeated rejection, she continued to suppress her emotions throughout her adolescent years. For Lori, growing up in an abusive family was painful, but it nonetheless offered

her a place she could call home. Her inability to ground her identity outside the adoptive family caused her to endure the painful experiences.

Many adoptees search for meaning within their adoptive family, and the subtleties of salvation messages have profound impact on adoptees. Lori and Bethany clearly experienced a great deal of pain at the hands of their adoptive parents, but not all adoptees feel the same sentiments regarding their adoptions. There is, however, implicit expectation that they should be appreciative toward the adoptive parents, and this causes them to surface act in order to assimilate into the adoptive family and ground their identity.

Birth Family

Korea's socially embedded attitudes toward adoption and the cultural notions of blood ties and family provide the basis of contradictory feeling rules for adoptees. Moral judgments are usually placed on the birthmother for abandoning her child, and, by extension, blame extends to the child who is viewed as a "bad seed." There are conflicting perceptions toward the child because on one hand, the public feels empathy towards the child for being abandoned, but on the other, regardless of fault, the child is also socially stigmatized for the alleged misbehavior of the birthmother. This may lead some Koreans to feel empathy for the child, while blaming the child for being the product of an undesirable union. The cultural importance placed on blood relations complicates social perceptions toward them when they reunite as a family again. Despite their past, there is a strong expectation that adoptees should forgive the family. Moreover, because blood is stronger than any cultural situation impacting the adoption, the adoptee is expected to receive the birth family unconditionally. Adoptees are hence expected to

forgive their parents and feel proud of their Korean culture, even when they feel angry or are made to feel shamed by other Koreans looking down on their life situation. These contradictory social perceptions in Korea surrounding adoption make it difficult for Korean adoptees to relate to their birth family or birth culture, dissipating hopes of fully anchoring their identity in Korea.

Keira expressed a need to love her birth family and regrets not being close, since conventional wisdom focuses on the natural love and connection one has with their biological parents. Keira shared similar experiences as other adoptees who find it difficult to connect with their birth parents despite how they are expected to feel. She revealed her true feelings: "even though I love my birth family, I do not see myself living with them. I think mainly because I don't feel very close to them (something I regret though)."

It is apparent that Keira does not feel the deep connection that is expected of blood relations. Her true self understands the difficulties required of her to "feel very close" to a family that ultimately abandoned her. She surface acts emotions of obligatory love, because it allowed her to stake some connection to parents that help define who she is. She recalled:

> I was looking into the eyes of the two people whose genes I had. I could finally see my nose in someone; identify whose eyes I had. I felt so lucky to be able to have them answer some of the questions about my family history and birth that I never knew.

Still she finds her identity floating between the two cultures where she is implicitly prevented from claiming full membership. Surface acting allows her to feel as close as she can to her birth family and culture without really knowing them.

Heidi discussed the complexity of emotions upon meeting her birth family. She reflected:

> That transition period is so hard; it was really difficult and I was working full time in a hakwon [or learning institute], and I couldn't take any time off and I was really emotional all the time and definitely it satiated something inside me I think-knowing. Because even if you feel like there was this big empty blank thing, you know not knowing ten months prior to my life. But actually that concept didn't seem really real to me before 2001. And then I realized, I don't know anything about my life for the first ten months. Nothing. I don't know anything and it really started to get to me. Even now, because my [birth] mother has passed away, I can fill in some of the blanks but not all of them. And I never met my foster mother with whom I spent like eight months. So a lot of it's such a mystery. And there's new sets of problems that comes with it like the language barrier with my family and cultural differences, that sort of thing…

Surface acting provided her an opportunity to feel like she finally found where she belongs, providing answers for situating her identity. Yet her true realizations are suppressed as the "cultural differences," and the lost time in a foster home make it almost impossible to ever fully anchor her identity to the birth family and culture.

Aspiring to fill in some missing pieces about their identity, Korean adoptees hope to find a connection in order to gain a better sense of who they are when they search for family in Korea. Many displayed the expected feelings of forgiveness and love as they were finally able to see a physical resemblance while still working through the reality that they do not quite belong. This realization may lead adoptees into crisis where they decide to explore more of their identity, attending to the emotional dissonance that still exists with birth family's expectations and their own feelings, or they might decide to remain content for the time being with their current redefinition of family. The contradicting social perceptions in Korea underlying adoption ultimately make it more difficult for adoptees to completely relate to birth family, and, as a result, it does not realistically provide an anchor for which they had hoped.

Race and Culture

Korean adoptees surface act in the face of being culturally misidentified in order to feel a sense of belonging in their adoptive country. In the United States, there is an expectation that an Asian should know something about their "root" culture. When the adoptee is incapable of responding to their culture of origin, it fuels resentment and frustration as it forces the adoptee to question their identity about where they belong. Often times adoptees like Gwen used laughter to deal with questions that accentuate their un-Americanness, suppressing feelings of frustration as it reminds them of how they are different. Displaying laughter when they surface act allows them to acknowledge the misidentification as trivial. They do this in order to reestablish a link and sense of belonging to the culture that they do know, as they try and distance themselves from a culture that rejected them.

Faced with society's expectations that Asians could not have an "American" name, Gwen talks about how such misidentification impacts her. She commented:

> My first and last name is American. I remember this one guy, I was working and saying my first and last name and he says, oh you must be married [laughing]…Having them pointed out that I was different was frustrating…because I wanted to be so much like my family. Not to be different.

When Gwen is reminded of her difference based on dominant assumptions of American identity, it forces her to confront her painful past in Korea where she was sold into indentured servitude. Gwen has every reason to distance herself from anything Korean, as it forced her to remember that she had "this horrible childhood" in Korea. She left her biological sister behind when she escaped to be free from the oppressive environment, feeling a deep sense of guilt and shame for making that choice. Coming to America was supposed to represent freedom, but she knows that this place also does not

fully accept her as an American. The constant reminder of her differences that link her to Korea compounded her anger. Despite these deep emotional feelings, she treated these encounters as though they did not matter to her. This allowed her to feel a connection to the country and culture that could help her forget the past. However, these continual misidentifications eventually brought her to crisis, driven by the powerful feeling of guilt for having left her sister behind and the need to search for a "link to the past."

Like Gwen, Vanessa downplayed encounters that question her Asian identity. Knowing she cannot identify with being Korean or Asian, she had no alternative but to claim an American identity. It is in this context that Vanessa surface acts in order to trivialize the questions about her race in her effort to maintain connection to the American culture. She does this while suppressing her feelings of anger when she is asked the question, "Where are you from?" Because of her physical features that render her as a perpetual "stranger" in the United States (Takaki 1998) and her inability to claim membership to Korea due to cultural differences, Vanessa found herself floating in between two cultures. And these questions regarding her race and culture force her to consider the reality that she does not have a definitive response to that question.

Korean adoptees engage in identity work because there is a fundamental conflict between feeling rules and their true feelings. The conflict often originates in their home where they are made to feel different because of their adoptee status. The message of salvation premising the basic parent-child relationship creates an unstable ground on which to build their identity. In order to compensate for the differences, adoptees surface act to please their adoptive parents and to assimilate into the family. This is a perfectly logical way for them to ground their identity because no other viable alternatives exist. In

day-to-day social interactions, adoptees are constantly asked to explain their Asian heritage. This perception stems from general stereotypes about Asians as foreigners. For adoptees, their race or Korean culture does not define their identity. They identify completely with the American culture, and the society's inability to see them as Americans causes them to question their identity. Adoptees also surface act in these situations in order to avoid explaining their complex self. It is an effective coping mechanism that allows adoptees to get by the situations without having to invest too much of their emotional energy.

Deep Acting

Unlike surface acting, adoptees engage in deep acting when they adjust their frame of mind in order to conform to the feeling rules of a given situation. This requires forceful suppression of their true feelings and causes the tension within them to intensify. For the adoptees in this study, deep acting became a self-preservation technique because they desperately needed to find a safe place to anchor themselves. They do so by internalizing the feelings of gratitude toward the adoptive parents, making efforts to truly forgive their birth parents, and trying to live their lives happily, unmoved by the emotional scars of the adoption experience. Deep acting requires suppression of profound feelings of sadness, rejection and anger, but they do so because the desire to be accepted is overwhelming.

Abandonment

Many Korean adoptees internalized the feeling of gratitude for being adopted in order to hide the excruciating pain associated with abandonment. Anchoring their identity

securely within the adoptive family provided them with comfort and security. Darlene spoke about the conflicting emotions of her own adoption experience:

> I think adoption is wonderful and great. But, every individual is different and some individuals carry their past to their daily life emotionally dreaming everyday like I do and some kids don't. But I think it would be best to [adopt] from like three or under. If I had the choice of living my life without kids and adopting someone who was five-six-seven, I would honestly not adopt because I put my parents through so much hell. It was pretty bad. It's hard, it's very hard…it was a journey and it was a long process and very draining and it was hard. There's no way I would go through that again. I wouldn't survive.

Darlene understood the societal expectations that she should be grateful toward the adoptive parents for saving her from the abusive orphanage in Korea. But, when pressed, she revealed that adoption may not be good for everyone. She clearly harbored a deep sense of pain and anger, but she refused to bring those emotions to the surface. Darlene had bottled up deep emotional scars inside her, though some of the emotions came out during the attachment sessions with her adoptive mother. She described the intensity of the emotion work:

> I was scared. I puked a lot, I threw up a lot. I was really scared. I wasn't excited, I wasn't happy. I was just scared. And when I did get here, I cried for months straight. I know it's sad. And I kicked and screamed for months. My mom had to buy me an indoor and outdoor punching bag. I had a lot of anger. So, she had to sleep with me at night for a long time because I had nightmares…it took years for me to calm down. Eventually I could sleep by myself, but it took me years. And my mom and I would have to have wrestling matches all the time so I could get my anger out. I was really mad at my biological mom for just giving me up like that. When I was in school I went to a Catholic school so all the boys made fun of me, called me racial names…I didn't feel pretty. I didn't feel because there were always white people around me…I was very, very, very sad to lose my mom…I don't like my birthdays because I don't get to be with my mom. I got to be with her for like five years and you know, I think it's different if I were an infant 'cause then I wouldn't have any memories but I do. I was different because I do remember.

Living by herself for the first time, Darlene worked hard to adjust her frame of mind by trying to erase the painful memories from Korea. The fact that she never lived by herself because of the fear of being alone powerfully demonstrates that her memory of abandonment shaped who she is for the majority of her life. She recalled a time in her life when she was able to put her emotions and experiences into a perspective:

> And that's the thing I hate about having abandonment in my life because I don't want to be abandoned anymore. And I just figured that out this year…I used to never want to be alone and that's why I lived with a roommate or a friend or whatever…so this is my first time ever living alone, I'm not kidding! Ever! So I'm 26 and just doing it and I am loving it and I was like, what the heck was I afraid about. That's part of the abandonment-being scared of being alone.

Darlene convinced herself that she is secure and self-assured enough to move on with her life as an independent adult. For the moment, she is content that she has conquered the fear of being abandoned.

Dana, too, described similar sessions on attachment where she fought to overcome the fear and anger surrounding the abandonment issue. She recalled being in an attachment therapy at a very young age:

> And my mom put me in therapy with attachment work and it made me attach. I would have hour long screaming tantrums, I was really angry when I came over, so she put me into therapy at age two which is unheard of and we did attachment work...and that gave me the stability I needed. And she's been the only stability in my life.

Attachment therapies worked well with Darlene and Dana in terms of helping them cope with the intense pain and anger due to abandonment. This type of emotional management work relies on finding a secure and safe space in which adoptees could place their trust. The adoptive family is the natural target, and it becomes their safe haven for dealing with identity issues. The adoptees, in turn, internalized a great deal of gratitude toward the adoptive family, but the deep-seeded feeling of abandonment

continued to shake the foundation of their identity. Adoptees like Darlene and Dana continually engage in emotion work to manage the emotions associated with being abandoned. Deep acting is a way to help them feel good about themselves and to provide security in their lives by eliminating inconsistencies.

Adoptive Family

Adoptees suppress feelings of depression, anger, and sadness that result from a realization that they will always be different from their adoptive families. Moreover, paternalistic attitudes reinforce the underlying message that the culture from which the adoptees come is implicitly devalued, thereby reigniting insecurities based on factors that connect them to Asia, such as their physical features and outer appearances. The basic framework of the relationship between adoptive parents and the child profoundly shapes an adoptee's outlook in life. They begin to assess their self worth through the lens of others' perceptions of them (Kim 1977, 1978; Feigelman & Silverman 1984; Huh & Reid 2000; Yoon 2001, 2004; Palmer 2005; Lee 2006). Internalizing these implicit messages, adoptees try their best to fit in by adapting to the situations and suppressing those feelings that may contradict their objective.

Adoptees like Julie worked hard to convince themselves that they are happy and grateful for being adopted, even though being different bothered them and caused emotional distress. Julie's need to deep act feelings of being happy and grateful reflected the inconsistent responses her parents had towards her experiences with racism, Korean culture, being different, and ultimately abandoned. Julie's parents acted to educate the school when she is confronted with racial slurs, pointing out how she is different. Yet at home, when she lets her parents know the difficulty she is having with being racially

different, they inhibited her ability to address her race by telling her how much they love her and how they see her as beautiful. Though said with good intentions, it ultimately belittled her race and culture as they never allow her to address her issues with race at home. Moreover, she never got to address the root cause of her distress and pain with being different, her adoption, and being abandoned. Finally, they reinforced national paternalistic attitudes of salvation over Korea as Julie internalized feeling "lucky" from being one of the children "in need" adopted from "third world countries." She reflected:

> I remember…we saw a couple public school boys on the opposite end of the street and…all of a sudden they started yelling out racial slurs and I was the only Asian person in my group and so it was a very emotional moment for me and I went and told my mom. And then, my mom came into my middle school and did this whole thing on South Korea and where I was from and brought in popcorn and then she read a Korean story, I put on my Korean hanbok, the traditional Korean dress and so I don't know, it was kind of an awakening for me that I was actually kind of different from everyone…But I mean I got over it and it made me a bigger person and so I had to get up and get over it…
>
> The only thing that was bad was that I was different; it wasn't because I dressed different, it was just because I was different…Yeah of course it bothered me and stuff, but I would hear my parents always say, well, we love you and you're a beautiful girl and everything. Yeah I was different, some people are different, so it was just, hard…I think I was just one of those people who just dealt with the facts. I'm a realist, I look at the situation at hand - nothing is ever going to change. I couldn't change and have blonde hair and blue eyes like my sisters to fit in, I kinda like being different and unique and like having my own story. I'm really happy I was adopted…Sometimes I want to blame stuff on being adopted and being Korean, but don't feel bad for me, I'm fine. But I just need to say get over it. You can't change what happened. So, I think I'm pretty lucky being adopted and so that's nice.

Julie buried her true emotions that make her want to blame her problems on being adopted to fit the paternalistic rhetoric and example set by her parents. Her parents' inability to acknowledge the pain she felt and why she was having difficulty with her abandonment sent her unspoken messages that it was not "ok" to feel bad about being

different. She engaged in deep acting in order to feel happy even though she sometimes wanted to "blame stuff on being adopted and being Korean." However, she continued to try and suppress the anger and blame she has towards her Korean adoptee status in order to maintain a sense of natural belonging to her adoptive family.

Sometimes adoptive parents take their paternalistic attitude a step further and use it to intentionally hurt the adoptee and undermine their sense of worth. As Fisher (2003) revealed, the common perception that adopted children are not quite as good as your own biological children has some truth to it. Finding herself in this family dynamic, Rochelle engaged in deep acting to convince herself growing up that her living situation with a verbally abusive mother that favored her biological son was not such a "bad predicament" and acceptable even though it meant suppressing her real feelings of jealousy, pain, and rejection from the family. Rochelle explained:

> And then my brother came along and there was a lot of jealousy and there was a lot of that kind of feeling 'cause that's their kid and I didn't feel like I fit anymore with the family…Oh, I wouldn't say I felt all that great. But when you are young and naïve, you don't know and don't think that you're in a jam, or in a bad predicament. A lot of things my mother didn't show up, all the events I was participating in and she was just not really a part of that. She was for my brother, and for me the imbalance of the favoritism that I sensed was something I didn't accept well…That's something I missed a lot of growing up and how it hurt a lot to me.

Ultimately, Rochelle was drawn by emotional necessity to try and feel that this societal perspective was ok and normal so she could avoid confronting the reality that she experienced a second abandonment when her mother's love was redirected towards her biological son. Convincing herself that the situation was acceptable prevented Rochelle from having to address the pain of ultimately experiencing another abandonment and an inability to root her identity.

Adoptees like Julie and Rochelle are constantly reminded by society and their families of how they will never be able to take for granted the status of belonging. The different societal expectations placed on the definitions of family convolute how an adoptee understands how they are supposed to feel and how they actually feel. Trying to feel a sense of belonging, adoptees engage in deep emotional acting in order to convince themselves of their rightful place in the adoptive family. When adoptees are unable to definitively convince themselves of their rightful membership to this family, it leaves them questioning who they are again, often leading them to experience crisis and exploring more of their Korean background. If they succeed in convincing themselves of their happiness in their adoptive families without recognizing a need to explore their Korean identity, then they often remain in denial or avoidance until another social interaction occurs that might make them reevaluate where they are at with their identity.

Birth Family

As adoptees explore their identity and their biological link, they are confronted with conflicting cultural Korean values regarding adoption which complicate their ability to feel anchored to Korea. The ingrained notion of one blood in Korea influences the expectation that adoptees must forgive their Korean families and Korea for abandoning them, regardless of the situation. Moreover, it places pressure on the adoptee to search because the birth family represents true family. However, the shame and stigma placed on the birthmother make for strained reunions that do not always follow the happy ending reunion images depicted in the media. These societal expectations placed on birth family influence adoptees as they suppress their true emotions in order to feel like they belong.

Heidi discussed the love-hate relationship she has with Korea and her conflicting desire to meet her birthfather. She worked hard at convincing herself to love a country and potentially forgive an abusive father in order to reestablish her identity to the country of her birth and to her family. However, she still harbored a great deal of anger and frustration with Korea and her father. She explained:

> I love coming back, but then, there's so many things about Korea that piss me off…I don't like how they treat women here like second class citizens…I know a lot of cases including my own, where my parents were married for over 20 years and it was just because my father threatened to divorce my mother unless she gave me away. And I just know a lot of cases like that because to be a single mother here is so hard. Women will do anything. Sexism has been built up to this industry…Part of me wants to meet my birthfather someday, but part of me doesn't because it'll probably be an unpleasant experience. I guess I feel permanently ambivalent about it.

Heidi internalized a love and connection for Korea, and by doing so, she hoped to reclaim the importance of blood ties that may finally stabilize her quest for secure identity. On the other hand, her strong feelings toward the birthfather left her feeling ambivalent about the possibility of reuniting.

Some adoptees feel societal pressure to search for their birth family in Korea because the culture places so much emphasis on the strength of blood relations. Natalie tried to convince herself she felt a desire and courage to conduct a birth search, downplaying fear of the unknown as to what might happen once she meets her birthmother. She explained:

> I never really had any intention to look for them, when I came. I think I did it because I felt pressure. Because I'm an adoptee and all the time, I get, do you know your real family? And of course adoptees are expected to do a search when they come to Korea but I never really felt the urge to need to do that…because I already have one family that drives me crazy, why would I need another one? But I think I felt pressured because I never felt a burning desire to find them. I just was like well, you know, everybody else is doing it. And especially because I've been here

> awhile…Actually, I emailed my agency. I had visited in 2002 to try and get some information about my file, and so they had it written down and every time you go to visit, they write it down on your file. So I didn't realize that. So I emailed them, my email doesn't say please search, it just asks about the procedure, what is involved, how to go about doing it, is there a time I can come to your office? And they took that as…and they were like, here's your mother. I wasn't ready, and I had just started the process.

Natalie, despite her true feelings of hesitancy and apprehension, tried to convince herself that this is what she wanted to do. Her driving force was two-fold: to fit in as an adoptee (this is what they do when returning to Korea), and to explore the slight possibility of finding another connection beyond her adoptee community in Korea. Even the adoption agency, acting under the same societal guidelines mandating that adoptees should want to search and will feel joy if a connection is made, located her birthmother and brought her in for a face-to-face encounter without first asking Natalie. Her birthmother left the interaction without any signs of wanting to continue the relationship, confirming Natalie's underlying concerns with conducting a search: the possibility that she would be rejected again. She laments: "I was fine before and now I've opened something up and it kinda feels like she rejected me."

Teresa, another adoptee who was reunited with her birth family, talked about working on loving her parents even though there is this "emotional distance" from her parents that adoption creates. Having the unfortunate circumstance of being illegally taken from her birth family and adopted into an abusive family, her reunion with her birth family is welcomed by both parties. However, being integrated back into her family came with its difficulties. As some of the conventional feeling rules dictate, an adoptee automatically loves his/her birth parents because of the strong blood ties that create, as Sachdev (1992) found, a sense of knowing that they belong. Teresa explained:

> I started to remain in Korea longer because I wanted to spend more time with my family, but also because it is Korea; this is the place that I come from and despite the fact that I was having a very, very emotional difficult time here because my parents were ill and I was put in the role of being a caretaker and having financial responsibilities to my family who of course I loved them but at the same time there's this emotional distance as well, and I wonder, in a weird way, they are kind of strangers because my memory of them was when I was eight and then here I am as an adult and I'm in my 20's and in the end I just decided to stay because I felt like I really needed to be here, even though I hated it, even though I just wanted to pack up my life and just run away.

Teresa worked on deep acting as she convinced herself that she should engage in these obligations of caretaker as a daughter for her parents because of how she loves them and they are her familial anchor. Yet, deep down, she also struggled with the contradiction that she loves strangers. Of course, Teresa will continue engaging in this deep emotion work as she finally feels a sense of familial belonging, even though they still feel like strangers.

Dana, another adoptee who searched in Korea for her birthmother, internalized the expectations and feelings associated with the draw to blood relations, fantasizing about the possible reunion with her mother and "what family could be like." Based on the stereotypes of how birth reunions ought to go, Dana invested a lot of energy trying to feel excited and fantasizing about the loving emotional exchange she hoped would happen when she met her birthmother. She did this out of necessity to feel a sense of belonging as well as an affirmation that her mother did love her, despite the fact that she had been through years of therapy because of the pain and fear of being abandoned that she still felt.

> It was devastating because I was ten at this time and I had all these fantasies about what she was going to be like and really unrealistic about what family could be like, and I don't think I have recovered to this day and we came so close and we were standing outside her door and I wasn't asking for anything, I just wanted to see that. And it's been really difficult

> and I've done a lot to process that to this day but it's definitely been really difficult…I think it took me a long time in the last few years to face as an 18, 19 yr. old. Because forever I just shut down from what happened so I really tried to process it and I saw it as another rejection, I came all this way and it was bad enough you gave me up and you couldn't even see me for five minutes and I carry it today because it was another rejection, and birthdays are so hard and my chosen day are still really hard, and one thing, is while we were there, they told me she had six months [to live]… but part of me is just traumatized that I'm not sure I'll ever get back there, because there is just a lot of emotion and going back for the third time, I'm just asking for it. I think that's where I stand as of now…

After being rejected a second time by her birth mother, Dana's entire identity and the feelings she tried to generate were shattered. Having spent so much emotional energy on feeling optimistic about her potential reunion, Dana fell into depression, coming to a place where she realized the family she wanted so desperately to have could never be attained. Naturally, Dana wanted to make herself feel that she truly belonged to this biological link that society says is your one true connection and place of belonging. After her birthmother denied the possibility of attaining this connection, Dana avoided anything Korean in order to escape reliving the pain of abandonment and rejection.

Searching for birth family represents the possibility of filling a void and creating another link to anchor identity. Like the adoptees in Sachdev's (1992) study, Korean adoptees also searched and engaged in this deep acting "because they had been cut off from their past they felt a void, a missing link, a discontinuity in life. By knowing that they belong to their genetic roots and that they look like someone related to them by blood, they hoped to experience the life they lost by separation. Behind the overlay of informational need lay the emotional pain, hurt and frustration of the loss of years." (1992, 58-59). Whether adoptees feel a sense of obligation or create fantasies about the life they would or could have with their birth family, adoptees engage in deep emotional

acting work in order to convince themselves that feeling the emotions will help them gain a stronger sense of belonging.

Race and Culture

Adoptees feel competing expectations with how they are supposed to identify in addition to how they are supposed to *want* to identify in regards to race and nationality. Adoptees either internalize the racism they experience as a minority by trying to feel happy and content with being racially different or trying to assimilate to the white ideological standards, or they try to feel pride towards their Korean heritage when they still feel internalized shame about being different and from a patronized country. Motivated by the need to feel a sense of belonging and frustrated by the continual cultural misidentification placed upon them, adoptees work to internalize these varying emotions such as pride, happiness, and contentment in order to ground their identity, regardless of if they are grounding it in a white cultural identity or one that incorporates their Korean identity.

Bethany talked about how she has worked to emotionally feel pride about her Korean culture to counteract the negative devaluing of her culture that her adoptive parents displayed throughout her childhood. After ending ties with her adoptive parents, Bethany emotionally worked to actually feel pride as opposed to the insecurity she had about being Korean by relearning the language and trying to teach her daughter the Korean culture. However, her deep rooted insecurities about "what it means to be Korean" surface as her adoptee status inhibits her ability to truly claim full knowledge of the Korean culture and teach her daughter about Korea:

> Well, for me, it kinda makes me proud of my Korean heritage. But you know I feel like I'm lacking in the ability to teach her about it. I can teach

> her a little but not to the ability someone in Korea could. I know I had a hard time identity-wise, not within myself but in a social setting; what does it mean to be Korean among everyone else? I wonder how it will affect her socially; will she embrace both parts of her? I wonder what that will impact her growth and identity and how do I help her with that…

She worked to feel pride in spite of her insecurity with her inability to claim rightful membership because she never actually grew up experiencing culture with a family and community that is Korean. After disowning her adoptive parents, working to feel pride towards Korea becomes more important as it represents the last link she has to feel a sense of belonging.

Adoptees like James engaged in deep emotion work growing up as they tried to make themselves feel "happy," "accepted," and "normal," living in communities and families that constantly reminded them of their differences and hence, how they don't really belong. This deep emotion work was implemented in order to eliminate the tensions they felt with how they were expected to feel (happy, accepted, and normal) and how they actually felt (depressed and empty). They suppressed their true feelings of sadness and emptiness brought on by being different and adopted in order to make their lives more consistent by convincing themselves that they are content and just like everyone else in their community.

James talked about how he did everything to cover up the emotions he had about being different and adopted and the pain of not knowing who he was. He worked hard to be "the nice guy" all the time, emoting to others that things were "hunky dory" while using athletics to "cover up" his differences, as his "way of hiding all the other emotions...of emptiness, sadness and abandonment." He remembered:

> Like I said, [hometown] was very white and I guess my parents at a young age tried getting me into the Korean heritage and culture camps but I didn't want anything to do with it…I did everything in my power,

> subconsciously I knew I was different but I didn't know how, but I used athletics to cover it up. I was really social. I went above and beyond. I was the nice guy and I think that was my way of hiding all the other emotions…I didn't know who I was…my whole journey was never about the anger but the emptiness, the sadness, and the abandonment.

James spent a great deal of energy convincing himself that he was just like everyone in his white community, using athletics to cover up the sadness and emptiness he felt from being abandoned in order to make his life more consistent and feel grounded to his white community and adoptive family. It also prevented him from having to work through the difficult emotions of abandonment that made it difficult to anchor his identity, especially given the fact that he didn't know who he was. After years of suppression, James came into contact with other Korean adoptees, experiencing crisis, which eventually lead to searching for his Korean connections.

It is not surprising that James spent the first 24 years of his life deep acting to convince himself he was like his white peers by utilizing athletics as a cover-up and trying extra-hard to be the nice guy and have people like him. Hubinette (2007) speaks of an internal hate that arises as Korean adoptees attempt to distance themselves from all things Korean and "Other" in an attempt to maintain an illusion of being a non-immigrant member of white society. Like James, Korean adoptees deep act to convince themselves of a natural connection to anchor their identity in their white communities. For some, this internalized form of hate prevents adoptees from exploring their Korean heritage, while it drives others into crisis, as they recognize that denying one's identity just feels wrong.

Other Master Statuses

On top of being an adoptee and racially different than the majority of their community, some adoptees have additional master statuses that influence the deep acting they engage in order to root their identity and sense of belonging. One of the adoptees

discussed how their physical disability further impacted how her adoptive family paternalistically oriented themselves to the adoptee. Reminded of the opportunities she has in the United States that might never exist in Korea suggests she should feel grateful for being adopted as she becomes the subject of sympathy. Adoptees like Nikki must now work through having low self-esteem that is compounded by her physical disability on top of being racially different and abandoned. Trying to overcome low self-esteem, the stakes are higher for her to engage in deep acting in order to feel comfort and connection to a group that can affirm her sense of identity.

Nikki discussed the constant struggle to convince herself that she is "good enough" for her adoptive family as she is constantly reminded of her disability that caused her abandonment. She engaged in this deep acting emotion work in order to convince herself worthy enough to belong to this adoptive family. Noting her low self-esteem, she remembered:

> I was told the reason I was adopted was because of my disability. So for me…I was really hard on myself because mainly, I had a poor self image. Not good enough for the birth family how was I good enough for this family? So growing up I had a very poor or low self-esteem. Well, it's just been a lifelong struggle and I think by coming to Korea, it has improved. I have a better sense of who I am and am happy with that. By coming here and working here, I've proven to myself and others that I can do it.

Nikki's constant struggle with her low self-esteem is not surprising given the fact that she has two statuses influencing her abandonment: her disability and being a different race from her family. Already questioning her worth and ability to claim personhood because of her adoptee status and race, she has to work to suppress the negative stereotypes and feelings associated with having a physical disability such as

shame, inadequacy, further abandonment, and anger (Cahill & Eggelston 1994).[45] This added to the level of insecurity and intensified emotion work she must do to in order to feel pride, autonomy, and confidence as a person with a disability (Cahill & Eggelston 1994) in addition to the adoptee status. However, by actually going to Korea to work and live, she physically engages in emotion work that allows her to work on feeling worthy and raising her self-esteem in order to allow herself some aspect of belonging. As Hochschild (1979) has suggested, emotion work also involves trying to physically change emotions as well as mentally. Nikki moved herself to Korea in order to confront her fears of not being worthy and having autonomy in Korea. By physically living in Korea, she works to feel more confident even though she sees working through her low self-esteem as a lifelong process.

The theme of abandonment emerged for the adoptees as they engaged in deep emotion work to convince themselves that they were secure, safe, and wanted while suppressing the pain, anger, and fear of being abandoned again, in order to attach themselves to a family that could take care of them.

In respect to the adoptive family, themes emerged that were similar to those found with surface acting. Adoptees again become the subjects of sympathy which underlies paternalistic attitudes in the United States and the west (Hubinette 2007) and ultimately devalues Korean culture. These attitudes enforced adoptees to feel grateful and appreciative for having opportunities in their adoptive country that would be unlikely in

[45] As a physically looking Asian person born in Korea, yet raised in a different nation without Korean culture in a white family makes is near impossible for Korean Adoptees to claim a nation and race without being questioned by society.

Korea while suppressing emotions of pain, sadness, and depression. Adoptees also suppressed their fear of being abandoned again by engaging in physical and emotional deep acting to convince themselves they are safe and protected in order to maintain consistency and security in their lives.

With regards to their birth country and family, adoptees are again faced with the contradicting social expectations surrounding adoption which additionally make it difficult for them to truly anchor their identity in Korea. Korean cultural values that place shame on the adoptee, or blame the mother and child can make the adoptee feel rejected or can elicit empathy for the adoptee. Blood ties again, require the adoptee to feel empathy towards the family and forgive them as they work to suppress deep-seeded pain, shame, anger and depression in order to a claim another connection that roots their identity.

In the face of race and cultural expectations, adoptees are placed in a social situation where they are identified one way racially though raised culturally Western. The constant misidentification they face creates tension with who they feel they are and the societal perceptions of who they are. Adoptees deep act to try and convince themselves of their identification with a certain culture while suppressing their uncertainty and anger about having to negotiate membership in both cultures.

Changing Ideological Stance and Creating Alternative Feeling Rules

Changes in an ideological stance occur for an adoptee when they no longer try and adhere to the old feeling rules in society and accept and assume new ones for "reacting to situations, cognitively and emotively." (Hochschild 1979: 567). Rather than surrendering to expectations placed on them, adoptees often reinterpret social roles and

boundaries to include their experiences. After years of being physically and mentally exhausted from having to perform expected feeling rules that increased emotional dissonance in their lives, adoptees shift their ideological stance incorporating expectations that actually fit their experiences as they reclaim their reality and identity.

In so doing, adoptees incorporate a new set of feeling rules from their experiences and social interactions. When social conventions between how we expect to feel and how we should ideally feel coincide, we create alternative ideologies abstracted from reality. The consequence is that we develop an alternate set of feeling rights and obligations (Hochschild 1979). For example, an adoptee may shift their ideological stance from seeing adoption as a necessity to seeing it as a result of economic greed, patriarchy and sexism. The social interactions that brought about their ideological shift also form the impetus to create new feeling rules that allow an adoptee to feel anger and rage towards the social factors upholding adoption rather than feeling grateful and happy for being adopted or sad for being abandoned.

Adoptees in this study show they had ideological shift concerning their attitude toward adoption, the role of their adoptive parents, the relationships with birth family, their perception concerning their racial identity, and a sense of solidarity with other adoptees.

Views on Adoption

Several adoptees talk about their changing ideological stance on adoption by questioning the necessity for adoption in the first place. They begin by pointing out the negative ramifications of Korean children being placed into white homes in predominantly white communities. These adoptees question the rhetoric that "it's better

to have a wealthy life and education in the West than to stay in Korea where there are limited opportunities." They also question the ability of white parents to support Korean adoptees emotionally, especially in the face of racism. With these shifts in ideology, new feeling rules are created to accompany the changing ideology. Other adoptees attempt to transcend the externally-imposed dualism between American or Korean community inherent in identity formation by self-defining as a member of the Korean adoptee community or more broadly as a part of the Korean Diaspora.

Matt's ideological shift came when his emotions moved from unhappiness to feeling "powerless" and tired of "fighting all my life alone." Matt felt "powerless" as he saw his strongest lifeline of having an emotional attachment always out of reach. He reflected on his adoption: "I would cancel the adoption. So maybe I was hungry, maybe I died, but there was a small chance for me to be happy nevertheless. The health of the mind is more important than material wellness."

With this shift in ideology, Matt's adherence to new feeling rules allowed him to wish, without any remorse, he were never adopted at all. The only remorse he has is that he was not allowed to stay with his birth family. Joseph also made a similar ideological shift about rethinking adoption and how it starves adoptees of their emotional needs after seeing hundreds of adoptees return to Korea in search of their identity but failing to connect.

For James, an ideological shift allowed him to question why adoption happens in the first place. "It goes a lot deeper than that, like the government, like why when you go to Seoul, there's money, government programs, why they can't fix themselves within their own country? Does that make sense? Question after question."

By giving himself permission to ask these questions, James was able to reflect on why he tried so hard to shed his Asian identity. For 25 years, he felt that he had repressed a good part of his identity. Similarly, Heidi and Teresa probed deeply into the politics of the adoption issues. Their new stance and feeling rules, evolving from their experiences as adoptees, speaking with other adoptees returning to Korea, and their reunions with birth family, allowed them to be angry about being adopted, and to question without guilt, how the commoditization of children is masked behind humanitarian efforts. Heidi and Teresa discussed their position:

> Heidi: And they're always saying, now we're the tenth largest economy in the world, we had to send you away because we were really poor. And it means nothing to me, because now it's really great that you're so advanced but you're still sending more children abroad than you are adopting domestically…And after the fact that they continue to send children away when they could be adopted here…and Koreans love to say it's like divine providence that we were sent abroad. They always compare us to the Jews. And I'm always like, it's such bullshit. To say that it's God's will that we're adopted. I think it's bull crap and the same rhetoric the agencies try to shove down our throats…I know a lot of cases where the father threatened to divorce [the] mother unless she gave [the] baby away…And I just know a lot of cases like that, to be a single mother here is so hard. Women will do anything. Sexism has been built up to this industry where, in the states, you don't think of it as an option, that I'm gonna send my baby to a foreign country across the ocean…and the government is really resistant because adoption is a money maker and social welfare is expensive.
>
> Teresa: People never think about the emotional distress. People always think that what's more important. In Korea, it's always, oh, you're going to have a better life, you're going to have a better education and better opportunities. And it's like fuck, look at all these adoptees that are emotionally screwed up…I mean nobody cares really what their views [are] and I don't know what it is that made me survive. Maybe it helped a lot that I had my sister, that we had each other. But people equate happiness with money, but I think it's better to grow up poor and be happy. And not be abused and completely alienated than growing [up] in an economically well off situation…Why should the government stop when they don't have to pay for social welfare, they don't even have to create a social welfare structure and spend money, and on top of it, they are making money…

With the change in this ideological shift regarding adoption, Teresa and Heidi feel anger rather than guilt for being "ungrateful" that they were adopted. This shift helps them negotiate their identity and redefine who they are, incorporating feelings that are empowering rather than oppressive and belittling, leading to more exploration.

Other adoptees completely redefined their sense of self away from the traditional identity markers, such as race, culture or nationality. Eric explained:

> I see my part as part of the Korean Diaspora but I also see I was culturally American but I am proud of being an adoptee. I would say for me it's definitely being a Korean American adoptee, you have unique experiences…the pride stems from the fact that I am part of a unique community and unique history because it's also exciting because it's very young and we're just starting to record our stories and stuff for 2nd and 3rd generation adoptees…And the more I think about it, it makes complete sense to me as to why I feel proud, because I think, with myself and other people, we felt trapped between two cultures and we're never really sure which cultures we belong to, are we Korean, American?...I think a lot of Koreans feel like they have to choose or are trapped because they feel like one side may not accept them or both sides won't accept them. So I think with the adoptee community now, we have made the choice to say, this is our community; we have a unique story, unique voice, a community we created for ourselves. With me, I have chosen to make myself a part of, also, it's very powerful because you don't have anyone choosing for me, it's a choice I made for myself.

Now that Eric has placed himself out of the binary trap, he has created new feeling rules where he no longer feels insecure about claiming membership to a group. His new set of feeling rules allowed him to feel pride in being able to empower himself by choosing his own group membership without anyone being able to question its authenticity.

Unlike Eric, Lori had a shift in how she viewed Korea. Lori worked hard to "feel proud" of being Korean growing up, in order to manage the emotional anguish she suppressed when she left Korea "kicking and screaming" "onto the plane." However, returning to Korea resurfaced all the real sadness and anger she had suppressed with being forced out of Korea. The realities of this new Korea created a shift in ideology as

she felt “very disappointed” with being “ostracized” for “not speaking the language,” while learning of Korea’s “very ethnocentric” “attitude.” She lamented:

> In Korea I didn’t feel Korean at all. I got really emotional when we landed in Korea…I didn’t have time to process what the trip meant. When we landed, as in the airplane, I got to see Korea from a distance, because it felt like I was six years old. I remember the first time when I was taken away from [my]foster mother, it all came back again. Instead of making Korea disappear, Korea appeared. It was really emotional. I didn’t want to leave my foster family in Korea. They tried to explain to me, they had to carry me onto the plane because I was kicking and screaming. When I saw Korea from the airport to the hotel, it was so surreal. Nothing like I remembered. That is why, a big reason why I didn’t like Korea, it kind of made me lose some memory of what I remember Korea being like. Nothing was familiar. This is where I was born, but I felt like I lost a lot of Korean identity when I went to Korea. It’s like they ruined it. It made me really sad and I couldn’t find anything, part of me and my memory. I was six years old and I remember quite a bit and so it made me very sad…I don’t feel like I fit in anywhere, not Korean, not totally American. I have a disability, but I’m really independent.

Returning to Korea and having these new images muddy her happy memories of Korea forced Lori to realize the “proud” image she once had of Korea conflicts with her new experiences. Forcing her to confront the falsity of her emotions from her memories with her present experiences made Lori recognize she had no connection anymore. She is neither Korean nor American; she has no desire to claim either identity. These ideological shifts regarding adoption often empowered adoptees to make sense of their “adoption story” as well as change expectations when they continually fail to encompass their experiences as an adoptee.

Adoptive Family

Some adoptees are in the unfortunate predicament of being placed in abusive homes. As an emotional survival mechanism, Rochelle and Teresa found a way to reverse the abuse by shifting their ideological stance from accepting the abuse driven by

paternalistic attitudes that devalue them to recognizing it as abuse and being empowered to change their situation.

Rochelle, adopted in the 1960's, had a change in her ideological stance on how children and adoptees should be treated in a family after she grew up in a verbally abusive home, internalizing a lot of the negative comments her mother had made. While she was a child, she also accepted the favoritism and societal expectation that placed biological children as more important than adopted during this time period. She noted:

> But some of the comments I grew up with from my mother, all negative things, are either going to make me go psycho or I'm going to have to figure out a way to change that attitude in my head. I chose obviously to change. And so when my mom died, I promised to my kids that I would never do that. You know that no matter how frustrated or poverty stricken I live though and stuff, both my kids are number one in my book no matter what…and for me the imbalance of the favoritism that I sense were something I didn't accept well. And I don't want my kids to ever think any different…If you're gonna have your own child and then have an adoptee, make sure you treat them equally.

Not wanting her children to feel the same abusive affects she received as a child, nor an inequity of love, Rochelle made a concerted effort to "change that attitude" and change her definitions of family, which were instilled in her during the late 1960s and early 1970s. With new social interactions experienced by having her own children, a new set of feeling rules and shift in ideology were embraced to make it possible for her to place blame on her mother rather than herself. It also provided a shield that protected her from having to internalize another act of abandonment by her adoptive mother.

After internalizing years of emotional, physical, and verbal abuse, Teresa realized she was not the problem but rather her adoptive parents' ideals that were rooted in paternalistic attitudes that patronizes and devalues Korea and Korean culture. She recalled: "I think me and my sister had a strong sense of identity and will, where we

realized, oh, they're fucked up, they're what's wrong and it's abuse. But there's the huge amount of, even though we knew it mentally, we still internalized it as blaming ourselves for it." After Teresa came to this point, she found the strength to move out of the house and situate herself with other people of color and Asians. She did this to empower herself to work on negating the internalized blame, as her new set of feeling rules excluded internalizing blame, and shame and included pride and empowerment, as well as the permission to feel angry.

Having this ideological shift regarding what is an acceptable role for adoptive parents marked a huge note of internal strength and self preservation as both Teresa and Rochelle were working against ideologies that allowed abuse and unequal love to adopted children. The new feeling rules that they created allowed them to begin a new chapter where they could start exploring more of their identity, particularly for Teresa who moved back to Korea to be with her family.

Birth Family

Natalie shifted her ideological stance on the appropriateness of inquiring about birth family after her reunion with her birthmother was quite contrary to the "happy endings, tears, and building a relationship with the long lost mother," that is so often depicted in the media. After her mother decided not to keep in contact with her, she decided that being asked this question was now considered rude:

> So for a moment I felt like, like meeting her, not that it was a mistake, but I was like, why did I do it? I was fine before and now I've opened something up and it kinda feels like she rejected me. I mean I know she's not rejecting me but there's a part of me where…maybe she didn't like me…so now that I've done that, people ask me if I've met my birth family and now I can say yes, but I don't want to talk about it with people. It's kinda painful. It's not like I lose sleep over it but it's like you know, people don't realize they're asking rude questions.

Having a reunion experience that did not fit the mold brought a lot of pain and anger for Natalie, with feelings of regret that she decided to follow these expectations and search in the first place. Finding that her emotions do not coincide with the already accepted realm of feeling rules, she changes her stance on searches, viewing them as private and personal, rather than public. Therefore, people are now "rude" when they ask about her search, violating her new set of feeling rules surrounding this very personal topic**.**

Race

Being adopted into a white family and culture, Korean adoptees will always have to examine issues of race. Mike shifted his stance of internalizing blame when he was discriminated against based on his looks after interactions with other "immigrants" revealed how the negative experiences he had "was all caused by racism." He remembered:

> I think because I got interested in understanding myself better, 'cause I have always blamed myself being responsible for whatever I felt and why I always felt...being wrong…It actually started when I became friends with some immigrants from Iran, who were very dark skinned. We started to talk. And we could recognize similar experiences and it was all caused by racism, we were treated a certain way, 'cause of how we looked. I also discovered that myself before, but it got me more reliable when I found out that other people felt the same way.

Indeed, this ideological shift created a moment of unease for Mike that brought him to an element of crisis which allowed him to investigate his identity as a minority even further with another group of people. With a new set of feeling rules established, Mike no longer felt the dissonance of blaming himself for being forced into a family and country that "wanted him" yet continually engaged in hostile racist acts that made it clear he was "unwanted" and "rejected." With a new set of feeling rules, he allowed himself to

try and begin to let go of some of the negative Asian stereotypes he had internalized growing up, as well as open himself up to exploring why he felt so much pain from being different, which was ultimately connected to his adoption.

Peer Groups

Some adoptees, because they are racially Asian, felt an obligation when questioning their racial identity, to situate themselves with other Asians or Koreans. No doubt, this emerges because society places expectations on the normalcy of having peers that look like you. Adoptees like Natalie, internalized this expectation in an attempt to feel more Korean, though ultimately change their stance as their interactions with other Koreans and Asians influence their definitions of what it means to be Korean.

In an attempt to "feel more Korean" and explore her roots, Natalie engaged in deep acting to fulfill a pact that she would "make friends with Korean-Koreans." After living in Korea for an extended period of time, she expressed "guilt" for not having more "Korean-Korean friends." Failing to incorporate "Korean-Koreans" into her friendship circle, she ultimately came to the conclusion that she doesn't have to do anything to be Korean: "I am…and I've been going for four years thinking I have to learn Korean or I have to do something different to have people respect me."

Adoptees like Natalie understand that American or Western society may view them as Korean, but culturally they are white. Hence in order to know Korea, one must attach themselves to "Real" Koreans who were raised with the Korean culture. Based on repeated attempts to do the expected actions in order to feel more Korean (have Korean friends, speak the language with them), Natalie realized that she can never fulfill the external expectations of being Korean (growing up with the culture) placed upon her.

Through her experiences, she had an ideological shift about the necessity of having certain peers, freed herself of the stereotype of what it means to be Korean, and recognized she just "*is* Korean."

Experiencing dissonance with their true emotions and what is expected of them often leads adoptees towards experiencing and confronting crisis, and gathering and negotiating new information. The new information garnered from their personal experiences with social interactions, impacts adoptees' feelings which shape their actions, and ultimately their identity formation process. As illustrated, many adoptees experienced an ideological shift after they processed this new information and redefined their stances on certain aspects of intercountry adoption such as the necessity of adoption, family, race, and peers.

Creating Parallel Realities

Intercountry adoptees develop a fractured identity because their ability to claim membership to the most basic social units that anchor identity such as family, community, nationality, and race is always questioned. Adoptees struggle to identify in each of these social units because unlike a flight attendant or a nurse, they are provided an inconsistent road map of expectations on how they are suppose to behave and the emotions they are suppose to emote. The adoptee's true membership is always questioned leaving their emotional response convoluted by their inability to ground their identity to one set of expectations. Hence adoptees use an additional emotional management coping mechanism for dealing with the contradicting emotional expectations that I call parallel

realities.[46] Creating parallel realities allows them to individually compartmentalize each set of social expectations and feelings rules that emerge with social interactions. Adoptees then can utilize the four emotion management tools (surface acting, deep acting, shift in ideological stance and creating an alternative set of feeling rules) to manage their emotions in congruence with societal expectations within each of these separate parallel realities. Here is why and how parallel realities are created:

Adoptees continually work to make sense of the conflicting expectations of their adoptee status which include: not belonging because they were not kept by birth family and/or belonging because they were adopted; they were unwanted and abandoned and/or they were wanted and chosen for adoption. The adoptee feels inherent contradictions about their adoptee status, though this membership will never be questioned.

In addition to negotiating the adoptee status, adoptees are confronted with conflicting feeling rules and expectations regarding family membership such as: they belong to their adopted family and view it as their real family and/or the adopted family is not their real family because being adopted is not the same as a biological link; they were loved by their birth parents and given up so they could have a better life and the adoptive family chose them for love and/or they are unloved because the birth family did not keep them or the adoptive family does not love them as much as their biological children, or the parents adopted because they could not have a biological child. And if adoptees do find their biological family, they are again faced with contradictory

[46] It is important to note that creating parallel realities is just one of the emotion management tools that Korean adoptees use. One tool is not considered to be a higher form than another and there is no sequential order that parallel realities appear.

expectations of belonging to a family: the biological family is their family because of their biological link and/or the biological family is not family because they are strangers. Moreover, possibilities of a second abandonment exist if the biological family does not wish to see or maintain a relationship with the adoptee or the adoptive parents divorce, die or give up the adoptee to foster care.

Like Patricia Hill Collins (2000) has theorized, there are multiple levels of domination where different master statuses interconnect and interact with each other. Compounding and complicating their identities are multiple cultural ascriptions of master statuses like gender, ability, class, and sexual orientation that add to the contradictions of their identity.[47] Adoptees continually negotiate and validate their sense of belonging in these groups and how identifying in both dominant and oppressed groups influence identity.

Adoptees must also negotiate *intra*-status contradictions that are created when each master status interacts with the adoptee status. For example: A Korean American adoptee has intra-status contradictions within their race, ethnicity, and nationality. Their Asian race is questioned by other Asians because they are adopted and raised by a white

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[47] Each individual has interstatus contradictions where they are at one point in their lives a member of a dominant group that benefits from systematic privilege by having access to rules and resources, and are members of a target group, or oppressed group. For example, a black heterosexual able-bodied woman feels the systematic benefits of being heterosexual and able bodied yet experiences systematic oppression because of her race and gender. Even a white able-bodied heterosexual wealthy Christian male will experience oppression with ageism although the interconnectedness of his other statuses does provide him ample privileges in life. These interstatus contradictions influence identity formation for all individuals. See Collins (2000) for a further detailed analysis.

family.[48] Yet, their physical features indicate to society that they are Asian, not white. Western society wants to place them as ethnically and culturally Korean while the adoptees are denied that status by Koreans brought up in Korean culture. White America denies them the ability to claim American status because their physical features represent a stereotype that indelibly makes Asians foreign. Moreover, they have immigrant status being born outside the U.S., even though they are raised culturally American and have U.S. citizenship. The only status they may claim is "adoptee." Although, as mentioned in the first bullet, there are conflicting feeling expectations connected to the adoptee status.

Adoptees have a fractured self created by constant negotiation of the conflicting set of feeling rules inherent in each of their inter- and intra-status contradictions. In order to make sense of this fractured self, they latently create parallel realities to navigate the overlapping conflicting expectations placed upon them as they attempt to engage in the appropriate emotion work demanded by the interaction.

Once Korean adoptees create parallel realities, they file away or retrieve the appropriate emotion responses according to each set of expectations they deal with, even in the face of contradicting expectations within one status. Using one or a combination of the other tools (surface acting, deep acting, shift in ideological stance, and creating an alternative set of feeling rules), they manage the emotions within each parallel reality necessitated according to the social exchange.

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[48] Though some Korean adoptees are adopted into Asian homes in the United States or other Western countries, the vast majority are adopted into Caucasian homes.

Below I provide a few examples of how parallel realities are created by examining family, race, and Asian community.

Family

Adoptees like Kristy demonstrate how parallel realities result from the difficulty in managing the different expectations and feelings attached to her role within both adopted and birth families. Kristy's anger and sadness as a child, indicated by her avoidance and hatred of "doing Korean events," emerged in order to stifle the pain with being abandoned by her birth family. When she reestablished positive connections with her birth family as an adult, she created a new compartment to allow for an alternative set of feeling rules that included compassion for the parents that abandoned her. Hence she is able to authentically feel concern about their emotional well-being, evidenced by not wanting them to be "sad" or "indebted" to her adoptive mom, in one reality while simultaneously maintaining anger towards these same birth parents for abandoning her in another reality.

Furthermore, Kristy acknowledged that she is still her birth parents' "kid," illustrating the strength of the biological connection she places in defining a "real" family. Acknowledging birth family as "real" inherently makes her adoptive family not real even though Kristy sees both sets of parents as "real." Allowing for this contradiction, she created another parallel reality that allows her to feel the appropriate emotions that suggest her adoptive mother *is* "real" without negating the importance and "realness" of her birth family connection. She explained:

> Last year, I went over with my brother and my mom from here and she got to meet my family and my brothers and that was interesting to mix them together, and it actually ended up really good, I think it was a very good experience but I remember when I was going over, on the plane I was

> thinking, God I hope this works out, because I didn't want any sad family from my Korean family to be indebted to her because she took care of my kids, or my mom that she thinks, oh this is her biological family. I think that's one of the hardest things now knowing, that I have the struggle of trying to make each side feel good, that I'm equally a part of their family. So that's when I was meeting them for the first time, I talked with my parents and told them I don't want them to think they weren't my parents and they assured me and were supportive and said we don't worry about that and we want you to be able to have a experience like that. And regardless of them saying that, it's still a struggle.

Kristy created parallel realities to deal with the contradiction of having two "real" families where she assumes the *same role* as a daughter. In one reality, she engaged in deep acting as she worked to suppress 19 years of anger and sadness towards her birth parents for being abandoned. She also created an ideological shift towards her birth family to encompass feelings of compassion in spite of the pain they caused her by the abandonment. Finally, she worked in another parallel reality on reassuring her adoptive parents that their role as parents has not been usurped by two strangers who can claim a biological connection but did not raise her. These conflicting emotions obviously presented Kristy with a lot of emotional struggles as she worked to negotiate her experiences and redefine her definitions of family.

Race

Adoptees like Vanessa often have two competing and conflicting ideologies of race. She created one reality where she is Asian and embraces this aspect of her identity and another reality where her discomfort with being Asian surfaces resulting in her identification with white culture. Unable to deny her physically Asian racial features, she accepted her minority status, yet believed that her lack of cultural knowledge and language skills excluded her from truly being able to claim her racial status. She is unsurprisingly most comfortable claiming the white culture of her childhood experiences

referring to herself as a “twinkie.” Yet when asked how she identified, she acknowledged her Asian background while noting how she would “never identify as white.”

> Vanessa: I’m physically a minority…I’m very comfortable in my own skin now. I think I am very grateful for all the cards that had to fall for me to be here. I think overall it makes me more aware of race, but at the same time I think it makes me irritated that race is such an issue in this society…
>
> As far as being perceived as white, my friend once gave an analogy and he had a friend who was adopted like me and she calls herself white, not Asian, and he calls her twinkie, yellow on the outside, white on the inside. That I found funny, but also true in a lot of ways - I do feel white in that I don’t speak Asian language. I don’t speak the language and I am insecure that I don’t and I guess I have this stereotype that Asians are a bit snobby and prideful about language.
>
> Tanya: So how would you identify?
>
> Vanessa: I guess for government identification, I would identify Asian, if they ask, I would say Korean, but broadly Asian. I would never identify as white. I would say Korean, Asian but that I grew up in a white family.

Though Vanessa worked to embrace her Asian identity she still exhibited feelings of discomfort around her Asian status. Her internalized acceptance of negative Asian stereotypes and outward avoidance of Asian and adoptee groups illustrated her struggle to come to terms with being different, her inability to fully anchor her identity in one group, and her anger toward her birth culture that abandoned her in the first place.

> And me interacting with the adoptee community is weird because I don’t have that...I guess the adoptee community would be weird for me just because I look at adoption as part of my life and how I got here but I don’t schedule my life around it…I feel like, black kids and Latino kids hang out, it’s cool. And when Asian, it’s nerdy and I think it’s common perception and stereotypes…But Asians are just easier to make fun of.

Understanding what embodies racism, as an Asian person, she was very sensitive to stereotypes and prejudice, emoting anger when she experienced racism. Yet, because she is most comfortable in white communities, she accepted the negative racial

stereotypes placed on Asians which prevented her from joining any Asian community, adoptees included.

> …and I feel like I am kind of white. I don't get offended by a lot of racial things because I don't know where I fit and because I don't, if I went to Seoul, I wouldn't fit. But here, people expect a certain ethnicity, like, I get asked a lot where are you from, and that used to upset me as a kid, and now it still pisses me off but it depends on the context. If it's an Asian student or of Asian descent, this is me being racist now, or if they have that kind of background, I'm okay with that question, but if it's white, it really irritates me and I think they tend to ask Asian people that and no other unless you have an accent.
>
> I have a friend now who I just met this spring and…she's the first Asian I have truly been friends with. But she's third generation; she doesn't do a lot of Asian things. I thought it was very weird to want to be friends just because you look the same. Part of it, I wanted to fit in and I didn't want to be friends and Asian people hanging together is weird, us eating our rice, and I don't think it's always true but it's something people think about… And I think a lot of that stems from I grew up with such a white environment to be around people who are not white is weird.

Vanessa must create parallel realities in order to manage the conflicting societal expectations placed on her and the feelings she must manage. The parallel realities allowed her to have her race discussions without contradicting herself. Because within each individual reality, she was conforming to a certain set of societal norms and feeling rules.

When she was in one reality of being Asian, she performed deep acting to feel pride in "being different" and "comfortable" in her "skin" identifying as an Asian. This resulted from racial scholarship that empowers minorities to feel pride in their minority identity. Moreover, whites are not allowed to make fun of Asians as it "pisses" her "off." Indeed, as a member of an oppressed group, she has become educated about the systematic racism she experiences in this country and feels anger in the face of discrimination.

In another parallel reality, she felt she could not truly claim her Asian status because of the cultural loss she experienced inherent with the intercountry adoption transaction. She avoided Asians, revealing her true discomfort with the racial status that makes her appear different. Additionally, she internalized negative Asian stereotypes about being "nerdy," "eating our rice," and being "easier to make fun of," that provided a constant reminder of her differences. This naturally lead Vanessa to avoid interactions with anything related to the source of her "unbelonging." Yet, she simultaneously displayed deep acting by accepting this behavior in the face of her white friends, even though she was truly offended. This back and forth regarding race illustrated how she had to categorize two very different perspectives on how she viewed herself racially. These two parallel realities made it possible for Vanessa to experience crisis and begin further exploration of her Korean adoptee identity (as seen by her actions in agreeing to be in my study) while simultaneously avoiding her Asian status (illustrated by her fear of hanging around other Asians).

Asian Community

Naturally, Korean adoptees strive to find a community they can connect with, though their adoptee status convolutes their abilities to clearly assert membership to any group besides the "adoptee" group. Adoptees like Keira must reconcile the competing ideologies that dictate how they are both a member and not a member of the Asian and Korean community. Keira is physically Korean and Asian and should, by racial definitions, be allowed membership to these groups, as non-Asians often assume. Moreover, expectations dictate that she should automatically know or want to know about her Asian heritage. This influenced her actions to learn the language in hopes of

gaining more rights to "claim Korean" as her "identity." She was painfully reminded that her life experiences attached to the adoptee status will always prevent her from being viewed as a true member in the eyes of Asians and Koreans who grew up with the culture and language. These contradicting expectations often lead Keira to feeling alienated by both American and Asian cultures. She noted:

> In the past, I really wanted to learn more about the Korean culture because I thought that I didn't fit in there. Not learning seemed kind of like denying a part of myself and prevented me from getting involved in the community I guess. I suppose I saw not knowing about the Korean culture as a barrier that if I could overcome, would be my "in" to the community and my identity. I could claim being Korean. Besides, I was curious and interested. However, these days I am finding that learning more about the Asian culture in general has turned out to be pretty satisfactory, especially because I don't hang out with many Korean people or the Korean community specifically. It helps me identify more strongly with Asian.
>
> Sometimes I think it is hard to be Asian (and to appear very Asian in my outward appearance) but to not really "feel" like I am Asian (in that I don't know the language, cultural practices, etc.). I also don't know much about my birth family nor my family history. But I get assumptions from both sides (Asian and non-Asian). Sometimes it is Asian people who might look down on me because I don't know anything about "my culture," and sometimes it is other people who make assumptions about me based on stereotypes of Asians. Because of these assumptions, I sometimes feel alienated from both cultures, which I feel is definitely harmful. I believe that everyone is at their own stage of identity development and assumptions can deny that or force someone into something that is not truly them.

Adoptees like Keira created parallel realities to effectively engage in the emotion work that is expected of them within simultaneously contradicting sets of expectations. She created one parallel reality where she embraced non-Asian societal expectations of what it means to be racially Asian and ethnically Korean. These definitions, rooted in stereotypes that support racial marginalization, implied an automatic natural desire to go native by immersing oneself in the Korean community, fully embracing the culture. In attempts to stake some claim to her Korean identity and feel a sense of pride, she tried to

learn the language and then resigned herself to just learning about Asian culture in general. Moreover, she felt frustrated by the assumptions this group places on her, causing her to deep act to feel Korean and Asian in order to fit a stereotype.

Creating another parallel reality, she essentially identified as Asian because her minority status in America highlights her inability to fit the "majority American culture" which she "sees as white." However, without Korean familial connections integral to passing down cultural knowledge and socialization, she felt "looked down upon" by Asians and Koreans who reminded her of her outsider status. She felt frustration when Asians and Koreans denied her Asian membership because she was alternatively forced to assume membership to a "white America." Unwilling to accept this identity, she found herself negotiating and redefining her identity to include her Asian status in spite of other Asians' opposition. She surface acted to deny the American aspect of her identity noting how she was "not quite sure why I don't feel completely comfortable saying I'm Asian American even though I know that I am and that is an important part of my identity." And she began to renegotiate her ideology surrounding what it meant to be Asian, overriding other Asian and Korean narrow definitions of Asian that excluded adoptees.

A third reality is created to negotiate her own personal struggle to feel a part of any community. She noted how she did not "feel" Korean or Asian because she didn't surround herself with other Koreans, nor did she know a lot about her respective Asian culture. And of course, non-Asians perceived her as Asian, not American. This manifested feelings of being judged and alienated by all three communities, leaving her engaged in another ideological shift that views adoptees floating without any identity markers to ground her sense of belonging.

Her deep desire to fit in ultimately brought about a crisis where she was able to explore more of her Asian identity over her Korean identity, while still negotiating the conflicting expectations that tell her she will never be Asian, which she felt was "definitely harmful." She redefined her Koreanness to mean Asian, though she continued to struggle with the cultural American aspect of her identity and in general, "with how I identify myself."

Adoptees, through necessity, create parallel realities in order to simultaneously manage the contradicting emotional expectations placed upon them from different groups and individuals in society. It also allows them to concurrently feel and conduct emotion work that would normally contradict one another without the complications of actually conflicting. Each parallel reality that is created allows an adoptee the ability to experience and confront crisis, and gather and negotiate new information for certain aspects of their identity while denying and avoiding or redefining another aspect.

Identity Work Is Emotional Work

These emotional management tools are all key dynamics for ultimately helping an adoptee work through their identity formation process. Emotion work helps them work through the dissonance which results from social rules dictating how they should feel with how they actually feel in relation to their identity as a Korean adoptee. These emotional negotiations occur on a continual basis as adoptees are recursively faced with new and repeating societal expectations and feeling rules that are created, sustained, and recreated from social interactions influencing the phenomenon of intercountry adoption. As an adoptee in Hubinette's research asserted, "Our search for ourselves does not have an end – neither does the pain…A friend recently commented that we, as adopted

Koreans live a lie. In order to assimilate into not only a white society, but also our adoptive families, we learn to see ourselves as others want to see us. We turn our lies into betrayal of ourselves." (2007: p.23). Indeed, the adoptees in this study discussed how social expectations influence how they feel or try to feel, which in so doing, impacts how they understand who they are and their identity.

In addition to the emotion management tools outlined by Hochschild (1979), adoptees also created parallel realities to deal with the compounding contradicting societal expectations emerging from the intersection of the adoptee status with other anchoring identities like family, race, community and nation. This is further complicated by the overlay of other master statuses like gender, sexual orientation, ability, and class. These conflicting social expectations and feeling rules guide an adoptee to either engage in further acting that may "betray ourselves," or influence an ideological shift that results in the creation of a new set of feeling rules. Consequently, managing emotions ultimately influences identity (Hochschild 2003) by influencing what the emotion becomes. For this reason, adoptees engaging in emotion work can therefore influence, as Denzin (1984a) has argued, action and agency. This emotion work ultimately influences the creation and recreation of feeling rules that recursively influences an adoptee's identity formation process as they try and answer the question of "who am I?"

CHAPTER VI

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION:

STRUCTURATION THEORY AND ADVOCACY

The identity formation of intercountry Korean adoptees is a social process. When adoptees participate in social interactions, they anticipate, interpret, and respond to action frameworks that embody social norms. Because all actions involve recursive monitoring of actors, adoptees' actions both reproduce and transform social rules of interaction. Each actor instantiates what Giddens (1984) calls rules and resources that are both constraining and enabling. These rules and resources impact the ability of individuals to realize their goals, thus implicating power in each action.

Cultural ideas of shame and illegitimacy associated with adoption, and the importance of blood ties rooted in Confucian thought constrain agency for birthmothers and Korean adoptees. These cultural concepts are embedded in Korea's social policies on adoption, social welfare, and economic development. Bearing the brunt of the stigma, Korean adoptees must negotiate the social rules influencing the appropriate behaviors and feeling rules. The struggle to work through these feeling rules represents the beginning of the emotion management process through which they form adoptee-specific identities. These rules and resources also enable Korean adoptees to bring about social change. Korean adoptees use allocative and authoritative resources, such as organization, internet, and the media, to change perceptions, attitudes, and social norms surrounding intercountry adoption. Adoptees create organizations that allow them to exchange ideas,

heighten awareness, and create solidarity; they may return to Korea with the purpose of advocating for policy changes. These efforts have led to improvements on the birth search rights, the opportunities to work and reside in Korea, and the awareness of adoption as a social issue, particularly concerning the rights of birth- and single mothers. Finally, their activism encompasses academic research and writing by and for intercountry adoptees through which they claim ownership of their experiences.

Cultural Ideologies and Intercountry Adoption

The popularity of intercountry adoption from Korea is rooted in cultural ideologies concerning the illegitimate sexual unions, the lack of adequate social service support for single mothers and children, and the stability of supply and demand between sending and receiving countries. When intercountry adoption was created as a government-sponsored program in the 1950s, mostly Amerasian babies between American GIs and Korean women were adopted out in attempts to cleanse the country of "mixed-children" (Hubinette 2007). The mixed race babies were socially stigmatized because of the importance placed on the purity of bloodlines. Impoverished full-Korean children eventually replaced the biracial children and war-orphans, as adoption became a national economic development plan and an alternative to providing social welfare programs to help the poor.

Korea's negative attitude towards illegitimate children is an extension of the social perception concerning their parents. However, the blame is disproportionately placed on the mother who is ultimately responsible for caring for the baby regardless of economic or personal issues (Hyoung 1997; Kim 2003; Hubinette 2007). This often forced the mother to relinquish her child without adequate economic and social support.

Additionally, the demand for children increased in Europe and North America due to the declines in fertility, the high costs of infertility treatments and the lack of suitable domestic adoption opportunities (Masson 2001). The Western paternalistic attitude towards Korea premised on the idea of saving poor babies fueled intercountry adoption.

A complex of social, cultural and economic factors continues to support the intercountry adoption industry. When asked about the causes of intercountry adoption, social workers today point to the importance placed on preserving the bloodlines, the stigma of being a child of an illegitimate union, and the sexism that perpetually places blame on women. Kim and Seung, who are social workers at an orphanage and a birthmother home, respectively, talked about the cultural rules of Confucianism and its impact on the perception toward "unwed mothers:"

> Kim: I think it is a [cultural] difference. Koreans think blood is very important; my blood and the children. If we see unwed mothers or unwed fathers, we think [the children's] origin [is] not good [because they are] not legally married couple. Just that they enjoy their own life and then they got their baby without any plan about baby. Just they enjoy, [but] they can't afford. Even [if] they love each other, the children will be rejected.

> Seung: Birthmothers thought in the past, under influence of Confucianism, women [should stay] at home to take care of the children…There is no government support until now when birthmother chooses [to] keep [their children].

While the structure of intercountry adoption is buttressed by the negative public perception toward the mother and the child, sending babies overseas absolved the Korean government of the responsibility to provide social services for them. Roy, a post-adoption worker, reflected on the politics of intercountry adoption:

> The Health Ministry, instead of education and building schools, can send children to foreign [countries] and Korea does not pay any money. At the same time, [when] children [are] sent away, the government gets the money, yearly income of 50-100 million dollars…The Korean [economic]

> development [or] the prosperity of our country goes back to the adoptees. We are now enjoying the profits of sending children.

Moreover, Korean adoptees in some Western countries have earned brand name recognition because of the efficient way in which intercountry adoption has been managed. Jane, a social worker at an adoption agency, noted:

> The Korean program of overseas adoption is a model for the whole world. Some people say it's the Cadillac of overseas adoption. Good childcare. Good medical and honest records. We have a good government program…

Despite individual motives and situations, the patriarchal cultural norms of the Korean society produce patterns that significantly disadvantage women and girls. Girls are more likely to be relinquished than boys, and women are more likely than men to bear the responsibility of caring for the child. The children also obviously do not have a say in choosing their adoptive family or where they are going to live. Moreover, once adopted into a family from another country, they are forced to acculturate into their adoptive parents' culture. The obvious racial difference between the adoptee and the adoptive family creates additional layers of complexity and becomes the source of major cultural dissonance throughout their lives.

Sexism and patriarchy in Korea impact adoptee girls disproportionately. Many girls are given up for adoption because of the emphasis on maintaining the bloodline through the male child. Joseph, an adoptee who works with post-adoption services, observed: "Boys generally stay in Korea because of the bloodline, and so if you have five girls and then you want a boy, and the last is a girl, what do you do? Bye Bye."

The gender imbalance is quite noticeable in orphanages where many of the children are placed for adoption. Kristy noted: "We obviously saw a lot more girls in the orphanage than boys, so I think [giving up girls is] still common, and that's one of the

reasons." The patriarchal cultural norms of the Korean society not only support the practice of abandoning babies, but also lead to feminization of intercountry adoption.

Constraining Social Norms in Adoptive Country

Intercountry adoptees continue to experience various forms of constraining cultural norms and disempowering experiences in their new lives in adoptive countries. Adoptees often feel like they do not have a choice in making important decisions in their lives. This feeling of helplessness is rooted in the paternalistic attitude toward the adoptees, who are expected to conform to contradictory cultural norms and are treated perpetually as children in need of the right guidance. Adoptees mediate these constraining social norms in their struggle to define self, based on rational calculations of the available alternatives.

Once children are adopted into a Western society, they have little say in maintaining their Korean cultural heritage. Adoptees are forced to assimilate into their adoptive family and community, but ironically, they are also expected to know and explain their Asian heritage. Teresa, Lori and Heidi explained their frustrations over the contradictory expectations:

> Teresa*:* How can any adult think that's an okay thing to just ship a child off to a foreign country and that child is going to be alone and doesn't know the language, and cut off culturally. Everything that you've known up until that point is lost… and [they] force you not to speak the language, forbid you, and cut your hair and all that stuff to basically erase your identity.
>
> Lori: If I spoke Korean I would get punished and spanked on the feet because that's how you got punished in Korea. For three years I was abused, from ages six to nine; the abuse lasted that long. They would drag me up the stairs by the hair…Both adopted and foster parents were abusive.
>
> Heidi: I dislike it when people accuse adoptees of not being 'Korean' enough. I think we are forever indelibly Korean from being born there and

> being caught in a transnational system and industry of adoption that Korea willingly participated in and we did not.

Having been forced into intercountry adoption at birth, Korean adoptees are placed in a floating space where their identity is questioned based on different expectations in society. Although they are pressured to assimilate into the Western culture, they are simultaneously expected to know about their Asian culture because of their physical features. In this context, it is not unusual for adoptees to downplay one of the two contradictory expectations. However, the consequence of doing so is social marginalization based on socially constructed binary characterizations of who they are, such as American versus not-quite-American or Asian versus not-quite-Asian. The tendency to view adoptees as one or the other becomes the source of great distress.

In adoptee communities, the perception of adoptees as children pervades. Cultural camps, for instance, are created and run by parents and adoption agencies, which reinforce a paternalistic attitude that "allows" and "tells" adoptees how to be Korean under the guidelines of parents, non-adoptee researchers, and adoption agencies. This perception also perpetuates a common misuse of studies on children that purportedly accounts for identity formation of all adoptees, including adults. Moreover, research is done *on* adoptees not *by* them, relegating adoptees to a passive role as children (Hubinette 2007). Teresa voiced her frustration over the lack of representative adoptee voices:

> I think it's the equivalent of any white liberal sociologist studying about people of color, and people of color having nothing to say about it. It's like in the past in the U.S., not to compare our experiences to African Americans because it's different, but, it's the same idea when your experiences are written by those who don't have the same frame, or the same skin color.

Research on adoption by non-adoptees creates, what Karl Manheim referred to as, "an affinity to the power of the group that created it" (Collins 2000:251). Non-adoptees who manage and control the intercountry adoption industry have a vested interest in shaping the contents of research. Thus, research becomes a cultural tool that sustains intercountry adoption rather than critically challenges the need for its continuance.

Administrative and Cultural Challenges of Returnees

In Korea, it has been quite difficult for adoptees to access resources and information about birth family. Adoption agencies, for instance, prevent adoptees from gaining access to information about their birthmothers.[49] Matt shared how these cultural and administrative rules constrained him from gaining personal information:

> They were very reserved in giving out information. Because they are protecting the parents, they have to keep it secret...I couldn't see the files they have. So I can't say, I only have this information right now, it's a background story, but I'm not sure if I have all the information from them, so I want a complete copy of this file to be sure, but they don't give it.

When agencies deny this knowledge to adoptees, they constrain an adoptee's access to their own history and alienate them from their Korean links. Mike faced similar resistance from his adoption agency in Korea. He recalled:

> Last week I wanted to go see SWS, the agency I was adopted through. [A person at the agency] was disturbed by the fact that I wanted to see my file, even though she had gone through it already. Suddenly a paper falls out, and it's a paper showing my mother's name, her age and the place I was born. I was in shock.

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[49] These road blocks that protect the mother are created from sexist social norms that allow a woman's worth to be based upon her sexual activities, absolving men from similar scrutiny. Knowledge of having an illegitimate child could prove detrimental to her current situation. Her prior behavior in a patriarchal society scorns undesired unions, making her deserving of abuse in the eyes of her current husband or making her chances of marriage impossible (e-j Kim 2003).

Withholding critical birth family information from adoptees is a reflection of Korea's cultural norm that implicitly blames the mother for having an illegitimate child. The right to protect the privacy of the mother outweighs the right of the child to know the truth about their past.

Culturally seen as shameful and illegitimate children (Hyoung 1997; Kim 2003), adoptees face tremendous difficulty reintegrating into the Korean culture. Moreover, their limited cultural knowledge and linguistic abilities provide additional barriers to acceptance as Koreans. Roy discussed the cultural constraints placed on adoptees:

> Korean adoptees are coming to me to start the [birth] search…they want to build themselves up as a whole person…to learn Korean culture, speak Korean…[However], adoptees are regarded as a handicap in Korea.

Roy suggested that Koreans looked down on adoptees and sometimes created hostile atmospheres for them. Mike expanded on Roy's comment about the disadvantages of being an adoptee in Korea:

> This time it was much worse. I was there for two months and the first two weeks I wanted to go home every single day…I had hard times getting help, people didn't like that I couldn't speak Korean, and if I said I was adopted, they thought I had money so they just wanted to sell things expensive…Because you want to love Korea, you want to love it all. And you certainly want to be a part of it. Which is impossible if you can't speak the language, and as an adoptee it is even more tough, 'cause you never get that second chance. It will never be enough for us looking like Koreans, not understanding half-ways of the Korean culture. We are expected knowing better than that. But if a white guy, even a friend of mine, coming to Korea and order some food in a bad, bad Korean accent. He will be treated like an angel! So that's the saddest thing about it all. We will not fully belong here too.

For Mike and Roy, Koreans placed an unrealistic expectation that adoptees should know the language and scorn them when they are unable to speak it. This lack of cultural knowledge further impeded their ability to integrate into the culture and feel a sense of belonging.

While Koreans look down upon adoptees who can't speak the language, adoptees are expected to re-assimilate into Korea on their own. Teresa expressed her frustration over the contradictory expectations:

> I wanted to learn about Korean culture and the language, and I came and I was totally turned off because I was really resentful of the fact that this country had sent me and other adoptees away. But then at the same time expect us to come back, reassimilate ourselves, learn the language and act like nothing ever happened. And I have a big problem with that because that's just pretending like nothing ever happened and it's not taking any responsibility or accountability and it's always putting the burden on adoptees, it's always us who has to bridge that gap.

Adoptees who return to Korea confront similar cultural challenges. The language barrier and cultural stigma silence the voices of adoptees. Moreover, the Government's apathy toward the adoption issue legitimizes the perpetuation of the problem. Teresa noted:

> So with any government, if you can ignore a certain percent of a population who has no voice and who you view as being inferior, why bother with them, they're not your priority. So I think that adoption, it's a system that perpetuates itself.

Heidi also shared the challenge she faced trying to bring attention to the adoption issues in Korea. She commented:

> I'm still really pessimistic about the point of reaching fluency in Korean like I speak English. Obviously it will never get to the point of my English but I don't even think it will get to the point where I feel comfortable. And, communication for me is really important…I don't like how they treat women here as second-class citizens still. And I really dislike the xenophobia they have about the rest of the world…My [Korean] cousin asked me the other day if I was a twinkie and I tried explaining that to her, that's really offensive…So for myself, being raised in the West…the biggest things I guess would be racism, sexism. Being completely unaware of those things here. And all the Koreans here say, oh, but it's changing, changing slowly. And I don't feel like I can ever speak Korean well enough to be articulate and tell people why it's wrong. And after the fact that they continue to send children away when they could be adopted here. And they're always saying at these events…now we're the 10th largest economy in the world, we had to send you away because we were really

> poor. And now it means nothing to me, because now it's really great that you're so advanced now, but you're still sending more children abroad than you are adopting domestically and it's because people here are just, they will not change their ways of thinking.

Frustration ensued for Heidi as she tried to educate Koreans about policies that continually place children in racially and culturally different homes overseas. Not knowing the language hampers an adoptee's ability to communicate their own personal experiences and advocate for policy changes regarding adoption.

Adoptees returning to Korea face several cultural barriers as they try and access resources and have a voice. Their stigmatized status makes it difficult to receive help and support from the Korean society. Indeed, adoptees share the same stigma as "having a handicap." In addition, adoptees lack the cultural resources to change social perceptions about adoption. This ultimately hinders adoptees' access to resources and personal information. Finally, the language barrier makes them feel voiceless and stifles their attempts to advocate for societal attitudes and policy changes pertaining to adoption.

Rules and Resources Enabling Korean Adoptees

Rules and resources are not just constraining but also enabling (Giddens 1984). Korean adoptees are using allocative and authoritative resources to form organizations with the aid of technology, like the internet, in order to assert their voice, exchange ideas, build solidarity, and heighten awareness about adoption issues on a global level. These organizations also help adoptees overcome the barriers that constrain them from experiencing Korea, while providing them with a network of other adoptees. Despite overwhelming cultural and administrative constraints placed upon them, adoptees are influencing policy changes in a variety of areas, including the birth search process, employment and residency opportunities, the cultural and language acquisition programs,

and the awareness of social issues that includes rights for birth- and single mothers. Adoptees are able to slowly change the perceptions and social norms regarding intercountry adoption in Korea through diverse methods, such as media, film, literature, art, and music. In academic research, an increasing number of adoptees have taken up the issue as their primary research focus.

Creating Adoptee Organizations

Adoptees use various forms of allocative and authoritative resources to create organizations on both local and international levels. Bethany, an adoptee in the United States, utilized the internet in order to create her own networking Korean adoptee website. This venue allowed her to assert her voice, search for support from other adoptees, and exchange thoughts on adoption. She expanded:

> My parents were supportive in terms of money but in terms of emotion support they were very lacking…the internet for me was my gateway to connect with other adoptees. I knew it wouldn't cost too much…I just felt so isolated and lonely in my adoptive history and so I wanted to talk to other people and see if it was normal in comparison to other people. Because I always heard, we don't know why you had such a problem-my parents always kinda threw back in my face what they did for me like I didn't deserve it and I owe them...I just wanted to hear what other people said. I actually recruited people from other websites all over the world. I basically came up with this template email and I emailed these people that posted on forums and at one point I had 100 people, and which is kinda small worldwide but it was just me, and had no backing. And it wasn't just only Korean adoptees. But that's where I had most of my adoptee contact. And when I moved it was mostly because of someone from the adoptee community…I just felt they're an adoptee, they must have mercy on me; it's like the adoptee underground. [Laughing].

This venue provided opportunities for her to connect with adoptees worldwide to talk about concerns growing up in white adoptive homes, networking to search for employment, and a safe space to talk about their general thoughts on being adopted. Other internet forums like KoreanAdopteesWorldwide and KoreanAdopteeSearch

provide a similar venue for adoptees to voice their opinions, network, ask questions, and share their experiences.[50]

Ami Nafzger, a Korean adoptee, helped create the first government-sponsored, nonprofit organization in Korea called Global Overseas Adoptee's Link (G.O.A.'L). This is the first organization run by adoptees. Experiencing the cultural barriers and stigma placed on adoptees returning to Korea first hand, she established this organization to help other adoptees. G.O.A.'L currently provides adoptees a social network and helps ease their transition into Korea.[51] Their presence in Korea also helps to break down cultural stereotypes that adoptees are shameful. The adoptees running G.O.A.'L convey their concerns to the government about the barriers adoptees continue to face and what resources the government can offer to help overcome them.

A couple examples of non-government groups created and run by adoptees in my study include Adoptee Solidarity Korea (ASK) in Korea and Adoption Mentoring Program (AMP) in California.[52] ASK was created by adoptees living in Korea, Korean

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[50] These online forums allow adoptees to post their research and artistic work on adoption, question policies, advocate for petitions to bring about policy changes, raise awareness to others wanting to have an uncensored perspective on being adopted, provide tips on conducting birth searches, and provide support for both adoptees who have found birth family and those who have not. These forums also make it possible to advertise worldwide about conferences and gatherings designed to provide a space to assemble, network, and discuss research and awareness.

[51] G.O.A.'L helps ease transitions by providing translation services, language classes, birth search services, social networking, a journal to allow adoptees to express their thoughts and opinions, links to adoptee researchers, help with finding employment, and places to reside.

[52] These are by no means a complete list of adoptee organizations existing globally. One of the other big organizations is IKAA (International Korean Adoptee Associations), an international association for Korean adoptees comprised of European IKAA and USA IKAA. IKAA-Europe consists of Adopted Koreans' Association (Sweden), Arierang (The Netherlands), Korea Klubben (Denmark), and Racines Coreenes (France). IKAA-USA comprises of AKC Connection, Also-Known-As, Inc., and Asian Adult Adoptees of Washington (http://ikaa.org/en/page/68).

nationals, and Kyopos (overseas ethnic Koreans) who want to advocate change in the intercountry adoption policies, to end intercountry adoption and to raise awareness regarding the social injustices that force single women to choose adoption. Utilizing media outlets and advocacy,[53] this group seeks to educate the public about policy changes. AMP is a program created by adoptees to help mentor younger adoptees as they work through difficult identity questions.

The House of Korean Root (KoRoot) and International Korean Adoptee Service (InKAS) are organizations run by Koreans whose sole purpose is to serve adoptees by providing services similar to G.O.A.'L. They try to help adoptees overcome the cultural barriers they will encounter when they return to Korea, by providing a place of residence (KoRoot), language classes and a small stipend (InKAS). Moreover, KoRoot espouses a political component where they engage in raising awareness by educating adoptees, families, and Koreans on the patriarchy that underlies social injustices which maintain intercountry adoption. They also provide awareness about the negative ramifications some adoptees experience by being placed in an intercountry interracial family.

All of these organizations offer services that help adoptees overcome the cultural barriers and stigma they encounter upon returning to Korea. More importantly, the organizations serve as a platform through which adoptees raise their concerns and represent their voices. Not only are adoptees finding support and solidarity through these

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[53] ASK engages in all forms of advocacy such as presenting at conferences, writing editorials, presenting films and other art mediums, protesting, attending rallies, and working with other government and non-government organizations.

organizations, but they are also advocating social policy changes from the vantage point of the adoptees.

Adoptee Activism and Social Change in Korea

Building on the strengths of these organizations and networks, adoptees in Korea are helping to transform the perceptions toward adoptees, the opportunities for other adoptees, and the structure of the adoption industry. Joseph recalled an adoptee who utilized the media and television to begin their birth search:

> An adoptee from Norway, she worked for a broadcast TV. Before she didn't say anything about that, and she had no access to her file at Holt. Then she said, I work for the media and I will have a team from Norway come and poof, here is a lot of info. Why? Because media is very strong.

Joseph also advocated for adoptees to contact prominent television networks such as the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) to bring attention to the issue when there were no other options remaining to gather information on their birth family. KBS now televises a live show called *I Miss that Person* that helps reunite adoptees with their birth families. Television shows like this are designed to pull at our heart strings when a reunion is made, to infuse human voice and dimension into the adoption issues.[54] Rather than seeing adoptees as a target of shame and stigma, these shows humanize the experiences.[55]

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[54] Hubinette (2005) has written about Korean adoptees and Korean artists using media, music, and film to educate the public on intercountry adoption and the social issues attached to it. Organizations like KoRoot regularly hold viewings of films created by adoptees and Koreans that reveal social issues surrounding adoption like the predicament of birthmothers and their lack of emotional, cultural, and economic support. Films like *Arirang* or *First Person Plural* that memoir the life of an adoptee growing up overseas also help to educate and change perceptions of adoption and reevaluate if placing a Korean baby abroad is the best choice.

[55] An additional note, some adoptees have cautioned about the negative aspects of having their personal stories objectified for the purpose of entertainment.

Although grassroots campaigning for social change is undoubtedly very difficult, the consistent effort of the adoptees yielded important transformations. Three major changes facilitate greater access for and recognition of adoptees in Korea. These include: the implementation of special visas for adoptees, the establishment of National Adoption Day, and the inclusion of adoptees among overseas Koreans for dual citizenship.

The implementation of the F4 special visa category allows adoptees to work, live and own land in Korea. In 1999, G.O.A.'L lobbied for the inclusion of adoptees under the special law on Overseas Koreans. The new visa category affords greater opportunities for the overseas Korean adoptees than the previous visas, such as F1, F2 or tourist visas.[56] In another watershed event in 2006, Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare formally announced May 11th as National Adoption Day. According to editorials in *The Korea Times*, Koreans were beginning to feel ashamed that they were still sending away their children, even when Korea is economically wealthy. The Mission to Promote Adoption in Korea (MPAK) and ASK's vocal presence, combined with recent celebrity domestic adoptions and highlights in the media, reveal how adoptees are using various resources to bring about a shift in perception regarding adoption. Finally, since the interview with David, G.O.A.'L has been campaigning to get dual citizenship for adoptees.[57] Just recently, according to *The Korea Herald*, the Korean government announced that it wants

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[56]An F1 visa is given to Korean Americans who wish to stay in Korea to visit relatives more than 90 days and up to one year. Applicants must provide proof that their origin is Korean such as a Korean family registry or marriage certificate, or birth certificate. An F2 visa is a residence visa. http://www.chicagoconsulate.org/en/sub03/sub03_01.php

[57] For example, G.O.A.'L helped distribute signed petitions from around the world to send to the Korean government, distribute surveys, and provided a voice representing adoptees to the Korean Ministry of Justice. http://www.goal.or.kr/eng/?slms=roomandlsms=1andsl=6andls=1.

to extend dual citizenship to groups of overseas Koreans, including adoptees.[58] Thus, several new policy initiatives have resulted from the ongoing efforts of the transnational adoptees.

Influencing Change in Korea: Women's Rights

Many adoptees living in Korea recognize that underlying causes of adoption are embedded in Korea's cultural tradition that ostracizes and stigmatizes a single mother. ASK, whose mission is to create awareness and social change, works closely with groups that are beginning to advocate for the rights of single women (Kim 2003; Hyoung 1997) in order to allow them to keep babies in Korea by providing welfare services.[59] Utilizing media sources like film and newspapers, ASK capitalizes on Korea's concern about its international image and the declining shift in birth rate.[60] Influenced by the concern that Korea's birth rate remains one of the lowest in the world, Koreans are beginning to see the importance of keeping babies in Korea. Indeed, in the last several years, the number of domestic adoptions has overtaken international adoptions for the first time in Korea's history. Echoing the importance of grassroots struggle for change, Teresa urged:

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[58] *The Korea Herald*, December 30, 2008

[59] While I was in Korea, I witnessed this first hand as adoptees and Koreans from ASK canvassed their awareness campaigns to government officials, parents, and adoptees at conferences, and collaborated with other organizations like ones that support birthmother homes. By presenting information about single mothers and how denying them support perpetuates the cycle of intercountry adoption, members of ASK were able to raise awareness among the adoptees and the Korean community to help change perspectives on birthmothers.

[60] Koreans take pride in their status as an economically strong nation. Highlighting its inability to take care of its own children as a current rich nation brings shame to their image. An example of this happened during the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Receiving negative press for exporting over 8,000 children that year, some Koreans were embarrassed that they were still shipping children out for adoption as they were touting their new economic position in the global economy (Lee & Miller 2008). As a result, the Korean government began decreasing the number of children adopted overseas.

> As adoptees, we need to create awareness to these problems to other adoptees and also to Koreans. Because the first step is awareness. And we're also trying to push for change by meeting people in the government and right now we're working on a petition to submit to why adoption should end…When we started ASK, their reaction is always like, "Korean people are not going to change, it's too hard, you can't do it." Why not? 'Cause five years ago, very few people were adopting domestically. There was still a huge stigma, but in the last five years, the government went on a campaign, and so did the adoption agencies, for their own interest, not because they wanted to but, push for Koreans to start to adopt more and more domestically and so, that can happen. Women's rights…you have to fight for change and that's the thing. To always have a better vision than to accept what is not ok. And I think that collectively as adoptees came together and more and more adoptees became politicized that this should stop…because the government is not going to do shit unless they get pressure from people within their country and most of all from outside. It seems like Korea never does shit unless they get bad international criticism. So that's the moment now, what we're trying to do.

Seung, who is groundbreaking in her approach as a social worker and director to helping birthmothers make informed choices about their options, also talked about some of the changes being made from advocacy campaigns run by organizations like ASK. She explained:

> I have supported birthmothers to decide decision for baby's welfare and give information about post birth Before there were no post services for birth mothers to keep baby. Even I didn't think society to keep the baby. Until now, the best solution is abortion for society, selves and family…Year by year, because the birth rate is the lowest in the world, its people, government official think it's kind of a crisis in Korea's future. Now they have interest about the birthmother and keeping her baby. Until now, no changes, but maybe next year, expecting Director in government dealing with problem.

Seung also weighed in on the role of demographic changes on intercountry adoption in Korea. The low birth rate in Korea is becoming a great concern for the Korean government. Seung and organizations like ASK are working to recreate the cultural norm so that Korea sees the benefit of keeping their babies and providing support

for single women to reduce the impact of the low birth rate. As a result of these efforts, other important changes have happened in Korea. Seung elaborated:

> Seung: First sign is in past when suggested to keep babies at the time, they blamed me. They ask how could they raise their child. Why don't you persuade to give up for adoption. But now since 2000, one day the government official in charge of women's department called to come and have briefing for the problem. She understands there would have one policy development. One policy that at that time from next year will support group homes to help birthmothers keep their babies. We started five group homes in Korea but one group home capacity is only five birthmothers and babies. So only 25. But it's a start and very meaningful first step. So this year, last year they supported four more group homes and seven more have developed. And also in Seoul, it has group homes since 2000. But now at this month, the week after next, end of July this month, we will move to our group home to a bigger space. After moving, we can have almost 13 mother and babies.
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> Tanya: Do most mothers want to keep their babies?
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> Seung: yes, sure. About 30% keep. Big development.
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> Tanya: Why the change?
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> Seung: Birthmothers thought in the past, under influence of Confucianism, women only at home to take care of the children. Now woman has a job and financial ability for self support. Women's thought has developed more than ever before. In the past, women only under male domination. When women get financial ability, they begin thinking of ways they can change, then and social attitude change a little by little because of low birth rate.

Seung also discussed the different programs, such as individual and family counseling, that are now available to birthmothers that educate them on their options. Birthmothers attitudes are changing as they realize there is support available from the government and organizations like ASK, to keep their babies. Seung shared:

> Most important thing of change is the birthmother's thinking way has changed than ever before. Why I am mother, why do I have to give up? Under pressure of others? I'm responsible, it's my own decision. Also agency at here. First we support them for the first time. We educate birthmothers and Korean's attitude, society changes because of the low birth rate…But after 10-15 years after child grows up, it will be very

> different. Education, birthmothers who give up for adoption have more guilt. Need balance of education. Developing program for group counseling for decision making. Mandatory. All kinds of information they get when they choose keeping. What pressure from society and parent and difficulties will endure and what kind of resources from society or sponsorship. And also make them search for the ability to keep baby around her, like financial and emotional. Financial can be supported but emotional and social ability, they can go to counseling programs, big help for them…When choose keeping, they get parent education. How to take care of baby and how can they be self-supported and make plan with social worker. Many birthmothers, especially young, are abused by family, we have a counseling program…So if make plan with social worker and if they need more help from here, they report to group home. Can stay 1 year, 3 months and get training vocational, according to plan. So after financial vocational training, can have qualification test and get license from each job. Then found job. For 2-3 months, adjust to job environment and they can discharge from mother and baby home.

By helping families reconnect, Seung and her co-workers are reinventing family relations regarding the birthmother status. Providing counseling services to a birthmother's family helps them reconnect and create another support structure enabling mothers to keep their children. They are proving their worth to their family by showing how they could be resourceful, obtain vocational skills to get a job, and care for their baby. Seung commented:

> One of most important in counseling program is to have connection with original family. Keeping babies is very tough in this society. Need to be supported by parents emotionally. So can overcome peoples push, disagree of their attitude. So if original family is supportive of birthmother and baby, really good resources. Family counseling is very important. At first, most parents oppose very strongly but when able to see mother and baby home and good raising and how they get vocational training and have found job, family attitude changes, little by little. Oh, she do something well, they call then to invite to visit, and show baby, and now after contact and relation and original parents say I want to see baby and recover relationship a little by little. Many after discharge recover relationship with original family. Also have invited birthmother parents and counseled them and education program for the family. And the family have a good impression to the agency, and therefore better relationship with them. Keeping rate will be higher than ever before year by year.

These programs that help educate both the single mother and her family help slowly change the perceptions of birthmothers in Korea. Moreover, continued policy changes reflect the nation's shift in attitude towards these women. Seung discussed the importance of the Mother and Child Act that could provide economic security for the family:

> So these days we have asked the government to revise the Mother and Child Act. According to this Act, this maternity home support by government and now according to law, in maternity home, no conception of baby and child, only birthmother. There is no support 'til now when birthmother choose keeping. We asked the government to revise act and contain child conception. After revise role, if the government support home when birthmother choose keeping, money will support for children. And then maternity home will change attitude to support. Until now, most don't give any program to support when birthmother choose keeping. Maternity do that because no conception in mother and baby act. Without any pressure from the government. But I suspect the parliament will change, revise the law. I expect. So many from next year something changes. So many maternity homes are afraid of those situations. When support birthmother keeping a baby, many things are needed. Afraid of that situation. But when law changes, they should do, so next year I expect something and also many birthmothers being encouraged about revising the law to keep the baby. Many efforts to revise law at this organization. Revise content at national assembly and a few congressman give promise to support us. Last month, representative of opposition party visited here. I asked her about that. She is member to assess the law. I asked her to continue to revise the law.

Seung is still working with legislators to revise the Mother and Child Act that will provide monetary support for birthmothers so that they could keep the children in maternity homes. Currently birthmothers only have special birth homes like the one Seung runs, to help them keep their babies. By opening up this act to include money for all maternity homes, more mothers will be assured support to keep their babies. All of these changes that support birthmothers represent the work adoptees and Koreans are doing to change the attitudes of Korean society that will enable them to keep their babies.

Finding Their Academic Voice

On top of creating and running their own organizations, adoptees are finding and expressing their voices by reclaiming the academic literature on adoption by becoming researchers themselves. As Hubinette (2007) has already suggested, adoptees like himself, Kim Park Nelson, Kathleen Bergquist, John D. Palmer, and myself (to name a few) are taking ownership of their experiences by becoming the researchers. Adult adoptees are able to raise areas of concern that non-adoptee researchers lack the perspectives to pinpoint. New approaches to identity, awareness, and social change reflect the insight that comes from living the experience.

Adult adoptee voices are finally coming together on a global level through avenues like the internet, the international gatherings, and the various art forms like prose and visual art (Hubinette 2007). These avenues provide adoptees opportunities to voice their opinions and exercise their agency. Adoptees are making changes, exercising their agency, and exercising power. We have seen how in these moments of agency, power exists for those who utilize the rules and resources for their benefit. As more adoptees exercise their agency, more opportunities exist to change constraining structures into ones that bring about positive change for adoptees in Korea, and for single mothers. As more adoptees utilize these rules and resources, these new structures can be maintained and used to enable more agency for the adoptees.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In the 1950s, adoption from South Korea to Western countries started as a welfare solution to the problems of the increasing number of war orphans and biracial children. South Korea began keeping track of adoptions in 1958. As of 2008, a total of 230,635 children have been adopted. International adoption accounts for 70% (or 166,444) of these adoptions, with the United States clearly leading the way at 109,323 adoptions from Korea between 1953 and 2008 (Onishi 2008).

Table 1 Intercountry Adoption from Korea to Select Western Countries

Countries	Years	Number Adopted
United States	1953-2008	109,323
France	1968-2005	11,128
Sweden	1957-2007	9,214
Denmark	1965-2007	8,676
Norway	1955-2007	6,203
Netherlands	1969-2007	4,102
Belgium	1969-1995	3,697
Australia	1969-2007	3,363
Germany	1965-1996	2,352
Canada	1967-2006	2,040
Switzerland	1968-1997	1,111
Others	1956-2004	1,979
Total		**163,188**

Sources: U.S. Department of State and the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare. [61]

[61] U.S. Department of State: http://adoption.state.gov/news/total_chart.html, Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare: http://english.mw.go.kr/front_eng/main.jsp.

Though dire economic and political circumstances of the 1950s provided the context of the earlier trend, the adoption from Korea has not abated despite the upward economic shift (Nelson 2009). As noted in a *New York Times* article, Kim Dong-won, who oversees adoptions in the country's Ministry of Health, declared: "South Korea is the world's 12th largest economy and is now almost an advanced country, so we would like to rid ourselves of the international stigma or disgrace of being a baby-exporting country…It's embarrassing" (Onishi 2008: A6).

Indeed, when children from Korea are adopted overseas, more than the public image of Korea is impacted. As presented throughout this dissertation, intercountry adoption of Korean children into Western homes impacts the identity and emotions of these adoptees. Moreover, intercountry adoption also affects families, Asian American communities, and other racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. and abroad, as well as governments and governmental policies towards sending and receiving countries (Nelson 2009).[62] This chapter concludes with reflections on the policy implications of the scholarly research on intercountry adoption, specifically for Korea and receiving countries.

While I recognize that this study includes only 25 adoptees and six informants working either in adoption or post adoption services, and therefore should not be used to make a blanket statement about all adult Korean adoptees, the study does provide a

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[62] Asian children into Caucasian homes are not the only types of transracial adoptions that occur. Children from Latin America, Africa, and other Asian countries are adopted into Western homes, as well as domestically there are interracial adoptions occurring. Hence policies, and research of Korean adoptees, though not completely relevant, have some similar experiences and lessons to learn from.

deeper understanding and breadth of information about the adult Korean adoptee community and how its members experience their identity formation process. Despite the fact that the adoptees grew up in different social contexts, they still shared similar emotional experiences. Whereas other racial minorities experience similar interactions based on race and ethnicity, for the intercountry Korean adoptee, race and ethnicity as accentuating factors are not as fundamental as the adoptee status that becomes complicated by social aspects like race and gender. The uniqueness for adoptees regardless of their situated social contexts is that their adoptee status accentuates all other social statuses.

Moreover, as Creswell (1998) notes, 25 participants is a common number used when conducting a phenomenological study with in-depth interviews, meant to gather data rich in description and the lived experiences of the informants. In addition, the information gathered from these participants should be used to question the current discourse on identity development, provide an avenue to explore alternative ways of understanding identity, and create further inquiry into the identity process of Korean adoptees and how this fits into the larger scheme of international adoption.

Theoretical Implications

A New Identity: Recursive Identity Process

One of the major new theoretical contributions to sociology and identity theory brought forth in this paper is an alternative way to look at identity not as a development but rather as an ongoing process. For the adoptees in this study, identity is an ongoing recursive process rather than a linear stage development that has been the traditional model used by scholars (Erikson 1968; Cross 1991; Atkinson Morten and Sue 1993;

Wilkinson 1995; Huh and Reid 2000; Phinney 1992; Poston 1990). Interviewing adult adoptees sheds a new light on the complexity of the Korean adoptee experience from childhood into adulthood growing up in predominantly white families. While some researchers (Marcia 1980; Phinney 1992; Grotevant et al 2000) do recognize that identity development occurs throughout one's lifetime, identity models premise on linear progression where an adoptee moves forward from one stage to the next, or backwards to the previous stage, and arrives at the final stage. I suggest that there is not a final stage for one to ultimately achieve, rather Korean adoptees are continually jumping from one stage to another as they encounter a triggering event which makes them reevaluate their identity. Like Grotevant et al (2000) suggest, adoptee identity is embedded in a larger social context and the elements of identity are dependent on the social factors affecting their lives including family, peers, location, race relations, and current events.

Korean adoptee identity does not fit a linear model because unlike other racial and identity development literature suggests, they lack the ability to claim membership in familiar groups like their family, community, culture, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Hence, in order to feel accepted into these groups, the adoptees assume different roles and act according to the expected cultural rules. Further highlighting their "differences" is the "adoptee" status that becomes complicated by other social master statuses (race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation), and other social constructions of difference. Adoptees must mediate conflicting societal expectations in their struggle to belong. Social interactions that both question and affirm their membership and sense of belonging recursively trigger adoptees to reevaluate their constant floating status forcing them to continually navigate through the different elements of their identity formation.

The Identity Process is Emotional

The identity formation of adult Korean adoptees involves managing emotions. Social interactions and relations shape emotions (Johnson 1992) which in turn affect their identity, action, and agency (Denzin 1984a). This is the first study that examines how the emotional management of adult Korean adoptees affects their identity. Emotional management of adoptees requires balancing the conflicting feeling rules embedded in our society and culture. Building on Hochschild's framework, I demonstrate the importance of the parallel realities that adoptees create in order to rationally respond to diverse action contexts. The parallel realities allow adoptees to recursively negotiate contradictory expectations and feeling rules that result in a fractured identity. This fractured identity stems from their inability to claim membership to groups that the majority of the population take for granted. In order to make sense of the multiple layers of emotions and feeling rules, intercountry adoptees create *parallel realities* where they are able to file away and retrieve the appropriate emotion responses, even in the face of contradicting expectations. As they manage the conflicting emotions between the socially ascribed feeling rules and their true emotions, Korean adoptees encounter experiences that alter and frame their identity.

Identity Formation and Agency

The identity formation for intercountry Korean adoptees is a social process because they participate in social interactions where they anticipate, interpret, and respond to action frameworks that create and reproduce social norms. Thus, social norms and feeling rules are created and re-established by actors who embody agency and social change. Each actor brings rules and resources to bear on the interactions that are both

constraining and enabling, which implicates power as they struggle to bring about an intended outcome.

The rules and resources that shape intercountry adoption include the culturally embedded ideas of shame, illegitimacy, gender roles, and the bloodline. These age-old ideas are rooted in Confucian thought, which guides social policies regarding adoption, social welfare, and economic development. The cultural constraints significantly impede the range of activities for birthmothers and Korean adoptees. Bearing the brunt of the stigma, Korean adoptees must negotiate the social rules influencing the appropriate behaviors and feeling rules. As adoptees struggle to work through these feeling rules, it marks the start of their emotion management process and consequently, their identity formation.

Rules and resources are also enabling, giving agency to adoptees. Korean adoptees use allocative and authoritative resources such as organizations, internet, and the media to change perceptions, attitudes, and social norms surrounding intercountry adoption. Adoptees create organizations that allow them to exchange ideas, heighten awareness, and create solidarity. They return to Korea to advocate for policy changes that affect adoptees and birthmothers. To date, adoptees' agency to influence social change has transformed policies in birth search rights, provided opportunities to work and reside in Korea, and created an awareness of adoption as a social issue. Furthermore, perceptions of birthmothers are changing as the Korean government slowly has implemented policies that provide mothers more economic and emotional support to keep their babies. A final point, adoptees are no longer just the subject but also the researcher in academia, taking ownership of their lived experiences and gaining empowerment.

Future Studies and the Implications for China

Recommendations for future studies on intercountry Korean adoptees should identify some of the contextual issues that might impact identity. A regional study that includes more systematic analysis of the data focusing on key contextual issues like gender, geography (residence as child, and residence as adult), levels of higher education its location are areas where the study can be strengthened. This study included limited numbers of adoptees from Europe, Canada, and throughout the United States which made it difficult to provide overarching arguments about these contextual issues that impact identity.

Some recent studies have shown that parents who now incorporate the entire family in cultural activities and provide Asian mentors for their adopted children report them as having a better sense of self and a more positive outlook on their Asian identity (Feigelman & Silverman 1984; Yoon 2001, 2004; Lee et al 2006). Indeed, Yoon (2001, 2004) found that parents who showed positive support and partook in ethnic socialization experiences along with their childrens' Korean ethnic heritage resulted in adoptees having a positive sense of ethnic pride. As Lee et al. observe, families presently adopting are more aware of the importance for cultural socialization and have more resources and opportunities to engage in these cultural activities than previous families adopting internationally (2006). It is important to follow up with these children as they become adults to see how they view their identity and sense of self, as well as their adoption experience and their perspectives and recommendations regarding intercountry adoption. Moreover, researchers should compare and contrast these future studies with the current studies being done on the first few waves of adult Korean adoptees.

Finally, though Korea's numbers are decreasing with the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare citing goals to end intercountry adoption completely, China's numbers still remain strong. The research being done currently on adult Korean adoptees has implications for adoptees from China. We should be looking at how the voices of adult Korean adoptees and their experiences can help shape policies and recommendations for adoptees from China. Since its inception in 1992, adoptions from China have numbered over 71,500 with a majority of the children adopted to the United States.[63] This compares and contrasts the intercountry adoption phenomenon of Korea with China, noting similarities in Confucian-based cultures stimulating the abandonment of babies. Though the political and cultural structures shaping intercountry adoption policies from both countries have different beginnings with Korea connected to capitalist countries and China siding with Communist countries, similarities to race, gender, and culture are abound. Adoption numbers from China are still strong, and those studying the intercountry adoption phenomenon from Asian countries will do well to consider theoretical perspectives utilized to understand Korean adoptees and adoption.

Policy Implications

Enable Birth Searches and Reunions

There are several policy implications to consider when reviewing adoption between Korea and the West. The first is in regards to birth family information. Adoptees are struggling to understand who they are and where they came from when they begin a

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[63] http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/china_adoption.php. http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/FactOverview/international.html (Penner 1997).

birth search. For some of these adoptees, the experiences are difficult and harrowing, disappointing and upsetting, while, for others, they are filled with joy, happiness and understanding. But, what remains constant is the heartache and difficulty many expressed in trying to retrieve information on their birth family.

In Canada, Sachdev's (1992) positive results of adoptee-parent reunions resulted in recommendations to open records to adoptees. Griffith (1992), who also helped to open the birth records in New Zealand, reiterates the importance of opening these records to adoptees. While cultural norms differ in these Western countries compared to Korea, it does not take away from the fact that adoptees have a right to their personal information, especially in a transaction where they had no rights. When social workers often covet this information in order to "protect" the birthmother, they invariably deny it to the one person that it has the most meaning to, the adoptee. Moreover, this "protection" only serves to maintain patriarchy and sexism embedded in the society that perpetuates the intercountry adoption program. Policies making it easier for families in Korea and adoptees in western countries should be implemented. Adoptees already go through a great deal of emotional struggle as they work through the identity of being adopted into a different culture and racial family (Palmer 2005; Penner 1997; Hubinette 2007; Meier 1999).

Social Welfare Needs in Korea

Many adoptees and those working in fields related to adoption noted that Korea is still lagging behind other developing countries in their social welfare policies. Indeed, the Ministry of Health and Welfare is quoted as saying that Korea is the 12th richest economy in the world and should no longer have to send its children abroad (Onishi 2008).

However, for this to be possible, Korea must expand its social welfare program to include services for mothers wishing to keep their children, and for children to stay in Korea with the goal of being adopted domestically if the mother feels the need to relinquish her child.

U.S. and the West's Demand for International Babies and Increasing Domestic Adoption

As many researchers have noted already, there is a large demand for Asian babies in Western countries (Nelson 2009; Hubinette 2007; Selman 2002; Lovelock 2000; Masson 2001, Weil 1984). Indeed, Jane, one of the social workers in Korea, likened Korean adoptees as the Cadillac of adoptees because of Korea's product value of babies being "healthy" and "cute," coupled with the ease with which the transactions occur. Demand remains high in many Western nations due in part to the decreased fertility rate and the lack of options for domestic adoption. As Nelson (2009) illustrates, the fear of domestically adopted children being placed back with the birthmother lingers in the back of adopting parents' minds, reinforcing the demand for adopting internationally where the likelihood of parents fighting to take their child back is non-existent. Western countries need to refocus energies on fixing the welfare and adoption system in their own countries and providing homes for these children, rather than seeking outside of the country.

Moreover, Patton-Imani (2002) calls for a redefinition of adoption in the United States, noting how the current policies implemented by white middle class parents, social workers, and psychologists have enabled a system that systematically ignores the needs of African American children for adoption. "Black children were typically labeled unadoptable and left in foster care," (p. 822) hence creating an adoption system serving to "reproduce legitimate white middle-class families according to state definitions of 'normal' gender, race, sexuality, and class identities," (Patton-Imani 2002: 822). With

limitations on ‘normal,’ healthy, adoptable white children, white middle class parents looked to Asia where having an Asian baby was almost white enough and easily assimilated (Nelson 2009). Thus, the United States in particular (as the nation adopting the most Asian children internationally) needs to take a deep look at the current system in place which enables parents to choose to assimilate a child from another culture and continent in favor of poor, older and/or of color “illegitimate” children left in foster care in their own country.

More Stringent Placement Policies and Parental Education

Many adoptees discussed the abusive homes they were adopted into and how these experiences added to the already present difficulties of being racially different and adopted. Several adoptees advocate for the end of intercountry adoption, period. For those adoptees still in favor of adoption despite their abuse, they discussed the importance that social workers and agencies do a better job of screening the parents. These adoptees experienced racism in the home, in addition to physical and emotional abuse. As children who are voiceless in the transaction, the least that decision makers can do is ensure the home they are entering is a healthy environment. Other adoptees whom felt they had loving, caring parents, still felt that their parents were unprepared for the identity issues and racial difficulties the adoptees experienced in a transracial family. Nelson agrees, noting how many adoptions that occurred in the 1960s through the 1980s found that parents were unprepared and were oblivious to the difficulties that their

adopted children would encounter (2009).[64] Parents are better educated in this latest wave of adoptions with studies showing children with a more positive sense of pride in their racial and ethnic heritage (Lee 2006). Time will tell how the adoptees of today compare to the experiences of current adult adoptees.

Finally, adoptees and those working with adoptees in Korea noted how policies were inconsistent amongst the four major adoption agencies in Korea. Policies regarding birth searches in particular were noted, as well as how they screened parents, and placed children. Consistency in policies should also extend to the North American and other western countries' counterpart adoption agencies.

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this study are four-fold. First, identity is a lifelong process. Second, identity formation requires emotional management. Third, adoptees exercise their agency and influence intercountry adoption. Fourth, we should be rethinking adoption in terms of what is best for adoptees.

Identity as a Life Long Process

As noted in the theoretical implications, identity is a lifelong process. We need to be cognizant of this shift in paradigm as we seek to understand identity of adult Korean adoptees. There is no final stage as noted in other identity models, in that Korean adoptees unique experience of being adopted, being racially different, and born in a different country creates added complications to their identity. Moreover, depending on

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[64] Nelson also discusses how white parents are ill-prepared to talk about race, perpetuating a "love is colorblind" attitude that is embedded in racial inequities inherent with transracial international adoption: http://www.adoptionmosaic.org/?p=175

an adoptee's interaction contexts, it will impact the future identity process of the adoptee. This identity is influenced by social/cultural factors and life changes that are constant throughout any human's life span. It is naïve of us to believe that events in the future will never impact how an adoptee views their identity. To argue that adoptees can achieve a final stage denies the unknown and reflexive nature of interactions in society.

Emotional Management and Identity Formation

Again, identity is emotional and adoptees actively engage, as Hochschild suggests, in emotion management to navigate through the conflicting emotions existing between the socially ascribed feeling rules and their true emotions, thus encountering experiences that alter and frame their identity. The adoptees clearly spoke of the emotions work they do on an ongoing basis as they continuously encounter new social interactions that influence a reevaluation of where they are identity-wise according to the expectations presented to them.

Adoptees and Agency

Adoptees however, are not complacent. All of the adoptees I interviewed can and do engage their agency and take some form of action related to and within the realm of intercountry adoption. Whether it is agreeing to participate in an interview for research on adoptees, mentoring others, or participating in activism for changing intercountry adoption policies and social welfare policies, adoptees have a voice. They are changing the social structures of intercountry adoption with their actions, creating awareness, and redefining social norms and policies related to adoptee and birthmother rights in Korea.

Rethinking Adoption from Adoptees' Perspective

Finally, the question needs to be posed to all those connected to intercountry adoption: What is ultimately best for adoptees?

For some of the adult adoptees in this study, ending intercountry adoption is the best solution for children. Staying with birth family is the top priority, albeit in an environment that is supportive, which requires government support. Indeed, all children seek to know where they come from and many adoptees eventually search for family, if given the opportunity (Sachdev 1992). If the option is not available, staying in Korea is the next best option. Adoptees discuss the difficulties growing up as the only Asian person in their family and their community. They describe complex feelings as "embarrassing" and filled with "hate" and "anger" because they were made to feel different. Sending an orphan to a Korean or Asian family in a Western country is preferable over a Caucasian home. This way the adoptee will have a racial familial anchor that they can identify with. Further, the adoptee indeed needs a family.

Intercountry adoption will not end any time soon. The stakeholders involved with making the choice to place children abroad need to make sure that it is done with the child's best interest in mind, rather than driven by "bottom lines" and "economics." It is important to remember that adoptees have no choice in the matter, and the decision should take their emotional and physical welfare into account. Finally, adoptive families need to ask what is in the best interest for the child, rather than their own personal interests, as it is the child who must ultimately navigate through the conflicting societal expectations inherent in transracial intercountry adoption.

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APPENDIX A

ADOPTEES' THOUGHTS ON INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS

I decided to compile some of the responses of the adoptees regarding intercountry adoption so that the reader may view their exact words. Here is a compilation of responses for both "For Adoption" and "Critical of Intercountry Adoption."

For Adoption

> Lori: First of all, I'd tell government officials to try to do a better job on screening adoptive parents. Things like my situation cannot happen. Put a limit to the number of kids they can adopt. And I think if they would check on the family they would have seen how much stuff that was. For Korean adoptees or any, I would honestly say, don't let the past define who you are because I think a lot of adoptees do that. They get angry at birth mother and take anger out with drugs or getting pregnant. It's really important for us to define who we want to become. For the adoptive family, most important to know, is to not treat the kids differently. Even if biological or adopted. Treat all the children the same. I think that messes up a lot of adopted kids. Koreans, be more open minded. Don't treat the kids like products. And be more open minded about single mothers, single parents. Don't put age limits on how old a kid can be when adopted. Just because they are older doesn't mean they don't deserve to be adopted.

> Eric: My personal take is a child needs to be placed where it will be most loved and most taken care of. There's complication for biological children and biological families as well as with adoption. I can see the merits of both arguments of end adoption or keep it. I think there really is a balance at least for the next few generations, there's always going to be a place for intercountry adoption. I don't think it should preclude international adoptees to improve the system to improve the quality of life for everyday Koreans and Americans.

> Tanya: So then do you think that the adoptees have an obligation to be involved in the process?

Eric: I would say it's a choice but also a responsibility. For me personally for what I do, it comes from not obligation but responsibility because I feel like there's a need there.

Tanya: Is it fair for me to say, your personal goals are more post adoption?

Eric: Right now my immediate focus is post adoption with heritage camps but I would like to move to pre-adoption. Working through an organization that addresses national policy with laws, specifically, for example not sure the form it would take, like the reform laws on record keeping, releasing records.

Ann: I think adoption persists because it's part of that whole sense of humanity, helping humanity if I've learned anything. It's something I've become passionate for. Some people, most people believe that it's a human universal right to have those 5 things or 3 things that everyone has food, water, and shelter. And also love I hope is something that everyone has or experiences. Family, and relationships, even though mine hasn't been perfect. Are so important for survival. We need to be social for survival. I think for the good of humanity that people do it. It's cause we hope that everyone can be loved and essentials of life per se. And I think some people might be afraid to face the possibilities of their past and the past unfolding and discovering. And also might be that their parents have the stance that like, you are American, that's not a part of you. Cause I know there is a small percentage of parents like that. And it might be too much to face for some people. Or it's something they convinced themselves that they don't need to go and fulfill in life and answer those questions.

Vanessa: I think on a whole adoption, both domestic and intercountry, is an excellent opportunity to gain a child and give up a child that you don't feel you can provide for. I very much against the prochoice movement because I don't feel like I can say I'm pro choice because I think forever reason you want to say that I was adopted, for the most point it was because they couldn't or unwilling to provide the services that I needed and that's a lot of reason for abortion because they can't or won't provide services. Which is why I think adoption is a great way for people who are pregnant who can't or won't take care of a child, it's a great gift to give to someone. I also think adoption is a great alternative to a lot of in-vitro fertilization and for me because I think that people are people, and I think that there are a lot of babies in the world who need love, and if you want to give love, why spend 100 of thousand of $ to spend on fertility when there is a child who needs love and I guess I don't feel a lot of like it's a bad thing, I think it's a good option, not an alternative but a different choice and a different process. I think when you get a child you instantly fall in love with the child and so I don't think that you really ever love children less if you call them your own, regardless of how you got them.

So I think domestic adoptions are great. I think international are great too, if there are babies that need things in other countries or need that parental figure and you can supply it then why not. I don't know if I would ever do interracial adoption, if I had children I would adopt, I haven't really decided on the baby factor yet but it's years away. But if I do have children I would like to adopt. I'm not sure if I would adopt a child of a different race. Like if my husband is white, I don't think I could adopt a black child. Or if my husband was from Mexico, I would be more open adoption from Asian or central America versus Russia. Or if I decided to adopt alone.

Tanya: Would you adopt an Asian child?

Vanessa: I probably would. I probably would not venture outside, not because I think it's bad because I don't think it's bad. I just don't know if I want to put my kid through that interracial experience where their father is white, their mother is Asian but their black. I think,

Tanya: But they did it with you?

Vanessa: Yeah I know but, and I know it's so funny to say that, but I don't know if I'd do that

Dana: I think it's a great way to give babies homes and it saved my life and it saved a lot of children. I do think I have a lot of scars from it, and I get angry how it is portrayed in the media, that it's so normal and you are saving this baby's life and aren't you wonderful mentality. That angers me. I want to get involved with the educational process, and I do know there are home visits, but I feel like we should educate them more about domestic/ international adoption, interracial, I think they're very unprepared as parents and they don't realize what they are getting into and agencies are too scared to educate them as much as they could and should because it might scare them off. But I think, I mean, I do look on adoption on a positive light because it saved my life, but I'm skeptical about it and how the parents are going to deal with the child and if they are adopting for the right reasons. Because they are religious and thinking they are saving a child, but in reality the child is not asking to be saved, they aren't asking to be given up to leave their culture or their country. So um, I guess I think we need to acknowledge the babies history and its life before arriving. that we're not blank slated, and we don't start just because we're adopted and what happened to us previously didn't matter.

Tanya: So what would you change if you could about the adoption process?

Dana: How it is now? I would push more education programs and more post adoption programs, and more like we have heritage camps, in the

summer but more programs throughout the year that help adoptees growing up. I think that's what I would change. I don't think it should stop, but it could be improved.

Critical of Intercountry Adoption

Bethany: well, I guess from a broad view. I think it's kind of hypocritical of Americans to want their cross cultural children to just become American because the main core of America, most of us are multicultural, so in that way its hypocritically, so why would you force that on somebody, I don't understand that part. To me, cross culturally, if I were to adopt it would be for me so I could learn more about the culture, and not just to add someone to my family. It's like, for the people who have only Asian friends or American friends, don't you want o learn about other people. I would probably change the interview process as far as the adoptions, I would want to know what they think of living in American and a cross cultural in America and not just how many marriages you've had, more about the people and not just t heir situation. As far as my experience, I would if I were, the social worker that placed me with my family, I would have told them, this isn't your fairy tale, you have to deal with it as a family, not just isolate and if they want to know more about their culture and their past life, they're entitled to that. It doesn't mean they don't want to stay or love you, of course they do, they're children. There needs to be a level of trust there where they know that they can love you and still be themselves and not have to choose between that. I think that's uh, what I have heard from a lot of other Asians. For instance the people that say everything is hunky dory, they have chosen that they have given up their inner desires to be happy family. Which is really only a skeleton, how is that really being happy.

Tanya: Why do you think adoption persists intercountry (with Korea)?

Bethany: well, I can base it on what I know and stretch it a little further. Form my family's situation, there's a part of mystique and exoticism with having someone in your family that stands out which is contradicting because you want them to be American and almost white. Like my dad, he was enamored with any female that was Asian. He wouldn't let them pass without saying hi or how beautiful they are. And my mom thought they were especially cute. As far as the American population, I can only guess because it doesn't make sense to me. It's really not innate to you, why force it? I think for Americans, they like things that are unique and a little, not that it's taboo, but things that create a little more interest, you know, to make a superficial statement about their own part or character. "I have so much love and character for the human population that I would adopt a person from another country" Does that sound too mean?

Matt: I would restrict it. People who are able to get their own children should do so. Many people want to adopt children because they want to help them. But as there can be a lot of problems for the child, even leading to suicide its not guaranteed that the parents are helping their adoptive child. So the only reason to adopt a child should be, that the parents wish to have another child by their heart and not because they want to help! I would not allow to adopt with reasons to help. I would not allow to adopt without experiences or connections to the country, the child comes from.

Joseph: I think that there is no need anymore. I think Korea should also try to develop a program and attitude for support, not for seeking bloodline. I understand that bloodline is so important and still a lot of Koreans, especially conservatives are still thinking that. But if they want to survive financially, they need to keep people within Korea. So, I think if this society wants to be in top 10 in the world financially, then they need to change a lot about their social welfare, but they don't put time money and effort to show

Heidi: Sexism has been built up to this industry you know where, like in the states you don't think of it as one of my options, that I'm gonna send my baby to a foreign country across the ocean never to see them again. I think that international adoption should be used as a last resort. And if it does occur, I think it should be, I think race should be a consideration. And I also think that parents need to be educated about racial discrimination and privilege and the agencies make half hearted attempts to do it now. But definitely in the past, it was definitely more of an evangelical. They were doing. And now it's a trendy thing. Angelina Jolie. yup all of Hollywood, very much like the upper east Manhattan. Also a very liberal white thing. When I was in Boston, I would see Chinese babies everywhere because professors love to adopt. And you know, my advisor at school this year, actually she adopted a girl from china and I had to switch advisors because I just didn't want to go there with my advisor because I knew I would have to edit what I would say with her based on that, and a lot of the paper and analysis of doing this past year concerned adoption and I just didn't want to have to deal with trying to protect an adoptive mom's feelings…yeah, it's really hard to talk to people. I feel like we get polarized into two groups. The good adoptees who are happy and well-adjusted and the bad adoptees who are bitter and want to stop adoption and are self-hating. People love to split us up into those two camps and it's completely bogus, because I think reality is in between and everyone lies somewhere on the spectrum based on their experiences and their political beliefs.

Teresa: So I think that adoption, it's a system that perpetuates itself. So why change it, challenge it. It takes more effort right? It's just more convenient to continue what you're doing. And you know, people are always saying it's because Korea, it's because of patriarchy or bloodline,

or strong stigma, but that happens in other countries as well. But they're not shipping off their babies either. It's a mixture of all of these factors, it's that, it's the problem of Korean society who doesn't accept these children and the feeling like they have to do it, and then there's the govt. lack of , their negligence, and um, support for this agency. And the adoption agencies who are profiting and it's in their best interest to keep this thing going.

Tanya: So what do you think needs to change. And what about the adoption agencies that always say, well, it's about the disabled children.

Teresa: Well, my question would be, why the hell would you ship off people who are disabled or who are unwanted to another country. Why can't we figure out a way to keep them? I mean shit, why is it ok to send them to another country when Korea needs to change now. I mean, yeah, there is that problem with disabled people. Well, Molly Holt is always saying well what about the disabled children, no one will want to adopt them, blah blah blah, yeah. Well, let's change that. I mean are you going to continue doing this 10,15 20 years from now? And you know, if you reverse the situation and can you imagine white children being adopted into families of color, it would seem absurd and yet it's ok to adopt children from overseas. It's a form of colonialism in a way. Not colonialism, imperialism. I think it's the same. I think, well, you can go on ASK's website, that's what we're trying to do. So what needs to change is, Korean society, there has to be increased rates for women and children and increased social welfare and children.

Amy: I think it's horrible to live in all white communities and it really messes up adoptees even more. This is one of the reasons for returning to Korea. And I don't think that adoptees can ever be happy.

Natalie: Ummmm. Well I guess it's like they say, in a perfect world adoption wouldn't happen. Well actually I think it's the adoption people that say that. I noticed that at the conference that the adoption people, the adoptees working for the adoption agency said that, in a perfect world adoption wouldn't happen but it's best for the child to have a home. And I'm like. Well…but um, in situations when a country really can't take of its own then the children need to go somewhere. But in a situation where a country can, then they should. I mean the problem is that, a country sending its children away, doesn't help the people…Well, it feels like the band-aid solution you know? Yeah, I'm not very eloquent I'm sorry. I'm better written. (laughing) much better on paper. That's why I think I support what ASK is doing. Because I don't think we really have many ways to educate on intercountry adoption

Tanya: how do you think it affects adoptees? How do you think that affected you growing up?

Natalie: oh, what a big question. Um, I mean well, I think that's what I had a really big issue with the KAAN conference. I mean nobody really said anything about race. And yet we all know, that it's mostly white middle, upper class adopting. So I think, for adoptees, Korean adoptees growing up in America, one of the big issues is about race. Because you're not of the same race as your family. Just about uh, especially America, you know. Played a big role in what happened with the Korean War, you know with dividing the country along the 38th parallel, and creating 2 diff. countries where one of them feels like they need to send children abroad to America…But nobody mentioned race.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

ENGLISH VERSION

Protocol title Intercountry Adoption between Korea and the U.S.
PI Joon Kim, Sociology

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Intercountry Adoption Between Korea and the United States

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joon Kim, Clark B271, (970) 491-2418, Joon.Kim@Colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Tanya Kaanta, Clark B270, (970) 491-5197, tamu@lamar.colostate.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are being invited to take part in this research because you have some insight into the intercountry Asian adoption process. This could be because you work for the government, that you are a professional in the field of adoption, or you have a personal relationship or experiences with intercountry Asian adoption.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The research is being done by Tanya Kaanta and Dr. Joon Kim. Tanya Kaanta is a PhD student in the department of Sociology at Colorado State University. Dr. Joon Kim is a professor at Colorado State University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? We are doing a research study with hopes of better understanding the social factors that affect intercountry adoption between Korea and the United States.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The study will take place in Korea for 6 weeks and in the United States for six months.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher Tanya Kaanta. This will consist of a series of questions that will guide our conversation. Other questions may be asked to follow up with your last statement. You also have the opportunity to ask any questions of the researcher throughout the interview. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 ½ hours. Moreover, follow up questions will be

an opportunity for you as the participant to make sure the researcher is presenting your information accurately.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and your choice.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

- A risk inherent in the procedure is possible psychological trauma or stress for the adoptees and families of adoptees. There may be a risk of stirring up feelings of insecurity or sadness about the issue. This risk is somewhat possible depending on the nature of the history of the participant. The duration is not lengthy unless this has been an ongoing issue for the participant for a long time. The effect may be sadness or insecurity. The method of minimizing the risk include letting the participant know that this may be a potential risk and if they choose not to be in the study, they do not have to go through with it. For adoptees in Korea that choose to participate, the services of the Global Overseas Adoptee Link will be available for consultation in Seoul, Korea. For adoptees in Colorado, the services of Dr. Susan MacQuiddy are available for Colorado State University students, and S. Mikiko Kumasaka, M.A., and Reagan Le, Director and Assistant Director of Asian Pacific American Student Services, will also provide services for adoptees. Information for all these contacts will be provided to the participants at the start of the interview. Dr. Susan MacQuiddy is a Psychologist in the Counseling Center at Colorado State University who has knowledge on Adopted Asian Americans. Finally, Mrs. Kim Matsunaga and her staff will provide resources for adoptees and their families in Colorado that may want to discuss their feelings. Ms. Matsunaga and her staff at AAC specialize in Asian intercountry adoption, including Korean adoptees. All contacts have freely offered their services to any participant who would need to discuss feelings that may be brought up during the study at any time. For families of adoptees, again, AAC adoption agency will be able to provide resource and support.
- Another possible risk is the possibility of loss of confidentiality. I will minimize this by not using your name in the research. Rather I will assign a number to you. This number will be used to represent you and your interviews. Your name will be on a list locked up in a separate location from the code sheet that will have the assigned number to you. The code sheet that has the assigned number will also be locked up in a different location from the list with your name to help ensure confidentiality.
- There are no other known risks associated with the interviews.
- It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? The direct benefits are:
You will have the opportunity to express yourself and realize that you may not be alone in your concern for this issue. It will be an opportunity to openly share your feelings and insights that may help others in the future who have a relationship with intercountry adoption.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. We understand that you may change your mind, and there will be no pressure on you to change your mind if you do decide to withdraw your consent.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? Participation in this study will not cost you anything.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep you name and other identifying information private.

When we interview you, your name will not be used. Rather I will assign a number to you. For example, the first person interviewed will be called Participant 1. Your relationship to the intercountry adoption experience will also be noted. For example, if you are an adoptee, coding will read: Participant 1, adoptee. If you are a person working in the field of adoption, it will read: Participant 2: adoption worker. Your name will be kept separate from the research notes locked in a separate place.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Only Tanya Kaanta, the co-researcher, will know you have participated. Your name will not be included in any of the interview transcripts. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? No.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? You will not receive any compensation for taking part in this study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Tanya Kaanta at tamu@lamar.colostate.edu or at (970) [xxx-xxxx]. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrem, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655, Janell.Meldrem@Research.ColoState.edU. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
[Include this text with minimal modification. Do not have signatures appear on a page without this text.] Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing ____ pages.

_______________________________________ _____________________

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study *Date*

____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_______________________________________ _____________________

Name of person providing information to participant *Date*

____

Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

KOREAN VERSION

Protocol title Intercountry Adoption between Korea and the U.S.
PI Joon Kim, Sociology

연구 참가 동의서 (consent form)

Colorado State University (콜로라도 주립대학교)

연구의 제목: 한국과 미국 국가간 입양

주요 조사자: Joon Kim (김준겸), Clark B271, (970) 491-2418, Joon.Kim@Colostate.edu

제 2 조사자: Tanya Kaanta, Clark B270, (970) 491-5197, tamu@lamar.colostate.edu

왜 이 연구 참가에 초대 되었는가? 당신이 국가간 아시아 입양에 관하여 있기 때문에 이 연구안에 초대되었습니다. 예를 들면, 정부를 위해 일한다거나 입양의 분야의 전문가 이거나, 또는 ▪ ▪ 국가간 아시아 입양에 사적인 관계가 있기 때문입니다.

연구의 주체 Tanya Kaanta와 Dr. Joon Kim입니다. Tanya Kaanta은 사회학 전공의 콜로라도 주립 대학에 박사 학생 이며, Joon Kim 박사는 사회학과 콜로라도 주립 대학에 교수입니다.

이 연구의 목적은 무엇 인가? 한국과 미국간 입양에 대한 사회적인 요인을 이해하기 위하여 입니다.

연구 일정

연구는 6주 동안 한국에서 진행될 것입니다.

무엇을 하도록 요청 받을 것인가?

Tanya Kaanta 와 인터뷰를 하게 될 것입니다. 대화를 통해 연구원의 질문에 대답하시고, 또 질문이 있으시면 질문을 하시면 됩니다.

연구에 참여 의사 결정

연구 참가는 완전한 자발적 선택에 의해 진행됩니다.

연구참여에 나타날 수 있는 위험 및 불편함

연구와 관련된 위험은 심리학적 긴장 및 슬픔, 불안정한 감정입니다.
또 이와 관련된 잠재적인 위험이 있을 수 있으며, 참가자가 자신의 이야기를 연구에 참가 시키기 싶지 않으시면 참가를 철회할 수 있습니다.
참가하시기로 결정하게 되면 Tanya Kaanta연구원은 발생한 심리적 불안정을 애란원의 심리 전문 치료사에게 연결 시켜드려 도와드릴 것입니다. 또한 연구 기간 중 어떤 때라도 연구 참여를 중단하고 싶으시다면 중단 하실 수 있으십니다.

연구 참여의 혜택

연구참여를 통해서 이 문제에 혼자가 아니며, 미래에 있을 입양 관련된 사람들과 감정과 의견을 나누어 그들을 도와줄 수 있게 됩니다.
또한 참여자의 의견이 심리학 치료 연구에 반영되어 많은 사람들을 도와주게 될 것입니다.

연구안 참여

연구 참여는 자발적 의사에 따르며, 참여를 결정하시고 진행 중 중단하고자 할 때,

손실이나 불편 없이 중단하실 수 있습니다. 연구자들은 참여자의 상황을 이해하며, 중단하고자 하실 때 어떠한 압력도 가하지 않을 것 입니다.

의무나 금전적 요구

이 연구 참가는 어떠한 의무나 금전적 요구를 하지 않습니다.

참가자가 제공한 정보는
사생활 보호법에 의해 지켜질 것입니다.

당신의 정보는 이 연구에 참여된 다른 연구원들의 정보와 합하여 발표될 것이며, 연구원들 간 정보를 교류할 경우 역시 사적인 사항은 보호 될 것입니다. 이 연구 결과는 논문으로 출판될 수 있으며 이 때 역시 참가자의 개인정보는 보호 될 것입니다.

연구에서 참가자의 이름은 거론되지 않을 것이며 이름대신 참가자1, 2 이렇게 표현될 것입니다. (예: 참가자 1 입양아, 참가자2 입양관련 전문가)

우리는 참가자의 정보 보호를 위해 최선을 다할 것이며, 참가자의 이름은 인터뷰 기록에도 포함시키지 않을 것입니다. 하지만 Tanya Kaanta 연구원 및 제2 연구원 탐방 기자는 여러분이 면접에 참가한 사실을 알 수 있습니다.

또한 만약 우리의 연구를 법원에서 아동학대 및 다른 관련된 이유로 증거를 요청할 때는 참가자의 정보가 제공 될 수는 있습니다.

연구 참여 종료를 일찍 할 수 없습니다.

이 연구 참여에 대한 금전적인 보상은 없습니다.

연구를 통해 입은 신체상의 상해

이 연구로 일어난 상해에 대해서는 콜로라도 정치 면제 행위가 결정하고 콜로라도 주립 대학이 법적인 책임을 제한할 수 있습니다. 대학에 클레임은 상해의180일안에 신청해야 합니다.

관련된 질문

이 연구 참여를 결정하기 전 어떠한 질문이 있으면.

tamu@lamar.colostate.edu에 조사자,Tanya Kaanta, 또는 (970)xxx-xxxx로 물어보시면 됩니다.

또 참여자로의 권리에 관한 질문이 있으면Janell Meldrem 970-491-1655있으면,Janell.Meldrem@Research.ColoState.edU. 로 하시면 됩니다.

이 연구 참여의 동의서의 사본은 참여자가 한 부 갖게 됩니다.

그 밖의 사항

이밑에 서명하면 이 3페이지의 동의안을 읽고, 동의한 것으로 승인됩니다. 또한 이 동의안의 사본을 가지고 있다는 사실 또한 인정하게 됩니다.

______________________________________ ________________________

연구안에 참여 합의하는 사람의 서명 일 달 년

____

연구안에 참여한것을 합의자의 인쇄 이름

______________________________________ ________________________

참가자에게 정보를 제공하는 사람의 이름 일 달 년

____

Signature of Research Staff

연구원의 서명

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF RECRUITMENT: ADOPTEES

Protocol title Intercountry Adoption between Korea and the U.S.
PI Joon Kim, Sociology

<u>Letters of Recruitment for adoptees</u>

Participants for Research needed:
My name is Tanya Kaanta and I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University. I am conducting research on intercountry adoption between Korea and the United States. I myself am also a Korean adoptee and hope to provide a Korean adoptee perspective on intercountry adoption experiences.

I am looking for participants who identify as Korean adopted (ages 18 and up) to be interviewed for my study. If you agree to be in my study, questions will be addressed regarding your experiences as an Asian adoptee and your perspective on adoption between Korea and the United States. Your participation will require between 30 minutes to 1 ½ hours of your time. Your name won't be used at any time, and will not be written down in my study. Obviously with adoption issues, there may be emotional issues that arise from being in this study. Having anticipated this possibility, we have already arranged people for you to speak with should emotions arise. On the other hand, being able to express your thoughts and experiences about adoption may be emotionally beneficial for you as well.

There will not be any compensation for being in this research other than receiving a finished copy of the research project upon its completion. You may also change your mind and opt not to be in the research project at any time. If you would like to be in this research, you may contact me at

email: tamu@lamar.colostate.edu

Thank you for your time.
Best Regards,

Tanya Kaanta