Korean Australian Adoptee Diasporas:
A glimpse into social media

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Abstract 350 words maximum:

There are an estimated 3,500 Korean Australian adoptees, making them the largest group of intercountry adoptees in Australia. With the onset and continuation of Korean Australian intercountry adoptions, adult Korean Australian adoptees form a unique diaspora and limited knowledge exists around their adoptee experiences and perspectives as adults. This thesis investigates adult Korean Australian adoptees' diasporas, including the emerging field of social media as a core component of Korean adoptee digital diasporas. This research not only examines adult Korean Australian adoptees' lived experiences but also how they engage with social media. Social media includes online social networks that connect individuals through the Internet to build relationships with others, for example using Facebook, Twitter, Blogger or YouTube.

Through analyses of the data drawn from an online survey, focus groups and interviews with adult Korean Australian adoptees, this thesis serves to address the current gap in research into Korean Australian adoptees' diasporas, which is under-researched in terms of current adult adoptee perspectives. The principal dataset in this research was provided by 69 participants from the online survey and 17 participants from the focus groups and interviews. A mixed-methods approach is used to capture different dimensions of adult Korean Australian adoptees' lives. This exploratory study provides a basis for capturing Korean Australian adoptees' diasporas and highlights the social media trends in Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

This thesis highlights adult Korean Australian adoptees' powerful lived experiences in their own words. The findings indicate that adult Korean Australian adoptees' voices need to be heard with insights into adoption journeys, identities, families, and Korean adoptee social media. Social media is a diasporic space that connects adult Korean Australian adoptees to other Korean adoptees and provides a sense of belonging to the larger transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. As limited knowledge exists around adult Korean Australian adoptees' lived experiences or how social media is used or valued by global Korean adoptee communities, this study illustrates contemporary insights into the understandings and complexities of Korean Australian adoptee diasporas.
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Preface and Acknowledgements

I am Frankenstein:
created, not born.

I am Edward Scissorhands:
functioning but not quite finished.

I am the Incredible Shrinking Man:
with a disease no one can name.

I am the Android from the Twilight Zone:
my behavior programmed into my circuits.

I am adopted–the freak whose motives will always be misunderstood
—the creature unable to hold your hand
—the earthling with an alien disease
—the monster created by acts of mankind, not acts of God
—the unhuman mandated by law to fill the place of a real human who could not be here.

Anonymous
Journey of the adopted self: A quest for wholeness

When I discovered the above poem by an adopted woman in Lifton’s Journey of the adopted self: A quest for wholeness (1994, p. 67), these verses touched me. Like many of my other fellow Korean adoptees, I felt insecure and isolated by my transracial adoption. When I began to share my adoption experiences, I will be forever grateful for my family, friends, professors, mentors and advisors who supported me on this journey. This PhD developed from my life experiences as a Korean adoptee and the journeys of other Korean adoptees.

I aimed to be conscientious of my word choices and writing style. American style is illustrated throughout this thesis as it is written from my voice. I also use Australian vernacular to write with a focus on Australian literature and articulate the voices of the research participants. Scholars have used abbreviations and acronyms for intercountry adoption (ICA) and Korean adoptees (KTRA, OAKS, or KAD) for the ease of reading, but I hope that the adoption community will focus on a common vernacular that will share adoption experiences instead of minimizing adoption by acronyms and abbreviations. I used intercountry rather than transnational to symbolize awareness of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption 1993 (Hague Adoption Convention). Transnational is frequently the preferred term amongst scholars as it portrays interweaving dimensions of real and virtual adoption spaces. I used the term Korean family throughout this thesis, which is often a controversial term by adoptees themselves as
to how one defines family. Adult adoptees will also critique the commonly used terms of orphan, or abandoned/orphaned babies within adoption literature.

Thank you everyone for your support and encouragement throughout my candidature. I would like to firstly begin by extending my deepest appreciation to the participants in this research and all other adult Korean Australian adoptees. Thank you for generously sharing your lives with me and making this research possible. I am also particularly grateful to my supervisors, Professor Elizabeth Fernandez and Dr. Jung-Sook Lee for their support, guidance and patience. Thank you Elizabeth, for not “cramping my style” and letting me develop my unique writing voice. This research was supported by an International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS) and this scholarship was invaluable to me during my candidature. Special thanks go out to Dr. David Kim-Boyle, Dr. Shona Bates, and fellow UNSW colleagues. I would also like to thank my friends and families for their interest in my research. Finally, thank you Curtis.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>AKA</td>
<td>Also-Known-As</td>
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<tr>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>Adopterade Koreaners Förening</td>
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<td>ESWS</td>
<td>Eastern Social Welfare Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extract of the IDC Report</td>
<td>Extract of the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GI</td>
<td>General Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hague Adoption Convention or Hague</td>
<td>Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICA</td>
<td>InterCountry Adoptee</td>
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<td>IRL</td>
<td>In Real Life</td>
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<td>IKAA or Gatherings</td>
<td>International Korean Adoptee Associations Gatherings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS</td>
<td>International Social Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAS</td>
<td>Korean Adoption Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>KIHASA</td>
<td>Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Adoption Inquiry</td>
<td>Overseas Adoption in Australia: Report on the inquiry into adoption of children from overseas</td>
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<td>PARC</td>
<td>Post Adoption Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROK, Korea</td>
<td>Republic of Korea or South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMI</td>
<td>Too Much Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMIAPT</td>
<td>The Minnesota International Adoption Project Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRACK</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCRC, CRC, CROC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America or United States</td>
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1 Chapter One: Introduction

Even though our experiences of love have been tainted by pity, violence, money, naïve fantasies, greed, and prejudice, we still search for connection. If there was ever such a thing as pure love, it must be the love between a mother and child. If we were robbed of even that, then maybe we always wander like hungry ghosts, gorging until vomiting, never able to be satisfied.

Jane Jeong Trenka
*Fugitive visions: An adoptee’s return to Korea*

In the above excerpt, Jane Jeong Trenka¹ (2009) states that Korean adoptees “search for connection” (p. 165). Korean Australian adoptees, born in South Korea² and adopted³ to Australia, are a unique diaspora. Korean adoptee⁴ diasporas are a complicated transnational phenomenon with contested notions around forced migration, birth country of origin, sending and receiving nations, adoptive nation and citizenship, identity, homeland, belonging or acceptance, assimilation, foreignness, race, family, connections and community.

This research examines Korean adoptee diasporas in Australia⁵, the real and symbolic experiences or consciousness derived from the adoptees’ migration from Korea to Australia. In exploring Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas, social media is a core component of digital diasporas.⁶ Social media includes online social networks that connect individuals through the Internet to build relationships. This research focuses on investigating adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas, including lived experiences from adoptee diasporas and the emerging field of social media in Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

---

¹ Jane Jeong Trenka is a Korean adoptee activist and an award-winning writer, see *The Language of Blood* (2003); *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (Trenka, Oparah, & Shin, 2006); and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee’s Return to Korea* (2009). Her “literary activism” has shaped Korean adoption laws (Trenka, 2011, p. 141).

² Hereafter, the Republic of Korea (ROK) or South Korea is stated as Korea.

³ I use adoptee for brevity. In this thesis, Korean adoptees does not refer to individuals adopted within Korea; Korean adoptees refers to individuals born in Korea and adopted overseas. Adult Korean adoptees refers to the chronological age of Korean adoptees whom are 18 years of age or older. I acknowledge that there are many preferred terms for these adopted individuals, including the frequently used expression transnational adopted Korean in scholarship.

⁴ In this study, when possible Korean intercountry adoptee(s) is stated as Korean adoptee(s) and the term Korean intercountry adoptee is shortened with respects to adoptive nations. For example, Korean American adoptees are Korean intercountry adoptees who were adopted to the United States of America. Hereafter in discussing intercountry adoptions, the first country listed is the sending country and the second country listed is the receiving country. If only one country is listed, then it is the sending country.

⁵ Hereafter, Korean adoptee diasporas in Australia is stated as Korean Australian adoptee diasporas.

Chapter One: Introduction

The first Korean Australian adoptions took place circa 1967. There are an estimated 3,500 Korean Australian adoptees, making it the longest-standing and largest group of intercountry adoptees in Australia. Korea also accounts for the largest population of intercountry adoptees in the world, estimated to be above 200,000 individuals. This chapter provides the context for this research: first, introduces transnational adoptee diasporas; then, positions my Korean adoptee researcher perspective; next, examines the significance of an Australian emphasis in Korean intercountry adoption research; and last, presents the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Adoptee Diasporas and the Transnational Korean Adoptee Diaspora

Intercountry adoption is a contemporary phenomenon that transcends borders with “transnational’ dimensions of ongoing, crisscrossing flows in multiple directions, in space that is both real and virtual” (Volkman, 2005, p. 2). In most cases, intercountry adoption occurs transracially from poorer, developing countries to wealthier, developed Western countries. Briggs and Marre (2009) summarized this intricate relationship between countries:

Adoption opens a window onto the relations between nations, inequalities between rich and poor within nations, the history of race and racialization since the end of slavery in Europe’s colonies and the United States, and the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous groups in the Americas and Australia. Transnational adoption emerged out of war. (p. 1)

Reflecting on this, the histories of intercountry adoptions evolved over the last century. These adoptee migrations or “quiet migrations” emerged from military progeny in Europe (Weil, 1984) and from later militarization (Pate, 2010, 2014).

As a consequence of war, this forced movement through adoption creates distinct transnational adoptee diasporas with “new geographies of kinship” (Volkman, 2005, p. 2). Adoptees’ diasporas developed from transnational forced movements or “circulation of children” (Marre & Briggs, 2009) from country of origin to adoptive nation (Eng, 1997, 2003; Homans, 2011; Hübinette, 2004, 2007; Williams, 2002; Willing, 2004). Diasporas are movements that are grounded in transnational processes of being “routed” and/or “rooted”

---

7 While developed or industrialized nations are perceived by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth (World Bank, 2014), GDP is not indication of development (Costanza, Hart, & Posner, 2009). In this thesis, Korea is the sending country and Korean adoptees were traditionally sent to White Western receiving countries. Western nations are usually industrialized countries with predominately European ancestry and including nations such as Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom or United States of America.
from real or symbolic homelands (Clifford, 1994) or “imagined communities” (Anderson, 2006). Diasporas stem from push and pull migrations particularly concerned with the notions of “freedom and opportunity” to Western nations (S. Friedman, 2009). In this forced movement between adoptive nations and Korea, adoptee diasporas are situated around a “life in the West is best” (Hubinette, 2004, p. 20).

Since the Korean War (1950-1953), the complex diasporic movements of 200,000 Korean adoptees worldwide formulate the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. This transnational Korean adoptee diaspora attempts to shed light into adoptees’ connections with Korea, adoptive countries, and other Korean adoptees. Within diasporas, there are ambiguous connections where a “diaspora consciousness” (Clifford, 1994, p. 319) addresses an evolving awareness of migration, cultures and histories. Within Korean adoption studies, the boundaries of adoptees’ diaspora consciousness are difficult to define as real and symbolic diasporic connections shift for individual Korean adoptees within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Korean adoptees’ diasporas are a consciousness of being in-between or displaced by borders, culture, race, nation, class, gender, and other social hierarchies. As such, Korea is an illusory space where adoptees search for notions of a homeland, motherland, country of birth, sending country, culture, history, language, past or family.

Amongst Korean adoptees, the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is shaped by shared experiences and diasporic identifications. Anthropologist Eleana Kim (2010) highlighted Korean adoptee connections to each other as a social imaginary:

Adoptee’s common experiences of disconnection, disidentification, and displacement from a real or imagined Korea and Korean family, expressed as loss, involuntary exile, a fact of life, or good fortune, bind these disparate individuals to a shared identification as a Korean adoptee. (p. 98)

Kim reframed the term diaspora through Korean adoptee kinship where “the spaces and moments in which the significance of being adopted from Korea is foregrounded and

---

8 Benedict Anderson (2006) argued the concept of nations as imagined communities whereby: “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (p. 6).
10 The imaginary is an illusory relationship between an individual and their social world. For further reading, see Taylor (2004) Modern Social Imaginaries.
heightened” (p.13). Significant to this research, Korean adoptee scholar Tobias Hübinette (2004) observed that Korean adoptees share a Korean adoptee third space11:

However, for me it is adopted Koreans, with all their differences and commonalities taken together, who provide a perfect example of such an existence in the third space [emphasis added] between their birth country’s utopian dream of a global ethnic Korean community [emphasis added], where the adoptees are essentialised as Korean brethren, and a Western culture demanding assimilation and loyalty. (p. 23)

According to Hübinette, the Korean adoptee third space is where adoptees are able to critically observe themselves and reevaluate their consciousness within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. This Korean adoptee diasporic consciousness is a process with real and symbolic connections constructing experiences within transnational spaces.

1.2 Why Research Korean Adoptees? My Existence in the Third Space

My personal adoption experiences as a Korean adoptee are the genesis of this research. In 2003, I joined Korean @doptees Worldwide12 (K@W) on Yahoo Groups. K@W is the first Korean adoptee online archive (E. Kim, 2010, p. 135) and the foundation for building Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Membership in K@W was a pivotal turning point in my life. It was the first time that I felt a connection with other Korean adoptees. Korean adoptee researcher Kim Park Nelson (2009) suggested that Korean adoptees can be themselves without having to explain their adoption, including their race, family, or identities to other Korean adoptees (pp. 8-9). With the help and support that I received from other Korean adoptees, I returned to Korea to meet my Korean family13 in 2004.

This is how my shared Korean adoptee diasporic connections began. When I returned to Korea, I realized that I could have been adopted into any family or to any nation. Korean adoptee, Daniel Kim, captured this sentiment when he said:

I have a family in Sweden and a family in Korea. You are my third family. It’s important to take care of each other because we are a family, and I could be you, you could be him, he could be her. (as told to E. Kim, 2010, p. 95)

11 Bhabha (1994) stated that reality in the modern world is subjective from “in-between” spaces (p. 2).
12 Hereafter, Korean @doptees Worldwide is stated as K@W. In 1998, Sunny Jo founded the K@W electronic mailing list or listserv in Yahoo Groups to support Korean adoptees. K@W states that it is an ADOPTEE RUN international organization with the purpose of educating both Korean adoptees and the general public (Jo, 2006; Korean @doptees Worldwide, 1998).
13 I use Korean family to represent a part of adoptees’ diasporas. It is recognized that other terminology exists in Korean adoption research, including birth, biological, first, or natural family.
Kim’s commentary notes that serendipity exists amongst Korean adoptees’ diasporic journeys. Thus, Korean adoptees greatly share connections to each other within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

1.2.1 One of 200,000 Korean adoptees.

I am one of the 200,000 Korean adoptees sent overseas. Korean intercountry adoption is the longest-standing and largest intercountry adoption program, and the majority of adoptees are now adults. Intercountry adoption population expert Peter Selman (2009) affirmed, the most populous intercountry adoptees are Korean adoptees. Korean intercountry adoption peaked around the time of my birth, in the 1980s, with the majority of adoptees sent to United States of America. In 1985 alone, an estimated 8,837 children were sent overseas (Hübinette, 2005, p. 264). To put this into perspective, every hour of every day for over one year, one Korean child was sent overseas for adoption.

Possibly, the number of Korean adoptees is a significant part of Korean adoptee transnational diasporas. However due to inadequate records from Korea sending children overseas and insufficient records from Western receiving countries, the exact number of Korean adoptees is unknown. For example, the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) approximated there are 164,612 Korean adoptees worldwide (M. Kim et al., 2013) and the International Korean Adoptee Service (InKAS) estimated 205,343. Between KIHASA and InKAS estimates, there is a 25% differential. Other Korean adoptee population numbers have approximated over 250,000 (Yuh, 2005).

I am one of the 10,000 Korean adoptees adopted to Minnesota. Thus, my adoption to Minnesota is not unique. Korean intercountry adoption is deeply rooted in Minnesota and Park Nelson (2009) remarked that “Minnesotans wanted, want and continue to want Korean

14 Hereafter, the United States of America is stated as the United States or America(n) when possible.
15 Hereafter, Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs is stated as KIHASA. KIHASA reports statistics from the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare.
16 For example, Yuh (2005) stated that 200,000 Korean adoptees were sent to the United States and a further 50,000 were sent to Europe (p. 279). See also Hübinette (2012) “References and statistics on Korean and transnational adoption.”
adoptees” (p. 193). With more Korean adoptees per capita than anywhere else in the world, Minnesota’s state motto of “Land of 10,000 lakes” could also be “Land of 10,000 Korean adoptees” (K. Jackson et al., 2010). As such, I am one of these Korean Minnesotan adoptees.

1.2.2 Consciousness within “West is best” White attitudes.

A further reflection of this research is situated within the “West is best” (Hübnette, 2004, p. 20), Korean adoptees’ diasporas exist within White adoptive nations, families and societies. Growing up in a small predominately White Minnesota town, I remember having an aversion to my skin color. My Korean face was always part of my American life; this past frames my own diasporic journey. Reflecting on this, Agnew (2005) highlights how the past is part of diasporas:

The past is always with us, and it defines our present; it resonates in our voices, hovers over our silences, and explains how we came to be ourselves and to inhabit what we call ‘our homes’… Those who have left their places of birth to make homes in other parts of the world are familiar with the question ‘Where do you come from?’ and respond in innumerable, well-rehearsed ways. (p. 3)

I undoubtedly know how to answer, “Where are you from?” as my Korean past defines my diasporic consciousness.

Perhaps, I am measured by my own double-consciousness. W. E. B. Du Bois (2000) pointed out that an individual’s psychosocial divisions are derived from the society we live in: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 3). Du Bois observed that with this double-consciousness, a sense of self or self-concept is difficult to form when you are measuring yourself against others. In looking at myself through the eyes of others, what I internally felt towards myself is often worse than what I experienced from others with thoughts of being sexualized for men with Yellow Fever18; afraid of sticking out as the Banana19 in Asian communities; and always being rejected as that illegitimate Korean orphan.

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18 Yellow fever is a colloquial term often used to describe a sexual fetish or the desire to date Asian women (not to be confused with medical condition yellow fever). See Woan’s (2008) “White sexual imperialism: A theory of Asian feminist jurisprudence.” See also seeking asian female, a documentary, that demonstrates an aging White man with “yellow fever” (Lum, 2013).

19 Banana is a colloquial term often used to describe an individual who is yellow on the outside but White on the inside perspective (Twinkie is also used, but predominately in the United States). Panda is used to describe an individual as being Black, White and Asian.
1.2.3 Korean utopia shattered.

I am one of 40,000 registered\(^20\) Korean adoptees sent away through Eastern Social Welfare Society\(^21\) (ESWS) and my ESWS adoption file\(^22\) says that I am a Korean illegitimate abandoned orphan.\(^23\) Looking at these words, Korean adoptees, including myself, are only now rediscovering our histories from our adoption files and our Korean families.

One cannot live in Seoul as an adoptee for long without noticing that something is terribly wrong. Of the about two hundred adoptees who live in Korea long-term, there is an overrepresentation of adoptees who have been reunited with their families. Those adoptees who have been reunited with their families know exactly how they came to be adopted, and usually, the story their Korean families tell is not the same story that the agency told their adoptive parents at the time of adoption. (Trenka, 2009, p. 89)

As Trenka described, Korean adoptees’ agency adoption files\(^24\) misrepresented adoptees’ lives. When I returned to Korea to meet my family, I began to filter through the fabrications in my adoption file and then question the marginalization around my illegitimate status. Reflecting on the thoughts of being sent away, Korean adoptees’ diasporic journeys are a disengaged part of this Korean utopian dream within the third space (Hübinette, 2004).

My diasporic return to Korea is not unique. A “generation of adoptees are returning” to Korea (Jones, 2015) where 50 years ago it was assumed that Korean adoptees would never be interested or return to their country of birth (McGinnis, 2007a, p. 166). But in my return to Korea, I became exposed to the sexualized narratives\(^25\) and injustices of unwed Korean

\(^{20}\) I use the term registered because the numbers presented by both the adoption agencies (Green, 2003; Hübinette, 2012) and the Korean Government are collected from multiple sources (M. Kim et al., 2013). There is no official documentation of Korean adoptee statistics and adoption files were poorly kept (Trenka, 2009, 2012).

\(^{21}\) Founded by Kim Duk Whang as a Christian humanitarian effort, Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS), individuals will often refer to Eastern Social Welfare Society as “Eastern” due to the several name changes. Hereafter, Eastern Social Welfare Society is stated as ESWS when possible.


\(^{23}\) Orphan used by United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (2009) refers to “a child who has lost one or both parents.”

\(^{24}\) Falsified information and fabricated papers was created by adoption agencies and governmental institutions for “adoptability” to make a child appear more adoptable or “rescuable” (E. Kim, 2010, p. 12). False documentation also developed from unknown or closed adoption records. Steve Morrison countered that “I would just assume that the agencies either made up or guessed at missing information” (Haruch, 2014). See also Deann Borshay Liem First Person Plural (2000) and In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee (2010) which specifically traces how Korean adoption agencies forged documents.

\(^{25}\) Park Nelson (2013) wrote: “I was particularly disturbed to learn that many of the women [female Korean adoptees] in my study had been told as a matter of simple fact while growing up that their Korean mothers were probably prostitutes, or that they themselves would have probably ended up as prostitutes if they had not had the good fortune to be adopted.”
mothers. As a Korean woman reflecting on this, I turned to one Korean mother’s story in *I Wish for You a Beautiful Life*²⁶ which poignantly spoke of the marginalization.

But I had to send you away because I was sending you to a better environment and a better place where you could be happy rather than live with an incompetent mother. It may sound like an excuse, but it would be too cruel to raise you as the child of a single unwed mother in this society because of the way people would treat you. (Dorow, 1999a, p. 29)

Adoptees and their Korean families encounter the systemic norms of male privilege and patriarchal authority stemming from Korean law and tradition. Accordingly, Korean adoptees are now advocating for their human rights²⁷ and the rights of their Korean families (Trenka, 2011).

In reframing our diasporic journeys, Korean adoptees return to Korea to seek answers about their lives and some have discovered the social injustices surrounding their transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. J. Bhabha (2014) observed how adult Korean adoptees reject the traditional intercountry adoption narratives:

> Korean adoptees have rewritten the historical record of their migration to some extent, moving away from an earlier “saving” narrative to an account that critically highlights South Korea’s reliance on intercountry adoption as a mechanism for exporting deep social welfare problems, with no attention to the needs or rights of the disempowered and voiceless birth mothers. (p. 126)

As such, these new perspectives by Korean adoptees are part of a growing body of literature on Korean intercountry adoption.

### 1.3 Voices in Adoptee-constructed Research

Having established my own experiences as a Korean adoptee in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, this adoptee-constructed research was informed by my experiences and the experiences of other Korean adoptees. In this connection, Korean adoptee scholars extend insights into Korean intercountry adoption. Hübinnenè (2005) asserted that Korean adoptee researchers play an important role to enhance the breadth or quality of Korean adoption literature:

²⁶ See Dorow (1999) *I Wish for You a Beautiful Life* is a collection of letters written by unwed Korean mothers residing at Ae Ran Won, a support home in Seoul Korea. These letters were written for children that were adopted overseas. The term “unwed mother” is a direct translation from the Korean word mihonmo (KUMSN, 2013). See also Korean Unwed Mothers Support Network (KUMSN).

²⁷ Drafted by the United Nations, this Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was adopted by the General Assembly and recognizes that “the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”
Here, for the first time, adopted Koreans are considered active agents capable of creating their own social spaces and expressing their own authentic voices instead of just being valuable commodities of Korea’s adoption program, grateful and privileged children of white elite families or idealised and perfectly assimilated adoptees in academic research. This ethnogenesis [original emphasis] of an adopted Korean community with its extremely heterogeneous, completely deterritorialized, and uniquely parentless character takes place beyond the birth country’s nationalist vision of a global Korean nation, where the adoptees are automatically essentialised as Korean nationals and expected to reconnect with the Motherland, and a self-righteous Western culture portraying them as tokens and icons of anti-racism and multiculturalism. (p. 20)

As a leading Korean adoptee scholar, Hübinette reflected his awareness concerning Korean intercountry adoptions.

In addition, adoptee-constructed research proposes that adoptee scholars critically examine their within or insider connections to adoption. Trenka, Oparah, and Shin, the editors of Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption (2006) suggest that “Authors never write from a completely impartial place – our vision always reflects our social location in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, political perspective, and involvement in the adoption triad”28 (p. 3). Accordingly, a within research perspective brings attention to the relationship of the researcher and those being researched and challenges the privilege traditionally associated with the researcher role. As such, my outsider within researcher position is later discussed in Chapter Five.

1.3.1 My voice as an adult Korean adoptee.

As previously discussed in this chapter, adoptees are connected with each other in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. It is only recently that adult adoptees have been considered capable to articulate their transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. The 1999 Gathering29 of the First Generation of Adult Korean Adoptees was a historical reference point in challenging Korean adoptees’ continual “infantilization” (E. Kim, 2010, p. 141). With International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) providing leadership and structure, subsequent Gatherings have taken place in Oslo, Norway (2001), and Seoul, Korea (2004,

28 I note that adoption triangle or adoption triad is a term used to describe the three-sided adoption relationship that exists between birth parents, adoptive parents and the adoptee (Marshall & McDonald, 2001; Triseliotis, Feast, & Kyle, 2005). As adoption touches many lives as well as the adoption triangle, including adoption professionals, partners, and extended families, this well-meaning term is often considered dated.

29 The 1999 Gathering of the First Generation of Adult Korean Adoptees was a conference for adult Korean adoptees. Hereafter, any reference to the first and subsequent Gatherings is stated as the Gathering(s).
2007, 2010, 2013) and mini-Gatherings are also hosted (IKAA, 2011). The Gatherings facilitated an important role for adult Korean adoptees to share adoption experiences.

I attended the 2012 IKAA European mini-Gathering and the welcome speech reflected that kimchi could be Korean adoptees’ madeleine. Korean adoptees often exchange stories of remembering when we first ate Korean food, such as kimchi. Memories are powerful moments in connecting the collective affinity in diasporas (Hirsch & Miller, 2011). When I first ate kimchi at university, perhaps my awareness to existing social institutions of adoptee diasporas materialized, caught between “West is best” and my Korean “utopian dream” (Hubinette, 2004). As such, perhaps this memory of eating kimchi helped me find my voice as an adult Korean adoptee and to recognize the marginalized voices of other Korean adoptees.

1.3.2 Missing voices of adult Korean Australian adoptees.

This research sheds some light on adult Korean Australian adoptees and their experiences. The connections and relationships that I made with other Korean adoptees in Australia greatly influenced this thesis. Due to historical waves of Korean Australian intercountry adoption and the formalized agreement between the Australian Government and ESWS in 1978, my age was similar to many of the Korean adoptees I met in Australia. Although we were adopted to different countries, our adoptions through ESWS connected our adoptee diasporas. Korean Australian adoptions represent the largest number of children adopted into Australia since the late 1960s. However, despite the Korean Australian adoption program being the largest and longest-standing intercountry adoption program in Australia, little is known about Korean Australian adoptees. It is estimated that there are over 2,400 adult Korean Australian adoptees. The earliest statistics indicate 3,500 Korean Australian adoptions

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30 Marcel Proust (1913) *In Search of Lost Time* wrote about themes of involuntary memory, for instance in remembering the significance of eating a madeleine (Troschianko, 2013).
31 Hereafter, Korean Australian intercountry adoption(s) is stated as Korean Australian adoption(s) when applicable.
32 The Australian Government, sometimes referred to as the Commonwealth Government of Australia or the federal government, was established by the Australian Constitution.
33 I attended Inter-Country Adoptee Support Network (ICASN) events. ICASN was an adoptee organization founded in 1998 by Lynelle Beveridge to support all intercountry adoptees. Inter-Country Adoptee Voices is the renamed website of ICASN.
34 Please see Appendix A as the numbers of adult Korean Australian adoptees is estimated. Adult refers to the chronological age of 18 and in 2015, the year of birth would before 1995. Using the InKAS data, this number is estimated at 6,800.

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(Hübinette, 2005; Selman, 2006, 2009, 2000); whereas InKAS (2014) reported over 8,072 Korean Australian adoptions.

This thesis brings together an adoptee-constructed study for understanding adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas. In reflecting on international and local Korean adoption research, a significant gap in research is twofold: first, adult Korean Australian adoptees’ perspectives are missing in the current Korean intercountry adoption literature and; second, the marginalization of adult Korean adoptees’ voices. This study is especially useful by solely examining adult Korean Australian adoptees’ voices.

1.4 Background to Korean Australian Adoptions

What happened to all of those Korean children adopted into Australian families? The first Australian Government registered Korean intercountry adoption took place circa 1967 (D. Fook, 2012; M. Fook, 1968). Furthermore, the growth of the Korean Australian adoptions steadily progressed after the Korean War, but the program notably increased after Vietnam War\textsuperscript{35} with Operation Babylift\textsuperscript{36} in April 1975 (discussed in further detail in the next chapter). Operation Babylift peaked Australian interests in intercountry adoption with the first emerged “quiet migrations” (Weil, 1984) of transracial adoptees from Vietnam. In the late 1970s, an estimated 5,000 intercountry adoptees were sent to Australia, mainly from Korea (Rosenwald, 2009, p. 6).

Taken as a whole, patterns of Korean Australian adoptions historically correspond with other Australian adoption trends. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare\textsuperscript{37} (AIHW) report yearly on intercountry adoption regulations, history, key trends and practices. The AIHW reports, Adoptions Australia, created a source of knowledge on adoption in Australia and the comparison between intercountry adoptions and Australian domestic (also known as in-country or local) adoptions. Furthermore, a downward trend in Australian domestic adoptions was met with increased intercountry adoptions. Due to the decrease of healthy White

\textsuperscript{35} The Vietnam War (1962-1975) is also referred to as the Vietnam Conflict as the United States never officially declared war (Australian War Memorial, 2014; US Department of State Office of the Historian, 2014). It has been argued that Cold War politics from the Vietnam War propelled intercountry adoptions in Australia (Forkert, 2012b; Fronek, 2012).

\textsuperscript{36} The impact of Operation Babylift is a historical reference with 537 Vietnamese orphans adopted into Australian families (Harvey, 1980). For a concise overview, see Forkert’s (2012b) Refugees, orphans and a basket of cats: The politics of Operation Babylift.

\textsuperscript{37} Hereafter, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is stated as AIHW. Please refer to the Adoptions Australia (2015) for further reports on adoption in Australia, outlining the most up-to-date and historical information on both domestic and intercountry adoptions in Australia.
Australian babies available, it was known to take approved prospective adoptive parents as long as eight years before a child was allocated to them in domestic adoption (Kraus, 1982). Possibly, Korean Australian adoptions surged as a result of these lengthy domestic adoption processes.

In looking at other facets of the Korean Australian adoption program, it is regulated by the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, ESWS, and the Australian Government. Since 1978, ESWS facilitates the adoption program in Korea and is the only current authorized agency for Korean Australian adoptions. ESWS has accounted for approximately 2,500\(^{38}\) Korean adoptees to Australia. During the height of Korean Australian adoptions from 1983 to 1989, Australia received 1,689 Korean adoptees. This peaked in 1987 with 306 Korean Australian adoptions – *one Korean child was adopted to Australia every day for over ten months in 1987*. Since collecting intercountry adoption statistics, the AIHW reported that Korea was the lead sending country for intercountry adoptions in Australia between 1991-1992 to 2002-2003 (2010, p. 17). Despite the recurring dynamics of Korean Australian adoptions, little is known about Korean Australian adoptees.

With the majority of Korean Australian adoptees now adults, minimal research has been done to investigate their experiences. Thus, this research investigates the experiences of adult Korean Australian adoptees and is designed to address this gap in the literature. This study may help inform policy, practice, and future research around Korean Australian adoptions.

1.4.1 Increased significance of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ voices.

The Korean Australian adoptee population is an under-researched area in Korean intercountry adoption and intercountry adoption in Australia. This research is timely with the increased significance placed on intercountry adoption policy and practices in Australia. In 2014, the Australian Government proposed changes to streamline intercountry adoptions for adoptive families. Moreover, the Korean Government has threatened\(^{39}\) to suspend or close the Korean Australian adoption program due to declining birth rates, the promotion of local adoption in

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\(^{38}\) Of the estimated 40,000 children that ESWS sent for intercountry adoption, approximately 5% were sent to Australia (Green, 2003). However, there were an estimated 40 Korean Australian adoptions between 1969 to 1977 (Hübinette, 2012). With these statistics, there are approximately 1,000 Korean Australian adoptees not registered with ESWS.

\(^{39}\) Korea established plans to close intercountry adoptions, one plan by 1994 and another plan by 2015 (Hübinette, 2005, p.88). Critics of Korean intercountry adoption argue that Korea’s desire to end its role as a sending country is legitimate and needs to be pursued (Bitzan, 2008, p. 153).
Korea and support for unwed Korean mothers (O’Dwyer, 2006). However, contrary to public media knowledge, Korean Australian adoptions continue. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, this research is part of a growing body of adoptee-constructed literature that deems adoptees’ experiences as essential to inform intercountry adoption policy and practices.

Understanding the adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences has particular salience during this time of adoption reform. There is growing pressure to understand intercountry adoptee experiences as adoptees are frequently transracially adopted into White families. The overwhelming majority of adoptive parents are White – not just in the United States but also in Canada, Europe, and Australia (Pate, 2014, p. 139). While there is a broad base of knowledge around Korean intercountry adoption, much less is known about how adoptee diasporas are significantly tied to adoptive countries. Accordingly, this research delves into the two unknown areas of Korean Australian adoptions, adult Korean Australian adoptees and social media in the Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

This thesis explores Korean Australian adoptee diasporas, including the uniqueness of social media in the Korean adoptee digital diasporas. This research focuses on social media in order to present a more nuanced picture of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. In reflecting on the dynamics of adoptee diasporas, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute (2012) reported that the Internet will change how we think about adoption:

Social media, search engines, blogs, chat rooms, webinars, photo-listings and an array of other modern communications tools, all facilitated by the Internet, are transforming adoption practices, challenging current laws and policies, offering unprecedented opportunities and resources, and raising critical ethical, legal and procedural issues about which adoption professionals, legislators and the personally affected parties, by their own accounts, have little reliable information, research or experience to guide them.

Within adoption communities, this online space is an important transformation. It gives a voice to adult adoptees and to those affected by adoption. As such, this research addresses the area of social media in Korean adoptee digital diasporas with the contributions it makes to developing and advancing adult Korean Australian adoptees’ voices.

1.5 Research Aims

The purpose of this study is to investigate adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. This study largely includes first-hand voices of the adult Korean Australian adoptee that

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40 Of the finalized intercountry adoptions in 2013–14, 11% of children were adopted from Korea (AIHW, 2014).
participated in this study, using data drawn from an online survey and semi-structured focus groups and interviews. There is value in gaining insights into adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences by learning from those who have lived through the experience. This research aims to capture adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas by exploring their lived experiences and understanding the larger role social media plays in Korean adoptee diasporas.

This research hopes to contribute to the much-needed discussion that to better understand Korean Australian adoptions. From this exploratory research, other Korean Australian adoptees, adoptive parents, and other interested people will have a better understanding of the adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences and perspectives.

1.6 Thesis Overview

The thesis captures the distinctiveness of adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences through the voices of the participants in this study and my lens as an American Korean adoptee researcher. This thesis is divided into ten chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction provides an overview of the research and creates a foundation for this doctoral study. The thesis emphasizes the significance in understanding adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences and perspectives through Korean adoptee diasporas. In framing this research project, this introduction includes my Korean adoptee background and the originality of this research. This chapter sets the framework for understanding the adult Korean Australian adoptee research participants in this study.

Chapter Two: Framing Korean Australian Adoption shares a brief overview of the relevant historical policy and practices that have shaped adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. This review of literature identifies a historical framework to explore the settings that help to understand Australian adoption practices and the developments in Korean intercountry adoptions. This background establishes the happenstance of how Korean Australian adoptions occurred. It also attempts to uncover the mindset in which Korean intercountry adoption policy and practices progressed. This second chapter helps position the Korean Australian adoption program.

Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions conceptualizes the processes in Korean Australian adoptions. The chapter starts by exploring the global transformation of families, including perspectives from both Korean and Australian families.
Through understanding the transnational concerns in framing the “best interests of the child,” regulatory frameworks such as the Hague Adoption Convention and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child aid in guiding intercountry adoptions. After reviewing the current body of literature on Korean Australian adoptions, the research questions emerge.

Chapter Four: Theories Surrounding Korean Adoptee Diasporas recognizes diasporas as a process and the diasporic identities in the transnational migrations of Korean adoptees. This chapter presents a theoretical and conceptual framework on Korean adoptee diasporas, capturing theoretical perspectives on adoptee diasporas, identities, adoption, shared connectedness, belonging, communities, and diasporic spaces. I address some Korean adoption theoretical approaches developed from Korean adoptee researchers (see Bergquist, Hübinette, McGinnis, Palmer, Park Nelson, and Walton) which have guided this research. This chapter discusses the shared perceptions of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora and the communities in digital diasporas. In seeking to address the knowledge gap in adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences, the Internet is an online space where Korean adoptees reflect on their Korean adoptee diasporas.

Chapter Five: Methodology outlines the mixed-methods approach in this study. I detail different methods, both quantitative research involving an online survey and qualitative research via focus groups and interviews. This chapter also highlights methodological research components, including study design, recruitment of participants, and data analysis. I use a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2003, 2009) that addresses inequality and injustice while conducting research. The decision to approach this research in this way was shaped by the current body of adoption literature where adoptees’ experiences are rarely heard and their voices are often marginalized. This research calls attention to my outsider within perspective. In this adoptee-constructed research, I hold a perspective that I am not a Korean Australian adoptee (as an outsider). I do not have the same background of being Australian or growing up in Australia but I am a Korean adoptee researcher (within perspective). It is hoped that this thesis is presented in a way to position the focus on the voices of the adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study.

Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees examines the results from the online survey. This is the first chapter to expand on the findings. To explore the breadth of the findings, I report all of the results from both methodologies in three
different chapters (Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight) and then later discuss the findings in a separate Discussion Chapter (see Chapter Nine). This chapter primarily introduces the profiles of the research participants, both from the online survey and the focus groups and interviews. These demographic profiles and patterns are useful to provide context for the next two chapters that detail the qualitative findings. This chapter looks at the patterns of participation in social media in general and Korean adoption/Korean adoptee social media from the online survey results.

Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Experiences investigates the findings from the focus groups and interviews. These in-depth discussions with adult Korean Australian adoptee participants are separated into two chapters. This first chapter addresses larger themes of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. This chapter looks at questions such as, “What are the lived experiences of adult Korean Australian adoptees?” Largely influenced by growing up and living in Australia, research participants share their lived experiences and identify adoption stories they deemed relevant.

Chapter Eight: Recognizing the Role of Social Media in Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Lives draws upon the patterns of social media participation and perceptions as profiled in Chapter Six. This is the last chapter of the findings which features dimensions of social media to understand a larger picture of the Korean adoptee diasporic spaces. The adoptees in this study offer valuable insights into this changing online space. Facebook, in Korean adoptee digital diasporas, is the main social media platform. Lastly, the integration between online and offline adult Korean Australian adoptees’ interaction is discussed.

Chapter Nine: Discussion summarizes the key trends from the research findings. In exploring adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas, the participants’ lived experiences shaped this study. Their self-reflections expressed in their own words are a substantial component of the findings. This chapter explains the significance of this research while integrating the results from the three previous chapters.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion completes the thesis with a summary of research contributions, limitations, and suggestions for further research. This chapter also considers the contributions of adoptee-constructed research. This last chapter discusses the importance of the advancement of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences and perspectives.
Chapter Two: Framing Korean Australian Adoption

For those Chinese girls we see in their “forever families” on urban sidewalks; for those Korean kids growing up on farms in rural America; for those African American kids single-handedly integrating small town schools in British Columbia; for the children bought with the bribes of American dollars; for our sisters who have been kidnapped and sold; for the children who are deemed “unadoptable” – we must witness.

Trenka, Oparah, and Shin
Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption

2.1 Introduction

Transracial adoption unites adoptees by their unique experiences (Trenka et al., 2006, p. 1). Adoption has biblical, historical and social origins but intercountry adoption is a 20th century phenomenon. To better understand this research on adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences, this chapter contextualizes a foundation for Korean Australian adoptions. Previous research has been largely concentrated on the globalization of Korean intercountry adoption, but this research particularly emphasizes a direct Australian focus.

This chapter begins with Section 2.2, a brief backdrop on the Korean intercountry adoption program development via post-war humanitarian missions and social or economic circumstances. In order to explain Korean intercountry adoption, it is useful to identify its causation after the Korean War (1950-1953). Intercountry adoption is a consequence from war, civil unrest and natural disasters with concerns for “orphans or refugees” in need of safety and protection (O’Halloran, 2009). Generally speaking with Korean intercountry adoption, the privatization of adoption agencies influenced the subsequent migrations of Korean adoptees to the United States. Moreover, the continuance of Korean intercountry adoption post-Korean War is argued to have stemmed from the absence of Korean Government social welfare, with sociocultural justifications and geopolitical relationships behind the ongoing program.

Section 2.3 then examines a further history of Australian adoptions. The genesis of intercountry adoption in Australia is connected to the aftermath of the Vietnam War and Operation Babylift (Section 2.3.1). Within Australia’s borders, domestic adoption practices largely influenced Korean Australian adoptions. Section 2.3.2 examines forcible adoptions to understand the policies and practices intersecting between Australian domestic adoptions and Korean Australian adoptions: (1) Forced Adoptions, (2) Stolen Generations, and (3) Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents. Section 2.4 recaps the chapter.
2.2 The Orphan Aftermath of the Korean War

Section 2.2 outlines a historical context of Korean Australian adoptions, detailing the sociocultural influences on Korean intercountry adoption. Korean intercountry adoption emerged as humanitarian social welfare. Following the Korean War, families were separated and Korean children were orphaned or abandoned. The practice that orphaned and abandoned children be adopted overseas is driven by a convergence of wars, poverty, social upheavals and an availability of children from countries that lacked social welfare (R. Lee, 2003). American and international charity organizations, such as Save The Children, World Vision, Compassion, Church World Services, and Catholic Charities, sent support aid to Korea (D. Kim, 2007, p. 5) in post-war crisis relief efforts.

The first registered Korean intercountry adoption agencies were the Seventh Day Adventists (Hübinette, 2005). Maisie and Dennis Fook adopted two Korean children with approval from the Australian Department of Immigration and International Social Service (ISS) from the Seoul Seventh Day Adventist Hospital and Orphanage (D. Fook, 2012; M. Fook, 1968). After Fook’s two adopted children arrived from Korea to New South Wales in May 1967, Maisie Fook wished to establish an intercountry adoption program in Australia but her request was denied by Immigration Minister, Billy Snedden (Forkert, 2012a, p. 98). Historically under the White Australia Policy, the Fook’s 1967 adoption is notably one of the first registered Korean Australian adoptions.

2.2.1 Korea, land of the war orphans.

From a “land of many orphans” (M. Fook, 1968), this history of Korean intercountry adoption began “as an innovative prototype of the compassion and care for poor children beyond national, racial, and cultural boundaries” (D. Kim, 2007, p. 7). The influx of Korean War orphans, children orphaned or abandoned by both parents, raised international concerns. New globalized information sources of television and print media (Hamamoto, 1993, p. 211)

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41 In 1953, the American Seventh Day Adventists established the first formal Korean American intercountry adoptions (Hübinette, 2005, p. 58; E. Kim, 2009).
42 Maisie Fook worked with ISS in her family’s adoption and ISS was the only overseas adoption authorities recognized by the Australian Government (Forkert, 2012a, p. 89). Hereafter, International Social Service is stated as ISS.
43 From the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, the term White Australia Policy is a colloquial term with an intentionally favored immigration towards those of European and Anglo-Celtic descent to Australia (Elder, 2007, p. 120). The Fook’s 1965 approval from the Department of Immigration stated that “entry of children, from Asia or elsewhere, for adoption by Australian residents is not prevented by Australia’s Immigration Policy.”
Chapter Two: Framing Korean Australian Adoption

captured stories of “leaving children in the dust” (Ames, 1951, p. 1), “Korean children like ferrets” (Fagance, 1953), and “running around living like stray dogs, registered and neglected” (Noble, 1954, p. 5). These portrayals of Korean children began the saving the orphans narratives. This is when Korea became the land of war orphans.

From Western militarization (Pate, 2010, 2014), concerted efforts of servicemen aiding children caught in the consequence of war. Medical professionals, servicemen, and missionaries in Korea saw the surge of impoverishment and child abandonment. Western efforts financially supported or “adopted” Korean orphanages and children (AAP, 1951, 1952a, 1952b). As an illustration, Australian service members of 77 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) adopted a Seoul orphanage with 80 children:

Ranging in age from two to six years these tiny waifs of war are suffering from malnutrition, protein and vitamin deficiencies, dyspy and allied illnesses caused by the acute shortage of proper foodstuffs in Korea… Many of the children, stranded by the tide of war, have been picked up in the streets where they have been living on scraps and what they have been able to beg from the UN Servicemen. (AAP, 1952)

Propagated by Cold War geopolitics (E. Kim, 2009) to save the Korean war orphans from communism (AAP, 1951), humanitarian efforts neglected to consider the consequences of Western militarization.

Subsequently, post-war progeny of American and United Nations (UN) servicemen or GI babies continued from militarization on the Korean peninsula. Korean women and their relations with servicemen, either in prostitution or marriage, were considered yanggonju (Cho, 2008). Yanggonju literally translates to “Western princess” and is the “GI bride” and the “Yankee whore” (Cho, 2008, p. 3). Both the yanggonju and their mixed-race or

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44 Maurice Fagance (1953) wrote “The little human ferrets who know no beds but the debris, their jet black heads made pie bald with the white whirls of ringworm, will rush you and slash at your wrists with sticks to get the lion’s share of the food.”

45 See Hobson (1951) where Pak, a Korean orphan was “adopted” by Private Mosey’s Unit. The Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported on Australian servicemen’s effort during the Korean War.

46 Initialism for general infantry. GI baby is a colloquial term that refers to the children of American servicemen. This term continued from the First World War. The term UN baby is often used interchangeably as to consider the serviceman father.

47 The term yanggonju (양곤주) is used pejoratively to sexualize a Korean woman as a prostitute for the American military. Women’s sexual labor is a result of war. Abuses against Korean women started from Japanese imperialism (comfort women) and camptown prostitution (gijichon). Cho does not use yanggonju pejoratively and writes about her own transgenerational trauma or haunting from her mother’s life whereby “keeping alive the memory of things that would otherwise become forgotten” (Cho, 2008, p. 202). See Grace Cho (2008) Haunting the Korean diaspora: Shame, secrecy, and the forgotten war.
Amerasian children were marginalized. Based on Korean beliefs of bloodlines and social hierarchy (Peterson, 1996), these “half-half” children were often abandoned (Clement, 1998). Korean orphanages struggled with the growing number of Amerasian children or “half-American” children (Lucious, 2005, p. 134).

Without adequate support in Korea, humanitarian forces transitioned these Amerasian or half-American children into intercountry adoption to Western nations, more precisely to the United States. American militarization in Korea had a profound influence (D. Kim, 2007, p. 7) and more Korean children were adopted to United States than to all other countries combined. Korean intercountry adoption started with humanitarian notions of anti-communism from the Cold War (Hamamoto, 1993, p. 211) but another aspect of equal importance is the spread of religious Christian evangelicism (Joyce, 2013) through notions of “White-American-God” (D. Kim, 1976, p. 179) or “Christian Americanist” (Oh, 2005).

**The Notoriety of Harry Holt.**

As such, widespread Korean intercountry adoption arguably originated from Harry Holt, an American farmer from Oregon. In 1955 with a special act from the United States Congress, Holt traveled to Korea and adopted eight children to raise them in Creswell, Oregon (Holt, 1956). Harry Holt’s commitment to Korean intercountry adoption was found in Isaiah 43:5-7 scripture: “Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west…” Holt’s religious and historical significance in bringing “the seed from the East” is the genesis for their legacy. Harry and his wife, Bertha, believed that God wanted them to adopt from Korea.

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48 Amerasian was coined by Pearl S. Buck after her trips to Japan and Korea, seeing children with both American and Asian bloodlines; Buck also adopted a number of children from Asia (Lucious, 2005, pp. 134-135).

49 Korean adoptee Thomas Park Clement (1998) shared his journey, *The Unforgotten War: Dust of the Streets*, to describe his personal challenges of being a mixed-raced “devil” (Clement, 1998, p. 6). He was called “Dust of the Street” or “Child of a Foreign Devil” as he was conceived by a White American military father and a Korean mother.


51 Isaiah 43: 5-7 has been frequently used to refer to Holt’s calling: “Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth: Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him” (Holt, 1956; Holt International, 2013; Joyce, 2013).
The Holts indeed changed the landscape of Korean intercountry adoption. Bertha Holt (1956) recounted their mission to save Korean children:

We saw before us the plight of hundreds of illegitimate children… GI-babies… children that had American fathers and Korean mothers… children that had been hidden by remorseful mothers until it was no longer possible to keep their secret. Finally, the children were often beaten by other children who had never known Koreans with blond hair… or blue eyes. [ellipses in the original] (p. 21)

Harry and Bertha Holt formally developed a private organization, Holt International Children’s Services to conduct Korean American intercountry adoptions. Within one year of their “American celebrity status” (Joyce, 2013, p.48), Holt’s adoption campaign influenced over “500 Americans to adopt Korean babies” (Holt, 1956, p. 230). These first Korean American adoptions flourished with prospective American adoptive parents. White American families were fundamentally, either religious or humanitarian reasons, interested in caring for Amerasian children. The first generations of Korean adoptees were largely placed in White Protestant middle-class American families residing in rural areas with an average of two biological children of their own (D. Kim, 1976, p. 163). These American transracial families traditionally dominated Korean intercountry adoptions.

Holt International’s Korean intercountry adoption program continues today. With over 60 years in Korea and a thriving Korean American adoption program, Holt International developed into a multinational, commercialized private enterprise. It remains one of the largest adoption agencies worldwide. While Harry Holt’s legacy continues in both Korea and the United States, another private adoption agency, Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS), was a catalyst for Korean Australian adoptions.

Kim Duk Whang, a former employee of the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, founded Christian Crusade in 1972 or as known today, Eastern Social Welfare Society (2014). Kim’s mission was to serve God by helping abandoned and orphaned Korean children; he said this prayer for children adopted overseas through ESWS:

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52 Hereafter, Holt International Children’s Services, is stated as Holt International.
53 Christian Crusade was later renamed to Eastern Child Welfare Society and again later named to Eastern Social Welfare Society.
54 See Appendix B for the full prayer. The origin of this prayer is unclear as Kim passed away in 2011 but the translation of this prayer is intended for the estimated 40,000 Korean intercountry adoptees that ESWS sent overseas (Eastern Social Welfare Society, 2014; Fronek, 2009; Rosenwald, 2009, p. 134).
Precious lives, our angels, we send away these lives to foreign countries, with scarred memories of their homeland. Please forgive our sins and allow Korea to be a better country, so that we will be adopting children from other countries, instead of us always sending ours away... It is our sincere wish that these lives will not forget their home country and the love of the people who took care of them.

The existence of ESWS facilitated in the movements of Korean adoptees. ESWS remains one of the largest and last private adoption agencies in Korea, continuously sending Korean adoptees to the United States and Australia.

Indeed, ESWS has largely influenced the processes around Korean Australian adoptions (discussed in further detail in the next chapter). In 1978, ESWS formalized an agreement with the Australian Government as the main agency for Korean intercountry adoptions (Eastern Social Welfare Society, 2014). When this agreement was enacted, the number of Korean Australian adoptions more than doubled.55 Fronek (2009) identified ESWS as a proponent for Korean intercountry adoptions, “Korean adoption agencies embraced altruistic discourse to meet the goals of caring for children in orphanages” (p. 163). It was estimated that Korean Australian adoptions account for 35% of all intercountry adoptions in Australia (Rosenwald, 2009, p. 7) and the vast majority of these adoptions took place through ESWS. ESWS was and continues to be the Korean Australian adoption provider.

2.2.2 The framework for Korean Australian adoptions.

This section illuminates Korean Australian adoptions, a practice that has continued for over sixty years. Humanitarian motivations drove Korean Australian adoptions after the Korean War due to the lack of Korean Government social welfare. Australian adoptive parent Maisie Fook traveled to Korea and she saw Korean War orphans in “terrible poverty accentuated by bitter winter temperatures. Sickness and malnutrition caused much suffering and many deaths” (M. Fook, 1968). Australian serviceman David Goldsworthy remembered children from his military duty in Korea and he requested legal applications for intercountry adoptions (Forkert, 2012a, p. 51). Sister Margaret Salmon, an Australian nurse in Korea, became a second “mother” to Ko-nam (Irvine, 1964). Perhaps, these stories illustrate the initial interests in Korean Australian adoptions.

55 There were an estimated 40 Korean Australian adoptions between 1969 to 1977, 26 in 1977, and 60 in 1978 (Hübnerre, 2012). See Appendix A.
In looking at the historical waves of Korean adoptees in Australia, the first migrations occurred in the 1960s and 1970s under privatized orphanages and adoption agencies. The Fook family originally sponsored two Korean children and then transitioned to intercountry adoption in 1967 with the Seoul Seventh Day Adventist Hospital and Orphanage (D. Fook, 2012). In 1969, the Morris family of Western Australia adopted Mary-Anne, an eight-year-old Amerasian child from the Catholic Star of the Sea Orphanage in Inchon (Hatch, 2013). Amerasian children, including privatized adoptions like Mary-Anne Hatch and Peter Bell, were adopted to Australia. Hatch (2013) recalled that her Korean mother wanted the best life for her, “There is nothing more shameful than being an illegitimate Amerasian child in Korean society.” Historically, December 1977 marks the first official arrival, by plane with escorts, of eight Korean children to New South Wales (Fronek, 2009, p. 77). Reflecting on this timeline in the literature, these first Korean Australian adoptee “quiet migrations” (Weil, 1984) are relatively unknown.

Decades later with the continuation of American militarization and lack of Korean Government social welfare, Korean Australian adoption programs flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. The humanitarian foundations that assisted with social crises from war later expanded into multiple, private adoption agencies sending Korean children overseas. As such, Korean intercountry adoptions continued to be influenced by the Korean Government’s dependency on intercountry adoption, Confucianism, and geopolitical international relations.

**Korea’s dependence on intercountry adoption.**

Given the patterns of Korean intercountry adoption, it appears that there were historical and social shifts in the rationale to send children overseas, from the initial post-Korean War humanitarian crises relief to lack of Korean social welfare. Korea, both as a nation and as a society, has been critiqued because of its long-term Korean intercountry adoption programs.

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56 Child sponsorship is a humanitarian operation where individuals donate monetary funds to assist children in poorer nations. Individuals are often given pictures and letters from the child that they are sponsoring. World Vision started sponsoring Korean orphans which later influenced Korean intercountry adoption (Holt, 1956; Holt International, 2013).

57 Mary Anne was born in 1961 and adopted in 1969 at eight years old (Hatch, 2013) and Peter Bell, born in 1976 and adopted in 1979 by Australians Josephine and Kevin Bell. Bell, Australian athlete and possibly one of the most well-known Korean Australian adoptees, states that in his adoption, “Well, it began in Korea when I was three days old and my mother decided she didn’t want me” (Wilson, 2003).

58 Fronek (2009) noted that official refers to arrangements made as a result of government to government negotiations and that the first official Korean Australian intercountry adoptees arrived by escort but the practice of escorts varied from state to state.
Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk (1998) raised flags with Korea’s global dependence on intercountry adoption:

> If all children in a country are to be aided by appropriate child welfare policies, the lesson to be learned from South Korea’s experience is that a nation must develop its own domestic family and child welfare policies and programs and should not rely on intercountry adoption as a viable solution for children in need. (p. 111)

The authors point out that Korea is an economically developed nation but lacks social welfare to support families and children. In reflecting on their statement, this perspective was written shortly after the 1997 International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis which largely affected families in Korea (S. Kim & Finch, 2002). The IMF crisis led to more intercountry adoptions, in particular Korean children with special-needs and females were sent overseas (Sarri et al., 1998, p. 108).

Without a comprehensive social welfare system, economic disparity and financial distress reframed the expansion of Korean intercountry adoptions. Critiquing the multiple reasons for Korean intercountry adoptions, Choi and Trenka (2012) point out:

> However, in light of Korea’s current economy, many people from outside Korea have been left wondering why Korea is still the world’s fourth-largest sending country at international level. Adoption agencies popularly cite Korea’s Confucian culture as the cause. This may be a part of the reason, but another very tangible factor is the Korean government’s policy decisions around unwed mothers and their children.

The authors strongly argued that while Confucianism aided in the relinquishment of children, the Korean Government now depends on intercountry adoptions as part of the social welfare system.

**Confucianism and bloodlines.**

Within Korean adoption literature, issues of Confucian ideologies promoted a hierarchy in gender, a preference for a male heir to further family bloodlines or lineage. Driven by this male preference, Confucian beliefs arguably influenced Korean adoption practices, within both domestic and intercountry adoptions. In this same connection, women are viewed as

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59 The introduction of Confucianism into Korea is unknown. Korean Confucian bloodline principles were more strict than their counterparts in China or Japan and placed women as “incidental” in Korean’s classic patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal society (Peterson, 1996, p. 3). Confucian bloodlines and filial piety in Korean society are still stressed in Korea today.

60 Until the late 1990s, this male heir was recorded on a family registry, translated from Korean hojuje or hojuk. There were higher rates of female fetus abortions and family relinquishments of female infants because the ever-present objective in a family was to obtain a son (Peterson, 1996). For further information on this relationship, see Walton (2009b) “Hojuje and the significance of ‘blood’” (pp. 214-216).
secondary in filial piety or family class hierarchy; mothers deemed vessels to bear their husband’s sons (Peterson, 1996). In traditional Korean Confucianism, acceptance or openness towards adoptions and women’s rights are not considerations.

Indeed, motivation to sustain family lineage with sons promoted both secret domestic adoptions within Korea and increased the availability of females to be adopted overseas. Until the late 1990s in Korea, there was a growing trend to terminate pregnancies once the gender was determined female (Peterson, 1996, p. 213). With these social expectations, adoptions in Korea are closed and secretive (Hayes & Kim, 2008). As such, women concealed their infertility and pretended to be pregnant for the gestational period until the child was born to hide their adoptions (Y. Kim, 1977; Peterson, 1996).

Furthermore, in the wake of post-Japanese colonization (circa 1876-1945) and post-Korean War, bloodlines remained significant (Y. Kim, 1977). Unknown, tainted Korean bloodlines or “mixed-blood” children were shunned by traditional Confucian beliefs (Lucious, 2005). Korean society rejected mixed-race children as well as orphaned, abandoned, female, and children with disabilities or special-needs. With cautious views on Korean bloodlines, Korean intercountry adoption emerged as an acceptable answer for these children. Thus, Korean Confucianism continues to be cited as to why Korean intercountry adoptions exist today (“Pity the children: South Korea’s orphans,” 2015).

**Geopolitical market demands.**

Another long-term trend in the literature points to the influence of anti-communism (E. Kim, 2009) and the heavy reliance of American troops post-Korean War; whereby, the Korean Government needed to maintain geopolitical relationships with the United States. After both the 1986 Asian games and 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korea was critiqued, particularly by North Korea but also by international commentators, for the exportation and marketing of children for American demands (Hübinette, 2005; Sarri et al., 1998; Weil, 1984). Korea’s dependence on intercountry adoption validated the reputation of being a “baby exporter” for Western interests (Kwon Dobbs, 2011).

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61 The current Korean Australian adoption program counters these statistics. The current AIHW (2014) statistics state that gender is equally dispersed. However, the number of infants is disproportionate compared to other sending countries.
Chapter Two: Framing Korean Australian Adoption

With child rescue discourse (Fronek, 2006, p. 24), the privatization of Korean intercountry adoption was justified. Korean intercountry adoption is arguably driven by market supply and demand (Cuthbert & Spark, 2009; Cuthbert, Spark, & Murphy, 2010; Freundlich, 2000; Fronek, 2006, 2009; Fronek & Cuthbert, 2012; Fronek & Tilse, 2010; Quarterly, Swain, & Cuthbert, 2013; Swain, 2012). As such, this supply and demand considers the following equation: Western adoptive parents demand adoptable Korean children = paying “to complete one’s life with family” (Park Nelson, 2006, p. 89).

Korean intercountry adoptions developed into a long-term, systemic practice that alleviated the Korean Government from providing social welfare. Intercountry adoption was considered the best alternative method of raising “homeless” children because Korean adoptees “do very well in various parts of the world” (W. Kim, 1995, p. 153). Nonetheless, geopolitical relations started by private adoption agencies, including Holt International and ESWS, and the Korean Government created a marketplace for Korean babies and children. Intercountry adoption literature will suggest that a greater likelihood of market forces introduces profit motivated persons and agencies with potential to compromise the legality of the process (O’Halloran, 2009, p. 133). Korea’s ingrained intercountry adoption culture (Bitzan, 2008) has produced a sixty-year movement of Korean adoptees. At the intersection of a number of long-term trends affecting Korean intercountry adoption, 3,500 adoptees are in Australia.

2.3 Reframing Adoption Practices in Australia

This next section attempts to address the overlap in Australian adoption past practices. The two themes explored in this section, Operation Babylift and forcible adoptions, provide a background to understand the transition towards Korean Australian adoptions. Australian adoption research demonstrates that Korean Australian adoptions correspond to other domestic adoption practices in Australia.

Who is adoption intended for…the children? mothers? adoptive parents? Adoption itself is a complex entity. O’Shaughnessy (1994) commented that researchers need to (re)think how to contextualize adoption policy:

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62 See Adoption History Project (2013) at Monash University, a four-year national research project funded by the Australian Research Council. The publication from the study, The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption (2013) is a comprehensive historical outline of Australian adoptions. See also Joshua Forkert’s thesis (2012a) Orphans of Vietnam: A History of Intercountry Adoption Policy and Practice in Australia, 1968-1975 from the University of Adelaide in Australia. Forkert’s thesis focused on the historical context of adoption policies.
Adoption needs to be approached in a historically respectful, discourse critical and socially connected way. Comparison of apparently unlike phenomena is as valid and useful as comparison of apparently like phenomena. Different levels of social reality should be included in our attempts to understand. (p. 8)

In reframing Australian adoption constructs, one narrative of past Australian adoption practices suggests “which women within [original emphasis] the nation should have children” (Elder, 2007, p. 85). The issues surrounding adoption practices present larger contexts of power, race, and privilege.

Both in the United States circa 1851 and in Australia circa 1896, historical narratives of adoption were explained through “public needs of children seeking care and the private desires of couples and individuals for children” (Cuthbert et al., 2010, p. 430) and “to provide childless couples with social progeny and heirs to their property” (Howell, 2009, p. 153). From the late 1870s, Australian adoptions reflected “boarding-out policies” and children “taken without payment” (Quartly et al., 2013; Swain, 2012) with adoption legislation grounded in the needs of adopters, not the needs of children. Historical and sociocultural conceptualizations around Australia’s adoption practices also mirrored practices in the United Kingdom and the United States (Cuthbert & Spark, 2009; Cuthbert et al., 2010; Fronek & Cuthbert, 2012; Marshall & McDonald, 2001; Quartly et al., 2013). In the literature, adoption was often thought to hold a number of advantages.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, a history of legislation and significant events shifted around what was considered the best option for the mother and child or best intentions adoption practices. In the next section, these best intentions are broken down into two key themes of Australian adoptions: Operation Babylift and forcible adoptions. Section 2.3.2 forcible adoptions is separated into national adoption inquiries and apologies: Forced Adoption, Stolen Generations, and Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents.

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63 The first adoption legislation in Australia, Adoption of Children Act 1896, was originally endorsed in Western Australia with additional adoption laws to follow in the 1920s; alternative adoption legislation and acts followed in each Australian jurisdiction.

64 See the Forced Adoptions History Project (2015) where some of the events included: 1973 supporting mother’s benefit, the introduction to birth control and abortion in Australia, and Adoption of Children Act/Ordinance.

65 Best intentions is referring to the idealized notions of adoption. See adoptive parent Cheri Register (2005) Beyond Good Intentions: A Mother Reflects On Raising Internationally Adopted Children.
2.3.1 Operation Babylift and transnational migrations to Australia.

In framing the timeline of intercountry adoptions in Australia, adoption history was made in April 1975 with Australia’s involvement in Operation Babylift. Operation Babylift occurred when the South Vietnamese Government permitted a number of special purpose flights with Vietnamese children for transnational adoption (Forkert, 2012b; Fronek, 2012; Harvey, 1980; Williams, 2003; Willing, 2004, 2006). This removal of Vietnamese children heralded the advancement of intercountry adoptions in Australia, with an estimated over 270 infants sent to Australia and over 2,000 infants sent to the United States. Thus, this multilayered removal of Vietnamese children and Operation Babylift was a significant influence within intercountry adoption literature in Australia.

Indeed, Australian society was quite receptive to Operation Babylift (Harvey, 1980) as a child rescue framework. Aiding children orphaned and abandoned caught in a war-torn country to be rescued from death and communism, legitimized this removal of children. Narratives emerged, these Vietnamese neglected, malnourished “waifs” would have died if not adopted to Australia (Bang, 1968; Bang & Newton, 1972; Chambers, 1976). The media story of the first two Vietnamese girls made headlines in 1968 with their adoptions to Australian families, the Hoare family of Hobart, Tasmania and the Donnelly family of Forbes, New South Wales (Forkert, 2012a, p. 95). Willing (2004) remarked that this notion of rescue is regularly used to validate humanitarian efforts:

Generalized narratives of the orphans’ “salvation” from inferior Third World characters are also evident in adoption narratives offered by some of the Westerners who assisted the Vietnamese orphans’ evacuation… Western religious values are also featured in some of the memoirs by adoptive parents as a way of explaining the adoption of Vietnamese orphans. (p. 654)

The removal of Vietnamese children to the West parallels the previously discussed Korean intercountry adoption crusades.

Operation Babylift normalized intercountry adoption as a humanitarian operation in Australia. Harvey (1980) discussed that early intercountry adoptions, including Operation Babylift, were less politically controversial in Australian attitudes and society (p. 346). In contrast, opposition to Operation Babylift was overshadowed, Forkert (2012b) proposed:

The irony of Operation Babylift in Australia is that the desire to be seen to be acting humanely that drove the government’s decision making process, led to the gross

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66 This idea of special purpose flights to protect orphaned children was also used in the Korean War with “Operation Little Orphan Annie” (Edwards, 2006).
violations of adoption policy and practice that have marred its reputation and legacy and provided the source of a bitter and emotional controversy that continues to this day. (p. 440)

Having established the Australian public’s approval, Operation Babylift was considered to be geopolitically driven with American interests (Forkert, 2012a; Fronek, 2012). Nonetheless, Operation Babylift segued a new era of intercountry adoptions in Australia.

2.3.2 Forcible adoptions and the apologies.

A further consideration in Australian adoption history is the narratives of the forced removal of children for adoption or forcible adoption practices. Accordingly, the Australian Government redressed three forcible adoption past practices, (1) Forced Adoption; (2) Stolen Generation; and (3) Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents, with national apologies. This section briefly outlines these forcible Australian adoption practices with their apologies.

In this Australian adoption literature, forced relinquishments were reinforced from a best intentions approach, namely the perspective of the advantages of adoption. The forcible adoptions of Australian domestic adoption narratives are strikingly similar to Korean intercountry adoptions. For instance, Hyun Sook Han (2004) relayed her own forcible adoption practices as a Korean social worker:

I misunderstood my job and thought I was supposed to make the birth mothers relinquish their children; I pushed those mothers to sign the papers. Of course, I did not walk into town and just grab the children. The way I tried was to convince those mothers that their children were better off coming with me and being adopted internationally… I really believed, in my youth and naïveté, that I was doing the best I could for these children. (p. 100)

Han relayed that the movement of Korean children for intercountry adoption was based on her best intentions. In this connection, Han’s sentiments mirror the past Australian domestic forcible adoption practices.

Forced Adoption.

Predominately practiced from White Australian families between the 1940s to the 1980s carried out by doctors, nurses, social workers, religious figures and family members, unwed Australian women were forced to relinquish their children. This part of Australian adoption

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history is considered *Forced Adoption* with notions of forced forgetfulness, shame, coercion, and silence. From social stigma of unwed pregnancies and the lack of women’s rights, Australian women were sent away to other cities and countries like New Zealand to give birth (AAP, 1953) and fathers were shielded or listed as anonymous.

Women were left with no other choice; they were coerced and deceived as adoption records were altered and destroyed, and told that their newborns died at birth. Fessler (2006) recounts the hidden histories of mothers who were forced to surrender their children:

> The girls who went away were told by family members, social-service agencies, and clergy that relinquishing their child for adoption was the only acceptable option. It would preserve their reputation and save both mother and child from a lifetime of shame. (p. 9)

Left with their secret pregnancies, these unwed women were forced to relinquish their children for adoption. Silence and anonymity were practiced to shield both parents and child of “bastard” illegitimacy and the “sin” of sex before marriage (Frame, 1999). Adoption was the only way for unwed mothers to make a clean break, forge a life free from stigma, and to leave “their mistakes behind” (Joyce, 2013, p. 267).

The Apology and unwed mother social stigma.

This pattern of forced relinquishment contextualizes past and present intercountry adoption practices in Australia. The National Apology for Forced Adoptions (2013) addressed adoptees:

> To each of you who were adopted or removed, who were led to believe your mother had rejected you and who were denied the opportunity to grow up with your family and community of origin and to connect with your culture, we say sorry.

This Forced Adoption’s Apology neglected to consider overseas mothers who were also forcibly separated from their children. Interestingly in Korea today, the same forced adoption structure exists with ubiquitous maternity homes or “baby farms” operated by adoption agencies (Joyce, 2013, pp. 267-268). Children from unwed Korean mothers are the main

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68 A clean break would supposedly allow both parties to forget about the past whereby no further contact occurs. This theory was popular because it was believed to be the best outcome for both the mother and child (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2012, p. 22).

69 It was noted that the scope of inquiry addressed the Commonwealth’s contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices throughout Australia with Australian adoption law (pp. 3-5). Overseas adoption was beyond the terms of reference for this inquiry (p. 279) and the inquiry did not address Australian mothers who were sent overseas to relinquish their children for adoption or overseas mothers who were forced to relinquish their children for adoption to Australia. In North America, this forced adoption period is known as the “Baby Scoop Era” and American children were sent to Australia for adoption.
source of children placed for adoption (Hayes & Kim, 2008). Scholars contested that the “loss and pain [suffered by overseas birth mothers] is at least equal to that of mothers in Australia” (E. Han, 2012) and it was a disappointment that intercountry adoptions were not recognized in the Apology (Graham, 2013).

**Stolen Generations.**

The forced removal of Indigenous children from their families for adoption and institutionalization is known as the *Stolen Generations*. This Australian Government policy began in 1910s and continued to 1970s. Reflecting on the literature, Indigenous Australians were viewed as a “subordinate” racial group (Pettman, 1988, p. 1). To build a White Australian national identity, the Stolen Generations were expected to be “domestic workers and labourers” for families (Elder, 2007, p. 85). As a powerful reminder of White hegemony, the removal of countless Aboriginal children from their parents and their subsequent placement with approved White foster parents or into institutional care was a disaster (O’Halloran, 2009, p. 439).

Based on Indigenous Australians’ social and economic circumstances, the Stolen Generations were misguided by notions that it was better for the children to be systemically desensitized to their race and culture. *Bringing Them Home* (1997) reported the following injustices experience by the Stolen Generations:

> We may go home, but we cannot relive our childhoods. We may reunite with our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, communities, but we cannot relive the 20, 30, 40 years that we spent without their love and care, and they cannot undo the grief and mourning they felt when we were separated from them. We can go home to ourselves as Aboriginals, but this does not erase the attacks inflicted on our hearts, minds, bodies and souls, by caretakers who thought their mission was to eliminate us as Aboriginals. (Link-Up NSW submission, p. 11)

With White assimilation and genocide in mind, this narrative explores the suffering experienced by Indigenous Australians.

**The Apology and White assimilation.**

Indigenous communities demanded the Government’s acknowledgement for their actions. This Apology to Australia’s Indigenous (2008) stated that “The time has now come for the

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70 The Indigenous are the original inhabitants of Australia, also referred to as Aboriginal Australians. The Stolen Generations also included Torres Strait Islanders but much of the literature is documented to refer to Aboriginal Australians. The Stolen Generations time frame coincided with the White Australia Policy and further complicated by the “myth of terra nullius” (Elder, 2007).
nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.” Nevertheless, the detrimental loss of identity, family and culture of the Stolen Generations can never be recovered.

Akin to the Stolen Generations without the actions of genocide, the consequence of White assimilation within intercountry adoption practices neglect to consider the unrecoverable losses felt by adoptees. With transracial intercountry adoptions, Korean adoptees are “living diversity posters” with the ability to “survive in a world of white supremacy and white privileges” (Hübinette, 2007, p. 144). Willing (2006) highlighted the White assimilation of Vietnamese Australian adoptees:

The Vietnamese adoptions also followed an era of Australian history when efforts to assimilate Indigenous and migrant populations into dominant culture drew little mainstream protest. It is not surprising that adoptive parents were not encouraged by adoption authorities to provide their children with a multicultural upbringing, with an emphasis on their culture of birth. (p. 260)

The complexities of White hegemony are frequently dismissed in transracial adoptions. As such, Korean intercountry adoption is seen as a “colorblind/adoption-blind philosophy” (Palmer, 2011). Stories of White assimilation and the Stolen Generations are a reminder to recognize the loss that individuals face when forced to forget who they are.

*Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents.*

Known as the *Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents*71, migrant children were sent to boost Australia’s White population and children from poorer backgrounds were institutionalized. From the 1920s, this practice of forced child migration and institutional care was developed because of concerns in adopting “destitute” children from poor backgrounds (Penglase, 2009, 2010). Institutional care was indeed considered the best answer at the time. Survivor of institutional care, Joanna Penglase (2010) recounted the system:

Children were separated from their siblings, denied knowledge of their family, inadequately schooled, often did the work of the institution, and in addition, were physically assaulted, sexually molested and emotionally neglected by their carers. Although undoubtedly good and well-meaning people worked within this system, and did their best for children, they were powerless to affect the overall character of such a system of ‘care.’

Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents were taken from their families and placed into care. Reflecting on this literature, these forced migrations enabled privileged governments and

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71 I have used the term “Lost Innocents” as per the Inquiry (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2009a) but “Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants” is also used.
adults to traffic children. Consequently, these children in Australian institutional care were traumatized with the loss of their families, identities and nationhood.

The Apology and child trafficking.
This National Apology (2009b) noted that the perceived efforts of institutional care and forced child migration failed:

Sorry – for the tragedy, the absolute tragedy, of childhoods lost, – childhoods spent instead in austere and authoritarian places, where names were replaced by numbers, spontaneous play by regimented routine, the joy of learning by the repetitive drudgery of menial work.

The deinstitutionalization of children from care was a difficult and disempowering process (Penglase, 2009). The experiences of Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents considers the detrimental consequences of forced child migration and removing children from their families, cultures, and nations.

With child trafficking considered from the Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents, intercountry adoptees are moved by the “push” and “pull” efforts of governments (Weil, 1984, p. 277). More precisely, intercountry adoption is recognized as child trafficking and a human rights violation (Clair, 2012; Joyce, 2013; Smolin, 2004). Thus, the forced transnational movements of intercountry adoptees arguably exploit children with no agency in their migrations.

Adoption histories and rethinking the apologies.
These Australian adoption histories aid in the understandings of Korean Australian adoptions. The national apologies for past adoption practices are a stark reminder of the complex situations surrounding adoption. While the Forced Adoption Apology did not include any mention of intercountry adoption, forced relinquishments by overseas mothers is relevant to the current intercountry adoption debate. The Forced Adoptions’ committee (2012) received the following submission from Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help (VANISH):

We see the same mistakes being made with intercountry adoptions that were made back in the sixties and seventies with local adoptions. That is an issue for us, and the

David Smolin (2004; Smolin & Bartholet, 2012) refers to the practice of child laundering, when children are illicitly obtained by fraud, force, or funds, and then processed through false paperwork into “orphans” and then adoptees.

Mr. Leigh Hubbard, Chair, VANISH, Committee Hansard, Wednesday 20 April 2011, p. 4. Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help (VANISH) is a group that has been serving the post-adoption community for over 25 years.
Commonwealth has a real role to play there because it obviously has the primary responsibility for conventions and dealing with other countries in relation to adoptions, even if the adoptions are under a state’s legislation. (p. 279)

The Australian Government’s formalized involvement in every Korean Australian adoption is frequently overlooked. In addition, both the Australian and the Korean Governments have significant influence in the finalization of every Korean Australian adoption. In the current trends of adoption in Australia, the removal Korean children from their families and culture is of concern.

2.4 Summary
The emergence of Korean Australian adoptions is reviewed in the context of post-Korean War, Operation Babylift, and National Inquiries of Australian adoption practices. This chapter has demonstrated that the foundation of Korean intercountry adoption stemmed from the aftermath of the Korean War. There was a call for action to adopt “half-American” (Lucious, 2005) children from Korea. Indeed, Australians responded favorably with humanitarian motivations in post-war Korea. After Operation Babylift, Korean Australian adoptions steadily progressed with ESWS as a significant proponent. The role of preexisting social institutions, including a lack of Korean social welfare; Confucianism; and geopolitical market demands, in sustaining Korean intercountry adoptions were discussed.

To understand Korean Australian adoptions, a general knowledge of Australia domestic adoptions holds relevance. Forced child migration, child trafficking and White social privilege reflect ideological structures. The fundamentals of the Korean Australian adoption program parallel the rights and violations leading to the national apologies from the forced removal of children for adoption and unwed single motherhood. Possibly, there might be a future national apology for the forced child trafficking of intercountry adoptees in Australia.

This chapter presented themes and narratives around forcible adoptions with potential to learn from the past and drive towards ethical and moral intercountry adoptions. The next chapter delves into key contextual issues of Korean Australian adoptions.
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

3 Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

Any country, any society, which does not care for its children is no nation at all.

Nelson Mandela

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter historically contextualized the movements of Korean Australian adoptees and this chapter provides a further background to the inner workings of Korean Australian adoptions. It is necessary to understand the wider context around Korean Australian adoptions in order to explore adoptees’ experiences. This chapter outlines some of the key social, political and economic contexts around Korean Australian adoptions questioning, “With idealized notions of globalized family formation, are we finding Korean children for Australian families?” Understanding this family formation is an important part of how Korean Australian adoptees may envision their adoptee diasporas.

This chapter begins with the globalized processes surrounding Korean Australian adoptions (Section 3.2). Reflecting on this process, it could be argued that the idea of family formation—separation is imperative to understand: for every family created by adoption, another family was separated. As such, this seamless adoption transition between families is predominately facilitated by ESWS. The chapter next outlines how key regulatory guidelines influence Korean intercountry adoptions (Section 3.3). Notably, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption 1993 (Hague Adoption Convention) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child promote guiding practices for all intercountry adoptions. Within these UN frameworks, both

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75 I use the term family to symbolically address Korean family; however, this idea of family separation or families being torn apart by adoption is often criticized. Adoptees themselves counter that the only family that they have is their adoptive family.
77 Hereafter stated as Convention on the Rights of the Child (common initialism is the UNCRC, CRC, and CROC). Korea signed 25 Sep 1990 and ratified 20 Nov 1991 and Australia signed 22 Aug 1990 and ratified 17 Dec 1990. However, Korea considers itself not bound by the provisions of paragraph (a) of Article 21 and sub-paragraph (b) (v) of paragraph 2 of Article 40.
the Australian and Korean Governments address the “best interests of the child.” Yet, the practice of exchanging money for children invalidates these UN guiding principles.

Section 3.4 reports that Korean adoptees offer insights into human rights and what they feel are best interests. With astute perceptions on Korean intercountry adoptions, Korean adoptees themselves have noted the impact on cultural awareness within their own adoptions. Finally, literature review has raised a number of relevant questions on Korean Australian adoptions (Section 3.5). The research questions will be introduced. Section 3.6 concludes the chapter.

3.2 Impact of Korean Australian Globalized Families

As explored in the previous chapters, Korean intercountry adoption is complex in terms of the historical, social, economic, and geopolitical motivations. Korean Australian intercountry adoption globalized families are established through adoption and globalization. As intercountry adoption is a recent phenomenon between countries, it is important to present a backdrop of the families within their nations.

Reflecting on Korean Australian adoptions is unique because both nations, Korea and Australia, have global perceptions as developed societies. As such, it is important to note that both Korea and Australia are Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members with high Gross Domestic Product (GDP). From this perspective, Mr. Kofi Annan (2000) endorsed that developed nations should reinforce human rights:

A developed country is one that allows all its citizens to enjoy a free and healthy life in a safe environment. And a genuinely developing country is one in which civil society is able to insist, not only on material well-being, but on improving standards of human rights and environmental protection.

Despite being OECD nations with material well-being, both Korea and Australia have been internationally criticized for their lack of social development. For instance, Korea continues
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

to rank poorly (ranked 117 out of 142) on gender equality (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014) and Australia has been criticized for UN human rights violations. Despite the ongoing trends of economic development for both Korea and Australia, their status as developed nations is limited compared to the aforementioned reference by Mr. Kofi Annan.

Furthermore, there are estimates that over 1 million children have been transnationally adopted but recent years have seen a decline in numbers (Selman, 2012). With reports of millions of children languishing and waiting to be adopted overseas, the terminology *orphan* is casually defined. As such, the Australian Attorney-General’s Department (2013) asserted the following:

> The vast majority of orphans are still living with a family member. Even where orphans are living in institutions, many are regularly visited by family members. Generally these children are not considered to be in need of intercountry adoption.

As the last chapter illustrated, Korean adoptees are often perceived to be orphans justifying overseas adoption. More precisely, Korean intercountry adoption was considered the best opportunity for Korean orphans and their families to make a clean break with a closed adoption.  

### 3.2.1 Korean families and a clean break.

In looking at Korean intercountry adoption and by separating Korean families, closed adoptions successfully worked because of the geographical distance and language barriers between Korean families and adoptive families. An open adoption framework or continuous contact with Korean family is not traditionally supported in Korean adoptions (Hayes & Kim, 2008). Guided by clean break theory and closed adoption practices, intercountry adoption effectively removes the child from a Korean family. Furthermore, the Korean family registry or birth was frequently amended. Korean birth mothers are distant shadowed figures (H.

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81See the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2014 where Australia was ranked 24 out of 142. Over the last year, Korea has fallen behind six more countries (ranked 111 out of 136).
82 The Australia Government has been notified that human rights are being violated in Migration Act 1958 - Sect193; the Migration Act requires that asylum seekers who arrive anywhere in Australia by boat be taken to a regional processing country (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012).
83 Hereafter, Australian Attorney-General’s Department is stated as Australian AGD.
84 From the Australian Forced Adoptions (2012, p. 12), closed adoption often refers to an adoption process where there is no interaction of any kind.
85 Korean family registry system is based on Confucian traditions and Korean birth certificates do not exist. The Korean family registry was the most fundamental record of identity (M. Kim, 2012, p. 179).
Kim, 2012) with little voice about the circumstances that led them to relinquish their child for overseas adoption.

As expressed by unwed Korean mothers in *I Wish for You a Beautiful Life* (Dorow, 1999) and *Dreaming a World* (S. Han, 2010), they describe a situation where they believed that this clean break was the best and only option. These women share their complex narratives of social stigma and forced relinquishment in letters for their children. In particular, a Korean mother wrote to her daughter, “…although I did not abandon you, I also had no choice but to place you for adoption. I want to emphasize this to you” (Dorow, 1999, p. 25). Also illustrated by another Korean mother who wrote this letter for her child born in 1998, “In the eyes of this unforgiving and condemning society, this baby I was about to bring into the world would be nothing more than the illegitimate trash of an equally worthless mother” (S. Han, 2010, p. 102). As explored in these letters, these unwed Korean mothers believed that they had no other choice.

In looking at closed adoptions with a clean break, Korean orphans establish new lives with their adoptive family as if the Korean mother or family does not exist. Cuthbert et al. (2010) cautioned that intercountry adoption in Australia is perceived as more “natural” as it appears to be “closed, autonomous and final” (p. 436) because with domestic adoption with “damaged” children “no clean break is assured” (p. 443). In the case of Korean Australian adoptees, new birth certificates without any mention of their Korean families are issued and these new birth certificates legalize the Australian adoptive parents as the child’s only parents (AIHW, 2015). Furthermore, the Korean adoption agencies aid in the streamlining of closed adoptions practices.

### 3.2.2 Processed through the ESWS system.

These processes by private adoption agencies in Korea have greatly challenged the notions around keeping Korean families together. In reflecting on the arrangements of closed adoptions, the ESWS adoption system is a privatized intermediary separating Korean families

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86 Trenka described the process of having an adoption agency orphan family registry and an original family registry with her Korean family (2009, p. 90). Children are often misrepresented to produce an “eligible orphan” (E. Kim, 2010, p. 11) and this falsification of records makes a new legally available orphan (Smolin, 2004). Korean Australian adoptee Elise Horspool (2014) wrote: “Adoptees grow up clutching these files as the only thing that connects them to where they’re from. However, unfortunately as is being discovered more and more, adoptees are finding out that this information is incorrect and in a lot of cases, fabricated. Their birth date and birth-place could be wrong, their mother’s age or name is fabricated, and the family situation and why they were given up also wrong.”
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

and transitioning adoptees into new families. The majority of Korean Australian adoptions were administered by ESWS and other Korean adoption agencies conduct similar practices. For instance, ESWS facilitates the entire intercountry adoption process: (1) maternity homes\textsuperscript{87} for unwed mothers, (2) a system that supports mothers with a place to relinquish their children, (3) child to family matching\textsuperscript{88} services for intercountry adoption and which country the child is allocated to, (4) foster care facilities in pre-adoption services, and (5) administration of costs\textsuperscript{89} and finalization for the child to be adopted overseas. It is possible that this seamless start to finish process mirrors a business vertical integration strategy where the supply chain is continued by one organization. From unwed mother “baby farms” (Joyce, 2013) to new families in Western nations, Korean adoptees pass through the systems of Korean adoption agencies.

ESWS is the official Korean adoption agency for Korean Australian adoptions since 1978 and ESWS is the gatekeeper of adoption files with Korean family information. ESWS adoption agencies’ files are seen as the “only thing that connects them [Korean adoptees] to where they’re from” (Horspool, 2014). ESWS has shaped Korean Australian globalized families, including the facilitation of forged adoption records in some ESWS files (E. Han, 2012; Milligan, 2015). For example, Americans John and Anne Marie Ostrowski recounted their ESWS adoption where Chad, born Yong Seong Park, was trafficked and they “gave him up to save his life” (Tyre, 1999). Chad’s story is an important reminder of the facilitating role of ESWS. The role of Korean adoption agencies is pivotal in making globalized adoption families.

3.2.3 Globalized families, from a Korean family to an Australian family.

Korean Australian globalized families socially reinforce that intercountry adoption is a method of Australian family formation. In the backdrop of broader social and demographic shifts, intercountry adoptions provided an opportunity to fill a gap from Australian domestic adoptions. As discussed in the last chapter, domestic adoption policies in Australia were

\textsuperscript{87} From the Bible, “Look after orphans and widows,” ESWS operates Esther’s Home and Sharon’s Home (Eastern Social Welfare Society, 2014).

\textsuperscript{88} Matching was traditionally used by social workers to ensure that the child would “fit” into the family (E. Kim, 2009). This language was used on the ESWS website (Eastern Social Welfare Society, 2014).

\textsuperscript{89} For Korean Australian adoptions, the fees are approximately USD $19,500 (Australian AGD, 2014) but for Korean American adoptions, the fees are approximately USD$ 40,000 (Children’s Home Society, 2014). The cost possibly incentivizes private adoption agencies to send more Korean children the United States (A. Young, 2009).
strictly regulated (Kraus, 1982). These dynamics as stated by Marshall and McDonald (2001) noted that, “Some Australian parents, unable to adopt at home, look mostly to third world countries to complete their families” (p. 16). For example, Australian adoptive parent Lois Chambers (1976) wrote her personal views on Vietnamese Australian adoptions in that “inter-country adoptions are a most satisfactory solution, not only for childless couples but more importantly, for the parentless children of the world.” In contrast, adoption scholars and professionals have urged a “finding families for children, not children for families” framework (Quartly, 2012).

Increasingly, the motivations or the why\textsuperscript{90} of intercountry adoption family formation are revealed. Lovelock (2000) highlighted that waves of adopting parents were influenced by infertility and problems experienced in trying to adopt domestically. For instance, Willing’s (2010) study captured adoptive parent Beth’s story about “not going to do IVF again” and she said:

Ran into someone who was waiting for a Korean child... I said to myself, you know, we could think about that, so we basically just went from there... I just saw my friend and I said, OK, how do you do that? (Beth as told to Willing, 2010, p. 156)

Beth described her circumstances so she could form her own Korean Australian globalized family. Australian adoptive parents have been a major contributor to how the government agencies historically managed intercountry adoptions (O’Halloran, 2009). Fronek and Tilse (2010) questioned the role of parent advocacy groups\textsuperscript{91} with the political power to influence legislation with policies to enable the expansion and promotion of intercountry adoption.

Korean Australian globalized families reflect an evolution and progress of family formation. It is suggested that the “darker side of adoption” advances the motives of the adopting parents (Bean, 1984, p. 5). Adoption frameworks are concerned with the desires or “needs” of parents

\textsuperscript{90} See Alexandra Young’s thesis (2009), Families of choice: A qualitative study of Australian families formed through intercountry adoption, from the University of Sydney in Australia. Young outlined trends in intercountry adoption family formation and participants remarked that intercountry adoption is not about saving children and yet the language used when describing why they have, was filled with allusions to saving children from life in an orphanage (p. 157). Also see Indigo Williams Willing’s (2010) thesis, Transnational adoption and constructions of identity and belonging: A qualitative study of Australian parents of children adopted from overseas, from the University of Queensland in Australia. Willing draws on the circumstances that influenced adopting parents’ decisions for intercountry adoption and examined the participants’ individualized notions of fate, love and intimacy (p. 151).

\textsuperscript{91} Australian Society for Intercountry Aid Children (ASIAC) was one of the largest parent support group in NSW, Australia and Australian Intercountry Adoption Network (AICAN) states that it represents thousands of Australians; people who have been adopted from overseas and their families, and people interested in intercountry adoption.
to adopt children (Quartly, 2012; Quartly et al., 2013) to become Australian “families of choice” (A. Young, 2009). Within the current debate of Korean Australian globalized families, Korean intercountry adoptions have decreased with global economic development and low birth rates. With Korea’s low birth rate (OECD, 2015) and the Korean Government’s promotion of domestic adoption (Hayes & Kim, 2008), Korean Australian adoptions have followed a declining trend. However, both the Korean and Australian Governments are working towards better existing intercountry adoption practices to support Korean Australian globalized families.

3.3 Guiding Principles in Ethical Intercountry Adoption Practices

Intercountry adoption practices are divided amongst nations: Which countries are helping whom… and for who? Section 3.3 addresses Korean Australian adoptions’ regulatory obligations in terms of conducting ethical intercountry adoptions. Past adoption practices were envisioned to have a best intentions focus within a child rescue framework, see Chapter Two. Unfortunately, past adoption practices have demonstrated that the legal and social welfare systems meant to protect children and vulnerable populations often violated human rights. Human rights are now identified for all parties within the “adoption triangle” (Marshall & McDonald, 2001; Triseliotis et al., 2005) to share broader perspectives of intercountry adoption practices.

As such, intercountry adoptions need to develop processes consistent with human rights frameworks (Cantwell, 2014). It is important to note that safeguards were established to protect children through what constitutes the “best interests of the child” from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Section 3.3.1). Significantly, the Hague Adoption Convention (also known as the Hague) was initiated to prevent child trafficking and to promote human rights between receiving and sending countries (Section 3.3.2). Moving from policy into practice, Section 3.3.3 explores how nations work through these UN obligations.

92 In 2012, Australia’s birth rate was 1.9 and Korea’s birth rate was 1.3. To put this into perspective, Australia’s birth rate is 46% higher than Korea’s and Korea’s birth rate has steadily dropped from the 1970s where it was 4.5 (OECD, 2015).

93 “Best interests of the child” was a deliberately undefined concept (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Cantwell, 2014).
3.3.1 **Convention on the Rights of the Child and family rights.**

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* is one of the most widely ratified international human rights treaties. A Dutch report (2008) on intercountry adoption, “All things of value are defenceless” expressed that the value of a child as a person is self-evident. The Australian and Korean Governments have established procedures aligned to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* to ensure that children’s rights are valued within intercountry adoptions.

Yet, within the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, Korea considers itself not bound by the provisions of (a) of Article 21 which states:

- (a) Ensure that the adoption of a child is *authorized only by competent authorities* [emphasis added] who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the *persons concerned have given their informed consent* [emphasis added] to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary;

As previously presented, Korean intercountry adoptions were exposed to the trafficking of children, falsifying of documents, and aiding of forced adoption practices with unwed mother relinquishments. The Korean Government is moving towards domestic adoptions (Hayes & Kim, 2008); however, family preservation concerning unwed women’s rights is not supported (Choi & Trenka, 2012). The Korean Government has arguably committed to the cessation of Korean intercountry adoptions (Bitzan, 2008; O’Dwyer, 2006). In this connection, the Korean Government has taken recent measures to reduce vulnerability within intercountry adoption processes, discussed later in the *Special Adoption Act*.

The *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Hague Adoption Convention* warrant that all efforts have been made to keep the child with their family with respects to their fundamental rights. In the context of these UN guidelines, intercountry adoptions should be a last resort and indeed intercountry adoption processes need to be reevaluated.

3.3.2 **Hague Adoption Convention and adoption procedures.**

The main objectives of the *Hague Adoption Convention* outline ethical intercountry adoption practices. In terms of the *Hague Adoption Convention* within Korean Australian adoptions,

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34 Family preservation is philosophically grounded in that it is beneficial for both the child and their families to remain together. See TRACK (2012) and the International Conference on the 1st Single Mother’s Day (2011)
Australia went into effect on December 1998 and Korean signed\textsuperscript{95} on May 2013 but has not ratified. Korean Australian adoptions are not yet subject to the requirements and relevant regulations. The \textit{Hague Adoption Convention} is a guiding regulatory framework; signing and ratifying does not mean that governments are obliged to act within its guidance. The Australian Government summarized key points of the \textit{Hague Adoption Convention} in the Overseas Adoption Inquiry (2005):

- children should grow up in a family environment;
- each member state should attempt to keep children in their families of origin;
- intercountry adoption can offer a permanent family to a child where a suitable family cannot be found in their state of origin;
- the abduction and trafficking of children should be prevented; and
- intercountry adoptions should be made in the best interests of the child. (p. 27)

In reviewing the literature, the general protection of children from intercountry adoption “malpractice” is of concern with non-Hague countries’ best interests safeguards less effective (Cantwell, 2014). Notably, non-Hague countries have larger accounts of child trafficking and unethical practices in safeguarding human rights (AIHW, 2014; Cantwell, 2014; Clair, 2012; Hollingsworth, 2008; Smolin, 2004; Smolin & Bartholet, 2012). For example, the Australian Government suspended Ethiopian intercountry adoptions (non-Hague) because child safeguards were not effectively made (AIHW, 2015). Australia continues to have intercountry adoption programs with countries that have not enacted the \textit{Hague Adoption Convention}, like Korea, with 50% of all 2013-2014 intercountry adoptions processed with non-Hague compliant countries.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{Korea’s Special Adoption Act revision.}

Since the signing of the \textit{Hague Adoption Convention}, the Korean Government (2014) committed to the \textit{Special Adoption Act}\textsuperscript{97} revisions which went into effect in August 2012. An outline of the \textit{Special Adoption Act} is captured in Figure 1.

\textsuperscript{95} Please note that there is a difference between countries that are a Party to a particular Hague Convention.

\textsuperscript{96} In Section 3.1 of the \textit{Adoption Australia 2013-14} report, 114 intercountry adoptions were accounted for and 57 of those were non-Hague adoptions (AIHW, 2014, p. 13).

\textsuperscript{97} In June 2011 the National Assembly, Korea’s law making branch of government, passed Bill #1812414. The bill was lobbied by Korean adoptees, single unwed mothers and public interest groups.
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

Figure 1 Summary of the Special Adoption Act Revisions

The revisions highlighted:

- implementation of one-week adoption reconsideration by family and family court approval system, and
- reinforcement of the qualification of adoptive parents.

The Korean Government has proposed the promotion of domestic adoption, the support of Korean family search, and the establishment of adoption services (Korea Adoption Services, 2014). This new framework was proposed to support family preservation and the rights of adoptees.

The 2005 and 2014 reports in Australia.

Two reports\textsuperscript{98} were released in Australia to address intercountry adoptions, the 2005 Overseas Adoption in Australia: Report on the inquiry into adoption of children from overseas\textsuperscript{99} and the 2014 extract of the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on

\textsuperscript{98} Both reports commenced under the Liberal Party of Australia (2015) where the term “liberalism” is considered a combination of economic liberalism and social conservatism. The Liberal Australian Government has addressed to make intercountry adoptions easier (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2014b; Prime Minister of Australia, 2014; Quartly, 2014).

\textsuperscript{99} After over 30 years of intercountry adoptions, Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, Bronwyn Bishop, commenced an Inquiry into the adoption of children from overseas. Hereafter, the Overseas Adoption in Australia: Report on the inquiry into adoption of children from overseas is stated as the Overseas Adoption Inquiry.
Intercountry Adoption.\footnote{Hereafter, the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption (2014b) that was released in April 2014 is stated as The Extract of the IDC Report. The full report has not been released and this report addressed the impediments to improve intercountry adoption.} Both of these reports investigated the Hague Adoption Convention within intercountry adoption practices in Australia.

The Overseas Adoption Inquiry initiated the conversations on intercountry adoption reform and discussed how to further understand the Hague Adoption Convention. The Overseas Adoption Inquiry (2005) was organized to address how the Australian Government can better assist Australians who are adopting or have adopted children from overseas countries because “Intercountry adoptions can, without doubt, be in ‘the best interest’ of children” (p. ix). The Overseas Adoption Inquiry recommendations (2006) addressed a lack of resources and support for intercountry adoptions with 27 recommendations designed to improve the system as a “blueprint for systematic change.” To date, some of these recommendations have not been implemented and some Australian adoption scholars have argued that additional assessments of intercountry adoption policies and practices should redress the current obligations of the Hague Adoption Convention (Fronk & Cuthbert, 2012; Quartly et al., 2013).

Almost a decade later in 2014, the Prime Minister’s department identified in the Extract of the IDC Report (2014b): “immediate steps that could be taken for improving and streamlining the delivery of inter-country adoption services to make inter-country adoption easier and faster for Australian couples” (p. iii) where adoption reform (2014) will “enable more people to find families.” Furthermore, the Extract of the IDC Report suggested removing the “red tape” and reducing delays for Australian families, and streamlining adoption processes (2014). For example, the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014\footnote{Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 (2014a) allows Australian citizenship under bilateral intercountry adoption arrangements, including Korea.} simplified adoption processes and allowed a vertical integration strategy for Korean intercountry adoptions. Adoption scholars and other political parties\footnote{The Australian Greens (2015) have countered this report and their political views speak on behalf of children, refugees, students, individuals and families living in poverty and natural environment.} have raised concerns with how this streamlining from the Extract of the IDC Report contradicts the Hague Adoption Convention obligations (Quartly, 2014).
3.3.3 Social change towards regulatory obligations.

The issues of safeguarding human rights and child protection based on the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Hague Adoption Convention* have been at the center of a rigorous intercountry adoption debate. It is necessary that intercountry adoption programs address public opinion and concerns, including the risk of child trafficking and child laundering (Clair, 2012; Smolin & Bartholet, 2012). In this connection, O’Halloran (2009) criticized intercountry adoptions:

- It removes the most adoptable children from their own country, culture and kin and thereby exposes them to possible future difficulties in relation to matters of identity, racism and language.
- It leaves behind those children who are statistically less likely to be adopted and who will therefore probably be consigned to institutional care. (p. 133)

Intercountry adoption is contested by the dynamics between child languishing and best interests of the child.

These important debates around the social changes within intercountry adoption practices continue. Perhaps, critiques of intercountry adoption are not an “anti-adoption discourse” (Cantwell, 2014; Fronek, 2012, p. 453) but rather a vital lens into the complexities of intercountry adoption processes. For instance, Young (2009) interviewed adoptive parent Aaron, who explained:

Even though I’ve got a Korean child myself. I mean to say that you know, I would like to see the day come when Korea did not adopt any children overseas, that’s not being hypocritical, that’s just saying well that’s the way they should move towards, you know? (Aaron as told to Young, 2009, p.157)

As Aaron suggested, Korea is working towards ratifying the *Hague Adoption Convention* with intentions to protect Korean children and families and promote family preservation. Varying perspectives are indeed necessary to work towards human rights within intercountry adoptions.

Adoptees, adoptive parents, adoption practitioners, and governments have recognized the underlying pressures of *finding children for adoptive parents* to create globalized families. Akin to literature on domestic adoption practices, children’s voices and rights should be heard (Neil, 2012); adoption should not be about adoptive parents’ rights. Swain (2012) suggested that governments have legitimized intercountry adoptions:

Under the cloak of a discourse of benevolence, through the construction of a world awash with children in need of rescue adoptive parents have been consistently successful in
asserting their right to a child, and pressuring governments to relax controls on intercountry adoption accordingly. (p. 413)

Swain questioned intercountry adoption practices where the best interests of the child is used to validate the removal of children for overseas adoption. Possibly, intercountry adoption can be counterproductive with exposure to “baby selling, kidnapping, and forced labor” (R. Lee, 2003, p. 714).

The exchange of money for children.

Thus, it is important to note that as a consequence of market demands for children (see Section 2.2.2), monetary exchanges currently exist in intercountry adoptions. However, the Hague Adoption Convention states that adoption consents should be free from either duress or financial inducements (O’Halloran, 2009, p. 164). Australian adoption scholars have commented on the practice of financial interests:

There is no question that the transfer of children from one country to another, usually from the developing to the developed world, opens up the possibility of exploitation and fraud, especially when money enters the transaction. Australia has not been immune from recurring allegations of complicity in the illegal trade in children. (Quartly et al., 2013, p. 122)

Government regulations around monetary gains need to be considered; however, in some cases, governments are the agencies that process intercountry adoptions.

In presenting this complex picture, the current cost of a Korean Australian adoption from ESWS is an estimated AUD $24,000. The Australian Government (2014) has suggested reforms be “easier and faster for Australian couples to find families.” With a “market in babies” (Quartly et al., 2013), most of the Korean children adopted to Australia are under the age of 24 months (AIHW, 2015). As such, governments often overlook the exchange of money for children.

The current Korean Australian adoption program focuses on care for children with special needs or complex medical backgrounds. Adopting parent supply and demand interests arguably perpetuate a market for adoptable children. Young’s (2009) study addressed the question of whether more children would be adopted to Australia if more money was exchanged:

..we’re competing or – competing is the wrong word, but there are, you know, all the other countries of the world who are also wanting their number of children and then we’ve got the US… who seemed to be able to just go in and, you know, say yes we’ll have that
child and that child and that child and here’s our money. (Harriet as told to Young, 2009, pp. 204-205)

As the above quote outlines, the United States is seen as a financial competitor in adoptive parents’ demands for children and children are deemed as a commodity available for purchase.

In contrast, market values of children are countered by adoptive parent Barbara Yngvesson:

> The market in children does not so much devalue the adoptable child (by commoditizing it), as establish a central condition in constituting its value (its entitlement to political or physical life, or both); and the regulation of this market through national laws and international conventions is part of a technology of rule in which this newly valued life is deployed: as a means to complete families, as a form of exchange for resources from abroad, and as a long-term investment that may bear unexpected returns in the future. (2010, p. 58)

Yngvesson asserted that adoptees are connected by the “cost of belonging (and of love)” (2010, p. 176). Market values of children, even if altruistic in nature, still treat adoptable children as a commodity. In looking at both market value perspectives within Korean Australian globalized families, a *cost-benefit analysis* reflects what cost and what benefit is for whom: Korean children either *languish in poverty* in a socially stigmatic Korean society or they become *adoptable children* in Australian families with positive outcomes. The issue of treating children as a transactional commodity is an ethical concern within intercountry adoptions.

### 3.4 Shifts Towards Adoptees’ Best Interests

The earlier sections of this chapter highlighted the larger processes around Korean Australian adoptions to help frame this research. In the practice of transnational regulatory frameworks, including the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Hague Adoption Convention*, these policies were implemented without the voices of adult intercountry adoptees in mind. As the previous sections have illustrated, debates on intercountry adoption are largely centered around families and children. In considering *best interests of the child*, what are the *best interests of the adoptee*? To understand this perspective, best interests of the adoptee acknowledges that adoption has a life-long impact and the longer-term adoption perspective beyond “the child.” As such, adoption policies and practices need to acknowledge further complexities in operationalizing the *best interests* and address the long-term consequences of being adopted overseas.
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

In this larger conceptualization of Korean Australian adoptions, Section 3.4 demonstrates that the experiences of adoptees themselves over their life course should be considered. This section establishes two shifts within Korean Australian adoption processes in capturing best interests of adult adoptees: Korean names (Section 3.4.1) and returns to Korea (Section 3.4.2). From this perspective, adult Korean adoptees’ experiences need to be explored when addressing intercountry adoption procedures’ best interests.

3.4.1 Right to a Korean name?

The Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention reported the importance for a child to live and grow in its country of birth. Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) stated:

The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, [emphasis added] the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know [emphasis added] and be cared for by his or her parents.

As the latter part of Article 7 is not feasible in intercountry adoptions, the right to a name signifies an important link to birth country, parents and/or heritage. The use of a name in the best interests of the child may represent a sense of cultural awareness in a connection to the past. This right to a name is a complex perspective within the best interests of the adoptee.

Within Korean Australian adoptions, the right to a name is a legally interwoven and open issue. On one hand, it endorses building a sense of identity within the best interests of the child. In accordance with some Australian legislative obligations103, the child’s first given name is expected to be retained by the adoptive parent(s) to provide a sense of culture and cultural awareness (AIHW, 2014, p. 74). On the other hand, names are amended on new Australian birth certificates to erase connections to Korea: “A new birth certificate is issued to the child bearing the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) as the legal parent(s), and the new name of the child, if a change has occurred” (AIHW, 2014, p. 1). Thus, the legal use of a Korean name is discretionary to adoptive parents. Accordingly, intercountry adoption policy regulation with ethnoracial identity issues varies from adoption agency to adoption agency (Carstens & Julia, 2000, pp. 61-62).

103 New South Wales, Adoption Act 2000 No 75 (2000) refers to the ethical practices that exist within Article 7 whereby courts approve names: Court must not approve a change in the given name or names of a child who is more than one-year-old, or a non-citizen child, unless the Court is satisfied that the name change is in the best interests of the child.
As such, the right and/or use of a Korean name is significant; it is a connection to the adoptee’s birth in Korea. For some Korean adoptees coming to terms with their adoptions, a Korean name is a symbol, irrespective if named by family, a foster carer, or an institution. Traditionally, Korean names are decided in patriarchal lineage by the father or grandfather (M. Kim, 2012), but for some Korean adoptees, their right to a name is decided by the adoption agencies. In learning about her Korean adoption records, Korean Australian adoptee Kim Myung Soo’s name was forged to Kim Myung Joo (E. Han, 2012). False Korean names deconstruct an adoptees’ connection to their birth and the right to know their past.

This right to a name is questioned by adult Korean adoptees when thinking about their Korean past. After meeting her Korean mother, Korean Australian adoptee Blossom Beeby (2008) cautioned the idealization of a Korean name:

I began to think of my Korean name as the one connection between myself and Korea and my birth mother… I looked at her face and could immediately see myself. It was like her eyes, nose and cheekbones had been imprinted on my face. I asked how she had chosen my name. She hadn’t. She’d handed me to the social worker the day I was born and had no say in the name I was given. This shook my comforting idea that my mother had given me my name in love. (pp. 327-328)

Korean American adoptee Rachel Youngeun Rostad (2013) wrote the spoken word poem, “Names” highlighting her symbolic “barcode” given to her by the adoption agency:

So my birth name was Youngeun. I used to think my birth mom gave it to me. But she didn’t. It was given by the foster home, not much more than a barcode… The name Youngeun is a barcode. The name Rachel is a Made in America sticker slapped onto a Korean flag.

… When you name your daughter, it’s a prayer for everything you want her to be. It makes sense, then, that she named me nothing.

Rostad’s poem ended with powerful sentiments surrounding her name. As adult Korean adoptees, both Beeby and Rostad reflected on their affinity towards their Korean names and what it meant to them to find out that the adoption agencies named them.

In examining Article 7, are names a symbolic cultural connection to the past or are they a best interests regulation that has little meaning? Designed around the best interests of the child, the right to a name highlights an importance to an adoptee’s country of birth. Insights from adult Korean adoptees explain the significance when considering this right to a Korean name.
3.4.2 Returns to Korea.

As per the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Hague Adoption Convention*, connections with country of birth are important human rights for intercountry adoptees. In contrast, the *Hague Adoption Convention* fails to consider the complexities around what constitutes the best interests of the child to remove the child from their country of birth (Cantwell, 2014; Hollingsworth, 2008). Within intercountry adoptions, adoptees may lose their national or cultural identity to their country of birth, often with the loss of language. Adult intercountry adoptees are now visiting their countries of birth with new insights into cultural awareness to regain language, reconnect identity and find families.

Korean adoptees’ connections with their country of birth are essential to foster. Accordingly, Riggs (2012) indicated a best interests practice in connecting adoptees with their birth culture:

> Deep, respectful engagement with the child’s birth culture should precede intercountry adoptions. This should not be in the form of an exoticised spectacle of the other, but rather an embodied opportunity to comprehend the incommensurabilities that shape birth and adoptive family lives, so that the latter can begin to come to terms with the responsibility they have to the former. (p. 462)

Riggs pointed out the cultural responsibilities of adoptive families within intercountry adoptions. In this same connection, adoptive parents can nurture a sense of openness for intercountry adoptees to come to terms with country of birth. For Korean adoptees, families can cultivate contact with Korea, Korean culture or Korean families. Contact models are seen to empower families in open adoptions (Neil, 2003, 2009). As such, this notion of open Korean intercountry adoptions may be in the best interests of the adoptee.

Furthermore, Korean adoptees’ connections with Korea have been encouraged in return visits to Korea. Adoptees return to Korea, their “homeland” or “motherland” (Miller, 2013). This return to Korea is important in understanding Korean adoptees’ diasporic journeys. Korea is no longer a war-torn nation; some adult Korean adoptees move to Korea to live there permanently (Trenka, 2009, 2011). These movements of adult Korean adoptees shift the traditional norms of intercountry adoption.

The significance and complex picture of the cultural reconnections to Korea has been well documented by adult Korean adoptees. Following the IMF crisis in 1998, an official Motherland Tour (1999) by the Korean Government invited adoptees to experience Korea as
their country of birth. Kim Dae Jung, the president at the time, delivered a formal apology\textsuperscript{104} for the past social injustices (1998).

Looking at you I am proud of such accomplished adults, but I am also overwhelmed with an enormous sense of regret at all the pain that you must have been subjected to.

I am pained to think that we could not raise you ourselves, and had to give you away for foreign adoption.

So we sent you away. Imagining all the pain and psychological conflicts that you must have gone through, we are shamed. We are grateful to your adopted parents, who have loved you and raised you, but we are also filled with shame.

This return tour was the first time that the Korean Government invited adult adoptees back to Korea to experience Korean culture. Adult Korean adoptees from all over the world attended this historical event, including David Gold\textsuperscript{105} invited as the Australian delegate (1999, p. 8).

Returns to Korea are of significance to the adoptees and their globalized families. In fostering connections to Korea, adult Korean adoptees have shared the symbolic importance of their return visits. The experiences of return are mediated by the parallel reality of the digital world (Hirsch & Miller, 2011, p. 12); Korea is a reconnection to a symbolic place. Reconnections with Korea, the return to Korea and/or the engagement with Korea as adoptees’ country of birth is necessary in the best interests of the adoptee.

\section*{3.5 Korean Australian Adoptee Literature}

The previous sections of this chapter walked through a contextual background of what is known about Korean Australian adoptions. What remains a gap in this background literature is the lived experiences of Korean Australian adoptees. There is a growing body of international literature on Korean adoptees but most of the extant research focuses on the United States, largely based on Korean American adoptees’ experiences. In Australian literature, the Post Adoption Resource Centre\textsuperscript{106} (PARC) highlighted transracial intercountry adoptees’ experiences in \textit{The Colour of Difference: Journeys in Transracial Adoption}, with one Korean Australian adoptee narrative (Armstrong & Slaytor, 2001). This literature explored adoptees’ insights on themes of gratefulness, between two worlds, racism, reunion,

\textsuperscript{104} See Appendix C for Full Remarks at Meeting With Overseas Korean Adoptees on 23 October 1998 at Chungwadae (Blue House), Seoul, ROK.

\textsuperscript{105} No further information was found on Mr. David Gold, but his date of birth, 14 January 1949, would record him as one of the earliest documented Korean Australian adoptees.

\textsuperscript{106} Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) is a subsidiary of The Benevolent Society, a not-for-profit and non-religious organization founded in 1813. PARC (2014) aims to provide those impacted by adoption with support and guidance.
and returning to country of origin. This book pioneered the discussion of transracial adoptee’s experiences in Australia.

In looking at intercountry adoptees’ experiences in Australia, particular reference is made to adoptee researchers. In the field of adoptee scholarship, sociologist Indigo Williams Willing (2002, 2003; 2004, 2006, 2010; 2012) has made significant contributions in understanding intercountry adoptees in Australia. She began her research to share her experience of growing up with White parents in Australia and the larger adopted Vietnamese diaspora (Williams, 2003). Williams Willing founded Adopted Vietnamese International (AVI), an online community for Vietnamese intercountry adoptees, and her voice in adoption research is highly regarded. Vietnamese adoptee, Dominic Golding (2007, 2010) wrote *Shrimp* to address his adoptee narrative, “It is an autobiographical account by a Vietnamese-Australian adoptee wrestling with a past history of war, the identity of Australia, and being seen as something I’m not” (p. 48). In sharing their lived experiences, both Williams Willing and Golding have raised new questions in that the missing voices of adult intercountry adoptees in Australia should be explored.

In addition, the most significant study in exploring Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences is Jessica Walton’s (2009b) PhD research. Walton, an American Korean adoptee, researched Korean adoptees’ experiences and the ways adoptees make sense of their identities in their adoptive countries and in Korea. She conducted 22 in-depth interviews with Korean adoptees aged 18-39 years during three months of fieldwork in Seoul with ten (45%) of her participants being Korean Australian adoptees. Walton’s qualitative research captured narratives to understand how Korean adoptees negotiate their identities, unpacking the complex notions of identity and lived experiences of Korean adoptees. In connecting the first-hand accounts of Korean adoptees, Walton described how “identity is lived and experienced [original emphasis] by Korean adoptees based on their experiences in their adoptive countries and when they return to South Korea” (2009b, p. 20).

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107 Indigo Williams Willing earned a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her work with adoptees.
108 See Jessica Walton’s (2009b) thesis, (Re)embodying identity: Understanding belonging, ‘difference’ and transnational adoption through the lived experiences of Korean adoptees, from The University of Newcastle in Australia.
Furthermore, it is worthwhile mentioning other Korean Australian adoption empirical studies. Patricia Fronek’s (2009) thesis\textsuperscript{109} utilized Actor Network Theory to understand the dominant Australian adoption proponent network through the Queensland, Australia experience. Whilst not collecting the voices of Korean adoptees themselves, Fronek conducted a case study with text and six in-depth interviews with stakeholders from interest groups and organizations. Adoptive parent Kim Gray (2007) interviewed eight (40% of her total participants) and adult Korean Australian adoptees aged 14-20 highlighting cultural identity\textsuperscript{110} narratives. Adoptive parent Trudy Rosenwald’s (2009) research investigated identity and well-being and included 133 (73% of her total participants) adolescent and adult Korean Australian adoptees aged 14-26 years old. While there is a wide range of knowledge in the preexisting Korean Australian scholarship, the core of this research is to understand the experiences of Korean Australian adoptees.

With Korean Australian adoptions as the longest-standing and largest program, research has overlooked the adult Korean Australian adoptee population. Adoptee activists and researchers have strongly argued that adoptees’ experiences need to be shared:

> To reclaim our birthright as human beings – not as objects of exchange – and to transform our personal stories into collective action for social change, we must understand our historical connections to past generation, our past and future connections to our countries and families of origin, and our current connections to each other. (Trenka et al., 2006, p. 13)

Adult adoptees acknowledge the significance in sharing their stories to reclaim their voices. After an examination of the existing Korean Australian adoption literature, the voices of Korean Australian adoptees themselves were missing.

3.5.1 Research questions.

Throughout this thesis, adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences are approached as a diaspora. The research questions of this thesis are:

- How do adult Korean Australian adoptees engage in Korean adoptee diasporas, and how is this engagement reflected in their lived experiences?

\textsuperscript{109} See Patricia Fronek’s (2009) thesis, \textit{Understanding the emergence, diffusion and continuance of intercountry adoption from South Korea to Queensland, Australia}, from The University of Queensland in Australia.

\textsuperscript{110} See Hall’s (1990) \textit{Cultural identity and diasporas} which suggests cultural identity “is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being.’ It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. It is constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth (pp. 225-226).
Chapter Three: Contextual Issues Around Korean Australian Adoptions

- Within Korean adoptee digital diasporas, how do adult Korean Australian adoptees construct their experiences in social media?

This research uses mixed-methods, details of the methodology are provided in Chapter Five. This research draws from an online survey and semi-structured focus groups and interviews data to answer the above research questions. The main purpose of this research is to explore adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences.

3.6 Summary

This chapter illuminated the historical and contemporary contexts to understand Korean Australian adoptions. This background suggests that Korean Australian adoptions should address the development of Korean economic growth, the continual gender inequalities of unwed mothers in Korea, the regulation of private Korean adoption agencies, and the challenges of adoption-driven motivations. The issues within intercountry adoption human rights or best interests’ frameworks are useful to understand. As stated in the Hague Adoption Convention, intercountry adoptions should be a last resort. To date, both the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention are not enforceable in practice. Taken as a contextual whole, this research indicates that these systemic processes shaped Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences.

Adult intercountry adoptees have valuable insights into the varying attitudes, practices and regulations of Korean Australian adoptions in the best interests of adoptees. The chapter briefly established that a greater exploration of Korean Australian adoptions encourages the inclusion of the voices of adoptees and their perspectives on the best interests’ principles.

What do Korean Australian adoptees think about their experiences? An empirical review of literature highlighted a number of pertinent studies, but as of yet Korean Australian adoption research has not included the voices of adult Korean Australian adoptees.

This research is unique in that I examine adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas to advance a greater understanding of Korean Australian adoptions. This next chapter tackles some of the difficult conceptualizations around Korean Australian adoptions. Analyzing Korean adoptee diasporas is a complex task; I will extend on previous Korean adoption research with Korean adoptee theories that suggest an importance of learning from those that have lived through the experience.
4 Chapter Four: Theories Surrounding Korean Adoptee Diasporas

I looked in the mirror, I could see I was different. I was told time and again that the world would be a boring place if everybody looked and acted the same, yet I did not want to be different. I wanted to be like my White family and friends.

John D. Palmer
The dance of identities: Korean adoptees and their journey toward empowerment

4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights a theoretical framework to understand Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas. Whilst previous chapters discussed how Korean Australian adoptions originated from historical and social practices, the goal of this chapter is to examine theoretical approaches surrounding Korean adoptee diasporas. The last 40 years of Korean adoption research has produced a large body of literature which has evolved significantly with Korean adoptees as scholars. Within the literature presented in this chapter, adoptees themselves have written extensively on adoption experiences and these first-hand narratives supply an important backdrop for exploring the participants involved in this study.

This chapter has four thematic sections. The chapter begins by examining the significance of diasporas and the formation of Korean adoptee diasporas as a concept (Section 4.2). Framed around Korean adoptee researcher Tobias Hübinette’s (2004) Korean adoptee third space, Korean adoptee diasporas are located in conflictual psychosocial spaces between Korea and adoptive countries, see Chapter One where Hübinette distinctively proposed that Korean adoptees exist in this unique diasporic space. The work of Hübinette and other Korean adoptee scholars (see Bergquist, McGinnis, Palmer, Park Nelson, and Walton) demonstrate the conceptual tenets of diasporas. In this study, Korean adoptee diasporas are defined as the experiences or consciousness derived from the adoptees’ migration from Korea to Australia.

Section 4.3 outlines existing theoretical and empirical literature on identity in relation to this study. It discusses identity as a term with ideas involved in developing adoption identity frameworks. Thus, this chapter does not provide an in-depth account of identity formation. Within Korean adoption studies, multiple identity frameworks examine the genesis of how adoptees begin to look at their identities and where adoption is positioned in moving through various life stages. These various branches of identity development theories hold relevance; however, some theories are limited when accounting for the complex diasporic identities of Korean adoptees.
The next section (Section 4.4) integrates social identity to adoptee diasporas within Korean adoption literature. While there is a large focus on Korean intercountry adoption research in the United States, this section clearly points to a gap in the research on Korean Australian adoptions. As an important backdrop to understand the research participants in this study, the complex notions surrounding social identities and adoption experiences within Korean adoptee diasporas are particularly emphasized.

Section 4.5 addresses how adult Korean adoptees actively participate to develop diasporic communities in the representation of their voices. The Internet is an important aspect to diasporas because it is an accessible and open space that builds components of trust, support, and social connectedness. Korean adoptee digital diasporas symbolically link this sense of connection and belonging to Korea. In the context of their digital diasporas, social media is an emergent diasporic space.

### 4.2 Imagined Adoptee Diasporas

The transnational Korean adoptee diaspora began at the end of the Korean War and continues today with Korean children migrating to different Western countries. From this forced migration, Korean adoptees are distinctively caught between both adoptive nations and Korea; whereby their nationhood is imagined. According to Benedict Anderson (2006), nations are an ideology which give individuals meaning to the sense of community:

> It is *imagined* [original emphasis] because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (pp. 5-6)

Anderson observed that nations are imagined communities, spaces where people can belong. Anderson identified nationhood where “we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy” (Anderson, 2006, p. 4). Within this research, the ideological strength of imagined communities informs the social and geographic spaces of a Korean adoptee diaspora framework.

Through the concepts of an imagined community, Hübinette’s (2004) Korean adoptee third space represents a nationhood for the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. The transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is a psychosocial space where Korean adoptees transcend race, citizenship, culture, religion, language, and identity in resistance to the limited
paradigms of nationalism. Having established the historical and social contexts surrounding intercountry adoption in Chapter Two, transracial adoptees have strongly declared that their diasporas are subjected to “the larger forces of colonization, racism, sexism and globalized capitalism, as well as intimate conditions of grief, rage, loneliness, and longing” (Trenka et al., 2006, p. 15). Taking into account the complexity of adoptee diasporas, a conceptualization of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is highly relevant to this research.

It is important to note that in this research the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora has connections to real and symbolic Korea. Both a tradition of displacement and dispersal of ethnic Koreans and contemporary Korean diaspora politics are multifaceted concepts within diasporic transnationalism (Hübinette, 2004). This complicated phenomenon of diasporic nationalism, with discursive definitions of diaspora, conceptualize theoretical connections with a sense of belonging outside geographical borders (Agnew, 2005; Ahmed, 1999; Brah, 1992; Clifford, 1994; S. Friedman, 2009; Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1990; Hirsch & Miller, 2011; Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005). As such, diasporic identities examine notions of “hybridity” (Hall, 1990). With an illustration of transnational hybridity reflected in Korean adoptee diasporas, Korean adoptee Deann Borshay Liem (2015) emphasized a sense of belonging, “we all have Korean faces but speak different languages and are assimilated into each of our cultural milieus.” The voices of Korean adoptees in diasporic transnationalism considers a sense of cultural hybridity.

Within Korean adoptee diasporas, imagined communities discuss experiences around diasporic processes. Within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, Korean adoptees’ journeys aid in capturing this complex phenomenon (Section 4.2.1). Korean adoptees’ diasporas offer awareness in dissecting the complexities of adoption from lived experiences to shape notions of diasporic KAD nationalism (Section 4.2.2). The transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is a powerful construct within Korean adoptee identities (Section 4.2.3).

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111 Anderson (1992) later refers to diasporic nationalism as long distance nationalism. Related to transnationalism within imagined communities, he stated: “Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone analyze” (2006, p. 3).
112 From the displacement of the Korean War, Cho (2008) described the generational diasporic haunting of unresolved trauma unconsciously passed from one generation to the next (p. 11).
113 Hübinette (2004) noted that Korean adoptees do not necessarily model Hall’s notion of hybridity. However, Karen Dubinsky’s (2010) Babies without Borders symbolically characterized adoptees to be hybrid or missing babies joined by global circuits of trade and migration (p. 131).
4.2.1 Emergent diasporic journeys.

For Korean adoptees within these transnational imagined communities, the continuous social and symbolic consciousness around Korea represents a sense of belonging to a diasporic journey. Korean adoptees find themselves with a diasporic consciousness constructed from either real or symbolic connections to Korea. The transnational movements of Korean adoptees conceptualize social and geographic boundaries of the diasporic journeys (Bergquist, 2003, 2004; Homans, 2011; E. Kim, 2003, 2010; Miller, 2013; Yang, 2009). The ideological significance of Korean adoptees’ journeys, connections or returns to Korea as a “homeland” (E. Kim, 2003) exist in their diasporic consciousness. Highly relevant to this study, Korean adoptees’ diasporas, Korean adoptees’ complex diasporic journeys have captured the first substantial global movement of transracial adoptees. Furthermore, the engagement with Korean adoptees’ returns are part of a range of counterpublic discourses and practices (E. Kim, 2010, p. 13). Kim’s Korean adoptee counterpublic is positioned to understand adoptees’ symbolic diasporic returns.

The diasporic journeys captured in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora reflect a further awareness of symbolic returns. Symbolic quests for home include the search for a sense of diasporic past, identity, and self. For instance, Lifton (1994) described the metaphor of home and the journey towards wholeness for adoptees:

- It is a quest for the beginning of one’s narrative; for the lost mother; for unconditional love; for meaning; for the recovery of lost time; for a coherent sense of self; for security; for form and structure; for grounding and centering.

The search for Home reflects the adoptee’s need for biological, historical, and human connectedness. It is close to a religious search because it is an attempt to connect to forces larger than oneself. (pp. 127-128)

Perhaps, Lifton’s Home is a powerful reflection of symbolic diasporic journeys and this use of Home incorporates the strengths of symbolic connectedness in relation to Korean adoptees’ diasporic returns.

Within the social spaces of Korean adoptee diasporas, reflections of symbolic returns and constructing adoptees’ returns are presented in diasporic journeys. Despite the highly individualized experiences within notions of returns, the symbolic existence of an attachment...
to Korea and/or Korean family is important within adoptees’ diasporic journeys. This illusory Korea is often powerful for many Korean adoptees (Homans, 2011). As such, the concept of the return to Korea is made synonymous with a sense of Korean family. In this connection, it is “natural” for adoptees to return to Korea with notions that “The ties between the birth mother and the birth country are perceived to be natural, everlasting and unbreakable” (Walton, 2009b, p. 63). Korea is ideologically associated and gendered as the “motherland” (Miller, 2013) in adoptees’ return journeys. Belonging to a sense of Korea or Korean family remains of great significance. Korean American adoptee, Kevin Ost-Vollmers explained that “It was only after I had found my biological family and placed flowers on my biological mother’s grave in Korea that I understood that I am living the life and traveling the journey that my mother wished for me” (K. Jackson et al., 2010, p. 106).

The extent to which diasporic returns overlap and intersect within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora entail both personal and public Korean adoptee lived experiences. Park Nelson (2009) argued that the awakening of an adoptee identity is a notably important experience and within the Korean adoptee community, this experience is referred to as one’s “journey” (p. 237). The importance of this counterpublic journey suggests that Korean adoptees are living members of a unique diaspora with significant first-hand accounts. For example, Jennifer Fero’s self-discovery was captured in the documentary, *Adopted*. This documentary portrayed the lives of two families (one family adopting from China and Fero’s family with her mother dying from cancer). Fero demonstrated the challenges she faced as a Korean adoptee, “I am a Fero, but I’m not. I’m Korean, but I’m not. I’m an American, but I’m not.” She also commented in the documentary, “It’s not my journey – it’s our journey. I don’t live alone. *This is not my burden*” [original emphasis] (B. Lee, 2008). Korean adoptee experiences or journeys, like Fero’s, reflect Korean adoptee lived experiences. This shared sense of diasporic journeys is integral to individualized Korean adoptee lived experiences and the larger transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

### 4.2.2 Connections to each other’s lived experiences as an imagined KAD nation.

Within these Korean adoptee imagined communities, Korean adoptees live through experiences that shape who they are. Korean adoptees’ lived experiences involve assigning meaning to and reflecting on their adoptee diasporas. Identified as a relevant concept within this research, lived experiences are very real and significant reflections from individual Korean adoptees contributing to a sense of belonging within the transnational Korean adoptee
Chapter Four: Theories Surrounding Korean Adoptee Diaspora

diaspora. Lived experiences are constructed from dimensions of “lived meaning” and Korean adoptees’ lived experiences are a unique contribution to their imagined communities.

The gathering of lived experiences is a major theme in Korean adoptee literature. Korean adoptees are unique in their shared adoption experiences as the first transracial forced movements or “quiet migrations” (Weil, 1984) of intercountry adoptees. Illustrating this, Seeds from a Silent Tree: An Anthology By Korean Adoptees (Bishoff & Rankin, 1997) was the first collection of poetry, fiction and personal narrative ever written by Korean adoptees. These first-hand accounts portray the complexities of life as a Korean adoptee, with specific attention given to the community of adult adoptees. In the sharing of lived experiences, Walton (2012) addressed the emergence of Korean adoptees directing their own agency:

> The kinds of support that adoptees need change over time from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Building on this, there needs to be recognition that the word ‘adoptive’ does not refer only to the child being adopted but also the adolescent and adult adoptee. (p. 451)

This agency considers the ways that meanings have changed over time in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

The narratives of adult adoptees explore the shared lived experiences within the Korean adoptee diasporas. Korean adoptees themselves became active participants in creating their own social diasporic spaces and expressing their own authentic voices (Hübinette, 2005). With the notion of diasporic hybridity, McGinnis engaged in this self-reflection of “Who are you also-known-as?” as she observed:

> I wanted to understand how I, as an Asian woman with an Irish last name and blond-haired mother, could be an American too. Ultimately I realized this conflict about my identity arose because I felt I had only two choices: Korean or American. The reality was that I was both. I felt to identify simply as being Asian would be to deny the love and nurture of my adoptive parents; and to identify solely as American, I would be denying my Korean ancestry and heritage. (McGinnis, 2007b)

McGinnis shared her own agency with a sense of diasporic consciousness. Living in a racialized, classed, and gendered world, Brian (2012) proposed that Korean adoptees search for ways to belong (p. 172). The imagined transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is grounded in shared lived experiences and connections.

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115 Lived meaning refers to the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful. It describes those aspects of a situation as experienced by the person (van Manen, 1990, p. 183).
From the multiple migrations and generations of Korean adoptees, the Korean adoptee literature suggests that transnational diasporas developed from a sense of belonging as a “KAD”

nation (Jo, 2006). Korean adoptee Sunny Jo coined the terminology KAD (‘Korean ‘AD’optee) and Jo’s KAD culture or nation (2006; 2002) provides a background to Korean adoptees’ diasporic transnationalism.

The creation of KAD ethnicity and culture started with KADs reclaiming our own culture and heritage to get beyond the shame and inferiority that have been forced upon us by adoptive families from the start (e.g., attempts to fully assimilate us; the idea of our adoptions securing us “a better life”; removal and replacement of our names, languages, and culture; lack of respect for our heritage and birth families; and ridicule, racism, and discrimination), or by Korea upon return (e.g., the pressure to be “more Korean” or to learn the Korean language and expectations of interest in Korea and Korean culture). (Jo, 2006, p. 288)

Jo credited adult Korean adoptees as active participants in reclaiming their experiences with grassroots activities. Perhaps in relation to shared lived experiences, KAD attempts to engender a distinct diasporic space; it is an imagined community with strengths and weaknesses within adoption journeys. In this complex diasporic KAD nation, adult Korean adoptees’ diasporic connections brings to light crucial questions about the spaces where adoptees belong.

4.2.3 Newfound diasporic identity explorations with Korean adoptee scholars.

Engaging in the diasporic processes around a sense of identity are central to understanding Korean adoptees’ diasporas. Hall (1990) stated that diasporic identities “are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (p. 235). Further, diasporic identities negotiate notions of “difference” (Hall, 1990) and within intercountry adoption, transnational adoptees are seen to have a “foreign look” (Rooth, 2002). Providing some first-hand insights into intercountry adoption scholarship, Korean adoptee scholars promote new meanings to diasporic identities and conceptualizations of difference.

Within adoptee diaspora literature, the advancement of Korean adoptee scholars has encouraged a number of diverse conceptual approaches to diasporic identities. As an illustration, Walton (2009b) examined an embodied identity via lived experiences, the

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116 Sunny Johnsen, adoptee writer and activist from Norway defined KAD in “The Creation and Rise of KAD as a Separate Identity and Nation” (Johnsen, 2002). KADs are Korean adoptees; a person who was adopted from Korea as a child and raised in another country, often by adoptive parents of another race, ethnic background, and culture (Jo, 2006, p. 285).
process through which a sense of belonging and sense of self is experienced. This Korean adoptee identity model investigated adoptees’ lived experiences through one’s physical body:

Identity and belonging are often understood within conventional frameworks, which do not always acknowledge their complexity in terms of how they are experienced. For Korean adoptees, issues of identity and belonging are not taken for granted. Instead, ideas about ‘whiteness’, ‘Koreanness’ or ‘adopteeness’ are re-conceptualised and given new meaning based on their lived experiences. (Walton, 2009a, p. 220)

Walton questioned the static frameworks of identity; she noted that for Korean adoptees, adoption experiences and identities are complexly entwined.

As diasporic imagined communities, a number of Korean adoptee scholars have noted that diasporic identities and their meanings profoundly change. For instance, John Palmer (2011) elaborated on his own Korean adoptee experiences in developing a theory on Korean adoptees’ various identities coining the term “Dance of Identities.” He remarked that Korean adoptee identities are multifaceted in being “White, Korean, Korean adoptee, and those in between and beyond,” and stated:

The dance of identities theory portrays the adoptees as taking their own identity journeys to discovering their identities for themselves (i.e., empowering their own identities). The theory does not allow for one adoptee to be a spokesperson for all Korean adoptee; it does not allow for one adoptee to claim that her/his journey is the right way to empowering one’s identity; it does not allow for one adoptee to believe that her/his identity journey is any better than another’s. (p. 2)

Palmer noted that these reflections on identities engage Korean adoptees in a process of self-discovery and empowerment. Korean adoptee scholars explore the contesting and contradictory terms under which different identity approaches hold relevance, reflecting a strengthened position from their own first-hand accounts.

Contemporary Korean adoptee diasporas present conceptual diasporic processes around identities. In the field of Korean adoptee diasporas, understanding “Who am I?” is often based from extant intercountry adoption literature.

4.3 Rediscovering the Ongoing Identity Processes
Identity is an important construct to understand in Korean adoptee diasporas. Much of the existing research on Korean adoption has been concerned with concepts around identity processes. The earliest Korean adoption studies frequently considered the identity development of Korean adoptee children and was largely dominated by perspectives of adoption practitioners, adoptive parents, and academics. This Korean adoptee literature
demonstrated the significance surrounding Korean adoptees’ identity formation during adolescence. Accordingly, Korean adoption research has been greatly influenced by identity literature (for a more comprehensive framework examining the transracial intercountry adoption literature and identity models see R. Lee, 2003). Thus, this growing body of work on Korean adoptees’ identities is relevant to understand the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora and adult Korean adoptees’ experiences.

In the United States, empirical studies on Korean adoption emerged with a study that employed a theoretical foundation on self-concept for adolescent Korean American adoptees, measuring self-esteem, personality integration, and adjustment (D. Kim, 1976). Kim’s groundbreaking investigation into adolescent Korean adoptees and their White American adoptive parents highlighted the complexities of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. Prior to Kim’s (1976) study, much of the literature on Korean adoption was descriptive reporting on anecdotal personal insights (p. 13) with inconclusive findings that Korean children had adjusted “well to American homes” (p. 20). This refers to the fact that Korean adoptees were considered a “social experiment” deemed successful (E. Kim, 2010, p. 4). It is important to note that Korean adoptee identity literature has progressed since these first early studies.

Furthermore, early empirical studies investigated the psychosocial adjustment of Korean adoptee children with analytic work on themes such as race, social well-being, community, emotionality, and family adjustment. In Sweden, longitudinal studies collected data on intercountry adoptees focusing on the social adjustment of adopted children in homes and schools (Gardell, 1980). Gardell’s findings noted that the adoptees, of which 68% were Korean adoptees, wanted to be “like everyone” but knew that they were “different” (p. 14) and maintained in their identities that they felt themselves to be ordinary Swedish children. Studies further identified the first processes of identity development for Korean adoptees. For instance, Wilkinson (1985) described how Korean adoptee children come to terms with their Korean adoptee identity in five stages: (1) Denial, avoid anything to do with Korea; (2) Inner Awakening, feel more comfortable with Korea; (3) Acknowledgement, active and aware; (4) Identification, actively identify with attempts at being Korean; and (5) Acceptance, sense of equilibrium (pp. 61-62). These studies pointed to patterns of identity development.
amongst Korean adoptee children and early studies were significant in providing a framework for this research.

In more recent empirical work, adult Korean adoptee scholars have been integral in uncovering more significant nuances associated with the first-hand knowledge of Korean adoptees’ diasporas with evidence that identity is a continuing relationship with Korean adoption life experiences. From this perspective, Korean adoptees are often faced with ongoing complex identity processes from their transnational diaspora across the life course. As identity is explored, it is a key concept in Korean adoptee diasporas. This section briefly outlines the lifelong processes of identity formation, “Who am I?” and “Who will I become?” (4.3.1) and adoption explorations (4.3.2). Relevant to the literature around Korean adoptee diasporas, Korean adoption studies have come to focus on identity processes and adoption experiences.

4.3.1 “Who am I?” and “Who will I become?”

It is important to acknowledge the construct of identity as it pertains to Korean adoptee literature. Developing and understanding identity or “Who am I?” is a complicated, lifelong process. Identity constitutes the foundation for psychosocial development (Erikson, 1965, 1968). As such, identity formation theories are presented to understand Korean adoptees. In relation to understanding the adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study, notions of identity development conceptually map the processes of shifting identities important to this research project.

A multifaceted construct, identity and identity formation are constantly changing and involve lifelong development. Identity theorist Marcia (1980) proposed that identity is not something that one possesses but something that individuals merely “have.” Marcia’s extension of Erikson’s psychosocial identity, “Who am I?” and “What am I doing in this world?” (Erikson, 1965, 1968) argues that identity is an ever-changing entity that directs an individual. According to Marcia:

Identity has been called a “sense,” an “attitude,” a “resolution,” and so on. I would like to propose another way of construing identity: as a self-structure – an internal self-constructed, dynamic, organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The better developed this structure is the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world. (1980, p. 159)
Marcia proposed that identity is an individually complex construct and that definitions of identity are diverse.

In this connection, identity is a process situated in multidimensional layers. Some of these layers in identity formation are grounded in ethnicity, national loyalties, social acceptance and self-awareness. These layers influence identity by defining (and redefining) what each layer means to every individual as both an individual and plural concept. Identity as applied to biological characteristics, psychological dispositions, and/or sociodemographic factors is interpreted and infused with personal and social meaning in answering the question “Who are you?” (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011, pp. 2-3). Identity shifts within one’s lifespan because life experiences change how individuals think about who they are. For example, adolescence is often a critical period when individuals process “Who am I?” where identity dynamics shift to the question, “Who will I become?”

Identity development is seen to define personalities or a sense of self in many different ways. Ideas about identity are influenced by our own social worlds and formed by social contexts around us. Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development in adolescence involves an “identity crisis” namely “identity vs role confusion” which initiates questioning personal identity and the social world (1968). Likewise, Marcia presented a state of “identity diffusion” which is a state where the identity process is not developed or where individuals interpret the physical, mental and emotional changes occurring within themselves as not having developed a set of self-defining beliefs (1980). Identity crises or diffusion are concerns occurring predominantly during adolescent identity development.

In recognition of the complex and contested processes surrounding identity, empirical data reports identity conflicts in adoptees (Sorosky, Baran, & Pannor, 1975). Identity is frequently used as a framework to analyze the significance of adoption in one’s life. Authors have identified the potential concerns that arise with adoption across the lifespan: loss and trauma; guilt, shame, and inadequacy; disturbing influences on self-image, identity; loss of power in directing the course of one’s life; rejection, and the continuing fear of further rejection; isolation and alienation; lowered self-esteem; and unresolved grief (Winkler, Brown, van Keppel, & Blanchard, 1988, p. 31). Adoptees are challenged to address these aforementioned dimensions and added complexities exist in transnational, diasporic identity formations. An exploratory approach to the dynamic, meaning-making processes around identity and
adoption provides a framework for a number of aspects associated with Korean adoptee diasporas.

4.3.2 Adoption explorations within identities.

Adopted individuals may construct an identity around adoption experiences across the course of their life to question, “Who am I as an adopted person?” Identity processes examine what it means to be an adoptee and to have an adoptive/adoptee consciousness. In conceptualizing the link between adoption and identity, adoptive identity literature provides a backdrop for understanding adoptee diasporas in this thesis. As such, an adoptee consciousness is often seen to help Korean adoptees construct diasporic identities.

In addition, conceptual frameworks around adoption suggest that identity becomes a particularly salient feature (for a detailed explanation of Erikson’s seven-stage model of the developmental tasks that adopted people face throughout a lifetime see Brodzinsky, 1985). Brodzinsky (1985) adapted Erikson’s psychosocial crises to adoption with adoptive family tasks at various developmental stages. In other words, adoption is psychologically multifaceted and a personally complex experience that shapes one’s identities. Thus, the centrality of adoption is an influential factor in an adoptees’ sense of self. The ongoing search for self is universal; for adoptees and non-adoptees alike, an understanding of the self is one of the primary tasks of psychosocial development (Brodzinsky, Schechter, & Henig, 1993, p. 13). Within Korean adoptee diasporas, adoptee consciousness or adoptive identities are useful for connecting diasporic processes in psychosocial spaces.

With an Erikson identity perspective, development of an adoptive identity is when an adolescent adoptee begins to connect adoption with a sense of identity, explores the meaning of being adopted, and copes with differences in their family (Brodzinsky, 1987; Brodzinsky et al., 1993; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004). It should be noted that adoptive identities manifest from adoption narratives or stories that individuals construct, write, and/or tell about themselves in being an adopted person (Dunbar, 2003; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Lash Esau, 2000; Kohler, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2002; Von Korff, 2008). Perhaps, an understanding of adoptee identity is a unique and important development within one’s life course. This adoptee consciousness holds relevance to Hübinette’s (2004) Korean adoptee third space.
Incorporating the lived experiences of adoptees will provide a number of insights into adoption studies. In understanding her own identity as an adopted individual, Jackson (1993) highlighted this unique sense of adoptee consciousness:

> Throughout my development in and outside of this family, I have struggled with the meaning of my adoptive status and the impact that it has had on my identity...Although this struggle has, over the years, alternately occupied the forefront of my thoughts and receded into the background, I remain intrigued by the life experiences of adoptees and the processes by which they make sense of those experiences. I attribute this interest in part to my own reflection on adoption, as well as to my feelings of isolation from others who share the label “adopted.” (p. 1)

Jackson observed that adoption has influenced how she thinks about life and how she sees herself. When examining adoption experiences, a number of different dimensions to adoptees’ identities need to be recognized. Adoptees need to know that their grief and loss experiences are real and that adoption is not just a concept (Verrier, 1993). Thus, lived experience is a useful approach for adoptees to make meaning of their adoption experiences.

**Ambiguous loss: Adoptees’ primal wound.**

In framing an adoptee consciousness, one experience to understand is the assumed connections with having been relinquished and/or adopted, including dimensions of ambiguous loss. Feelings derived from their relinquishment, adoptees can develop a sense of identity surrounding loss. Discovering frameworks around loss within adoption explorations, ambiguous loss represents a person who is psychologically present but physically absent (Boss, 2009). For adoptees, this unresolved grief and ambiguous loss is a traumatizing reality (Gair & Moloney, 2013). Perhaps, parents of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptees feel a sense of ambiguous loss. Research by Feeney, Passmore and Peterson (2007) discussed the interconnectedness of attachment, loss, and trauma as influences in adoptee’s lives. It has been argued that by believing and proclaiming the perfect nature of the adoption and by not addressing the actual painful reality of relinquishment (J. Wright, 2013), adoptees’ experiences are marginalized. However, loss frameworks are debatable in the understandings of adoption lived experiences.

Despite the varied literature on coming to terms with adoption loss, the experience of a “primal wound” (Verrier, 1993) possibly emerges as a significant ambiguous loss. As adoptees attempt to make sense of their adoptions or to understand their primal wound, significant emotional pain, grief or distress is caused with confusion about being adopted.
This approach to understanding loss in adoption was highlighted in *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child*, as Verrier (1993) commented:

Self is the essence or core-being of a person giving one a sense of wholeness. The Self often gets lost as a result of early trauma and a feeling of having to act in such a ways as to avoid re-experiencing that trauma. A person knows when he is acting from the true Self because there is a lack of anxiety and feeling of congruency between the internal and external self. (pp. 224-225)

This characterization of “Self” captures the associations between adoption and trauma.

Underpinning the notion of a primal wound is the fact that loss is often experienced as trauma for many adoptees. Feelings of loss from relinquishment and being adopted provide particularly strong emotional narratives; adoptees traditionally seek to understand their relinquishments in their search for origins (Triseliotis et al., 2005, p. 345). Adoptees’ traumas and losses can intersect when searching for answers about being relinquished. Under these circumstances, adoption professionals need to recognize the traumatic life-long impacts of adoption (Sass & Henderson, 2000). It is important to acknowledge trauma and loss in adoption experiences.

Thus, Verrier’s adoptee terminology of Self and the primal wound theory build on conceptual tenets of attachment, bonding and loss. There are implications arising from Bowlby’s attachment theory (1974) in contextualizing adoption (Edens & Cavell, 1999). The use of loss and attachment as an adoption framework has a strong tradition with the concepts explored in Harlow’s (1959) research with monkeys. This early work supported the profound influence that attachment has with affectonal relationships. Making frequent references to attachment within intercountry adoption, reactive attachment disorder (RAD) demonstrates complex physical and psychological problems experienced by those who have suffered pain and loss in his or her life from the experience of being placed for adoption (Hoksbergen & ter Laak, 2000). The separation from mother, family, country, culture, and infringement of basic human rights are illuminated by concepts of loss and trauma in the adoptive identity struggles.

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118 Verrier’s work in adoption is believed to have revolutionized the discourse around adoption and *The Primal Wound* has been referred to as the “adoptive’s bible.”

119 Korean adoptee blogger, JaeRan Kim or Harlow’s monkey, openly spoke of the monkey experiments and how they related to adoption where “the impetus to adopt internationally is to save children from institutional life, where we would receive all the basic needs met but lack the comfort and emotional needs that a family can provide” (Vollmers, 2011).
Chapter Four: Theories Surrounding Korean Adoptee Diaspora

Adoptees during adolescence and genealogical bewilderment.

Within the subset of empirical studies that focus on adoption during adolescence, adoption experiences or coming to terms with an adoptee identity expose additional challenges. During adolescence when identity issues are particularly significant, Sants (1964) coined the term "genealogical bewilderment":

A genealogically bewildered child is one who either has no knowledge of his natural parents or only uncertain knowledge of them. The resulting state of confusion and uncertainty, it will be argued, fundamentally undermines his security and thus affects his mental health. (p.133)

According to this view, Sants points out that this disoriented loss may perpetuate alienation and further trauma. As such, the genealogical bewilderment approach has served as a useful lens for conceptualizing adoption experiences generally. It could be argued that a greater state of knowing helps clarify a sense of self or adoptee consciousness. As such, open adoption studies continue to document the importance of knowing the context of familial origins. In contrast, though, too much adoption information provided too soon for adopted children may be overwhelming (J. Wright, 2013).

There are no clear-cut assumptions about how adoption influences individuals at different times in the life cycle. However, within the general perspectives of adolescence and identity processes, Grotevant et al. (2000) takes the view that adolescence can be a period of intense adoption exploration:

At one end of the continuum, adolescents show little or no interest in exploring aspects of adoptive identity. At the other end of the continuum lies preoccupation, in which adoptive identity is the organizing theme of the person’s identity and consumes considerable psychological and emotional energy. (p. 382)

The authors affirmed that a form of preoccupation with adoption, also expressed as adoption preoccupation, may evolve from adoption reflections during adolescence. Further research also indicated gender differences in the exploration of adolescent adoptive identity. Girls initiate the exploration of adoptive identity earlier in their lives than boys who engage with their adoptive identity when they form families or become fathers themselves (Dunbar, 2003, p. 107).

As adoptees seek to understand what adoption means and the role of adoption in their lives, the salience of adoption preoccupation during adolescence is influential. Exemplifying this, adolescents with extremely high levels of adoption preoccupation reported significantly lower levels of trust in their adoptive parents (Kohler et al., 2002). Adopted adolescents who deeply
thought about adoption had the highest levels of adoption preoccupation (Dunbar, 2003; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004) and older adolescents had a greater understanding of their adoptive identity than younger adoptees (Von Korff, 2008). Adoption preoccupation can affect how an adolescent feels about his or her sense of self as an adoptee within their family (Kohler et al., 2002). Consequently, adopted adolescents may transition into adulthood with “emotional baggage”: feelings of isolation, alienation, difficulty with making commitments in relationships, low self-esteem, lack of ability to trust others, and anger (Winkler et al., 1988, p. 90). Perhaps, learning about adoption over different stages of the life course is necessary to reflect on varying lived experiences.

**Adult Adoptees and self-reflection.**

“Who am I as an adult adoptee?” questions the life of adopted adults. Coming to terms with themselves as adults, adoptees need to know “who they are as adopted persons” (Grotevant, 1997, p. 12). Being an adult adoptee includes being able to deal with the psychological ebb and flow that adoption will have in life (Brodzinsky et al., 1993, p. 22). Adoption research proposed that certain life events advance the decision to explore adoption or “Who could I have been?” (Winkler et al., 1988, p. 89). Winkler et al. (1988) suggested that this adoption reflection is often triggered by: (1) the start of a family, (2) engagement or marriage, (3) for women, pregnancy and childbirth, (4) death of an adoptive parent, and (5) other periods of distress (pp. 92-93). As adults, adoptees are exposed to more diverse lived experiences within adoptee consciousness.

Perhaps from life experiences, adult adoptees have a deeper understanding of adoptee identities. For example, Lifton’s (2009) *Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience* described a greater awareness of being an adoptee. Lifton, herself an adopted person, used Adoptee with a capital A in the following context as a political statement and to give voice to Adoptees:

> I felt that most adopted people were not visible enough: that no one saw their sense of abandonment and loss or understood the identity struggles they were going through. Conferring the capital A upon the adopted was a declaration that Adoptees would no longer settle for being invisible. They would have to be seen with all the complex emotional baggage they carry. The capital A not only stood out but seemed to make them stand out. “Look at me,” it seemed to say. “See me.” (p. ix)

Lifton later noted that that certain perceptions towards adoption have changed and she lowered the A in her following book, *Journey of the adopted self: A quest for wholeness*, and this is mentioned in latter versions (Lifton, 1994, 2009).
Lifton’s research with adoptees, birth mothers and fathers, and adoptive parents explored the psychological consequences of adoption. She felt that using the term Adoptee empowered her own and other adoptees’ experiences.

Self-reflection is critical to adoptees seeking awareness within their own adoptive identities. Accordingly, first-hand adoption narratives suggest that the “search for an adopted self” is an empowered quest for all of the missing pieces of the self so that one can become whole (Lifton, 1994, p. 12). The literature demonstrates that it is important to consider the voices of adoptees and this process of reflection. The importance of adoptee self-reflection is noted by Brodzinsky et al. (1993):

The struggle to understand who you are, where you fit in, and how you feel about yourself is universal. It is a unique part of being human. Self-reflection is one process that sets us apart from other animals... Adoptees go through the search for self in some unique and characteristic ways, and many of the differences can be explained by the fact that adoption cuts off people from a part of themselves. (p. 3)

This is reinforced by Shaw who stated, “Self-understanding and self-presentation are still relatively unexplored areas of adoptive life... As an adopted person, what do you tell other people about your status? What do you tell yourself?” (1984, p. 124). In this context, adoptees find a sense of agency in expanding interpretations and applications of their adoptive identities. As such, this relatively brief review of identity-adoption explorations illustrates the foundations for identities within Korean adoptee experiences.

4.4 Shared Perceptions from Korean Adoptees’ Identities

In this next conceptual section, social identity theory (Hogg, 2006) helps to frame what it means to be associated with social and symbolic ties to a group, specifically the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. It is important to note that social identity theory addresses the socially constituted formation of Korean adoptee diasporas. Social identity provides a conceptual framework for understanding Korean adoptee identities and Korean adoptee consciousness (E. Kim, 2010). Social identity refers to an individual’s conscious association with certain social groups aiding to help define his or her place in society (Tajfel, 1978, 1982). Individuals then internalize the emotional significance of the group to their identity by defining the self (Turner, 1982, 1996). In this context, social identifications establish meanings behind Korean adoptee diasporas, including the dynamics within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.
These concepts around social identity influence how adoptees view their Korean adoptee diasporas in private and public transnational associations. Social identity theory explores the ongoing relationships between individuals and the groups in which they belong (Postmes & Jetten, 2006). Korean adoptees’ identities are constructed from the membership within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Explored in the the foundations of a social identity, Halloran and Kashima (2006) referred to this shared perception:

People with a common social identity may further share certain aspects of cultural knowledge, including beliefs about their social contexts (such as stereotypes and implicit assumptions), values, attitudes, social norms and practical skills, as part of their group life, in dealing with their common fate, or simply through sharing space and time together. (p. 137)

In this research, perhaps the most important facet of social identity theory is how shared identities from adoptees’ diasporas transpire into “Korean adoptee collective identity” and “Korean adopteeness” (E. Kim, 2010). This Korean adoptee social connectedness recognizes the diasporic communities of Korean adoptees. Conceptually, social connectedness to other Korean adoptees represents a symbolic relationship with other Korean adoptees as a socially constituted group.

With research on the Korean adoptee collective identity and adoptee diasporas, Korean adoption experiences identify similarities as well as differences. Also important to social identity theory, dissimilarities can be linked with the social construction of being adopted. Furthermore, individuals feel that being adopted increases a sense of “differentness” (Grotevant, 1997). Additionally, transnational adoptee diasporas reflect on a sense of being “out-of-place” or not quite belonging in their adoptive country or their birth country (Walton, 2009a, 2009b). There are a number of complex layers in dissecting social identity amongst Korean adoptees within Korean adoptee diasporas. Relevant this this study on Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences, two layers that frequently emerge in Korean adoption research are perceptions around difference (4.4.1) and backdrop of family (4.4.2).

4.4.1 Processing difference.

Another central theme closely linked in understanding adoptees’ shared experiences is that of difference. An important foundation in Korean adoptees’ diasporas, the notion of differences significantly includes visual areas of racial, ethnic, cultural, transracial, or ethnoracial dimensions. For many adoptees, adoption often becomes “visible” because of real or perceived differences in physical appearance, abilities, or personalities within families.
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(Grotevant et al., 2000, p. 383). Adoptee’s visible otherness and feelings of rejection may include a sense of being abandoned or of being unwanted (Lifton, 1994, 2009) and feelings of “unbelongingness” (Kaanta, 2009). Thus, the contextual discussions of difference and similarity conceptualize the identity crises embedded in the adoption experiences explored in adoption literature.

In accounting for difference within intercountry adoption literature, racial, ethnic, and cultural identity developments have been extensively researched to capture adoptees’ complex narratives. In examining this issue, Lee (2003) termed, “the transracial adoption paradox,” whereby adoptees’ identities and experiences are often paradoxical in society bound by societal difference of race between adoptees and adopted parents. Adoptees are perceived and treated by others, and sometimes themselves, as if they are members of the majority culture (i.e. racially White and ethnically European) due to adoption into a White family (R. Lee, 2003, p. 711). The transracial adoption paradox evaluates the following questions: “What are the psychological consequences of growing up in a transracial adoptive family? How do the unique experiences of transracial adoptees shape racial/ethnic identity development?” (p. 712). Issues of differences as explored in the transracial adoption paradox are clearly of relevance in examining Korean adoptees’ diasporas. In particular, it is important to acknowledge how Korean adoptees think they are viewed in society and how they view themselves in their social worlds.

In addition, feelings of otherness and difference highlight the complexities of transracial adoptions, often the case with Korean adoptions. As documented within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, Korean adoptees often negotiate contradictions between living in a White household with social privilege and their position as a racial minority (R. Lee, 2003). Korean American adoption literature corroborates these findings, an Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute’s (2009) study found that of the 179 respondents surveyed who were born in Korea and adopted by two White parents, 78% considered themselves White or wanted to be White as children (p. 5). In this context, the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora is a diasporic community attuned to their perceptions of difference and Whiteness.

How is this sense of difference interpreted? A sense of otherness is a further recurring theme in transnational diasporic populations. For Korean adoptees, this otherness is characterized in the disconnection of their White social identifications and their visible Korean physical
appearance. Adoptees perceptions of being an “Other” as White colonized subjects from postcolonial diasporas (Hübinette, 2007, p. 145) emerge from notions of “ethnic identities” (Phinney, 1989, 1990; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997) with adoptees being seen as a foreigner or a “migrant” (Rooth, 2002, p. 91). Accordingly, Korean adoptees find themselves unable to hide their visible otherness, which heightens a diasporic consciousness stemming from their hybrid identities. White society has an influential role in the experience of belonging and exclusion related to the development of racial and ethnic identities of Korean transracial adoptees (G. Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010, p. 188).

In capturing this complex construct of difference in Korean adoptee diasporas, Korean adoptees share their feelings of visual otherness living in White in societies. Considering the lived experiences within Korean adoptees’ identities, Hollee McGinnis (2003) described growing up with her Korean adoptee consciousness:

> Although I always knew I was born in Korea and adopted, I was not always conscious of what either meant. Growing up, being Korean described my physical appearance, explained where I came from, and made me unique from the rest of my family. As a teenager, I was made more conscious of looking Asian because people assumed, based on my physical appearance, that I spoke Korean or knew Korean culture. However, because I was raised by a non-Korean family I did not think of myself as Korean. I was a McGinnis. (pp. 9-10)

McGinnis found that society saw her as Korean but that is not how she saw herself. This shared experience of visual otherness reflects the juxtaposition of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Korean adoptees’ varying constructions of difference are emphasized in much of the Korean adoptee scholarship.

**Growing up different.**

A common theme in the literature is that Korean adoptees’ identities are influenced by attitudes and racialized perceptions of difference. Akin to the discussed identity approaches, racial and ethnic identities also become more important to Korean adoptees from adolescence into young adulthood (D. Lee & Quintana, 2005; McGinnis et al., 2009; Song & Lee, 2009). In looking at identity transitions, Korean adoptees have documented their experiences of visual otherness throughout their life course. For example, Korean Australian adoptee Kim recalled in her autoethnography how she was treated for her “black germs” where she “noticed more and more the physical differences between the other children and myself”
(Armstrong & Slaytor, 2001, p. 133). In these first-hand accounts, a picture emerges of what it was like for Korean adoptees to grow up in White societies.

The extant research largely captures the development of Korean adoptee children identities. Yoon’s (2004) study on ethnic socialization discussed that Korean adoptee children felt that no one really understands them: “Many adoptees often feel sad and lonely in being the only Korean in their families and schools… if they feel that nobody wants them, they experience rejection and attribute it to being different” (p. 86). Yoon observed that Korean adoptee adolescents felt excluded which impacted their identity development. Huh and Reid (2000) studied perceptions of ethnic identity of Korean adoptee children and found that developing “a sense of identity that incorporates one’s cultural origins as well as ease in communicating about these origins might be seen as valued attributes” (p. 80). This strand of literature has attempted to stress ways to minimize differences to combat feelings of social isolation in Korean adoptee children.

Growing up different can evoke both positive and negative feelings about knowing who you are or where you came from. For instance, the literature on identity development and perceptions of difference in transracial adoptees often extended to migrant children’s identities. From this perspective, Korean adopted children appear to develop their sense of cultural and racial awareness similar to non-adopted migrant children (D. Lee & Quintana, 2005). In reviewing approaches related to migrant children, Hodge (1988) explored the attitudes of conflictual transnationalism in an Australian study:

> However, it is clear that there are still many among us who cannot yet accept that one’s cultural identity and one’s national identity are not identical. There still remains a tendency to feel pity for the children of immigrants who “live in two worlds”… having sooner or later to make a choice between these two conflicting worlds. (p. 16)

The fostering of identity processes is important when recognizing physical differences and are linked with the well-being of children. For the same reason, as Korean adoptees move into adulthood, it is important to address identity formation and well-being (R. Lee, Yun, Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010). Relevant to this study, Korean adoption literature reports that the reminders of difference are crucial in understanding the Korean adoptee consciousness and the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.
Visual diasporic reminders in mirrors and names.

Why does difference matter to Korean adoptees? Perhaps, difference and visual otherness are important experiences collected in Korean adoptee narratives. Across the life course, Korean adoptees continue to process their paradoxical, conflicting public identities. Two commonplace experiences relating to visual otherness, mirror and names, are noteworthy. Both of these visual reminders are important extensions of the previously discussed transracial adoption paradox.

Many studies have indeed captured how Korean adoptees position both mirrors and names as central to their perceptions of difference. In this context, Korean adoptees’ struggles with visual otherness via mirrors and names demonstrate a diasporic awareness to a Korean adoptee consciousness. Exemplifying this in Once They Hear My Name (2008) the authors found several stories when Korean adoptees introduced their names, it was often followed by curious looks, momentary confusion or invasive inquiries. Korean American Todd Knowlton (2008) always brings up the fact that he is adopted, he said that there is no hiding it:

> It doesn’t bother me, but once they hear my last name, people always ask uncomfortable questions… Ironically, I think I was labeled the “white” Todd, even though there was another Todd my friends knew who was actually Caucasian. Now, except for my last name, I don’t think anyone could tell that I wasn’t “total Korean”… (p. 57)

Todd actively tried to control his public perception. Yet, he felt that his name was self-contradictory in that he was not “actually” White.

In illuminating these symbolic representations of names and mirrors, it appears that both names and mirrors are part of Korean adoptees’ public journeys. Within this Korean adoptee collective identity, Kim (2010) detected a “false race consciousness,” in mirrors which are similar to family photographs:

> Mirrors, like family snapshots that are prominently featured in adoptee films and videos, encompass the conundrum of the adoptee’s divided subjectivity. Both present visible evidence of the adoptees’ incontrovertible racial difference from her family and peers and also provoke questions about inherited traits and family resemblances. (p. 92)

In Korean Australian Blossom Beeby’s (2008) autoethnography, she emphasized the significance of looking in the mirror as an adoptee:

> Asian adoptees often talk about their experiences with mirrors. To many of us they have a sad significance. Inside we identified with the Caucasian people who made up our families. If we closed our eyes and imagined ourselves, we would see rosy white kids. When we looked at our faces in the mirror though, foreigners would appear. (p. 324)
These stories, while anecdotal, are relevant to the ongoing discussions of difference within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Ultimately, these stories of Korean adoptee-ness represent shared lived experiences within Korean adoptee diasporas.

4.4.2 Korean adoptees and their families.

As a key concept in understanding Korean adoptees’ feeling of difference, adoptive families were linked with notions of difference in the processing of identities. Thus, Korean adoptees and their families are encouraged to facilitate discussions on otherness, difference and race. While some Korean adoptees maintained close relationships with their White adoptive families, Docan-Morgan (2010b) emphasized that transracial adopted children were less inclined to tell their White parents about the racially abusive behavior and attacks due to their lack of understanding of racial discrimination. Families have greatly influenced the backdrop of Korean adoptee social identifications with contextualizing adoptive parents as White majority and Korean adoptees as racial minority.

Within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, differences challenge family relationships. In intercountry adoption literature, researchers measured the degree to which adoptive parents engaged in cultural socialization practices as identified by adoptees to promote identity development (Mohanty, 2010). Rather, parental encouragement is critical to the process of developing a sense of Korean identity (Huh & Reid, 2000). The research demonstrates that a more fluid understanding of diasporic transnationalism in relation to families is required within intercountry adoptions. As such, Willing’s (2010) research with Australian adoptive parents cited this example, “We always talk about how although he is Australian, he was born in Korea, and that’s how we describe it” (p. 205). Grounded in transnationalism, families attempt to incorporate diasporic identities for Korean adoptees.

Parents need to extend social identity processes beyond their own terms of who they are in the context of their transnational family. Tuan and Shiao (2011) strongly argued that Korean adoptees’ self-development is impacted by parents and society:

In sum, how adoptive parents dealt with differences within the family mattered in many ways. Specifically, the strategy of acknowledging differences mattered because it gave voice to, and validated, the experience of adoptees that their race, ethnicity, and adoptive status were salient to others and the broader society; because it led to a sense of shared fate with their families when acknowledging included the family response to racial incidents; and because, over time, the strategy became less a badge of moral or social status for parents and more a way to identify a mixed family. (p. 66)
According to the authors, Korean adoptees and their families need to address feelings of rejecting and accepting their Korean heritage with their identities. Likewise, Carstens and Julia (2000) explored the importance of “ethnoracial awareness” in families with concerns about identity conflicts and structural barriers to socialization. As such, the picture that emerges today is a family that can incorporate their shared differences while fostering diasporic identities.

Korean adoption literature highlights that despite the challenges, recognizing differences is highly useful for overcoming some the complexities of adoption. In the studies from the United States, families with Korean adoptees are encouraged to address cultural socialization and the ways in which parents negotiate racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences within the family should substantially increase (R. Lee et al., 2006). Moreover, transracial adoptees strongly recommended that agencies and parents recognize the importance of learning about their child’s racial history and culture and make that history and culture part of both their child’s life and their family life (Simon & Roorda, 2000, p. 392). It is not surprising that the support of family and adoptive parents to provide positive, ongoing experiences promotes a further awareness to a Korean adoptee consciousness and social identities.

**Childhood Korean heritage camps.**

What can be done for adoptees to address some the differences in their lives? The literature review of Korean adoption studies detailed childhood Korean heritage camps which aimed to recognize social identity disconnections, such as race, culture, ethnicity, or adoption. Camps were a space for Korean adoptee children to encounter and reclaim their paradoxical identities with their adoptive families. Korean heritage camps engaged with cultural socialization and Korean activities, such as Korean food, language, crafts and sports. Attendance at heritage camps, a decision largely dominated by parents, were designed to inspire conversations, improve communication and provide adoptees an inclusive space to learn about themselves, their families, and the broader Korean adoption community with other Korean adoptees.

Another distinctive characteristic of camps is that they were established to help Korean adoptees and their families deal with cultural sensitivities and racialization. For instance, transracial adoption research suggested parents examine their racial attitudes toward the value and importance of enculturation and racialization (R. Lee et al., 2006; R. Lee & TMIAPT, 2010). Furthermore, White American parents used heritage camps to make sense of their
differences and parents utilized camps to balance perceived familial racial and ethnic differences (McCabe, 2008; McGinnis et al., 2009; Randolph & Holtzman, 2010). It is important to note that the benefits associated with childhood Korean heritage camps are reflected in the first Korean adoption identity development literature.

Designed by Korean adoptees’ parents, camp was a way to find sameness with other families, to build social communities, and to address Korean adoption stigmas. In this context, Korean adoptive families discussed encountering discrimination towards their transracial families (Tigervall & Hübinette, 2010) and adoption stigmas suggested that adoptive families are often viewed as “second best” (R. Lee et al., 2006; R. Lee & TMIAPT, 2010). Sentiments were expressed by Cheri Register, an adoptive White American parent of two Korean adoptees, who wrote a book entitled, “Are those kids really yours?” about the intricacies of Korean adoption and the “pitfalls” of well-meaning adoptive parents (Register, 1991, 2005). White adoptive parents structured camps to lessen notions of difference and help Korean adoptees find social identifications amongst their families.

The model of camp is explored as distinctive socialized activity in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Camps provided an avenue to significantly influence children’s self-development, facilitate parental reflection, and encourage interactions amongst Korean adoptees. However, adoptees reported that although camps explore Korean culture, they did not impact on their sense of identity regarding the racial challenges they faced in the larger social contexts of everyday racism and adoption stigma (Randolph & Holtzman, 2010). Despite the outcomes of camps, employing an identity process to minimize differences is important for Korean adoptees and their families. In framing adoptee diasporas, camps acknowledged that family plays a critical role in social identity processes. The ideological structure of camps is very useful when thinking about the developments around a Korean adoptee consciousness.

4.5 Adoptee Diasporas as Communities

Much of the adoption literature surveyed in this chapter conceptually details Korean adoptee diasporas. Addressed in this Korean adoptee third space (Hübinette, 2004), the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora manifests not as a choice but rather a life circumstance often with conflicting diasporic identities. Transracial adoptees, Trenka et al., (2006) strongly argue that adoptees share circumstances in that, “the pain of loss and unbelonging generated by our
living in the borderlands of racial, national, and cultural identities produces a kind of spiritual sickness” (p.10). The authors reflect the notion that adoptee diasporas signify an importance of knowing where, why, and how adoptees process their sense of belonging.

Within this diasporic imagined community, a picture of Korean adoptee-ness is created with Korean adoptees’ shared consciousness and lived experiences. Perhaps common historical periods of intercountry adoption and institutional settings shape Korean adoptees’ social contexts with patterns in life histories, social realities, norms, and values (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). In forming the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, Korean adoptee kinship is a sense of shared belongingness. From this perspective, E. Kim (2010) examined “adopted territories” as “networks of adoptees and their activities, situated in a range of virtual and actual locations, that comprise the transnational Korean adoptee counterpublic” (pp. 8-9). Akin to the conceptual formations of imagined communities, this Korean adoptee counterpublic is an association of Korean adoptee-ness and Korean adoptee kinship.

Diaspora studies often focus on transnational social cohesion within communities. This social cohesion reflects a connectedness between individuals from their shared experiences. Turner (1982) suggested that social cohesion can arise as a direct product of social identification (p. 30). As such, Korean adoptee diasporic communities bring together a social sense of kinship, belonging, solidarity and support. Korean adoption studies have used social identity theory to examine Korean adoptee group membership and community (Langrehr & Napier, 2014). Examining this Korean adoptee sense of community, communities are symbolically constructed, providing a sense of identity and of meaning-making (Cohen, 1985). As such, Wellman proposed that communities provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging, and social identity (2005, p. 53). Within Korean adoption communities, the ability to communicate and share Korean adoptee experiences builds a sense of trust and social connectedness.

In looking at the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora as a social imagined community, this refers to the unifying patterns of a sense of shared belongingness, fostering social connectedness. Thus, Korean adoptee imagined communities negotiate social memberships within and across real and symbolic boundaries. Adult Korean adoptees share adoption experiences and perspectives to each other without feeling this sense of “in-betweenness” (Park Nelson, 2009, p. 334). Despite the differences amongst themselves, Korean adoptees
have more to gain from talking to each other and building a community because they do not always share their experiences with their families (Register, 2005, p. 3). This shared sense of belonging is noteworthy as it is a social bond and a sense of Korean adopteeness.

Communities are important for individuals to feel connected and the value of interpersonal relationships is explained by social capital. Social capital refers to connections amongst individuals and the OECD (2001) explained the importance of social capital121:

Social capital is defined as networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within and among groups.

Shared norms and values enable people to communicate and make sense of common experiences as well as divergences in some norms and values. (p. 41)

Considering this framework of social capital, the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora thrives on shared experiences and relationships. With adoption as the catalyst factor, Korean adoptees’ communities are spaces that support Korean adoptee connectedness. Social capital provides a number of insights into Korean adoptees’ diasporas; they are a transnational communities characterized by particular sets of reciprocal ties with social capital as the fabric that supports both relationships and individuals to belong.

4.5.1 Korean adoptee belongingness with networks and organizations.

Social capital is often linked with notions of belongingness and community, central to the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. As previously mentioned in Chapter One, Korean adoptee kinship involves the “spaces and moments in which the significance of being adopted from Korea is foregrounded and heightened” (E. Kim, 2010, p. 13). How do Korean adoptees negotiate social capital and their shared understandings and differences of Korean adoption? E. Kim (2010) relayed an account that suggests Korean adoptees have “cultural citizenship”:

Mi Ok Song Bruining calls the instantaneous bonds of adoptee relatedness “instimacy.” This instant intimacy and sense of belonging, however, can mask internal differences, status distinctions, and exclusions within the community. Predicable vectors of difference exist in terms of class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and these intersect with others specific to Korean transnational adoption: race and racialization, relationship to Korea, attitudes toward birth family searches, and political views on adoption. (p. 125)

In this light, the author addresses that shared experiences amongst Korean adoptees can be very diverse and the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora brings vastly different ideologies and life experiences. As such, Korean adopteeness or “instimacy” within adoptees’ diasporas

121 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) analyzes social capital with importance in looking at the social networks and social trust reciprocity in the General Social Survey (ABS, 2004).
reflect that social capital and social connectedness are vital in understanding the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

Furthermore, adoptee-focused communities in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora are overwhelming driven by a sense of belongingness. In this connection, the need to belong is not a new idea and people frequently seek positive interactions with a strong desire to form and maintain attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Focused on reinforcing adoptee relationships, Lifton (2009) elaborated on this sense of adoptee kinship:

Call them what you will – a pseudo-species, survivors, exceptions – adopted adults insist they feel outside the mainstream of human experience. Instead of asking “Who am I?” they ask “Who are we?”... It is this private world of tribal secrets that binds them together in a new kind of kinship. Together they have a chance of discovering who they are. (p. 63)

As Korean adoptees turn to each other, the significance in connecting shared adopteeness suggests that the desire to belong is a powerful process.

Korean adoptee imagined communities consider the diasporic movements in both local and global geographical settings and virtually in transnational spaces. These social networks of Korean adoptees are organized and mobilized. Social networks are a set of people or groups of people, with some pattern of interactions or relationship (Scott, 2000). Korean adoptees formalized organizations of their own that spoke to their specific needs (Lifton, 2009, p. 269). For instance, Adopterade Koreaners Förening122 (2012) represents the first formalized adult Korean Swedish adoptee organization in 1986. The Gatherings and the formal Korean adoptee organizations demonstrate newfound diasporic connections. Hollee McGinnis, a founder of Korean American adoptee organization Also-Known-As (AKA123), described the formations of the adult Korean adoptee networking:

The adult adopted Korean community has continued to evolve throughout the 1990s, facilitated by the advent of the Internet, as formal and informal associations developed throughout the United States, Europe, and South Korea, where some adopted Koreans were choosing to live permanently. (McGinnis, 2007a, p. 165)

For McGinnis, AKA brings together aspects of diasporic mobility and identity.

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122 With an estimated 9,000 Korean adoptees in Sweden, Adopterade Koreaners Förening (AKF) or Adopted Koreans’ Association was founded.
123 Hereafter, Also-Known-As is stated as AKA. AKA (2012) is a Korean American adoptee organization in New York City, NY, United States with a mission to “empower the voice of adult international adoptees, build cultural bridges, transform perceptions of race, and acknowledge the loss of the birth country, culture, language and biological family experienced by international adoptees. AKA established an early online presence with a website in 1996 (Howard, 2012, p. 23; Lifton, 2009).
The emergence of diaspora organizations represents a globalization and transnationalism in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Under these circumstances, a number of Korean adoptee organizations have evolved in Korea, including: Global Overseas Adoptees’ Link (G.O.A.’L\textsuperscript{124}), Koroot\textsuperscript{125}, Adoptee Solidarity Korea (ASK\textsuperscript{126}), and Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea (TRACK\textsuperscript{127}). These organizations engage adult Korean adoptees as active participants in new transnational Korean adoptee communities. This agency in Korean adoptee organizations continues to foster a sense of meaningful relationships and social connectedness bringing together Korean adoptee diasporas.

### 4.5.2 Transitions towards Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Diaspora organizations are further mobilized through technology and connectivity. Korean adoptees are very much on the Internet with an active, growing online presence. Strikingly, Sunny Jo suggested, “Only recently have adult KADs been able to unite and come together in order to claim a space and an identity for ourselves” (Jo, 2006, p. 289). Perhaps, diaspora organizations developed from bonds of cultural citizenship or sense of “Korean adoptee instimacy” (E. Kim, 2010) where a Korean adoptee online space is facilitated by expressions of agency. Yang (2009) strongly described how online Korean adoptee movements transform diasporic identities:

> By combating anti-subordination and challenging traditionally rigid categorizations via grassroots Internet communities, Korean adoptees may establish their niche. And by resisting silence and stepping forward to fuel the fire of openly discussing the racial, cultural, and identity-based losses that occur when a child is adopted across international borders, Korean adoptees may move beyond the confines of established identity to embrace their uniquely multicultural, transnational identities. (p. 172)

This point by Yang suggests a sense of agency from Korean adoptee grass roots participation.

Online diaspora communities provide newfound fluid spaces for meaningful Korean adoptee interactions. Through the numerous Internet-based groups, homepages, live journals, blogs

\textsuperscript{124} Hereafter, Global Overseas Adoptees’ Link is stated as G.O.A.’L. G.O.A.’L (2012) is a Korean adoptee founded and administered organization in Seoul, Korea.

\textsuperscript{125} Koroot (2011), literally translated to 루트의 집House of Korean Roots, was founded in 2002 as a guesthouse accommodation and resource for Korean adoptees.

\textsuperscript{126} Hereafter, Adoptee Solidarity Korea is stated as ASK. ASK (2012) was founded in 2004 by a group of adult adoptees living and working in Korea to address the problems associated with Korean transnational adoption.

\textsuperscript{127} Hereafter, Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea is stated as TRACK. TRACK (2012) is an organization advocating full knowledge of past and present Korean adoption practices to protect the human rights of adult adoptees, children, and families.
and communities, the adopted Korean movement is very much a virtual community (Hübniette, 2005, p. 92). In the ways that people use community, it is now defined socially and not spatially (Wellman, 2005, p. 53). The phenomenon of collective identity through virtual networks is occasionally referred to as “digital diasporas” (J. Brinkerhoff, 2009; Everett, 2009). Brinkerhoff’s (2009) digital diasporas is an electronic migrant community whose interactions negotiate their identity and promote solidarity; learn, explore, and mobilize through ‘new’ technologies of communication (p. 2). Through the maturation of virtual, imagined communities developing and mobilizing social capital, the online worlds of Korean adoptees are digital diasporas.

A vivid picture of Korean adoptee social connectedness is revealed and supported by social capital within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. In linking social capital to digital diasporas, Lin explained (2001) that “Social ties can now transcend geopolitical boundaries and exchanges can occur as fast as willingly as the actors care to participate” (pp. 226-227). This access to more Korean adoptees worldwide and this sense of Korean adoptee collective identity or Korean adopteeness (E. Kim, 2009) is a form of agency. Korean adoptees unite the emerging sense of kinship and belonging reflected in Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Overwhelmingly, social media is a key platform for providing connections important to the social capital within digital diasporas. Some examples of social media are Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, and YouTube with new online and offline diasporic spaces gathering over 1,500 Korean adoptee global participants in some social media groups on Facebook. Facebook has several unique features128 (N. Lee, 2013) and online technologies, like Facebook, provide instantaneous connectivity, overcome geographic boundaries and convey self-ascribed digital identities (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011). Facebook, and other forms of social media, are online spaces where adult Korean adoptees turn to for support, connection, and information. In this connection, Korean adoptee digital diasporas are where adoptees “exhibit

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128 Facebook (2015) is an online social networking service launched in 2004 with multiple functions: profiles, groups, friends, life, etc. A Facebook profile or Timeline is a page for individuals to update an online biography or accounts of an individual’s life. At the time of this study, Facebook utilized certain functions; however, these functions may be deleted or amended. See Newton Lee’s (2013) Facebook Nation: Total Information Awareness which offers a comprehensive look at Facebook. Facebook, in particular has been linked with social capital, building trust and shared reciprocity (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; N. Lee, 2013; Valenzuela, Park, & Kae, 2009).
Chapter Four: Theories Surrounding Korean Adoptee Diaspora

an elaborate life in cyberspace” (E. Kim, 2010, p. 140). Korean adoptee diasporas have emerged as a place to foster relationships, reduce isolation and help build a sense of identity. Given the significance of the online imagined communities of Korean adoptees, this research addresses social media as an important diasporic space within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Social media aids the development of social capital enabling Korean adoptees with finding their place in their social worlds.

4.6 Summary
This chapter examined theoretical concepts and frameworks to understand Korean adoptee diasporas. Within this chapter, the crucial questions of how and why to conceptualize Korean adoptees’ diasporas, the theoretical backdrop for this thesis were raised. The concepts and issues introduced examine relationships between diasporas, identity, and adoption within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. This chapter explored diasporic meanings into the larger body of Korean adoption literature, offering a richer perspective on varying approaches to Korean adoption. While there is a body of work that looks at Korean adoptee diasporas, it is important to address that adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences are yet to be captured.

Drawing on literature relating to identities and Korean adoption experiences, “Who am I as a Korean adoptee?” and how do Korean adoptees navigate identities from adoption experiences, Korean adoptees discuss paradoxical diasporic journeys and lived experiences. Within adoptee diasporas, transracial differences between adoptees and their adoptive parents form a unique social composition that influences Korean adoptees’ perspectives towards race, ethnicity, and culture. The current scholarship by Korean adoptee researchers indicates that Korean adoptee identities are circular social processes.

The illumination of transnational Korean adoptee diaspora integrates adoption, adoptee diasporas, identities, and community. It is a model that points to Korean adoptee kinship, shared adoption experiences, and social connectedness. Adoptee diasporas recognize the significance of this kinship or Korean adoptee identity, building spaces to share and reflect on the complexity that adoption brings into Korean adoptee journeys. For this reason, Korean adoptees evolved into a unique social diasporic nation empowered by social connectedness and social capital. As Korean adoptees increase their awareness of their diasporas, their main knowledge source has been connecting and collaborating with other Korean adoptees.

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Changes within the transnational Korean adoptee population towards online diasporic spaces has been largely neglected. More importantly, digital diasporas are growing and research on Korean adoptee digital diasporas is relevant to the constructs surrounding imagined communities. Thus, this chapter briefly addressed the development of social media in Korean adoptee online communities.

In order to gain insights into adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences, this chapter presented a conceptual framework to further understand Korean adoptee diasporas. The next chapter will report the research methodology which assists to understand the unanswered research questions presented at the end of *Chapter Three*. 
5 Chapter Five: Methodology

Being within – yet excluded from – the dominant discourse is an incentive to create knowledge that goes against the grain.

...our cultural production has been marginalized and essays discussing our personal experiences of adoption have remained undistributed and largely unheard.

Trenka, Oparah, and Shin
Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the methodology and methodological processes within the thesis to understand adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas aligned with the research aims. Having established the unique conceptual framework from the previous chapter, the current study extends Korean Australian intercountry adoption research and adds to the body of knowledge regarding Korean adoptee lived experiences, specifically adult Korean Australian adoptees’ engagement with adoptee diasporas. This chapter begins by introducing a practiced methodological approach, lived experience, in Korean adoption research (Section 5.2). The term lived experience refers to a cognizance, assigning meaning to and reflecting on an experience. The methodology outline in this chapter is intrinsically linked with the research questions outlined in Chapter Three.

In Section 5.3, Mertens’ (2009) transformative research is defined as a methodological paradigm framed around prioritizing human rights and social justice:

The transformative paradigm focuses on (1) the tensions that arise when unequal power relationships surround the investigation of what seem to be intransigent social problems and (2) the strength found in communities when their rights are respected and honored.

(p. 10)

The strength of such an approach, as described by Mertens, is that this transformative research model positions the research around the research participants to acknowledge social justice and human rights. Similar to research models that create partnerships within communities, this study is built from my connections within the Korean adoptee community.

Much of my research is related to feminist approaches, which further concentrate on the notion of voices, including both my voice as a researcher and the voices of the adult Korean Australian adoptee research participants. In this chapter, I then substantially discuss this researcher voice as outsiders within perspective (Section 5.4) related to the integration of feminist theories in the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009). The main tenets of the feminist perspective helped guide my methodological approaches as issues of social equity
and social justice relate to intercountry adoptees. The multidisciplinary nature of Korean adoption research is not only of interest to feminist scholars but also to sociologists, psychologists, and other academic scholars.

Additionally, I detail the data collection design and procedures in this mixed methodology. Section 5.5 overviews both the quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. A mixed methodology is traditionally designed where quantitative research is usually based on a large, random sample and qualitative research is associated with smaller, nonrandom samples (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the quantitative component is based on an online survey, which reports on larger, structured data. The qualitative component is centered on semi-structured focus groups and interviews, which address in-depth details of adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. The semi-structured focus groups and interviews elicited different dimensions of the participants’ worldview not captured in the structured online survey.

Section 5.6 examines the data analyses adopted in framing the findings. I address ethical considerations in Section 5.7. Section 5.8 concludes the chapter.

### 5.2 Lived Experience as Methodological Framework

The research aims to explore adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas, through an examination of lived experiences. Researching lived experience attempts to extrapolate on the explorations of everyday life. As individuals find themselves in the world, lived experiences are the everyday starting points to help make meanings from life (van Manen, 1990). Max van Manen\(^{129}\) asserted that research is an investigation of our own lives: “It is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence” (p. 31). This methodological framework focuses on the everyday life of your research participants. Using a lived experience approach within this research brings to light the methodological value in thinking about the participant’s everyday lives.

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\(^{129}\) See van Manen (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for action sensitive pedagogy*. The six methodological themes of lived experience: (1) turning to the nature of lived experience; (2) investigating experience as we live it; (3) reflecting on essential themes; (4) the art of writing and rewriting; (5) maintaining a strong and oriented relation; and (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-34)
Lived experience is a research pedagogy of learning from experiences as we live it. Some social research suggests that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In this research context, a lived experience approach facilitates learning through everyday life stories as conduits of knowledge. More precisely within adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas, this lived experience framework maps the intersection of everyday life and Korean adoptee diasporas in this study’s research participants’ lives. This research framework points out that adoptees’ lived experiences involve a significant understanding of what it means to be an adult Korean Australian adoptee.

Furthermore, lived experience as a methodological approach emerged from my own perspectives as an adoptee and as a researcher, discussed as an outsider within later in this chapter. As researchers reflect on their own everyday lives, research is interpreted by power dynamics framed by their own lived experiences. Creswell (2007) commented on researchers’ worldviews: “Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 21). As such, transformative research is concerned with differential privilege accorded to scholarly literature versus lived experience (Mertens, 2009, p. 11). As a Korean adoptee researcher, I discuss transformative research processes that address the “voices of those who live in a world that allocates privileges to some and denies those privileges to others” (Mertens, 2009, p. 15). This research was developed in recognition that adult Korean adoptee experiences have been marginalized.

5.3 Transformative Research

Dimensions of human rights and social justice are recognized within this study. Drawing upon the social sciences, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) proposed, “We want a social science committed up front to issues of social justice, equity, nonviolence, peace, and universal human rights” (p. 11). Researchers have noted that various methodological theories frame mixed-methods research (K. Collins, 2010; Creswell, 2003, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Hodgkin, 2008; Mertens, 2003, 2009; Mertens et
al., 2010; Sweetman, Badiee, & Creswell, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In seeking to answer the research questions, transformative research uses a particular lens that prioritizes human rights and social justice. Mertens’ (2009) transformative research paradigm is outlined in the table below.

**Table 1 Transformative Paradigm**

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<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dimensions of diversity associated with differential access to power and privilege, including disability, gender, race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and other contextually important dimensions of diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model of research</td>
<td>Multiple and mixed-methods; culturally respectful; supportive of diverse needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>Acknowledges the need to work together to challenge oppressive structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Table 13.1 in the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

Within this paradigm, research is a process of learning and engaging with researchers’ historical and social standpoints. Researchers must acknowledge how we see ourselves and be aware of personal beliefs (Mertens, 2009, p. 76). This transformative paradigm frames ideological concepts of social justice, researcher perspective and participant self-knowledge. Transformative research brings visibility to “members of communities who have been pushed to societal margins throughout history” (Mertens et al., 2010, p. 195) where “issues such as oppression and domination” are important to study (Sweetman et al., 2010, p. 442). The basic tenets of the transformative research framework are important to this study.

Transformative research incorporates a critical lens of societal inequalities and social structures. A transformative paradigm provides a metaphysical umbrella with which to explore similarities in the basic beliefs that underlie research approaches that have been labeled critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, participatory, inclusive, human-rights-based, democratic, and culturally responsive (Mertens, 2009, p. 13). As such, feminist theory provides a conceptual tool to include my adoptee researcher perspective within the transformative framework. A feminist approach frames methodological processes, from survey design to statistical modeling, to the theoretical frameworks used to interpret results (Harnois, 2013, p. 2).
5.3.1 Feminist lenses.

As a theoretical base in transformative research, feminist theory provides a unique insight to how researchers conceptualize the world. Hesse-Biber (2007) described this feminist perspective in research arguing that “multiple feminist lenses wake us up to layers of sexist, racist, homophobic, and colonialist points of view” (p. 4). Feminist theory, as well as other social science theories, detects oppressions of race, age, class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ability, and all other categories of difference. As such, feminist theorists share concerns of oppression and discrimination, individuals with disabilities, and people with diverse backgrounds in relation to human rights and social justice (Mertens, 2003, 2009). Within this research, feminist theory provides a broader framework for addressing the research questions of this thesis.

Within a transformative research approach, feminist reflections create a foundation to understand privileged positions in the research processes, address power differentials in society, and work for issues of social justice. Feminist research is broadly focused, Harnois (2013) attested:

Feminist research requires a shift in how we approach research, but it does not require a focus on women, *per se* [original emphasis]. Feminist research requires a feminist perspective, but feminist research might not focus primarily on gender. And certainly, feminist research needn’t be produced by women. (p. 5)

Rather, feminist research is concerned with the larger patterns and meanings significant to feminist lenses. For instance, multiracial feminism is a broad-based theoretical perspective in which race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation are understood as intersecting systems of inequality (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Research informed by feminist theories is not necessarily concerned with presenting an account of feminism. This feminist lens is an important approach in understanding my voice as a Korean adoptee researcher and the voice of the research participants.

*Women’s voices and feminism in adoption discourses.*

Following my examination of Korean adoption literature, feminist lenses uniquely position adoptee’s experiences. Illustrating the feminist lenses of adoption literature, the field of adoption is equally describable as female-centred, female-dominated and female-oriented (Telfer, 2004, p. 248). Although adoption research encapsulates a wide variety of worldviews, it is generally associated with women’s experiential knowledge. Adoption is often characterized as a feminized field in aspects of kinship, family, identity and motherhood.
(Telfer, 2004) and motherhood discourses often incite blame towards women (Smith, 2007, p. 414). Building on the idea that feminist lenses recognize marginalized voices in adoption literature, this research highlights the intersections of feminism and intercountry adoption.

Adoptee-constructed intercountry adoption research positions adoptees’ rights and the rights of their mothers. Demonstrated in the social and historical accounts of intercountry adoption, Vietnamese birthmothers have been portrayed as “careless,” “poor uneducated mothers” and “unfeeling prostitutes” without the opportunity to be “given a substantial platform to reply or explain” (Willing, 2004) and unwed mothers in Korea felt forced to give their children up for adoption (Dorow, 1999; S. Han, 2010). Captured by adoptee scholars, Trenka et al. (2006) illustrated their notions of feminism:

> Our definition of feminism includes a commitment to reproductive justice for all. At the heart of our adoptions are the reproductive choices of our mothers – choices that were most often made in the context of limited options.... Our feminism demands that we critique a global system that bequeaths power to some mothers but not to others.... Although our stories lie at the intersection of feminist and global economic justice movements, white feminists and feminists of color alike have largely overlooked transracial adoption as a site of struggle… (p. 13)

The authors strongly advocate for writing within feminist and social justice lenses. The social injustices faced by unwed mothers considers the disempowerment and marginalization of women in society. This lens provides an important approach to intercountry adoption from a feminist perspective.

**Advocating for adult adoptee voices.**

To further understand the role of feminist lenses in transformative research, this study explores the idea of uncovering adoptees’ voices in relation to social justice. Turing to bell hooks’ (2000) analysis of understanding agency within feminist lenses, she reflected:

> I have found that saying “I am a feminist” usually means I am plugged into preconceived notions of identity, role, or behavior. When I say, “I advocate feminism,” the response is usually, “What is feminism?” A phrase like “I advocate” does not imply the kind of absolutism that is suggested by “I am,” It does not engage us in the either/or dualistic thinking that is the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society. It implies that a choice has been made, that commitment to feminism is an act of will. (p. 31)

When hooks illustrated “I am” versus “I advocate,” it is a statement of advocacy. She believed in social justice and social awareness. Feminism is a philosophy of action and movement that anyone can advocate. Relevant to this research on adult Korean Australian adoptees, advocating for adoptees’ voices identifies a sense of agency.
Drawing from feminist advocacies like hooks, this research promotes on the voices of the adult adoptees rather than the perspectives of adoptive parents and adoption practitioners or adults’ interpretations of children’s experiences. To say that this research advocates for adoptees’ voices implies significance and a commitment to “What are adult adoptee voices?” From my lived experiences as a Korean adoptee, I recognize the marginalization of adult adoptee voices and I advocate for adoptees’ voices to be heard. This adoptee-constructed research is committed to empowering adoptees’ agency.

5.3.2 Voices of participants and complexities of privilege.

I turned to literature on feminist lenses to understand my voice and the voices of the research participants. The concepts surrounding feminist theories challenge oppressive structures. For instance, in looking at indigenous marginalized populations, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) strongly expressed:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. (p. 1)

While researchers present their own analyses and interpretations, Smith’s powerful words criticize the power structures that exist in research. The power dynamics associated with who speaks for whom is a core issue and it is important to address, “Whose voice is included?” (Mertens, 2009, p. 298). In this study, my methodological processes are attuned to the participants’ voices, the privilege held by my researcher status, and the meanings assigned to the data.

Feminist lenses suggest that self-reflection is necessary to understand how researchers tell the stories of others. Dorothy Smith (1974; 1999; 2007) proposed that first-hand knowledge is a starting point in the exploration of methodological processes in research. In addition to Smith, Collins (1986) and hooks (2000) agreed that experiential knowledge is necessary for accurately addressing power differentials, specifically in capturing the marginalized voices of women. A transformative framework recognizes power differentials in the research contributing to the process of knowing yourself as a researcher (Mertens, 2009, p. 85). When researchers interpret data, they ascribe meaning and value to the voices of participants with their own interpretations.
Chapter Five: Methodology

Transformative research and feminist approaches encourage the continuous reflective process. It is important to know one’s privilege and account for how researchers approach their research. Birch (1998) described her moments of reflexivity:

> The more I progressed into the analysis and the writing up, and so into my own personal, private space, the more I became aware of the emergence of my own sociological identity. I was the author who was choosing to make certain arguments and explanations. Hence it is the recognition of the mirror image that was my own inner journey of self-discovery. (p. 183)

Birch emphasized the significance of self-awareness to set a tone in the research. Reflexivity becomes a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness (Okely & Callaway, 1992). Researcher reflexivity suggests that your own knowledge and critique of personal knowledge claims help frame methodological perspectives.

### 5.4 Knowing Yourself as a Researcher and Outsiders Within Research

As this research draws heavily from the feminist frameworks, being an “outsider within” is a distinctive methodological standpoint. In the preface of the first 1984 edition, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* hooks described her positions of looking from “the outside” and “the inside”:

> Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked from both the outside in and the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both. (hooks, 2000)

hooks’ self-reflections are grounded in her “insider/outside” positions with an examination of her personal stances. This outsider within approach highlights the importance of engaging with your own personal consciousness and the relationship of the researcher to the researched. These two positions (1) **within**, and then subsequently (2) **outsider** are discussed in further detail.

#### 5.4.1 Research from within or by an insider.

This **within** perspective is highlighted to position myself as a Korean adoptee researcher. This adoptee-constructed research reflects my personal notions of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora and my participation within Korean adoptee communities. Even though individual adoptee experiences can be very different, there is often a shared Korean

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130 See Patricia Hill Collins’ *Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought* standpoint on self, family, and society (1986). Equally, Trinh T. Minh-ha’s (1989) *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* reflect the “both/and” on “insider” and “outsider” identities.
adoptee-ness (see Chapter Four). I was adopted from Korea to the United States from the adoption agency, ESWS. As discussed in the earlier chapters, ESWS is the main Korean adoption agency that facilitates Korean intercountry adoptions to Australia. Whilst I was not adopted to Australia, this research project originated from my experiences of living in Australia as a Korean adoptee. My interactions and relationships with Korean adoptees no doubt shaped this study and being part of the Korean Australian adoptee community influenced how this research was designed.

In this study, within perspectives acknowledge my perceptions as a Korean adoptee researcher. Transformative research claims that “there are no value-free interactions between two human beings, knowledge of self is a requirement for doing any type of valid research or evaluation work, no matter what methods are used” (Mertens, 2009, p. 76). As a Korean adoptee researcher investigating Korean adoptees, it was essential to reflect on how to interact with participants while also recognizing adoptee “lab rat” interactions. Due to my personal adoptee connections, I was also a research subject during the same period I conducted my research. It was important to reveal my within involvements in the adoptee community, specifically within Korean Australian adoption communities.

Related literature on Korean adoption studies influenced my decision to explore my within perspectives as a Korean adoptee researcher. Exemplifying the need to state personal stakes in adoption discourse, Kim Park Nelson (2006) discussed:

> I neither support nor condone the practice of transracial and transnational adoption but believe strongly that power differentials between parents and children, institutions and individuals, white people and people of color, rich and poor nations are great enough that the potential for abuse is enormous. I also believe that adult adoptees have an important role to play in challenging these abuses and that an unsentimental critique of the current practice of transnational adoption is a critical first step. (p. 90)

The author endorsed the importance of evaluating power differentials. Her within perspective cautioned that most research “cannot claim impartiality” (Park Nelson, 2006, p. 90). This statement resonated with me as an adoptee researcher to identify the importance of transparency and accountability. As such, I reflected on the diverse experiences within

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131 Every year, adult adoptees volunteer to participate in adoption studies. One line of thought is that this participation in research treats adoptees as “guinea pigs” or “lab rats” in adoption studies. See Adult Adoptees Advocating for Change (2012) website.
Korean intercountry adoption and lack of Korean Australian adoptee voices in adoption research.

5.4.2 Being an outsider.

Understanding my outsider connections is equally important to address in this research. Being an outsider within is a particular standpoint within adoption discourse:

The immutability of our bodies – born in one place and raised in another, speaking different languages, nourished from different tables – are manifestations of the uneasy and often violent clash of the ideologies of race and nationality. Adoptees of color are therefore outsiders within the two powerful discourses on transracial adoption. (Trenka et al., 2006, p. 5).

The authors commented on the multiple dimensions that characterize adoptees as outsiders. Being an outsider presents my relationship with this study’s research participants, particularly with Australia. This study presents the perspective that I am an outsider in Australia, my relationships and interactions with adult Korean Australian adoptees are as an outsider.

This outsider within perspective furthers a reflection of how researchers situate themselves within their research. Mertens (2009) reinforced the advantages in both insider and outsider research:

The argument that one must share a particular salient characteristic to do research or evaluation with a community has merit. This merit persists, despite examples of individuals who do not share such characteristics who have contributed to our understanding of discrimination and oppression in the context of furthering social justice. (p. 89)

As Mertens discussed, an outsider standpoint can influence and benefit research. Research “focuses not only on difference and particularity [original emphasis] but also on the relationships, inequalities, and social processes that help create and maintain these differences’ (Harnois, 2013, p. 13). Being an outsider further positions this research in a unique way.

5.5 Mixed-methods Design

In seeking to answer the research questions, this study incorporated mixed-methods of an online survey (quantitative) and semi-structured focus groups and interviews (qualitative). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods can be used in transformative research and evaluation. Mertens suggested, “Mixed-methods designs can be considered to address the informational needs of the community” (2009, p. 74). Mixed-methods or multiple methods
are employed in the collecting, analyzing, and integrating of both quantitative and qualitative components of a study.

This research uses a mixed-methods approach, where the purpose of mixed-methods research is to provide a complementary understanding of a research problem through the combination of both qualitative and quantitative strategies. Qualitative research is the investigation of social phenomena involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Similarly, Creswell (2007) further provides this definition:

- Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic pictures, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting. (p. 15)

Quantitative research refers to the investigation of social phenomena by collecting numerical data analyzed mathematically, in particular using statistical, numerical or computational techniques (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). Different research strategies are utilized to elicit more robust views and relationships within data collection. Mixed strategies and methodologies enable a detailed understanding of the data, offsetting weaknesses within one method with the strengths of the other method (Creswell, 2003).

Within this study’s aims, this research considered that mixed-methods would capture greater perspectives in adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences and was deemed the most appropriate method. Mixing or integrating various research strategies is considered advantageous in research, Stewart and Cole (2007) strongly asserted:

- Proponents of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods also argue that this approach can increase our confidence in the robustness of a finding when the relationship appears to hold using a variety of research approaches (this represents a form of replication or cross-validation, and is often termed triangulation). (p. 328)

The concept of mixed-methods and the merging of both qualitative and quantitative elements in research are increasingly popular in applied social research. The next two sections outline the mixed methods used in this study, sample and recruitment (5.5.1) and research processes (5.5.2).

### 5.5.1 Sample and recruitment of adult Korean Australian adoptees.

This section summarizes the sample and recruitment processes in this study. Individuals invited to participate in this research included adult Korean Australian intercountry adoptees: participants that were currently 18 years of age and older, born in South Korea and adopted
to Australian parents. The participants of the quantitative online survey were invited to partake in the subsequent qualitative semi-structured focus groups and interviews. From the broader population of adult Korean Australian adoptees, the online survey instrument elicited patterns of social media usage and interaction with both friends in general and with other Korean adoptees. The semi-structured focus group and interview instruments focused on in-depth data from individual adoptees.

A total of 69 individuals participated in the online survey portion of the research and a subset of 17 individuals participated in the semi-structured focus groups and interviews (which represents a 25% voluntary participation rate from the online survey). From June 2012 to November 2012, this study conducted an online survey using survey administration software. From December 2012 to April 2013, the study conducted semi-structured interviews, including four focus groups and seven individual interviews, in Australia at different states and territories. Five interviews were conducted via face-to-face and two interviews were conducted over computer-mediated communication, Skype. This subset of volunteer participants is a similar sample to other qualitative studies of Korean Australian adoption (Gray, 2007; Walton, 2009b).

**Participant profile and sampling.**

At the time of this research, there was no comprehensive, nationally representative data on adult Korean Australian adoptees. Thus, it was challenging to accurately establish exact numbers and geographic locations; this research estimates that there are approximately 3,500 Korean Australian adoptees. Participant recruitment was designed to address this study’s research aims.

In researching adult Korean Australian adoptees, I identified sampling strategies to maximize the likelihood of responses. This research uses a purposeful sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 173) and opportunistic sample (K. Collins, 2010, p. 359) to obtain information on

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132 The University of New South Wales offered the complimentary use of KeySurvey. KeySurvey is a web-based software that automates the creation, deployment, analysis, and reporting of surveys.

133 Skype is an online telephone, video conferencing, and instant messaging client developed by the Microsoft Skype Division.

134 Please see Appendix A. Korean Australian adoptee population statistics differ by source. It is estimated that adult Korean Australian adoptees represent an estimated 70% of the overall Korean Australian adoptee population.
adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. A snowball sampling technique was used. Mertens endorsed the strengths of a snowball strategy:

> To obtain information when you do not have a full list of people or the intended participants are difficult to find, start with someone who you do know and ask him or her to recommend others who either agree or disagree or might be able to present confirming or divergent points of view. (2009, p. 215)

Snowball sampling included assistance from online Korean adoptee organizations, Australian and/or Korean communities, and other adoption networks.

**Voluntary participation and recruitment campaigns.**

In researching adult Korean Australian adoptees, an extensive recruitment campaign was employed. This research relied on voluntary participation; achieving an appreciable sample size is formidable in most voluntary research. Identified from my within adoptee status (Section 5.4), it is important to state my researcher privilege during this recruitment period: I acknowledge that due to my adoptee status, I had unique access to Korean adoption information and websites. I recognize that I had access to information that other non-Korean adoptee researchers may not have right to access.

In this connection, the recruitment in this research study was twofold. It first involved an extensive campaign for voluntary participation in the online survey and a link to the survey website. I used publicly available information on the Internet related to Korean Australian adoption and general intercountry adoption to communicate information about my study. Traditional media campaigns, as in the distribution of physical flyers for posting and mailings, were advantageously reinforced. This traditional campaign was utilized to contact Korean Australian adoptees that do not use the Internet. Additionally through my personal intercountry adoption connections in Australia and worldwide, I distributed physical flyers in person and online flyers via email.

The secondary recruitment strategy involved personalized electronic communication, via email and telephone text/short message service (SMS), with a voluntary subsample of the online survey respondents. The follow-up communication requested further voluntary participation from survey respondents to partake in semi-structured focus groups and interviews (discussed in the next section of this chapter). This follow-up communication reflected a relational approach due to the sensitive nature of further adoption discussions. This relational approach recognizes cultural competence, “a disposition that is required to
understand how to approach communities in a respectful way, to invite participation, and to support that participation” (Mertens, 2009, p. 231). Because focus groups and interviews respondents were recruited through the online survey, it is likely that this study’s sample represents a more informed, active group of adult Korean Australian adoptees. The next section further discusses the online survey and the focus groups and interviews.

5.5.2 Quantitative and qualitative research processes.

As was outlined in the previous chapters, there is a lack of information surrounding adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. In looking at the research aims, all participants in this study share the common connection of being an adult Korean Australian adoptee. From this perspective and in the context of preserving individual confidentiality and anonymity, all participants in both quantitative and qualitative datasets were de-identified to preserve anonymity. Pseudonyms\textsuperscript{135} were given to all of the participants and no further identifying information is provided in the text besides the pseudonym assigned.

This study included a quantitative component: (1) an online survey that accessed as large a range of the Korean Australian adoptee population as possible, and a qualitative component: (2) semi-structured focus groups and interviews that promoted in-depth discussions of Korean Australian adoptee experiences. The quantitative method was designed to reach the greater population of adult Korean Australian adoptees. Online surveys access a variety of populations who are affiliated with specific groups based on considerations of global reach, convenience, timeliness, and confidentiality (Evans & Mathur, 2005; K. Wright, 2005). The qualitative method sought a deeper detailed understanding of individual adult Korean Australian adoptees. Qualitative methods allow issues to be studied in-depth and in-detail (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and for the researcher to observe, discover, and describe themes and underlying dimensions of social life (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008).

**Online survey.**

The online survey produced descriptive information in the following seven sections: demographic information, adoption information, interaction and relationships with friends,

\textsuperscript{135} The online survey respondents (OSR) are given the pseudonym, Adoptee-OSR. The comments are anonymous; I capitalize Adoptee to create a sense of voice for the participants in this study. The capitalization is to give a name to the anonymous comments and to imagine them as human beings, not as anonymous entities. See Lifton’s (2009) *Lost and Found*, Preface: *Adoptee* with a Capital A.
social media participation in general, interaction and relationships with Korean adoptees, adoption-related social media, and open-ended comments, thoughts, or opinions.

The online survey was anonymous and consisted of fourteen questions which gathered demographic information, twenty-four yes/no or multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. To be most effective, the online survey was designed to be completed within fifteen minutes, and the questions were branched to ensure that respondents are asked questions that specifically applied to them. The online survey incorporated ideas from traditional adoption survey designs, exampled in the adoption demographic section. It was purposely constructed to differentiate the participants’ experiences with social media in general and the use of social media for adoption-related purposes or to interact with other Korean adoptees. Survey design considerations included asking questions in a purposeful order and providing questions with specific definitions and time frames. To better capture specific knowledge and opinions while taking the online survey, the survey concluded with an open-ended question for the elaboration of any additional commentary (these remarks are discussed in the following chapter).

The web-based survey administration streamlined the methodological design enabling strict anonymity and confidentiality. The importance of a transparent research processes (Sweetman et al., 2010, p. 452) highlight that data should not be identifiable. Within this study, it was imperative for me to ensure that the research design administered and maintained confidentiality and anonymity for the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants.

The online survey allowed participants to provide structured accounts. The data presented in surveys often create a matrix (de Vaus, 1991) and descriptive surveys are a “snapshot in time of the variables being studied” (Mertens, 2009, p. 191). The survey allowed participants flexibility and convenience to answer individual questions. However, personal feelings are difficult to document through controlled question and answer format. The subsequent open-ended component allowed the participants’ perspectives to be expressed in their own words.

Following the completion of the online survey, the participants were invited for a second method of data collection, voluntary participation in a focus group or an individual interview. This subsample of the online survey participants contributed to further in-depth opinions and reflections.
Semi-structured focus groups and interviews.

From the completed online survey respondents, 17 adult Korean Australian adoptees volunteered for further discussions on adoption, which consisted of semi-structured focus groups and interviews. The focus groups and interviews were guided around adult Korean Australian adoptees’ lived experiences, relationships and identifications with other Korean adoptees, and social media participation within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. The semi-structured questions focused the discussions on specific topics but also allowed for open insights into other adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences.

As an adoptee researcher, it was important to encourage a sense that participants are respected equal partners in this study. Korean adoptee-only discussions, with myself as the interviewer/moderator, hopefully established an authentic, interactive environment where participants felt safe to express honest reflections and opinions. In discussing personal adoption experiences, it was important to start the conversation with my position as Korean adoptee researcher and a self-introduction to my adoptee experiences. This technique was utilized to relax the participants and for the discussions to openly flow with a sense of shared Korean adopteeness.

Within the focus groups and interviews, I felt that this self-introduction with my personal adoptee experiences and the introductions of the research participants benefited this study. It was hoped that the focus groups and interviews would engender a sense of trust, rapport and comfort for participants. This approach cultivated a sense of genuineness by emphasizing mutual benefit in sharing Korean adoptee experiences. Perhaps, this is a broader message for insider researchers to be cognizant of and appreciable of their within position while fostering a reciprocity of trust when undertaking research.

Drawing from my within perspectives in this adoptee-constructed research, I was aware of the power dynamics in an interviewing setting and the informal status differentials between researcher and subject. In this connection, I facilitated the conversations in a less directive, dominating role to promote an open environment conducive to interpersonal discussions. Additionally, feminist approaches suggest addressing privilege and power differentials when conducting research (Birch, 1998; Harnois, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Oakley, 1981; Ribbens & Edwards, 1998; Stewart & Cole, 2007). Participants were also given the opportunity to ask me questions at any time during the interviewing process to balance a flexible and
equitable discussion. I was mindful to inform participants that their participation was voluntary and consent could be withdrawn at any point. With the permission of participants, audio recordings were made of all focus groups and interviews. I also took handwritten researcher notes or field notes so that I would be able to recall specific points in the discussion. The audio files and notes were transcribed verbatim (the findings from these discussions are described in later chapters).

There were two research arrangements, focus groups and interview, organized in a comfortable research environment offered to all of the respondents. A focus group is a form of group interview with a small number of people and the ideal number of a focus group is seven to ten people with small focus groups ranging from four to six participants (Krueger, 1998). When focus groups were not feasible due to geographic location, semi-structured individual interviews were organized. The interview is a complex and involved procedure which enables highly personal interactions (Minichiello et al., 2008). Both focus groups and interviews in this study revealed the research participants’ experiences as adult Korean Australian adoptees. It was beneficial in this study to have adoptee-only discussions.

From the semi-structured focus groups and interviews in this research, adult Korean Australian adoptees communicated their lived experiences in their own voices. The strength of this interviewing approach is that it empowers and engages participants to understand their own personal experiences and views. Participants may gain perspectives from being interviewed (Minichiello et al., 2008). In reflecting on the literature, Weber (1986) endorsed interviewing:

> In reflecting on a certain phenomenon or lived experience, human science researchers often seek a new perspective by turning to others and asking, as it were, “What is your experience of the phenomenon? How do you come to see it that way?” and also, “What do you think of what I see?” In asking someone to participate in an interview, we are thus in a sense extending an invitation to conversation. (p. 65)

Focus groups and small group interviews.

In this research, the focus group discussions were specifically employed to engage adoptees within Korean adoptee diasporas. This study’s focus group technique facilitated interaction, communication, and conversation between research participants. Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction between participants will likely yield the best information and when participants are supportive to, and similar to each other (Krueger, 1988; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Krueger (1988) claimed that focus groups are a “carefully planned
discussion” where “group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments” (p. 18). Through focus group planning and facilitation, participants were able to share their adoption experiences, what they thought about Korean adoption, and respond to the views of other adult Korean Australian adoptees.

The focus groups enabled participants to relate and draw connections to their personal experiences in adoptee-only discussion. This helped create a greater atmosphere of trust and facilitated an open and safe environment in which participants were able to discuss and explore complex and highly sensitive topics. Due to several last minute cancellations and no-shows, the focus groups in this study may be interpreted as small group interviews because the participation (in actual numbers versus the expected number) was low.

In summary, planning a focus group requires attention to timing, group participation and concentrates on a specific topic. This study explored the notion that there are valuable insights when adult Korean Australian adoptees are able to share experiences between each other and build a sense of mutual connectedness.

Individual interviews.

When focus groups were not feasible, the semi-structured individual interviews explored adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas. When focus groups were initially planned but did not eventuate due to unforeseen circumstances, individual interviews were an alternate resource. Interviewing is a considered a powerful method for research because it is a complex, involved research tool that gives access to knowledge of meaning (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 1).

One-on-one interviews created a more intimate space for reflection for the research participants and the researcher. The flexibility and comfortableness of individual interviews may help dissolve the hierarchical relationship between researcher and respondent (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Minichiello et al., 2008; Oakley, 1981; Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). Researchers also benefit with the one-on-one individual focus permitting more reflective probing. Reflective probing is a research strategy where the researcher, reflecting on the answer by the research participant, asks for further clarification or verification of what was stated (Minichiello et al., 2008). Furthermore, probing and nonverbal observations are more difficult to evaluate in group settings.
From the semi-structured individual interviews in this study, adult Korean Australian adoptees spoke candidly of their lives. Semi-structured interviews allow individuals to elaborate on experiences and prioritize what they consider to be relevant and important (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Minichiello et al., 2008; Oakley, 1981). In this research, semi-structured interviews allowed research participants the opportunity to independently articulate reflections, opinions, and experiences on their own lives and events. These one-on-one interviews gained an in-depth understanding of individual adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences.

5.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of research, by organizing and interpreting it. In this study, data analyses connected findings from the quantitative online survey and qualitative semi-structured focus groups and interviews to the research aims. With the integration of mixed-methods, Mertens (2009) provided comprehensive guideposts for data analyses as follows:

Gather all the data and review it. If you have quantitative data, consider putting it into a table or graph or using descriptive statistics such as frequencies or means. Then, use more complex statistical procedures as warranted by the type of data and the questions of interest. With qualitative data, read it as it is collected. When you finish data collection, read through all of it thoroughly. Develop codes (i.e., recurring concepts that arise in the data). Coding the data is somewhat of an iterative process as researchers and evaluators seek to develop codes and code data in a way that allows new codes to emerge and also allows for consistency and stability in the use of the codes. Either manually or using the computer, organize the data according to codes; analyze these to pull out themes that emerge from the data. (pp. 281-282)

As suggested by Mertens’ framework, data analyses consist of several steps. Guided by this framework, I returned to these stages at multiple times to integrate both the quantitative and qualitative datasets.

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses increase complementarity. Complementarity seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, or clarification of the results from one method with the results of another method (Greene et al., 1989, p. 258). Comprehensive methodological processes are useful strategies in connecting data analyses to the research questions in mixed-methods research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Robust mixed-methods data analyses should align with research aims and the research questions. Researchers make meanings out of data and data analysis predicts whether the meanings found are significant. This study employed integrative data analyses of both the quantitative and qualitative datasets.
5.6.1 Quantitative data analysis.

While keeping the overall research aims in focus, this quantitative analysis uncovered trends about adult Korean Australian adoptees’ responses to social media usage and interaction with friends, both in general and with other Korean adoptees. Data analyses were performed in SPSS examining descriptive statistics. More precisely, chi-square tests or Fisher exact tests were undertaken to make meaning out of the data. Descriptive statistics are useful in determining the demographics of the participants (McDonald, 2009). This study did not aim to make generalized claims with the inferential statistics.

Both statistically significant findings and non-statistically significant findings were analyzed for a more robust, comprehensive quantitative analysis. This methodological rigor considers research processes where it is imperative for researchers to use intuition when making sense out of the data. In looking at statistics, Mertens (2009) strongly stressed:

> In the transformative paradigm and more generally in the research world, it is insufficient to know how to calculate statistics with quantitative data. Transformative researchers and evaluators who use statistics raise issues related to the potential harm that can be associated with uncritically accepting results that statistical analysis show to be “statistically significant” or that rely on average scores without serious consideration of subgroup performance based on relevant dimensions of diversity. (p. 299)

As Mertens suggested, researchers too often rely on the statistical analysis alone, which is a misuse of statistics and quantitative result. In this study, quantitative data analysis focused on identifying and analyzing statistically significant and non-significant patterns from the online survey. Statistics identified patterns of adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences via social media.

This study’s data analyses integrate mixed-methods design. As such, the quantitative analysis laid out a foundation to enhance the qualitative analysis for providing or confirming meanings in the data.

5.6.2 Qualitative data analysis.

Analysis of the open-ended survey questions, focus groups, and interviews data consisted of several steps. This qualitative data analysis involved preparation and organization, coding, and interpretation. An integration of data analytic strategies provides a multidimensional understanding of research (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010). In this study, qualitative data analysis largely focused on engaging with the semi-structured focus groups and interviews data.
**Data immersion and knowing the data.**

The first step is the preparation and organization of the data. A researcher knows their data; data analysis immersion or “familiarization” is a process whereby researchers immerse themselves in the data collected by examining it in-detail (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). This listening, reading, and reviewing is an integral process of knowing your data.

Subsequently, I transcribed my handwritten researcher field notes and a portion of the focus groups and interview data, the rest of focus groups and interview data were commercially transcribed. Once all of the focus groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim, I listened to each audio file again to ensure that the transcriptions were correct. I, then, read each transcription file in full and with my notes from each session, I typed summaries. Transcription does not reflect the nuances of meaning that are associated with subtle modulations of tone (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 119). I also wrote additional reflections on each focus group and interview with my personal thoughts. According to Krueger, “The researcher should think about both the actual words and the meanings of those words” (1988, p. 115). At the time that I was reading and transcribing, I reflected on this data immersion process, including personal feelings from the time that the research was conducted to the time of analysis.

**Data coding and the context of meaning.**

During this next process, codes or categories are developed to sort the data and make sense of the data. Coding is a general term for conceptualizing data (Boyatzis, 1998; Charmaz, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data coding explores the raw data to make meaning and provides a technique for labeling, separating, comparing, and organizing data. From the reflexive and iterative process of data immersion, coding tracks themes or concepts (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). The process of coding is highly interpretive in the searching for meanings, values, processes, actions or interactions. Next, I turned to open coding where codes are “grounded” in emergent strategies (Charmaz, 2008) to understand my meanings from the data.

The process of coding turned out to be an iterative but also instinctive process. In this study, everything was coded, including answers to the survey open questions, transcripts, handwritten notes, summaries, and reflections, to see how the codes emerge in the data. Open coding helps to “play the game of believing everything and believing nothing” and
researchers are “as open as the coding itself” (Strauss, 1987, p. 29). Open codes presented specific voices to research participants’ experiences but this initial coding was fragmented. This coding challenged the larger concepts constructed on the key themes and findings of the theoretical orientation of the research (Boyatzis, 1998). Line-by-line coding of data with comparing the thematically structured codes and the grounded codes (Charmaz, 2008) reached a deeper understanding of the meanings from the data. From conceptual organization to writing up, fractured codes became clearer and integrated. With several back and forth stages of interpreting significant concepts, data coding is not a linear process.

Data interpretation and recognizing the findings.
In this last process of data analysis, I examined the complex ideologies surrounding adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas with their voices, from their own words. Specifically, I was interested in the lived experiences that frame adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas (the findings are discussed in the following three chapters). In the coding and capturing of themes, researchers draw on concepts aimed at elucidating the raw data into meanings. In this regard, I drew on concepts and frameworks explained in Chapter Four. Researcher flexibility and integration of emergent data processes guide interpretation (Charmaz, 2008). As an outsiders within researcher, I carefully reflected on the detailed transcripts, personal notes and analytical summaries of the data. Above all in analyzing the datasets, the research participants were sharing their voices and their lives.

5.7 Research Standards and Ethical Considerations
The ethical conduct of research involving humans at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) is guided by the principles and responsibilities. Set out in the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity136 (2010), research standards identify ethical and safety issues when conducting research:

- Honesty in all aspects of research.
- Accountability in the conduct of research.
- Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others.
- Good stewardship of research on behalf of others.

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136 At the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity, 21-24 July 2010, the statement provides a set of guiding principles and responsibilities of researchers rather than a regulatory document or policy (“Singapore statement on research integrity,” 2010). This statement is outlined in the UNSW Postgraduate Research Handbook.
There were no appreciable risks or benefits from participating in this study but a number of concerns were raised to address ethical and safety issues to participants. An informed consent form and an adoption resources sheet were designed to express voluntary participation and provide further assistance to those who may need advice following participation in the research.

Ethics approval for the study was obtained through the UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee on 6 December 2011, meeting the requirements in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, Reference HC11446. The approved HC11446 application included relevant information on ethical considerations, exemplifying this through voluntary informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, post-research information, and data collection and storage.

5.8 Summary
The methodological approaches used to understand adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas were outlined: framing lived experience, applying transformative framework, situating my outsider within researcher perspective, addressing mixed-methods data collection, outlining the data analysis, and understanding ethical research standards. The transformative paradigm engaged me as a researcher to understand dimensions of social justice, promote the awareness to marginalized voices, and reflect on power differentials with researcher reflexivity. Importantly, I discussed my outsiders within role in the research process. Researchers are never neutral; they shape the direction and scope of their research. As such, the presentation style in the upcoming findings chapters aimed to give prominence to the voices of the research participants.

This chapter described the methodological processes in the research design. The quantitative online survey and qualitative semi-structured focus groups and interviews are outlined. An important tenet of this research is that it effectively draws upon the research aims. Thus, as an exploratory study, it was not necessary to make statistical inferences to the Korean Australian adoptee population. Rather, this mixed-method design captured different dimensions of Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. The next three chapters will focus

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137 The UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) provides ethical review of research applications from researcher application. See Appendix D for the approved UNSW consent form as based from the UNSW HREC application.
on the findings of the data and provide explanations uncovered in data. The findings detailed in the following chapters are linked with the methodology.
Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees

6 Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees

I think social media plays an important role in allowing information to be readily accessed and distributed among Korean adoptees. It can allow positive connections and relationships to form and we can share our feelings with people who can empathize. (Adoptee-OSR)

From my own perspective, I see no causal relationship between my use of social media and whether or not the people I interact with through that media are adopted. The birth history of any given individual is not a determining factor in regards to on-going interaction. (Adoptee-OSR)

Prior to being introduced to Korean Adoption-related social media, I had no desire to connect with Korean Adoptees in person. This attitude has not changed but I enjoy chatting online with adoptees without the pressure of having to attend social events. (Adoptee-OSR)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three chapters discussing the findings of the research. Chapter Six presents the responses from the quantitative online survey. Both Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight reveal the participants’ voices from the qualitative focus groups and interviews. The findings chapters draw from both research questions to learn more about adult Korean Australian adoptees:

- How do adult Korean Australian adoptees engage in Korean adoptee diasporas, and how is this engagement reflected in their lived experiences?
- Within Korean adoptee digital diasporas, how do adult Korean Australian adoptees construct their experiences in social media?

Having established that Korean adoptees utilize social media as part of understanding their diaspora (see Chapter Four), I collected data to further understand adult Korean Australian adoptees’ social media experiences. Social media is defined as online social networks that connect individuals through the Internet to build relationships with others. Some of the examples listed in the online survey were Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, and YouTube. Furthermore, I differentiated two categories of social media in this research. The research participants’ social media experiences were divided into: (1) Social media in general: includes the general use of social media and use of social media with friends, and (2) KADI social media: includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or use of social media to interact with other Korean adoptees. More specifically, KADI social media

138 The online survey instrument separated: (1) social media in general or with friends, and (2) Korean adoptee interaction and/or adoption-related social media. KADI is an acronym reflective of KAD terminology as addressed earlier in Chapter Four. In the focus groups and interviews, I used the term KAD to represent a sense of Jo’s (2006; 2002) “KAD nation.”
would technically be a subdivision of social media in general but for this research, I separate KADI social media to focus on Korean adoptee interaction and/or Korean adoption-related social media.

The experiences and perspectives captured in this research project address the knowledge gap of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ use of both social media in general and KADI social media because limited information is known about how Korean Australian adoptees interact online and build relationships with other Korean adoptees. The online survey was purposefully constructed to be able to compare the research participants’ responses between social media in general versus KADI social media. The survey instrument consisted of fourteen sociodemographic and adoption experience questions, twenty-four questions with predetermined responses and one open-ended question. To better capture specific knowledge and opinions while taking the online survey, the survey concluded with an open-ended question for the elaboration of any additional or relevant information.

In this chapter, results from the quantitative data are organized into two main sections: Section 6.2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the online survey demographics and adoption experience data and Section 6.3 presents the analyses of the participants’ responses to social media usage and interaction with friends, both in general and with other Korean adoptees. This data is summarized in cross-tabulations performed in statistical software. Chi-square and Fisher exact tests were utilized to determine statistical significance.

The online survey gave respondents the opportunity to further elaborate and add commentary with an open-ended question (Section 6.4). This qualitative data from the online survey was designed to give research participants a chance to anonymously express their social media perceptions and participation in their own words. Key topics mentioned were lived experiences, Facebook, being Australian and sense of belonging (additional qualitative data is explored in the next two chapters from the focus groups and interviews). Section 6.5 summarizes relevant demographic data from the focus group and interview participants (a subset from the online survey participants). Section 6.6 reviews the chapter.

### 6.2 Survey Participant Demographics and Social Media Use

There were 69 adult Korean Australian adoptees that completed the online survey and this section provides a summary of the survey respondents’ sociodemographic backgrounds, divided into two tables: (1) demographic data and (2) adoption experience data. Five areas
of interest in the first table include: gender identification, current age, state or territory currently residing in, educational attainment, and current relationship status. Overall, the research participants’ demographics were found to be consistent with other Korean adoptee survey demographics (Dijkstra, Schwekendiek, & Preenen, 2011; McGinnis et al., 2009). Table 2 below summarizes the online survey participant demographics and of the 69 survey respondents: 81% are female, 71% aged 24-29 years old, and 58% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Participants from the online survey had higher levels of education attained versus the general Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Table 2 Demographic of Adult Korean Australian Adoptee Survey Participants (n=69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=13 (%)</td>
<td>n=56 (%)</td>
<td>n=69 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56 (81%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 years old</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29 years old</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>41 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 years old</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or territory currently residing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory – ACT</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales – NSW</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td>18 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory – NT</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland – QLD</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia – SA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania – TAS</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria – VIC</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia – WA</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 or below</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and further education</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>11 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate diploma or certificate</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree or higher</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>34 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current relationship status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered married or de facto</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>27 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>28 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Additionally in looking at demographic profiles, Table 3 summarizes the participants’ adoption experiences, including: age adopted, state or territory adopted to, adoptive siblings,

119 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) states that 24% of Australians have a bachelor’s degree or higher.
and whether they had returned to Korea. In highlighting these adoption experiences of the survey respondents, 43% participated in face-to-face Korean adoptee interactions and 83% have returned to Korea.

| Table 3 Adoption Experiences of Adult Korean Australian Adoptee Survey Participants (n=69) |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Age adopted                     | Male   | Female | Total  |
| 0-6 months                      | 6 (46%)| 39 (70%)| 45 (65%)|
| 7-12 months                     | 3 (23%)| 5 (9%)  | 8 (12%) |
| 13-36 months                    | 3 (23%)| 8 (14%) | 11 (16%)|
| 37-60 months                    | 1 (8%) | 4 (7%)  | 5 (7%)  |
| State or territory adopted to   |        |        |        |
| Australian Capital Territory – ACT | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| New South Wales – NSW           | 10 (77%)| 28 (50%)| 38 (55%)|
| Northern Territory – NT         | 1 (8%) | 0 (0%)  | 1 (1%) |
| Queensland – QLD                | 1 (8%) | 0 (0%)  | 1 (1%) |
| South Australia – SA            | 0 (0%) | 12 (21%)| 12 (17%)|
| Tasmania – TAS                  | 0 (0%) | 2 (4%)  | 2 (3%) |
| Victoria – VIC                  | 1 (8%) | 2 (4%)  | 3 (4%) |
| Western Australia – WA          | 0 (0%) | 12 (21%)| 12 (17%)|
| Returned to Korea               |        |        |        |
| Yes                             | 12 (92%)| 45 (80%)| 57 (83%)|
| No                              | 1 (8%) | 11 (20%)| 12 (17%)|
| Adoptive family with additional adopted children from Korea |        |        |        |
| Yes                             | 7 (54%)| 14 (25%)| 21 (30%)|
| No                              | 6 (46%)| 42 (75%)| 48 (70%)|
| Participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction |        |        |        |
| Yes                             | 5 (38%)| 25 (45%)| 30 (43%)|
| No                              | 8 (62%)| 31 (55%)| 39 (57%)|

Note. ‘Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Table 4 specifically recaps the difference between the participants’ use of social media in general and KADI social media. As established in Chapter Three, Brinkerhoff (2009) defines digital diasporas as “an electronic migrant community whose interactions are made possible through ‘new’ technologies of communication.” Digital diasporas are expanded by the changing nature of social media. Within this research, I use KADI social media as a means to understand adult Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas. In these results, 99% of adoptees from the online survey use social media in general, whereas, 58% use KADI social

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The online survey asked the following questions, “Since being adopted, have you returned to Korea?” and “How many times have you been back to Korea.” These questions were phrased in order to achieve categorical data and they did not explore with participants the purpose of the return to Korea, whether to live or visit.
media. Accordingly, these results suggest that KADI social media contributes to adult Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas.

### Table 4: Adult Korean Australian Adoptee Survey Participants Social Media Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=13 (%)^a</td>
<td>n=56 (%)^a</td>
<td>n=69 (%)^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media in general</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
<td>55 (98%)</td>
<td>68 (99%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean adoptee interaction and/or adoption-related social media (KADI) social media</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>31 (55%)</td>
<td>40 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>31 (55%)</td>
<td>40 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>25 (45%)</td>
<td>29 (42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. ^aPercentages may not add due to rounding.

*KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

Having summarized the demographic profiles from the adult Korean Australian adoptees’ online survey responses, the next section ascertains associations between the above demographic variables and social media usage employing bivariate analyses.

#### 6.3 Identifying Involvement in KADI Social Media

This section explores adult Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas with a focus on identifying characteristics of those most likely to participate in KADI social media and Korean adoptee interactions. After establishing the survey participants’ demographics and adoption experience profiles, Section 6.3.1 highlights the analyses of who participates in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction and KADI social media. I examine the characteristics of the survey participants that are engaged in Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Both statistically significant and non-statistically significant (see Section 5.6.1) results are scrutinized for a holistic understanding and the possibility that trends exist. Furthermore, Section 6.3.2 addresses the findings on returned to Korea and gender identification. While not statistically significant, these characteristics are briefly dissected to understand adult Korean Australian adoptees.

Section 6.3.3 explains the patterns in the responses from adult Korean Australian adoptees’ interactions (with friends and with Korean adoptees) and social media use (in general and KADI social media). These patterns are first explored twofold by comparing: (1) the frequency of communication with friends in general to Korean adoptees (via face-to-face, telephone, email and social media) and (2) the frequency of using different types of social
media in general to KADI social media (social networking site; web log or blog; video-sharing; and listserv or electronic mailing list). The trends reveal different benefits after using social media in general versus KADI social media. Also, the patterns are identified from agreement responses using social media in general versus using KADI social media.

6.3.1 Profiling the adult Korean Australian adoptees.

In examining this adult Korean Australian adoptee digital diaspora, I report which survey respondents use social media in general versus KADI social media. The survey research participants were significantly more likely to use social media in general (n=68) than KADI social media (n=40) \((t=-6.815, df=68, p<0.001)\). Given the statistically significant result that KADI social media is used less than social media in general, I profile the demographic characteristics of adult Korean Australian adoptee survey participants. Analysis of the following two survey questions: (1) “Do you participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction?” and (2) “Do you participate in KADI social media?” identified characteristics of those participating in Korean adoptee digital diasporas. These questions were cross-tabulated with demographic profiles into contingency tables below.

The contingency tables (Table 5 and Table 6) report the tests used to determine statistical significance, both chi-square tests and Fisher exact tests. Fisher’s exact test is a more appropriate statistical test when the expected number of observations in cells of a contingency table is small, expected count in 20% or more of the cells is less than 5 (McDonald, 2009). Table 5 below summarizes the results for the survey question “Do you participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction?” The following variables were statistically significant: having Korean adoptee siblings, current age, and current relationship status.

Table 5 Contingency Table: Demographic Profiles and Adoption Experiences with Face-to-Face Korean Adoptee Interaction \((n=69)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respond do participate in Korean adoptee interaction</th>
<th>Respond do not participate in Korean adoptee interaction</th>
<th>(X^2) statistic</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25 (45%)</td>
<td>31 (55%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 years old</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>6.236</td>
<td>0.040*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29 years old</td>
<td>17 (35%)</td>
<td>32 (65%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age adopted</th>
<th>30-35 years old</th>
<th>35+ years old</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
<td>4.010</td>
<td>0.722*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 months</td>
<td>12 (48%)</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-36 months</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>5 (62%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-60 months</td>
<td>3 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or territory currently residing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory – ACT</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>3.729</td>
<td>0.832*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales – NSW</td>
<td>12 (48%)</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland – QLD</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>5 (62%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia – SA</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania – TAS</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria – VIC</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>1.579</td>
<td>0.945*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia – WA</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td>7 (70%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 or below</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>1.579</td>
<td>0.945*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and further education</td>
<td>6 (38%)</td>
<td>10 (62%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate diploma or certificate</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree or higher</td>
<td>17 (43%)</td>
<td>23 (57%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current relationship status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered married or de facto</td>
<td>9 (29%)</td>
<td>22 (71%)</td>
<td>5.926</td>
<td>0.028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>21 (57%)</td>
<td>16 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned to Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27 (47%)</td>
<td>30 (53%)</td>
<td>2.018</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive family with additional adopted children from Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 (29%)</td>
<td>15 (71%)</td>
<td>2.730</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24 (50%)</td>
<td>24 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Fisher exact test

Table 6 below summarizes the results from the survey question “Do you participate in KADI social media?” The following variables were statistically significant: having Korean adoptee siblings and state or territory adopted to.
Table 6 Contingency Table: Demographic Profiles and Adoption Experiences with KADI Social Media (n=69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respond do use KADI social media</th>
<th>Respond do not use KADI social media</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ statistic</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31 (55%)</td>
<td>25 (45%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 years old</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29 years old</td>
<td>28 (57%)</td>
<td>21 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 years old</td>
<td>7 (64%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or territory currently residing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.506</td>
<td>0.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory – ACT</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales – NSW</td>
<td>15 (60%)</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland – QLD</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia – SA</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania – TAS</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria – VIC</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia – WA</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.553</td>
<td>0.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 or below</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and further education</td>
<td>12 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate diploma or certificate</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree or higher</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current relationship status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered married or de facto</td>
<td>19 (61%)</td>
<td>12 (39%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>20 (54%)</td>
<td>17 (46%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age adopted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.759</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>26 (58%)</td>
<td>19 (42%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 months</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
<td>3 (37%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-36 months</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-60 months</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or territory adopted to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.983</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales – NSW</td>
<td>26 (68%)</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory – NT</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland – QLD</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia – SA</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania – TAS</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria – VIC</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia – WA</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned to Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.585</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35 (61%)</td>
<td>22 (39%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive family with additional adopted children from Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.113</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16 (76%)</td>
<td>5 (24%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between the two tables, there were a combined four\textsuperscript{141} statistically significant (p<.05) demographic and adoption experience characteristics. However, whilst the demographic characteristic of state or territory adopted to was statistically significant, this finding is not of practical significance and is not discussed.

**Korean adoptee siblings.**

Within adoption experience profiles, I briefly investigate the survey question, “Did your adoptive family have additional adopted children from Korea?” to look at Korean adoptee siblings.\textsuperscript{142} Of those survey participants who had Korean adoptee siblings, 76\% used KADI social media (compared to 50\% of respondents without siblings). It is important to note that 50\% of respondents who had no Korean adoptee siblings engaged in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction. Thus, an unexpected result uncovered that research participants were less likely to engage in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction if they had Korean adoptee siblings, only 29\% of respondents. Figure 2 illustrates these statistics.

\textsuperscript{141} As reported in the contingency tables (Table 5 and Table 6), having Korean adoptee siblings was significant in both tables.

\textsuperscript{142} This question was phrased this way because there have been cases where biological Korean adoptee siblings that are adopted into the same family and Korean adoptees adopted into the same family that are not biological. Recently, there has been media publicity when Korean adoptee siblings are separated and adopted to different countries. These cases have been positively highlighted due to the fact that the adoptees have been identical twins adopted to the United States and France (Horspool, 2014).
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Figure 2 Korean Adoptee Siblings: Exploring the Relationship Between Face-to-Face Korean Adoptee Interaction and KADI Social Media

Note. ‘KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

Current age.

Current age is analyzed to identify any differences between research participants’ age bands\(^{143}\) (18-23, 24-29, or 30-35) from the survey question, “Please select your age group from…”? At the time the research was conducted, 36 years old and above was also an age band but in this study there were no participants in that particular age group. Accordingly, the survey participants’ age groups follow the peak of Korean Australian intercountry adoptions, for instance, the pivotal December 1977 “official arrival” of Korean adoptees (Fronek, 2009, p. 77).

Another interesting demographic characteristic from the adult Korean Australian adoptees that took the online survey is that respondents aged 18-23 years old participate more in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction compared to KADI social media use. In contrast, respondents aged 24-29 years old are more likely to use KADI social media versus participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction. Figure 3 illustrates the spread of these results.

\(^{143}\) I used age bands for two main reasons: 1) the year of birth is often a sensitive topic for many adoptees because records have been forged or closed and exact age is possibly unknown; 2) age bands are a safeguard to preserve confidentiality.
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**Figure 3** *Current Age: Exploring the Relationship Between Face-to-Face Korean Adoptee Interaction and KADI Social Media*

Current relationship status. Current relationship status was examined from the survey question, “What is your current marital status…?” Research participants responded that they were either: (1) single or (2) married or in a de-facto relationship.\(^{144}\) Survey participants that responded as being single were equally likely to participate in face-to-face interaction and use KADI social media (circa 55%). Of those adult Korean Australian adoptee survey respondents in a relationship, 61% indicated that they use KADI social media but only 30% participate in face-to-face interaction with other Korean adoptees. This highlights that adult Korean Australian adoptee participants that are single are more likely to engage in face-to-face interaction with other Korean adoptees compared to those that are in a relationship. These differences are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

\[^{144}\text{Being in a relationship consisted of both de facto and married categories. Other marital status categories were listed in the online survey but no responses were elicited.}\]
Though not statistically significant, more male participants were single and this is consistent with other studies on Korean adoptee relationships (Dijkstra et al., 2011).

6.3.2 Uncovering the non-statistically significant profiles.

In exploring the relationship between face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction and KADI social media, I reported contingency tables (Table 5 and Table 6) which outline profiles that are statistically significant in understanding who participates in the adult Korean Australian adoptee digital diaspora. Whilst not statistically significant from the contingency tables, I delve into the return to Korea and gender identifications to establish if there were any patterns from the questions: (1) “Do you participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction?” and (2) “Do you participate in KADI social media?”

**Returned to Korea.**

This adoption experience was examined from responses to the survey questions, “Since being adopted, have you returned to Korea?” and “How many times have been back to Korea?” While not statistically significant, it is possible to expect that the more often an adult Korean Australian adoptee has returned to Korea, the more likely they would use KADI social media and/or participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction. In terms of predicting what patterns would emerge from the “returned to Korea” variable, it was graphed. Field (2013)
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recommends inspecting the data visually to assist in interpreting the statistics. Figure 5 points to an upward trend highlighting the more times a participant has returned to Korea, the more likely they are to participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction and the more likely they are to use KADI social media.

**Figure 5 Number of Times Returned to Korea: Impact on Face-to-Face Korean adoptee Interaction and KADI Social Media**

Note. *KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

**Gender identification.**

Gender identification was not a statistically significant demographic characteristic in the bivariate analyses from the survey question, “please select your gender identification?” In this study, 81% of the survey participants were female. This follows trends of Korean intercountry adoption where there are more female adult Korean adoptees. Hübinette (2005) estimated that 57% of Korean adoptees sent overseas were female from the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare statistics circa 1958 to 2000 (pp. 264-265). Additionally, until the late 1990s and the shift of the family registry in 2008, Korea had higher rates of female fetus abortions and family relinquishments of female infants because of the objective to obtain a son heir (Peterson, 1996).

While the focus groups and interview participants are a subsample of the online survey, a higher proportion of females participated in the qualitative component of this research (see Section 6.5). The higher proportion of adult Korean adoptee female research participants is consistent with other Korean adoption research; one study noted that gender was a factor and
“females were more comfortable with their adoption” (McGinnis et al., 2009, p. 6). Figure 6 below reports that female respondents are more likely to participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interactions but less likely to use KADI social media than male respondents.

**Figure 6 Gender Identification: Impact on Face-to-Face Korean Adoptee Interaction and KADI Social Media**

![Figure 6](image)

Note. “KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

It is important to note that I explored the findings on gender identification to understand patterns of both female and male adult Korean Australian adoptees. Moreover, male adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study responded as more likely to use KADI social media.

### 6.3.3 Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas emergent trends.

This section repeats analyses (chi-square tests) which explore the survey participants’ responses regarding interactions (with friends and with Korean adoptees) and social media use (in general and KADI social media). After revealing the profiles of adult Korean Australian adoptees who participate in KADI social media and Korean adoptee face-to-face interactions, I report the patterns that emerged from the following online survey questions:

- “In the last month, how often did you communicate…” and “what types of communication did you use with…” friends in general versus Korean adoptees?
- “What is the most important benefit that you experience…” after using social media in general versus KADI social media?

145 The exact questions were phrased slightly differently. For example: (1) “How far would agree with the following statements using social media in general?” compare to (2) “How far would agree with the following statements using social media in relation to Korean adoptees and/or Korean adoption?”
“How far would you agree with the following statements…” using social media in general versus KADI social media?

As demonstrated above, these questions are mirrored to compare in general versus Korean adoption to shed light on how adult Korean Australian adoptees report relationships and interactions with other Korean adoptees.

**Types of communication and social media.**

Data was collected on how the participants in this study used different forms of communication and what different types of social media they used. Communication was measured by asking the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants, “In the last month, how often did you communicate…?” and responses were coded. The types of communications queried were: face-to-face, telephone, email and social media. The results indicate that survey participants in this study interact more frequently and with more types of communication with their friends in general compared to other Korean adoptees. Survey respondents on average interact face-to-face with their friends in general between daily (19%) and weekly (70%). In comparison to face-to-face interactions with other Korean adoptees, respondents interact less ranging from monthly (42%) to not at all (54%). Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics.

**Table 7 Types and Frequencies of Communication (n=69)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of communication</th>
<th>Question pair</th>
<th>Daily Count (%)</th>
<th>Weekly Count (%)</th>
<th>Monthly Count (%)</th>
<th>Do not use Count (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>48 (70%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean adoptees</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>29 (42%)</td>
<td>37 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td>34 (49%)</td>
<td>29 (42%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean adoptees</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>21 (30%)</td>
<td>36 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td>34 (49%)</td>
<td>30 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean adoptees</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>34 (49%)</td>
<td>20 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td>34 (49%)</td>
<td>25 (36%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean adoptees</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>28 (41%)</td>
<td>24 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adult Korean Australian adoptee survey participants use different forms of communication and every type of social media more with their friends than with other Korean adoptees. Not surprisingly, responses indicated 96% of respondents use social networking websites and the use of social networking sites, such as Facebook in Australia (K. Young, 2009), are increasingly popular. However, of the online survey respondents, only 54% use social
networking websites to communicate with Korean adoptees. These responses are summarized in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types and Frequencies of Social Media (n=69)</th>
<th>Social networking</th>
<th>Web log (blog)</th>
<th>Video-sharing</th>
<th>Listserv or electronic mailing list</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66 (96%)</td>
<td>27 (39%)</td>
<td>34 (49%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>42 (61%)</td>
<td>35 (51%)</td>
<td>64 (93%)</td>
<td>65 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean adoptees or Korean adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37 (54%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32 (46%)</td>
<td>62 (90%)</td>
<td>62 (90%)</td>
<td>66 (96%)</td>
<td>69 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historically, the Korean adoptee digital diaspora began as a listserv in 1998 with K@W. Founded by Korean adoptee Sunny Jo (2006; 2002), K@W is an online debate and information forum on Korean adoption issues by Korean adoptees. Researchers noted the importance of K@W as the first Korean adoptee online archive (E. J. Kim, 2010, p. 135) and, for instance, Gray’s PhD title, ‘Bananas, Bastards and Victims’? Hybrid Reflections on Cultural Belonging in Intercountry Adoptee Narratives was taken from a Korean-American adoptee post in May 2003: “the life of an adoptee is difficult but so many of us are making it. our success is not because we are bananas, bastards and victims. it comes from something we have yet to write about.” Despite the historical context of K@W, adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study are not utilizing this social media platform.

**Most important benefit.**

Participants in the study were asked in the online survey, “What is the most important benefit that you experience after using social media?” compared to “What is the most important benefit that you experience after using Korean adoptee and/or Korean adoption social media?” This comparison revealed why adult Korean Australian adoptee research participants use different facets of social media. Significance was measured by a chi-squared test ($X^2=51.998$, $df= 4$, $p<0.001$) that compared the most important benefit experienced from social media in general versus from KADI social media. There were significant differences between the respondents most important benefit of using social media in general compared to KADI social media (summarized in Table 9 below). In this case, adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study use KADI social media to increase their knowledge about adoption (30%) and to feel a sense of community (23%).
Table 9 Most Important Benefits After Using Social Media in General and KADI Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important benefit</th>
<th>Social media in general (n=68)</th>
<th>Count (%)</th>
<th>KADI social media (n=40)</th>
<th>Count (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives me a real sense of community</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in knowledge</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network and connect</td>
<td>49 (72%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing communication</td>
<td>8 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. "KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

40 participants use Korean adoptee and/or Korean adoption social media.

Connecting with friends was the most important benefit experienced from social media in general (72%) and KADI social media social media (35%). However, the distribution of most important benefits experienced from KADI social media provides evidence that adult Korean Australian adoptees use KADI social media for a greater range of benefits (see discussion on social capital within Korean adoptee communities in Chapter Four).

Attitudes towards social media, Likert scale responses.

A Likert scale was used to identify agreement responses from the question asked, “How far would you agree with the following statements about…?” The five Likert questions and responses are summarized in Table 10 below. The Likert scale responses were coded: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree.

Table 10 Summary of Likert question responses, “Do you agree with the following statements about using social media?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question pair in general (n=68) KADI* (n=40)</th>
<th>Agree Count (%)</th>
<th>Neutral Count (%)</th>
<th>Disagree Count (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps me connect with my friends</td>
<td>60 (88%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me connect with adoptees</td>
<td>30 (75%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerts me to interesting and fun things</td>
<td>54 (79%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me connect with acquaintances</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows me to know what my friends are thinking and doing</td>
<td>58 (85%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me connect with adoptee acquaintances</td>
<td>53 (78%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me find useful information about adoption and/or adoptees</td>
<td>44 (65%)</td>
<td>20 (29%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees

Note. 4 KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees.

This data highlights that participants in this study had higher percentages in responding that KADI social media is helpful in finding useful information about adoption and/or adoptees (70% agreed). Additionally, participants noted that social media in general allows individuals to know what their friends are thinking and doing (0% disagreed). Contrastingly, 8% of participants disagreed that KADI social media allows them to know what other adoptees are thinking and doing.

6.4 Qualitative Open Ended Responses from the Survey

The qualitative component of the online survey gave adult Korean Australian adoptee participants the opportunity to add or elaborate information and to express their comments in their own words. This information was separated from all of the survey answers and participants in the study. There were 20 anonymous comments and I have used the pseudonym, “Adoptee-OSR” for all of the comments from the survey and this is subsequently used throughout the rest of the thesis. In this section, I briefly examine some of these comments and incorporate these narratives with the quantitative survey data. As later described in the focus groups and interviews findings in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight, in-depth experiences provide insights into social media perceptions and usage. These comments delve into adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences and how the Internet and KADI social media have influenced what they know about Korean adoption.

6.4.1 Not everyone’s experience is the same.

Lived experiences emerged and adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study emphasized their individuality. Below Adoptee-OSR takes the view that being a Korean adoptee is a personalized experience, he or she remarked:

“I believe strongly in supporting young adoptees to embrace their background yet at the same time not forcing their birth culture on them and their adoptive families. Their discovery of their background should be up to them. I hence distanced myself away from the adoption groups because I was getting myself worked up and it wasn’t healthy... To me Korea and my experiences are very precious to me though only every now and then do I wish to take myself back – though I’m happy I made the move to meet my family when I was in my early 20s. Not everyone’s experience is the same and that’s an important

146 I use this pseudonym, Adoptee-OSR (Adoptee-Online Survey Respondent) throughout this thesis. See Section 5.5.2.
point [emphasis added]. Everyone has different wishes and expectations and this shapes their experiences. (Adoptee-OSR)

Adoptee-OSR’s comment acknowledged the complexity of being an adult Korean Australian adoptee. This quote demonstrates that Korea or the idea of the connection to Korea is an emotional part of their adoption. Another research participant additionally viewed Korean adoptee interaction as something adoptees look for to understand their experiences:

Most adoptees which I have met and [that] are keen to actively participate in on-going adoptee interactions – they are generally wanting to explore something more in their own lives. Those adoptees present with a confused identity, especially around their adoption. These adoptees present a trend around having a particular illusion/understanding of their adoption experience. (Adoptee-OSR)

This Adoptee-OSR indicated that Korean adoptee interaction provides a personal examination of what it means to be a Korean adoptee.

6.4.2 I live a very Australian lifestyle.

Does being in Australia influence how you think about Korean adoption or is being an adult Korean Australian adoptee different to other Korean adoptees’ experiences? According to the demographic trends in Section 6.3.1, adult Korean Australian adoptee participants with Korean adoptee siblings influenced the likelihood of their Korean adoptee interaction. One Adoptee-OSR theorized about spending time with their sibling and how this related to his or her Korean adoption: “My older sister is Korean so I spend every day with her, but not other Korean adoptees. I find, for me, there’s not a large hold to my Korean heritage – I live a very Australian lifestyle which i love” [emphasis added].

Other adoptees observed that being in Australia or being Australian is a unique Korean adoptee experience (this is further elaborated in Section 7.3). One Adoptee-OSR questioned as it seems like adult Korean Australian adoptees’ engagement with adoption is different:

Australian Korean Adoptees do not seem to connect online using social media or face-to-face with the intensity that adoptees in the US and Europe seem to. In WA [Western Australia], adoptees tend not engage with other adoptees online and are reluctant to attend adoptee and Korean cultural events. (Adoptee-OSR)

Adoptee-OSR presents the view that Australian adoptees tend to be less active in KADI social media and face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction.

6.4.3 Facebook increased my participation in social media.

Social networking sites were highly utilized by adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study (96%) with Korean adoption or adoptee friends’ social networking sites used (54%).
Facebook is a common platform, Adoptee-OSR confirmed the significance of Facebook: “The discovery of Korean adoption related social media greatly increased my participation in social media – it is the main reason why I reactivated my Facebook account. Generally, I dislike Facebook.” This Adoptee-OSR regained interest in Facebook and found fulfillment in KADI social media.

Within this data, perceptions of Facebook and Facebook groups were mentioned in the comments and Facebook will be explored in-depth in Chapter Eight. Adoptee-OSR noted that Facebook groups are a space to communicate diverse lived experiences:

I have participated in a few Facebook groups for adoptees and I found that they drew the more negative stories of adoption (not that they shouldn’t be heard) which completely changed the vibe of these groups. I left them because they upset myself and other adoptees too much. I enjoyed the sense of community in sharing our stories with each other... I now only pursue friendships with adoptees individually online, not through groups. (Adoptee-OSR)

Furthermore, Adoptee-OSR also recognized that Facebook groups have a certain type of negativity (further discussed in Section 8.3). Similarly, Adoptee-OSR communicated that “I don’t usually comment on any of the adoptee groups on FB [Facebook] but I do occasionally visit to see the dramas.” This commentary by Adoptee-OSR to observe and read the “dramas” in Facebook is elaborated on in Section 8.4.

6.4.4 A nice sense of belonging and opens my eyes.

It is important to note that adult Korean Australian adoptees use KADI social media for multiple reasons. Korean adoption itself is multifaceted and adoptee respondents discussed their experiences and perceptions. Adoptee-OSR noted that social media provides him or her an alternate perspective, “…it gives me a nice sense of belonging and opens my eyes to other adoption issues and information.” Another respondent expressed the idea of connectedness, and in particular the possibility of meeting or contacting Korean family:

I hope in the future to meet up with the Mother that gave birth to me, my mum and dad (parents) support my needs to know whom she is and let her know I have a good life and I love my life. It would be good to connect, though I have been unsuccessful. (Adoptee-OSR)

While the survey itself did not elicit views on Korean family, perhaps Adoptee-OSR was reminded of connecting with a sense of Korea. All of these online comments helped to gain understandings around adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences and perceptions.
6.5 Focus Groups and Interviews Participant Demographics

In addition to the online survey, another component of this research was the focus groups and interviews. Section 6.2 provided a brief demographic overview of the 69 survey research participants. A subset of the 69 survey respondents, 17 adult Korean Australian adoptees, participated in the focus groups and interviews, representing a 25% response rate from the survey respondents. This section provides a demographic overview of these 17 research participants and the next two chapters (Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight) will outline the in-depth qualitative findings to build on the understandings of the adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas. In terms of the demographic profile information, the research participants in the focus groups and interviews were fairly homogenous with 88% female, 65% ages 24-29 years old, 71% adopted under the age of 6 months, 94% returned to Korea, and 88% use KADI social media. Table 11 summarizes the key demographics of the focus groups and interviews participants.

Table 11 Demographics of Adult Korean Australian Adoptee Focus Group and Interview Participants (n=17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender identification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29 years old</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 years old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age adopted</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 months or older</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Returned to Korea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Korean adoptee interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Korean family connection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.5.1 Adoptee introductions.

During the start of focus groups and interviews, written and verbal demographical information was gathered and self-introductions were made. These introductions helped gain demographic information but also were important for the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants to present themselves in their own words. Due to the nature of the conversations, it was difficult to fully capture all demographic information. For instance, one participant in the study explained that their adoptive parents did not tell them that they were adopted until the start of high school, and according to the adoption records, this adoptee was adopted to Australia around 6 months of age. Of the many topics discussed during the introductions, there was some discussion surrounding Korean families. Korean families in relation to search or reunion perceptions and experiences are often difficult to articulate. For example, one participant was unsure if they had a reunion because the initial meeting with a Korean family member was deeply complex and the meeting context was lost in translation.

Stories and narratives are used to demonstrate particular times in each adult Korean Australian adoptees’ life. The questions asked in the focus groups and interviews were broken into three main categories: adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences, interaction and relationships with Korean adoptees, and the use of social media. Examples of responses are given to illustrate particular experiences and are described in a way to avoid any identification of the adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study. In using my personal observations and writing about the research participants lived experiences; all adult Korean Australian adoptee participants were assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. These qualitative results are reported in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

6.6 Summary

This chapter sheds some light on adult Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas, largely grounded in KADI social media. By analyzing demographics and descriptive results, these findings investigate the complex tenets associated with understanding adult Korean Australian adoptees’ digital diasporas. This chapter explained the trends and patterns in the survey data. Inferences to the general adult Korean Australian adoptee population are made with caution as the sample of participants may not be representative of the larger population. Through bivariate analyses, I gained a broad understanding of the research participants’ lived experiences in relation to sociodemographic factors.
Chapter Six: Exploring the Digital Diaspora of Adult Korean Australian Adoptees

Relationships and interactions with other Korean adoptees online are identified as a crucial part of Korean adoptee digital diasporas. These results fill a part of the knowledge gap in understanding adult Korean Australian adoptees’ lived experiences and how social media is a utilized tool in Korean adoptee digital diasporas (discussed in-depth in Chapter Eight). The information explained in this chapter provides a sense that adult Korean Australian adoptees may be thinking more deeply about social media. From the open-ended component of the online survey, quotes were gathered and briefly summarized. To gain knowledge of lived experiences, the findings are best understood in the own words of the participants and the next two chapters will explore the qualitative data in this research.
7 Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Experiences

I know it may sound really weird or funny but I kind of forget that I’m Asian because I grew up in a very [White] Australian family. (Grace)

The problem with my friends is that they’re aware of it [being a Korean Australian adoptee]. But they don’t know how it feels and how all the complications come together. (Haley)

I had White friends growing up and through school but I was never a “cool” child – I was always kind of a dork. I never saw myself as Korean so it’s really like I’ve only just realised it….I didn’t really recognise like sometimes the bullying, or different treatment as having anything to do with my Korean heritage until later when I grew up. (Brittany)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data from the focus groups and interviews; all participants’ quotes are provided under pseudonyms. Within this chapter, the research participants described their distinctive lived experiences of being an adult Korean Australian adoptee (a further discussion of the social media data is presented in Chapter Eight). The unique experiences captured illustrate the broader dimensions of Korean adoptee diasporas, including the circular processes impacting their lives as adult Korean Australian adoptees. The concept of lived experience (van Manen, 1990) is seen to be a unique approach in this research. Personal values and lived experiences produce a focal point for how Korean adoptees articulate or make sense of their identities (Walton, 2009b). This chapter brings to life the research participants’ lived experiences.

Section 7.2 starts the chapter with an explanation of how Korean adoptees introduce themselves as briefly described in Chapter Six (see Section 6.5). Adoptee introductions illustrate a context for understanding life experiences of Korean Australian adoption, also characterized as diasporic adoption journeys. These Korean adoptee journeys explore lived experiences, including the hometown that one was adopted from and at what age, the size of town or area growing up and exposure to other Korean adoptees, and/or returning to Korea for leisure, to visit ESWS, or meet Korean family. By explaining diasporic adoption journeys, other adoptees recognize the understanding or searching for oneself through everyday adoption lived experiences.

In Section 7.3, the key theme of Australia(n) identifications of adult Korean Australian adoptees is explored. Several participants in this study discussed the experience of physically looking Korean but culturally feeling White Australian. In this study, I termed the
participants’ Australian self-identification as self-Australian. Self-Australian is a perception and a self-imposed national, cultural and social contributions of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas. The notion of self-Australian is broken down into two main sections: constructions of being White and White Australia (Section 7.3.1), and families with transracial Australian bonds (Section 7.3.2).

Section 7.4 provides a general discussion around being a Korean adoptee and the transnational diaspora. As described in previous chapters, Korean adoptees are the most populous intercountry adoptee. The discovery of Korea or the return to Korea is a significant moment in many adoptees’ diasporic journeys. As a result, a substantial subsection (7.4.3) focuses in-depth on how adult Korean Australian adoptees symbolize past connections with Korea. This Korean past or yesteryear considers the desire to rekindle or engage with thoughts or people in Korea prior to their adoption to Australia. Section 7.5 provides a summary of this chapter.

7.2 How Korean Adoptees Introduce Their Adoption Journey
Having established a background to the focus groups and interviews in the previous chapters, the way adoptees introduce themselves provides an interesting viewpoint on Korean Australian adoptions. These adoptee self-exposed introductions highlight some of the distinct backgrounds of the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants. What this research indicates is that adoptee introductions let adoptees uniquely reveal or reclaim their adoption journeys. Importantly, it was in this sense that the research participants’ adoptee introductions could include any topic that they wanted to share about their lives, for example broader topics included: area of Korea written on their ESWS adoption file that they relinquished; the name of the city or town in Australia that the adoptee spent the most time growing up or attending school; their age now and their age at the time of adoption; visits to Korea; and descriptions of adoptive families.

As participants shared their adoption journeys, participants in this study described the backgrounds of their lives. In this connection, Korean adoptees with White Australian parents addresses some of the complexities in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, see

\[\text{147} \] Australian-ness is also term used to depict and discuss the state or quality of being Australian (Elder, 2007); however, an Australian identity demonstrates cultural and racial separation (Pettman, 1988). Australianness points out the complexities and ambiguities in Australian identities (Elder, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2008; Hodge, 1988; Horne, 2005).
Chapter Four. The specifics of each participant’s family were not gathered but adult Korean Australian adoptees spoke of various cultures and family compositions: Australian parents, transracial families with their White parents’ biological children, divorced parents, multiple adoptee siblings, Korean adoptee twin siblings, or no siblings. As this introduction demonstrates, families were significant within the research participants’ lived experiences.

7.3 Self-Australian Explorations

In Section 7.3, I describe the feelings and perspectives of what it meant to the research participants to be Australian as the concept of self-Australian. The term of self-Australian reflects my insights into adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ experiences. This section illustrates the research participants’ self-Australian perceptions and how Australia is part of their diasporic adoption journeys. In this study, all of the participants shared a similar adoptee diaspora with little to no agency in their migrations to Australia. Ultimately, Australia was a common thread which is solely unique to this particular transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

7.3.1 Constructions of being White and White Australia.

To further understand the term of self-Australian, this section explores the notions around White Australia. In discussing this point, Australia is an “imagined community” that represents a sense of belonging and connectedness to a place. As such, an imagined community is a nation that produces a national identity (Anderson, 2006). National identities often reflect the visual image of who belongs to that nation. Being Australian is often simultaneously recognized as being White Australian (Elder, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2008; Horne, 2005). Thus, a perceived Australian national identity often excludes racial groups such as Indigenous Australians and other minority groups (Pettman, 1988). Within imagined communities, the relationship between race and nation frequently overlap (Anderson, 2006). As such, Korean adoptees are seen as a “migrant” with a “foreign look” (Rooth, 2002, p. 91). Perhaps through the lens of Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporas, a major component of self-Australian is being White.

In this light, it is useful to recognize that being Australian is racially restrictive. Hodge (1988) commented on the marginalization of those who are not White:

> The serious questions about identity in a diverse society like ours are not questions about national characteristics that help others to define us; they are in essence questions about “Australian-ness”, about the ways we draw boundaries to distinguish those Australians
we call “us” from the other Australians we prefer to think of as “them.” Identity is about labels that we place on people in order to categorise them; it is about the meanings we attach to words that help us with this labeling. Words like “migrant”, “ethnic”, “Asian” or “Aussie” to which each of us may give differing connotations. (p. 2)

In addition to Hodge, Goldsworthy (2008) extended the notion of this Australian national identity, “For some, neither history nor heritage define the essence of an Australian” (p. 58). Both Hodge and Goldsworthy reflect the complexities in the constructions of an Australian national identity.

Self-Australian is an approach that values the self-reflections of living and growing up in Australia from the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research. Within the transnationalism of intercountry adoptions, nationalism and identity in Australia is often a reflection of the idealized, generalized and mythical population of White Australians (Willing, 2010, p.131). Stressing this Australian identification is often conceptualized notions from iconic social images and cultural stereotypes of White Australia (Elder, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2008). For the research participants in this study, the link between their perceptions of growing up in Australia and White Australia was strong. Adoptees compared their Korean physical characteristics to White Australia, and this is best described in the participants’ own words:

$I still remember when I was little, thinking back about why I perceived myself – what was pretty and what was not pretty. That was a big issue for me [emphasis added]. I don’t think I realised it was a big issue until in hindsight, now that I’m older and more mature. I grew up with people who were blond, blue eyes, near the beach, it was all about the long legs and the bikinis [emphasis added] and all that sort of stuff. That’s just not me, but I didn’t get that at the time. (Sarah)$

In Sarah’s mind, White Australian characteristics signified beauty and physical attractiveness. To adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study, this construction of being White influenced their Australian sense of self and Sarah described this conflicted self-image.

Reflecting on their experiences, most of the research participants explained that being White in Australia reflected a norm in society. In relation to a societal normative, individuals live and act in a socially structured system that has psychological consequences to social behavior (Turner, 1996). Perhaps the best narrative of this was when Michelle explored the contrast of not being a White Australian compared to being perceived as Asian or Korean:

$It’s like a fear of being – if I eat sushi then I’m going to become, I don’t know, seen as being an Asian person when they [other Korean adoptees] identify so much as being Australian. I think it’s down to identity – the perception as to how you want to see yourself and how you want others to see you. (Michelle)$

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Michelle clarified that adult Korean Australian adoptees’ identities develop from the social world around them. As such, some adult Korean Australian adoptees struggle with not identifying as Australian.

For many of the research participants, White Australia signified societal norms, a point that they reinforced by talking about the social structures that existed when they were growing up and today. In this sense because of the time or place that they grew up in, adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study provided explanations as to why they felt racialization, the social identification of race to individuals. The desirability for acceptance is significant in the adoption experience and the building of self is weakened by the moments of questions and resentment over the years (Lifton, 1994, 2009). Acceptance was important for the adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study and growing up with the dominance of White Australia exposed certain perceptions of not being White.

**Not being White Australian/not being Korean.**

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study articulated the paradoxical attitudes to being Australian and being a Korean adoptee. The impact of growing up in White Australia influenced how the research participants viewed their everyday life. Some participants, like Haley, found it difficult to accept themselves as Australian:

“As a kid I would be like, “I’m a Korean adoptee, I’m a Korean adoptee,”” [original emphasis]. Now I’m just like, “No, I’m Australian and I just happen to be born in Korea.” I tried to do the whole fake Korean thing, always eating Korean food, trying to speak in Korean, listening to Korean, and it just didn’t work because I wasn’t Korean, so I just stopped doing it. Now, I’m like, “No, I’m Australian” [original emphasis]. (Haley)

Haley recognized that she wanted to behave a certain way because she was born in Korea; however, her sense of self now reflects a stronger social identification to Australia, rather than her perceived racialization.

A significant issue amongst the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed was that a conflict existed between not being White and not being Korean. This racialized experience of being treated differently and/or feeling that a certain social identity defines the self (Turner, 1982, 1996) was seen as a struggle amongst research participants. Danielle commented: “I didn’t really have the experience myself growing up. But I’m sure there are lots of [Korean Australian adoptee] kids out there who are dealing with the challenges of not being Korean, but also not being a White Australian.” Danielle also emphasized, “especially if they don’t have a supportive family or a supportive community.”
Additionally, Heather spoke of her personal challenges and the disadvantage of not having support to help her understand her identities. Heather indicated that she felt disconnected to her culture: “No one even talked to me about my cultural identity and who I identify as. Australians are obsessed with culture in a way. But there’s no personal discussions going on, or a formal discussion. That’s interesting.” These comments illustrate the racialized disconnect in adult Korean Australian adoptees existing in White Australia but often not as Australians or Koreans.

**Biographies of otherness.**

The adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed had a heightened sense of racial awareness. This is significant because the transnational Korean adoptee literature is grounded Korean adoptees’ feelings of being different or as an Other, described in Chapter Four. For instance, Korean adoptees are often confronted with the fact that “being from Korea” emphasizes “being an Other” (Walton, 2009a, 2009b). In this connection, Hübinette (2005, 2007) observed that Korean adoptee otherness is further constructed from postcolonial studies. As argued by Pettman (1988), race is a complex social relationship within White Australia:

> Race is often read as a marker of crucial difference, a legitimate basis for seeking or maintaining separateness. Through exclusion, it defines ‘the Other’… It is not surprising that ‘Australia’ has been defined historically as white, English-speaking and male, as these qualities define those dominant in the establishment and development of ‘modern’ Australia. (p. 2)

Pettman has noted that White Australia is legitimized from postcolonial notions of race, superiority and dominance. In this light, it is useful approach racialized otherness in the research participants’ lived experiences.

Concepts around otherness are illustrated as participants’ examined their feelings of being an Other. For Willing, the ideology of being an Other within transracial intercountry adoption perspectives identifies: “the ‘normal’ status that Whites are accorded in Australia is buttressed by processes that mark out various ‘Others’ as being an inherently different and always ‘foreign’ presence in society” (2010, p. 130). With dominant self-Australian ties but racialized differences, Felicia described her own sense of being an Other and called herself “ethnically ambiguous”:

> You sort of look like you’re from somewhere else, but you’ve grown up in a different culture.....in that funny way, where people perceive you as foreign but you feel Australian, so I find that kind of interesting to talk about. (Felicia)
Felicia uniquely characterized this notion of diasporic foreignness. Here, too, is this sense of otherness from the participants’ lived experiences and Wendy recalled “looking different” because she identified with White Australia: “I always felt the same growing up... I always felt the same but I always looked different. I always used to hate looking different because I felt the same.” Wendy described her experiences of having a Korean physical appearance which contradicted her Australian sense of self. She found it difficult to not be accepted when she felt the same as a White Australian. Adult Korean Australian adoptees questioned their racialized otherness or being an Other in Australia.

Return to somewhere: Where are you from?
The significance of the dialogue “Where are you from?” elucidates the powerful influence of race in diasporic adoptee journeys. Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants examined this situation of being asked, “Where are you from?” and what it means to be from somewhere. As perceived White Australia classifies who is considered Australian (Elder, 2007; Pettman, 1988), the reference of being from somewhere means that physically looking Korean suggests that one cannot be Australian. For instance, Haley expanded on this notion: “I feel like we [Korean Australian adoptees] should go and start talking to every Caucasian person and go, ‘Where are you from? Not Australia, what’s your ancestry?’” There appeared to be conflicted feelings attached to this “Where are you from?” commentary, challenging the research participants’ self-Australian identification.

In reflecting on these feelings towards these interactions, participants discussed their experiences and consistently cited their discomfort in being asked this question. Wendy said that she would often respond that she was from a city in Australia but then her response was usually countered by: “‘No, where were you born?’ I hate when people do that. ‘Where are you from?’” [original emphasis]. Wendy recalled this desirability for acceptance; Australia was how she viewed herself when she answered that she was from Australia. Perhaps, some adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed resented the lack of awareness to individuality within Australian self-perceptions.

What do these discussions around “Where are you from?” mean to adult Korean Australian adoptees? While some research participants spoke of being directly asked this question, others talked about how it was emphasized that they were not from Australia. For instance, Sarah remembered when she engaged with the notion that she was different and it was
stressed to her that she was *from Korea*. When another Korean adoptee arrived at her school, it forced Sarah to recognize her Korean adoption:

> It just highlighted, “Oh yeah, that’s right – I’m different to everyone else,” but I had never felt like that before. Then it was just a bit of a thing, everyone in the school would say it for a while, “She’s from Korea as well,” and it was like an ongoing sort of discussion always when I was around that forced me to *acknowledge* that, “Yeah, I’m a Korean adoptee,” or “I’m from Korea” [emphasis added]. (Sarah)

Accordingly, the exchanges of being from somewhere indicate that adult Korean Australian adoptees felt that they could not be from Australia. Racialization is part of the research participants’ everyday lives where they were always *from Korea*.

**Exposure to bullying and the impact of these encounters.**

Particular anxieties about White Australia manifested in the research participant’s narratives. Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study voiced insights on racism, racial bullying and social rejection. The impact of these encounters outline the dominance of White Australia in their everyday lives. For adult Korean Australian adoptees such as Danielle, racial bullying continued from childhood to adulthood and she described what it was like for her to be an Asian woman in Australia:

> People would make ching-chong noises at me because they thought that’s what Asian languages sound like. They’re like, “I’m speaking in an Asian language” and I’m like, “That’s not an Asian language – Why are you making those noises?” People would try and make my eyes straight by pulling up the sides of my eyes. That was when I was a kid – people don’t do that to me anymore. *But*, you know, [as an adult] I’ve been spat on and had people yell shit at me. I had people sort of follow me in their cars and things like that. (Danielle)

Danielle also commented that she continues to feel racism in Australia. Korean adoption research has established that adoptees are hesitant to express their experiences to their White families due to their lack of ever experiencing racial discrimination (Docan-Morgan, 2010b). This is important to note as some of the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research struggled with these experiences of racism and social rejection.

The narratives of growing up in White Australia often expressed stories of bullying. Exemplifying this, Tiffany illustrated how she was teased because of her race:

> *I think growing up in a suburb where there was no other Asians. That definitely hasn’t really helped in feeling like a Korean Australian adoptee – more like just a Korean adoptee. I’ve never felt a strong link to Australia. You know, I’ve never really felt like someone who was born here, *someone really accepted* [original emphasis]. I got teased a lot when I was at school.* (Tiffany)
This teasing and social rejection took on particular importance for some adult Korean Australian adoptees. Related to Tiffany’s remarks, Victor relayed a similar narrative about social rejection:

*Basically if I could tell myself when I was a little kid that it didn’t matter that I was different, I would probably have had better primary school experience because I wouldn’t have reacted so much to it. I would have been a lot happier then...because it wasn’t the best experience.* (Victor)

Victor indicated that he learned from his childhood bullying and that he was able to grow from the perspective of feeling different. In another example, Opal said that she felt like a “black sheep” and that she was “bullied for being Asian.” Furthermore, Opal recalled: “That really affected me, my self-esteem for a long time. I guess that’s partly what made me act out and try to do other things to make myself feel better.” Opal felt insecure and doubted her worth so she behaved in a certain way to mask her social rejection.

Research participants also stressed the lasting impact of bullying related to race and adoption. In Crystal’s case, for example, she shared how her encounters with bullying were also due to being a Korean adoptee:

*I’d get comments and things, but like, they just affected me. You know, little things like, “Who’s your real mother?” and I never knew how to respond. I’ve still held onto some of those little comments and things for a very long time.* (Crystal)

Crystal expressed that the bullying and childhood comments influenced how she felt about her adoption. The research participants’ reflections are a stark reminder to the lasting pain that bullying can cause.

White Australia was indeed a significant factor in the research participants’ lived experiences. The societies that Korean Australian adoptees live in greatly contribute to how Korean adoptees develop a sense of finding their place in world. The processes by which White Australia was negotiated reflected individualized self-Australian explorations.

### 7.3.2 Families with transracial Australian bonds.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study identified their parents and their families as a significant part of their lives. Family emerged as an important aspect in the development of self-Australian connections. Participants in the focus groups and interviews discussed how to define their transracial self-Australian families, typically with White Australian parents. Through a number of family approaches, intercountry adoption identifies the creation of a
“family of choice” (A. Young, 2009). In these transracial Korean Australian families of choice, adoption was the fundamental building block.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study acknowledged the social construction of family. Consistent with the ideology of families of choice, the perceptions of family within intercountry adoptions are often communicated as a “normal Australian family” (Willing, 2010). Adoptee participants illuminated that they felt that Korean Australian adoption is normal family experience. Participant Patricia offered the following perspective: “It was just normal to me. I just assumed that everybody was adopted growing up as a kid. Just thought that everybody’s parents went to Korea and picked them up as well.” Patricia highlighted that she thought her family was the mainstream experience. Felicia expressed similar notions, as she was confused when questioned about her adoption: “I’m like ‘Why do people think this is weird?’ This is really normal to me.” Felicia wondered if it was unusual being a Korean Australian adoptee. In reflecting on their families, research participants were quick to place a sense of commonness and to discuss the normalcy of their family experience.

It was important for the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed to define their families in their own words and on their own terms. However, many of the research participants’ families were transracial and adoptees in this study discussed encounters when asked about their families. As such, Danielle avoided sharing her family adoption history when she did not want to talk in-depth about her adoption journey. At times, she admitted sharing false narratives to people: “Well if I’m feeling lazy, I’ll just lie. I’ll say, like, I was born in Australia and my parents immigrated. And then that satisfies people.” Danielle carefully presented her parents and her own sense of self as an Australian.

Australian transracial families were often framed in terms of advantages and benefits in comparison to the alternative, namely not being adopted from Korea. Consistent with the literature in Chapters Three and Four, the participants in this study expressed that the influence of their transracial families and their self-Australian perceptions of families were significant to their experience.

My White parents.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees examined their transracial families and identified their parents as key contributors to their self-Australian perspectives. Much of the adoption literature has suggested that parents are important in shaping certain self-perceptions. To
conceptualize this within Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. A sense of identity is inherited from parents with their parental identity formed from the myths and stereotypes that circulate in wider Australian society (Hodge, 1988). As such, the visual racial differences in these transracial families of choice are important to address. In this accord, one striking comment by Michelle affirmed that her parents helped her build a sense of who she was: “My parents have always said to me, ‘I’m not their Korean adopted daughter.’ – ‘I’m their daughter.’ – Full stop.” Michelle’s family used particular phrases to emphasize family bonds over racial or adoption constructs. Brittany, likewise, summed up this perspective: “My parents are my parents. I mean, I’m lucky to have another set of parents out there, but they’re my parents.”

In describing their families, adult Korean Australian adoptees also noted that there are certain racialized expectations. Research participants admitted not sharing and/or sharing their own Korean Australian adoption narratives. Racial assumptions emerged and Haley stressed agency in responding to certain situations:

> Sometimes I just go, “Yeah, my parents are Korean and we do that,” because it’s so much easier than having to get into the other discussion. I used to tell everyone but now unless they explicitly ask or figure it out which most of my friends did, I don’t bother explaining it to them – I just let them assume what they like. (Haley)

Haley conveyed limited or false information to prevent the dialogue from probing into her personal adoption. Like Haley, Victor said, “When I’m at the pub, it gets asked a lot: ‘What type of Asian are you? Are you Korean? Japanese? Chinese?’ And, I’m like ‘Well, my mum is English, my dad is Dutch – Figure it out.’” In certain situations, adoptees preferred to let others “figure it out” about their families.

Adult Korean Australia adoptees discussed the importance of fostering a supportive Korean Australian environment that recognizes the differences in transracial families. The different ways that adoption experiences are encountered provides a number of insights into this issue for White parents. For instance, Crystal affirmed this by stating, “I think often that parents don’t want to acknowledge some of the problems, the challenges that their adopted kids might be facing. I think parents just want to think, ‘Oh, my child’s doing well.’” Crystal noted that by addressing some of the difficult issues within families, it is helpful for younger adoptees in their transracial families. These discussions of transracial Korean Australian families illuminated constructs of adoption and race. Perhaps feeling integrated and accepted in a family can advance a sense of belonging at wider societal level.
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**Ugly Duckling perceptions of rejection.**
It is worth noting here that genealogical bewilderment suggests that it important to know biological origins, see Chapter Four. Hans Christian Anderson’s *The Ugly Duckling* is the story of a duck who believed his whole life that he was different. H.J. Sants (1964) drew a literary analogy of a genealogically bewildered child and the ugly duckling:

> The swan is rejected because he cannot do what the others in his family can do as a result of his different genetic endowment. Persecution leads to depression and wandering (symptoms found so often in the genealogically bewildered child)...The ugly duckling showed his need to identify with others in order to feel that he belonged but he could not identify with animals differing so much from himself in appearance and performance. (pp. 135-136)

As illustrated with tale of the ugly duckling, Korean Australian adoptees often have different physical appearances to their White parents or family. Akin to the duckling, adult Korean Australia adoptee participants highlighted their feelings of difference, confusion, and longing for acceptance in their families.

What is the relevance of genealogical bewilderment? In this association where the swan thinks his whole life that he was a duck, when in fact he was a swan, adoptees themselves recognize their differences in their families. Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants discussed recognizing dissimilarities in their families. Incorporating this genealogical bewilderment approach, Faith expressed not connecting to her family: “I just didn’t relate to my family at all. I was so different. Like even my habits, food, and the way I dressed, and the way I used to do things...” Faith’s comment reflected a perception that it was she who was different in her Australian family.

Another interesting viewpoint from the duckling’s story is the overwhelming account of wanting acceptance in a family. Sants cautioned the eagerness to identify with parents to reinforce feelings of belonging (1964, p. 136). Perhaps, the desirability for acceptance is stronger for some Korean Australian adoptees and feeling rejected exposes past trauma. Rachel emphasized her need to feel accepted in her family and her rejection when her adoptive parents divorced:

> My adoptive parents got divorced when I was 12 so that brought up a lot of double rejection of me actually wanting to kill myself. Because I just thought my biological parents wouldn’t have me, now these parents [Australian adoptive] don’t want me. (Rachel)

Rachel conveyed that acceptance was driven by rejection, attributed by her first loss of being abandoned or relinquished by her Korean family, see Verrier’s primal wound theory.
When considering the ugly duckling’s story paralleled to the research participants’ transracial families, adoptees may internalize their differences. This is due to the fact that adoptees are deprived of the knowledge to know who and where they come (Lifton, 2009). In this connection, Olivia identified feelings of difference and not fitting in. In processing her feelings towards belonging in her family, Olivia asserted:

*It brings up something inside that you wish that you had, their families are always so close and everything. I always felt kind of the *odd one out* and wondered *why I was here* [emphasis added] and everyone else was living in happy families. So I just kept living my life, and I love my family, don’t get me wrong. *But I don’t truly feel like I fit anywhere with them, which is really difficult* [emphasis added].* (Olivia)

Olivia explored her perceptions of assimilation within her Australian family. She recognized that she loves her family but she continued to feel as “the odd out.” Akin to the ugly duckling experience, some of the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed spoke of the isolation of being the one who was different.

**Familial dynamics and structures.**

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study mentioned familial dynamics as they spoke of their Korean Australian family system. Perhaps in describing these dynamics, Crystal best acknowledged the complexities in her Korean Australian family: “I think because our parents, you know, they haven’t really gone through it. It’s like they can’t explain it either.” In relation to her family life, the experience of being a Korean Australian adoptee shaped her perceptions of her family dynamics. When considering this family interaction, family structures also played an important role. It is worth noting that participants spoke of different racial, cultural and adoption backgrounds in their self-Australian families. In particular, siblings are explored in the context of familial dynamics and structures (see Chapter Six for statistics on Korean adoptee siblings).

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study recognized the specific dynamics of sibling relationships in particular family situations. Rachel described the complexities in her feelings with her siblings: “I find it really hard sometimes. *My siblings, they’re all like ‘you’re our sister’, but it’s hard because you’re not my blood.*” Rachel’s relations with her siblings were impacted by a lack of a biological link within her family. Crystal also examined how she considered herself part of the family in comparison to her sister:

*I was intensely jealous of her [my sister] growing up because she was White and because she was my parents’ biological daughter and because I just thought things were easier*
This biological connection, intertwined with issues of race and adoption, was important to Crystal. Her feelings towards her sister manifested into an unexplainable emotional narrative. Accordingly, these familial dynamics appeared to have a significant role in the research participants’ perceptions of their families.

Some research participants confirmed having Korean adoptee siblings. Korean adoptee sibling dynamics characterize certain Korean Australian adoptees’ family experiences. For instance, Haley described having a sibling with contrasting views towards Korea.

He doesn’t tell people he’s adopted; he wants nothing to do with Korea. I tried to get him to come back to Korea with me but he was like, “I’m never ever going back to Korea ever again. I want nothing to do with it.” He knows nothing about Korea – he refuses to eat Korean food. I think because he was adopted when he was three so he still remembers his birth mother. I think he feels like if he spent three years with her then why couldn’t she keep him. He’s one of those dark and silent types. He doesn’t express his feelings, but I think when he’s older, he might change his mind. (Haley)

Haley recognized her brother’s experiences and wondered if his view will change over time. In contrast, Heather discussed her connection to her biological Korean adoptee sister: “I think my sister and I feel – we’re quite confident that we have each other, so we have a biological connection to our homeland already with us...” Heather felt strengthened with her Korean adoptee sibling in her family. Feelings of deep affection and solid connection are common amongst Korean adoptee siblings (Wilkinson, 1985). Both Haley’s and Heather’s sibling experiences presented divergent views about Korean adoptee sibling dynamics.

Quite possibly, Korean adoptee siblings are a resource to reduce isolation or identify with Korea and Korean adoptee. This echoes a wide body of empirical studies on the importance of Korean adoptee identities and learning about Korean adoptee diasporas. Additionally, Korean Australian families, with or without Korean adoptee siblings (biological or not), engaged with this notion of Korean adoptee socialization while living socially in White Australia.

Family associations between Korean Australian globalized families.

Also noteworthy, adult Korean Australian adoptees’ White parents strived to develop a sense of connectedness within their transracial families. The participants in this study reported that childhood experiences demonstrated the first opportunities for interactions amongst Korean Australian adoptees. For instance, Victor continues his participation at Korean camp, “My
mum and dad took me to camp, which is a Korean adoptee program, since I was a little baby and I’m still attending them now.” Adoptees’ families, like Victor’s, realized the importance of Korean adoptee socialization while growing up to build a sense of self-Australian family. Further, other Korean adoptee studies have confirmed the use of Korean heritage camps (McCabe, 2008; McGinnis et al., 2009; Randolph & Holtzman, 2010).

Adoptees in this study discussed informal childhood adoptive family gatherings organized by their parents. Wendy communicated that she used to keep in touch with other Korean adoptees, “when I was a kid, but that’s 20 years ago now.” Patricia remembered that her family would participate in the social networking, “I remember as a kid there would be, like, barbecues and gatherings and everything, where we would all get together but I think it was just whatever makes you comfortable.” Patricia mentioned a sense of comfortableness in these childhood social gatherings. Danielle also expressed her experience of associating with other intercountry adoptees at picnics and other social events, “We went to those things up until the age of, say, six or seven and then we just like stopped.” Danielle recalled the abrupt discontinuation of social networking as a reference point in her childhood adoption experiences. Wendy, Patricia, and Danielle recalled attending informal adoptive family gatherings in the past. The strength of these connections advanced a sense of inclusion for adoptees and their transracial families.

Informal adoptive family gatherings took place as a support to Korean Australian families. Adoptees in this study noted that childhood experiences helped adoptees think about other Korean adoptees in Australia. Olivia, for example, recalled the adoptive family group interactions and the intentions of those exchanges:

There was only a small group of us but we used to go to a Korean group altogether as kids… you do a little bit to keep in contact. Everyone kind of went their separate ways and as far as I know it’s only myself, my sister and one of them that we grew up with throughout our life that have really kept in contact, all the rest have kind of drifted off. (Olivia)

Olivia described that she maintained a lifelong friendship with one Korean adoptee while drifting away from other adoptees in the group. In contrast, Felicia remarked:

There’s a girl that my mum has kept in contact with from when I was adopted, and she joined a support group and she’s kept in contact with that girl and her family…we were friends as kids but then we got older and we have absolutely nothing in common unfortunately. (Felicia)
Felicia observed that her connection to another Korean adoptee manifested by her mother’s contact with that particular family. Closely linked with the purpose of Korean heritage camps, parents established Korean adoptee socialization opportunities as a means of support for their Korean Australian globalized families.

**New insights for parents.**

A further reflection of the participants’ lived experiences is their insights on Korean Australian families that they considered relevant to prospective adoptive parents. Haley empathized with Australian families about to adopt from Korea, and she signaled her concerns as an adult Korean Australian adoptee. She expressed that it is often confronting, “I didn’t want to tell them all the bad things that come from adoption” but she concluded that it is important for White adoptive parents to hear reflective accounts of Korean Australian adoption.

One part of me felt really happy for them, but I was like, “You have no idea what this kid is going to go through as he grows up or she grows up. As much as they’re going to be a happy child, it’s still going to be difficult.” I kind of wanted to say to them, “It’s great, I’m glad I was adopted because it could have gone terribly,” but I really wanted to say that, “As happy as you are, you’re being a little bit selfish because you’re not taking into account what this kid’s going to go through.” My parents still really have no idea, and it’s not because I don’t talk to them because I do – but they just can’t understand it. They have told me over and over again, “I understand but we just wanted a kid and we took you out of bad circumstances, but we’ll never understand what you’re going through,” and they try but they just can’t. I felt like – I tried to be nice to these families and say, “I’m really happy for you,” but I said, “You just need to think, as this kid’s growing up, what they’re going through as well.” And hopefully, they did. (Haley)

Haley’s statement is an astute reminder that her lived experience is unique and that adoptive parents may never be able to fully understand the experiences of the children they adopt. Many of the participants, like Haley, addressed holistic Korean Australian adoption approaches and the value in learning from adult adoptees.

Families exist within adoptees’ complex diasporic journeys; parents and families are intrinsically part of Korean adoptee diasporas. It is important to note here that adult Korean Australian adoptee participants wanted to explore the meanings in their relationships with their families. Research participants revealed interactions when they were questioned about their “real” parents, an insight that they felt compelled to clarify. In this well-expressed example, Wendy said that she was asked: “Is that your real mum?” And I’m like, ‘No, that’s my birth mum.’ I’m sorry, don’t lessen what my mum has done for twenty-something years.” Adoption is a life-long journey; Wendy’s journey is shared with both of her families.
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Amongst the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this study, the significance of family was overwhelming. Adult Korean Australian adoptees’ lived experiences generate new insights into racial and adoption constructs within transracial families of choice and what it was like growing up in their Australian families. As such, issues around transracial families influence self-Australian explorations as they shape the perceptions of what it means to be an adult Korean Australian adoptee.

7.4 Being a Korean Adoptee

The concept of self-Australian highlighted adult Korean Australian adoptees’ connections in identifying with and living in Australia (Section 7.3). Section 7.4 engages with the notion of being a Korean adoptee within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Generally speaking, the participants in this study elaborated on the distinctive characteristics of being a Korean adoptee and what it means to be a Korean adoptee raised in Australia.

This section discusses how the research participants uniquely and individually describe who they are whether they define themselves as: a Korean adoptee living in Australia, a Korean Australian adoptee, an Australian Korean adoptee, or a Korean adoptee. Reflecting on their experiences, most of the adoptees in this study informed me that there was no emergent answer in how they chose to define themselves (7.4.1). Hopefully, this research presents picture of the research participants’ Korean adoptee diasporas. Furthermore, the adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study reflected on making connections with Korea as their country of birth (7.4.2) and understanding a Korean past (7.4.3).

7.4.1 Big questions of defining who I am.

Research participants acknowledged that being an adult Korean Australian adoptee is part of their lives. Adoptees in this study thought about Korean adoptee diasporas with other Korean adoptees. Participant Brittany deliberated on her feelings towards being a Korean adoptee: “I don’t think until I really met other Korean adoptees that I really questioned myself with those kind of big questions [emphasis added]: Who I was as far as being adopted and being a Korean adoptee?” Perhaps, adult Korean Australian adoptees gained insights into their experiences of being a Korean adoptee in interactions with other Korean adoptees. One example of this is Michelle’s viewpoint, she identified that being a Korean adoptee gives voice to adoption but it does not define who you are:

I think being a Korean adoptee is definitely part of my identity so I don’t think you can separate the two things. It’s part of history and part of who you are, but I don’t think I
Michelle acknowledged that she sees herself as being more than “just” a Korean adoptee. Both Brittany and Michelle give an importance of being a Korean adoptee; however, neither are fully concerned with defining it in their lives.

As mention earlier in Chapter Four, connections with other Korean adoptees’ experiences are described as adoptee kinship or Korean adopteeness. Whilst the lived experiences may not be identical, sharing experiences with other Korean adoptees helps build a sense of validation as Korean adoptees. This is affirmed by Olivia:

It’s bizarre but a lot of Korean adoptees that I’ve met, all of the ones that I’ve met actually have similar views – they haven’t felt like they’re part of their families. They’ve had issues growing up, they’ve wondered why they were sent away, why did my relationships fail, why can’t I get close to the people that I genuinely care about but there’s something always holding me back. There’s something always holding you back or you’re so happy but you’re looking for that next happiness because it’s like it’s not enough. And then you start feeling selfish about it – it’s a vicious circle. Every relationship I’ve had [and] I’ve had a very good and a very loving one – but there’s something always wrong with it and I can’t describe it. I know it’s the situation of “it’s not you, it’s me” because I genuinely don’t know what it’s like to feel part of something. A lot of the other adoptees that I met in Korea said very similar things. (Olivia)

Olivia appreciated her own personal perspectives of her adoption and life after adoption in her shared experiences with other Korean adoptees. Revealed in Korean adoptee scholarship, Korean adoptees’ life histories and lived experiences reveal processes that shape their identity development (Meier, 1998, 1999). In the context of a number of overlapping shared life experiences, this perception of Korean adoptee collective identity or Korean adopteeness (E. Kim, 2009) exists in some of the research participants’ narratives.

It is also worth noting here that participants in this study voiced how they felt identifying as a Korean adoptee. For instance, Rachel described her personal experiences: “My adoption has always been very open. Being a Korean [adoptive] has always been a part of my life growing up.” Rachel stated that she was fortunate to have her adoption as an open part of her identity. This open-mindedness about being a Korean adoptee presented a powerful identity understanding. As such, Heather commented that her views of being a Korean adoptee changed after visiting Korea: “I guess I’m a proud Korean adoptee. I’m proud to be Korean, whereas before I would say I was the opposite as an adolescent. I was more embarrassed.”
Heather’s self-awareness reflected a further openness in declaring herself as an adoptee and as a Korean.

**Awareness of Korean adoptees.**

For some, associating with Korean adoptees broadens an awareness of Korean adoption and the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Participants observed what it meant to be connected with other Korean adoptees. Felicia reflected on her interactions:

> *This is funny because I haven’t really met that many [Korean Australian adoptees]. And the ones I’ve met, I’ve had nothing in common with. We’ve just got completely different personalities. It’s kind of cool because we can go, ‘Oh wow, we’re both adopted.’ But then, we’ll sort of get to know each other and realise we have got nothing in common apart from that [being adopted] – which I think says a lot. You can be from the same background but be completely different people.* (Felicia)

Felicia framed how she felt connecting with other Korean adoptees. Drawing from the conceptual tenets of Korean adoptee-ness, this connection brings Korean adoptees together despite of their differences.

It is also important to note that the return to Korea is an influential experience in answering does the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora define whom I am? For Korean adoptees reaching out to explore the meaning of being a Korean adoptee, awareness of other Korean adoptees is often heightened in Korea. Patricia revealed her encounters with other Korean adoptees in Korea, “*We sort of all realised that the other adoptees that are living all over the world have had vastly different experiences in childhood growing up with adoption.*” Patricia appreciated the diversity of adoption experiences and being in Korea made her recognize the vastness in Korean adoptee diasporic journeys. Most participants in this study suggested that Korean adoptees tend to bond in Korea or about Korea.

Many of the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research discussed being exposed to other Korean adoptees. However, 57% of the online survey respondents indicated they do not participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction. While it may be symbolically important to be aware of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, few of the research participants spoke of meaningful face-to-face Korean adoptee interactions in Australia.
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7.4.2 What does it mean to be from Korea?: Diasporic returns to Korea.

The experience of returning to Korea and discovering Korea provided the research participants with a connection to Korea and with other Korean adoptees. Korean Australian adoptee participants particularly mentioned the significance of returning to Korea in processing their personal adoption perspectives in being Korean adoptees. In this research, 94% of adoptees from the focus groups and interviews and 83% of adoptees from the online survey indicated that they have returned to Korea. Participant Michelle processed the impact of being a Korean adoptee in Korea:

I think it’s an experience that has changed me and changed my views compared to someone who didn’t have anything to do with Korea or still doesn’t have anything to do with Korea. I can’t tell you how that has just changed me or anything but I think perhaps it was a bit of a defining moment. (Michelle)

Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants, like Michelle, recognized their experiences in Korea as significant to understanding what being a Korean adoptee means.

In the larger globalized Korean adoptee population who return to Korea for different reasons every year, being in Korea is often a self-discovery. Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study recalled individual reflections and reconnections to Korea. Heather explained that living in Korea contributed to an awareness and a sense of belonging: “It was a really interesting experience for me. By living in Korea and understanding the culture, I suppose, on a much deeper level – I feel much more connected.” Heather addressed her personal feelings in being attached to Korea and noted that her relationship with Korea are now more meaningful.

Awareness and understandings of Korea and Korean culture in Korea can be confronting for some Korean adoptees. It was, in Haley’s experience, a different world where she found that in Korea, she was one of thousands of Korean adoptees and that being a Korean adoptee was a relatively unimportant in Korea. Haley found that this experience of returning to Korea made her feel insignificant.

I had this big idea in my head that I would go to Korea and people would go, “Oh, you’re adopted.” But I went and people were like, “Oh, you’re adopted – there are heaps of you here,” and I was just like, “Oh.” You know, I wasn’t expecting that, or that people would go, “Oh, you’re adopted,” and they wouldn’t talk to me. I don’t know, I had this romantic notion in my head…that I would be welcomed back but it wasn’t the same, people were just like, “No, there are heaps of you, you’re nothing special” [emphasis added]. (Haley)
Haley acknowledged that she thought being back in Korea would be a welcoming experience but she unexpectedly found responses to her experience disconcerting. Adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporic journeys to Korean vary with complex notions and experiences of return.

**Australian outsiders looking in Korea.**

It is significant to the research that participants in this study expressed that being in Korea helped them contextualize their adoptee diasporas. Participant Victor articulated a sense of otherness during his return to Korea: “When you go to Korea and you’re talking with them [Koreans], you feel like you’re – I feel like I’m the outsider looking in [emphasis added] rather than the insider looking in.” Victor noticed that he was a Korean adoptee looking into Korean culture. His comment reflects that even though he looks Korean and wants a sense of belongingness with Korean culture. However, as a Korean adoptee, he felt like an Other by Koreans and perceived himself as not fitting in. Wendy expressed that she feels Australian when she was in Korea: “I’m in huge culture shock because I’m really Australian. I try and be a Korean, but – I think I’m – you know, that lady that went and lived with the gorillas – I kind of felt like that.” Wendy anecdotally remarked on how she felt certain cultural differences. When adult Korean Australian adoptees described being in Korea, it helped to understand a further awareness of who they are as Korean adoptees.

Some adoptees in this study indicated their self-Australian perspectives when asked, “Where are you from?” in Korea. Sarah acknowledged her own self-identification depending on her environment, “When I’m in Australia, people ask, ‘Where are you from?’ I just say ‘Korea.’ When I’m in Korea and people say, ‘Where are you from?’ I say, ‘Australia.’” Sarah rationalized her answers depending on the context. Thomas discussed being a Korean Australian adoptee in Korea:

> When I was living in Korea, the question is always “Where are you from?” and you know, “Australia,” and “Wow, I haven’t met too many Australians” or “You’re the first Australian adoptee that I’ve met” so it was kind of refreshing. It felt like I was kind of special or different somehow. (Thomas)

Thomas’ comment observed a sense of self-Australian perceptions. For both Sarah and Thomas in Korea, being from Australia was uniquely accepted without having to justify their own diasporic sense of being from somewhere (see also Section 7.3.1).
The experience of being an adult Korean Australian adoptee in Korea describes a unique diasporic return. Reflecting on these experiences, adoptees in this study returned to Korea and gained new understandings of what it means to be a Korean adoptee.

7.4.3 Connecting with Korean yesteryear

In capturing the diasporic journeys of Korean adoptees (see Chapter Four), connections with Korean yesteryear elucidate symbolic memories and experiences of a Korean past. By understanding and connecting with the past, adult Korean Australian adoptees process their Korean adoptee diasporas. This last section investigates the recollection and discovery of Korean yesteryear as a Korean adoptee.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study spoke of their experiences in connecting with their own sense of Korean yesteryear. The majority of the participants did not share any physical memories of their Korean past; this is expected as 65% of online survey and 71% of focus groups and interviews participants said that they were adopted to Australia under six months of age. The following experiences delve into Korean adoptee diasporic journeys to recapture Korean yesteryear: (1) care experiences in Korea; (2) searching for yesteryear; (3) finding and “reuniting” with Korean past or Korean family.

It is worthwhile mentioning that not all adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study wished to acknowledge their Korean yesteryear or Korean family.

Care experiences in Korea.

Having Korean foster parents who fostered or cared for adoptees in Korea triggers a sense of Korean yesteryear. The adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study communicated their perceptions of foster parents as a connection to their Korean past. Adult Korean Australian adoptees’ Korean foster parents were the caregivers in Korea before adoptees were sent overseas for adoption. Research participants noted that their Korean foster parents are historical links to their lives before coming to Australia. Participant Brittany discussed meeting her Korean foster mother, she remembered, “I met my foster mum while I was over

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148 I use the terminology yesteryear as it deemed more appropriate than using bygone, forgotten, or yesterday. I recognize that it may be considered a dated term; however, it evokes the involuntary memories of the Korean past for Korean adoptees. Yesteryear acknowledges memories that exist but also memories that are not there. Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants were adopted from Korea several years ago and their time in Korea may not be remembered but is definitely not forgotten.

149 I use the terminology Korean family and Korean parents. Birth family is also used when it is a direct quotation from a research participant.
there [in Korea] and since then I haven’t really had any contact with the whole Korean culture.” Brittany associated meeting her Korean foster mother with making contact with Korean culture. This connection symbolizes that Korean foster parents are a part of Korean adoptee yesteryear and identifications to Korea.

Contacting and meeting Korean foster parents, traditionally the foster mother, is a crucial connection to adoptees’ yesteryear. Reminiscing on Korean yesteryear can be a profoundly complicated experience and adult Korean Australian adoptees expressed their sensitive perspectives when meeting, contacting, or searching for Korean foster parents. Adoptees in this study addressed their emotional states when uncovering personal information from their adoption files in the records or pictures from Korean foster parents. As an illustration, Haley was challenged in her romantic notions and felt disappointed after meeting her Korean foster mother. She recounted her experience:

I was so looking forward to talking to her, and she was like, “I don’t even remember having you for that six months, to be honest,” and she was like, “I don’t remember your name.” I showed her all the photos of me with her and she was like, “I don’t remember that,” and it just kind of ruined my perception of her. Because I had this fairytale idea in my head that she was my foster mother and she looked after me and she must have loved me – but I was just another baby in the big line really. (Haley)

Haley’s emotional attachment to her Korean foster mother dramatically shifted because she wanted more from the experience in connecting with her Korean yesteryear. Haley’s experience also demonstrates that Korean foster parents may not understand Korean adoptees’ expectations. Haley then realized she was not in a fairytale story.

Stories of adult Korean Australian adoptees with their foster parents were shared to evoke a sense of Korean past. Participants mentioned reconnecting with histories and memories of Korean yesteryear as told by their Korean foster parents. Wendy recalled a narrative of her Korean foster mother and this story helped Wendy position herself in her Korean adoption journey:

She fostered 80 children and at the time she was fostering me, she was also fostering a quite heavily disabled boy. But my mum said it was really good for me because she didn’t – she was professional so she didn’t bond with me too much, which meant that it made it really – not that she didn’t bond – but she kept it really business like. So that when I went to my mum and dad, I went with open arms to my mum and dad and I was really ready for that because I hadn’t been given too much. (Wendy)
Wendy’s Korean yesteryear was described through the perspectives of her Australian mother and her Korean foster mother. This story illustrates Wendy’s Korean yesteryear and also provides an adoption memory with her Australian family.

Having established that Korean foster parents and the care in Korea are historically part of the Korean adoptees’ diasporic journeys, Korean adoptee participants revealed that it was important for them to visit ESWS to see the children there awaiting adoption or visiting other children about to be adopted overseas. As such, Victor visited a Korean foster family that had a child who was going to be adopted internationally: “Just the interaction between the foster mum and at the time it was a little boy was really amazing. I was like, ‘How can you raise somebody knowing that you have to leave them?’ It was really good.” This experience engaged Victor in remembering his Korean yesteryear as a Korean adoptee who was also fostered and cared for in Korea. He ruminated on the notion that Korean foster parents are emotionally generous and he perhaps related this idea to his own Korean foster parents.

Indeed, this connection with Korean foster parents was inevitably interwoven with notions of Korean yesteryear. For those research participants that spoke of Korean foster care, there was a sense of importance in this relationship with Korean foster carers, especially foster mothers.

Yesteryear and memories of the Korean past.

Korean yesteryear highlights an intersection between the present and the past life that existed before being adopted to Australia. Lifton (1994) shared that Korean adoptees and their families should return to Korea to search for their past:

American parents feel helpless and angry that no one warned them of the pain their adolescents would feel at being abandoned. No one told these parents when the plane landed with its precious unidentified bundles that their love would not be enough, that they should go to Korea before too many years passed and find the people who knew their child’s story, or even a fragment of it. (p.79)

Lifton’s comments support the idea that Korean adoptees have a human right to know their past. In searching for Korean yesteryear, adult Korean Australian adoptee participants referred to the complexity of issues including: finding emotional well-being; seeking adoptive family perceptions; questioning legal implications; using post-adoption services; discovering unwed mother stigma; understanding Australian culture and society; and learning Korean culture and society. In the research participant’s own ways, they described what searching for Korean yesteryear meant to them.
Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Experiences

ESWS adoption files.

Korean adoption files were an avenue for adult Korean Australian adoptees to rekindle their Korean yesteryear. Recapturing the stories of the past prompted a sense of Korean yesteryear and adoptees in this study recollected looking at adoption files or visiting ESWS to discover their past. Adult Korean Australian adoptees have multiple adoption files due to processing by both Korean and Australian agencies, with files written in both Korean and English.

Participants searched for meaning in their adoption files to guide their Korean yesteryear. Michelle was interested in reading her adoption file in Korea; however, it invoked a powerful emotional connection to her yesteryear.

_I found out more information than I had been disclosed in my [English translation] file. A lot of it did match which I was pleased to read. I don’t know if she [the social worker] read my English version first but I just found out things like he, my grandfather, worked in a factory as a driver and my birth mother was a factory worker and that was probably the most devastating thing to me. Because in my [English translation] file it didn’t say what he did but it said that she was an office worker. I don’t know but it struck a really bad chord with me and it made me quite upset. Because to me I don’t know a factory worker seems really sad to me – it doesn’t seem like a nice life._ (Michelle)

Through discovering more about her Korean past, Michelle’s Korean yesteryear is retold to her through her English adoption file with her past memories being shared in English. Michelle stressed the nostalgic feelings towards her Korean family from reading her adoption file. Adult Korean Australian adoptees, like Michelle, regain their Korean yesteryear by just reading their adoption files.

In searching for Korean yesteryear, adult Korean Australian adoptees rely on their adoption files as the only histories of their past. Adoptees in this study questioned the authenticity of the information on their adoption files. Participant Haley considered that her information could be inaccurately translated or forged. She questioned: ‘I feel like, ‘Is it real or not?’ I even worry that my birthday is wrong, because – it could be.’ Without knowing her past, Haley was concerned that information in her ESWS file is false and that her birthday is a falsified date. Danielle also questioned the information on adoption files.

_I’ve met a lot of people [Korean adoptees] who’ve had adoptions that have been processed in really dodgy ways. So their birth certificates have been falsified, their documents have been destroyed. People, who they’ve been matched with in terms of biological parents, are incorrect._ (Danielle)

As Danielle suggested, adult Korean Australian adoptees need accuracy and integrity in adoption files.
Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Experiences

Korean family.

Searching for this Korean yesteryear helped participants understand what Korean adoption means to them. The desire for Korean yesteryear may drive a search for a Korean family to reconnect with one’s origins. Participants described the search for their Korean family as an influential part of being a Korean adoptee and to develop a sense of their beginnings. Haley’s search for her Korean family led her to reevaluate her life.

"I go through periods of where I will be really intensely interested in adoption and then I will have periods, which has been lately, where I’m just like, “I want nothing to do with it, I’m just going to go on with my life and pretend I’m not adopted,” because I felt like I spent almost 11 months last year focusing on it. You know – looking into it, researching it, going over to Korea. I felt, to be honest, it pretty much ruined my life for that year, because it’s so time consuming and emotionally consuming. People don’t understand what you’re going through so they can’t help you." (Haley)

Her periods of longing for the Korean past were emotionally tumultuous; Haley reached a point where she felt that her Korean yesteryear is haunting her.

Hearing stories from other Korean adoptees helped adult Korean Australian adoptees learn about Korean yesteryear. By gathering stories of the search for yesteryear, adult Korean Australian adoptee participants acknowledge an interest to learn about their Korean past. For example, Tiffany sought answers from other Korean adoptees to help her search:

"I started reading other people’s stories just so that it might help me find my birth family. But it wasn’t – other people’s stories, no matter how much luck they had – it just wasn’t relevant to what I was doing. I couldn’t get anywhere reading other people’s stories." (Tiffany)

However, Tiffany felt that the narratives were not helping her find her own Korean past. Victor also read stories of other Korean adoptees that were searching for their Korean yesteryear. This helped Victor formulate his own feelings towards a search for his Korean family:

"I got so many different stories from them [other Korean adoptees] that I realise that I don’t have to find my family until I’m ready or if not – it’s not a big thing. It’s not the end of the world and listening to stories from other adoptees helped form my opinions on how I live and with me finding my birth parents. It’s like I’ll look for them but if it doesn’t happen, it doesn’t happen. How I see it is – I’ve got my family now and they’ve brought me up, they’ve loved me for who I am, and they’ve always kept me involved and they really, really want me. But if I had met my birth mother and father, it would be nice but if it doesn’t happen, it doesn’t happen. At the end of the day your family is the people who surround you." (Victor)

Victor addressed the importance of learning and listening from other Korean adoptees in searching for their past. Victor feels that his family is the people around him today.
Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Experiences

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study identified the difficulties in regaining their Korean yesteryear. Korean family searches are a complex and difficult process. Adoptee participants mentioned that their Korean yesteryear helps them reflect on past, present and future experiences. Rachel voiced how her Korean family search is shared with her father as he acknowledges her Korean past. Rachel described the relationship of searching for her Korean family with her father.

It’s something for my father who has gone through that process with me and he said to me, “I was selfish because I wanted you.” Because, you know, he took me from Korea and that’s the way he sees it. He gets as much out of it as I do when he goes to Korea with me and then we try and find out my birth family and that kind of stuff. (Rachel)

Rachel’s father supported her decision to reconnect with her Korean yesteryear as they search for her Korean birth family together. Both Rachel and her father are mindful that her Korean family search is a collection of who she was, who she is today, and who she will be after she knows about her beginnings.

In reflecting on these events of searching for Korean adoption files and/or families, the circumstances that the research participants describe demonstrate that their Korean yesteryear is a considerable part of their diasporic adoption journeys. For all the Korean Australian adoptees interviewed that chose to search, their searches were indeed individualized based on their own personal expectations.

Finding and “reuniting” with Korean past.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study expressed that Korean family contact and reunions emerged as a meaningful part of the adoption journey in connecting Korean yesteryear. In the focus groups and interviews introductions (see Section 6.5.1), some research participants voluntarily spoke of their Korean family and of those participants, 59% indicated not having a reunion with their Korean family while 35% had a reunion with their Korean family. To clarify this point, adoptees in this study shared reunion experiences that included both: (1) Korean families searching for their adult Korean Australian adoptee children, and (2) adult Korean Australian adoptees searching for their Korean families. Furthermore, reuniting is a term used to frame a particular dimension of this Korean adoptee search experience and reconnecting with the Korean past.

Generally speaking, stories of Korean adoptee family reunions elaborated on the expectations that exist when uncovering Korean yesteryear. Korean Australian adoptees in this study
considered the difficulties in Korean family reunions. Danielle remarked that other people imagine what a Korean birth family reunion is:

*I don’t think anyone really is interested in hearing a story of an adoptee who doesn’t meet their birth parents and is quite happy... but people love to see adult adoptees meeting their birth parents and crying. And Koreans love that kind of stuff too.* (Danielle)

Danielle’s commentary conveys the social expectations in Korean family reunions. Reunion expectations are often difficult to conceptualize. Likewise, Olivia commented on the cultural expectations in reunions: “It’s hard, it’s the cultural differences – it’s the expectations. I’ve met other adoptees that have met their biological families and the first thing the biological family will say to the girl is ‘You’re ugly’ or ‘You’re fat.’” These real experiences from finding Korean families are challenging and Olivia empathized with these narratives.

Importantly, research participants discussed the paradoxical situation of being reunited with their Korean past but not fully understanding what a Korean family reunion means. Exemplifying this, Wendy questioned: “‘Is this Pandora’s box?’... It’s here you have no choice, if it’s bad – you can’t take it back.” In explaining such decisions, she wondered if she should continue on this journey in seeking her Korean past. Similarly, Thomas addressed his personalized reunion journey:

*I was one of the lucky ones, in that I could actually make contact with my birth family. And I guess when I met them I kind of rushed into being the son that they’d lost. I played along with it for a while because it was very exciting and new to get to know my sisters that I didn’t know I had and also my birth mother. But eventually I felt somewhat of a burden, even though there wasn’t really one. I felt that it was a bit difficult to kind of juggle two families so I’m no longer really in touch with them anymore.* (Thomas)

Thomas considered the personal difficulties in navigating his connections with his Korean family and his decision to halt contact. For some adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, there are several contributory factors to the decision to reunite with the Korean past.

In learning about Korean family experiences, adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study shared insightful reflections of what it meant to find that missing part of the past. Olivia described feeling an immediate kinship with her Korean brother. She mentioned that having a Korean brother was crucial for her because she finally saw her own physical resemblance:

*It was like automatic – I just felt an instant connection with him. Not so much my parents until I started to spend time with them. But my brother, to know that you’ve had a brother that looks like you, sitting across from you and you’ve never even known about him before, that left a lasting impression. Korea, since I’ve been there, has definitely changed me as a person.* (Olivia)
Olivia’s experience in making contact with her Korean family changed her life and it was an important part of her diasporic adoption journey. Connecting with her Korean yesteryear was a defining moment for her.

Circumstances of the past.

In finding Korean yesteryear, adoptees may be exposed to the circumstances that led to their being relinquished or adopted. Participants described how they had processed learning about their Korean past from being reunited or meeting with Korean family. Perhaps the best example of this, Crystal illustrated a progression of her feelings in relation to finding her Korean family:

I mean at first I was like really grateful and really happy that I’d been able to find my birth mother and, you know, generally my birth family was really nice. So I felt really lucky that I’d had like a positive experience with that. But then I actually felt kind of angry because I was like, well, they kept me for like three years and they technically could have kept me forever… It was like more of thing where it was like socially embarrassing to keep me and stuff. So I was really quite angry. (Crystal)

Crystal observed that her feelings shifted from happiness to anger when she attempted to understand why she was relinquished by her Korean family to be adopted to Australia.

Korean family reunion experiences often resulted in a culmination of different feelings towards finding Korean yesteryear. These reunion experiences and individual perspectives raised further questions about Korean families, culture, and society. Sarah met her Korean uncles who made the decision about her adoption and therefore her personal understanding of her Korean yesteryear changed. The discovery of Korean yesteryear affected both Crystal and Sarah as they now have different perceptions of their Korean past.

It was participant Olivia’s statement that reflected a diasporic consciousness of what it means to find Korean family. She voiced this consideration after being reunited:

I still haven’t really figured out. I don’t hate the life that I have by any means. I don’t take it for granted, but part of me wishes that no matter how hard it was back then, that they would have kept me as part of their family, no matter how bad. I don’t regret being here [in Australia], and I don’t hold any hatred towards them for what they had to do. I
think being an adoptee anywhere, not just Korean but any adoptee – you can’t help but feel that you’re alone in your life, no matter how good things are going. (Olivia)

As Olivia expressed, reunions with Korean family can intensify feelings of not knowing and not understanding. Olivia related her experience to that of other adoptees who question what their past means to them.

Discovering a swan.

Earlier in this chapter, the literary analogy of the ugly duckling (Section 7.3.2) shared the significance of adoption and genealogical bewilderment. The rest of duckling’s tale mentions a transformation or self-discovery with respect to the past; a reflection reveals a swan.

Some adult Korean Australian adoptee participants that reunited with their Korean families addressed a narrative of finding themselves. After her reunion with her Korean birth mother, Faith uncovered new meanings in her Korean past:

My grandmother forced her to give me up. So it was not her decision. But I mean, yeah, she was unwed, and she was very young… It’s just when I found my mother and, you know, found who I really am. I just started to become more confident in myself. And that’s taken me a long time because for so long, I just didn’t want to know. I felt so rejected because it was just like – how could you actually do that to someone, you know? But I didn’t know the circumstances behind it and I see now how much she loves me and how much she’s been thinking of me. (Faith)

Akin to the swan, Faith revealed that it was possible for her to find herself after meeting her Korean family.

Participants highlighted an awakening in understanding more about their Korean yesteryear. Sarah captured her feelings: “I was asking my Omma [Korean mother] about when she was pregnant with me, and it was such a weird feeling I felt – to know that this woman had given birth to me.” Sarah unexplainably felt familiarity to the story of her birth and her Korean yesteryear. Also exemplifying this, Wendy described the crucial moment of meeting her Korean birth mother:

I met my birth mother and it was the first time I actually felt like I was a Korean. I think it takes something like that – to feel connected. It was the first time I actually thought – it changed my perception of how I felt about being adopted too. (Wendy)

Wendy considered the importance of finally connecting her diasporic journey. These above Korean adoptees’ narratives parallel the swan in the tale of the ugly duckling in finding their reflections.
Generating conversations.
Korean yesteryear generates conversations around Korean family reunion experiences. Participants in this study appreciated the collective openness in sharing Korean family stories to help understand certain relationships with Korean yesteryear. As an illustration, Opal commented that connecting with other Korean adoptees helped her recognize adoptees’ diasporic journeys, “It feels like there is so much more to learn and know just birth family wise. I think keeping contact with Korean adoptees is important.” In contrast, searching for Korean yesteryear is a very individual experience.

People [Korean adoptees] tell you their personal stories and how they went about searching. I know that DoCS [Department of Community Services] used to send out pamphlets about adoption and searching for your birth family but that's really only for Australian adoptees who have been adopted into Australia. Well, that doesn’t help me. (Haley)

Korean Australian adoptee reunions are explored by the knowledge gained in sharing stories with other Korean adoptees. As similar reunion cases have been recorded and documented within the larger transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, Crystal welcomed sharing Korean birth family reunions between Korean adoptees. I think that it's important to share that information with each other. For example, someone hadn’t said to me, “Actually, meeting your birth family can be really emotional and it can bring up kind of unexpected feelings and that the relationship will kind of evolve over time”... We’re all at different points of our journeys. (Crystal)

Crystal concluded that Korean adoptees’ diasporic journeys with other Korean adoptees is meaningful to share. The data suggests that the conversations and discussions around Korean yesteryear reflect a further awareness of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

The narratives expressed in this chapter are a reflection of the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research. Perhaps, the sharing of lived experiences exposes what it means to be a Korean Australian adoptee.

7.5 Summary
The chapter provided insights into the lived experiences of adult Korean Australian adoptees who participated in this study. The qualitative data presented the personal stories of the research participants with an emphasis on conveying their experiences in their own words. This chapter aimed to provide an understanding of the participants’ explorations around self-Australian and what it means to be a Korean adoptee.
In White Australia with their families, adult Korean Australian adoptees shared their experiences to gain new perspectives on race and adoption recalling accounts of self-imposed identifications with Australia, their individual Korean adoptee identities, and their relationships with their families and other Korean adoptees. In reflecting on these experiences, it is important to note that Korean adoptees’ diasporas do not exist in isolation. As such, Korean Australian globalized families were large part of self-Australian perceptions. There was much evidence of adult Korean Australian adoptees feeling isolated by their Korean physical appearance, especially since many of participants reported that it was important to be just like White Australians. Race and perceptions of racialized otherness in White Australia were discussed at lengths.

This chapter then provided valuable knowledge surrounding returns to Korea and connections to Korean yesteryear. In the circumstances that were described amongst the research participants, a further reflection to being a Korean adoptee is the shared awareness across Korean adoptees’ lived experiences. For the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, Korean yesteryear is an emotional diasporic journey into the Korean past. Different notions of Korean past were explored: Korean foster parents and the care in Korea, ESWS adoption files, and Korean family. Conversations about Korean yesteryear surfaced as significant parts of adoptees’ diasporic journeys, which sometimes led to Korean family contact and/or reunions.

The next chapter and last chapter of the findings presents varying perspectives on Korean adoptee digital diasporas and social media experiences. KADI social media is a useful tool for adult Korean Australian adoptees. Further drawing from the focus groups and interviews, this last chapter advances new perspectives into this changing diasporic space amongst Korean adoptees.
Chapter Eight: Recognizing the Role of Social Media in Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Lives

8 Chapter Eight: Recognizing the Role of Social Media in Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Lives

With social media, you can have very, within the adoptee community, very different opinions. Kids are using social media at a younger age – what does that mean for [adoptive] parents? So are they [parents] going to be able to facilitate some of those conversations that happen with adult adoptees through social media? Or is social media a tool that post-adoption services can take on to help support adult adoptees? (Olivia)

When it’s [KADI social media] global, it’s too much to filter – I find so much information that we [Korean Australian adoptees] can’t keep up with it. It’s hard to really be able to connect. It would be better if you met a group of people overseas and you made your own group where you can keep in touch. That would probably be more efficient – you would probably get more out of it. (Wendy)

I don’t need a Facebook timeline to create myself. I think I’ve got a pretty good idea of who I am. (Thomas)

I did find more social media for Korean Americans than Korean Australians, which is kind of a bummer because I wanted to find out more. (Felicia)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the developing perceptions around adult Korean Australian adoptees’ social media experiences. As previously outlined in Chapter Six, social media in general was used by 99% of adult Korean Australian adoptee survey participants, and KADI social media was used by 58% of respondents. Furthermore, social media in general and KADI social media were differentiated for clarification (see Chapter Six). Social media in general includes the general use of social media and using social media with friends; KADI social media includes the specific use of social media for adoption-related purposes or using social media with other Korean adoptees. To clarify this point, KADI social media focuses on Korean adoptee interaction and/or adoption-related social media.

Participants in this study presented their KADI social media experiences and discussed a variety of topics in the both quantitative and qualitative datasets. For example, the survey results in Chapter Six observed reasons adult Korean Australian adoptees engage in KADI social media. Responses from the online survey indicated that 55% of the respondents use social media to gain knowledge and to participate in discussions about Korean adoption while 45% of the respondents use social media to engage or connect with Korean adoptees. This chapter largely reveals participants’ observations, opinions, and feelings regarding KADI social media using their own voices.
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Section 8.2 discusses a context around social media. This section highlights how social media is a digital diaspora utilized by adult Korean Australian adoptees. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the larger international Korean adoptee digital diaspora is a network fostered by “Korean adoptee kinship” (E. Kim, 2010). Participants recounted how social media is used to develop connections and where adoptees can share experiences. Section 8.3 explores individual participant’s social media interactions. Korean Australian adoptees approach social media with different online tactics as they encounter various Korean adoption experiences and perceptions.

Within participants’ social media interactions, Facebook emerged as an important social media resource for adult Korean Australian adoptees in Korean adoptee digital diasporas (Section 8.4). Participants’ social media experiences were concentrated around Facebook, facilitating dialogue amongst Korean adoptees (Section 8.4.1, also addressed earlier in Section 6.4.3). Thus, Korean adoption/adoptee Facebook trends and behaviors are uniquely described (Sections 8.4.2 and 8.4.3).

Section 8.5 examines how social media integrates social connectedness, linking online and offline interactions and helping build a sense of the Korean Australian adoptee diaspora. This last section reports on the new understandings into Korean Australian adoptee relationships via social media (8.5.1) and family connections and awareness (8.5.2). Section 8.6 provides a recap of the chapter.

8.2 Social Media Unifying Connections

The Internet is an opportune space for the globalized network of Korean adoptees to use social media in general and KADI social media. The Internet flattens our social world (T. Friedman, 2007) and social media interaction has become a daily or common social exchange. Individuals increasingly use the Internet everyday within their personal, professional and social life. Accordingly, the survey results reflected that social networking sites were the most utilized social media amongst adult Korean Australian adoptee participants (96%).

The first-hand accounts of social media in general and KADI social media are useful to understand the Korean adoptee digital diaspora. Several adoptees in this study expressed how social media in general is an accessible, comfortable space. Research participant Thomas observed his empowerment from using social media:
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I think it’s [social media] good because we have this freedom to present ourselves how we want to, how we want others to see us. We can connect with people conveniently, easily, regardless of time and space – not really time – but regardless of how far we are away from each other. (Thomas)

Thomas highlighted the importance of connecting experiences. Similarly, Felicia also mentioned finding affinity from individuals online:

A good part about social media just in general – about any kind of issues no matter what – you always meet someone that has something in common with you, even some obscure interest… There’s always going to be someone online that will be able to relate to you. (Felicia)

Felicia described the benefits of relating or meeting people through social media. The examples from Thomas and Felicia reveal the accessibility to find similar interests to reduce isolation.

Utilizing social media to find a sense of belonging is significant. Perhaps, this is best explored when Michelle addressed the reasons for establishing online interactions: “I think there’s a wide range of things that you can gain from it [social media] – if you want to. That’s the thing, it’s there if you want it. People are there if you want them to be” [emphasis added]. Michelle’s comment reflected an appreciation for online connections from social media.

Heather indicated that social media supports new interactions: “It’s a way of keeping in contact with people that you wouldn’t normally keep in contact with at all. Because it’s visual, it’s that added sensory value of you just knowing what’s going on.” Heather reported that the visual component of social media prompts her to engage with other Korean adoptees.

Participants in this study addressed the ability to connect with Korean adoptees online. Crystal noted the potential, “I think it’s comforting to know that there is this whole community, not necessarily in Australia, but at least around the world that you can connect with if you want to.” As Crystal suggested, it is important that Korean adoptees can turn to the Internet for support.

8.2.1 Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

KADI social media is a resource helping connect Korean adoptees within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, also described as Korean adoptee digital diasporas. In this context, Korean adoptee digital diasporas are online communities of Korean adoptees. Haley pointed out: “I think being on the Internet with them [Korean adoptees] or seeing really how many there are in the world. I know that we’re in the same boat.” Haley acknowledged that her
online interactions have helped her feel supported knowing that there are other Korean adoptees in similar situations. Korean adoptee digital diasporas create a sense of belonging, an online space for Korean adoptee kinship.

Participants in this study recognized KADI social media as a way of facilitating Korean adoption and Korean adoptee conversations. Research participant Opal remarked: “It’s only really recently – I think adoption has come up more and everyone’s been a lot more open about it. I think that social media has been one of the main reasons that it’s [Korean adoption has] become more talked about.” Opal recognized the importance of KADI social media to raise awareness. KADI social media is important for adult Korean Australian adoptees to connect experiences, support Korean adoptee interactions, and link discussions to an awareness of Korean adoption. Haley noticed Korean adoptees’ online emergence: “I think there’s definitely a presence [of Korean adoption] on the Internet. People have become more and more aware of the Korean adoptee community.”

The existence of KADI social media enables further understandings of adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. Participant Sarah noted how she learned about being a Korean adoptee banana and she remarked on her Korean adoptee interactions: “It is interesting. And the stereotypes that I’ve learned more about since hanging around with Korean adoptees and reading up online as well… ‘Banana’ – I had never heard that term until I actually met other Korean adoptees.” Sarah found a new dialogue around her own adult Korean adoptee experiences and she began to understand the relationship of her own experiences within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Amongst the participants that used KADI social media, meeting Korean adoptees online was important to gain insights into their lived experiences and the stories of their lives.

### 8.2.2 Stories of who you are – the open, honest experiences.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study expressed how KADI social media facilitates sharing adoption narratives to advance discussions around Korean adoption. Several adoptees in the study expressed new understandings of Korean adoption from the Korean adoptee digital diaspora. Brittany points out that the online presence of KADI social media is important in learning about Korean adoption.

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150 Banana is a common term in Korean adoptee literature, see *Chapter One.*
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Social media is definitely a positive thing, for me at least. It just opens your eyes to everyone’s different stories. It allows you to participate and to meet other people, to get more information about everything adoption – about other peoples’ reactions and resources. (Brittany)

Brittany appreciated the advancement of Korean adoption knowledge and she felt that she benefited from it as a resource.

Sharing personal adoption narratives online may help strengthen Korean adoptee connections and validate a sense of Korean adoptee kinship. Wendy, for example, discovered the advantages of Korean adoptee digital diasporas: “I never had that real bonding experience with other adoptees. Online, I found really handy because I could just go – ‘Here, is my story,’ – and everyone was so interested.” Later, she described this connection as, “They’re [Korean adoptees are] kind of a part of you.” Wendy appreciated the ability to tell her personal story to other Korean adoptees online. She recognized this unique sense of Korean adoptee kinship.

When expressing personal and honest adoption experiences, KADI social media has the potential to build a sense of openness within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Crystal acknowledged a sense of openness in sharing adoption lived experiences on KADI social media, she said: “I think that people [Korean adoptees] can sometimes be a lot more open online, which is good and understandable.” Rachel also explored this sense of candor, “I think with social media and online forums and blogs and things like that, you can be more honest.” Both Crystal and Rachel’s comments reflect a further affinity amongst Korean adoptees when sharing adoption narratives online.

Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants valued the ability to communicate openly their own Korean adoptee story. The personal experiences on KADI social media integrate a sense of Korean adoptee kinship and mutual understanding of lived experiences. Participant Brittany conveyed the advantages of a mutual appreciation between Korean adoptees online:

Sometimes if you want to put a point across or if you want to make a statement or a comment about something – it’s not like everyone’s on you if they don’t agree with you or anything like that. I think everyone who is adopted has a fair amount of respect for each other’s stories, and they do know that it’s a sensitive issue. (Brittany)

Brittany’s comment illustrated a sense of honest and open Korean adoptee awareness from her observations in Korean adoptee digital diasporas. The data suggests that sharing
knowledge, narratives, and discussions around Korean adoption in Korean adoptee digital diasporas is an important part of understanding personal adoption experiences.

Closely connected to the idea of digital diasporas are the concepts of collective identity and diasporic mobility (J. Brinkerhoff, 2009; Everett, 2009). The importance of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora online was a strong finding. The social connectedness from shared Korean adoptee experiences in KADI social media provides a form of Korean adoptee collective identity and cultural citizenship (E. Kim, 2009).

### 8.3 Approaches to KADI Social Media

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study illustrated different stories, opinions and interactions with other Korean adoptees via KADI social media. From their individual interactions in Korean adoptee digital diasporas, participants in this study commented on the appropriateness of KADI social media behaviors and dialogues given the complexities surrounding Korean adoption. Section 8.3 outlines some of participants’ approaches to KADI social media: sensitivities around sharing personal stories (Section 8.3.1), constructive adoption discussions (Section 8.3.2), and hiding behind digital identities (Section 8.3.3).

#### 8.3.1 Sensitivities around sharing personal stories.

As conveyed in the last section (8.2.2), adult Korean Australian adoptee participants reflected on the significance of sharing adoption experiences with other Korean adoptees online. Interactions within Korean adoptee digital diasporas are reflective discussions and interpretations of Korean adoption experiences. As the personal lived experiences of Korean adoptees can be confronting, participants illuminated concerns surrounding the intensity and negativity within KADI social media.

Participant Sarah found herself navigating through various adoption narratives online:

> *There is the one [KADI social media] for people who have had contact with their birth families, and another one for Korean adoptees in general... But going through them, you realise there’s so many different opinions. People experience so many different things. It’s interesting. But then, actually, you just get to a point where – I’ve heard this same, it’s not the same story, but it sounds like the same story* [emphasis added]. (Sarah)

Sarah spoke of the likeness in Korean adoption narratives. She was interested in different Facebook groups with certain adoption lived experiences. In contrast, Haley cautioned around pessimism, which made her reevaluate her KADI social media participation:
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You have the same story if you’re adopted but I’ve just found that everyone’s got such different stories – and I know I find it hard… I found a lot of Korean adoptees on the Internet are not optimistic at all. I’m not optimistic all the time but I can’t find any optimism in any of these groups. (Haley)

Haley reflected on her online interactions with Korean adoptees and she found too much negativity within KADI social media.

As KADI social media is an open space, research participants spoke of encountering some challenging and upsetting views. As such, Tiffany addressed her trepidations with using KADI social media:

Some control within the group, perhaps not controlling what people say. But just so you don’t have to stumble across opinions that are going to upset you straightaway. And if you choose to go into that particular section of the forum, then you know you’re about to see things that you don’t agree with – rather than the whole Facebook page is just people posting whatever they want. (Tiffany)

Tiffany noticed that she was challenged with certain viewpoints. She advised that KADI social media could be moderated. On one hand, sharing open and honest personal adoption stories online may build a sense of Korean adoptee kinship. On the other hand, stories involving confronting opinions may hinder Korean adoptee participation in KADI social media. Amongst the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, it seemed to be personal balance in the sharing of adoption experiences online.

Social media is often characterized by the Internet pejorative term “too much information” (TMI), akin to oversharing. Adult Korean Australian adoptees relayed similar TMI concerns with KADI social media. Patricia noticed that some Korean adoptee blogs were overtly challenging with extreme opinions, she expressed, “they’re a bit too intense.” She later pointed out: “A lot of adoptees are against adoption altogether – because of the way their childhood has been. So reading those sorts of things was a bit of an eye-opener.”

Patricia noticed that oversharing could polarize adoption/adoptee experiences. Adult Korean Australian adoptees related to the adoption narratives but also found certain sensitivities within adoption stories on KADI social media.

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151 Initialism of Too Much Information. TMI is an Internet slang and pejorative term used to indicate that someone has revealed more personal information than you necessarily need or want to know. See Correia (2012) “When is too much information really TMI?”
8.3.2 Constructive adoption discussions.

Another interesting observation within KADI social media is the nature of the constructive argument. Participants in this study illustrated some of the argumentative behaviors and conversations found within Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Research participants noted that online Korean adoptee discussions sometimes are like face-to-face arguments. Heather, for instance, expressed her concerns in the most extreme example:

*I see that there’s a lot of negativity on the [KADI social media] pages, but those people choose to interact like that. They’re obviously venting or expressing something they need to express. All those conversations, I guess, are valuable to someone. I actually think it’s quite humorous sometimes. I’m looking at them, going, “Oh, my God! They’re beating each other up on Facebook.”* (Heather)

Heather pointed out this online interaction seemed like an offline quarrel with people “beating each other up.” Participant Tiffany also noticed divergent views on KADI social media. Tiffany described online Korean adoptee forums as honest but confrontational. She commented that it seems like “thousands of people are just arguing with each other,” and she felt overwhelmed with the aggressive attitudes. Wendy perceived online arguments as unnecessary, “It’s not the place for it. It’s social media.” Research participants suggested that this online argumentative conduct is unwelcome.

Despite the challenging responses on constructive Korean adoptee arguments, some adoptees in the study indicated that even the intense and challenging adoption interactions are beneficial. Crystal expressed that it is worthwhile to understand all of difficulties that some Korean adoptees face:

*Occasionally find there are some extreme views on the Internet. Often in some of the Facebook groups like the people that post the most, that’s because they’re having kind of a difficult time with something and sometimes they might say, “I’m really emotional or like really angry or whatever” but overall it’s been really positive.* (Crystal)

Like Crystal, Rachel found advantages in the challenging discussions on KADI social media, “There is endless benefits and it [KADI social media] will only grow throughout time… Yeah, I don’t really see many challenges. I think mainly all benefits, whether it’s constructive criticism – that is still a benefit” [emphasis added]. Rachel suggested that criticisms provide positive and negative insights. Crystal and Rachel observed that this openly argumentative online environment is a beneficial resource for Korean adoptees to learn about alternative viewpoints.
8.3.3 Hiding behind digital identities.

As the earlier sections established, KADI social media provides a space for Korean adoptees to share differing opinions and attitudes but often Korean adoptee digital diasporas allow anonymous individuals and views. As such, Korean adoptee digital identities emerged from adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ experiences in KADI social media. Individuals often remain anonymous in their online behavior with virtual personalities or “digital identities” (ACMA, 2013). These digital identities include behaviors where individuals post anonymously online, use pseudonyms, or create online personas such as the Internet pejorative of a “keyboard warrior.”

Exemplifying this, participant Patricia highlighted the protection that individuals feel when they are anonymously online:

*People are protected when you’re online as well. You’re hiding behind a computer* [emphasis added]. *I mean, there are a lot of things that I think a lot of those people wouldn’t say if they were face-to-face with somebody. Obviously because you’re on a computer, you can just say whatever you want* [emphasis added]. *Again, things can be misinterpreted too.*  
(Patricia)

Patricia’s comment refers to the behavior of a keyboard warrior, when online personas are likely to be highly opinionated but not usually aggressive or assertive offline. She also remarked that anonymous online mannerisms and communication are difficult to interpret.

Participants in this study expressed a sense of caution with other Korean adoptees that they did not know “in real life (IRL)" or met face-to-face. Possibly, part of the adoptees’ cautiousness with KADI social media was the occurrence of online arguments to emotionally shame or try to damage adoptees, including “trolling” or contact from trolls. Heather encountered trolling behaviors.

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152 A keyboard warrior is an Internet slang and pejorative term used to indicate online individuals identified by their aggressive or demeaning written communications. See Dennis (2014) “The myth of the keyboard warrior.”

153 Initialism of In Real Life. IRL is an Internet slang used to indicate that online interaction is a different category of social interaction. This phrase is used to distinguish actual events, people, and activities from fictional online worlds or interactions on the Internet.

154 Troll(s) are an Internet slang and pejorative term used to describe individuals that purposefully pick arguments and attack others on the Internet for self-amusement and to cause maximum discord. Online trolling is “the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the Internet with no apparent instrumental purpose.” See Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus (2014) “Trolls just want to have fun.”
Trolls and trolling are enabled by anonymity. Danielle commented on trolls as well, “I don’t know how bad it is now, but every now and again, you would get people trolling and stuff in the forums.” Danielle later voiced that trolling behavior should not be tolerated because the adult Korean Australian adoptee population is small. Both Heather and Danielle indicated that trolls and trolling are destructive in Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Participants in this study expressed emotional considerations when discussing personal opinions on Korean adoption with anonymous online Korean adoptees in Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Heather revealed an emotional interaction with an anonymous Korean adoptee:

She [another Korean adoptee] had this opinion, which was so strong, and she was just voicing over everybody, just trying to get it out there. It made me really upset because she wasn’t listening to anyone – it was just her opinion. I just had to leave [the online forum] because I can’t handle this conversation. It was really emotional for everyone [original emphasis]. I guess it does happen in real life, but you can walk away. I suppose you can walk away from Facebook too, but I have a feeling that people just keep going, because it’s anonymous [emphasis added]. It’s just – it gets personal. (Heather)

Heather highlighted the difficulties in discussing Korean adoption with anonymous online Korean adoptees.

In this connection, these anonymous Korean adoptee online interactions delve into concerns with anonymous Korean adoptee digital identities. Participants in this study described feeling supported in sharing their stories and opinions online while at the same time guarded by their own perceptions of other Korean adoptees. Within Korean adoptee digital diasporas, issues of identities online are of concern when anonymous individuals are believed to have perceptions of shared social connectedness. Interactions in Korean adoptee digital diasporas are multifaceted and research participants spoke of their various approaches to KADI social media.

8.4 Facebook Connections

At the time of this study, Facebook surfaced as the most widely utilized social media network amongst adult Korean Australian adoptee participants. Social networking sites, including Facebook, were highly used by adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study (96%) and KADI social media (54%). In Korean adoptee digital diasporas, this trend of Facebook use
mirrors other Korean adoptee networking (Jo, 2006) where Korean adoptees seek a space to voice who they are and share their lived experiences. Facebook is now that diasporic space.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees engaged with Facebook as part of social media in general and KADI social media. Participants in this study conversed in specific Facebook terminology. As an illustration, *to Facebook*\(^{155}\) is a subjective verb and an action; Facebooking is presently using Facebook; Facebooked is the act of previously using Facebook; or Facestalk (Facebook lurking or stalking) is the use of Facebook to follow an individual without their knowledge. The burgeoning use of Facebook may provide new insights into Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Facebook has a number of functions that help connect people; it can benefit individuals as well as society as a whole (N. Lee, 2013). Facebook provides social information on what an individual may *Like*\(^{156}\), support, purchase or gain interests in (Lee, 2013). It also allows individuals to communicate with each other through the building of networks of *Facebook friends* and allows *Facebook groups* of individuals with similar interests to be formed. The self-creation of a Facebook account and/or profile enables individuals to create their own digital identities.

This Facebook section is divided into three parts. Section 8.4.1 explains the role of Facebook online social networking to Korean adoptees. This section then explores Facebook behaviors observed by the research participant, Korean adoption preoccupation and adoptee ties (8.4.2) and Korean adoptee voyeur (8.4.3).

8.4.1 **Instantaneous Facebooking and Korean adoptee Facebook groups.**

Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants discussed self-identifying as a Korean adoptee on Facebook. In particular on Facebook groups and/or pages, participants in this study spoke of negotiating their own attitudes and interactions with other Korean adoptees. Facebook provides a constant flow of Korean adoption information. Facebook automates social

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\(^{155}\) *To Facebook* is an Internet slang used to indicate the verbification of Facebook. It is a colloquial term and not yet defined in a physical dictionary. However, the verbification of Facebook was used by the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants in this study.

\(^{156}\) "Like" is public icon on Facebook and it is an easy way to let someone know that you enjoy something on their Facebook profile, without leaving a comment.
Participant Heather described a steady flow of Korean adoption information automatically emerging on her Facebook profile. She explained: “I suppose a lot of the information [on Korean adoption] that comes through my Facebook, through the pages, which I am active in or not active in. I’ve ‘Liked’ the pages, groups or whatever so I see them [the information] coming up.” Facebook and other social networking sites use computer automation to release updated social information for comment or contact, and Tiffany prevented this Facebook automation, “I’m still a member of the [Korean adoption] group but I don’t ever look at the posts and I’ve blocked the posts from going onto my main Facebook site.” In relation to this point, the participation of Facebook in general and Korean adoption Facebook varied greatly amongst the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed.

Participants in this study explored their use of Facebook groups to communicate and connect with other Korean adoptees. Adult Korean Australian adoptees mentioned the two specific Facebook groups: one group for Korean adoptees in Australia; and one group for Korean adoptees that were adopted from the Korean adoption agency, Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS). Despite the online presence of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, some participants were simply unaware of that such groups existed. For instance, Faith remembered when she discovered the Facebook group for Korean adoptees in Australia:

\[I\text{ just stayed up until midnight and was reading every single post that went through. Because it was like – wow, this is blowing my mind – in a positive way, …and I actually thought of deleting my Facebook account. But then, I found this [Korean adoptees in Australia Facebook group] and I was like – okay, I’ll keep it. (Faith)\]

Upon realizing a Facebook group existed where she could connect her lived experiences, Faith decided to keep her Facebook account. Faith gained a sense of personal adoption awareness from reading other adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences.

The ESWS Facebook group is a collective social network for Korean adoptees that were adopted out by ESWS who share this particular experience. Patricia assigned herself as a member of the ESWS Facebook group because she noticed, “There doesn’t really seem to be much else online.” Patricia commented that information for adult Korean Australian adoptees is limited and that the ESWS Facebook group was the largest Facebook Korean adoptee
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population she had encountered. Perhaps, it was important for Patricia to find an diasporic group that she personally related to rather than the larger Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

Research participants stated that they gained Korean adoption information and connected with other Korean Australian adoptees through these Facebook groups. To clarify this point, Michelle mentioned, “I think that's [the Facebook group] probably the most active place where people [Korean Australian adoptees] do interact.” The presence of this particular Facebook group provides Michelle a specific space for interaction with other adult Korean Australian adoptees. However, Rachel was unaware that there are Facebook groups with a focus on adult Korean Australian adoptees, she remarked, “I didn’t realise that people would have Korean adoption Facebook groups...” Rachel clarified that she would be interested in connecting with the adult Korean Australian adoptee Facebook group now that she is aware of its existence.

As adult Korean Australian adoptees’ Facebook activities transpired, participants in this study elaborated on particular Facebook interactions and behaviors. In this research, it was suggested that Korean adoptees may project virtual personas due to the sensitive conversations around Korean adoption and the availability to remain anonymous on Facebook.

8.4.2 Korean adoption preoccupation and instant adoptee affinity.

Facebook is an accessible environment to engage in conversation about personal Korean adoption experiences and interact with other Korean adoptees who are preoccupied with their individual Korean adoption experiences. Korean adoptee-only Facebook groups inclined an intensity around Korean adoption. In this section, Korean adoption preoccupation is characterized by a fixation with adoptee experiences, highly sensitive emotional ties with adoption and other adoptees, and a tendency for adoptee-only interactions.

In explaining such experiences, Haley described a pattern of Korean adoptees constantly engaging with Korean adoption information on Facebook. While she has an interest in participating in Korean adoptee digital diasporas, she does not have a passion for Korean adoption like other Korean adoptees on Facebook.

*I’m not as passionate about it [Korean adoption] as all of the adoptees on the Internet are. That's what I find, they will be really passionate – the ones that post all the time on Facebook about it. And there will be just the ones like me, who just sit on there and just read everything. As much as I would like to be passionate about it, it’s just too much
Haley discussed how some online Korean adoptees are absorbed with their Korean adopteeness in Facebook groups.

Participants in this study expanded on how some Korean adoptees inundated them with Facebook friend(ing) requests. This pattern of Korean adoptee Facebook friending is illustrated by continuously adding Korean adoptees as Facebook friends. This immediate desire for Korean adoptee Facebook friendships is a reflection of Korean adoption preoccupation where Korean adoptees automatically think that they should be Facebook friends with any Korean adoptee, akin to “Korean adoptee intimacy” (E. Kim, 2009).

Heather expressed her apprehensions on Korean adoptee Facebook friending:

> You know when you go to Korea and everyone becomes your friend on Facebook, I didn’t really like that. There were a few people who I just thought – I know you really want to be my friend, but – they kept on. I kept on saying, “No, this [Facebook] is my personal stuff.” I feel as though, “You’re more of an acquaintance than a friend…” Facebook is definitely my personal thing and you don’t really know those people [other Korean adoptees]. Even though you might be proud of the [Korean adoptee] community, they’re not good friends. So sometimes, I guess I feel a bit like, it’s a bit strange. (Heather)

Heather found that being part of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora does not automatically make all Korean adoptees instant Facebook friends.

It is important to demonstrate how the overt adding of Korean adoptee contacts as Facebook friends influenced adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ feelings about KADI social media. Participant Thomas explained his skepticism on Korean adoptee Facebook friending:

> Talking about social media, normally I only connect with people who I’ve at least met in-person. I don’t like to make new connections through social media. Sometimes I meet someone or I know who they are, so they send a friend request to me or we somehow connect. And it’s quite a negative thing. If I don’t know them that well and then I do connect with them on social media, I find out more about their personality and I’m not impressed. I don’t know if that’s being too judgmental or too harsh but normally I decide that they’re a weirdo or they’re not really as nice as I thought they would be. That hasn’t happened often, just a few times I met some weirdos online – they were adopted Koreans. (Thomas)

Thomas explained that it was off-putting for him to add Korean adoptee Facebook friends that he did not know IRL. Participants, like Thomas, mentioned concerns with this incessant Korean adoptee Facebook friending.
Participants interviewed in this study felt that some Korean adoptees were excessively obsessed with Korean adoption on Facebook. Consequently, these Facebook groups and Facebook friending enable behaviors around Korean adoption preoccupation. Although each adult Korean Australian adoptee participant detailed their apprehensions about Facebook, it was interesting that they ultimately continued to participate. Perhaps, the draw of Korean adoptee digital diasporas is that it is an anonymous space to think deeply about Korean adoption, something that is important in their lives.

8.4.3 Korean adoptee voyeur and adoptee dramas.

Overwhelmingly, Facebook voyeur habits emerged in Facebook activities. In this section, the Korean adoptee voyeur is a Korean adoptee passive observer who witnesses the production of Korean adoption activity that transpires within Facebook. For instance in this study, Facebook stalking is when Korean adoptees review another person’s Facebook profile to access personal information, look at pictures, read Facebook comments and gain knowledge about this individual without any direct interaction. Facebook lurking is when Korean adoptees silently read information but never actively or directly engage or voice opinions in the background of Facebook groups, profiles, or Facebook pages. Both Facebook stalking and Facebook lurking are common habits of a Korean adoptee voyeur.

As presented earlier in this chapter, Korean adoptee diasporas are a sensitive topic with potential for adoptees to relate emotionally to other Korean adoptees’ experiences. Korean adoptee TMI’s and oversharling are what the participants in this study considered Facebook drama(s). A Korean adoptee voyeur visits Facebook to see the emotional, personal dramatics of Korean adoptees online. This is explained by Heather who divulged her curiosities:

_The updates that I get – range from me being intrigued by the conversations the adoptees have because there’s a lot of emotional and political conversations that go on – I look at [and I am ] kind of horrified. But just out of curiosity, I have a look every now and then to see what’s going on there [on the Facebook groups]. (Heather)_

Heather reflected that the more intense Korean adoption information is the most interesting.

Korean adoptee dramas range from oversharlig of certain adoption lived experiences to Korean adoptees voicing controversal opinions about adoption to rile or troll other adoptees. Korean adoptee voyeurs continuously read perceptions of adoption experiences without having to be directly involved in Facebook dramas. For instance, Sarah observed alarming stories found on Facebook: “Reading up online about some of the horrible things that people
endure that are adopted in other countries and some of the abuse they experience and all that sort of stuff. It’s just horrible.” Patricia mentioned that Facebook commenting is not necessarily useful and she recognized that other Korean adoptees may be concerned with different adoption issues.

I don’t comment or anything but I do read everything that’s on there [Facebook]… I’m completely fine with the whole adoption thing and a lot of people on there seem to have some issues with it. They’re very vocal about their thoughts and their feelings about it [being a Korean adoptee]. I’m just not going to comment on it. (Patricia)

Facebook lurking was the most common Korean adoptee voyeur behavior amongst participants in this study. Lurking generally included reading but not commenting directly on Facebook. Exemplifying this, Thomas considered himself as a Facebook lurker as he recognized his Facebook participant observer behaviors.

I do have to look at Facebook. I’m more of a lurker. I don’t know if that’s a term. It sounds a bit creepy, but I just like to see what other people are up to without really catching up with them. (Thomas)

Thomas spoke of wanting to know his Facebook friends’ activities without directly contacting them. Faith discussed the importance of being both active and passive on Facebook:

The element of social media is that you can be there or you don’t have to be there. You can still participate, I guess silently. But you can also actively participate in it. I like it that way. You always know that it’s there and it’s a really good thing, definitely a positive thing. (Faith)

To clarify this point by Faith, the mere presence of KADI social media was crucial to her. Lurking is advantageous for many adoptees who are not ready to publically share their diasporic adoption journeys.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study illuminated that their Korean adoptee voyeur practices reflect an engagement within KADI social media. Passive Facebook lurking is a way that adult Korean Australian adoptees feel that they are part of Korean adoptee digital diasporas without actively participating in the adoptee dramas.

8.5 Social Media as a Catalyst in Integrating Diasporas

This last section describes the integration of social media into the participants’ online and offline lives. Online experiences are represented by exchanges on the Internet and offline experiences are represented by face-to-face interactions (see Chapter Six for the survey results). Adoptees in this study explored both online and offline complexities in Korean
adoptee relationships and interactions. For adult Korean Australian adoptee participants, KADI social media is a valued supportive resource where online and offline lives intersect.

The adoptees that participated in this research study provided both online and offline observations on what it means to be a Korean adoptee and how social media is integrated into adult Korean Australian adoptees’ lived experiences. N. Lee (2013) described the relationship of online and offline lives: “For many people, life online is as real as life offline. The two lives are intertwined; each of them affects the other, both in the psychological and physical sense” (p. 150). This coexistence of online and offline continues in Korean adoptee diasporas. Adoptees in this study described the reasons for their personal interactions with other Korean adoptees. Participant Thomas referred to a social connectedness with other Korean Australian adoptees: “I kind of wished there was a network, an Australian adoptees network. It would be nice to be able to meet and talk about my experience with those guys.”

Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants explored their offline interactions with Korean adoptees. Survey responses indicated that 56% of respondents do not interact face-to-face with other Korean adoptees. Olivia pointed out the geographic dispersion: “In Australia, it’s sort of very few and far between. They [Korean Australian adoptees] are not all in the same spot.” Research participants addressed the constraints on developing an adult Korean Australian adoptee face-to-face community and the merits of Korean adoptee offline interaction supplemented by KADI social media participation.

8.5.1 Adoptee relationships and being part of a supportive community.

Both online to offline and offline to online exchanges build a Korean adoption foundation to develop adoptee interactions and relationships. Adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study illustrated Korean adoptee friendships and relationships developed from KADI social media. Online and offline Korean adoptee interaction is important in nurturing an accessible and supportive Korean adoptee community. Crystal relayed her thoughts on the adult Korean Australian adoptee network:

It’s just so hard to find them [adult Korean Australian adoptees] and connect with them and bring them together. Generally, people don’t want to go to a social event if there are just a handful of people. But I would love for there to be opportunities for Australian Korean adoptees to kind of meet each other and support each other in person as well as online. (Crystal)

As part of the foundation to a community, KADI social media may provide an avenue to organize adult Korean Australian adoptees within Australia.
Participant Sarah shared her experience of developing Korean adoptee offline friendships that resulted from online contact:

*To connect with other adoptees – I’ve really enjoyed recently in the last few months being able to actually physically meet up with Korean adoptees, moving it from online to actually interacting with these people. It’s nice to be able to actually hang out and build other friendships. Although, at the moment, I’m finding that the Korean adoptee groups that I’m with – they’re still separate to my other friendships. It still takes time.* (Sarah)

Sarah emphasized that her friendships with other Korean adoptees are different from her other friendships. She then clarified that relationships can grow with time. Brittany commented that she thinks that both online and offline exchanges are important in maintaining friendships:

*I think the face-to-face contact helps nurture a relationship if you’re looking for it. I don’t think I would have been as good a friend with some of the people [Korean adoptees] that I’ve met, than if I just continued to have a social media relationship with them. It’s good to have both* [emphasis added] *because the online social network allows you to cast a wider net to people. I think it’s also important to have that face-to-face contact because as a base of communication, it’s better.* (Brittany)

Brittany addressed this online and offline intersection of Korean adoptee friendships.

Korean adoptee diasporas are positioned around a perceived Korean adoptee kinship, bond, connection or as described earlier in *Chapter Four*, “Korean adoptee intimacies” (E. Kim, 2010). Through a sense of shared Korean adoption connections, adoptees in this study revealed the importance of Korean adoptee interactions when building personal Korean adoptee relationships. Olivia illustrated the supportive nature of the Korean adoptee community in Korea:

*The interaction is great because you all get along because you all have something in common. You can relate and you support each other – and you see the best and the worst. Especially when you’re in Korea, surrounded by other adoptees meeting their families for the first time or the ones that don’t get to meet their families that really want to. I find it is a great support network.* (Olivia)

Olivia elaborated that supporting other Korean adoptees is invaluable.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees have differing thoughts on maintaining interactions with other Korean adoptees. Participant Brittany explained that she wanted to connect her KADI social media with her childhood Korean adoptee contacts.

*I think in Australia – I haven’t really researched it a lot, but we’re kind of further behind as far as integration of new information about our adoptions... Facebooking for the Korean [adoptees] I remembered from the club that I had as a kid. I tried to kind of get in contact with them. But most of them don’t – not because they don’t like the idea of their adoption or reject adoption – but they just don’t have that mentality of wanting to
Brittany sensed that other Korean Australian adoptees are ambivalent towards building relationships with other Korean adoptees. Conversely, Tiffany acknowledged that she feels indifferent about Korean Australian adoptee interactions:

"After meeting a few other Korean Australian adoptees, it was nice to feel that connection but I don’t feel like I need to find any more people. If an Australian Korean adoptee group started, I don’t think I would be part of it." (Tiffany)

Tiffany expressed that she was not interested in seeking adult Korean Australian adoptee relationships. Both Brittany and Tiffany suggest that Korean adoptee interactions, relationships, friendships, and community mean various things to adoptees.

"Our relationships are different."

Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants discussed their relational attitudes towards connections with other Korean adoptees. While Korean adoptees share this common bond, individual adoptee personalities diverge with different interests and feelings towards adoption. Participant Michelle best explored the differences in her experiences with face-to-face versus online Korean adoptee interaction.

"I think they’re [face-to-face versus online] really different actually. I think it can be really awkward meeting other adoptees face-to-face because at the end of the day sometimes your shared connection, your shared interests stop with adoption.

There are the kids, babies that I came over with. That’s what our connection is – that we all came from Korea at the same time. We’re the same age, we were all adopted. That’s where it stops. So when the discussion about adoption stops, sometimes I have nothing else to say [original emphasis]."

"I think some other adoptees – like I know one in particular, he’s just shit scared of everything. He’s really scared of everything Korean and just not into it. I think he finds it really confrontational meeting up with myself and the others because he’s just like, ‘You guys are just so full on – you know things [about adoption] and you’ve been to Korea. You want to go and have Korean barbecue. It’s just too much.’ He’s fine talking to us on Facebook and email or whatever. But when it comes to face-to-face and he’s a ‘No.’"

"I think it’s also if you’re an Australian adoptee, like most Australian adoptees, I don’t have many Asian friends. I couldn’t even count them on one hand. I think it’s also another perception thing. Sometimes, I don’t want to go out with all these other adoptees and look like a bunch of Asians [original emphasis]." (Michelle)

Michelle’s comment reflects a further awareness to interacting with other Korean adoptees. She appreciates the sense of Korean adopteeness when with other Korean adoptees but she
also feels ambivalence about that same connection. She also raised the challenges of interacting with other Korean adoptees face-to-face and being identified as “bunch of Asians.”

In this context, Korean adoptees may vacillate between personal perceptions and opinions on Korean adoption and the value of connections and relationships with other Korean adoptees. For example, participants in this study addressed the difficulties when interacting with other Korean adoptees. Haley elaborated on this perspective:

*Over the internet, a typed message is about as personal as it gets. It’s not like actually talking to them [other Korean adoptees]. Then again, I have talked to Korean adoptees in person and didn’t get along with them. I didn’t have that connection with them at all. I think it made me dislike them more because the thing is — I find we’re all the same* [emphasis added]. *Every adoptee I’ve met in person, we’re all Asian but we dress like White people, you know, and the Whiter we dress the better we are* [emphasis added]. (Haley)

Haley recognized that Korean adoptees have this White persona and she has negative sentiments about connecting with other Korean adoptees face-to-face. Thus, she distanced herself from both Korean adoptee interactions. Further, Victor commented on the boundaries imposed on his Korean adoptee relationships, he revealed, “You go out to meet your Korean adoptee friends and you have your own friends.” Victor separated his friendships demonstrating a shift in how he thinks about Korean adoptees from his “own friends.”

While the Internet and KADI social media affords connection to other adoptees, many of the participants in the study questioned their interpersonal/impersonal relationships with other Korean adoptees. Participant Olivia commented on her marginal interactions:

*I don’t go out of my way to get involved in social media with other adoptees – it’s mainly just to touch base – say hello/happy birthday if you need to, what’s going on in your life, when are you going back to Korea, all of that sort of thing.* (Olivia)

For Olivia, her online contact with other Korean adoptees is not something that she actively seeks. Thomas considered his lack of interest in online Korean adoptee interactions: “I don’t interact with many Australian adoptees at all. Even today, I’m connected to one of them on Facebook but we don’t really communicate with each other that much or at all.” Thomas acknowledged his opportunity to reconnect with adoptees but he was hesitant about the merits of keeping in contact with other Korean adoptees online.

Adult Korean Australian adoptees shared that their interpersonal adoptee relationships outside of online interactions varied. Some participants utilized KADI social media to see or read what is happening in other Korean adoptees’ lives and other participants did not engage
with Korean adoptees in either online or offline. To clarify this point, perhaps both online and offline Korean adoptee interaction have their own significance in their own ways.

8.5.2 Attachments of Korean yesteryear reframed by social media.

As adoptees in the study discussed the complexities of their Korean yesteryear (see Section 7.4.3), social media developed opportunities to raise awareness when thinking about Korean family or attachments of Korean yesteryear. In this research, social media acts as an empowering space to provide Korean Australian adoptees support and information stemming from their Korean adoptee diasporas.

In reflecting on the impact of social media to how the participants in this study process their past adoption experiences or their Korean families, adult Korean Australian adoptee participants described understanding their Korean past with online strategies. Faith, for example, described how social media helped her unify her efforts to search for her Korean family: “You’re so desperate – I mean I used to Google my [Korean] mum’s name all the time – on Facebook, on everything, just to see if she’d pop up.” Faith found support on KADI social media for adoptees that were searching for their Korean families, “There are people at different stages and that’s [social media] the only open forum that they can be honest with each other.” Thus, in seeking to integrate her Korean adoption resources, Faith found KADI social media important.

Social media provides assistance in how adult Korean Australian adoptees may reconnect with their Korean families. When Korean adoptees want to learn or search about their Korean past, social media is an avenue that lessens the geographic nature, language, and cultural barriers of Korean adoptee diasporas. Haley outlined searching for her Korean family through social media:

*I go on Facebook even now and type in my [Korean birth] mother’s name… So I don’t know, it’s a bit of a comfort thing, I guess. Instead of just sitting at home not being able to do anything, I can just sit on Facebook and do that if I want. [Thinking that] she could be one of these people because I know a lot of people find their birth families by Facebook. I’ve heard that story a lot.*

Social media is a resource in shaping how Korean Australian adoptees think about their past and this is exampled by research participants who use social media to try to connect with their Korean families.
Chapter Eight: Recognizing the Role of Social Media in Adult Korean Australian Adoptees’ Lives

Social media is important in furthering our understanding of the contemporary concerns around adult Korean Australian adoptee connections. The conversations around social media may develop into new dialogues for the future understandings of Korean adoptee diasporas.

8.6 Summary
This chapter found that KADI social media supports connections amongst adult Korean Australian adoptees. Participants in this study described their KADI social media experiences with other Korean adoptees as facilitating knowledge sharing views and emotions around Korean adoption while providing participants access to adoptee networks of support and sociability. Within KADI social media, online social connectedness stemmed from the shared sense of lived experiences.

Despite the challenges of Korean adoptee digital diasporas, research participants are empowered by sharing stories of their Korean adoptee-ness, helping them and other Korean adoptees to reduce their sense of isolation. The use KADI social media is a personal choice and it is beneficial for adult Korean Australian adoptees to be exposed to the greater transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. KADI social media facilitates adoption conversations amongst Korean adoptees whom they may or may not get along with. For Korean adoptees, KADI social media is a distinctive online diasporic space unlike any offline space in Korean adoptee diasporas. Perhaps for adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, the lack of Korean adoption resources influenced them to continuously access Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Given the limitations of Korean adoptee face-to-face interactions in Australia, KADI social media possibly felt like the only choice and participants spoke of KADI social strengths and weaknesses. Participants in this study also offered varying insights into their online interactions with other Korean adoptees from Korean adoptee friendships to finding Korean families.

Within KADI social media connections, this chapter specifically focused on adoptee online interactions where standards of behavior and appropriateness were of concern. Adult Korean Australian adoptees addressed their online strategies in discussing adoption experiences in a safe and anonymous space. Facebook emerged as an important social media platform. The Facebook findings in this study may be transferrable to other Korean adoptee social networking sites that facilitate Korean adoptee-only interactions. Some of the trends and behaviors reflected in Facebook participation, including Korean adoption preoccupation and
Korean adoptee voyeur, challenged adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ involvement in KADI social media.

Most participants in this study recognized the separation between KADI social media and social media in general. Amongst the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, I think that they asked themselves why do I participate in this digital connection with other Korean adoptees? KADI social media was important for the research participants to recognize the different stages of adoption journeys and being online created a unique space for them to be exposed to and understand the experiences of other Korean adoptees. Perhaps, Korean adoptee digital diasporas are a noteworthy resource that merit mention as a replacement for Korean adoptee face-to-face interaction in Australia because there is no large-scale formal Korean adoptee group established to support and promote such interaction. In sum, this chapter illustrated how adult Korean Australian adoptees participate in Korean adoptee digital diasporas. The next chapter is a discussion of the three findings chapters.
Chapter Nine: Discussion

Do you ever get called bananas? Yellow on the outside and White on the inside? (Wendy)

I mentioned before it [being a Korean Australian adoptee] makes me more Australian because I’m kind of sticking to my home country now. I’ve got my mum and dad here. I’m not trying to make a complicated situation – I’ve got two families, one here and one overseas. If anything, it just makes me, brings me back to where I was in the first place. (Thomas)

If you’re adopted, you’re an orphan; you’re an orphan in any country. It doesn’t matter; you will have that same feeling. It’s very interesting meeting non-Korean adoptees as well because they all have that same broken heart in everything that you do. (Olivia)

9.1 Introduction

This study sought to fill the gap in the research on adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences in relation to Korean Australian adoptee diasporas. It investigates adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences, in particular their engagement with Korean adoptee diasporas, the experiences or consciousness derived from the adoptees’ migration from Korea to Australia, and their social media involvement within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. This chapter further discusses the three preceding findings chapters while addressing the research questions:

• How do adult Korean Australian adoptees engage in Korean adoptee diasporas, and how is this engagement reflected in their lived experiences?

• Within Korean adoptee digital diasporas, how do adult Korean Australian adoptees construct their experiences in social media?

This chapter discusses and interprets the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ experiences and perspectives, linking the findings with the research questions. The data drawn is from the structured quantitative online survey (see Chapter Six) and qualitative semi-structured focus groups and interviews (see Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight).

Several theoretical frameworks are used as a basis for this research (see Chapter Four) and this chapter examines the findings in the context of these frameworks. I draw on Korean adoptee researcher Tobias Hübinette’s (2004) “Korean adoptee third space” to examine Korean adoptee diasporas as complex transnational phenomenon with contested notions around forced migration, birth country of origin, sending and receiving nations, adoptive nation and citizenship, identity, homeland, belonging or acceptance, assimilation, foreignness, race, family, connections and community.
Section 9.2 outlines adult Korean Australian adoptees’ poignant insights into their own lives. The participants in this study shared their lived experiences, reflections on their lives in their own words. Section 9.2 is broken into two key subsections: self-Australian (9.2.1), and Korean adopteeness (9.2.2).

Section 9.3 dissects the diasporic spaces of KADI social media within Korean adoptee digital diasporas and identifies the significant role of social media in adoptee diasporas. Social media now enables adoptees all over the world to join together as unique diasporic community. KADI social media in this research includes online social networks that connect adult Korean Australian adoptees through the Internet to build relationships with other Korean adoptees. Korean adoptee digital identities are used in KADI social media (Section 9.3.1). Facebook is a substantial resource for the research participants (Section 9.3.2). KADI social media is a central diasporic space for Korean adoptee diasporas.

While the findings of this study are mainly qualitative in nature, this discussion is an integration of both the qualitative and quantitative data analyzed. A more detailed discussion of the recommendations from this research and directions for future studies are discussed in the next and final chapter.

9.2 Unique Insights Derived From Self-reflection
This first section draws attention to the research participants’ self-reflections as adult Korean Australian adoptees. From the literature review, it was found that little is known about adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. Echoing a lived experience framework from previous Korean adoption studies (E. Kim, 2003; Meier, 1999; Palmer, 2011; Walton, 2009), transformative research and feminist approaches were extremely pertinent when examining the marginalized voices of Korean Australian adoptees. As noted in previous chapters of this thesis, this research recognizes the importance of giving adult Korean Australian adoptees the chance to voice their experiences. In this study’s findings, there was substantial use of the participants’ voices to properly articulate their experiences and ensure their personal experiences, their knowledge, insights, and voices are not overlooked. Throughout this research, the participants recounted their lives as capable agents, expressing their own perceptions and insights.

As presented in Chapter Five, utilizing lived experiences as a methodological concept in this research enabled the participants to share recurring observations of their lives. The decision
to approach this thesis in this way was shaped by my outsider within status (see Chapter One). There is methodological significance in learning from those who have lived through experience. Feminist literature calls attention to the importance of speaking from our own lived experiences. hooks (2000) emphasizes this strength citing comments from one of her students:

We discovered that we had a greater feeling of unity when people focused truthfully on their own experiences without comparing them with those of others in a competitive way. One student, Isabel Yrigoyen, wrote:

We are not equally oppressed. There is no joy in this. We must speak from within us, our own experiences, our own oppressions – taking someone else’s oppression is nothing to feel proud of. **We should never speak for that which we have not felt** [emphasis added]. (p. 59)

Illustratively in this study, participant Victor commented on the importance of telling his story: “**When you’re just telling your story in person, sometimes, they just go along with it. They don’t ask questions… Is it going to put them out of their comfort zone and will it make it awkward?**” In this study, participants reflected on their own adoption experiences, elucidating that adoption is a very real and substantial part of their lives and that their individualized experiences have not been heard. The use of the research participants’ own authentic voices in this thesis conveys their lived experiences, in their own words, representing what they have individually felt. Importantly, a lived experience approach helps provide a lens for examining the narratives of the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed.

The significance of self-reflection and expression of lived experiences acknowledges that adult Korean Australian adoptees are conduits of knowledge on their own lives. While some of the accounts are retrospective in nature, it was found that many of the participants had reflected about their adoptions. Reinforcing this point, the first-hand accounts expressed in the two previous findings chapters recount unique, personal reflections. The experiences shared by the participants in this study were spontaneously communicated, it was as if they were looking at videos of their lives and describing what they saw. Being part of a distinct adoptee diaspora, the research participants spoke of the various ways that their adoption had influenced their lives.
9.2.1 Self-Australian: Australian/not Australian/sometimes Australian/unsure.

This research is believed to be the first study to solely examine adult Korean Australian adoptee diasporas. One of the unique findings of this research is the notion of self-Australian. The term self-Australian in this study individualistically describes research participants’ experiences of identifying with Australia as Korean adoptees. The application of this self-Australian theme draws from the literature on Australian identity studies (Elder, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2008; Horne, 2005), namely that there should be no concrete definition of what is Australian. It was interesting to hear the research participants’ lived experiences in their own words to explore how they felt Australian.

In the findings, I focus on the participants’ own self-identification with Australia and self-reflections as Australians capturing how they feel individually. The findings illustrate that using the term Australian reflects a self-perception. Participants in this study identified how they “feel” in Australia or as Australians. Most significantly is approach that self-Australian identification refers to participants’ self-described sense of being Australian/not Australian/sometimes Australian/unsure Australian identities. To clarify this point, some participants in this study related a sense of ambivalence or danced around their perceptions of an Australian identity, but it is difficult to capture their ambivalences from their words alone. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, Turner, 1982, 1996) links the construct of identities to one’s social world.

It was found that the participants’ self-Australian narratives described a diasporic consciousness. Explained by Hübinette’s “Korean adoptee third space,” adoptee diasporas exist in psychosocial spaces between Korea and adoptive countries (2004, p. 16). For some of the participants in this study, their diasporic consciousness is symbolically evidenced in national, cultural and social identifications with Australia. For others, their diasporic consciousness is a “paradoxical journey” (Clifford, 1994), a sense of identifying but also not identifying with Australia or as Australians. In this research, the notion of diasporic consciousness was particularly evidenced in the stories around the “Where are you from?” question.

Most notably in this study’s findings, the Korean Australian adoptee diaspora embodies a sense of racialization. As explored in the participants’ first-hand accounts, the self-identification as Australian is often synonymous with White. Perhaps, this White Australia
perspective points to the fact that most of, if not all, adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research were highly influenced by the time and place that they grew up. Furthermore, these findings in relation to self-Australian will be discussed under the following themes: paradox of growing up in White Australia; ambiguous identities and the adoptee chameleon; and the continuum of Korean Australian families.

**The paradox of growing up in White Australia.**

The findings of this study illuminate the influence of White Australia throughout adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. As this research is focused on adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences, the period of *growing up* refers to the retrospective nature of the lived experiences that have shaped the participants’ perceptions. The majority of the participants in this research reported being raised in White Australian communities with their families.

These first-hand accounts were concentrated around *growing up in White Australia* and the *paradox* that develops from a self-uncertainty of not being White within White families, communities and society. As presented in *Chapter Four*, R. Lee’s (2003) “transracial adoption paradox” is one explanation for how paradoxical social hierarchies often confine and define transracial adoptees. As such, Lee’s transracial adoption paradox reflects the participants’ complicated, racialized experiences in this research. These paradoxes are shaped by multiple, changing identities of the participants: I’m Australian but I’m not – I’m Korean but I’m not – I’m White but I’m not – I’m Asian but I’m not – I’m the same but I’m not.

The findings of this research also engaged with the social notion of White Australia as Australia. Why is it that individuals adopted to Australia by White Australian parents and raised in Australia do not “feel Australian?” Perhaps, because their physical appearance is not White, some of the adult Korean Australian adoptees’ accounts placed a superiority on being White Australian. It is useful to recall the literature on this White Australia(n) dominant perspective and the “true blue Australian” symbol (Goldsworthy, 2008). Australia is a very complex place; where a White Australian nation meets ethnicity, race and culture (Elder, 2007). The research participants’ adoptee accounts illustrated the challenges for transracial adoptees in growing up with this idealized conception of White Australia. Full belonging in adoptive nations is often synonymous with being White (Yngvesson, 2010). The best
example of this is in Chapter Seven when Tiffany said that “I’ve never really felt like someone who was born here, someone really accepted.”

A heightened awareness about not being White was consistently found in the research participants’ lived experiences. For example, difficulties at school and instances of bullying were expressed amongst participants in this study. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Michelle shared an encounter with another Korean Australian adoptee who feared being identified as Asian and refused to “eat sushi.” This is an example of Korean adoptees’ acute sensitivities around racial differences and feelings of otherness. Similar to other Korean adoptee research, some adoptees felt that they were a prized member, while others learned that they were an outsider or object of ridicule (Tuan & Shiao, 2011, p. 66). The findings present a salience of White bias in Korean Australian adoptee diasporas which is largely demonstrated by feelings of otherness and perceptions of not fitting in while growing up in White Australia.

**Ambiguous identities and the adoptee chameleon.**

Another key narrative that emerged in the focus groups and interviews was the concept of ambiguously being from somewhere. A large number of participants in this study described situations where they felt unable to escape their ascribed racial, ethnic, or cultural categorization. As presented in the body of Korean adoptee identity literature (see Chapter Four), scholars have discussed this Korean adoptee diasporic identity. It was further noted in this research that Korean adoptee identities are ambiguous. For example, I recalled how Felicia described being “ethnically ambiguous” and this was an important concept to her. The significance of this finding stands out in Chapter Seven when research participants described the anxieties around being asked periodically, “Where are you from?” Participants in this study expressed situations where they purposefully adapt (or lie about) who they are and where they are from because in their view explaining their personal adoption story is not and should not be necessary on all occasions. Adult Korean Australian adoptees recognize how being from somewhere shapes their own sense of identity.

It is clear that participants in this study wanted to explain their identities in uncertain, non-binary terms. Participants in this study felt trapped by the expectation to choose to be either Korean/Asian or Australian/White. This was captured by Faith: “I don’t really want to associate with any of them [being Korean or Australian]. I just want to be myself.” Korean adoptee scholar, Kim Park Nelson commented that Korean adoptees often expressed context-
based identity shifting as an experience of in-betweenness (2009, p. 336). A more complex picture of this is revealed in the extant literature which suggests that racial dynamics are continuously exposed when Korean adoptees are with their White families, look in the mirror and at family photographs, or when people question their name (E. Kim, 2010; E. Lee et al., 2008). Results from this study point clearly to the need to recognize transracial or fluid identities.

Indeed, adaptability was a necessary approach in participants’ lived experiences evident in this study. This point is evidenced in the portrayal of certain narratives. For instance, Victor expressed: “You see a panda photo saying, ‘Don’t hate me – I’m Black, White and Asian.’ But at the end of the day, the ‘banana’ or the ‘panda’… if I’m White or Asian, I can get along with everyone.” Victor chose to be flexible in being seen as multiracial or transracial. D. Kim (1976) found a similar trend in his study and characterized Korean adoptees as “chameleons.” Kim further explained that Korean adoptees might have a “chameleon complex”: when they are with White people, they feel Korean; and conversely, when they are with Korean people, they feel White (p. 174). This notion of the Korean adoptee chameleon is noteworthy as Korean Australian adoptees feel the need to adjust their ambiguous identities.

Both the Korean adoptee chameleon and the Korean adoptee chameleon complex were present in this study’s findings. Perhaps to understand this conflictual process, in an illustration in Chapter Eight, Haley characterized all Korean adoptees as Asian and White. Her perspective implies that Korean adoptees knowingly relate to being White but at the same time, she assigns importance to the fact they Korean adoptees do not have a White physical appearance. Echoing a similar context, Wendy had stated in Chapter Seven that she tried to be Korean in Korea but ended up feeling like, “that lady that went and lived with the gorillas.” As such, Korean adoption research has adopted similar notions to chameleon/chameleon complex and it is often discussed that Korean adoptees may avoid their own reflections in a mirror; subconsciously they expect that if they did look, a White person would be staring back (E. Kim, 2010, p. 92). While the mirror may be an extreme example, these conflicting narratives appeared periodically in identifying as bananas or pandas, the research participants often spoke of their diasporic identities in indistinct, transitory terms.
The findings of this study caution against creating static identities for Korean Australian adoptees. Akin to Palmer (2011) whom suggested that Korean adoptee identities continuously “dance,” this research suggests a similar approach in thinking about Korean Australian adoptees’ multifaceted identities. Perhaps, identity models address a number of limitation and more awareness is possibly needed as adult Korean Australian adoptees’ identities are complex and multidimensional.

The continuum of Korean Australian families.
All of the participants in this study acknowledged the distinct role of families and the construct of families. The majority of the participants in this study shared their retrospective accounts of growing up in White Australia with their transracial families. The findings on family in this research are significant, as little has been documented in relation to adult Korean Australian adoptees’ constructs of family. A considerable number of participants illuminated what Korean adoption meant to their White parents and the role of adoption in their transracial Korean Australian globalized families.

Ultimately, in looking at the participants’ lived experiences in this study, adoption is not just the adoptees’ journeys – it is the families’ journeys as well. One important aspect is the continuum of familial belonging in the findings where family dynamics and structure influenced how research participants felt as a transracial family. The participants shared that some familial relationships are often a two-way process; some adoptees felt alienated or different within their families which led to feeling rejected in their families. For instance, Rachel in this study clearly pointed out her parent’s divorce as a defining moment felt rejected in her family.

Some of the participants revealed strategies to deal with adoption and/or race within their families. Participants’ first-hand accounts often presented Korean Australian families within a “colorblind/adoption blind philosophy” (Palmer, 2011). This colorblind/adoption blind philosophy suggests an inability to see or to pretend that skin color/adoption exists within transracial adoption families. Most notably, some participants referred to their families with terms like “my parents,” “normal,” and/or “just Australian.” For example, Michelle observed the actions of her parents who never identified her as their “adoptive daughter.” Some studies have emphasized the role of parents to reinforce positive relationships and a sense of belonging within their families in transracial intercountry adoptees’ lives (Willing, 2010; A.
Young, 2009). Australian intercountry adoption literature remains focused on the experiences of younger adoptees with adoptive parent perspectives (Gray, 2007; Rosenwald, 2009).

For other participants, adoption and/or race were difficult issues to face within their families. Being a Korean adoptee is not something the participants’ parents have lived through and Crystal stated that her parents “can’t explain it either.” A number of Korean adoption studies have noted the disconnect in familial communication, namely with racial and adoption issues (Docan-Morgan, 2010; McGinnis et al., 2009). Thus, the significance of belonging and feeling supported within families is a particularly crucial aspect of Korean adoptee diasporas.

9.2.2 Korean adopteeness in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

The current study revealed that the majority of the participants reported an understanding of their own Korean adoptee identification. Korean adopteeness or Korean adoptee collective identity (E. Kim, 2003, 2010) claims that there is a sense of shared Korean adoptee experiences within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

This study has found that a substantial number of participants recognize being a Korean adoptee and part of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. As such, it is useful to apply social identity theory to understand the research participants’ Korean adopteeness. Discussed in Chapter Four, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) highlights a sense of group sameness or likeness where individuals develop a “strong sense of self, social location, and belonging” (Hogg, 2006, p. 116). This idea is important because it acknowledges the interplay between the individual adoptee and their public identity as a Korean adoptee. Using social identity theory, the findings indicate that the participants in this study situate their Korean adopteeness as individuals and as part of the Korean adoptee collective. While this framework is very useful for thinking about Korean Australian adoptees, the participants in this study cannot be treated as a simple homogenous social group. Rather, adult Korean Australian adoptees in this study spoke of vastly different life experiences and perceptions which indeed add value to the concept of shared Korean adopteeness.

Additionally, participants in this study spoke of adopteeness that they felt with other Korean Australian adoptees, Korean adoptees and intercountry adoptees. These multiple and overlapping adoptee group memberships identified below demonstrate the individual depth and integration of adoptee diasporas:
individual adult Korean Australian adoptee but also part of the Korean Australian adoptee diaspora;
• part of the Korean Australian adoptee diaspora but also part of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora; and/or
• part of the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora but also part of larger global adoptee diaspora.

To clarify this point, participants spoke of their shared Korean adoptee experiences and of their relationships with other adoptees within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Perhaps adoptees’ diasporas evidence a shared past that is an imagined form of group connection (Hirsch & Miller, 2011). The study’s key findings in relation to Korean adopteeness will be discussed further under the following dominant themes: initial Korean adoptee socialization; Korean yesteryear with a lost Korean past; and Pandora’s box with Korean family.

**Initial Korean adoptee socialization.**

Findings from this research revealed the impact of Korean adoptee socialization. The majority of the participants in this study reported interactions or relationships with other Korean adoptees. Two notable connections were: Korean Australian adoptive family gatherings/heritage camps and Korean Australian adoptee siblings. Given the limited population of Korean Australian adoptees and the geographical remoteness of Australia, participants spoke of the significance of knowing and meeting other Korean adoptees.

One important aspect here is that families played a large role in facilitating Korean adoptee relationships and interactions. Parents and families traditionally organized Korean adoptee socialization and awareness opportunities for adoptees, as identified from previous studies that address the implications of racial, cultural or ethnic socialization for adoptee identity development (Bergquist, 2000; D. Lee & Quintana, 2005; R. Lee, 2003; R. Lee et al., 2006; Mohanty, 2010; Yoon, 2004). Akin to Korean American adoptee heritage camps (McGinnis et al., 2009; Randolph & Holtzman, 2010), participants in this study engaged in similar activities to Korean heritage camps growing up. Some of the adoptees in this study specifically mentioned these gatherings as a resource that provided participants with the opportunity to share a sense Korean adopteeness. Whilst no specific data was collected on Korean Australian adoptive family gatherings/heritage camps, this form of Korean adoptee socialization also stood out in the qualitative findings. Participants in this study established that there are thought-provoking connections to early Korean adoptee socialization.
Chapter Nine: Discussion

It was found in this study that having a Korean Australian adoptee sibling growing up reduces a sense of separation that stems from Korean adoptee diasporas. Analysis of the survey data suggested that having Korean adoptee siblings lowered the probability of participation in face-to-face interaction with Korean adoptees. Adoptee-OSR, survey participant, remarked in Chapter Six that he/she spends time with their Korean adoptee sibling but not with “other Korean adoptees.” As siblings simulate a sense of knowing more about Korean adoptee diasporas, perhaps this comment points to a special relationship between Korean adoptee siblings. Yoon’s (2004) research found that having an ethnic Korean adopted sibling played a significant role in minimizing emotional and psychological distress for adoptees. However, there were limited findings from the discussions of adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed who spoke of the familial dynamics between Korean adoptee siblings and non-Korean adoptee siblings.

It was striking, though, consistent with the literature on Korean adoptee socialization that adult Korean Australian adoptees in this research assigned an importance to just knowing other Korean adoptees. Further, Korean adoptee socialization and familial dynamics are important concepts to be considered within Korean adoptees’ diasporas. Knowing other Korean adoptees reduces a sense of isolation and estrangement from the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora as it provides a symbolic connection to Korea.

Korean yesteryear with a lost Korean past.
A strong theme in the research participants’ lived experiences was that they wanted some sort of engagement with their Korean adoptee diasporas and connection with a sense of Korea. In this study, the findings demonstrate that returning to Korea was a significant diasporic journey. Confirming Homans’ (2011) finding, symbolic or real returns to Korea are deeply complicated, sensitive, and ambiguous. Several participants presented this return to Korea as some form of symbolic connections to Korea and their own Korean past. Some of these diasporic connections included looking at their ESWS adoption files, meeting foster carers, searching for Korean family, interacting with other Korean adoptees, learning Korean language, and/or eating Korean food. In reflecting on the significance of this finding, I recall the comment from Adoptee-OSR in Chapter Six who stated: “To me Korea and my experiences are very precious to me. Though, only every now and then do I wish to take myself back...”
Adoptees in this study reported individualized symbolic connections to Korea with a lost Korean past in their diasporic consciousness. The findings in this research illuminated the participants’ Korean yesteryear which depicts an illusory notion, a form of “cognitive realism in the evocation of memory” (Troscianko, 2013) to an innate Korean past or a priori. The idea of a lost Korean past is positioned around an involuntary memory. In searching for Korean yesteryear, adoptees in this study returned to Korea to discover and find answers about their diasporic journeys. It was important for some of the research participants to search for answers to questions like: what it is like to see someone who looks like me; who was the mother that gave birth to me; does my foster mother remember me; or what were the circumstances of my relinquishment?

_Pandora’s box with Korean family._

A particularly interesting trend in this study’s findings relates to the paradoxical consequences of searching or finding Korean families. Pandora’s box (see Section 7.4.3) with Korean family suggests getting into a situation where the outcome is deeply complex and emotionally charged in the complications of knowing one’s Korean past and Korean family. Wendy indicated her continuous struggles of opening her “Pandora’s box” noting that “after I met my birth mum I went through a small period of depression…”  I wish to express that on the topic of Korean family and/or Korean past, it was not necessary and/or possible for all of the participants in this study to share their experiences.

The participants in this study reflected difficult situations in managing their wanting to know the circumstances of their Korean past and the genesis of their lives. Accordingly, the most common approaches in adoption research classify adoptees as “searching and non-searching” (Triseliotis et al., 2005) where searching possibly develops from a sense of having “genealogical bewilderment” (Sants, 1964). Other adoption studies argue that family searches are often part of an adoptee’s journey or “quests for wholeness” (Lifton, 1994; Telfer, 2004). The findings in this study highlighted that searching was important for some participants but for others, it was not necessary to know their Korean family. However, there was much evidence in certain connections to the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed when they spoke of their diasporic past existing in their ESWS adoption files or meeting foster carers.
9.3 Valued Digital Diasporic Spaces: Opportune Positions of KADI Social Media

This last section illuminates KADI social media as an important space within Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Korean adoption research has linked the Internet with the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora (Hübinette, 2005; E. Kim, 2010). With specific attention to social media, this study offers a unique contribution in terms of exploring the unknown ground of Korean Australian adoptee digital diasporas.

The findings elucidate that KADI social media is a valuable resource within adoptee diasporas. Participants in this study observed how the Internet and social media help their connections with Korea and Korean adoptees. It was found that KADI social media provided the participants in this study the opportunity to meet in a space dedicated to their lived experiences. For most of the participants, KADI social media served as an appreciated support outlet for Korean adoptees to explore their individual reflections on their own adoption experiences and the experiences of other Korean adoptees.

This study found that KADI social media supports the development of Korean adoptee connections and networks. Exemplifying this, the online survey respondents agreed with the notion that social media helps to connect. The Internet forms “imagined communities” (Anderson, 2006, p. 5) within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Research identifies the benefits of such communities as being able to provide emotional support, information, material aid, social identity, and a sense of belonging (Wellman, 2005, p. 54). The findings from this study indicate that engagement with Korean adoptee digital diasporas is motivated by the shared connectedness within the transnational Korean adoptee diasporic community. This finding is supported in Korean adoptee-constructed culture or nation, for example see Jo’s (2006; 2002) “KAD nation.” There were examples given by the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed that it was important to have this online space (Section 8.2).

This study demonstrated that sociability in an online space is valued by adult Korean Australian adoptees. This is explained by the high utilization of social networking sites (96% of online survey respondents). This research also identified that online Korean adoptee social networking is an important component of Korean adoptee digital diasporas (54% of online survey respondents). Online Korean adoptee social networking relates to social connectedness and social capital. Social capital is a sociological, multidimensional concept of relationships; it is characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity with implications for
significant social connectedness (Stone, 2001, p. 34). Using the theoretical notion of social capital, the findings indicate that the participants in this study trust Korean adoptee online sociability, build virtual Korean adoptee kinship to reduce a sense of isolation. Previous studies have reported (Howard, 2012; Whitesel & Howard, 2013) that the Internet is a source of connection for many adoption networks. Though, the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed spoke of varying interactions, the overall evidence highlights the importance of the community building and KADI social media.

Many of the participants in this study spoke of how KADI social media provides an opportunity to engage in supportive Korean adoptee social connectedness by sharing stories. It was found that KADI social media empowers a form of accessible adoptee/adoption support. The most recent KIHASA study\(^\text{157}\) reported that Korean adoptees (27.3\%) wanted to receive services established by adoptees for adoptees (M. Kim et al., 2013). The Korean adoptee digital diaspora is a convenient place to share adoption experiences with adoptees and provide adoptees with strategies for building social capital and social support around Korean adoption issues. The best example of this is when Rachel stated in *Chapter Eight, “There is endless benefits.”*

9.3.1 Korean adoptee digital identities – who am I as an adult Korean Australian adoptee online?

The findings illustrate that participants in this study welcomed the pivotal role of Korean adoptee digital diasporas but hesitantly engaged with a public Korean adoptee digital identity. It was found that Korean adoptee digital identities are often anonymous. An explanation for this finding is the process of establishing “Who am I online?” or forming individual digital identities. A recent study by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA, 2013) found that Australians value being able to maintain a degree of online anonymity and control over their online personal information with a considerable number of Australians using digital disguises. These digital identities are formed by providing inaccurate or misleading information. Participants in this study recounted their preferences for online anonymity in KADI social media.

\(^{157}\) The Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) study mentioned Australia amongst their 155 participants but only three paper questionnaires were collected were from Australia. Also 884 adult Korean adoptees participated in their online survey but only one person identified an Australian support group, Korean Adoptees Australia and Interstate Gathering for Adult Korean Adoptees (M. Kim et al., 2013).
In the findings, there was much evidence in Chapter Eight pointing out that “dramas,” “trolls” and “lurking” present a variety of challenges with digital identities. Most of the participants in this study engaged within the Korean adoptee digital diaspora and appeared to be confident in their own self-identified digital identities. It was found that different approaches to digital identities raised concerns around too much information (TMI) and keyboard warriors. For instance, adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this study suggested they were more likely to participate in KADI social media when they could read about Korean adoption experiences and information without having direct interaction with other Korean adoptees.

9.3.2 KADI Facebook nation: Korean adoptees on Facebook.

It is worthwhile to note that Facebook was found to be substantially used within KADI social media. The findings reported on how Facebook is the most widespread, increasingly used and accessible form of social media. A KADI Facebook nation is the well-developed diasporic space of Korean adoptees on Facebook. The Facebook groups are dedicated forums for Korean adoptee online socialization. The study’s key findings in relation to the KADI Facebook nation will be discussed in terms of: self-presenting Korean adopteeness, Facebook preoccupation and voyeurs, and future Korean past.

Self-presenting Korean adopteeness.

Participants’ awareness of their own Korean adoptee digital identities are conceptualized by a collective Korean adoptee diasporic consciousness, akin to online collectiveness, “Who are we online?” (Warburton & Hatzipanagos, 2013). Studies affirm that Facebook is an important tool because of the instantaneous connectivity, ease in overcoming geographic boundaries and self-presenting digital identities (Jensen et al., 2011, p. 289). However, it was found that some participants in this study were bothered by Facebook newsfeed automation, the continuous oversharing of adoption stories, and the instant Korean adoptee Facebook friending.

It was found that participants in this study did not just add Korean adoptees as Facebook friends because of a Korean adoptee digital identity. Participants in this study were more willing to add Korean adoptees as friends if they felt they knew the person IRL or if there was a sense of trust. Unlike traditional friendships, Facebook only friends are convenient online friends. Research participants differentiated between what they felt were real
friendships, Facebook friendships, and Korean adoptee Facebook friendships. The results of this study mirror other studies that suggest Facebook is used to “keep in touch with old friends and to maintain or intensify relationships characterized by some form of offline connection” (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1162). To clarify this point, the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed in this research discouraged widespread Facebook friending based solely on a Korean adoptee digital identity.

**Facebook preoccupation and voyeurs.**

This study has indicated that Korean adoption preoccupation and the Korean adoptee voyeur are interesting examples of online Korean adopteesness within the KADI Facebook nation. Several of the participants in this study identified how other Korean adoptees approach interactions on Facebook. This is particularly interesting because with the research participant identifying other Korean adoptees’ deviant online approaches without considering their own underlying behaviors of lurking or stalking on Facebook.

The findings describe the varying ways that adoptees identify and behave within the KADI Facebook nation. Possibly, these finding are akin to E. Kim’s (2010) “Korean adoptee intimacy.” The evidence in Chapter Eight brings to light that the motivation for Korean adoptee connection may shape the how and the why Korean adoptees use Facebook. Previous studies have demonstrated that extremely high levels of adoption preoccupation are associated with higher levels of social alienation (Kohler et al., 2002). Similar research suggests there are greater social benefits for Facebook users who experience low self-esteem and low life satisfaction (Ellison et al., 2007). In this research, motivations for Korean adoption Facebook preoccupation and being a Korean adoptee voyeur possibly manifested from the different stages of adoptees’ journeys.

From the accounts of adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed, various behaviors within KADI social media emerged to reflect different needs. The reinforced evidence around this KADI Facebook nation are perhaps the most debatable in terms of valorizing and devaluing the significance of Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

**Future Korean past: Wanting to know more about Korean adoption.**

It is evident from the findings that the Internet can be a more accessible tool to reconnect with one’s Korean past. The findings reflected a further awareness of how Facebook has revolutionized adoptees’ diasporic notions of returns to Korea and their Korean past. As an
illustration, Korean adoptees seek new ways to find their Korean past and families beyond geographic boundaries, culture and language via “Google” or “Facebook.” It is clear that Facebook and social media help connect adoptees with their families (Hobday, 2012; Howard, 2012; Oakwater, 2012; Whitesel & Howard, 2013). For some Korean adoptee, searching for Korean families in Korea meant television campaigns (H. Kim, 2012). However, KADI social media now enables adoptees to use strategies to overcome the traditional limitations of searching.

From the wide-ranging nature of KADI social media and KADI Facebook nation, participants in this study are engaged with the new opportunities to empower their lived experiences. These findings demonstrate the important role that the social media plays in Korean adoptee diasporas.

9.4 Summary
This chapter summarizes the key research findings. The findings address what it means for the participants in this study to engage in Korean adoptee diasporas. This research has reported the importance of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ voices and perspectives. The main findings emanating from this research contribute to a fuller understanding of the adult Korean Australian adoptee diaspora: unique lived experiences; self-Australian framework; Korean adopteeness; valued Korean past; Korean adoptee digital identities; KADI Facebook nation; and Korean adoptee experiences in KADI social media.

These findings have furthered our understandings of the contemporary adult Korean Australian adoptees’ self-Australian lived experiences: growing up in White Australia, ambiguous Korean Australian adoptee identities, Korean Australian families. Within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora, this research highlighted reflections of Korean adoptee socialization, lost Korean yesteryear, and Korean family. The findings also demonstrated how Korean adoptee digital diasporas operates to empower adult Korean Australian adoptees beyond the geographical borders of Australia.

KADI social media is a significant diasporic space for adult Korean Australian adoptees. It enables participants to enrich their own lives by Korean adoptee social connectedness and provides them with Korean adoption information. This chapter highlights the emergence of KADI social media, specifically the rise in Facebook trends, behaviors, and attitudes. Facebook is now a unique part of the process in searching for Korean past. It is hoped that
KADI Facebook nation will grow as a resource for Korean adoptees and will be better utilized in the future.

The next and final chapter will share the summary of research contributions, my researcher reflections, and this study’s research considerations and limitations. This final chapter completes this thesis.
10 Chapter Ten: Conclusion

I think we’ve [Korean Australian adoptees] grow up in two cultures and we’re a mix of both. It’s really hard, it gets to a point where you just – I don’t really want to associate with any of them. I just want to be myself… I just want to do that for a while now. (Faith)

I think it’s different than being an adoptee from other countries for sure – having friends from Europe and America, I just know how there’s a big sense of community there with adoptees. And here, there’s a few of us who do communicate every now and then. But it’s just something – like we don’t have a formalised network and it’s something that no one really wants to start or connect [emphasis added]. (Michelle)

I think maybe more awareness, more social awareness… Maybe not just Korean Australian adoption, but maybe just intercountry adoption, I think there needs to be more awareness. (Rachel)

Promiscuity, drug taking, gang involvement, suicide, depression, mental illness and things like that among intercountry adoptees was higher than in the general population and that it might have something to do with a lack of support services for intercountry adoptees. (Danielle)

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences and understand Korean Australian adoptee diasporas, specifically the contributions of social media in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. As little is known about the Korean Australian adoptee population, this thesis extends existing Korean intercountry adoption research by looking at adult Korean Australian adoptees’ unique experiences. I employed a mixed-methods approach in this study; quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from an online survey and semi-structured focus groups and interviews, respectively. I argued that adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences have been largely unheard and missing from current intercountry adoption literature in Australia. Thus, this study contributes to the field by creating awareness and recognition of Korean Australian adoptee diasporas and by drawing attention to adult Korean Australian adoptees’ voices and their valuable experiences and insights.

All of the participants in this study share the connection of being adult Korean Australian adoptees. The participants’ sociodemographic profiles (see Chapter Six) corresponded in both quantitative and qualitative datasets: adult Korean Australian adoptees aged 18-35, mainly adopted to Australia under the age of six months, predominately female, and most
have returned\textsuperscript{158} to Korea. The research does not try to encompass the entire Korean Australian adoptee experiences but addresses the varying perspectives and recommendations from the research participants.

This chapter summarizes this doctoral study and highlights its research contributions (Section 10.2) and researcher reflections (Section 10.3). The research limitations and methodological considerations are then outlined (Section 10.4), followed by a discussion of recommendations that can be drawn from this study for policy and further research (Section 10.5). This final chapter concludes with a closing statement from myself (Section 10.6) and from one of the participants (Section 10.7).

\textbf{10.2 Summary of Research Contributions}

This section outlines the originality of this thesis. This research is the first study that solely investigates adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences. This study illustrates how adult Korean Australian adoptees engage with Korean adoptee diasporas. This thesis presents an alternative narrative of adult Korean Australian adoptee voices from the dominant, traditional narrative of intercountry adoption literature on adopted children and adoptive parents. As such, adult Korean Australian adoptees have contemporary insights into the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora and Korean adoptee digital diasporas.

The research examines how Korean adoptee digital diasporas uniquely operate as an important diasporic space for adult Korean Australian adoptees. Emergent from this study is the idea that social media is valuable and accessible to Korean adoptee diasporas. The study found that social media contexts, such as Facebook groups and other social networking sites, reinforce the presence of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporic voices.

The key research contributions of each chapter in this thesis are outlined.

\textit{Chapter Two} and \textit{Chapter Three} reviewed \textit{historical narratives and processes} surrounding Korean Australian intercountry adoptions. Even though Korean Australian adoptees are the largest intercountry adoptee population in Australia, the extant literature highlights that little is known about these specific adoptees. These chapters review the historical and social developments to contextualize adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. These chapters

\textsuperscript{158} For a further discussion relating to Korean adoptee returns, see Homans (2011), E. Kim (2010), and Trenka (2009).
are unique by postulating the *how* and the *why* Korean Australian adoptions developed and *what* has influenced adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. Specific concerns are highlighted in relation to Korean Australian adoptions around forcible child migrations and child trafficking, social stigma of unwed motherhood, and Western White assimilation. Human rights and cultural awareness are exampled to frame contemporary conversations of Korean Australian adoptions. *Chapter Three* introduced research questions.

*Chapter Four* concentrated on a theoretical framework, drawing from multidisciplinary approaches, in order to understand adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences within Korean adoptee diasporas. This chapter focused on theoretical concepts and frameworks to understand adoptees’ diasporas, including constructs surrounding diasporic journeys, lived experiences from the literature, and Korean adoptee-constructed scholarship. This chapter framed Korean adoptee diasporas as a process around Hübinette’s (2004) “Korean adoptee third space,” see *Chapter One*.

Accordingly, this chapter presented theoretical concepts surrounding adoptee diasporas, including identity, adoption experiences, social identity theory, and diasporic communities. Discussions around Korean adoptee identities and adoption experiences illustrated key issues from empirical studies: the primal wound, adolescence, adult adoptees’ sense of self, transracial identities, and Korean adoptee kinship. *Chapter Four* illustrated that Korean adoptee digital diasporas developed from Korean adoptee networking, drawing on notions of social capital and social connectedness. Perhaps, Korean adoptees turned to the Internet to share their unheard diasporic journeys.

*Chapter Five* reflected how a transformative research approach was used to develop the mixed methodologies in this research. As captured in Mertens’ definition, transformative research embodies a sense of social justice for marginalized populations. This thesis explicates that adult Korean Australian adoptee voices are neglected in research and this thesis is an effort to prioritize adult adoptees’ first-hand accounts in adoption research. Transformative and feminist research approaches acknowledge the importance of power differentials, oppression, and social justice values in research. This study was conceptualized around my outsider within position. The insights around my Korean adoptee researcher framed an awareness to adoptees as researchers.
The three findings chapters provide valuable insights into participants’ experiences from both quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter Six outlined the data from the online survey capturing adult Korean Australian adoptees’ social media habits. This chapter provides a greater understanding of the participants in this study. Additionally, to reach a broader range of participants and given the topic of social media, the Internet-based research strategy proved to be the most appropriate. This chapter highlighted the trends in the survey data to understand adult Korean Australian adoptee lived experiences.

Both Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight used qualitative data that focused on collecting the personal accounts from the adult Korean Australian adoptees interviewed. The participants’ self-reflections expressed in their own words provided a rich perspective to this study. Chapter Seven addressed a wide range of adoption experiences explored from the participants’ lived experiences. While constructed forms of identity were not a focal point of the research, identity themes largely emerged in the findings when framing Korean Australian adoptee diasporas. Findings on self-Australian are a distinctive approach in this chapter and the participants’ lived experiences are explored around White Australian family, friends, partners and communities. Chapter Eight discussed dimensions of social media from the perspective of Korean adoptee digital diasporas. Facebook was emphasized with distinct Korean adoptee behaviors, such as Korean adoptee Facebook friending or Korean adoptee Facebook dramas. As such, the rapidly changing diasporic space of KADI social media challenged participants’ views on Korean adoptee interactions and relationships.

Chapter Nine discussed the key findings, highlighting how adult Korean Australian adoptees’ lived experiences and Korean adoptee digital diasporas are areas that have not been previously researched. This chapter further summarized the main points from the three findings chapters and grounded them in related research.

10.3 Korean Adoptee Researcher Reflections
This section explains my Korean adoptee researcher reflections. This doctoral study would not exist if it were not for my lived experiences as a Korean adoptee. Thus, it is important to acknowledge my reflections as a Korean adoptee researcher. Through the lens of my outsider within perspective, my reflexivity provided a nuanced way to think, analyze and report on this research (see Chapter Five). Research within is positioned around having respect for participants, a greater appreciation in shared experiences, and a culturally appropriate
methodology. Possibly, having been a participant in other Korean adoption research, I am acutely aware of how adoptees may feel talking about personal adoption experiences as research participants.

10.3.1 A Minnesotan in Australia.

As a Korean adoptee in Australia, this research is shaped by my own experiences. At the beginning of the focus groups and interviews (see Chapter Five), I introduced myself as a Korean adoptee researcher and spoke of my adoption experiences, of eating kimchi for first time; growing up in the Land of Korean adoptees (Minnesota); returning to Korea; and migrating to Australia. Perhaps this simple moment in sharing my Korean adoptee experiences, fosters the notion that kimchi is Korean adoptees’ “madeleine” (Troscianko, 2013). I believe that we are connected as Korean adoptees. This research is connected to my life as a Korean adoptee by acknowledging the crossover or intersections within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

Furthermore, being a Korean Minnesota adoptee holds relevance in this research. From the experiences of Jane Jeong Trenka (2003, 2009) and other Korean Minnesotan adoptees, I gained strength in sharing my story when I learned about Korean adoptee empowerment. Explored in Here: A Visual History of Adopted Koreans in Minnesota (K. Jackson et al., 2010) the author writes:

Minnesota is home to the one of the largest populations, per capita, of adopted Koreans in the world. Many of the 13,000 of us have grown up isolated and have experienced little racial tolerance in the urban, suburban and rural areas in which we were raised. Adoption is often fraught with psychological and emotional tensions, and being people of color raised in a racially Caucasian environment adds another layer of complexity. We recognize an urgent need for us to see ourselves represented, acknowledged, and celebrated. **We are each other’s touchstones, genetically and culturally** [emphasis added]. We are a living, breathing part of Minnesota history.

As I am a Korean Minnesotan adoptee, my research was inspired by Korean Minnesotan adoptee advocates, who pioneered the way for adult Korean adoptee rights and voices. There is salience in our experiences with each other as touchstones in the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora.

10.3.2 Our mirrored reflections.

We have so much to learn from each other. My Korean adoptee researcher role was a meaningful component in this research. I hope that by participating in adoptee-constructed
research, the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants were able to frame and fully communicate their experiences knowing that I shared some of their reflections. Within this research, I felt that it was important to share my personal adoption narrative to let the participants in this study know that I have lived through life as a Korean adoptee.

Additionally, participants had the opportunity to ask me questions and this conversation often turned to my own Korean adoptee-ness. It was important for me to have this discussion with the participants in this study. For instance, Michelle and I spoke about Korean American adoptees on Facebook groups. Michelle pointed out her thoughts, which actively resonated with my own experiences:

*They [Korean American adoptees] often talk about race, racism and discrimination, and issues with their adoptive families and not feeling part of their family unit. They talk about their adoption stories. They like to share lots of photos of themselves as kids. They talk about all sorts of things… So I guess that’s why I do find it interesting to stalk [in the online Facebook groups] because we [adult Korean Australian adoptees] don’t talk as much and we don’t have as many members [in the online Facebook groups]. I find it interesting to read. I do like to read the comparison between Australian adoptees and American – hearing their stories.* (Michelle)

Michelle’s observation reinforced the empowerment for Korean adoptees in sharing their stories. Korean adoptees’ lived experiences are not identical, both Michelle and I find it beneficial to hear the stories of other Korean adoptees to understand their lives and our own. I did not partake in this research to compare my life with those of other Korean adoptees. I find it more useful to engage with other adoptees to recognize the uniqueness of our own experiences. As I feel strongly about how I write this outsider within research, the Korean American insights on this Korean Australian study is perhaps a nuanced approach. In sum, the focus solely on Korean Australian adoptees is to give prominence to their experiences and it would be useful for future research to attempt comparisons of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences with other national groups of Korean adoptees.

My research represents only a small amount of work within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. Further academic attention is necessary on broader transnational approaches to connect Korean adoptee social identities and formations. Beyond traditional intercountry adoption approaches, the symbolic and real spaces arising from the juxtaposition of transnational Korean adoptee communities bring to light the changing nature of Korean adoption studies.
10.4 Limitations and Methodological Considerations

There are inherent limitations to any research. This section will briefly discuss limitations that merit attention.

10.4.1 Korean Australian adoptee population.

Despite arduous recruitment efforts, described in Chapter Five, the qualitative component of the research resulted in a small study sample. Whilst not the aim of the study, the thesis does not seek to generalize findings to the larger adult Korean Australian adoptee population; rather the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ experiences. A more diverse and larger number of respondents would have enabled fuller representation of the general adult Korean Australian adoptee population. However, a promising development in this research is the online survey response (as summarized in Chapter Six).

10.4.2 Time and research methodology.

A mixed-methods approach proved to be a difficult but rewarding methodology in this doctoral study, see Chapter Five for further details on the methodological strengths presented in this thesis. In this research, the use of mixed-methods increased the amount of time spent in conducting, analyzing and completing this research. In contrast, the use of mixed-methods in this research presented an iterative process of balancing both datasets to capture a broader range of adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences.

10.4.3 Outsider within bias.

Possibly, reflective of my status as a Korean adoptee researcher, investigating Korean adoptee experiences prompted me to pose the question: Who is this research for? Throughout this thesis, I have explained the importance in letting adult Korean Australian adoptees speak of their own experiences. At times, I found that it was hard to give justice to the participants’ experiences, as it is often difficult to articulate appropriate and accurate interpretations of such profound life experiences. A key component of this research is representing adult Korean Australian adoptees’ unique experiential knowledge. As such, I wish to acknowledge that as a researcher I have acquired and interpreted the knowledge of the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants.

With any research, researchers attain the knowledge of others with inherent biases. As discussed in Chapter Five, as stated by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), “The word itself,
‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1). Her thought-provoking comment illustrates that being researched objectifies communities with power differentials and research acquires the knowledge of human beings by researching them. I believe that research often relies on the knowledge within the community researched and that researchers attempt to bring some understanding to the social phenomenon of those researched.

10.5 Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Future Research
This section briefly outlines implications for policy, practice, and future research. Given the recent changes to intercountry adoptions’ policies and practices in Australia (see Chapter Three), this research is extremely timely. Throughout the history of Korean Australian adoption, policies and practices have differed between governments, social service agencies and families. As previously noted, this study is the first research project to solely examine adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences.

Current policy trends relating to intercountry adoption in Australia make this research especially relevant as the Australian Government recently undertook substantial developments in intercountry adoption programs, see the Extract of the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption (2014b). As addressed in Chapter Three, the literature explicated that intercountry adoption programs are under national debate. Perhaps, much of the current debate around intercountry adoption in Australia is related to the presence of an “anti-adoption culture” (Benns, 2010) challenging the practices of intercountry adoption. Moreover, adoptive parents and adoption professions do not consider that as a country Australia should decrease or reconsider its involvement in intercountry adoptions (A. Young, 2009, p. 205). It is hoped that this research will provide some guidance to understand that adult adoptees’ voices need to be recognized in this debate.

10.5.1 Listen to the spectrum of adult adoptee experiences.
This thesis has explored and presented the experiences and perspectives of the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants. This study demonstrates that adult Korean Australian adoptees have much to contribute to the discussions around Korean Australian adoptions. Korean adoption studies that include self-reflection are among the most useful because they present unaltered perceptions (Park Nelson, 2009, p. 149).
The experiences presented in this thesis examine a particular snapshot of the participants’ lives. It must be noted there are progressive changes in adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences and emotions over different stages of the life course. Adoption is a life-long journey. It is recommended that future research undertake longitudinal studies to identify evolving shifts in participants’ self-reflections and to look at how Korean Australian adoptees, at all ages and at different times in their lifespan, communicate their diasporas.

This thesis highlights that it is imperative to learn from adult adoptees to develop future intercountry adoption policies and practices. Practitioners in the field of adoption should be responsive to the social organization and agency from adult adoptees (McGinnis, 2003). There is a clear need for Australian policy and practice to be informed by the perspectives of adult Korean Australian adoptees. For example, the participants in this study have raised concerns about future Korean Australian adoptions and their uncertainties with Korean adoption agencies in relation to the falsification of adoption records. It is recommended that the Australian Government and the Korean Government hold private adoption agencies accountable for accurate adoption records in accordance to Article 21 of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*.

10.5.2 Provide Australian adoption services for adult Korean adoptees.

The findings from this research indicate that the availability of post-adoption support services is a concern for adult Korean Australian adoptees. This study highlights multiple, overlapping areas where participants indicated that further post-adoption services may have helped them understand their adoptions. For instance, participant Faith spoke of her individual struggle with self-esteem: “I just always had low self-esteem so I guess that poked through. I used to drink a lot as a teenager... that behaviour really was ‘she doesn’t care about herself’ kind of thing.” Other research participants spoke of dealing with bullying growing up and the impact on their mental health. Adoption practitioners often thought their work was complete when the child is placed in the hands of a new family (McGinnis, 2003). As such, post-adoption support services are necessary for adoptees and their transracial families.

As adult Korean Australian adoptees are the largest number of intercountry adoptees in Australia, it is recommended that effective post-adoption services be implemented with
funding provided by ESWS and the Australian Government, the responsible authorities for administering Korean Australian adoptions.

**Korean Australian adoptees’ returns to Korea.** The findings contextualize the trend of Korean Australian adoptees returning to Korea (83%). It was estimated that Korean Australian adoptions account for 35% of all intercountry adoptions in Australia (Rosenwald, 2009, p. 7) and Korean Australian adoptees have demonstrated that as adults, they are returning to their country of birth.

The findings suggest that adult Korean Australian adoptees’ returns involve emotionally and psychologically tumultuous terms. Research participants spoke of issues, including language and cultural barriers. A visit to the adoptee’s country of origin should be encouraged, supported and facilitated by adoption agencies (Carstens & Julia, 2000, p. 71). It is suggested in both the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Hague Adoption Convention* that cultural awareness in the best interests. It is recommended that adult Korean Australian adoptees’ best interests include a right to return to Korea. To operationalize such rights requires adequate financial and social support from both the Australian Government and ESWS as the facilitators of the participants’ adoptions. In addition, all Korean Australian adoptees should receive pre-visit support (such as language and culture classes) and post-visit support (such as emotional support or counseling) to help adoptees remain psychosocially and physically healthy in their returns to Korea.

It is recommended that future research undertake studies on adult Korean Australian adoptees returns to Korea. Several of the participants spoke of being in Korea as a defining diasporic journey in their adoptee diasporas. What reasons are driving Korean Australian adoptees to return or not return to Korea? Possibly, more post-adoption support is needed to facilitate Korean Australian adoptees’ returns to Korea. Future studies may delve into this human right of diasporic returns.

**Korean families of adult Korean Australian adoptees.** This study challenges the perception of Korean Australian adoption where adoptees are assumed orphaned children. However, participants in this study spoke of their returns to Korea and their Korean families. Several of the participants in this study are in contact with their Korean families but the Australian Government does not recognize this family relationship. AIHW (2014) states that once a child is adopted into an Australian family the adoptee is legally separated from their Korean
family. It is suggested that Korean families be included in Korean Australian adoption policy and practice implications.

Some of the participants in this study spoke of the circumstances surrounding their relinquishments. Over 90% of the children being placed for adoption in Korea (both domestically and internationally) come from unwed mothers under severe economic and family pressure (Hayes & Kim, 2008, p. 56). Korea is a significant sending nation in intercountry adoption as the largest and longest-standing intercountry adoption program. It is recommended that the Korean Government review its social welfare policies and practices.

In this research, 35% of focus groups and interviews participants indicated that they had a reunion with their Korean family. It is suggested that future research understand in-depth complexities of contact or reuniting with Korean family. Perhaps, a longitudinal study would also be of interest to see what contact arrangements could be made to see if open Korean Australian adoptions would be feasible.

Supported communities. Adult Korean Australian adoptee participants turn to the Internet to find a sense of support within the transnational Korean adoptee diaspora. In online networks, people maintain ties and foster specialized relationships (Wellman, 2005, p. 55). With Korean adoptees geographically dispersed across Australia and Korean Australian adoptee diasporas are very much online. The findings from this study around social media have future implications for post-adoption practices. Social media is an accessible resource to support Korean Australian adoption communities. It is suggested that adoption practitioners, the Australian Government, and Korean Australian families utilize the Internet to share crucial information.

Social media is an excellent resource with future practice and research implications within post-adoption services. Participants spoke of KADI social media as a Korean adoptee support network centrally important to their diasporic communities. It is recommended that future research delve into social media, in particular, Facebook within the Korean adoptee digital diasporas, to gain new insights into the adoption communities.

10.5.3 Promote adoptee-constructed research.

Adoptee-constructed research reinforces the view that adult Korean adoptees’ voices are powerful resources. How adult Korean adoptees communicate their perceptions and
experiences of adoption is a relatively new area of research (Docan-Morgan, 2010a, 2010b). As such, adoptee-constructed research is a unique platform to share and communicate scholarship. It is suggested that future research consider the methodological considerations of having an adoptee researcher to communicate and interpret the findings.

10.6 Overall Concluding Thoughts
As the longest-standing and largest transnational adoptee population in Australia, adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences offer valuable insights into intercountry adoption. Yet, this research demonstrated that their lived experiences have largely been unheard. This doctoral research study focused on adult Korean Australian adoptees and uncovered aspects of their diasporas: adoption; self-reflection; family; race; belonging; identities; friends and partners; Korean returns; Korean family; communities; social connectedness; diasporic pasts; and the role of the Internet and social media. This research contributes to not only learning about adult Korean Australian adoptee participants’ lived experiences but also about diasporic spaces in modern imagined communities.

The findings in this study illuminate a range of particular experiences and perspectives from the adult Korean Australian adoptee participants. This research is also part of a new wave of adoptee-constructed research. When adult Korean Australian adoptees are actively listened to, their experiences can shape intercountry adoption policy to support services in the future for all adoptees in Australia.

10.7 Final Statement
Lastly, as part of the qualitative semi-structured interviews, this research purposefully asked the participants to share any final thoughts within their adult Korean Australian adoptee experiences. As part of this adoptee-constructed research and my role as a Korean adoptee researcher, it is important to remain committed to maintaining the significance in learning about the participants’ experiences expressed in their own words. Adult Korean Australian adoptees’ experiences inspire resiliency, strength, and honesty. Participant Thomas commented that this research “is working towards a greater awareness of who we are.” This research described adult Korean Australian adoptees’ diasporic journeys in sharing their lived experiences.

The statement below is from Olivia. I wish to close this thesis with her heartfelt, powerful reflection. The ending of a thesis this way reflects that this research is about adult Korean
Australian adoptees’ experiences. In looking at Olivia’s statement below expressed in her own words, know that these are her own lived experiences, her personal thoughts and opinions. It is a powerful reminder as to why I believe that this research is important.

In terms of being a Korean adoptee in Australia, I think for all adoptees we all feel similar things. Life goes on and we’re happy with our lives and we make it happen. But you’re always going to have that something missing inside.

No matter how many times you get to see your [Korean] family, it’s not the same. The other siblings had a lifetime to get to know each other and you’re the odd one out. It’s a touchy subject.

But I guess the only thing that I can really take away from that is that when I have a child of my own, for starters, I could never imagine what it would be like to give away a child. I would never give away a child and for me having my own biological child is the opportunity to have that bond: impart in that child and give to that child everything that I missed out on in my life. Just to feel overwhelming love and appreciation and to feel proud. I honestly wish that I could say that I knew what that was like, but I’m still yet to find that or to know. (Olivia)
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been adopted by Private Mosey's. [Photograph]. Canberra, Australia: Australian War Memorial.


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References


Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Korean Australian Adoptee Population Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source(s) (calendar years)</th>
<th>Number of intercountry Korean adoptees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INKAS website 2015 (1969-2013)</td>
<td>8,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hübinette (1969-2004) and AIHW (2005-2013)</td>
<td>3,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selman (1969-2009) and AIHW (2010-2013)</td>
<td>3,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIHASA (1969-2013)</td>
<td>3,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenwald (1972-2005) and AIHW (2006-2013)</td>
<td>2,980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. 
* Hübinette’s underlying data is from the KIH
* Selman’s underlying data is from the KIH
* KIHASA’s underlying data is from the KIH
* Rosenwald’s underlying data is from the AIHW
Appendix B: Kim Duk Whang Prayer

Precious lives, our angels, we send away these lives to foreign countries, with scarred memories of their homeland. Please forgive our sins and allow Korea to be a better country, so that we will be adopting children from other countries, instead of us always sending ours away. We send them for care. So please protect these lives and help them lead a happy life in their new homes. Always provide them with grace and intelligence, lead them to live by the rules of Jesus Christ, to have all the luck, to help benefit others, and to return the glory to our Lord. It is our sincere wish that these lives will not forget their home country and the love of the people who took care of them.

Father, please remember the foster families who worked hard whether it is favorable or unfavorable conditions to protect these lives, and give them blessings for the benefits they provided with. By your blessings, these adoptive families will be full of love and be under your protection. Now the children are leaving. Please make their way as easy as possible, lead them to the most pleasant life.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.
Appendix C: Full Remarks at Meeting With Overseas Korean Adoptees on 23 October 1998

It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you, from eight different countries of the world to which you were adopted at a young age. Welcome back to your home-land.

It has been eight months since I became president. During this period, I have met countless people. But today’s meeting with all of you is personally the most meaningful and moving encounter for me.

Looking at you, I am proud of such accomplished adults, but I am also overwhelmed with an enormous sense of regret at all the pain you must have been subjected to. Some Korean children have been adopted to the United States, Canada, and many European countries over the years.

I am pained to think that we could not raise you ourselves, and had to give you away for foreign adoption. The reason for the adoption was primarily economic difficulty. But there were other reasons. Koreans traditionally have a habit-of-the-heart that placed too much importance on blood-ties. And when you don’t have that, people rarely adopt children.

So, we sent you away. Imagining all the pain and psychological conflicts that you must have gone through, we are shamed. We are grateful to your adopted parents, who have loved you and raised you, but we are also filled with shame.
Appendix D: Participant Information Statement and Consent Form

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

Korean Australian Adult Adoptee Collaborations

Participant selection and purpose of study
You are invited to participate in a study of online social networks of Korean Australian adoptees. We hope to learn about the Korean Australian adoptee community and how the Internet is used for adoption-related social media. Social media includes online social networks that connect individuals through the Internet to build relationships with others e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Blogging, YouTube, etc. The study is being conducted by HeeRa Hosen, who is currently undertaking a PhD at The University of New South Wales. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are 18 years or older and because you have indicated that you are a Korean Australian adoptee (a person who was born in South Korea and adopted to Australia).

Description of study and risks
If you decide to participate, you will be invited to participate in either a 30 minutes individual interview or 50 minutes group discussion. In relation to your participation in either an interview or a group discussion, the researcher will contact you at a later date via email and/or telephone with dates, times, and locations. Thank you in advance for your time.

The research does not directly deal with issues that may cause personal distress; however, should you feel the need to discuss your personal adoption experience or any issues arising from your participation in the study, adoption counseling resources are available. Please contact HeeRa Hosen for an information sheet with adoption resources.

With your help we will be able to gain a more informed and accurate picture of the Korean Australian adoptee experience and you may find satisfaction in the knowledge gained in this process. We appreciate your assistance in this important study and hope that everyone involved will find the experience rewarding. We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.

Confidentiality and disclosure of information
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission, except as required by law. If you give us your permission to sign this document, we will plan to publish and discuss the results without identifying participants in a thesis for the award of the award of PhD in Social Work through UNSW. A summary of the findings will be distributed in a research paper that will be submitted to The Australian Society for Adoption Research Center. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

Participating in the group discussions means that you are sharing your adoption experience with other adoptees in a group. In order to respect and protect your and other adoptees in the group discussions, we ask that you do not disclose any circumstances the names of anyone who participates in the group or the information shared within the group discussions.

Complaints may be directed to the Ethics Secretariat, The University of New South Wales, SYDNEY 2052 AUSTRALIA (phone 61 2 9385 4234. fax 61 2 9381 6846; email ethics.sec@unsw.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in a confidential manner and will not be associated with you.

Feedback to participants
Feedback to participants will be available at the end of the study in a report upon request to HeeRa Hosen.

Page 1 of 3
Your consent
Your participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationship with the University of New South Wales. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask us. If you have any additional questions later, Holly A. Freeman, PhD Student, School of Social Sciences, c/o8033@uqmail.edu.au, 04 803 904 608, will be happy to answer them.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM (continued)
Korean Australian Adult Adoptee Collaborations

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that, having read the information provided above, you have decided to participate.

________________________________________________________
Signature of Research Participant

________________________________________________________
Signature of Witness

(Please PRINT name) ____________________________

(Place PRINT name) ____________________________

Date

________________________________________________________
Signature

________________________________________________________
Date

________________________________________________________
Places PRINT Name

REVOcation of Consent
Korean Australian Adult Adoptee Collaborations

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW any consent to participate in the research proposal described above and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT prejudice any treatment or any relationship with The University of New South Wales.

________________________________________________________
The section for Revocation of Consent should be forwarded to Dr. Elizabeth Fernandez, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, e.fernandez@unsw.edu.au

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Appendix E: Adapted Instruments

Online survey instrument

Section 1 – Demographic Information
1. Please select your gender identification
2. Please select your age group
3. Which state/territory do you currently reside
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed
5. What is your current marital status

Section 2 – Adoption Information
1. What year were you adopted, for example 1983
2. What age were you adopted
3. Which state/territory in Australia were you adopted to
4. Did your adoptive family have additional adopted children from Korea (siblings that are also Korean adoptees)
5. Since being adopted, have you returned to Korea
6. How many times have you been back to Korea
7. What age did you first return to Korea
8. Have you returned to Korea as an adult (18 years of age or older)
9. As an adult, what age did you first return to Korea (18 years of age or older)

Section 3 – Thinking of All Your Friends
1. In the past month, how often did you see any of your friends
2. In the past month, how often did you communicate with any of your friends by telephone/mobile
3. In the past month, how often did you communicate with any of your friends by e-mail or Internet
4. If you have communicated with any of your friends via the Internet in the past month, how often was this communication by social media
5. In the past month, how many new people did you meet and whom you intend to stay in contact with
6. Did you meet some of these new people on the Internet

Section 4 – Social Media Participation In General and With Your Friends
1. Do you use social media
2. Do you use the following social media
3. How far would you agree with the following statements about using social media in general or with your friends

4. What is the most important reason for you to engage in social media

5. What is the most important benefit that you experience after using social media

Section 5 – Thinking of Korean Adoptees and/or Korean Adoption

1. In the past month, how often did you see any of your Korean adoptee friends

2. In the past month, how often did you communicate with any of your Korean adoptee friends by telephone/mobile

3. In the past month, how often did you communicate with any of your Korean adoptee friends by e-mail or Internet

4. If you have communicated with any of your Korean adoptee friends via the Internet in the past month, how often was this communication by social media

5. In the past month, how many new Korean adoptees did you meet and whom you intend to stay in contact with

6. Did you meet some of these new adoptees on the Internet

7. Do you participate in face-to-face Korean adoptee interaction in Australia

8. Which state/territory do you interact with other Korean adoptees the most

Section 6 – Social Media in Relation to Korean Adoptees and/or Korean Adoption

1. Do you use Korean adoptee and/or Korean adoption related social media

2. Do you use the following to become familiar with Korean adoptees and/or Korean adoption

3. How far would you agree with the following statements about using social media in relation to Korean adoptees and/or Korean adoption

4. What is the most important reason for you to engage in Korean adoptee and/or Korean adoption social media

5. What is the most important benefit that you experience after using Korean adoptee and/or Korean adoption social media

Section 7

1. Is there anything that you would like to add about your personal social media participation and experiences (in general or adoption related)?
Interviews instrument

Section 1
1. Adoptee introductions

Section 2 – Australian Korean Adoptee Experience
1. In terms of your adoption experience as a Korea adoptee in Australia, were there any experiences or specific times in your life that have influenced how you see yourself today
2. Were there any significant times or experiences that left a lasting impression
3. As an adult, what are your reflections or perceptions on being a Korean adoptee in Australia

Section 3 – Relationships and Interactions with Korean adoptees
1. Based on your Korean adoption experiences in Australia, what relationships and/or interactions have you had with other Korean adoptees and can you describe these relationships
2. What might be the significance and/or importance of relationships and interactions with other Australian Korean adoptees

Section 4 – Social Media and/or Korean Adoption Related Social Media
1. How do you engage or participate in adoption related social media, for example topics on Korean adoption, adoptees and Korea and in what ways can you describe online interactions and relationships with other Korean adoptees
2. What might be the reasons to participate in social media or adoption related social media
3. What are the benefits and challenges facing social media and adoption related social media in the future

Section 5
1. After considering all of the topics discussed, do you have any other final thoughts on Australian Korean adoptees in general, Korean adoptees using social media, or Korean adoption related social media
2. Do you have any questions for me