Moving to the West: Media, Cultural Transnationalism and Identity. Cultural Dynamics of Korean Women in Diaspora

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MOVING TO THE WEST: MEDIA, CULTURAL TRANSNATIONALISM AND IDENTITY

CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF KOREAN WOMEN IN DIASPORA

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Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

To all the women who are politically incorrect

And

My dearest Marble

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, XIAOMIN HU hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the works of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

Moving to the West: Media, cultural transnationalism and identity

Cultural dynamics of Korean women in diaspora

Xiaomin HU

This research project explores the experiences of young Korean women relocating to London, employing an ethnographically informed approach to delve into media, diasporic identity, and cultural transnationalism. The analysis draws from six month of intensive fieldwork, including "following" in-depth interviews, participant observation, and digital ethnography. The study aims to investigate the interplay between media, social values, interactions, and the performance of identities within the Korean female diasporic community in the context of circulation and transnational migration.

The primary objective is to discern how social values and interactions, whether mediated or direct, contribute to the cultural transmission within Korean female diasporic groups and shape specific meanings associated with transnational identities. Within this framework, meta-themes such as transnational imagination, Western centrism, alternative multicultural interpretations, and performativity emerged, guiding further data analysis.

The research findings underscore the pivotal role of media in shaping the imagination that prompts young Korean women's transnational mobility. Additionally, it reveals the complex contradictions within their transnational social spheres, fostering a unique symbolic transnational space where identity politics continuously evolve through negotiation and struggle.

This study offers a comprehensive examination of cultural transnationalism, spotlighting a contemporary migration pattern. It showcases the correlation between media, non-Western contexts, Western centrism, identity, and everyday

transnational experiences. At a micro level, this analysis fills significant research gaps regarding the intersectionality of transnationalism, media, and migration studies within the narrative of young Korean women's transnational experiences.

Keywords

Cultural migration; cultural transnationalism; performative identity; Korean women; diaspora; race; racial ideology; the West; digital media; social media.

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I am grateful to myself for persevering and not giving up.

“The move away from the singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organisational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. what is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the art of defining the idea of society itself.”

Homi K. Bhabha, “the location of culture”

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Chapter 1 Introduction

> "On the 18th of March 2017, I found myself seated at a Korean restaurant situated in New Maldon, a well-known Korean enclave within Greater London. I was indulging in a serving of Kalguksu, a traditional Korean knife-cut noodle soup. Adjacent to my table, a Korean family comprising a couple in their forties and their two children – a teenage girl and a toddler boy – engaged in conversation using the Korean language. Curiously, the teenage girl cast a disdainful gaze in my direction and promptly switched to the English language when addressing her parents and younger brother, despite their continued employment of the Korean language. I overheard her berating her mother: "I explicitly instructed you not to speak Korean with me". This occurrence evoked a memory from 2012, during my time residing in Seoul, South Korea. On that occasion, while engrossed in reading at a local café in my neighbourhood, I unintentionally caught fragments of a conversation between two college girls, who passionately discussed their aspirations and future plans. Expressing their fervent desires, they remarked, "I am yearning to journey to the United States", "I aspire to reside there", and even proclaimed, "I want to become an American".
>
> Field notes, March 2017

A few years ago, while I was residing in South Korea (hereafter referred to as Korea), a noteworthy conversation transpired with one of my close acquaintances – an esteemed Canadian professor in her forties who imparted English language instruction at a prestigious Korean university in Seoul. During our exchange, she recounted an incident that occurred within one of her lectures. An undergraduate male student in his twenties, unexpectedly proposed marriage to her so that he would be able to relocate to Canada. While the sincerity of his proposition remains unclear, it prompted me to contemplate the significance attributed to concepts such as "living abroad", "possessing a 'Western' passport, or even "having a 'non-Asian' (typically white, in this context) spouse" within Korean society. Do these elements now embody the cultural ramifications of contemporary migration? Do they serve as prevailing motivational factors for mobility? Alternatively, could they be emblematic of the prevailing ideology of modernity within Korean society?

During my extensive three-and-a-half-year sojourn in Korea, I gleaned, through a combination of personal encounters and media narratives, that the society exhibited

a profound inclination towards “Western centrism”. Yet, a nuanced comprehension of the societal and media culture extends beyond a simplistic attribution to “Western centrism” alone. It is a complex combination encompassing xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and a pronounced “white fetish”. These factors exert a potent influence, particularly upon the imaginations of young individuals, accentuating their fascination with the West.

To illustrate, proficiency in the English language has evolved into a symbolic yardstick for gauging an individual’s competence. Even for positions devoid of international communication requirements, prerequisites such as “having studied English abroad” or “possessing an impressive TOEIC score” have assumed indispensable importance. Consequently, the pervasive influence of Western cultural imperialism, as disseminated through Western media products, beauty standards, and social norms, has engendered a remarkable proliferation of the Korean plastic surgery industry. Individuals now seek features imbued with a Western aesthetic, including a higher nasal bridge, a V-shaped jawline, and double-fold eyelids, facilitated by medical interventions.

Moreover, skin tone has become a criterion for categorising individuals within the spectrum of foreigners. African Americans, for instance, encounter rejection when applying for English tutoring positions, as the image of an English teacher aligns more readily with that of a white individual. Likewise, Southeast Asians often find themselves overlooked or ignored when seeking directions on the streets, as they fail to conform to Korean society’s idealised notion of a foreigner. Young girls harbour dreams of romantic involvement exclusively with white foreigners. Meanwhile, the mere act of “residing in a Western country” automatically conveys notions of affluence, modernity, and elite social status within the Korean societal framework and discourse.

These experiences have instilled in me a profound motivation to enhance awareness regarding the cultural dimensions of contemporary migration among young Koreans.

Within this context, I conceptualise them as cultural migrants – individuals who relocate not primarily for political or economic motives, but rather driven by cultural impetuses. However, my quest for relevant literature on media and cultural migrants has revealed several noteworthy issues.

Firstly, despite East Asia being one of the most significant sending regions for migration annually, there remains a substantial geographical gap in existing studies. While numerous disciplines have employed diverse approaches to examine East Asian diasporas, the scholarly focus has predominantly gravitated toward Chinese and Japanese diasporic communities. The situation of Korean migrants, who constitute a significant proportion of global immigration flows, has received insufficient attention, and remains largely unexplored.

Secondly, current studies on South Korea tend to frame "women on the move" through two simplistic lenses: either as an undesired consequence of Western cultural influence or as a response to liberate oneself from social gender inequalities. I challenge these reductionist explanations. Within the contemporary milieu of migratory dynamics, particularly within the Korean context, the act of "leaving the country" encompasses a multifaceted negotiation process including the interpretation of media products, the engagement with diverse social discourses surrounding "internationalism" as "cultural grace" (Cheah, 1998), and the performative aspects of identity. These considerations often intersect and occasionally contradict one another. I contend that construing Korean transnationalism solely as a practice of cultural imperialism represents a significant weakness within the existing literature, as it produces only partial accounts of media and cultural practices.

Thirdly, the discourse surrounding transnational everyday experiences tends to be dichotomous, oscillating between celebratory and non-celebratory perspectives. However, such a dichotomy does not fully encapsulate the complexity of contemporary transnational experiences.

It becomes evident that the intricate phenomenon of “Asian women on the move”(Kim, 2011) cannot be adequately addressed by relying solely on two oversimplified explanations: the notion of undesired Western cultural imperialism and the concept of “liberating” oneself from social gender inequality. Instead, I contend that an alternative perspective should be adopted. Surprisingly, the existing literature on this subject has paid scant attention to the discursive and mediated aspects of the “West” or the socially constructed meanings of “being international” and “living/studying abroad” in contemporary Korea. Moreover, the literature fails to explore how these values interact with the transnational everyday lives and identities of Koreans in the diaspora.

Within this context, my particular interest lies in understanding how young Korean women, who have already embarked on their journey away from Korea, navigate the cultural and social values from their native society within a Western context. I seek to explore how they negotiate their identities through social interactions and whether the media plays a role in these processes of transitioning from an “in” to an “out” perspective and vice versa. Rather than approaching the transnational reality through celebratory or non-celebratory tendencies or focusing solely on whether living across two continents cultivates a cosmopolitan attitude or reinforces national identity, I have chosen to position myself within a broader framework. This allows me to examine the transnational everyday experiences of young Korean women, while mapping the collective impact of media, social values, and social interactions on individuals’ self-perception and self-expression. Such an approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of cultural transnationalism and the diversity encompassed within the transnational social field.

Framework of Analysis

This research delves into four key subjects: media, social values, cultural transnationalism, and performative identity. From my perspective, these interconnected subjects form the core of my approach to the topic and serve as a robust foundation for theoretical analysis.

In this study, media is comprehended in three distinct dimensions: as an object, a technology, and a contextual entity. The role of media within transnational flows has been examined with regard to the construction of images depicting the host society, as well as how these mediations prompt cross-cultural practices. Existing studies have reached a consensus that media-generated portrayals of the host country often tend to be either "romanticised" or "unrealistic", thus contrasting with the "mundane" reality of transnational experiences. This approach to culture in transnational flows bears relevance to Appadurai's (1990) argument in his work *Modernity at Large*, where he contends that electronic media offers individuals the opportunity to create their own "imagined worlds". These "imagined worlds", as previously defined by Appadurai, encompass "the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imagination of persons and groups spread around the globe" (1989; 1990, p.297). Mass media has made it possible for ordinary individuals to engage with and be exposed to various resources that pertain to "another world", which Appadurai describes as "self-imagination as an everyday social project" (1996, p.4). Nonetheless, as Sun (2005) elaborates on Appadurai's ideas, this act of imagination is not simply "an idle, mundane and individuated mental activity resembling fantasising or daydreams" (p.75). Instead, it is "a social project expressive of agency and productive of modern political subjectivity" (p.75). Both Appadurai's and Sun's contributions provide a significant analytical framework for understanding media as a medium through which symbolic cultural meanings are formed within the realm of transnational practices. However, one aspect that remains insufficiently explored is how power dynamics in culture influence the workings of imagination.

The discussions surrounding the intertwined influence of media and imagination on transnational flows, particularly within Asian transnational groups, have been primarily grounded in the hegemony of American and Western European popular culture. This recognition has been extensively acknowledged by Fujita (2004; 2006) and Kim (2011). However, less attention has been given to the cultural hierarchy and power dynamics within these societies themselves. Particularly noteworthy is the

absence of discussions addressing the Korean society as a non-Western context that is nonetheless heavily influenced by Western-centric perspectives. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that the social values shaped by this Western-centric society not only constitute a subject of concern, but also shape the contours of imagination and everyday transnational experiences.

It is crucial to establish a clear understanding of the migrants under investigation in this thesis. Traditionally, migration has been viewed as an autonomous process driven by various political and economic factors. In their respective studies, Yatabe (2001) and Fujita (2004; 2006) have introduced the concept of "cultural migrants" to describe individuals who migrate for cultural motivations. Yatabe (2001), for instance, in his examination of Japanese relocation to Paris in pursuit of cultural opportunities in the arts, suggests that it is reasonable to classify this migration as "cultural" rather than economic or political. Fujita (2006) similarly employs the term in her study on young Japanese individuals who move abroad to pursue their dreams in the cultural industry. However, confining the definition of cultural migrants solely to those engaged in cultural practices provides only a partial account, as there exists a broader context within which cultural migration can be understood. As Hitchcock (2003) asserts, "Culture can act as a conduit in producing a more agonistic sense of global consciousness than the pieties of unreflective multiculturalism" (p.3). That is to say, culture can serve as a conduit for fostering a more agonistic sense of global consciousness, challenging the unexamined assumptions of multiculturalism. Nonetheless, transnationalism often focuses on "exchanges, connections and practices across borders, thus transcending the national space as the primary reference point for activities and identities" [1]. Thus, I propose that analytical framework of cultural transnationalism maybe applicable. Drawing on Hitchcock's (2003) perspective:

[1] See IOM workshop *Migration and Transnationalism: Opportunities and Challenges* background paper 9-10 March 2010

> "Cultural transnationalism has much to say about (and in) moving cultures, including alternative measures of modernity that do not depend inexorably on a Euramerican model of cognitive cogency, that which has relied upon a relatively stable set of cultural markers broadly associated with the Cartesian "I" and its tradition." (Hitchcock, 2003, p.10)

Regarding this matter, Hitchcock (2003) further asserts that "cultural transnationalism is not just a commentary or critique of power, it is also its very effect" (p.9). However, as evidenced in this research, the focus extends beyond studying the representations of transnationalism to encompass the embedded cultural codes that influence consciousness and shape everyday transnational experiences and identities. Particularly in an era that views transnational mobility as an open and voluntary journey, there is an ever-growing imperative to offer more nuanced interpretations of the subject in order to scrutinise the dynamic nature of transnational reality.

Furthermore, the construction of identity has been a recurring theme in the intersection of media, globalisation, and transnationalism. Moving away from the traditional understanding of identity as tied to notions of "nationality" and "ethnicity", contemporary theories of globalisation emphasise the dynamic processes of "becoming" and "being" in cultural identity. Drawing on Stuart Hall's work, Ang (2001) proposes:

> "Cultural identity, in this second sense, 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. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power." (Ang, 2001, p.150)

Building upon this standpoint, Madianou (2005) asserts that from a transnational perspective, identity construction undergoes ongoing transformation through relocations, cross-cultural exchange, and interaction. Drawing on Foucault's

framework, Butler (1993), for instance, argues that modern notions of identity are shaped by normative ideals that prescribe the expectations for “normal” individuals, although identities are primarily formed through social practices and performances. McKinlay (2010) further contends that “performativity is not reducible to performance and the degree of choice involved in identity construction both makes it appear more ‘nature’ for the individual and also open to reinterpretation” (p.232). Thus, it is imperative to understand identity within the context of transnational chaos, where adopting a performative perspective offers a pathway to comprehend the complexities, ambiguities, and paradoxes inherent in transnational social realms.

Research Aim and Research Questions

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in academic interest surrounding cross-border activities and social interactions among migrants. Traditional migration studies have predominantly focused on the social integration and assimilation of migrants in their host countries, although new frameworks have emerged to comprehend the complexities of contemporary migration that challenge many traditional assumptions. Researchers have begun to shift their attention to the micro-level aspects of various transnational activities. Rather than persisting solely in the macro-level debate between globalisation and transnationalism, the objective of this thesis was to investigate a novel pattern of contemporary migration by exploring the interplay among media, Western centrism in a non-Western context, identity, and everyday transnational experiences.

The purpose of this research was to make a substantial contribution to the existing scholarly literature on the cultural dynamics of Korean women in the diaspora from a micro-level perspective. In doing so, the study aimed to address several research gaps at the intersection of transnationalism, media, and migration studies. Consequently, in light of internalised racial discrimination and the phenomenon of “white fetish” within Korean society, as well as the Korean media’s tendency to excessively idealise the West, this thesis also sought to critically reassess the reflect upon the concept of identity.

A deliberate choice was made to select a research site that would yield comprehensive insights into the research problem. Governmental statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea indicate that London attracts the largest number of Korean migrants in the UK. Initially, the focus of this study was to examine the relationship between media representations of the West within Korean society and the cultural motivations behind young Korean women's transnational movements. However, during the pilot fieldwork conducted in 2015, I discovered that the transnational experiences of young Korean women living in the UK were often complex and nuanced, residing in a "grey zone". Based on my interactions and meetings with these young Korean women in 2015, I decided to refine the scope of my research. Consequently, I opted to analyse transnationalism, media, and identity among young Korean women in the diaspora using a broader lens. The adoption of an ethnographic approach facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics of young Korean women in the diaspora, allowing for the modification of my research questions as follows.

The research endeavours to examine the collective impact of media, social values, and social interactions on the circulation of people and the formation of identities within the Korean female diasporic community. More specifically, the research aims to address the following objectives:

a) Explore how social values and social interactions, whether mediated or not, are culturally transmitted within the Korean female diasporic group.
b) Investigate the ways in which these social values and social interactions contribute to the creation and shaping of meanings specifically pertaining to diasporic identities.

To accomplish these objectives, an ethnographic study will be conducted among young Korean women who reside in the global city of London.

In order to fulfil my research objective, it is essential to thoroughly examine and comprehend the intricacies of the transnational lives of young Korean women at a micro level. The literature review conducted for this research project has focused on two key areas: firstly, the Korean society as a Western-centric context, and secondly, cultural migration as a novel trajectory of border-crossing practices. These areas of investigation have guided my research interests and shaped the analytical themes of this study.

In light of these considerations, the exploration of media, social values, Western centrism within a non-Western context, social interactions, and cultural transnationalism has emerged as a new paradigm to elucidate the dynamics of contemporary migration. Drawing from my personal experiences as a non-white foreigner in Korea, I am compelled to delve into the realms of cultural transnationalism and performative identity within the framework of media and diaspora analysis. The objective is to obtain empirical data that can furnish a rich description and enhance our comprehension of the transnational context and reality experienced by young Korean women in the diaspora.

Thus far, there exists a notable gap in research pertaining to the intersectionality among these factors within the realm of media and diaspora studies, particularly when it comes to elucidating the phenomenon of “Asian women on the move”. This study aims to fill that gap by undertaking a comprehensive exploration of these intertwined dimensions.

In contrast to existing studies on “Asian women on the move” that predominantly frame border-crossing practice in two ways – either as an undesired consequence of Western cultural influence or as a response to “liberate” oneself from social gender inequalities – I have chosen a distinct approach to analyse the trajectory of leaving, arriving, and settling. My research is grounded in the contemporary understanding of cultural migration as a voluntary choice, with a specific focus on the cultural factors and correlations underlying this phenomenon. The decision to adopt this

approach was motivated by the limited availability of empirical studies exploring the unique context of cultural transnationalism and the need for fresh insights in the field of media and migration studies.

The core of my thesis centres on a cohort of young Korean women moving to and residing in the cosmopolitan city of London and their experiences of transnational everyday life. The central consideration is the impact of the social values they perceive and navigate from their home country of Korea, as these values play a pivotal role in shaping their identities and transnational everyday lives. Additionally, the study examines their transnational social interactions, encompassing both mediated and face-to-face encounters. This comprehensive analysis contributes novel insights to the field, enriching the existing body of knowledge on media, migration, and cultural dynamics.

As mentioned above, the overarching research objectives are:

a) Explore how social values and social interactions, whether mediated or not, are culturally transmitted within the Korean female diasporic group.
b) Investigate the ways in which these social values and social interactions contribute to the creation and shaping of meanings specifically pertaining to diasporic identities.

I aim to examine the primary research questions from three distinct perspectives:

a. From a media perspective

In what ways are media being used to articulate the multiplicities of diasporic identities in the negotiation of modernity?

What are the specific functions and influences of media within the realm of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to the Korean diasporic community?

b. From a social interactive perspective

How do young Korean women in the diaspora perceive their own identities within the context of transnational flows?

In what ways are identities enacted and embodied in their lived experiences of transnational lives, both in relation to their home country and in Western contexts?

c. From a cultural transnational perspective

How do young Korean women negotiate and navigate mainstream Korean cultural values in the context of their transnational lives?

What are the implications and significance of "living in London" for these young Korean women in terms of their identities, experiences, and aspirations?

The Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter One serves as an introductory chapter, commencing with an elucidation of the motivations behind this study. The latter section of the chapter outlines the framework for data analysis, followed by an evolution of the research questions.

Chapter Two adopts a cultural transnationalism approach and provides an extensive review of relevant literature that forms the theoretical basis of this research. The primary focus is on introducing the cultural intricacies within the Korean context, establishing a connection between political economy and cultural studies within this project. It delves into the role of media in a transnational context and examines the pivotal theory of identity as performance to establish the analytical frameworks guiding the analysis of research findings.

Chapter Three solidifies the theoretical foundation of this study by exploring essential concepts such as transnationalism, diaspora, and field. It investigates the interrelationship among these concepts before delving into the pivotal role of habitus, cultural capital, and distinction in shaping the framework and understanding of transnationalism within the context of this study. Through this examination of

fundamental concepts, the chapter lays a robust groundwork for a deeper understanding of the complex nuances within this research.

In **Chapter Four**, the rationale behind the research design is expounded, affirming that an ethnographically informed approach best suits this exploratory study. The research context is clarified to justify the selection of the research site. This is followed by a discussion of the employed research methods – specifically, 'following' in-depth interviews and participant observation, conducted both online and offline, to gather data with the global city of London. Additionally, the sampling and recruitment strategy for selecting participants are outlined, along with a description of accessing the field. The latter part of the chapter outlines the structure of data analysis, detailing the process of refining and categorising the rich fieldwork data. The chapter concludes with a self-reflective section that delineates the researcher's observed positionality within the field. It is observed that the simultaneous presence of insider and outsider perspectives not only coexists but also enriches the nuanced analysis of the generated data.

Chapter Five furnishes analytical insights into the transnational trajectory of young Korean women from their native Korea to the United Kingdom. Through the delineation of the class-based habitus and social ties of these individuals, the chapter demonstrates pivotal concepts such as the continual (re)production of self, the cultivation of refined habitus, and the accumulation of different forms of capital. These elements serve as guiding markers, facilitating an understanding of the complex journey undertaken by young Korean women in their transnationalism from imagined to reality.

Chapter Six extends the exploration of young Korean women's transnational positionalities by delving into nuanced discourses encompassing race and the West, juxtaposed within traditional Korean value frameworks. Within this discourse, the coalescence of inferiority and superiority complexes is examined, resulting in an overarching perception of the Western world as emblematic of modernity.

Subsequently, the chapter investigates the strategies employed by young Korean women in negotiating these Western-centric value perspectives within their everyday transnational experiences in London. This investigation probes into their racial ideologies and the dynamics of their transnational social interactions, culminating in the emergence of a meta theme from the empirical data -identified as Western centrism.

Building upon an intensive examination of young Korean women's subconscious, deeply influenced by Western-centric Korean value perspectives, **Chapter Seven** focuses on their media engagement in transnationalism and identity politics. It uncovers the shift of young Korean women's media engagement to the internet and social media platforms to navigate their transnationalism. By examining their engagement with Instagram, the chapter reveals how these complexities influence their performative diasporic identity. Through cultural codes like 'being Korean' and 'being International', these women strategically navigate social connections and establish their positionalities within transnational spaces. This strategic identity construction emphasises a nuanced, context-dependent approach in shaping their transnational selves.

In the exploration of young Korean women's transnational experiences within London's global environment, **Chapter Eight** critically examines the persistent challenges inherent in multiculturalism. The chapter initiates by exploring these women's comprehension of the concept, notably influenced by the prevailing rhetorical stance on multiculturalism in Korea. It is posited that despite residing in a global city like London, their understanding of the multicultural situation in Korea might not undergo substantial updates. However, their transnational experiences undeniably offer a reflective platform wherein they can refine and enhance their awareness and consciousness regarding multiculturalism.

Finally, **Chapter Nine** consolidates all the explored empirical data from previous chapters and presents the study's conclusions. The main findings regarding the

comprehensive transnational landscape of young Korean women in London are summarised and linked to the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter deliberates on the empirical and theoretical contributions sought by this study, as well as the limitations identified during the writing process. Lastly, implications and recommendations for future research are presented.

Chapter 2 Setting the Scene – Korea, Media, Cultural Transnationalism, and Identity

In Chapters Two and Three, I present the theoretical framework underpinning this study and elucidate the academic discourses that inform and contribute to its objectives. A comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural context is essential for a robust interpretation of the empirical data. Within this chapter, I concentrate on the key concepts that form the basis for subsequent discussions on transnational social field and transnationalism in Chapter Three. I advocate for a novel theoretical direction in conceptualising the intricate interplay between media, culture, and identity within a transnational framework, with the goal of comprehending the cultural dynamics of contemporary transnationalism. This proposed direction stems from a synthesis of existing theoretical approaches to the study of migration and identity. After examining the contributions of the political economy tradition to our understanding of migration and identity, I shift the focus towards the cultural dimensions of the topic, aiming to delve deeper into the subject through the adoption of a bottom-up cultural transnational approach.

Various approaches have been employed in the study of migration and identity. The geographical approach to migration studies has primarily focused on trans-migrants' spatial movements, while political perspectives (Portes, 1999; Basch, Gilck Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Ruedin, 2011, 2012, 2013) emphasise migrants' political engagements with either the sending or hosting society. These sociological discussions have led current studies to analyse social hierarchies and the influences of transnational processes on social institutional structures, including power relations, economic systems, cultural interactions, and social networks at the local level.

Existing theorisations on migration and identity, regardless of their positioning within political or cultural frameworks, tend to be dichotomised into either progressive migration with a strong transnational identity (often associated with cosmopolitanism) or retrogressive migration with a reinforced national identity.

Such a dichotomous approach reveals the grounding of both migration and migrant identity in essentialism, extending to the transnational social field itself. Consequently, these occasions often adopt a top-down, cosmopolitan perspective, neglecting the examination of the micro level realities of migrants and how they shape diasporic identity politics. However, studies that advocate for an understanding of transnational everyday experiences are rooted in the "mundane" realities of migrants, which highlight the challenges of integration into the so-called host society and the subsequent reinforcement of their national identities.

What has remained largely unexplored are the intricacies of the process of transnational movements itself and the cultural shifts that occur, along with the paradoxical consequences they entail for identity. It is not simply a matter of leaving one place and settling in another, but rather a complex and multi-layered process of negotiations, both internal and external. To provide a nuanced understanding of these negotiations, I set the scene for this research project by synthesising the relevant concepts and theoretical frameworks. This chapter illustrates how these concepts and contextual discussions have informed my approach to the field and guided the formulation of the research questions. By doing so, the subsequent discussion in Chapter Three on the definition of the transnational social field as a "grey zone" will be better contextualised and comprehensible.

Korea

The Korean context serves as a rich and complex backdrop for understanding the dynamics of transnational mobility and Korean diasporas. South Korea, as a nation, has undergone significant socio-cultural and economic transformations in recent decades. The country's rapid industrialisation, technological advancements, and integration into the global economy have brought about profound changes in various aspects of Korean society.

The cultural dimension of US geopolitical dominance in South Korea has exerted a significant and extensive influence. Through a longstanding alliance and military

presence, the United States has played a substantial role in shaping various facets of Korean society, including its cultural landscape, social values, and lifestyle. American cultural influence in Korea is visibly manifested in the widespread dissemination of popular culture, notably in the forms of music, Hollywood cinema, and television. Korean audiences have embraced American entertainment, resulting in the shape of imagination towards mediated Western/American modernity.

The West as Social Capital: Media Representations and Social Discourses

The inspiration for this research project stemmed from a documentary produced by Korean Educational Broadcasting System (EBS).

Figure 1 EBS documentary

Image retrieved from: http://kimipakchwe.blogspot.com/2011/12/racism-in-korea.html

An episode of the EBS (Education Broadcast System) program "EBS Docu Prime" illustrates the prevalence of racial discrimination in South Korea. This social experiment involved two foreign participants with different ethnic backgrounds, a "white" Canadian and a Southeast Asian from Indonesia, who were tasked with asking for directions from Korean passers-by in Seoul's bustling Gangnam area. The outcome was disheartening. The white participant received enthusiastic help from locals without much effort, with kind-hearted Koreans voluntarily offering aid upon seeing him holding a map. He was even escorted by a group of young Korean ladies to the tube station. In contrast, the Southeast Asian participant was completely ignored for hours, despite genuinely asking for assistance. Korean passers-by paid

no attention to his request for help, with no one even stopping to hear him out. This experiment reveals the stark reality of racial discrimination and "white privilege" in South Korean society, as well as the prevalence of "colourism" and negative stereotypes against non-white individuals.

There exists a historical basis for the perception of white superiority within Korean society. According to Kim's (2006) research on Korean navigation through global white racial ideology, the United States has solidified American's racialised influence in South Korea through both military and cultural economic means. This influence, couple with Korean' self-consciousness, which often tends towards inferiority when compared to the whiteness and modernity represented in Hollywood movies, has resulted in cultural imperialism and the early discourse on white superiority. With the progression of industrialisation and modernisation, the discussion of white superiority is no longer held at a macro-level but rather is adopted into everyday micro experiences. One instance is the adoption of Western cultural values and norms in the Korean society (Park, 2007; Bissel & Chung, 2009), where "West" and "whiteness" have become socially constructed terminologies representing some form of cultural grace. The discussion of white superiority has thus transitioned to a larger scale and is framed as "white fetish". There is a tendency in Korean media to celebrate and represent social culture underlying the theme of "dynamic Korea". In contrast, Ju and Noh's study (2013) examining the ethnoscape (Appadurai, 1996) of TV dramas on three Korean nationwide channels from 2005 to 2012 found that non-Korean characters were divided into different categories, with the adoration group consisting mainly of white males with attractive appearances and nice characters who have successful careers and are classified as social elites. The sympathy group, on the other hand, is composed of Southeast and Central Asians and blacks, who are mostly portrayed as characters with lower-working-class backgrounds and who can barely manage their humble lives. These racial and cultural discourses provide a new analytical lens through which to examine Korean diasporas and their (re)production of racial ideology. It is crucial to foreground transnational digital culture and racial ideology within the Korean context as not only a cultural imperialistic practice but

also a process of negotiation among interpretations of digital media contents, multiple discourses concerning "being international" as "culture grace" to mark social states, self-positionality, and identity performance. These considerations frequently intersect with and occasionally contradict each other. I argue that foregrounding transnationalism within the Korean context as only a cultural imperialist practice is a key weakness of the existing literature and produces only partial accounts of media, transnationalism, and cultural practices.

Culturally Embodied Race: Xenophobia, Internalised Racial Discrimination and "White-fetish"

This study delves into the transnational experiences of young Korean women and the intricate cultural shifts that take place within this process. Understanding the formation of Korean social and cultural ideologies, as well as the contextualisation of the racial hierarchy present within the social structure, becomes of paramount importance. To illustrate the racially embodied nature of Korean society, this section will commence with a few contrasting examples. Korea's social environment is particularly compelling for research in the realm of transnationalism and diaspora due to the coexistence of xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and the phenomenon known as "white-fetish". This amalgamation of social features has received limited attention in academic discussions within the specific context. Given the scarcity of existing studies that explore this complex social phenomenon, this research will draw upon highly relevant, albeit indirectly related, literature to highlight its emergence.

The xenophobic tensions within Korean society are of a multidimensional nature, encompassing both political and cultural agendas. This animosity can be traced back to historical events, particularly the United States' involvement in the Korean War. On 27th June 1950, the United States officially entered the conflict, supporting South Korea, and has maintained a military presence in the country since 1st July 1957. Unfortunately, over the years, there have been numerous reported incidents of sexual crimes and violent attacks committed by American soldiers against Korean

civilians, leading to significant political tensions between the U.S. military force and local Koreans. As a result, some Korean nationals have called for an end to the diplomatic agreement that allows for the U.S. troop presence, expressing fear and distrust of the U.S. military force, which they perceive as more threatening than the North Korean regime it is meant to protect them from. Such fear has given rise to a xenophobic narrative suggesting that "foreigners are dangerous" (see images below).

However, it is crucial to note that cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping this xenophobic narrative. Korean identity is closely tied to the concept of "blood lineage", which serves as a defining element of who belongs to the Korean community (Kim, 2020). The notion of "us" holds considerable significance in Korean culture, and its definition heavily relies on the recognition of Korean bloodlines. The idea of a "pure blood" society is deeply ingrained in Korean value systems, initially introduced as a government-designed strategic ideology in the aftermath of the post-Japanese colonial period. This concept portrays Korean as a society formed and operated by a single bloodline, and it profoundly influences the country's social fabric. Consequently, accepting foreigners into Korean society is seen as potentially disrupting the longstanding social balance and stability fostered by the notion of a "pure blood" society, thus contributing to the cultural aspect of xenophobia.

Figure 2 A sign on a public toilet door in Korea indicating this toilet is foreigners only

Image retrieved from: http://alexquinn.org/32apan/photos/medium/2005-08-14-160506—DSCN2963.JPG

Figure 3 A korean local bar indicating only native Koreans are allowed to enter

Image retrieved from: https://klownisms.wordpress.com/tag/collectivism/

Xenophobia is not the sole contentious cultural phenomenon that has emerged in South Korea amid its encounter with various diversity issues within the context of globalisation. Another significant issue within the country's social structure is internalised racial discrimination. Bivens (2005) provides a fitting definition for this concept within the framework of this study, stating that "Just as racism results in the system of structural advantage called white privilege for white people and their communities, internalised racism results in the system of structural disadvantage called internalised racism for people and communities of colour on inter-and intra-group levels".

Korean scholars often link such discriminatory behaviour to economic status (Kim, 2019; Kim, 2020), suggesting that "Koreans tend to be more welcoming toward white people from developed countries but disregard those from countries with lower economic status" (Kim, 2020; Ko, 2021). While the correlation with economic status is not entirely unfounded, I find it to be rather nuanced. There are two key factors that have contributed to the emergence of internalised racial discrimination within Korean society, which are frequently overlooked in discussions. Firstly, the Korean nationalist pride, based on the concept of ethnic national identity, celebrates Korea as a "pure blood" nation, standing in strong contrast to Japan's colonial influence in

the country. The discrimination against Japanese within Korean society, to some extent, can be seen as an extreme nationalist resistance against Japan's colonial legacy (see below picture of a Korean internet café rejecting Japanese customers).

Additionally, cultural image plays a substantial role in shaping a more generalised internalised racial discrimination in Korea. This notion is often associated with the images and reputations that certain nations represent on the global stage and, more specifically, in Western discourses. The portrayal of certain countries in media and popular culture may reinforce stereotypes and biases, thereby influencing attitudes toward foreigners from those nations.

Figure 4 A Korean internet cafe bans Japanese nationals

Image retrieved from: www.xn-539a39a89qk1f3qf.com

Exploring the socially and politically constructed meanings and discourses of "whiteness" within Korean society presents a highly intriguing and pertinent research topic. Notably, Korea's distinct categorisation of foreigners into "white" and "others" reflects a unique societal fetish toward "whiteness", adding complexity to the country's evolving multicultural social landscape. In this context, "whiteness" refers to the ideological construction associated with individuals classified as belonging to the white race. This idealisation of "whiteness" and its association with

mainstream Western modernity contribute to the establishment of a racial hierarchy system in Korea.

Korean scholars contend that the racial hierarchy ranking system in Korea is primarily determined by the degree of darkness in skin tones. In her work, Hayin Amber Kim (2020) expounds on a triracial system map in Korea, which highlights the dynamics of this hierarchy. The concept of whiteness, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of foreign individuals, influencing their treatment and experiences within the Korean community.

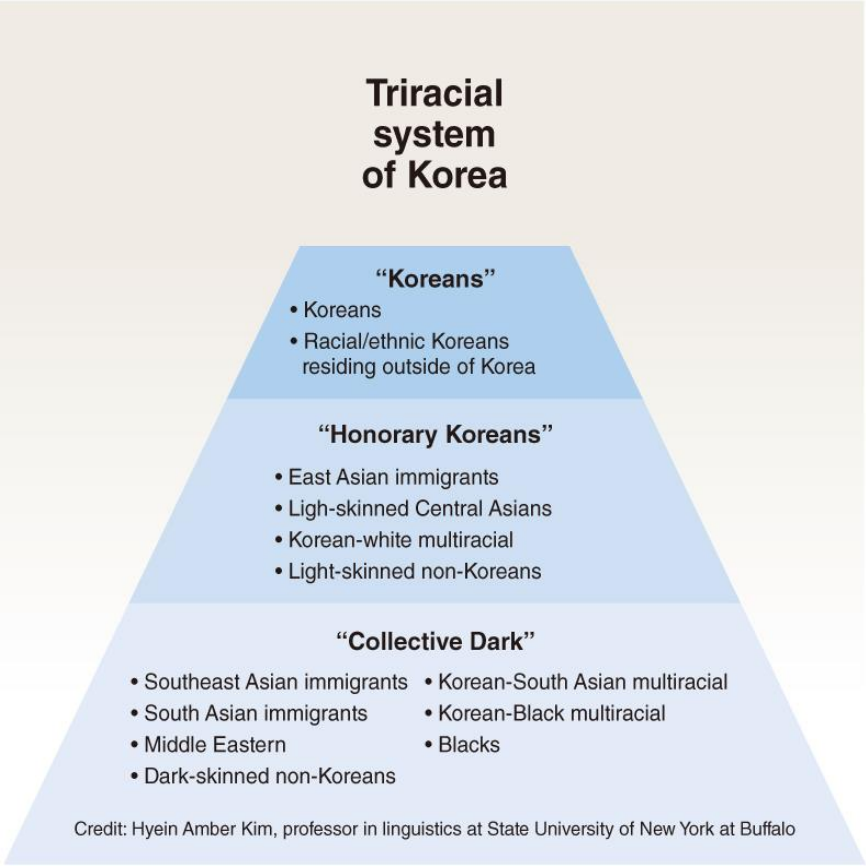

Figure 5 Triracial system of Korea

Image retrieved from https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210927000766

Kim's (2020) visualisation of the unspoken "caste" system in Korea, primarily based on race and skin colour, raises intriguing insights into the dynamics of racial

inequality within Korean society. This perspective invites valuable considerations in defining “Koreanness” and investigating the criteria that determine inclusion within the Korean social category. However, I find it challenging to fully embrace the notion of racial hierarchy being solely dictated by variations in skin shades within the social structure. My empirical study aims to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of this subject, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the construction of a racial ranking system within Korean social fabric, which involves a complex interplay of various cultural factors. By addressing the intriguing complex Korean social phenomena, my study aims to challenge essentialist perspectives and offer a more organic and contextualised understanding of race and identity within the Korean diasporic context. Through a nuanced exploration of the diverse cultural factors that underpin the construction of Korean social dispositions, this study aspires to contribute to broader discussions on multiculturalism, social dynamics and power relations within the diasporic context.

Figure 6 African American English tutor rejected for not being white

Image retrieved from: http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0922856434

Migration Studies and Identity: Between Political Economy and Cultural Studies

Migration and transnationalism have been commonly examined within two frameworks. The celebratory tendency portrays migrants as leading progressive lifestyles in their host societies, while the non-celebratory tendency highlights the "mundane" transnational reality of migrants, emphasising the challenges they face in terms of integration. In this study, I depart from these traditional assumptions and advocate for a grounded and context-based analysis of cultural transnationalism. By adopting a bottom-up approach, I aim to explore the existing issues pertaining to media, migration, and identity, eschewing the top-down, cosmopolitan perspectives often employed in previous research.

The study of media and migration has predominantly been approached through two common traditions: political economy and cultural studies. The political economy tradition focuses on the larger socio-political context, particularly in relation to theories of globalisation. It examines how social structures, power relations, and factors such as citizenship, economic structures, political movements, nationhood, migration policies, and governmentality shape and contribute to the process of globalisation. This approach aims to explain and understand transnational flows, often with implications for policymakers and political empowerment. However, critics argue that the political economy tradition's macro-level focus on institutions and structures can be deterministic and neglect the lived experiences of migrants themselves.

On the other hand, the cultural studies approach emphasises the role of culture, cultural phenomena, and cultural discourses in shaping new forms, meanings, and interpretations of culture. It pays attention to individuals and their communities, with a focus on transnational individuals in the context of migration and diaspora studies. However, the cultural studies approach has been criticised for disregarding structural factors that influence the creation of culture and individuals' interpretations.

Recognising the contributions and limitations of both approaches, this study adopts a comprehensive perspective. It acknowledges the significance of power relations in establishing specific cultural discourses and meanings and examines how they shape both societal and individual values. Additionally, while analysing the everyday lives and identity experiences of migrants, the study considers both structural factors and the interpretative capabilities of individuals. By integrating these perspectives, a more nuanced understanding of media, migration, and identity can be achieved.

Studying Culture Transnationalism and Cultural Migration

Migration theory in social sciences has traditionally focused on the economic and political aspects of human migration. Neoclassical economics theory, as one of the earliest theories explaining international migration, examines global migration as labour movement within the process of economic development. It analyses migration from both macro and micro levels, with macroeconomic describing the overall patterns of labour movement (Lewis, 1954; Ranis and Fei, 1961; Harris and Todaro, 1970; Todaro, 1976; Massey et al., 1993), and microeconomics focusing on individual decision-making based on the calculation of benefits through transnational movements (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969, 1976, 1989; Todaro and Maruszko, 1987; Massey et al., 1993).

However, the rise of the new economics of migration has challenged neoclassical economics theory by introducing political, social, and cultural factors to evaluate international migration. The World Systems Theory, for instance, views international migration as a natural consequence of disruptions and dislocations that occur during capitalist development (Massey et al., 1993). It emphasises the recruitment of individuals from developing countries by foreign capital, creating material and ideological links to the core countries (Sassen, 1988; Fujita, 2004). Media is also recognised as playing a role in reinforcing the ideological and cultural connections to the core countries.

Furthermore, the field has incorporated network theory and institutional theory to understand the stability and structure of migration flows over space and time, identifying stable international migration systems (Massey et al., 1993). However, existing theories often focus on refugees and labour migrants, assuming that economic and political factors are the main drivers of transnational movements.

With the emergence of voluntary transnational movements in the context of globalisation, new forms of migration have emerged. Fujita (2004) introduces the concept of "cultural migration" to account for individuals who relocate for cultural motivations rather than economic or political factors. Her study focuses on young Japanese individuals moving to New York and London to engage in the art and creative industry. Fujita's introduction of the term "cultural migrants" reflects the recognition that no single dominant theory can fully explain all aspects of migration. Nevertheless, the definition and scope of culture in this context warrant further examination and a more comprehensive analysis. It is necessary to delve deeper into the concept of culture to fully grasp its implications within the field of migration studies.

Cultural transnationalism, although still a relatively novel conceptual framework, has garnered increasing attention within the field of migration studies. While transnationalism traditionally emphasises the exchange and connections across borders, cultural transnationalism expands this perspective by highlighting the role of culture in shaping transnational experience and identities. It recognises that transnational activities encompass not only economic and political dimensions but also intricate cultural dynamics that influence the ways migrants navigate their everyday lives.

The notion of cultural transnationalism offers a valuable lens for understanding the complexities of migration and identity formation. By examining the interplay between culture, power, and consciousness, this framework illuminates the underlying cultural codes that shape migrants' perceptions and practices. It goes

beyond a simple binary view of multiculturalism and hybridity, acknowledging the nuanced processes by which migrants negotiate their identities in transnational contexts.

While the assumption that transnational activities promote multiculturalism and generate hybrid cultural forms may be widely accepted, critical inquiry is necessary to assess the validity of such claims. Cultural transnationalism allows for a deeper exploration of the implications and effects of transnational practices on cultural diversity and identity construction. By critically examining the power dynamics and cultural transformations embedded within transnational everyday experiences, this research project aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of cultural transnationalism and its impact on migrant's lives.

The Feminisation of Migration: An Overview

Nearly half of the world's migrant population comprises women (World Bank, 2006), and the gender composition of migration flows varies across regions (Guzmán, 2006). Within the East Asian context, migration tends to be predominantly female. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea reports a higher number of female residents in London compared to male residents. Youna Kim's (2011; 2016) study on "Diasporic daughters" reveals that migration from East Asia has become increasingly feminised. Contrary to the traditional perception of marriage as the primary motive for women's transnational movements, the new generation of women since the mid-1980s has been leaving their home countries to pursue educational opportunities in Western institutions as a "contact zone". They seek career prospects and, more importantly, engage in "a new emancipatory mode of identity formation - individualisation" (Kim, 2010; 2011, p.134).

Kim's analysis contributes significantly to the field, but it still aligns with the mainstream narrative of "Asian women on the move" as a response to gender inequalities, suggesting a sense of liberation. However, debates persist regarding the extent to which contemporary geographical displacements signify women's

changing power and freedom (Marinucci, 2007). Kelsky's (2001) exploration of Japanese women's imagination towards the West offers an alternative perspective – the conceptual framework of "being international". She links women's consciousness and lifestyle, as portrayed in popular media, to their social frustrations. Kelsky (2001) discusses the complexities of social gender inequalities as a driving force behind Japanese women's choices to engage in "being international". In other words, the gap in consciousness and professional frustrations shapes Japanese women's attraction to the West, which is further fuelled by an eroticised desire for white men – a symbol of Western modernity in women's imaginary.

The desire for a foreign lifestyle, encompassing elements of individualisation and the aspiration for a progressive existence, partially explains the increasing feminisation of migration. From seeking personal autonomy to falling in love with the mediated Western modernity and the imagination of a progressive lifestyle, these desires and aspirations contribute to the rising numbers of female migrants. In the subsequent section, the role of media in creating spaces for such imagination and reflexivity will be further explored.

Media Role in Between "In and Out"

The relationship between media and migration is an emerging and relatively unexplored area of research. In recent years, there has been increasing attention to this topic, although much of the existing literature primarily focuses on mediated migration and the representation of migrants in the media. Within this paradigm, the media's role in transnational migratory flows is often examined from a political perspective. However, in this study, the role of media will be discussed from a dual perspective, encompassing both its "input role" that influences individuals' migratory decisions and its "output" role in portraying and representing of migrant individuals' everyday transnationalism.

It is widely recognised that individuals' desires to migrate and their decision-making processes are influenced by the information and narratives they encounter through

various media channels (Appadurai, 1996). Therefore, media will be considered in this study as an object, a technological tool, and a contextual factor. It will be examined how media shapes individuals' perceptions and aspirations regarding transnational migration and migratory destination, as well as how it contributes to the construction of narratives and representations of transnationalism within wider societal discourses.

The role of media in transnationalism extends beyond its influence on migratory decisions and representation. Instead, it plays a crucial role in shaping transnational imaginations and facilitating the formation and maintenance of transnational connections and identity construction/performance. Leaning upon this certain articulation, media first serves as a powerful input tool for constructing and disseminating transnational narratives and discourses. Individuals are exposed to a wide range of information, images, and stories that transcend national boundaries through mass media. These representations therefore shape perceptions of other cultures, societies, and lifestyles thus contribute to the formation of transnational imagination. Furthermore, media platforms provide symbolic transnational spaces for communication and interaction. Social media, in particular, has revolutionised the way individuals connect and maintain social ties across borders. As an output, digital media within the transnational context serves as digital archive for transnational individuals to record their trajectory as well as provides symbolic social spaces for reflexive and performative self-representation. By constructing and performing their transnational narratives and reality, migrants assert their transnational positionality and subjectivities thus challenge essentialised notions of national, transnational, and cosmopolitan identities.

It is important to acknowledge that media within the transnational context is not a singular, neutral, or uniform entity. In contrast, media content, its representation, even accessibility of media is shaped by power dynamics. Therefore, a critical analysis of media is necessary to understand how it both facilitates and constrains

transnationalism, and to examine the power dynamics embedded in mediated transnational narratives.

Global Media and Transnational Imagination

Appadurai's concept of "imagined worlds" as facilitated by electronic media presents a compelling framework through which to analyse the relationship between global media and transnationalism. According to Appadurai, these "imagined worlds" are not mere flights of fancy but are deeply rooted in the historically situated imagination of individuals and groups distributed across the globe. This notion suggests that electronic media acts as a catalyst for the construction and dissemination of these imagined worlds, enabling ordinary people to engage with and be exposed to a multitude of perspectives, cultures, and realities beyong their immediate context.

The transformative potential of mass media, as Appadurai (1996) argues, lies in its ability to foster "self-imagination as every social project" (p.4). this perspective underlines that the act of imagination is not passive or inconsequential; rather, it is an active form of agency that contributes to the formation of modern political subjectivity. Media, in this context, emerges as a medium that shapes and reflects the dynamics of transnational imagination, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their positionality within a global context. The media serves as a conduit for the transmission of symbolic capital, allowing individuals to engage with diverse cultural narratives and perspectives. This "media-in" process contributes to the negotiation and construction of identities that transcend national boundaries, emphasising the agency of individuals in shaping their transnational experiences.

Fujita (2006), on the other hand, introduces a critical perspective on the potential limitations of Appadurai's framework. She raises the crucial concern of power relations within cultural imagination and the influence of cultural imperialism. While Appadurai's work suggests a departure from traditional centre-periphery models of cultural influence, Fujita argues that Euro-American cultural hegemony still plays a

significant role in shaping transnational imaginations, particularly with regard to transnational cultural migration from the East to the West. This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of how media-mediated imaginaries intersect with existing power dynamic and hierarchies.

The "media-in" role in this study will be examined and discussed under this approach, while media facilitates the emergence of transnational imaginations and cultural meanings, it is essential to critically examine the ways in which power relations, cultural imperialism, and existing hierarchies intersect with the process of imagination.

Ethnic Media and Global practice

Ethnic media, often catering to specific diasporic communities, occupies a unique position in facilitating and constraining the process of transnationalism. It serves as a conduit for the maintenance of cultural ties, the dissemination of information, and the construction of transnational identities, particularly within immigrant populations.

Ethnic media, intriguingly, holds a delicate position in the realm of transnationalism. On one hand, it provides a vital platform for diasporic communities to engage with their home culture, language, and heritage. It offers a sense of belonging and connection to the homeland (of origin) – such capacity for maintaining ties to one's ethnic roots fosters a form of transnational identity that exists alongside, and sometimes challenges, national identities. The dynamics of ethnic media's global practice intersect with broader power structures and transnational power dynamics. Just as global media can perpetuate cultural imperialism ad dominant narrative, ethnic media may contribute to the preservation of traditional hierarchies within diasporic communities.

Within this context, ethnic media emerges as a dynamic agent with a dual functionality – one that simultaneously facilitates and constrains the processes of

transnationalism. In the specific context of this study, ethnic media assumes a distinct "media-out" role, serving as a significant mediator through which young Korean women engage in, negotiate and perform their transnational experience and identities.

Furthermore, situating the examination of ethnic media within the broader context of media influence on transnational narratives provides a nuanced lens through which to understand the socio-cultural dynamics within the Korean context. The global practice of ethnic media, characterised by its transnational reach and impact, shapes and reshapes perceptions and performance of identity for young Korean women in diaspora.

Social Media and the Ultimate Transnational "Output"

Within the discourse exploring the negotiation of positionality among young Korean women, the role of global media and ethnic media as instruments and symbolic arenas are examined for their capacity to reflect the dynamic interactions through which these women navigate their positioning within the larger social context. A distinct facet of this negotiation emerges through the lens of social media, which represents a transcendent and transformative medium. This section critically evaluates the significance of social media as the ultimate transnational tool that facilitates the outward projection of transnational individuals' identities. Subsequently, the theoretical groundwork is laid for a more nuanced examination in the subsequent section, where key concepts such as identity, performativity is more thoroughly explored.

Central to this analysis is the recognition of social media' role as an "output" mechanism in transnationalism. The understanding of social media is based on Madianou's (2015) delineation of shifting social media "as discrete platforms to an understanding of media environments which users navigate to suit their communicative needs" (p.1). Unlike global media and ethnic media, social media platforms do not merely serve as mediums for the negotiation of identity; they serve

as conduits for the expression, dissemination, and embodiment of transnational experiences. The term “output” underlines the active nature of social media in reflecting the outward projection of their transnational selves. it signifies the deliberate act of crafting and sharing digital content that encapsulates multiple positionalities, thereby exemplifying a multifaceted engagement within the transnational context.

In this study, while global and ethnic media contribute to the discourse by providing a backdrop against which identity negotiations occur, social media transcends this role. It transforms the negotiation process into a performative act that extends beyond the boundaries of localised media. The digital narratives that emerge on social media platforms captures a dynamic interaction of identity and everyday transnationalism. These narratives are not merely reflections of the self; they rather represent a conscious and strategic “output” of transnational individuals’ identity, influence by multiple factors within their transnationalism.

The subsequent section will delve into the intricate theoretical foundations of identity and performativity, subsequently offering a more nuanced discourse on the manifestation of identity performance within the realm of social media.

Identities as Performance

Identity, a concept extensively examined across various social science disciplines including anthropology, political science, and psychology, pertains to both a state of being and an individual’s self-understanding. However, this broad and encompassing term proves challenging to precisely define due to its multidimensional nature. Identity transcends individual dimensions, extending to shared and collective community contexts.

Stuart Hall (1990) outlines two prevalent models employed to elucidate the construction of identities. The first model endeavours to explore identity formation in search of its authenticity and originality. This essentialist approach presupposes

the existence of fixed attributes within any identity, attributed to a common origin, shared experiences, or a combination of both. Critics argue against adopting this model due to its tendency to oversimplify identity's heterogeneous nature, implying the existence of predetermined and inherent components. While this study does not advocate for this model, its discussion serves to offer comparative insights. As previously elucidated, within the prevailing Western-centric paradigm of Korean society, a collective perception of the "West" emerges, implying a form of western identity synonymous with western modernity.

The thesis diverges from this approach, drawing upon an alternative model that characterises identity formation as a process of "becoming" rather than "being" (Hall, 1996). This perspective emphasises the individualistic nature of identity, eschewing the notion of "authentic and originary identities based in universally shared origins or experiences" (Grossberg, 1996, p.89). Underpinning this perspective is the recognition that a single individual may embody a diverse array of identities. this notion foregrounds the salience of cultural identity in academic discourse. Subsequent sections will embark on a theoretical exploration of prior studies in this domain, corroborating the complex nature of identity construction – how it engenders a sense of belonging, defines boundaries, facilitates exclusion, and ultimately evolves into a symbolic process of performative acts.

The Formation of Identity: A Theoretical Ground

The construction of identity has persistently captivated the scholarly pursuits of researchers investigating migration and diaspora. Within the realm of globalisation theory, the conceptualisation of identity has transcended its former confinement as a mere locus of nationality or ethnicity groups. Expanding upon Hall's seminal work, Ang (2001) contends that:

> "Cultural identity, in this second sense, 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. But,

> like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power (p.150)"

In the realm of media and diaspora studies, the conceptualisation of identity has evolved beyond the mere notion of a "diasporic identity", instead adopting a diasporic perspective that accentuates the fluid process of identity formation and transformation. This perspective delves into how identities dynamically evolve within the transnational current, heavily influenced by the role of media.

Identity, in this context, is viewed as inherently constructive, intricately intersecting with dimensions such as gender, social class, and race, manifesting in various facets of "individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis 2008 p.68). In our contemporary postmodern landscape, where media is an omnipresent force, it is imperative to analyse the intertwining of identity formation with media's pervasive influence. Madianou's (2002) investigation into the articulation of identities among various groups in Athens, including Greek, Greek Cypriots, Turks, Pomaks, and Roma, both through media consumption and engagement with news, underlines the importance of media in the shifts between openness and closure within identity discourse. This approach highlights the significance of the communicative space facilitated by media for discussions on social belonging and exclusion. Gillespie's study (1995) on the role of television in shaping and reshaping the identity of young Punjabi diaspora members in South Hall, West London, delves into the intricate negotiation of identity in the context of local and global dimensions. Gillespie (1995) asserts that media consumption has a tangible impact on cultural changes and formations, thereby influencing identity dynamics. Budarick's research (2011) further investigates the Iranian-Australian diaspora's sense of social belonging and emotions toward both their host country and homeland, revealing the dual role of media in fostering both belonging and detachment. For Iranian Australians, media emerges as a tool for negotiating the complexities of diasporic social environments. In the Japanese context, Fujita (2006) demonstrates how media

can sometimes reinforce national identity through migrants' everyday transnational experiences. However, Kim (2011) presents a nuanced perspective through her study of East Asian women's transnational practices, contending that the idealisation of transnational mobility often obscures the reality of social exclusion and inequality. Kim's analysis of Asian middle class and upper-class women underscores the notion that transnational mobility can simultaneously create boundaries and defensive positions toward the host society.

Gillespie (1995) and Madianou (2002), in their discussions of identity, avoid the static notion of a "diasporic identity", instead focusing on the continual "formation and transformation" of identity within diaspora. This perspective acknowledges the ongoing metamorphosis of identities due to relocation, cross-cultural exchange, and interaction, but intertwined with the globalisation of culture. However, while the discourse often centres on culture, the term itself is occasionally problematic, as noted by Madianou (2005), rasing questions about how culture is perceived and conceptualised. Moreover, the term "ethnicity" frequently emerges within this context, sometimes interchangeably. Although often assumed to represent cohesive "ethnic communities", the reality is that these groups are multidimensional and divided. The discourse surrounding culture, identity, and cultural identity thus prompts deeper explorations into the very essence of culture itself. The approach to culture in this study will be discussed alongside other key concepts underpin this research in the next chapter.

Performativity Through Social Ties: A Critical Overview

The concept of performativity holds significant relevance in the realm of cultural studies and social sciences, offering a lens through which to understand the dynamic and context-dependent nature of identity construction and representation. Rooted in linguistic and sociocultural theories, performativity highlights the idea that identities and meanings are not fixed entities but are continually enacted and produced through discursive practices and social interactions. This section critically reviews the concept of performativity and its application within the context of this

study on young Korean women in diaspora and the mechanism of their identity performance.

Performativity draws inspiration from philosopher J.L. Austin's speech act theory, particularly the idea that language is not merely descriptive but also performative, shaping and constituting realities through speech acts. Building upon Austin's work, Judith Butler (1990) expanded the notion of performativity to encompass gender identity, asserting that gender is not an inherent trait but a repetitive and performative process. Butler's exploration of performativity has been influential beyond gender studies, offering a framework to examine how various identities, including cultural and transnational ones, are iteratively constructed.

Performativity challenges essentialist and mere constructive views of identity by asserting that identity is not a fixed attribute but an ongoing performance. Within the scope of this study, performativity offers a lens to examine how young Korean women engage with various forms of cultural capital – both symbolic and embodied – within different fields. It enables an exploration of how individuals enact and negotiate their identities through social interactions and cultural practices.

Utilising performativity as an analytical framework, the "performance of identity" within this study is underpinned by two crucial concepts: social ties and disposition. The notion of social ties, originally expounded by Granovetter (1973; 1983), assumes a central role in demonstrating the dynamics through which information, ideas, and social capital traverse individuals and networks. These ties signify the relational links that interconnect individuals, embodying the delicate relationship between personal agency and collective social connections. The significance of ties extends beyond their mere function of connectivity; rather, they serve as channels through which cognitive and affective elements are exchanged, thus catalysing the circulation of meanings and cultural attributes within and between networks. With the advent of the digital age, marked by transformative shift in communication landscapes, the conceptualisation of ties has evolved to encompass the nuanced dynamics of

mediated networks. Haythornwaite (2002) and Genoni et al. (2005) have further demonstrated the role of ties in elucidating the mechanisms that underlie the circulation of capital within digital domains. Consequently, these ties, while manifesting within symbolic digital spaces, retain their influence over insemination of information, circulation of ideas, and the accumulation of cultural capital.

In the context of this study, social ties are regarded as the conduits through which the performance of identity are strategically planned within digital space. These ties serve as instrumental pathways that enable the dissemination of associated dispositions of young Korean women in diaspora. These disposition, operate as guiding forces, influencing the selection of expressions, language use and appearance. The framework of "the performance of identity" in this study encompasses the notion of disposition, representing the perceived transnational self, alongside the embedded western centric Korean value perspectives that underpin the maintenance of these social ties.

Another pivotal intersection in the context of this study is performativity and the discussion of cultural capital. Such intersection focuses on the active process of identity production. Performativity provides a framework to analyse how transnational individuals strategically deploy their capital, acquired through experiences and socialisation, to construct and negotiate their diasporic existence. In this study, the examination and analysis on performativity will highlight its "code-switching" functionality to highlight the situational identity of young Korean women in diaspora. In the context of media, performativity in this study will be extended to mediated practices, where young Korean women engage in identity performances not only in their transnational everyday but also through various media platforms.

Identity Performance on Social Media

Papacharissi's (2013) theoretical contribution on "a networked self" offers a nuanced perspective on the phenomenon of self-presentation on social media, conceptualising it as a performative act. She suggests that users engage in

constructing a “face” that is tailored to various audiences and contexts. This notion aligns with Goffman’s (1959) theatrical analogy, where he compares individuals’ online presentation to a staged performance. In this metaphorical framework, the online persona represents the “front”, akin to the visible aspects of a theatrical production, while the “backstage” houses the authentic self, hidden from public view.

Drawing inspiration from these theoretical underpinnings, in this study, the understanding of identity performance on social media is to convey Goffman’s interpretation of self-identity in the context of new media. By adopting his symbolic interactionist perspective, this study emphasises a qualitative and micro-sociological analysis to examine online performance and the cultural meaning within such interactive process.

According to Goffman (1959), interaction is perceived as a “performance”, influenced by the context and the audience, engineered to create specific “impressions” that align with the actors’ desired objectives. Therefore, individuals develop their social identity or persona through interaction with others, exchanging information that refines the definitions of the desired identity and behaviour. Within this context, the process of forming social identity becomes closely intertwined with the concept of the “front”, defined as “the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance” (Goffman, 1959, p.32). As a “collective representation”, the front establishes the conventionally perceived “setting”, “appearance”, and “manner” for the social role adopted by the actor. In order to present an effective front, the actor must fulfil the obligations of the chosen social role while consistently conveying the activities and attributes of the role to others.

The dynamic and ever-evolving digital landscape, on the other hand, introduces novel opportunities for the construction of meanings and mechanisms that exist between the realms of the “front” and the “backstage”. Meyrowitz (1986) argues that the advert of new media technologies disrupts traditional spatial confines by

dismantling the physical infrastructural barriers, resulting in a “collapse of space” (p.6). In contrast, Scannell (1996) posits that new media fosters an intricate “multiplied” space due to the convergence of media across heterogeneous audiences. This transformation of spatial dynamics inherently gives rise to additional strata within the contextual framework, where symbolic interpretations, cultural capital, and power structures emerge as new constituents for a more complex discourse on the performance between the “front” and “backstage”. It is pertinent to note that the boundaries between the “front” and “backstage” are not eradicated, but rather internalised by users, which significantly influences their curation of performances on social media platforms. Within this study, my focus resides in the exploration of this internalised process, juxtaposed with analyses of cultural capital and power structures within transnational fields, in order to demonstrate a more nuanced picture of young Korean women’s identity performances in diaspora.

Summary

In this chapter, I have elaborated upon a spectrum of theoretical conceptualisations forming the foundation of this research project. The outset involved an introduction to the Korean context, an indispensable contextual backdrop for comprehensively grasping the overarching subject of this study. Commencing with a re-examination of traditional paradigms encompassing political economy and cultural studies, I have positioned my project within the encompassing framework of cultural transnationalism. Addressing the escalating phenomenon of feminisation of migration, I have established significant interconnections between media, imagination, identity, and performativity to contextualise cultural migration. Subsequently, I delved into discussing the “in and out” media role within a transnational context, highlighting the pivotal significance of social media in today’s diasporic landscape. By probing into the concept of identity as performance, this chapter culminates in a concise contemplation of salient issues warranting further exploration in subsequent chapters.

First, the media role in constructing a “cultural ideology” as a catalyst for transnational movements has been explored to a certain extent. However, my analysis of the media construction of the West within the Korean context transcends a mere focus on western media influence and pop cultural imperialism. Instead, it offers a nuance, multidimensional examination encompassing various tiers of spatial domains where notions of the West and the prospect of migration to the West are subject to negotiations by young Korean women in diaspora. These spatial domains encompass symbolic spaces such as television, cinema, and the internet; social spaces characterised by the fusion of local culture with multiculturalism, xenophobia, and “white-fetish”; and emotional spaces marked by a spectrum of sentiments including desire, fear, and anxiety.

Second, the reality of the transnational everyday experience of young Korean women in diaspora warrants further investigation. While the allure of the unknown occasionally supersedes actual experiences, transnational practices are not confined to mere physical border-crossing movements. Instead, they involve a complex relationship between imagination and reality. My approach to this domain eschews recent theorisations that juxtapose the progressive and emancipatory aspects of everyday transnational experiences. Such juxtapositions tend to overlook the actual experiences of women in diaspora. Rather, my argument delves into a more granular dimension of the transnational every day, encompassing social interactions, cultural practices, media consumption, and self-positioning.

Additionally, aligned with a study conducted in the Chinese context by Sun (2002), it is posited that the construction of transnational imagination is an complex and uneven process, shaped by myriad economic, social, cultural, and political factors. Analogously, a consideration of transnational reality, media usage, and identity is approached as cyclical process. Building on the preceding points, the identity of young Korean women in diaspora, whether at a national or transnational level, is deemed relational and performative, rather than fixed and stable.

The subsequent chapter will build upon the theoretical deliberations advanced in this section and pivot toward the discourse on transnational social field. This thesis aspires to offer substantive contributions to media and migration studies, particularly within the realm of transnationalism theory, while also negotiating the intersectionality of media, transnationalism, and identity. The conception of the transnational social field as a “grey zone” endeavour to uncover the everyday transnational experiences of young Korean women in diaspora, diverging from traditional paradigms that categorise transnational movements into celebratory or non-celebratory categories.

Chapter 3 Transnational Social Field as "Grey Zone": Key Concept

The transnational social field represents a complex and dynamic space where individuals and communities navigate multiple cultural, social, and emotional ties across borders. In this chapter, I conduct a comprehensive review of the conceptualisations that significantly pertain to this project, to define the transnational social field and its inherent complexities. I first delve into the notions of transnationalism, diaspora, and fields, examining how these concepts interact and shape the experiences, status and positionality of individuals and communities. Additionally, I explore the role of capital, including symbolic cultural capital and embodied cultural capital, in shaping power dynamics within the transnational context (Bourdieu, 1986; Gilroy, 1993). Furthermore, I investigate how habitus and distinction intersect in the transnational social field, with a particular focus on whiteness and perceived distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 1992). By examining these dimensions, I aim to bring attention to the nuanced and multifaceted nature of geographic power within the transnational social field.

The participants within the scope of this research project are designated as "cultural migrants" (Fujita, 2004). This terminology derives from their transnational mobility being propelled by cultural motivations, their border-crossing activities inherently involving cultural practices, and their transnationalism being persistently moulded by cultural negotiations. What is culture then? Attempting to clarify culture in its robust spectrum proves unrealistic, although I glance at the varying use of "culture" in its certain dimensions. My narrative of "culture" is based on the challenge of its homogeneous manifestations.

Culture is often contemplated within its singular and abstract instantiation – as exemplified by terms such as Asian culture, African culture, and Japanese culture – encapsulating culture as "the entire way of life, activities, beliefs, and customs of a people, group or society" (Smith, 2001, p.1-2). Similarly, Jackson (1999) characterises culture as a fixed and static construct, defining it as "a set of patterns, beliefs,

behaviours, institutions, symbols, and practices shared and perpetuated by a consolidated group of individuals connected by an ancestral heritage and a concomitant geographic reference location" (p.33). In contrast, I adopt a post-structuralist approach point to conceive of culture as a performative and fluid process, continually being shaped and reshaped by social values and discourses often imbued with desire and morality, echoing Foucault's (1972) insights. Because culture is "distinct worlds of meanings":

> "…But recent research and thinking about cultural practices, even in relatively 'simple' societies, has turned this classic model on its head. It now appears that we should think of worlds of meaning as normally being contradictory, loosely integrated, contested, mutable, and highly permeable. Consequently, the very concept of cultures as coherent and distinct entities is widely disputed…" (Sewell, 2008, p.53)

As such, my interpretation of culture reflects an understanding of its dynamic and plural nature, (re)shaped by the interplay of social forces and individual agency. This fluid conceptualisation of culture aligns with the complexities inherent in the experiences of the cultural migrants under study. Their transnational journeys are embedded within a tapestry of shifting cultural meanings and practices, negotiated within a transnational framework that embraces with uncertainty and the multifarious intersections of identities and experiences. This comprehension of culture serves as a theoretical foundation for further enquiring into the conceptualisations that underpin this research project.

Transnationalism, Diaspora and Field

Transnationalism, diaspora and the dynamics of different fields within the transnational context constitute a multidimensional and interconnected social fabric of human experiences that span geographical, cultural, and social boundaries. This section investigates into these entangled concepts, highlighting their manifestations and implications for individuals and communities within a transnational context.

Polarised Transnationalism: Reconfiguring Global-Local Dynamics

The differentiation between "transnationalism" and "globalism" holds significant implications for comprehending the complex dynamics of cross-border interactions and their impacts on individuals and societies within a transnational context. Before probing into a more nuanced exploration of transnationalism, it is imperative to elucidate the deliberate choice of transnationalism over globalism.

Vertovec's (2010) exploration of "transnationalism" highlights its multidimensional nature as a web of links and interactions spanning national boundaries. His delineation underscores the anchoring of transnational processes in specific national or local territories, particularly pertinent in the context of migrants and dispersed ethnic groups. This suggests that transnationalism is characterised by its intimate connection to specific places, even as it navigates across borders. Within this framework, "transnationalism" is a term that encapsulates the sophisticated ties that individuals maintain with their countries of origin and their adopted host societies. It essentially acknowledges the dual spatial presence that individuals possess, engaging both with the host society and their so-called home (of origin).

In contrast, a "global process", as Kearney (1995) asserts, is not confined to specific national territories; it unfolds in a global space that transcends the boundaries of individual nation states. This broader characterisation of "globalism" emphasises the universality of certain phenomena, transcending the limitations of any single geographic location. This perspective views global processes as a force that permeates across the world, indifferent to national borders. Consequently, "globalism" encapsulates an overarching phenomenon that operates on a planetary scale, devoid of specific territorial anchoring.

While transnationalism encompasses various social formations, including economic structures, institutional arrangements, power dynamics, and cultural shifts (Jackson, 1999), it is essential to interrogate whether the framing of transnationalism within a global-local dualism inadvertently perpetuates a polarised perspective. The

characterisation of the global-local dualism within transnational discourse has been pervasive. Scholars like Freeman (2001) have depicted this dichotomy as gendered, portraying the global as empowered and masculine, while the local is cast as fragile and feminine. This perspective often ties the global to open multiculturalism and rationality, juxtaposed with a closed, nostalgic local. Such dichotomisation influences cultural and economic power dynamics, relegating cultural aspects to the local while empowering global economic forces. This polarisation shapes the dominant discourse, embedding a perception of power and agency within the global and constraining the local to matters of identity and politics (Ley, 2004). Yet, this perspective fails to adequately capture the complexity and multidimensionality inherent in transnational practices.

Vertovec's (1999) proposed six thematic frameworks for understanding transnationalism offer a means of engaging with its intricate nature. These frameworks highlight transnationalism as social morphology, consciousness, cultural reproduction, capital avenues, political engagement, and the reconstruction of "place". A closer examination reveals that these frameworks also intersect with the global-local dualism, with implications for how transnationalism is understood and studied. Transnationalism as a social morphology emphasises cross-border social formations, particularly within ethnic diasporas. This framing can unconsciously perpetuate a binary view of global and local, assuming that these formations are neatly defined and separate. Furthermore, the notion of "diaspora consciousness" intersects with the global-local dualism, potentially reinforcing the gendered perspectives associated with global and local identity. Regarding transnationalism as a mode of cultural reproduction acknowledges the role of global media and communication in shaping imagined worlds and identities. This framework offers a nuanced approach to transnational practices, yet it too maybe influenced by the global-lobal dualism, potentially restricting cultural reproduction to the local while privileging global economic and media flows. Viewing transnationalism as an avenue of capital aligns with global economic processes, highlighting the transference of labour and resources across borders. While this framework may encompass a wide

range of practices, it risks narrowing the focus to economic factors, overlooking the complexities between economic, social and cultural dimensions. Transnationalism as a site of political engagement accentuates the potential for transnational communities to participate in global political activities. This framework acknowledges the influence of technology but may reinforce the global-local dualism by defining political engagement within these binary terms. The reconstruction of "place" within transnationalism emphasises the spatial and positional dynamics of transnational actors. This framework introduces the concept of "social fields", which may foster connections and position individuals across multiple locations. While this offers a valuable perspective on transnational networks, it remains important to critically assess whether this framework is inclined towards a binary view of global and local spaces.

The prevailing theoretical discourse surrounding transnationalism, while conceptually rich, has often inadvertently reinforced the global-local dualism. It is important to acknowledge transnational practices are complex and multidimensional, often transcending simple dichotomies. To further our comprehension of transnationalism, it is imperative to critically interrogate these frameworks and consider alternative lenses that facilitate a more nuanced exploration of its complexities.

Diaspora and Diasporic Ties

The examination of transnationalism and its relationship with diaspora is an enduring discourse within academic realms, often undertaken to illuminate the dynamics of individuals and societies existing within cross-border contexts. Faist (2010) notes that while both terms encompass cross-border processes, they deviate significantly in their conceptual underpinnings. His definition suggests that diaspora predominantly connotes religious or national groups residing outside their homelands, whereas transnationalism entails durable ties spanning nations.

Within this context, diaspora plays a significant role in shaping transnational experiences. It entails a sense of collective identity and shared history among dispersed communities, fostering a sense of belonging beyond national borders (Cohen, 1997). Diasporic ties, assume a central role as binding and unifying agent within these communities. These ties serve as a critical support network that not only offers practical assistance but also enables the perpetuation of cultural heritage and traditions (Vertovec, 2004). Brubaker (2005) upholds that the preservation of cultural continuity is a cornerstone of diasporic ties, acting as a mechanism for passing down ancestral knowledge, languages, and customs from one generation to another.

Nevertheless, the concept of diaspora is not without its complexities and challenges. As Cohen (1997) notes, individuals within diasporic communities often find themselves navigating a delicate balance between multiple identities and cultural affiliations. The negotiation of these identities becomes particularly pronounced when individuals are engaged in transnational activities, as the complex transnational social fields prompts a nuanced relationship between various aspects of identity. Brubaker (2005) further underscores the complex nature of diasporic identities, emphasising how these identities can be simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, fluid yet deeply rooted.

This sense of interconnectedness within diasporic communities is a crucial factor that gives rise to a distinct and dynamic social-cultural space, one that transcends the traditional confines of a single nation-state. Unlike the more bounded and territorially limited interactions that characterise conventional national identities, diasporic communities operate within a fluid and wild realm of connections that span geographical, cultural, and political boundaries. As Vertovec (2004) affirms, diaspora often functions as a dynamic space where cultural practices are both upheld and innovatively adapted to suit the new contexts in which they are situated. This acknowledgement provides a firm ground to prob into the earlier essentialist approach to diaspora and diasporic ties. In this study, diaspora and diasporic ties are

examined through a “translocal” lens. Brickell and Datta (2011) advocate for a departure from a fixed-scale analysis that confines transnationalism to national boundaries. Their argument contends that focusing solely on the notions of “being and belonging” within a singular geographic scale limits the comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences and practices inherent in transnational processes. Instead, they propose that transnational experiences and identities must be studied through a multi-scalar lens that encompasses various connections between localities, spanning both imagined and tangible realms.

The notions of diaspora and diasporic ties are far from monolithic and presents challenges. Levitt and Shiller (2004) emphasise that migrant individuals’ experiences are inherently context-based, underlining the multifarious relationship between diaspora, diasporic ties, and identity. This intersectional dependence suggests that while diaspora and diasporic ties may appear intimately intertwined within the broader framework of transnational social fields, they also manifest as relatively distinct elements. Such an observation challenges the conventional presumption of an inherent contradiction between the process of assimilation in a new host state and the persistence of enduring attachments to the transnational individual’s home of origin. This assertion recognises that transnational individuals are engaged in a complex negotiation – they are both shaped by and engaged in a contestation of the boundaries associated with their diasporic affiliations.

The exploration of diaspora and diasporic ties unveils a complex relationship of diasporic identity, transnational connection, and negotiation. The significance of diaspora and diasporic ties is not solely relegated to their function as unifying agents that transcend the confines of national boundaries; rather, their importance extends to their capacity to influence and propel performative identities, thereby assisting transnational individuals in their navigation across diverse social-cultural domains.

Existing Fields

In the trajectory of transnational studies, the notion of transnational social space has traditionally been construed as a sequence encompassing departure, arrival, settlement, and, potentially, return (Bruneau, 2010). This conventional understanding of transnational space appears to be essentially tied to the contours of national territories. Contrasting this perspective, Sun (2002) clarifies the multi-layered nature of transnational space, transcending the customary notion of territorially bound transnational domains. This multi-layered transnational space encompasses symbolic media realms, including the internet, television, and cinema, along with social spaces characterised by cultural hybridity, and emotional domains where psychological fluxes are experienced within the context of new transnational lives.

However, the foundational concept of "social space", a frequently employed term in social science discourse, warrants a re-examination within the specific context of this study. "society", or "social space" are regarded as "field" in this study, a "field" is a context composed of individuals who shape their actions according to the power dynamics they exert within that context. This field confers agency upon individuals by prescribing rules and facilitating interactions across different tiers of the same field (Bourdieu, 2013). Bourdieu's (1984) conceptual framework introduces a profound perspective on the social world, one marked by the stratification and differentiation of distinct "fields". In this schema, the social reality is parsed into discrete arenas, each governed by a set of specific rules, codes, practices, and forms of capital. These fields are not merely arbitrary divisions but rather represent concentrated spaces of human activity and interaction, each characterised by its unique dynamics, hierarchies, and mechanisms of power.

Within a given field, individuals participate in a dynamic process of competition, competing to accumulate and deploy various forms of capital in their pursuit of advantageous positions. This competitive nature is characterised by strategic planning, calculated choices, and efforts to maximise one's cultural resources to

achieve prominence within the field. The acquisition and strategic use of capital become paramount, as individuals seek to position themselves favourably vis-à-vis their peers. Consequently, the dynamics of each field are not only shaped by the rules and conventions specific to that domain but are also driven by the power dynamics among its participants. Therefore, it is essential to identify the specific fields that enables transnational individuals' accumulation of capital in this study.

There are three existing fields: the Korean cultural field, the transnational context, and the transnational destination. Bourdieu and Wacquant's seminal work in 1992 proposes an empirical methodology for defining the boundaries of a given field, predicated on the discernment of a critical juncture at which resources cease to be acknowledge as forms of capital. As previously discussed in the preceding chapter, the portrayal of the Korean societal context often exhibits a perspective rooted in Western centrism. Consequently, the Korean cultural field emerges as a critical arena for the accumulation of cultural capital in terms of transnational access and global cultural capacity. The subsequent field, which I shall refer to as the transnational context, holds particular significance. In contrast to the Korean cultural field and the ultimate transnational destination field, the transnational context functions as an intermediary space where transnational individuals deliberately strategise their in-between status to collect diverse forms of capital. The incorporation of new cultural practices encompassing longing freedom, mundane reality, clothing style, conventional manners, multicultural attitudes, accents, and dispositions take place within the third field of the transnational destination, a process facilitated through the everyday experiences of transnational individuals.

Habitus, Capital and Distinction

Within the domain of the transnational social field, an array of diverse capital forms substantial influence over predominant power dynamics. Specifically, cultural capital encompasses a multidimensional realm encompassing ideologies, knowledges, skills, and cultural practices that individuals come to possess. Often, such cultural capital is acquired through lived experiences and sustained immersion in distinct cultural

settings. It is paramount to recognise that this form of capital exerts a profound impact on the complex in-group and out-group social dynamics that characterise the transnational context. Bourdieu's concept of habitus serves as another pivotal cornerstone, portraying a matrix of dispositions sculpted by individuals through their interactions within a specific field. This habitus, while not operating within conscious awareness, nonetheless serves as the foundational framework, endowing logic to the complex of power relations established by these very individuals (Bourdieu, 1989).

In this analytical framework, the concept of whiteness emerges as a salient construction within the specific context of Korea. Within the transnational landscape, whiteness assumes a unique manifestation as a distinct form of capital. Its role within this context is far-reaching, extending to both the configuration and enactment of identity dynamics. In effect, the notion of whiteness and perceived distinction becomes integral to the complex composition of identity performances and negotiations that define the transnational experience of young Korean women in diaspora.

Transnational Cultural Capital and habitus

In the context of transnational migration, the convergence of diverse forms of capital takes on heightened relevance due to the assorted challenges and opportunities that migrant individuals encounter. The examination of these intersecting forms of capital provides a critical lens through which the complexities of diasporic experiences can be analysed. It is within this multidimensional framework that we explore how different forms of capital become instrumental in shaping the negotiation and performance of identity, the establishment of connections across geographical boundaries, and the cultivation of a sense of belonging within both host and home contexts.

Transnational cultural capital in this study is divergence into two distinct yet interrelated dimensions, namely symbolic capital and embodied capital, further

clarifies the mechanisms through which young Korean women engage with their transnational surroundings. Symbolic capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986), extends beyond mere economic assets, encompassing intangible qualities such as prestige, recognition, and social distinction. Through active participation in specific cultural and social realms, young Korean women accumulate symbolic capital, thereby solidifying their position within broader societal hierarchies. This form of capital facilitates a deeper understanding of how migrant individuals strategically leverage their cultural competencies to navigate through and assert their positionality within different fields.

Conversely, embodied capital encapsulates the physical and cultural dispositions that individuals carry with them as a result of their socialisation and immersion in specific context (Bourdieu, 1986). This articulation provides insight into the physical manifestations of cultural practices and beliefs that become ingrained in transnational individuals' clothing style, conventional manners, accents, and other embodied expressions. Embodied capital enables a nuanced understanding of how migrant individuals adapt to diverse cultural settings, establishing connections, and shaping everyday identity performance.

In the context of this study, Bourdieu's theoretical framework provides a rich textile to analyse young Korean women's transnational experiences. In a society marked by xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and white fetish, the acquisition and display of symbolic capital act as means of asserting agency. On the other hand, embodied capital highlights on the physical and cultural dispositions that are not only influenced by their positionality but also serve as tools for engaging with the cultural, social and even romantic aspect of their diasporic lives. The notion of "disposition" is notably central to this conceptualisation, appearing at various junctures when Bourdieu defines the constructs of habitus and embodied cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1977) introduces habitus as a comprehensive repository of behaviours and values that become ingrained within an individual through their social positioning within a given society. This repository translates into an embodied perception and action, shaping how individuals interact with the world based on their distinct social location. This dynamic concept of habitus, as articulated by Bourdieu (1977), encompasses a "system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (p.82). In a complementary vein, he then extends the notion of disposition to embody cultural capital, characterising it as "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (p.47). This framing underlines the persistent nature of cultural capital, highlighting its crucial role in shaping an individual's capacities, proclivities, and even bodily comportment over time. Some scholars (see Moore, 2008; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014) suggest that the accumulation of embodied cultural capital and the formation of habitus are intrinsically interconnected facets of the same prosses of socialisation. In this light, the cultivation of cultural capital and the ingraining of habitus represent two dimensions through which transnational individuals acquire and internalise the culture codes, norms, and practices of their social situation.

Whiteness and Perceived Distinction

The adoption of a critical whiteness theoretical approach in this study signifies a conscious departure from traditional perspectives on whiteness. Rooted in critical race theory, critical whiteness studies aim to deconstruct the notion of whiteness as an unmarked, neutral identity. Instead, it examines whiteness as a socially constructed and historically situated phenomenon deeply entwined with power dynamics and systemic structures. By framing whiteness within this theoretical framework, the study unveils a more nuanced understanding of its role as cultural capital within the Korean context.

The definition of cultural capital into symbolic and embodied forms, as elucidated in the preceding section, offers a focused lens through which to analyse the influence of whiteness. This theoretical refinement aligns with critical whiteness studies, as it acknowledges that cultural capital, including whiteness, is not a static and homogeneous concept. Rather, it manifests through various dimensions and practices, intertwined with social interactions, norms, and power relations.

In the context of this study, the concept of whiteness will be comprehended as both symbolic and embodied cultural capital. In its role as symbolic cultural capital, whiteness is intrinsically linked with the underlying foundations of Western modernity. Meanwhile, as embodied cultural capital, it serves as a perceptible marker of distinction that significantly influences the disposition and identity performance of young Korean women. Lamont and Lareau (1988) further addresses on cultural capital as "widely shared high-status cultural signals (e.g., attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, good, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion" (p.156). Furthermore, Baker (2004) demonstrates how Bourdieu's theoretical framework extends the conceptualisation of cultural capital by portraying it as a symbolic manifestation of power and social status, which can be both accumulated and exchanged.

In accordance with Bourdieu's theoretical perspective (1984), various facets of cultural capital function as indicators of social status. This bestows individuals possessing such capital with an elevated position that enables them to justify their values, preferences, and cultural practices within specific contexts. The notion of "distinction", as expounded by Bourdieu, emerges from this privileged access to culturally valuable capital. This access confers individuals with a heightened position, allowing them to stand apart from those who lack a comparable amount of cultural capital and the associated level of privilege (Bourdieu, 1984).

By integrating critical whiteness studies into the exploration of whiteness as cultural capital in the Korean context, this study attains a heightened level of analytical depth.

The portrayal of Korean society as being influenced by western centrism, as emphasised in the previous chapter, serves as a pivotal foundation. Within this context, whiteness emerges as a crucial intermediator, shaping perceptions, behaviour, and social hierarchies. The critical lens prompts an examination of young Korean women's engagement with whiteness within the three identified fields of analysis. By analysing how these women negotiate, challenge, or reinforce the structures within the cultural, transnational, and translocal fields, the study acknowledges the complexity of their agency. This critical perspective enables a deeper understanding of how whiteness intersects with and shapes other forms of capital, identity dynamics, and power relations, highlight on the complex ways in which cultural capital operates in the transnational everyday of these young Korean women.

Summary

The concept of the transnational social field is framed as a dynamic "grey zone" where diverse cultural factors intersect. This chapter explores key concepts, including transnationalism, diaspora, and field, as foundational elements in understanding the theoretical approach to this study.

The chapter opens by unpacking the complex relationships between transnationalism, diaspora, and the concept of the field. It investigates the polarised current field of transnationalism, reconfiguring global-local dynamics and exploring alternatives to approach transnationalism. The significance of diaspora and its ties in shaping transnational narratives is also discussed, highlighting the complex relationship of diasporic identity, transnational connection, and cultural negotiation. It urges the importance to extend their capacity to establish a more nuanced understanding of performative identities. The concept of fields, both physical and symbolic, are examined to understand how they provide transnational space to form expression.

The second section of the chapter delves into the pivotal role of habitus, cultural capital, and distinction in the construction of transnationalism of young Korean women. It explores how cultural capital and habitus shape transnational individuals' navigation through social and cultural contexts. Transnational cultural capital is unveiled as a mechanism through which individuals negotiate their identity performance and engage with the broader transnational context. Additionally, the chapter examines the concept of whiteness both symbolic and embodied cultural capital, which plays a significant role in perceived distinction and its influence on young Korean women's disposition to achieve distinction within the transnational field.

By thoroughly delving into the key concepts, this chapter establishes a solid grounding for the research. As the study progresses, these concepts will serve as the framework upon which the methodology, data analysis and finding discussions of the research will be built. The ensuing chapter presents the methodology employed to investigate the lived experiences of young Korean women in the global city of London.

Chapter 4 Research Methods and Reflexivity

In the preceding chapter, relevant literature was thoroughly reviewed to establish the theoretical foundation for this thesis. These theoretical discussions positioned the research within the context of academic debates and guided the potential contributions to the current field of study. In this chapter, the focus will shift towards the methodology employed in this study. The objective is to gather empirical data and test novel concepts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural transnationalism of young Korean women in diaspora and its implications on their identity. This will be achieved by analysing their transnational everyday lives, their media usage, and their perceptions of mainstream Korean social values.

Qualitative research methods were chosen to facilitate in-depth discussions with the participants, allowing for a micro-level examination of their cultural transnationalism, transnational everyday life, and identity. The aim is to contribute substantively to the ongoing academic discourse on media, migration, and identity. The selection of these research methods was primarily driven by the researcher's keen interest in capturing the intricacies of young Korean women's transnational everyday lives within their natural settings. The researcher's own experiences as a "non-white" foreigner and keen cultural observations in Korea further motivated the research design, as it seeks to elicit profound insights into the lives of young Korean women in diaspora and how they navigate the complexities of mainstream Korean social values in their daily transnational experiences.

Methodological Considerations

Creswell (2009) emphasises the need for qualitative research to "develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study and this involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges" (p.176). Additionally, Madianou (2002) highlights the significance of complementing the weakness of certain methods with others to enhance the research's depth and validity. In line with these considerations,

methodological triangulation was applied in this study to combine data collected from "following" in-depth interviews and participant observations (both online and offline) to paint a richer and more nuanced picture of the research topic. By adopting this approach, I, as the researcher, could not only gain insights from participants' verbal expressions but also observe their actions, addressing concerns raised by Reeves et al. (2008) that "what people say about their behaviour can contrast with their actual actions" (p.513).

The chapter commences with a discussion of my understanding of qualitative research and how it aligns with my chosen approach for this study. Ethnographic approach is reviewed, highlighting the importance of reflexivity concerning my role as a researcher within the field site and my engagement in participant observation. The opportunities and challenges of participant observation are explored, as it offers a holistic interpretation of the research phenomenon for subsequent data analysis. Furthermore, the concept of "following" in-depth interviews is introduced and defined.

In the latter part of the chapter, other crucial methodological aspects are addressed. The sampling strategy employed in this study is discussed, detailing how participants were selected. Finally, the analytical approach is elucidated, illustrating how data collected from the fieldwork are validated and integrated into the research design through thematic analysis and coding.

The Nature of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research approaches are employed in this investigation to comprehensively explore, elucidate, and gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon and its intricate dynamics. Researchers adopt qualitative methodologies by formulating research questions within the paradigm of "what", such as "what is happening here" or "what does it mean" (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p.36). subsequently, relevant data are gathered within a specific context, involving participants who meet the socio-demographic conditions of the study. An

inductive approach is then utilised to analyse the data and identify overarching themes and findings.

The rationale behind my research design and methodological choices is grounded in these definitions. As this research project examines how social values and interactions, whether mediated or not, a) are culturally transmitted within a group of Korean female transnationals, and b) contribute to the construction and evolution of specific meanings pertaining to transnational identities, the study inherently adopts an exploratory nature. As previously discussed in the preceding chapter, the research design and methodological considerations are guided by the following research questions:

d. From a media perspective

In what ways are media being used to articulate the multiplicities of diasporic identities in the negotiation of modernity?

What are the specific functions and influences of media within the realm of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to the Korean diasporic community?

e. From a social interactive perspective

How do young Korean women in the diaspora perceive their own identities within the context of transnational flows?

In what ways are identities enacted and embodied in their lived experiences of transnational lives, both in relation to their home country and in Western contexts?

f. From a cultural transnational perspective

How do young Korean women negotiate and navigate mainstream Korean cultural values in the context of their transnational lives?

What are the implications and significance of “living in London” for these young Korean women in terms of their identities, experiences, and aspirations?

A well-structured research design plays a critical role in effectively addressing research questions. Given that the research objectives of this study encompass exploration from thress dimensions – namely “what”, “why”, and “how” – the exploratory nature of this investigation aligns seamlessly with qualitative approaches, making it an ideal fit.

By adopting qualitative methodologies, this study facilitates an in-depth examination of the “what” dimension, seeking to comprehend the phenomena and dynamics involved. It enables the exploration of the “why” dimension, delving into the underlying reasons and motivations shaping the participants’ experiences. Additionally, qualitative methods provide a means to scrutinise the “how” dimension, highlighting on the processes and mechanisms that mediate social values and interactions within the Korean female transnational group, thereby influencing the formation and evolution of cultural transnationalism and diasporic identities.

Embracing open-ended and flexible data collection techniques, such as in-depth interviews and participant observations, the qualitative approach ensures the capture of rich and nuanced data. Consequently, the analysis can uncover emergent themes and patterns, offering valuable insights into the complexities of the research objectives.

The Research Context

This section provides a comprehensive and nuanced description of the research context, which involves a unique and little-known phenomenon with historical and cultural significance. Kim’s (2005) study on globalisation and its impact on Korean women’s reflexive experience of television sheds light on the rapid cultural changes that occurred in Korea since the 1980s when globalisation began to influence Korean society. This period witnessed the emergence of a media-driven consumerist society, with television playing a hegemonic role in representing global culture through Hollywood movies, travel shows, and satellite DTH services.

Kim's findings reveal that these cultural shifts and media influences have contributed to Korean women's growing passion for foreign travel since the mid-1990s. Their transnatinal movements are driven by a deepening sense of reflexivity and imagination, seeking freedom, social mobility, and individualisation through engaging with the symbolic Western world. The mediated force of globalisation serves as a self-reflexive and imaginative social practice, prompting young Korean women to embark on a journey of hope.

While contemporary transnational flows are characterised by provisionality and nomadic tendencies, with individuals willing to go anywhere temporarily, the reality remains that Western urban centres, particularly London, remain top migration destinations for the global South. The study seeks to explore beyond the political-economic implications of the West's hegemony in these transnational movements and to delve into the role of Korean ideology of Western modernity within such transnational processes.

To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of transnational everyday lives and identity at the micro level and to refine the exploration of contemporary transnationalism, the study adopts a bottom-up approach, eschewing a post-colonial top-down dominance. London is chosen as the fieldwork site for data collection due to its super-diverse social structure and representative multiculturalism, emblematic of symbolic cosmopolitanism.

Additionally, governmental statistics indicate that London attracts the largest number of Korean migrants in the UK, with a significant proportion being female. The section also explores the cultural structure and symbolic meanings that render London as the ideal "West" and a transnational destination for young Korean women. Adhering to the methodological principles of explicating structure and context, the section offers a comprehensive analysis of the research context, setting the stage for the subsequent investigation.

London as the typical posh "West"

The notion of the "West" as a socially constructed concept holds significant importance in both academic and societal discussions within the Korean context. Western Centrism has become deeply ingrained in Korean social values, as argued by Kang (2004) in his examination of Western centrism in Korean academia. This belief system posits that Europeans and Americans represent the most advanced stage of human history on a universally valid progressive timeline. Non-Western societies are perceived as lagging behind in development, with progress achievable only by adopting the Western developmental model and embracing Western-style modernisation. Consequently, in this ideology, the term "Western" becomes synonymous with "modern" and "civilised". Moreover, in social interactions and discourses, the "West" is often symbolically represented by "white". Historically, the concept of white superiority has also played a role within Korean society. Kim's (2006) research on Korean's navigation of global white racial ideology highlights the solidification of American racialised influence in South Korea through military and cultural-economic aspects. Hollywood movies and cultural imperialism have perpetuated early discourses on white superiority, contributing to Korean's slef-consciousness of inferiority in comparison to whiteness and modernity. Over time, white superiority has transitioned from a macro-level discourse to a micro-level everyday phenomenon. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, a prime example of this is evident in the adoption of Western cultural values and beauty standards in the Korean society (see Park, 2007; Bissel & Chung, 2009). The "West" has become a socially constructed terminology within the Korean context, symbolising a form of "cultural grace". This white superiority discourse is also expressed as "white fetish" on a broader scale. The Korean media further reinforces and represents this social culture under the theme of "dynamic Korea", with a tendency to celebrate the Euro-American urban centre. Ju&Noh's (2013) study examining the ethnoscape of TV dramas on Korean nationwide channels from 2005 to 2012 reveals that non-Korean characters, particularly white males with attractive appearances and successful careers as social elites, are adored and portrayed

positively. Conversely, Southeast Asians, Central Asians, and blacks are depicted as lower-class workers., evoking sympathy.

Given this cultural structure and symbolic meaning constructed by Korean social values, London emerges as a strongly desirable migratory destination for young Korean women. The city's representation as the European urban centre aligns with the Korean ideological construct of the "West", which embodies aspirations for modernity and cultural grace.

Ethnography

The ethnographic approach is a multidisciplinary method used to gather detailed and rich data from the researched participants within a specific research setting. According to Creswell (2007), ethnography enables researchers to observe, describe, and comprehend "patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (p.68). To employ an ethnographic-informed approach, researchers mush establish a close connection with the researched individuals, immersing themselves in the research setting and maintaining constant presence in participants' lives. This approach allows for the in-depth examination of participants' actions and expressions in specific contexts, ensuring the collection of data that offers profound insights into the research context and objectives.

Given that this study aims to explore and understand the cultural transnationalism of young Korean women residing in the global city of London, adopting an ethnographic-informed lens allows for the observation of the dynamics and features embedded within the research setting.

However, conducting ethnographic research poses a challenge known as the possibility of researchers "going native". In such instance, researchers may struggle to complete their study due to their unfamiliarity with the research setting or the group behind studied. To address this concern, Creswell (2007) emphasises the importance of researchers' sensitivity to the individual needs of the study,

acknowledging their impact on the people and places being studied. This awareness ensures a balanced and unbiased approach while maintaining the integrity of the research process.

Reflexive moments: Before Entering the Field

My personal experiences as a non-white foreigner in Korea from 2010 to 2013 served as a significant source of inspiration for this research project. After conducting several informal interviews with young Korean women living in the UK during my first year of the doctoral program, I recognised the need to expand the scope of this study. I aimed to delve into their cultural transnationalism and examine their everyday transnational experiences at a micro level. In doing so, I also embraced a more reflexive approach to the research process.

This study is grounded in the cultural studies paradigm, which forms the theoretical foundation for my research. According to Loon:

> "The main impact of cultural studies on ethnography has been that the latter has become not only a subject but also an instrument of a continuous process of critical engagement with our own being-in-the-world, beyond the taking for granted of that which already exists." (Loon, 2001, p. 273)

Embracing this paradigm, I strive to engage in a more reflexive attitude towards the research process. By acknowledging my own positionality as a researcher and the potential impact it may have on the study, I aim to conduct a more thoughtful and self-aware investigation. This approach allows me to critically analyse the complexities and nuances of cultural transnationalism among young Korean women in diaspora, while also considering the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape their experiences. In adopting the cultural studies paradigm, I recognise the importance of examining cultural practices, representations, and meanings within the transnational context. This framework encourages me to explore how identities and practices are negotiated and transformed in the face of

migration. Furthermore, by incorporating reflexivity into the research process, I aim to be sensitive to the potential power dynamics and biases that may arise in the study. This critical self-awareness enables me to approach the research with a heightened sense of responsibility, ensuring that the voices and experiences of the participants are authentically represented and valued in the analysis.

Research process entails fostering an ongoing self-awareness (Pillow, 2003). However, at the beginning of my field, I encountered struggles with maintaining complete objectivity due to my own personal lived experiences in Korea. There were instances where my unconscious reactions towards the participants and their narratives influenced our conversations. Personal experience can play an ambiguous role in ethnographic research. On one hand, it has always been a central concern, but on the other hand, the traditional objectivist approach of anthropology has often neglected the deeply political aspects of personal experience (Loon, 2001).

Nonetheless, I recognise the significance of reflexivity in research, which involves critically examining power relations, representations, and the politics inherent in the research process (Sultana, 2007). In the context of global modernity, reflexivity is increasingly understood as essential in shaping the constitution of subjects. Therefore, I situate my reflexivity in the space “in-between” my personal experience and the research setting. By doing so, I negotiate my unconscious reactions, striving to avoid imposing my own interpretations and constructions on the collected data.

Since my departure from Korea in 2013, I have made concerted efforts to expand and stay updated on the Korean context. Engaging with non-academic articles that cover current social issues and debates in Korea, as well as watching Korean TV, has allowed me to maintain a relevant and informed perspective. Moreover, I have initiated conversations with foreigners who have lived or are currently living in Korea, to gain insight into their experiences. Many of these individuals have been enthusiastic to share their stories, offering valuable critical insights.

Recognising the potential limitations of personal experience, I have decided to adopt a more objective stance in analysing the data. This approach allows me to distance myself from preconceived notions and biases, promoting a more impartial understanding of the research context. As I progress through the research process, I continue to navigate the complex interplay between my personal experiences and the data, ensuring that reflexivity remains an integral part of the study. Through this commitment to reflexivity, I aim to enhance the credibility and depth of the research findings, as well as the ethical consideration of my role as a researcher within the study.

Digital Ethnography and Offline Observation

By engaging in a six-month-long online ethnography on Instagram and involving participants in "following in-depth-interviews", I have employed an ethnographic approach to investigate the transnational experiences of young Korean women. Ethnographic methodologies often incorporate a combination of interviews and participant observation, as commonly used in various studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This approach proves especially advantageous when exploring subjects related to culture, norms, practices, and customs, as it allows researchers to immerse themselves in the daily routines of the participants, thereby unveiling both overt and implicit aspects of their lifestyles and cultures (Jorgensen, 1989).

Ethnography offers a deep and contextually situated perspective on practices by embedding the researcher within the research site for an extended period. As posited by Markham (2017), ethnographers "seek to find meanings of cultural phenomena by getting close to the experience of these phenomena" (p.653). The immersive and extended nature of this approach enabled the tracking of patterns over time. Similarly, Robards (2013) and Stirling (2016) found that observing practices enriched their analysis of interview data. It allows the perspectives and experiences described by the participants to be validated. Participant observation serves as a robust tool for acquiring first-hand insights into cultures and knowledge, surpassing generalised statements, models, or facts about the world (Laurier, 2016).

In this study, apart from the online observation, the participants were not solely interviewed but also closely observed offline, allowing for a juxtaposition of their verbal descriptions with their actual behaviours within their transnational social settings. Given the emphasis on daily experiences and identity performance, this tri-method approach proved pivotal in capturing a holistic comprehension of participants' transnational everyday experiences.

The duration of my digital ethnography spanned six months for each participant, commencing on the day of their first interview. I monitored nine out of the thirteen participants with social media accounts and granted me access to their social media accounts. Instagram emerged as the predominant platform for observation, as participants commonly cited it as their most frequently used social media platform. I created an Instagram account for the explicit purpose of research, wherein I routinely monitored participants' feeds on a weekly basis and captured relevant screenshots for documentation. Concurrently, offline observation took place during each interview, offering an opportunity to systematically document their social interactions, thus contributing to a nuanced and refined comprehension of their transnational experiences. Given the emphasis on daily experiences and identity performance, this tri-method approach proved pivotal in capturing a holistic comprehension of participants' transnational everyday lives. As an integral component of my observation strategy, I analysed participants' posting patterns, content, and language usage. The digital ethnography primarily serves as methodological triangulation to validate and supplement my offline observations.

Longitudinal Mechanism: "Following" In-depth Interviews

Interviews are a widely employed qualitative method that allows researchers to engage with individuals possessing relevant knowledge or experiences related to the research topic. Through in-depth interviews, researchers delve into the intricate aspects of participants' experiences, motivations, and perspectives, thus gaining insights from different vantage points beyond their own (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston, 2013).

In this study, in-depth interviews serve the purpose of gathering data and generating detailed descriptions to address key research questions. These questions explore participants' understanding and interpretations of mainstream Korean social values, their integration of these values into transnational interactions, the enabling or inhibiting role of transnational interactions in their recognition of multiculturalism, and their identity performance amidst the transnational milieu. Employing in-depth interviews in this research context provides flexibility for data collection, as unexpected insights and perspectives may emerge (Grix, 2010). Additionally, face-to-face interactions between the researcher and the participants offer first-hand, comprehensive data.

However, in-depth interviews come with certain disadvantages. The flexibility in capturing diverse perspectives may also lead to confusion in identifying and interpreting participants' responses. Furthermore, researchers must be cautious of the "go native" trap while engaging with the participants' personal stories.

Initially, I considered conducting a single in-depth interview in the traditional qualitative approach. However, after conducting exploratory interviews in London in January 2016, I recognised the value of applying the "tracking strategy" (Marcus, 1995) to the interviews. In my study, "following the people" takes on a more structural sense, with four rounds of in-depth interviews conducted progressively throughout the fieldwork period (one interview per month). This approach aligns with my understanding of the transnational social field as a constantly unfolding, circulating space. The progressive interviews provide a deeper understanding of the shifting selves within participant's changing transnational everyday experiences, with micro daily insights revealing essential empirical data, particularly related to self-consciousness and performativity.

It is essential to note that while the transnational reality of participants does not undergo dramatic shifts, the continuous interviews capture subtle changes and fresh insights. The participants were both observed and interviewed, and all interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. This approach allowed the conversations to

flow based on the participants' responses, enabling them to discuss what mattered most to them in their transnational lives without constraints. Meanwhile, the researcher could guide and control the discussions in line with the research plan. The first and last interviews were slightly more formal, with the first interview focusing on understanding the participants' backgrounds and the last interview providing a reflexive moment for both the researcher and participants to revisit their experiences.

The data collection process spanned six months, involving 12 young Korean women residing in London. Although the interviews were not rigidly structured, an interview guide was used to address topics related to participants' transnational movements and everyday experiences, motivations for migration, engagement with imaginations and reality, life aspirations and struggles, coping with mainstream Korean social values, racial experiences, multiculturalism understanding, media usage at national and transnational levels, and identity shifts. Most interviews were conducted in Korean, as per participants' preferences and requests.

Sampling, Recruiting and Access

In the previous chapter, I elucidated my research interest in "Asian women on the move" and outlined my deliberate focus on young Korean women. This choice was purposeful as it aimed to explore uncharted aspects within the Korean context. To collect valid data addressing the research questions posed earlier, I conducted an ethnographic fieldwork that spanned from January to June 2017 in London. During this period, I closely followed 12 Korean women residing in London, ensuring they met specific socio-demographic criteria:

A) Age: 22-37 years old
B) Residence in London: At least one year

The selection of the age group between 22-37 was strategic and informed by several factors. First, women within this age range are considered young and generally face fewer constraints in their decision-making process. They have greater agency to shape their transnational experiences based on their own determinations. Second, women in this age bracket possess a certain level of life experience, allowing them to develop more nuanced perspectives on their transnational lives.

By targeting this specific demographic, I aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of young Korean women's transnational experiences, identity formation, and interactions with mainstream Korean social values. The ethnographic approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of their everyday lives, cultural practices, and the impact of global influences on their perceptions and behaviours. This research design aimed to highlight the less explored aspects of Korean women's transnational realities in London and contribute to a more holistic understanding of cultural transnationalism within this population.

At the outset of recruiting participants, I confronted concerns about gaining access into the field as a researcher. The question of why young Korean women would willingly share their personal life stories with a complete stranger, and allow a researcher into their lives, troubled me. The notion of "being there" (Geertz, 1988 p.16) and how to authentically "be there" emerged as crucial factors for me as the researcher. To address these challenges, I drew upon Kim's (2003) insights, which highlighted the need to tap into interpersonal resources, communicative competencies, and cultural strategies that we all develop in dealing with everyday life. In the context of research, the status of the researcher can be seen as one of the many social exchanges and negotiations that occur in everyday interactions.

To gain the participants' trust and cooperation, I adopted a sensitive and respectful approach during the recruitment process. I initially reached out to potential participants through informal channels, establishing a connection and rapport with them. I emphasised the value and importance of their unique experiences and

perspectives in contributing to a deeper understanding of cultural transnationalism. By framing the research as a collaborative and reciprocal process, I aimed to create a sense of partnership and shared exploration of their transnational lives.

During the fieldwork, I navigated the status of "being there" by adopting a reflexive attitude towards my role as a researcher. I acknowledged the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship and aimed to minimise any potential imposition of my own interpretations on their experiences. My approach was characterised by genuine curiosity, active listening, and empathetic engagement with their stories and insights. By being attentive to the nuances of their interactions and cultural practices, I sought to build trust and authenticity in our exchanges.

In this study, the sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, aimed at selecting participants who met specific criteria related to age, residency in London, and prior residence in Korea. This approach ensured that the participants belonged to the desired demographic group of young Korean women living in London. Purposive sampling, as described by Berg (2004), allows researchers to use their expertise to select subjects who represent a specific population. However, given the broad research setting and explorative nature of this study, snowball sampling was employed to select non-representative participants. Snowball sampling relies on personal networks, friendship networks of participants, and online communities to recruit participants.

To ensure diversity in the occupational backgrounds of the participants, multiple snowballs were used. An advertisement was placed on two Korean online communities, briefly explaining the study and encouraging interested individuals to leave their contact information. Since the online communities were exclusive to Korean citizens, potential participants were approach via email, providing a tailored explanation of the research topic and the relevance of their potential contribution. Upon receiving affirmative replies, interview schedules were confirmed, and a consent form was signed by each participant at the first meeting. Some participants

recruited from the online communities were enthusiastic about the study and introduced more potential participants through their friendship networks. They appreciated the academic attention given to a group that has been underrepresented in research.

For privacy considerations, all names provided are pseudonyms. A demographic profile of the young Korean women who participated in the research is provided below, adhering to the ethical guidelines of the interview process. Overall, the use of snowball sampling allowed for the recruitment of a diverse and engaged group of participants, enabling an in-depth exploration of their transnational experiences in the global city of London.

Name	Age	Educational level	Occupation
HyeJin	28	Undergraduate	Catering Services
MinJung	37	Postgraduate	Postgraduate student
Sohee	24	Undergraduate	Services & Office work
SunMin	27	Postgraduate	Freelancer
JiHae	24	Undergraduate	Sales
YooNa	37	Undergraduate	Banking
Inhae	32	Postgraduate	Freelancer & Housewife
InJung	35	Postgraduate	Freelancer & Housewife
EunHae	36	Undergraduate	Finance but on her break currently
MinJi	28	Undergraduate	Creative Industry
BoGyong	31	Undergraduate	Creative Industry
YoungIn	32	Undergraduate	Business management

Table 1 Participants Demographic Profile

It is important to acknowledge that establishing a substantial relationship with the participants was a crucial aspect of the research process. As a young female researcher, my gender and age were advantageous, as the participants perceived me as a peer who could empathise with them. Gender dynamics in the interview process have been well-documented in research literature (see Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Phoenix, 1994; Takeda, 2012), highlighting the significance of gender identity in shaping interactions between researchers and participants.

Being female myself eased access to the field, and my stereotypically unthreatening female characteristics (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) facilitated the formation of friendly relationships with the participants. Additionally, my lived experience in Korea and my knowledge of Korean culture created affinities between me and the participants. Moreover, my multi-lingual abilities, with a full working proficiency in the Korean language, further strengthened rapport with the participants, as many of them felt most comfortable communicating in Korean language despite living in London.

Throughout the entire fieldwork period, I emphasised self-reflection, recognising the impact of my positionality on my movements in the field and the overall research process. I will delve into my research experience, addressing how my position as a researcher influenced various phases of the fieldwork in the later section of this chapter as reflexive remark before presenting empirical data. By adopting a self-reflexive approach, I aimed to maintain an awareness of my role and its potential effects on the research context.

Data Analysis

According to Wynn and Williams (2012), the primary purpose of data analysis is to "identify the most complete and logically compelling explanation of the observed events given the specific conditions of the contextual environment" (p.799). Data analysis holds utmost significance in any research project, as the vast amount of data collected in the field must be refined to address the research questions effectively. Particularly in ethnographic data analysis, researchers often adopt an inductive thematic approach to categorise the data and extract relevant themes for further examination. As Creswell (2007) suggests, data analysis is an interactive process that encompasses various tasks such as "organisation and preparation of the data for analysis, transcribing interviews, optically scanning material, typing up field notes or sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on sources of information" (p. 185).

On the other hand, some researchers argue that data analysis is a repetitive process that begins even before fieldwork and continues throughout, serving to identify research problems and refine the research questions continuously. Contrary to viewing data analysis as a separate "project" within the research period, I concur with both perspectives by emphasising the negotiation between objectivity and subjectivity. It is essential to recognise that objectivity is a core research ethic, but it is unrealistic to expect complete objectivity in any study. Preconceived assumptions, values, and concepts inevitably shape the research process and analysis (Sayer, 2002), including data analysis. As an interactive and interpretive process, data analysis involves the researcher's subjectivity in generating information from the data. In my case, my lived experience and advanced knowledge of Korean culture did not hinder my ability to interpret the data; instead, they contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the findings. however, throughout the fieldwork, I remained attentive and continually revisited the data to refine the research problem and settings, ensuring a rigorous and well-organised data analysis process.

Considering the richness of the original data collected for this study, an organic reduction of information was essential to derive potential findings. To achieve this, I employed an inductive thematic examination of the data, allowing new themes to emerge for presentation. The data analysis process began with transcribing all interviews and translating them from Korean to English. Additionally, I revisited my field notes and extracted relevant documents from both online and offline observations. Subsequently, I categorised the responses received from the interviews into three themes that emerged from my research questions, providing an initial thematic coding structure to address these inquiries. Building upon these codes, I generated new themes that were valid and relevant. Finally, by seeking analytical relationships among the emerged themes, I defined the new themes to present the findings in a coherent and robust manner.

Thematic analysis and coding

Thematic analysis is widely recognised as the most appropriate method for studies aiming to generate information through interpretations (Alhojailan, 2012). According to Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012),

> "Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis." (p.10)

The greatest appeal of thematic analysis lies in its capacity to allow for multiple interpretations (Alhojailan, 2012). Its flexibility in approaching research patterns, whether in an inductive or deductive manner, makes it particularly suitable for studies seeking to extract information to determine the relationship between variables and to compare different sets of evidence pertaining to various situations within the same study (Alhojailan, 2012). The adoption of thematic analysis in this study aims to refine the rich data collected from various methods in the field, with the goal of identifying categories of analysis that capture the intricate nuances of cultural transnationalism.

Following the procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis process involves six key steps: a) Familiarising with the data, b) Generating initial codes, c) Searching for themes, d) Reviewing themes, e) Defining and naming themes, and f) Producing the report. This systematic approach ensures a rigorous analysis of the data, leading to the identification of key themes that address the research questions effectively.

a. Transcription of verbal data

The initial step of the data analysis process involved a mechanical task aimed at "familiarising with data". Despite being a highly time-consuming process, it provided invaluable insights into the raw data, allowing for preliminary analysis. This

endeavour facilitated the development of a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes and aided in the categorisation of data, leading to the generation of initial codes for subsequent thematic exploration.

In my dual role as both the transcriber and researcher, I ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This involved the translation and transcription of 49 audio-taped interviews into text format. As I read through each interview, I made detailed notes to identify patterns and themes that could serve as a foundation for further analysis. In the final step of this stage, I proceeded to categorise the information into broader sections aligned with the four theoretical frameworks employed to formulate the research questions: media, social value, cultural transnationalism, and identity.

b. Generating Initial Codes

Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend that at this stage of thematic analysis, researchers should systematically generate as many potential codes and themes as possible. While software programs like NVivo are commonly used for data analysis, I personally opted for manual coding as it allowed me to feel more at ease. I printed the transcribed interviews and utilised highlights and notes to carefully review all the data multiple times. Drawing upon Kim's (2006; 2011) account of the most relevant and common features of "Asian women on the move", as well as Appadurai's (1996) influential imaginative process on circulation within the Korean context, I was able to consolidate similar categories into broader themes.

Ten initial codes emerged during this process: 1) Individualism, 2) Inequalities in the Korean society, 3) A celebratory idea of living abroad, 4) Western modernity, 5) Elite status, 6) Representation, 7) Expectation and reality, 8) Race and transnational interactions, 9) National image, and 10) Koreanness. These initial codes were prominently present throughout the participants' responses, thus assisting in the further reduction and organisation of information.

Figure 7 Generating Initial codes

c. Searching for Themes

After identifying the initial codes in the first stage, new themes emerged, which are presented in the following table. Some of these new themes are directly related to the initial categories, while others may overlap or have vague connections with each other.

FIRST SET OF NODES		SECOND STAGE
CATEGORIES	**SUBCATEGORIES**	**EMERGING THEMES**
MEDIA	**REPRESENTATIONS**	London delivers the sense of Posh; when talking about Britain, we think about royal family; the empire on which the sun never sets; British bands; English rock; Higher Education; Freedom; Social benefits; have a better life; prince and princess; culturally graceful; Movies; Sherlock; British pop culture; historical; cultural events; culture life; Fatasy;
SOCIAL VALUE	**SOCIAL INEQUALITIES**	They don't treat woman well; additional work without payment; company culture; have to be a follower; networking society;
	WEST MODERNITY	This is a developed country. Everything is about America; Korea is a developing country;
	ELITENESS	My friends are jealous about me living in London; No matter what, you live in London; London is London; They call me an elite;
CULTURAL TRANSNATIONALISM	**RACE AND TRANSNATIONAL INTERACTIONS**	I find it difficult to be friends with black people; people believe in a racial ranking in Korea; Ignorance of Chinese; Koreans are racist; Korean only friendship network; offended being misrecognised as Chinese but slightly better if it is Japanese; I don't like hanging out with Koreans;
	NATIONAL IMAGES	Negative images on Chinese; negative images on Japanese due to historical reasons; America first;
		Different; actually no difference; want to live in a foreign country from long time ago; Thought I will have foreign

	EXPECTATION AND REALITY	friends; higher expectation on education; expectation on less discriminations; financial struggles; unsatisfied living conditions; being discriminated; language barriers;
IDENTITY	**CELEBRATION**	No plan for returning; Dreams come true; purchase permanent residence; life goal; different experience; I am not happy but I want to remain; better life;
	INDIVIDUALISM	First time live abroad on my own; travel alone; Live alone;
	KOREANNESS	Miss Korean food the most; In-between status; Difficulties to fit in in Korea;

Table 2 Second stage: Searching for themes

I experienced a sense of anxiety while dealing with the numerous themes generated from this stage. Although this phase is intended to focus on a broader scope of identifying themes and involves various codes that await sorting into potential themes, it presented a challenging task. As highlighted by Neumann (2014), this process involves inquiring about causes and consequences, conditions and interactions, strategies and processes, and searching for categories or concepts that cluster together. Consequently, I commenced the process of re-reading my data extracts that fit into each theme, ensuring that all data coherently formed a pattern that directed towards the emergence of overarching themes.

d. Reviewing Themes

At this stage, it is essential to further reduce the candidate themes for refinement. As indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), some themes may not be appropriate when there is insufficient supporting data or when the data is too diverse. Additionally, certain themes may merge into one another, while others might need to be broken down into smaller sections. The guiding principle here is that “data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.20). Following this process of reviewing and refining themes, a few overarching themes emerged.

FIRST SET OF NODES		SECOND STAGE	THIRD STAGE
CATEGORIES	**SUBCATEGORIES**	**EMERGING THEMES**	**OVERARCHING THEMES**
MEDIA	**REPRESENTATIONS**	London delivers the sense of Posh; when talking about Britain, we think about royal family; the empire on which the sun never sets; British bands; English rock; Higher Education; Freedom; Social benefits; have a better life; prince and princess; culturally graceful; Movies; Sherlock; British pop culture; historical; cultural events; culture life; Fantasy;	Transnational motivation; Fantasised transnational every day; The ideal "West"; Progressive lifestyle;
SOCIAL VALUE	**SOCIAL INEQUALITIES**	They don't treat woman well; additional work without payment; company culture; have to be a follower; networking society; everyone likes to be the same;	Sameness; Anti-Korean sentiment; Inferiority; Cultural grace; Marking social status; Western centrism;
	WEST MODERNITY	This is a developed country. Everything is about America; Korea is a developing country;	
	ELITENESS	My friends are jealous about me living in London; No matter what, you live in London; London is London; They call me an elite;	
CULTURAL TRANSNATIONALISM	**RACE AND TRANSNATIONAL INTERACTIONS**	I find it difficult to be friends with black people; people believe in a racial ranking in Korea; Ignorance of Chinese; Koreans are racist; Korean only friendship network; offended being misrecognised as Chinese but slightly better if it is Japanese; I don't like hanging out with Koreans;	Racially discriminating others; Internalised racial discrimination; Mono-cycle; Multicultural Utopia; Being racially discriminated; Aspiration; Non-celebratory; Recognition; Difference;
	NATIONAL IMAGES	Negative images on Chinese; negative images on Japanese due to historical reasons; America first;	
	EXPECTATION AND REALITY	Different; actually no difference; want to live in a foreign country from long time ago; Thought I will have foreign friends; higher expectation on education; expectation on less discriminations; financial struggles; unsatisfied living conditions; being discriminated; language barriers;	

IDENTITY	**CELEBRATION**	No plan for returning; Dreams come true; purchase permanent residence; life goal; different experience; I am not happy but I want to remain; better life;	British citizenship; Permanent residence; Cosmopolitan attitude; Better self; Recognition; Representing online; Individualisation; In-between; Brit-to-become;
	INDIVIDUALISM	First time live abroad on my own; travel alone; Live alone; make a life alone;	
	KOREANESS	Miss Korean food the most; In-between status; Difficulties to fit in in Korea;	

Table 3 Third stage: Reviewing themes and identifying overarching themes

e. Defining Themes

In this final stage of the analysis, the meta-themes that will serve as the foundation for presenting the research findings are defined. These meta-themes allow for the creation of a cohesive and comprehensive narrative that incorporates all the original data collected from the field. Through this process, meaningful discussions on the research outcomes can be formulated, providing a deeper understanding of the research topic and its implications.

CATEGORIES	**SUBCATEGORIES**	**OVERARCHING THEMES**	**META-THEMES**
Media	Representations	Transnational motivation Fantasised transnational every day The ideal "West" Progressive lifestyle	**TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINATION**
Social value	Social inequalities West modernity Eliteness	Sameness Anti-Korean sentiment Inferiority Cultural grace Marking social status Western centrism	**WESTERN CENTRISM**
Cultural transnationalism	Race and transnational interactions	Racially discriminating others Internalised racial discrimination Mono-cycle Multicultural Utopia	

	National images Expectation and reality	Being racially discriminated Aspiration Non-celebratory Recognition Difference	**A DIFFERENT MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING**
Identity	Celebration Individualism Koreanness	British citizenship Permanent residence Cosmopolitan attitude Better self Recognition Representing online Individualisation In-between Brit-to-become	**PERFORMATIVITY**

Table 4 Defining Themes

Validation of data

A common criticism of ethnographic or qualitative research is that it provides in-depth understanding of a particular group or culture but limits its generalisability or replicability to other contexts (Myers, 1999). However, Creswell (2007) argues that the purpose of qualitative research is not to "generalise finding to individuals, sites, or places outside of those under study and that the value of such research is the particular description and themes developed in the context of the specific time" (p.193). In this study, I depart from broad empirical generalisation and focus on developing new themes of transnationalism in a contextual manner.

To achieve the objectives of this study, I adopted multiple approaches to the data and employed various theoretical frameworks to ensure their validation. As discussed in the methodology chapter, an ethnographic informed research design requires not only listening to what people say but also observing how they behave. Thus, I applied methodological triangulation, combining data from in-depth interviews and participant observation (both online and offline), to enhance the comprehensiveness and validity of the outcomes. However, it is essential to recognise that the interpretations derived from the data are equally important as

the data themselves. This emphasises the significance of the researcher's positionality in the data analysis. In the following section, I engage in self-reflection after the fieldwork and provide a detailed account of my presence in the field and its potential impact on the data.

Reflexivity: Entering and Remaining in Young Korean Women's Transnational World

This section commences with an exploratory discussion on studying migration from a cultural transnational approach, aiming to establish the value of the empirical data in the broader field of media, diaspora, and transnationalism. Serving as a reflection on my overall reflexivity throughout the entire fieldwork process, this section addresses the rationales and emotions involved in front of the empirical findings. It documents my process of self-observation and emotional engagement, demonstrating how this dynamic analysis becomes a crucial source for understanding the data in a more nuanced manner. Hertz (1997) emphasises that this reflexivity visualises the researcher's knowledge into existence.

Incorporating social/value perspectives into the study of transnationalism addresses a missing piece in many existing studies in the field. As contemporary transnational movements involve multi-directional processes, the connections and networks that transcend territories connect migrant individuals and groups globally, and value perspectives lie at the core of these links and networks. Therefore, incorporating value perspectives is crucial in unfolding a comprehensive cultural transnational approach to the study of migration. The section begins with a general theoretical reflection on the cultural transnational approach and then proceeds to discuss my reflexive moments during the fieldwork.

A culture transnational approach to the study of migration

Culture plays a crucial role in the context of transnationalism, where culture exchange within global flows goes beyond mere politics or products. Understanding the space created for cultural discussions in transnationalism is of utmost

importance in this research. The challenge I faced during this study was how to situate and conceptualise cultural transnationalism effectively. Should it be treated merely as a theoretical lens or utilised as a method to approach empirical data? Migration studies have evolved considerably since the dominant trend of the 1990s, which viewed migration solely through the lens of host and sending societies. Adopting a cultural transnational approach to the study of migration entails methodological choices and theoretical expansions. Consequently, I decided to employ cultural transnationalism in both theoretical and methodological aspects. From this perspective, transnational movements are not seen as linear processes leading individuals from one place to another, but as multi-layered phenomena influenced by various transnational patterns.

Scholars in the field have emphasised the significance of understanding the philosophical and aesthetic determinants of social relations under globalisation (for instance, Hitchcock; Bakhrin). This argument has provided a solid foundation for approaching my research subjects. In the age of voluntary migration, the emotions and interpretations of transmigrants regarding their home and ontological existence become considerably complex. These individuals, who have voluntarily joined the transnational flow, may not possess the assumed strong attachment to their so called “homeland”. Their decision to leave home is often accompanied by emotional conflicts and negative sentiments arising from long-term resistance to their social surroundings. However, the cultural habitus and value perspectives of their homeland remain deeply embedded within their subconscious, influencing their understanding of transnationalism and serving as a recurring agenda in their everyday struggles. The construction and interpretation of transnational reality, as well as every interaction within transnational spaces, are significantly influenced by their perceived capitals and social/power relations. Under the cultural transnationalism approach, performativity plays a crucial role in discussing diasporic identities, acknowledging the constructive nature of such identities.

The study of young Korean women moving to and living in London serves as a representative case for examining transnational movements through a cultural transnationalism approach. One critical aspect is the unique cultural phenomenon in Korea that demands academic attention. This uniqueness adds complexity to the experiences of young Korean women in transnationalism, which will be comprehensively addressed in the subsequent four data analysis chapters.

Entering and remaining in the field – non-Korean female researcher in the field

In my research, one common question I encounter when people learn about my topic is, "Are you Korean?" or they automatically assume that I am of Korean ethnicity. Upon my denial, the follow-up question often is, "Then what do you know about Korea?". There appears to be a prevailing assumption that a researcher should share the same cultural background and identity as the researched group. However, I question whether my lived experience in Korea is sufficient to fulfil this requirement, along with my fluency in the Korean language and profound knowledge of Korean culture. Reflexivity is essential before delving into the actual data, as it allows us to critically examine our positionality in the field, review the feelings experienced while "being there", and analyse these dynamics as important sources of data (Takeda, 2012).

Reflexivity in research has been highlighted by Temple and Edwards (2002), who argue that researchers must reflect on their social identities and perspectives and how these impact interpersonal relations during fieldwork. Three key elements of my positionality hold central significance in my reflexive process: being a young woman, being Asian, and being a diaspora. These aspects were evident throughout the interviews, interactions, and observations in the field.

As previously discussed in my pre-fieldwork reflexivity, being a young woman played a vital role in granting me access to the field. Gender identity has a substantial influence on the interaction between researchers and participants (Kane and Macaulay 1993). Some participants I approached through personal networks

mentioned that they might not have easily granted access or shared their personal stories if I were a male researcher. While studies focusing on women conducted by male researchers have been successful, gender differences may still present obstacles and create unforeseen complications in the field (Takeda, 2012). In contrast, my gender identity as a young woman allowed me to establish positive relationships with the young Korean women under study, fostering openness and honesty.

As a diasporic Asian researcher, my presence in the field was partly assured, enabling the establishment of rapport due to the invisibility of racial hierarchy, thus affecting the power balance. Participants felt that I understood their life struggles and aspirations to some extent due to our shared life experience and knowledge. However, my non-Korean identity posed some delicate situations during the research process. My background as a Chinese diaspora, differing from the identity and cultural background of the participants, occasionally raised sensitivities during fieldwork. As Takeda (2012) discovered, issues of culture, language, and national and ethnic identity demand careful consideration alongside gender in fieldwork. Nonetheless, my proficiency in the Korean language and insightful knowledge of Korean culture were foundational for this study. Many participants were led to believe that I had Korean heritage due to my language skills. Speaking the same language not only fostered a positive rapport but also comforted participants, enabling them to express themselfes more freely (Takeda, 2012). This insider-outsider evaluation allowed me to recognise problems from an outsider's perspective while addressing them with inside knowledge.

As my research progressed, I realised that some participants were cautious in discussing their transnational social interactions with the Chinese community, perceptions of China, and the Korean fixation of the national image of China. Their efforts to avoid cultural sensitivities and maintain decorum may have hindered their genuine reactions and responses, which I regret missing out on.

Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research paradigm, methodological considerations, research context, sampling strategies, and research design utilised in this study. It emphasises the appropriateness of an ethnographic informed qualitative design for the research topic, considering the dynamic nature of transnationalism and the need for a nuanced understanding of everyday transnational experiences. The use of in-depth interviews as a "following" process is highlighted, allowing for a deeper exploration of the ever-changing transnational phenomena.

The chapter focuses on sampling, recruiting, and access strategies employed to engage participants and delves into the process of data analysis. Thematic analysis is presented as the method to derive meta-themes for the future discussion of findings, based on the abundant data collected from the field. The validation of data is also addressed to ensure the rigor of the research.

The latter part of the chapter expands on reflexivity after the completion of the fieldwork. The researcher's self-observation and emotions throughout the data collection process contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the data. the cultural transnational approach is introduced as a theoretical lens, establishing the grounds for better understanding cultural concerns in the study. While acknowledging the lack of existing literature in this area, the role of social value in contemporary transnationalism is identified as a significant aspect requiring further investigation.

Furthermore, the researcher's positionality as a non-Korean young woman in the field is discussed, revealing the influence of being a young woman, being Asian, and being a diaspora on the research process. The insider status, represented by the researcher's lived experience in Korea and proficiency in the Korean language, facilitates rapport with participants and enhances cultural understanding. Simultaneously, the outsider status as an ethnically Chinese researcher creates some

distance with the participants. Nonetheless, the coexistence of both statuses enables a highly nuanced analysis of the data.

Overall, this chapter serves as a crucial moment before presenting the actual data analysis chapters, providing insight into the researcher's approach, methodological considerations, challenges, and experiences in the field, contributing to the depth of the research outcomes.

Chapter 5 Imagination, “Peerage” and Reality: A Journey from Korea to the UK

Mass media has played a pivotal role in facilitating the exposure of ordinary individuals to a diverse array of resources from what can be considered as “another world”, thereby fostering the cultivation of imagination towards the realms of the “unknown”. As expounded in the preceding chapter, a comprehensive theoretical groundwork has been laid concerning the intricate nature of imagination and its significance as a propelling force for cultural migration. This chapter undertakes a profound exploration into the transnational trajectory embarked upon by the young Korean women who actively participated in this study, traversing from their homeland of Korea to the United Kingdom. The overarching objective is to offer an expansive panorama of their transnationalism, intricately analysing the complex interplay between imagination, reality, habitus, and capital – concepts that encapsulate the multifaceted nuances inherent in the transnational journeys of these young Korean women. The unravelling of these dynamic interactions and their interconnections not only contribute to the establishment of the contemporary transnational social field, aptly characterised as a “grey zone”, but also provides valuable insights into the broader migratory patterns exhibited by Koreans relocating to the United Kingdom.

The chapter commences by meticulously profiling the cohort of young Korean women who actively engaged in this study, with a specific examination directed towards their class-based habitus and the social ties intricately interwoven within their transnational journey from their home country of Korea to the United Kingdom. By methodically unravelling the multi-layered cultural components that conspicuously shape and define their transnational milieus, it effectively exposes the undercurrents of dynamism and cultural shifts that inherently manifest within this complex process. Rather than confining the analysis to a mere juxtaposition of imagination against reality, ad adept adoption of a phenomenological approach is embrace, elevating the study to a more nuanced and organically evolved

understanding of the manifold facets embedded within the realm of their transnational trajectory.

Rooted in the principles espoused by Van Manen (1990), phenomenology emerges as a paramount analytical framework, attending to the exploration of the lived experience or the complex lifeworld as perceived by the participants themselves. This paradigm views the world not as an external, detached entity, but as a dynamic construct interwoven within the experiential fabric of an individual. The phenomenological perspective, with its inherent focus on the interplay between the individual and their surroundings, leads to comprehending the nature and meaning production encapsulated within young Korean women's transnational everyday encounters. As illuminated through the phenomenological lens, the profiling of these young Korean women endeavours to excavate the meanings embedded within the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under study – an undertaking that inherently involves the researcher as an observer or a participant (Van Manen, 1990).

Building upon empirical data, this chapter proceeds by articulating and examining paradoxical facets that characterise the encounters of young Korean women in London. I delineate four paradoxical dimensions encapsulating the experiences of these individuals in the global city of London, embodying both symbolic and pragmatic aspects of their transnational trajectories. Grounded in the Bourdieusian concept of power, these dimensions serve to elucidate the ways in which young Korean women navigate and construe their decision to relocate, as well as analyse the resultant impact on their process of settlement. These dimensions not only underscore their settlement experiences but also accentuate their transnational existence, shedding light on how individuals deploy and accumulate their capital within an inherited socio-cultural framework to refine their habitus.

A Korean Approach to Gendered Migration: The Individualisation Myth

The amalgamation of transnational imagination and migration studies in East Asia has experienced notable expansion in recent times. However, the existing literature within this realm falls short in elucidating the origins and socio-cultural conditions that cultivate Western-centric imaginations, as well as the contributions of these values to the phenomenon of transnationalism. Instead, the focus has predominantly gravitated towards traditional gender norms and labour market constraints, conceptualised as propelling forces compelling individuals to seek "escape" from their homeland. In a recent study, the transnational movements of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean women are examined through this lens by Youna Kim (2011). Her analysis accentuates the empowerment engendered by female transnational migration within broader socio-cultural and economic milieus, often perceived as an act of self-determination. However, this notion of empowerment does not comprehensively encompass the women's pursuit of individualisation, as it arises not from voluntary choices but also as a consequence of their struggles with structural constraints and gender presumptions in their respective home countries. Kim posits that if educated women in Korea, Japan, and China were afforded better opportunities for success and personal growth within their home environments, the motivation for seeking individualisation through migration to precarious international stages or within provisional circuits of multiple migrations might diminish.

Within the context of Korea, the discourse surrounding emigration has evolved into a contentious societal issue. Coined recently by Mike Williams in *Shifting Cultures*[2], the term "Hell Joseon" embodies the frustrations and tensions permeating the younger generation regarding their societal constrictions. Historically referencing a period of hardship in Korean history, the term has metamorphosed into a pejorative signifier denoting a contemporary deteriorating situation. Contemporary young

[2] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-30/south-korea-hell-joseon-sampo-generation/11844506

Koreans employ it to satirise their tolerance for structural limitations and their present social standing. Often, the labour market is held culpable for failing to furnish adequate opportunities and avenues for individual growth for the educated youth, prompting many to seek alternative lifestyles abroad. While the globalised landscape of world economies engenders societal competition and exerts pressure on the younger generations worldwide, the perception of the West as a realm of opportunity remains an alluring yet elusive aspiration, particularly within Korean society.

Gender emerges as a pivotal determinant in discussions concerning the impulse to "escape" from Korea. the deficiencies within the Korean labour market are frequently interlinked with conventional gender assumptions, spotlighting the disadvantaged societal positioning of Korean women concerning job prospects and professional advancement as entrenched constraints. These constraints subsequently metamorphose into catalysts propelling women towards personal individualisation, thus functioning as driving factors for their transnational sojourns to Western territories. Kim's extensive enquiry within the East Asian context frequently underscores the aspirations of young Korean women for career accomplishments and personal autonomy. Within the narratives of these women undergoing transnational experiences within the cosmopolitan arena of London, a mosaic of intricate discourse emerges. Utterances such as "it would be ideal if I don't have to work to get money" and "white men are like luxury brands that Korean women ardently pursue" underline the intricacies of their self-conceptualisations during their transnational journey. As they endeavour to "craft their own path in London", their sense of individualism is enmeshed in complexity. They grapple with a sensation of "striving but not yet attaining" or a feeling of being "betwixt and between", reflecting the multidimensional nature of their transnational experiences. They often find themselves trapped between an evolving self-awareness reflecting their genuine aspirations, and a political recalibration that governs how they present themselves to others.

This nuanced comprehension of the experiences of these young women embroiled in transnationalism highlights the complexities of their yearnings and the factors that shape their decision-making processes. Their narratives embody a perpetual negotiation between personal ambitions and societal expectations, thereby illuminating the intricate dynamics that forge their transnational reality. Through a profound exploration of the interplay among imagination, aspiration, contradiction, and capital, this chapter endeavours to enrich the collective understanding of cultural transnationalism and contribute to the demarcation of the contemporary transnational field as “grey zone”.

Profiling the young Korean women: class-based habitus and social ties

In the realm of transnational studies, the individual’s journey across geographic, cultural, and social boundaries if often perceived as a multi-layered voyage, influenced by a myriad of internal and external forces. As we delve into the intricate tapestry of these young Korean women’s transnational experiences, it becomes evident that the interplay between one’s socioeconomic background, personal dispositions, and social networks forms a critical nexus that shapes the trajectory of this journey. In this section, I present the vignettes of these young Korean women who participated in this study. In doing so, I direct my focus toward two pivotal dimensions that case profound shadows upon their migratory paths: the class-based habitus that these women bring forth from their origins and the web of social ties that they weave throughout their journey.

Vignettes: migratory motivations

I met HyeJin at a local café situated within my neighbourhood, where she was employed on a part-time basis. Subsequent to our initial interaction, I extended her a direct invitation to participate in my study. HyeJin, at the age of 28, possessed a working holiday visa that facilitated her migration to London, a move that transpired after her departure from a modest media firm in Seoul. Her choice to embark on this

transnational journey was underpinned by an idealised perception of residing within a Western capital, fuelled by a curiosity to observe the unfolding of events:

> "I had been feeling a sense of 'dull' in my life; I had adhered to a role of being the 'model good girl'. I graduated from a reasonably reputable university and secured a job despite the challenging job market, I also have a boyfriend back home who was decent, but I do not have a strong romantic feeling for. It seemed like a life that one could predict for the next fifty years. I desired to explore the possibilities that could unfold in a different setting."

Likewise, I met SoHee, a 24-year-old, at another local café situated within my neighbourhood. She briefly worked at a local start-up in Seoul before relocating to London. SoHee too was a holder of a working holiday visa. Her daily routine entailed juggling the roles of a barista and an office worker at a small Korean commercial enterprise. Reflecting upon her circumstances, she felt "extremely lucky" to obtain the opportunity to inhabit a Western capital, given the highly competition associated with the application procedure for a working holiday visa to London from Korea. SoHee pursued the working holiday visa application twice, experiencing an initial rejection in her first attempt. Her motivation was rooted in the aspiration for a "better life":

> "Having freshly graduated from university, I aspire to embrace a distinct lifestyle that sets me apart from my peers. In my perception, London offers a realm of diverse opportunities, distinct from those within my social circle, and holds the potential for a better quality of life. My current ambition is to embark on a path of becoming a dancer here in London."

The working holiday visa, functioning as a contact zone, emerges as a pivotal juncture in the trajectory of young Korean women moving to London. This visa category serves as a significant transitional conduit for this demographic. MinJi and BoGyong, co-residing within a north London flat, aged 28 and 31 respectively, both bear prior experiences as recipients of working holiday visas.

For MinJi, her initiation into the London milieu materialised through her first encounter with a working holiday visa. Upon her arrival in London, she was initially employed as a retailer at a Uniqlo store. MinJi concurrently quested for more auspicious employment prospects. She described herself "lucky" as she eventually secured a job that not only facilitated her sustained residence in London but also granted her a work visa sponsorship – she works as a digital content designer in London during the course of my fieldwork. Reflecting upon her move, Minji attributes her decision to an inclination "to venture into unexplored territory":

> "The prospect of residing overseas had remained a distant reality in my life until now. Observing my friends went on English language training programs overseas, I couldn't help but nurse a sense of longing and admiration. It wasn't too long ago that the United Kingdom extended its invitation to Koreans through the avenue of working holiday visas – a development that intrigued me. As opposed to the more conventionally popular destination such as Australia and Canada for Korean working holiday visa applicants, my aspiration was distinctly directed towards the allure of London. For me, the city holds the promise of new challenges. I wanted to live abroad before I cross the threshold into my thirties."

BoGyong, who works as a motion graphic designer, dedicated an uninterrupted span of 8 years to a company in Seoul before embarking on a transnational journey via the conduit of a working holiday visa to London. Her affinity for British music and design has been a consistent thread weaving through her entire journey. A trip to London in 2012 cast an enchanting spell upon her, leaving in its wake a longing for a life in the UK. She seized the opportunity and submitted her application when the UK government first launched the working holiday visa scheme in Korea. It is within the canvas of those contrasting settings and unexplored territories in London that BoGyong perceived the most alluring prospects:

> "The creative industry in Seoul where I worked has a toxic atmosphere. I have always wanted to experience a different environment. I have been a fan of British music and design for a long time. After visiting the UK five years ago, I have been dreaming about living in such a diverse cultural

> setting different from Seoul. The potential opportunities and the chance to meet artists in London's creative industry excite me greatly."

JiHae, aged 24, shared a flat with MinJi and BoGyong. Her introduction to the UK occurred during her undergraduate years when she embarked on an exchange program for one term. This initial exposure in Sheffield left an indelible mark on her, prompting her affection for the British lifestyle. Subsequent to her graduation, she pursued a working holiday visa, a journey that led her to a role as a luxury brand salesperson in London. JiHae's motivation for this transnational move was rooted in the aspiration to recreate the sense of "happiness" she experienced in Sheffield:

> "The happy memory I had with Sheffield was profound. My decision to move to London was swift, literally coinciding with the culmination of my final term; I was eager to embark on this journey without delay, foregoing even the formalities of graduation. My desire was to recreate the vibrant experiences I had in Sheffield. In my pursuit of a working holiday visa, there was an intention to recapture the same sense of enjoyment here in London. The allure of London also rested in its promise of new and comfort for me, that profoundly motivated my decision."

SunMin, aged 27, provides another illustrative instance of leveraging the working holiday visa as a transformative junction for extended sojourn in the UK. Her trajectory encompasses a brief stint in Cambridge during her secondary school years, followed by a return to Korea to participate in an esteemed international program within a local high school – a facet emblematic of privilege within the Korean educational paradigm. Following her graduation from a university in Seoul, she came to the UK to pursue a postgraduate degree. Subsequently, she had to go back to Korea after graduation when her student visa expired, yet her association with the UK was soon rekindled as she sought a working holiday visa. A compelling facet that emerged from my interactions with SunMin was her persistent avoidance of the term "working holiday visa". Rather intriguingly, she consistently preferred to employ the designation "youth mobility scheme", despite both terms denoting the same concept and purpose. The tapestry of SunMin's experiences extends to diverse

transnational episodes, including a brief exchange term in the US, during which she engaged as an intern at the local Korean embassy. According to her, these encounters have collectively fostered a sense of detachment and unfamiliarity within the Korean milieu, nurturing an inclination towards an "international setting" that resonates more with her:

> "A significant motivation for returning to the UK is of a personal nature. My previous one-year study experience in this country has left me with a network of friends here. I now also have a boyfriend who is a local Londoner. Furthermore, my history of multiple international experiences has cultivated a preference for diverse cultural milieus like that of London, rendering my sense of comfort notably pronounced in such settings."

Much like SunMin, MingJung, aged 37, similarly sought to immerse herself in a culturally diverse environment. In addition, her motivation was notably underscored by a desire to extricate herself from Korea and sever those ties permanently. She had a fairly successful career in a major Korean entertainment company for almost a decade. MinJung came to the UK on a student visa, she enrolled herself in an undergraduate program at the age of 34, despite having already completed her initial undergraduate studies in Korea. Subsequently, she pursued a postgraduate degree within the same university. The strategic move was intended to circumvent a return to Korea, and by securing a postgraduate qualification in the UK, she positioned herself for potential application to a PhD program outside Korea:

> "My inclination is purely towards not residing in Korea. In fact, I harbour no desire to retain my Korean identity. Ultimately, I envisage changing my nationality in the future."

Unlike the extremity expressed by MinJung, EunHae's departure from Korea was also marked by a resolute decision not to return. Aged 36, EunHae took a career break during the duration of my fieldwork. Her initial migration to the UK in 2014 was instigated by a dual motivation: a job relocation opportunity and a favourable perception of the UK as a destination. Preceding her settlement in London, she spent

five years working in the finance sector in Singapore. Driven by a strong desire for a romantic relationship and a family life, EunHae described herself committed substantial efforts to seek out a suitable life partner through online dating platforms upon her relocation to the UK. Subsequently, she married a British citizen in 2016, which further solidified her intention to establish a future in the UK:

> "Despite having spent my childhood and early adulthood in Korea, I have harboured an enduring desire to experience life outside Korea. I have always been curious about possibilities and life outside Korea. This curiosity prompted my decision to take the opportunity in Singapore. Therefore, when the prospect to relocate to London arose, I quickly seized it. The prospect of returning to Korea holds little appeal for me. I married a British citizen last year; I will now continue living here in London."

YooNa, a close friend of EunHae, embarked on a similar transnational trajectory. Aged 37 and engaged in the banking sector, YooNa's journey is emblematic of her own. Upon completing her academic pursuit at a University in Seoul, YooNa landed a job with a foreign bank in Seoul. Her professional path led her to Dubai, where she spent a year in employment. Thereafter, a shift brought her to the Singapore office, where she worked for a span of eight years, culminating with her marriage. Subsequent to her marriage, she chose to quit her job. Her husband's decision to pursue a PhD degree in the UK (outside London) catalysed her voyage to London, a choice further underscored by her favourable perception of London's attributes. She quickly secured a position at a bank in London facilitated by her acquisition of an EEA visa, a privilege stemming from her husband's status as a European citizen:

> "Life in Singapore was adequate. The favourable taxation regime, couple with the luxury of employing a maid, contributed to a comfortable life there for me. However, I found myself gradually succumbing to a sense of 'dull'. It was precisely during this juncture that my husband decided to pursue a PhD degree in the UK. This prompted me to make the decision to follow him here to this new destination. My inclination toward this

> path was further solidified by my positive perception of London, as well as a genuine sense that this city is somewhere I could see myself live in."

InHae, aged 32, is a participant whose marital status also has significantly influenced her trajectory to London. As a full-time homemaker, InHae occasionally engages in freelance graphic design contracts. Her initial migration to the UK was motivated by her aspiration to pursue a postgraduate degree in arts and illustration. Guided by her artistic inclinations, InHae was drawn to London by its perceived reputation as an "artistic" hub, and the potential her chosen postgraduate program held. It was during the course of this academic pursuit that she crossed paths with her then boyfriend, who has since become her husband. Upon finalising her postgraduate studies, InHae returned to Korea due to the expiration of her student visa. In contrast, her partner was presented with a job opportunity in London, which he embraced. Pragmatic considerations quickly led them to the decision to marry, setting the stage for the commencement of their new life in London. Subsequently, InHae returned to London under a family visa arrangement. Her perspective on the city has evolved to view it as a more conducive environment for establishing a life together with her spouse:

> "I chose to move to London primarily due its heightened cultural environment. When presented with the choice between New York and London for my postgraduate study, I discerned New York to be excessively business-centric, prompting me to opt for London. The image I had for this city lay in its vibrant art scene and socially enriched artistic settings. My longstanding aspiration to reside in London may well have played a role in my decision to get married (chuckles)."

InJung, 35 years of age, undertook her migration to London in 2005 to pursue a postgraduate program in art and design, a decision that led to her prolonged stay in this city. Drawn by London 's perceived image as a conducive milieu for cultivating her artistic pursuits and fostering her career in the art sector, she initially envisioned a residence period of approximately 3 to 4 years. She is now actively involved in the

Korean art community in London and successfully managing her freelance artistic career. Reflecting upon the course of her migration, she deliberated:

> "Having worked for three years in Korea after graduating from university, my aspiration to pursue further education and live outside Korea took root. Although I initially contemplated studying in Germany, I found myself reluctant to pick up a new language. London had long held a distinctive allure in my perceptions, renowned for its artistic, cultural, and classic ambiance. Moreover, my dream school is located in London."

InJung graciously introduced me to YoungIn, an acquaintance she had encountered at the Korean church she goes. Aged 35, YoungIn held the position of a business development officer at a major Korean company's London office, and her migratory narrative was a compelling one. At the tender age of 9, she embarked on a year-long sojourn to Texas alongside her family, an experience she humorously labelled her father's "migration fiasco". Despite the family's inability to fully acclimate to American life due to a confluence of factors, YoungIn found herself enamoured with her year in the U.S. to the extent that transitioning back to her accustomed Korean lifestyle proved a challenge. Unlike her kin, she retained a fondness for her American experience, leading her to embrace the opportunity to relocate to London when the opportunity presented itself within her professional setting. For YoungIn, this move to London represents a poignant déjà vu of her enduring yearning for life in a Western nation – a chance to revel in newfound freedom:

> "I have a longstanding desire to reside outside Korea. My year in Texas left an indelible mark on me; I recall the challenges of readapting to life in Korea after that experience. the strictures of school life and the absence of freedom was terrifying. Upon learning of the prospects for relocation to my company's London office, I immediately seized the opportunity."

Class-based habitus before moving to London and the cultivation of social ties

Before embarking on their transnational journeys to London, the young Korean women in this study were situated within distinct class-based habitus originating from their experiences in South Korea. These habitus, shaped by social, economic, and cultural contexts, played a significant role in framing their imaginations, choices, and expectations as they ventured into a new cultural and geographical territory. Understanding the class-based habitus of these women before moving to London provides insight into the interplay between their pre-existing dispositions, social ties, and the mechanism they adopt to navigate through their transnational experiences.

Korean society, characterised by its hierarchical social structure and deeply ingrained cultural norms, fosters diverse class-based habitus among its individuals. These habitus are manifestations of the accumulated cultural capital, social networks, and lifestyle preferences that are formed within specific socioeconomic contexts. Prior to their relocation to London, the participants navigated various trajectories within and beyond Korean society, shaping their transnational and national perceptions.

In the context of this study, the class-based habitus of the participants before moving to London is constructed and evolves through lived experiences and interactions across five distinct aspects: previous exposure to Western culture, educational background, economic capital, religious practice, and marital status. These dimensions intersect to shape the participants' perceptions, aspirations, and opportunities as they go on their transnational journeys to London. Understanding how these aspects intertwine offers a comprehensive lens through which the participants' motivations, decisions, and experiences within the broader framework of transnationalism could be analysed.

Participants of this study share a common thread – they all have engaged in higher education, thereby setting the stage for a multifaceted interplay between their education experiences and their class-based habitus before moving to London. Higher education operates as a portal, providing these young Korean women a

nuanced confluence of knowledge, competencies, and social network, the combination of which has the potential to foster mobility. This academic pursuit shapes their cognitive and behavioural dispositions, thus providing a lens through which to observe the embodiment of intellectual and cultural capital within their class-based habitus. Notably, within the encompassing narrative of higher education, the participants' individual economic capitals assume varied forms. Minjung, Yoona, YoungIn, and EunHae, among others, emerge as exemplars of individuals who has amassed a certain degree of capital prior to their transnational relocation. This accumulation of economic capital stands as a divergent element in the complex equation of their disposition and struggles on a transnational spectrum, contributing to the divergent trajectories that they tread.

Furthermore, the participants' prior exposure to western culture exhibits varying degrees, thereby punctuating the mosaic of their class-based habitus. The matrix of this exposure ranges from consumption of western popular culture, incubating their imaginative constructs through mass media, to those with tactile experiences in the United States and Europe, thereby imprinting a pragmatic tapestry of impressions. Their cumulative durations of residing abroad fluctuate, spanning from those with a deep-rooted history of international sojourns to those who have yet to venture beyond the board of Korea. Religious practice emerges as a salient point of divergence, where the participants' engagement in Christianity orchestrates potential avenues for social ties. The Korean church, in this regard, serves as a nexus for cultivating and fostering connections, thereby creating a nuanced stratum within their social networks. Marital status, in its unique manifestation, presents another avenue for distinction among the participants. Their varied longings and unique contact zones with the aspiration of reaching the United Kingdom contribute to a complex array of motives that underline the significance of this variable in shaping their respective journeys.

Imagination and the internalised aspiration for the (re)production of self

In recent years, the field of migration studies has increasingly shifted its focus from an economic reductionist approach to incorporating cultural aspects of migration. However, there remains an area that warrants further exploration – the "symbolic dimension of migration, displacement, and mobility" (Sabry, 2004a, p.1). Studies on the role of media in transnational flows highlight how media-constructed imaginations can influence international migration decisions. Nevertheless, many of these studies tend to revolve around the dissonance between these "glorious" imaginations and the often more mundane transnational realities experienced by migrants.

Takeda's (2014) investigation of Japanese marriage migrants in Australia exemplifies how media-fuelled preconceptions about a destination country, in this case, Australia, shape the perceptions of potential migrants. The idyllic natural landscapes and multicultural social features of Australia frame the "mental geography of the West" in the minds of Japanese People. Paradoxically, the less appealing aspects of the Japanese reality, such as social benefit system issues, employment challenges, high suicide rates, and difficult working conditions, contribute to the further idealisation of Australia. In the face of these circumstances, people start to romanticise and envision an alternative lifestyle beyond their country of origin.

Fujita (2004;2006) similarly argues that global media play a significant role in establishing "cultural ideological links" between Japan and the West, thus motivating young Japanese migrants to seek a "better self" and pursue their life dreams in a transnational practice that transcends national boundaries. Kim's (2011) study on "Asian women on the move" delves into the concept of developing "a new emancipatory mode of identity formation – individualism" (Kim, 2011, p.134) as a departure from traditional social gender assumptions.

These studies collectively reveal the contrast between the "imagination of being there" and the reality of "actually being here". Despite this, much of the literature in

the field primarily emphasises how media-induced imaginations of migratory destinations create fantasised ideas of migrants. Appadurai's (1990) theory of global cultural flow provides valuable insights, describing the combined impact of five "scapes" – namely, ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes – on shaping imagination and fostering border-crossing practices among transnational migrants. The theory effectively depicts a comprehensive circle that explains the complexities of transnational mobility.

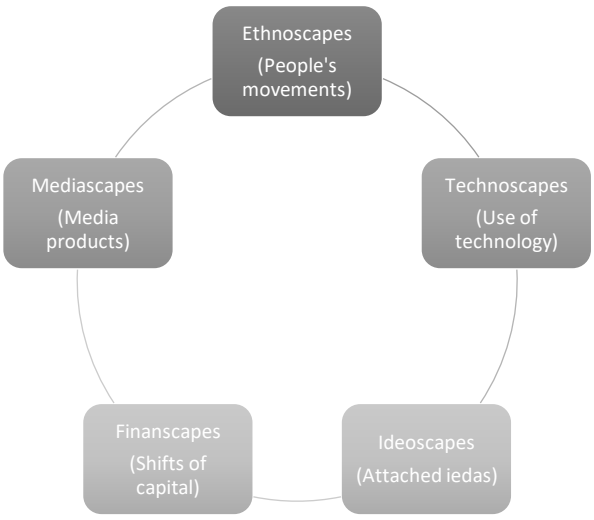

Figure 8 Appadurai's five "scapes"

However, a notable challenge I encountered in the existing literature is the significant gap in truly comprehending the cultural shifts and cultural transnationalism within migratory flows. It goes beyond merely examining the disparities between romanticised imaginations and the diverse realities experienced by migrants; it is equally crucial to delve into how cultural consciousness becomes ingrained in everyday life and impacts migrants' decisions. Much of the current research that purports to explore the cultural aspects of migration tends to be superficially disguised as focusing on culture, but in essence, it still maintains a firm political-economy approach.

The participants in this study are young Korean women between the ages of 24 and 37, who are highly educated and hold various occupations. They currently reside in

the global city of London. Their decision to move abroad was not solely influenced by life struggles in Korea or political factors. Instead, their motivations are rooted in a more complex sentiment, encompassing their aspirations for a (re)production of "better place, better self, and better lifestyle".

The Imagined London

In the discourse surrounding the conceptions of the West in Korea, "America" assumes a dominant position as the symbolic representative of the entire Western world. In contrast, "Europeaness" is ascribed posh and artistic implications, emphasising its distinction as the "non-mainstream". The exposure to American culture through media in Korea far outweighs the limited access to information about the UK and London. Consequently, these restrictions on exposure to British culture foster a sense of mystery and heighten the allure of "Englishness" as a symbol of high class. Fujita's (2006) study on young Japanese's preconceptions of London supports this notion, revealing that due to the prevalence of American culture in Japan, respondents in the London group perceive migrating to the United States as "too ordinary", while regarding European art and culture are the most esteemed.

JiHae contemplated the prevailing American influence in Korea:

> "In Korea, the US is the topic of frequent discussions. Anything in English, such as movies, is usually assumed to be American. America represents the West. When I first arrived here, one thing surprised me. When I needed to withdraw cash while traveling in Europe, the flag that represented English language was an English flag. In Korea, English is always associated with American. 'The West' is equated with 'white people'. When I first came for my exchange study, I thought the UK, to be very honest, should be a predominantly white society. I was taken aback to find the presence of many Muslims, Asians, and Black people."

MinJung also reflects on her own upbringing in a Korea influenced by American culture:

> "when I was a child, there was minimal exposure to 'British culture' in Korea. American culture had a significant influence…The media mainly focused on the US. As a child, the only foreign country I Knew was the US, and if someone was blonde, Korean people would assume they were American. The media romanticised the US excessively."

In the context of this study, young Korean women's preconceptions of London revolve around two predominant images: its inherently "posh" character and its multicultural social phenomenon. These perceptions are often associated with stereotypical depictions such as "good-looking men with decent manners", the royal family, and the concept of princes and princesses. These glorified images of London reinforce the cultural implications associated with "moving to and living in London" in the minds of these young Korean women.

SunMin intentionally adopted a British accent, despite acknowledging the prevailing preference for an American accent in Korea and the predominance of American English education within Korean education system. According to her, the fascination with London is rooted in the realm of classic English literature and British television:

> "The enjoyment I derive from reading Jane Austen's novels and watching Sherlock has significantly contributed to my fantasy of London. These classic literary works have shaped my perceptions and heightened my fascination with the city. However, upon closer observation, I noticed that most of my Korean friends who also came to London did so because of similar fantasies. Themes like the royal family and English gentlemen have a magnetic appeal to them, leading to their own unique and individual fantasies about the city."

MinJi delved deeper into the romanticised imagination of London and how the act of relocating to and residing in the city if filtered through the lens of Korean social discourses:

> "When discussing England in the context of Korea, the prevailing perception is of a well-developed country. Specifically, London is considered the epitome of a developed nation, offering an unparalleled experience of modernity. Within the Korean cultural framework, Britain is often associated with being a 'fancy place'. Many of my friends in Korea express profound envy for my current life in London. They share a common fantasy of living abroad, which seems to be a prevalent aspiration among them. The notion of 'posh', the quintessential British accent, British fashion style, and distinct lifestyle captivate their imaginations, rendering London a highly desirable destination."

Rebellion and Celebration: When Dreams come true

The motivations of young Korean women to embark on transnational movements are intertwined with a form of rebellion against a social phenomenon moulded by enduring cultural conditions that perpetuate a sense of "sameness". The deeply rooted "sameness" within Korean cultural narratives invests the notion of "being different" with negative interpretations. In such circumstances, notions of self-sacrifice ("how others perceive me") and the fear of being judged by others dominate the mental spaces of these young women.

Minji shared with me that she only truly grasped the extent of the "rooted sameness" within Korean society during her recent visit back home after spending a considerable amount of time in London:

> "Individuals often pursue similar things, and it seems that if one deviates from the norm, they attract a lot of attention, often in a negative manner. During my visit to Korea last summer, while on the tube, I observed that all the girls were dressed similarly and wore identical makeup. I noticed that whenever I do something uncommon or different, people always have something to say about it. I believe that people are apprehensive about facing such discourses, so they opt to conform and maintain 'sameness' in their appearance, such as wearing identical clothes."

BoGyong pointed out that the societal expectations in Korea extend beyond mere appearance and also encompass the notion of following the same life trajectory and adhering to a certain pace expected at specific ages.

> "I worked as a motion graphic designer in Korea. Somehow, we (design professionals) are regarded to be more 'liberal'. When I meet my friends outside the professional network, they often talk about getting married (peer pressure), clothes style (same as other people), it's like you always have to be on the same page with others."

In embarking upon their rebellious journey to break away from the entrenched "sameness" within Korean society and to accentuate the potential realisation of the long-envisioned state of "being distinct", a notable shift emerges from the ethos of self-sacrifice driven by external perceptions to a more self-caring disposition that centres around individual preferences and aspirations. Young Korean women relish the opportunity to shape their own biographies, engaging in self responsible and self-determined ways of life that are no longer bound by traditional gender roles. For these "fresh-off-the-boat" young Korean women, the experience of transnational mobility opens up a Pandora's box of new life choices and social surroundings, which they warmly embrace.

After describing the "sameness" she had witnessed and reflected upon during her trip home, MinJi proceeded to juxtapose her two distinct statuses after her relocation to London:

> "…I was one of them. I had to blend in to avoid judgements. Moving abroad has given me a sense of increased freedom and autonomy. I no longer feel the need to conform to societal expectations or worry about how others perceive me. I have embraced a more comfortable and relaxed approach to dressing, opting for clothes that suit my personal comfort rather than adhering to rigid standards. I have let go of the pressure to wear makeup, allowing my natural appearance to take precedence."

In addition to commemorating their recently acquired personal freedom, the theme of pursuing happiness takes centre stage upon their arrival in London. These young Korean women envision their "imagined London" as a realm where they can uncover the ultimate state of "happiness". SoHee firmly believed that London holds the promise of a more promising life. Her narrative resonates with the experiences of most participants in this study:

> "Upon my arrival, I was filled with excitement and enthusiasm, envisioning a life filled with experiences reminiscent of those portrayed in movies and television shows. I could picture myself strolling along the streets of London on a rainy day, elegantly dressed in a trench coat, just like Julia Roberts in Notting Hill. The thought of wandering through the charming neighbourhood, exploring its vibrant markets and quaint bookshops, brought a sense of joy and fulfilment."

The (re)production of self

While my primary focus is on the cultural aspects influencing young Korean women's transnational mobility, I cannot overlook the significant impact of the Korean labour market and working conditions, which are shaped by prevailing social norms and cultural conditions. Kim (2011) emphasises that gender conditions in Korea play a crucial role in shaping labour market outcomes. Despite high levels of education, women often face limited work opportunities and are relegated to subordinate roles within professional settings. These societal conditions give rise to what Kim terms "diasporic daughters" – emblematic figures of contemporary transnational mobility. These individuals are characterised by their nomadic, transient, individualistic, and networked lifestyles, as well as their propensity for risk-taking and multiple displacements (Kim, 2011).

SoHee's decision to quit her office job and pursue a working holiday visa to come to London was largely influenced by her disappointment with the precarious working conditions for young women in Korea. In her home country, she experienced the limitations and challenges imposed on women in the labour market, which hindered

her professional growth and personal aspirations. Seeking an alternative and more fulfilling lifestyle, she saw the opportunity for exploration and self-development in London. The allure of a working holiday visa offered her the chance to experience new cultures, break free from the confinements of traditional gender roles, and create her own path towards individualism and personal empowerment.

> "I encountered serious problems within the professional setting while working for a start-up business. The entire system was disorganised and chaotic, and I felt ill-prepared for the challenges I faced. Despite my lack of experience, there was no proper supervision or guidance provided, leaving me to handle everything on my own. This lack of support and direction left me feeling uncertain about the decisions I was making and whether I was on the right track. The absence of a strong social network compounded the difficulties of my job. In a professional environment, having access to supportive colleagues and mentors can be invaluable for learning and growth. However, in my situation, I lacked the necessary connections that could have provided valuable insights and assistance to navigate the complexities of the job. The combination of these challenges ultimately led to a sense of frustration and disillusionment with my professional experience. It became apparent that the working conditions in the start-up business were not conducive to my personal and career development. This realisation played a significant role in my decision to seek alternative opportunities, I hoped to find a more conducive environment to pursue my aspirations and goals in London."

BoGyong, too, made the decision to leave her long-term toxic job in search of new possibilities in London. After enduring a difficult and unhealthy work environment, she recognised the need for a fresh start and a chance to explore different avenues for personal and professional growth.

> "Over the course of eight years, I dedicated myself to a company within an industry known for its demanding nature. Despite being aware of the challenges inherent in this line of work, the reality proved to be more overwhelming than I had anticipated. Enduring long hours became the norm, with workdays extending to 12 or even 13 hours, often extending

> into the late hours of the night. Once someone called me for a meeting at 4 in the morning. Such an intense and gruelling schedule left little room for rest, relaxation, or personal pursuits beyond work. This experience, however, was not an isolated case; rather, it reflected a systematic issue deeply embedded in the Korean society."

Amidst the global cultural flow and the proliferation of media products, Korean women find themselves exposed to a space of reflexivity, wherein they begin to realise the existence of alternative ways of living beyond the confines of traditional social norms. This encounter with newly established ideas fosters a diasporic consciousness, igniting a desire or aspiration for a new and distinct lifestyle, as well as a transformation of the self, transcending the boundaries of conventional social assumptions. While the concept of free mobility may seem appealing, it conceals a deeper truth – the seemingly voluntary movement or the self-determined choice of women to migrate is, in fact, a gendered process shaped by larger societal forces that propel them into different corners of the world.

The decision to move abroad transcends being merely a legitimate pathway for physical mobility and displacement. It holds profound implications for the very nature of identity itself, emerging as a popular, self-directed "reflexive biography" (Giddens, 1991). This self-determined yet highly precarious biographical strategy is driven by imagined futures of individualisation, economic power, self-fulfilment, and the expansion of the self. In essence, the quest for a transnational life represents an intentional pursuit of a new and empowered self, unfettered by the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles and societal expectations.

However, it is essential to recognise that this movement is not without complexities and challenges. The aspirations for a new and different lifestyle are not merely spontaneous desires; rather, they are shaped and mediated by societal structures and prevailing norms that influence women's choices and trajectories across the globe. The allure of transnationalism, is, thus, a product of both individual agency and external influences. By embracing diasporic consciousness, Korean women

redefine their sense of self and identity, choosing to venture beyond the boundaries of their home country in pursuit of greater autonomy and fulfilment. The quest for self-realisation becomes a driving force that propels them to explore diverse opportunities across borders. In this context, the pursuit of defining "self" and the mapping of a personal trajectory rest upon the substantial import of a socially constructed voyage of "self-exploration". This expedition is perceived as an indispensable conduit for attaining self-realisation. For these young Korean women, the endeavour to "establish a life in a Western capital" presents a symbolic arena for the (re)production of self.

Regardless of their individual circumstances, the cultivation and transformation of "self" emerged as a prominent theme in the transnational journey to London of these young Korean women. For instance, JiHae found herself at a juncture of uncertainty upon university graduation, uncertain about her path ahead. However, her choice to relocate to London presented an opportunity for profound self-exploration:

> "I studied history at university, a degree often perceived as lacking post-graduation prospects. Uncertain about my future path, the prospect of 'living independently in London' stands as a means through which I hope to navigate and clarify my trajectory."

Unlike JiHae, YooNa, who has established a successful career in banking and possesses a clear sense of her aspirations, also underscores the prospect of reproducing "self" in the context of her move to London.

> "It is always about the exploration and examination of the 'self'. My decision to relocate was not purely driven by a quest for a better life, as my life was already satisfactory. However, I firmly believe that these spaces provide unique vantage points and challenges, allowing for the continual re-evaluation and enhancement of one's sense of 'self'. For me, I couldn't help but wonder, what could I achieve this time here?"

Inflexibility in Flexible places: reality, refined habitus, and the accumulation of capital

Unspeakable reality

Upon arriving in what they perceived as the "promised land" and celebrating their achievement of cultural capital, these young Korean women begin their actual transnational experience. As previously argued, their diasporic consciousness emerges from a reflection on global cultural flows and the impact of media products. This consciousness generates a desire for a different experience, fuelling their glorious imagination that life abroad will be better in every aspect. However, their initial euphoria is soon replaced with a realisation that the beautiful images they held of their dreamed transnational life have not materialised as expected. The global city of London, while promising opportunities, is also characterised as a highly ambiguous transnational social field. Everyday life and decision-making become risky endeavours, leading to the sobering realisation that the excitement of "determined to make my own life" can be replaced with the burden of "why is it all on me". Some of these women eventually discover that their struggles remain the same, only transplanted to a different location.

SoHee, with her aspirational yearning for a life fulfil with culture and art that London offers, encountered a disconcerting reality upon her transnational voyage. Her initial anticipation of seamlessly accessing the world of culture and art in this city she envisioned was met with a sobering revelation – that such pursuits were, in essence, luxuries beyond her immediate reach:

> "Upon arrival in London, I had envisioned attending numerous concerts, theaters, and engaging in various cultural experiences as per my initial plans. However, the reality has been quite different, as I find myself unable to fulfil these expectations. The constraints of time and financial limitations have hindered my ability to partake in these cultural activities.

> As a result, the vibrant cultural life I had imagined in London remains largely unexplored, leading to a sense of unfulfilled aspirations."

InHae, who embarked upon her London journey with the anticipation of immersing herself in the multicultural setting of the city, soon found herself grappling with an entirely different transnational reality. Her initial expectations of seamlessly blending into the vibrant and diverse milieu of London were soon confronted with the disheartening reality of experiencing constant racial discrimination.

> "My initial expectation upon coming to London was that I would encounter a more multicultural society with reduced racial discrimination. However, my experiences have led me to the realisation that racial discrimination persists even in this diverse city. Despite the multicultural environment, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours persist, leaving me disheartened and recognising the unyielding nature of this issue." (InHae)

HyeJin, who had been the "model good girl" and yearned to break free from the "dullness" of her everyday routine, harboured dreams of seeking a fresh start in London. However, she soon discovered that her journey had not led her to an immediate escape from struggle; rather, she found herself grappling with a different set of challenges in this new setting:

> "Upon reflection, I find that my expectations prior to coming to London were filled with optimism, anticipating positive changes and improvements in my life. However, reality has shown that many aspects remain unchanged, and the anticipated transformations did not materialise as I had hoped. The experience has led me to question the validity of such expectations and the complex nature of personal growth and life transitions in a new cultural context." (HyeJin)

Contrary to the initial celebration of achieving their cultural capital, a sense of diasporic blues permeates the transnational social and emotional space, accentuated by the experience of everyday occurrences and trivialities for these young Korean women. Consequently, this highlights the contradictory aspect of

transnationalism – the mundane reality. Among the various quotidian challenges, financial difficulty emerges as a predominant concern for the majority of Korean women who participated in my study.

For MinJung, the issue of housing emerged as a significant concern. In her case, she was sharing a three-bedroom flat with two other Japanese girls in Northwest London. However, her discontent extended beyond the mere location to encompass the living dynamics as well. According to her account, an unspoken understanding seemed to pervade the living arrangement, dictating that if one occupant within the flat happened to hear another, they would retreat to the confines of their respective rooms, opting to evade any form of interaction. Despite her reservations, MinJung found herself compelled to tolerate this arrangement, driven by the constraints of affordability that limited her options:

> "The housing expenses are exorbitant, and the living conditions and prices do not align. This situation appears absurd to me. Consequently, I have relinquished the pursuit of finding decent employment. Due to my limited proficiency in English, I could potentially secure a job in the catering service industry. However, this is not the career path I aspire to pursue. I am unwilling to allocate 1000 or 1500 pounds towards monthly rent. In Korea, with the same amount of money, I could afford to live in a much better place. Why should I dedicate 4 to 5 hours per day to a part-time job solely to support my rent? If I possessed better English language skills or other exceptional talents, I would certainly aim for a more desirable job, but regrettably, I lack such abilities." (MinJung)

Beyond mere financial considerations, HyeJin's experience of dwelling in the multicultural setting of London unravelled a challenge in the realm of cohabitation – a problem most Londoners have to embrace. For her, housing in London not only encompasses economic affordability but also complex cultural dynamics:

> "I have relocated to a different room again, making it the third time since my arrival in London. However, I still find myself dissatisfied with the new accommodation. The primary reason for choosing this place was its lower

> cost. Nevertheless, the area appears disorderly, and the condition of the house leaves much to be desired. Additionally, I am now residing with a Muslim couple, and the cultural and lifestyle differences between us have become a source of stress for me." (HyeJin)

Financial constraints play a significant role in shaping the way these women navigate their transnational experiences. The limitations imposed by financial factors impact their ability to explore and develop themselves in the new environment. As a result, they grapple with both emotional and practical doubts concerning their overall well-being. These challenges lead these women to contemplate their social position, which, in turn, manifests in various symbolic forms such as confrontation, disengagement, or withdrawal.

Refined Habitus and the Accumulation of Capital

In the preceding chapters, I have expounded on the mainstream Korean racial perspectives. These perspectives, influenced by media-constructed images of the West, engender romanticised assumptions about transnational mobility, portraying border-crossing movements as promising a glorious future and leading to entirely new lives. Consequently, within this context, cultural implications of these transnational movements come to the forefront. Unlike prevalent academic discussions on diaspora, which predominantly focus on refugees and migrant workers moving for political and economic reasons, a notable migratory characteristic within the Korean context is the association of moving abroad with financial wealth and a social status of "being an elite". Overseas educational qualification, for instance, is perceived as an institutional cultural capital within Korean society.

Among the participants, MinJung's journey to the UK was facilitated through the utilisation of education as a contact zone. Enrolled in a postgraduate program at a London university, she articulated the significance of a Western education qualification within Korean society, emphasising its perception as a form of valuable capital:

> "In Korea, the prevailing cultural norm places immense importance on financial wealth, leading to a society where monetary status often takes precedence over personal attributes and values. The pursuit of education abroad, particularly in Western countries like the United States, Australia, the UK, and Canada, is commonly associated with affluent backgrounds, implying that those who study abroad must come from financially privileged families. It is crucial to underscore that the concept of 'studying abroad' within the Korean context typically refers to becoming an international student in these Western countries, rather than neighbouring Asian nations like Japan or China. This association between studying abroad and financial privilege has resulted in a social dynamic where some individuals embark on international educational journeys not solely for academic enrichment, but rather as a means to exhibit their economic prosperity and attain elevated social status."

InHae similarly embarked on her initial sojourn to the UK to pursue a postgraduate degree, a trajectory she revisited after her subsequently entry following marriage. Her experiences added nuanced layers to the inherent value of a Western education qualification for Korean women, particularly within the context of the marital market:

> "For many young Korean women, the decision to pursue international experiences, such as studying abroad, is often driven by the desire to enhance their qualifications and position themselves more advantageously in the marriage market. In Korean society, educational qualifications and international experiences hold considerable weight in the evaluation of potential marriage partners. Pursuing higher education abroad, particularly in prestigious Western institutions, is viewed as a demonstration of ambition, competence, and global exposure. As a result, young Korean women see this pathway as a means to augment their marriage prospects and attract more desirable suitors who vale these qualifications and experiences."

HyeJin, who ventured to London through the working holiday visa scheme, also recognised that her "away from home" status conferred a refined habitus

embodying cultural capital, despite the reality of her mundane transnational experiences:

> "Each time I mention to someone that I reside in London, I invariably receive compliments such as 'you must be very proficient in English' or 'oh wow, you are now part of the elite'. To be candid, I must admit that, to some extent, I find these comments amusing, provoking a subtle sniggering within my mind. However, another facet of my consciousness persistently reminds me of the actualities of my life in London. In truth, I find myself confined to a diminutive room in an undesirable neighbourhood, engaged in a part-time job devoid of any skill requirements, and grappling with a lack of social connections or friendships. My experience in London, in reality, do not correspond to the idealised image often associated with living abroad. I am reluctant to share the reality of my situation with my friends back in Korea. Concealing my struggles, I tend to present a positive and fulfilling image of my life in London to avoid the impression of misery or discontentment."

In this context, their "living in a western capital" status carries immense cultural significance and conveys a perception of success, privilege, and elevated social standing. Young Korean women who have embarked on transnational journeys are aware of the value ascribed to this status by their society. As a result, they feel compelled to create and project an image that aligns with Korean assumptions regarding their life in a global Western capital. To preserve this esteemed image and accumulate such symbolic cultural capital, they may feel the need to present themselves as highly accomplished, proficient in English, and financially secure. Additionally, they may be inclined to share positive experiences, highlight achievements, and downplay any challenges or difficulties faced during their time abroad. This portrayal is rooted in the desire to maintain a favourable reputation among family, friends, and peers back in Korea.

Summary

In this chapter, I enquired into the multi-layered journey undertaken by young Korean women as they navigate the path from their homeland to the United Kingdom. Anchored in the overarching theme of gendered migration, the chapter explores the intersection of personal aspirations, societal expectations, and the interplay between imagination and reality.

The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of the individualisation myth, dissecting the collective mindset that shapes these women's decision to embark on a transnational journey. Through a nuanced profiling of the young Korean women who participated in this study, I dissect the class-based habitus that propels their migration, unravelling the interconnected factors of their previous exposure to Western culture, educational backgrounds, economic capital, and marital status. Through the lens of vignettes, I intimately examine the diverse migratory motivations that drive these women to go on this journey.

As the young women traverse the realms of imagination and aspiration, I delve into the complex realm of the (re)production of "self". With a keen focus on the imagined London, I dissect the nuances of rebellion against societal norms and the celebration that accompanies the realisation of long-held dreams. The juxtaposition of their dreams with the inflexible realities of their new surroundings exposes their experiences, further illuminated through the lens of refined habitus and the accumulation of cultural capital.

The narrative then delves into the unspeakable realities that often lurk beneath the surface, revealing the challenges and struggles that these women encounter. From housing predicaments to racial discrimination, their journey is punctuated by moments of upheaval and resilience, underscoring the multidimensionality of their experience. Drawing together the thematic threads, I illuminate the concept of refined habitus and the nuanced accumulation of capital. Within this context, the pursuit of higher education emerges as a pivotal marker of societal status, and how

the possession of overseas educational qualifications within the Korean society becomes emblematic of cultural capita. The chapter culminates in a synthesis of their stories, demonstrating how these young Korean women grapple with these tension as they relocate from Korea to the UK.

Chapter 6 Race and the West

The discussion of race and the West within Korean society, and the definitions of these concepts, is a fascinating topic due to the complex symbolic and cultural connotations they hold. As previously discussed in the section on the Korean context, these discussions are further complicated by issues of xenophobia, "white fetish", and internalised racial discrimination that are deeply entrenched within Korean societal culture. It is remarkable that in Korea, factors such as skin tone, nationality, and accent carry greater representational weight than an individual's actual personality or character. These factors underscore the deep-seated complexities and intricacies involved in discussions of race and the West in the Korean context.

In the previous chapter, I briefly touched upon the Korean conceptions of the West. However, to provide a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the contextual ground of my study, I will elaborate further on this topic. According to Warren I. Cohen (2002), globalisation has taken on a distinctly American flavour in much of East Asia, with the United States perceived as the centre of the world for many Asians. Cohen argues that Asians tend to selectively adopt American cultural elements that they perceive as improvements over their native cultures. As such, the "Americaness" has had a significant influence on Korean conceptions of the West. The adoption of American lifestyles to internalise US social values is not only a political correction but is also considered a matter of cultural grace in Korean society.

> "When she returned to Seoul in 2000 after 10 years in New York City, Park Su-ji introduced her fellow South Koreans to an exotic way to socialise over food: brunch. In the spring of 2005, she opened Suji's, which serves toasted bagels and blueberry pancakes, among other brunch staples, in a setting that features black and white photographs of the Chrysler Building and Union Square in New York. Two years later, scores of restaurants in Seoul offer or even specialise in brunch – and they are filled with South Koreans… On a recent Sunday, Ms. Han, 29, was catching up

> with three other single women at a corner table at Suji's. "I feel like a New Yorker, like the characters of 'Sex and the City'" said Ms. Han."[3]

The phenomenon of "run afters" to the brunch trend in Korea reflects a desire to emulate American culture and embodies the symbolic meanings of the "West" within the Korean context. The geopolitical dominance of the US and American cultural imperialism have had a significant impact on Korean society, leading to the adoption of American values into everyday life. However, this has also resulted in a devaluation of Korean culture. One manifestation of this trend is the pursuit of "Westernised" physical features, which has become an extreme manifestation of the belief that external physical appearance is crucial to success in Korean society. The term "lookism" (Jung, 2006) has been used to describe this belief. Empirical research conducted by psychiatrist Ryu in 2007 showed that a high percentage (52.5%) of Korean college girls have already received cosmetic surgeries, and an even higher percentage desire such surgeries in order to attain a "Western", "modern", and "intellectual" appearance. Such preferences reflect a sense of "inferiority" towards the "West" within Korean societal discourses.

In this chapter, the focus will be on the Korean nationalism and social interactions related to race in the daily lives of young Korean women residing in London. The chapter begins with an in-depth analysis of the discourse surrounding the "West" within the Korean community. This analysis aims to shed light on the co-existence of both inferiority and superiority complexes, which have resulted in the "West" being synonymous with modernity in Korean society. This issue is of paramount importance to be addressed, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the prevalent mentality within the Korean community in terms of their ambivalent relationship with their Korean identity. The subsequent discussion specifically focuses on the coping mechanisms of young Korean women regarding the mainstream race-related social and cultural values in their daily transnational reality.

[3] Lee, Su Hyun. (November 2, 2007) "A New Lifestyle in South Korea: First Weekends, and Now Brunch." New York Times. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/02/world/americas/02brunch.html

The chapter aims to highlight the distinct features of their everyday experiences concerning their awareness of race and the West. By analysing the narrative of young Korean women regarding race-related social interactions, this chapter intends to demonstrate how the mainstream Korean racial mentalities are manifested in their transnational social field and how they accommodate and struggle with these values.

Inferiority and superiority paradox: The West as a synonymous with modernity

Within the Korean society, there exists a considerable fascination with the "West". A common sentiment is that "they are better than us". The "Westernised" lifestyle, physical appearances, and mentality are extensively idealised in Korean social settings, leading to the automatic association of the "West" with affluence and sophistication. However, this preoccupation with the "West" creates a paradoxical situation wherein the rest of the world is perceived as comparatively less glorious within the Korean context. Despite this apparent contradiction, it is essential to note the coexistence of Korean nationalist pride with these sentiments, which offers unique insights into race-related value perspectives within the Korean community and helps explain the phenomenon of internalised racial discrimination. According to Shin (2006), the sense of nation for Koreans has been established and developed based on shared blood and ancestry.

> "The Korean nation was 'racialised' through a belief in a common prehistoric origin, producing an intense sense of collective oneness. Ethnicity is generally regarded as a cultural phenomenon based on a common language and history, and race understood as a collectivity defined by innate and immutable phenotypic and genotypic characteristics. But historically, Koreans have not differentiated between the two. Instead, race served as a marker that strengthened ethnic identity, which in turn was instrumental in defining the nation. Koreans

> thus believe that they all belong to a 'unitary nation' (Korean: Danil Minjok), one that is ethnically homogeneous and racially distinctive."[4]

Therefore, ethnic national identity becomes a crucial source of the Korean nationalist pride. It is usually enthusiastically embodied in sport events, alongside the phrases: 'Daehanminguk mansae' (대한민국 만세: victory Korea) and 'Daehanminguk choego (대한민국 최고: Korea is the best) with the symbolic representative – red jersey and Taegeukgi (South Korea's national flag).

Figure 9 2002 World Cup, Gwanghwamun, Seoul, Korea

Image retrieved from: https://seoulistic.com/korean-culture/personality-traits-about-koreans-you-should-know/

Then how come a nation with such strong nationalist pride also struggles with inferiority complex? The paradoxical coexistence of Korean nationalist pride and inferiority complex is a phenomenon that warrants exploration. The Korean society underwent significant devastation during the Korean War in the mid-20th Century and sought assistance from the US to recover and establish social order. The US, in turn, viewed Korea as a potential partner and disseminated American values and modernisation theory to counteract communism in the developing world. This mutually beneficial relationship laid the groundwork for significant Americanisation

[4] Shin, Gi-Wook. (August 2, 2006) "Korea's ethnic nationalism is a source of both pride and prejudice, according to Gi-Wook Shin." Available at: https://aparc.fsi.stanford.edu/news/koreas_ethnic_nationalism_is_a_source_of_both_pride_and_prejudice_according_to_giwook_shin_20060802

in Korea. From the late 1940s onwards, American commodities and media penetrated the Korean society, and the US military presence remains to this day. The cultural influence of the US media industry has made Korea one of its largest and most profitable markets outside North America (Groves, 1998) and is central to the "American Fever" that characterises contemporary Korean attitudes towards the West. Kang (1991) contends that Korean racialisation of the US is shaped by America's white national identity, and that the entire white community is perceived as "the same as America". This has resulted in the West (according to most of participants as "white people society") being synonymous with modernity in the Korean context, leading to the internalised ideological power of white superiority.

Chung and Choe's (2008) analysis on Korean national pride indicates that Korean people tend to take pride in their country's accomplishments in sports, history, and science and technology, while having relatively low levels of pride in national superiority. Moreover, the study suggests that most Koreans are dissatisfied with their country's national status. Interestingly, the researchers found that younger Koreans tend to have even lower levels of pride in their country's accomplishments, confidence in their identity, and belief that they are living in a superior country compared to others (Chung and Choe, 2008, p.123). However, there are divergent views on Korean national superiority. Kim (2006) posits that Koreans may invoke nationalist pride through external attributions, such as blaming their country's small size or other countries' unjust conquests, to explain their nation's weak or low status. According to this perspective, Korean national superiority serves as a symbolic representation of resistance. This view resonates with the conventional consensus on the subject, which suggests that Korea's historical subordination to Japan stimulated the need for national superiority as a means to overcome colonial domination.

The contentious coexistence of inferiority and superiority complexes significantly influences the formation of young Korean women's perceptions of their transnational status and the accompanying power dynamics. Particularly, these

individuals grapple with their country's underrepresented position in the UK and desire increased attention towards Korea from the Western world. The grievances primarily revolve around Western societies' perceived lack of awareness and understanding of Korea.

MinJung is passionate about politics, although she presents a very controversial figure in terms of embracing and rejecting Korean national identity. On this matter, she draws from her personal experience from her campus life:

> "I participated in a postgraduate university course focusing on gender and social diversity. The module instructor extensively addresses gender and diversity matters spanning various regions, encompassing the UK and numerous other nations. However, it is notable that Korea remains conspicuously absent from the curriculum. Given the multitude of pressing concerns prevailing within the country, one might question the rationale behind this oversight. Why does Korea not receive the recognition it merits within the discourse of gender and diversity?"

It is not only MinJung who struggles with the ignorance of recognising Korea in a Western context; MinJi, like most other participants in this study, has also experienced being automatically assumed to be Japanese or Chinese:

> "(English) people often mistakenly perceive me as either Chinese or Japanese; hardly anyone accurately identifies me as Korean. I find being categorised as either Chinese or Japanese distasteful. A significant number of people exhibit a lack of awareness about Korea as a distinct nation, and this lack of recognition can be quite exasperating."

The aspiration for international recognition of their homeland can be viewed as an outcome of the national pride harboured by these young Korean women, wherein they perceive their country to possess favourable qualities and seek external validation. However, this mentality also reflects the dominance of Western ideology within the Korean social context, emphasising a Western-centric perspective. The nuanced narrative of their demand is better understood as an assertion that their

country is superior to other Asian nations and warrants acknowledgement from the West. The underlying assumption of Western modernity significantly shapes the positionality of young Korean women and influences their interactions pertaining to race within their transnational environment.

The Puzzle of Identity

A prevailing theme that emerges from the responses of young Korean women regarding their life aspirations is the pursuit of personal happiness. The desire for a happy life is a common narrative among these individuals, as expressed through statements such as “I only want to have a happy life”. Their pursuit of happiness revolves around the notion of constructing a life based on their own narratives, with the belief that choosing alternative ways of living and embracing a Western society will ultimately lead to happiness. However, the concept of “happiness” is socially constructed and inherently ambiguous. It is heavily influenced by personal experiences and individual definitions, but in this context, it is often intertwined with discourses on distance from homeland and the adoption of an international or British identity. Despite the personalised definitions of happiness rooted in individual recognition and experiences, there seems to be a collective framework for “a happy life” among young Korean women in the diaspora. Freedom and distance from home emerge as two key factors associated with their happiness. Expressions like “I want to live a life on my own without constraints” highlight the significance of freedom, while the status of being far away from home in the global city of London holds not only great significance in itself but also in relation to their personal happiness.

This section focuses on young Korean women’s negotiation with their Korean identity and the concept of “remain”. It will first draw attention to their ambivalent relationship with their Korean identity. The discussion then moves towards examining the discourses of young Korean women regarding their aspirations for British citizenship and permanent residency. The longing for British citizenship and permanent residency is predominantly driven by the belief that it guarantees an alternative lifestyle. However, it is crucial to pay attention to a specific emotion that

arises during this process, namely the emotional experience of negotiating between the options of returning to Korea or remaining in the UK. Expressions like "I am not happy, but I want to stay" reflect a self-contradictory sentiment that characterises their transnationalism. By delving into the precise and concrete emotional experiences of young Korean women, this analysis aims to explore their ambiguous narrative surrounding the notion of home and the cultural forces at play in their desire to remain in the UK.

Being Korean: Negotiating amongst the "Goods" and the "bads"

The deeply ingrained Western-centric Korean value perspectives held in young Korean women's subconscious significantly impact their perception of their transnational selves and their positionality. As a result, this paradoxical cultural phenomenon continues to exert substantial influence in the recognition and construction of diasporic identity among young Korean women in London. MinJung's account of her experience of being Korean and her understanding of "Koreanness" serves as a representative example reflecting the sentiments shared by the young Korean women who participated in this research project.

> "It is quite strong to say that I dislike my Korean identity; perhaps 'hate' would not be an overstatement, even though the word carries significant weight. Nevertheless, my experiences living in London have led me to a stark realisation: despite my aversion, I remain inherently Korean. Despite my reluctance to engage with Korean communities or individuals, I still find myself in those circles. This paradoxical sentiment underscores my inescapable Korean identity. While I cannot claim pride in this aspect, I am undeniably drawn to the comforts of Korean cuisine. However, I harbour mixed feelings about Korean societal norms and customs. For instance, the absence of apologies when inadvertently stepping on someone's shoes in a crowded place reflects a cultural perspective where apologising might equate to weakness. This behaviour, in a sense, epitomises 'Koreanness'. Additionally, a cultural tendency toward superficial and excessive concern for others' opinions is not lost on me. I recall an acquaintance who habitually engages in superficial judgment of others, often based solely on appearance. While I comprehend this

> cultural trait, I have undergone a transformation during my time in London, gaining a deeper appreciation for individuality, humanity, and feminist perspectives."

Throughout the course of this study, the young Korean women actively expressed their dissatisfaction with Korean social norms, traditional gender assumptions, and unsatisfactory working conditions in Korea. Consequently, these factors formed the main components of their interpretation of "Koreanness". When I asked the participants to describe their perception of "Koreanness", I did not anticipate that they would predominantly focus on negative characteristics. However, it became apparent that their transnational experiences in London prompted many of these women to reframe and reassess their understanding of "Koreanness". Adopting the dual roles of insider and outsider, they were able to critically evaluate the negative aspects associated with "Koreanness". The grounds and standards for these judgments warrant exploration. Within the context of young Korean women in the diaspora, their critical assessment of their Korean identity involves a reflexive process that interrogates their own transnationalism and views the West as a holistic project. Through their observations, experiences, reflections, and subsequent critiques, they scrutinise the most fundamental difference – the "way of being" – based on their framework of Western modernity in their everyday lives. The discourses of the young Korean women encapsulate connotative nuances of approval and aspiration toward "being Western", reflecting their own narratives and the "West" that emerged from them.

YooNa, features social etiquette to be the major difference:

> "It is my perception that a significant portion of Korean society lacks a profound understanding of proper etiquette. In contrast, I have observed a prevailing sense of politeness and courtesy among people in London. Comparatively, the conventional approach to various matters in Korea strikes me as excessively conservative."

In addition, social interactions within diasporic communities are frequently delineated by various social demographic categories. Consequently, these communities tend to form distinct associations based on factors such as hometowns, alumni networks, and professions. A significant aspect that emerges from the discussions among young Korean women regarding "Koreanness" is the potential for prestige and power dynamics within these associations to disrupt the collective sense of Korean identity. In other words, their critical evaluation of the concept does not necessarily guarantee a unified understanding of "being Korean". Instead, the identification of young Korean women often revolves around how terms like "Britishness", "old Koreanness", and "family wealth" are employed within the Korean diasporic communities in London.

YooNa, as a relatively new arrival in London, encountered hierarchical dynamics within the Korean diasporic community in the city. She addressed:

> "I tend to avoid socialising with fellow Koreans here. I have noticed a prevailing sense of pride among many of them, stemming from their residency in London. This sentiment often translates into a perceived superiority over Koreans who migrated in earlier decades, such as the 70s or 80s, as well as a discernible bias against newcomers and Korean international students. There seems to be an implicit belief that they have assimilated to British culture more extensively than we have."

MinJi is actively involved in London's working holiday visa Korean community, her perspective on this matter expanded upon YooNa's insights. She noted that the issue goes beyond generational discrimination, extending to encompass occupational distinctions as well.

> "I am acquainted with some young Koreans who venture to London on working holiday visas, seeking novel lifestyles and experiences. This group comprises both recent university graduates and individuals on a gap year from their studies. I find their enthusiasm and dedication commendable, and it fosters a positive sense of Korean identity. However, I do acknowledge a certain perception I hold towards older migrants and

> Korean international students. The latter category often arrives in the UK for higher education, frequently funded by affluent parents. This segment tends to exhibit a sense of superiority towards those who have chosen employment as their route to sustenance and livelihood. Conversely, older migrants who arrived in the 70s or 80s often retain deeply ingrained, traditional Korean values that can appear outdated and resistant to change. These values are often transmitted to their offspring, contributing to a judgemental attitude within this demographic."

The persistent interplay between the notions of "being Korean" and "Britishness" in the transnational experiences of young Korean women raises significant confusion. On one hand, they express disapproval of "Koreanness" as it is perceived to be less progressive compared to their narrative of western modernity. On the other hand, "Britishness" represents power dynamics within Korean diasporic communities in London and engenders biases and prejudices. Notably, the sense of "Koreanness" among young Korean women undergoes a continuous transformation. The attributes and characteristics associated with their identity in the context of transnationalism are not solely constructive; rather, their identity in transnationalism is performative in nature.

Let's Talk about the British Citizenship

The term "citizenship" typically refers to the status of being a member of a nation state (Bauböck, 2010). However, within the western-centric Korean society, the notions of "whiteness" and "Americaness" carry significant cultural connotations. These concepts are associated with progressive lifestyle, modernity, and cultural refinement. Furthermore, when individuals migrate to the West and settle in a western capital, their wealth and social status automatically become evident, as discussed in chapter five. Therefore, British citizenship cannot be simply defined as mere "membership of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland". It acquires symbolic cultural meanings within Korean society and among Korean diasporas. Given this context, it is essential to adopt an analytical approach in order to examine

the concept of citizenship, particularly regarding its cultural implications within the process of “moving to the West” for young Korean women.

In many instances, migrants’ decision to pursue citizenship in their host country is often driven by practical considerations. YoungIn, for example, viewed obtaining British citizenship as a pragmatic choice, as it would provide her with greater security and convenience in terms of social policies and benefits. During my fieldwork, YoungIn, in her mid-thirties, was going through a divorce from her European spouse. While they were in the process of filing for divorce, she was also working on an application for European citizenship based on her soon-to-be ex-spouse’s nationality. This situation left me puzzled, and I questioned her about it during one of our meetings. I expressed my confusion, asking her how she could pursue citizenship from a country where she had never lived and had no personal connections. Despite my probing questions, YoungIn appeared unfazed and swiftly responded to address my inquiries.

> “The process of acquiring British citizenship appears to be notably more streamlined for European citizens compared to individuals of Korean nationality. This disparity is particularly evident when considering the relatively straightforward nature of obtaining citizenship as a European citizen, in contrast to the relatively more complex procedure associated with being a Korean citizen. Moreover, even in the midst of navigating a divorce, I remain eligible to pursue Italian citizenship due to the alignment of our marital period with the stipulated requirements for citizenship application. This strategic decision is primarily motivated by practical considerations, as it would grant me access to a host of rights and privileges bestowed by the social policies. This pursuit aligns with my aspiration to fully partake in the advantages and benefits that are extended to citizens, given my current residence and employment within the United Kingdom.”

The pragmatic aspect of acquiring British citizenship is underscored by numerous other participants in the study. Given the intricacies involved in the application

process and the stringent criteria for British citizenship, obtaining permanent residence emerges as an equally viable alternative for these young Korean women.

MinJi conveyed her contemplation of the possibility of returning to Korea, particularly after securing permanent residence in the UK, as a means to ensure future flexibility in her choices:

> "I might consider returning to Korea in the future, perhaps following the acquisition of my permanent residence status here (in the UK). This strategic approach would provide me with the flexibility to travel back and forth between the two countries, allowing me to maintain a connection with my home country while also benefiting from the stability and privileges that come with permanent residence." (MinJi)

InHae holds the belief that obtaining permanent residence would substantially elevate her quality of life in the UK:

> "My primary motivation for being here is to provide companionship and support to my husband, particularly as we are approaching the application process for permanent residence. This strategic decision is rooted in the belief that obtaining permanent residence status would significantly enhance our quality of life and overall experience in this country."

Within this particular context, British citizenship and permanent residence in the UK serve as avenues to an alternative lifestyle for young Korean women, presenting them with a means to disengage from their undesirable Korean life at their discretion. InHae provides insights into the intricate decision-making process she underwent regarding her migration plan and her application for permanent residence in the United Kingdom, delving into the specifics of her experiences:

> "We initially arrived in the UK as international students to pursue our postgraduate degrees. Our paths crossed during my postgraduate studies, and although I returned to Korea after completing my master's degree,

> my partner, who was then my boyfriend, remained in London after being offered a job opportunity. We were determined not to let distance come between us and even maintained our relationship through visits and constant communication. Eventually, the decision to get married emerged as a viable solution. By marrying, I became eligible for a spouse visa, allowing me to return to England. Now, we are on the brink of applying for permanent residence, a significant step that will undoubtedly simplify our life here. Moreover, it will help alleviate any queries from our family and friends back in Korea about why we haven't pursued permanent residence or citizenship, given the advantages it brings and the challenges we have faced."

"What kind of problems do you think they are implying?" I followed.

> "The mention of my London residence often garners a strong reaction from people, especially when I return to Korea to meet friends. In instances where I am introduced to someone I don't know, and my friends reveal that I live in London, there's noticeable shift in their attention towards me. It's as if the fact that I'm living in a western country amplifies their interest. The significance attributed to this aspect of my life is palpable. The pursuit of permanent residence or British citizenship holds paramount importance, as it signifies out ability to establish a meaningful life here in London. Without this status, our prospects in this country remain uncertain – as if we can't make a life here."

The acquisition of British citizenship or permanent residence in the United Kingdom by Korean diasporas transcends mere retention and assumes symbolic significance as a marker of successful transnational mobility. Within the Korean context, it signifies a certain level of recognition, affirming that these young Korean women, as transnational individuals, have established a life in a Western nation.

In Between Returning and Remaining: "I am not happy, but I want to stay"

Migratory plans are commonly approached from practical perspectives such as financial considerations and visa status. However, it is widely recognised within the

field that transnational experiences and emotions also play a significant role in shaping migrants' strategies. Fujita (2006) acknowledges the influence of transnational experiences and emotions on migratory plans, noting that such plans often undergo changes based on migrants' life circumstances in their host country. In her study on young Japanese individuals moving to New York, Fujita (2006) argues that when their prospects in New York do not meet their initial expectations, these individuals re-evaluate their migratory plans, even though many of them had initially intended to stay in the city for an extended period. This finding aligns with previous studies that have highlighted how migrants' persistent feeling of rejection and a lack of belonging can lead to a decision to return to their home country.

However, through conducting interviews with young Korean women in London and observing their transnational everyday lives, a notable finding emerged. Despite their encounters with challenging transnational realities characterised by language barriers, financial difficulties, and experiences of racial abuse (see Chapter five), a prevailing inclination to remain in their host country was evident in their migratory plans.

> HyeJin, a familiar face at the café I frequently visit, has been navigating the UK with a working holiday visa, which offers her a limited span of up to two years of residency. As her visa's expiration date looms closer, her journey has been marked by arduous challenges. HyeJin grapples with the weight of a meagre salary that barely covers her cost in this bustling city. The language barrier further compounds her sense of alienation and exclusion, casting a shadow on her daily experiences. Her living arrangements have also proven to be less than ideal, as she finds herself frequently relocating and sharing space with individuals who she does not get along.
>
> With each encounter, HyeJin's aura seems to carry a palpable weight of negativity, reflected in her frequent sighs and scarce smiles. Her discussions are often punctuated by grievances about her life in London, leaving an indelible impression of her enduring struggles. Given these circumstances, I had assumed that her yearning to return to Korea would

> be fervent. However, in a surprising turn of events, HyeJin initiates dialogues about pursuing avenues to prolong her stay. Seeking guidance on practical matters like job hunting, she has demonstrated a resilient desire to explore options for remaining in this foreign land. This revelation challenges my previous assumptions and highlights the complex interplay of aspirations and realities that shape the lives of individuals like HyeJin in the complex spectrum of transnationalism.
>
> Field note, April 2017

HyeJin exemplifies the mindset shared by numerous young Korean women in the diaspora. In the case of those residing in London, the prospect of returning to Korea appears somewhat ambiguous. This departure from the conventional understanding of diaspora dynamics, wherein individuals often make plans to return to their home country, reflects their willingness to endure the challenges of transnational life and persevere in the host country. This situation is closely intertwined with their intricate emotional connection to Korea, which is considered their supposed home. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I have explored the ambivalent sentiment experienced by these young Korean women regarding Korea and their Korean identity in London, which arises from various social and cultural issues they encountered in Korea. Thus, the notion of a place called home, which fails to evoke positive emotions, holds less significance for them. Life in London, as somewhere alien in this case, “is not too bad”.

> “The challenges faced by young people in Korea are notable. While life here presents its own difficulties, akin to challenges experienced globally, I am inclined to believe that remaining in this country offers a plethora of potential opportunities.”

As my fieldwork progressed, HyeJin was nearing the expiration of her working holiday visa. Throughout this period, she confronted an array of challenges encompassing housing, language barriers, and everyday experience of racial abuse. Despite these adversities, HyeJin maintains an unwavering optimism regarding her

London adventure. Her aspiration for further opportunities to prolong her stay in the UK persists:

> "I find myself somewhat torn in this situation. Apparently, I wouldn't have language barrier there (in Korea). However, even considering Korea as my place of origin, it does not necessarily hold an ideal appeal. Conversely, while my experiences in London present challenges, they do not entirely overshadow the positive aspects. It's a complex set of sentiments. The prospect of a potential shift in circumstances, especially if I secure a suitable employment opportunity, engenders an optimistic outlook."

The prevailing mindset prevalent within their transnational social sphere regarding this issue is characterised by the belief that "if I persist long enough, circumstances will eventually improve". This perspective has emerged as the most inspiring spirit driving the transnational resilience of young Korean women. Additionally, a significant factor in this process is their continuous re-evaluation and reconceptualisation of the notion of home. InJung articulates her understanding of home during our discussion:

> "I have come to regard the UK as my home. To me, home signifies a place of comfort and ease. However, within Korea, I have yet to find a similar sense of belonging. Korea encompasses the homes of my parents, my parents-in-law, my brother, and my friends, but not my own. It seems more akin to a residence belonging to others."

I followed up on her definition of home: "Do you think Korea in terms of country is home for you?"

> "No, I don't believe so. I don't experience a sense of comfort there. My primary desire is for personal happiness. However, the complexities of Korean culture pose challenges for me to attain that feeling of happiness."

The diasporic context often imbues the concept of home with a longing for a sense of belonging (Brah, 1996). The process of (re)conceptualising home in the context of transnationalism becomes a significant aspect for young Korean women. Many of them, like InJung, consider London to be their home. Notably, in this case, home takes on an emotional significance within the realm of transnationalism. Rather than solely representing a fixed geographical location associated with their home country, home has increasingly become an a-spatial phenomenon in the era of extensive transnational movements (King and Christou, 2011). This notion is particularly relevant to young Korean women in London. While the notion of home as a place of comfort and familiarity within the diasporic context has faced criticism for its idealisation, the young Korean women's identification of London as home, driven by its perceived comfort and security, reveals a strong yearning for a sense of belonging.

In the previous section, the symbolic significance of acquiring British citizenship and permanent residency in the UK for young Korean women was explored, revealing their symbolic embodiment of transnational achievement. Evidently, within a transnational framework, the pursuit of citizenship and permanent residency in the host country aligns with the diasporic desire to remain rooted. In the case of young Korean women in London, a discernible cultural subtext emerges between the notions of remaining and returning, wherein their need to remain is intricately tied to upholding their social status as "elites" and accumulate cultural capital within the Korean cultural field.

SoHee finds that the act of returning has its specific implications within the Korean context:

> "I perceive that the act of returning holds significant cultural implications within the Korean context. It could be interpreted as a personal shortcoming, indicating my inability to establish a successful life in London. Moreover, my decision to come to London was a deliberate choice on my part, which implies a certain level of responsibility that I must acknowledge."

MinJi, on the contrary, perceives her status in the UK as a vehicle for accumulate cultural capital back in Korea:

> "My friends frequently express their envy regarding my residency in London. I find a sense of satisfaction in this sentiment, as if I am successfully establishing a life here, prompting me to contemplate why I shouldn't take pride in this accomplishment. Despite the potential ethical considerations of such an attitude, I am inclined to embrace and relish these emotions."

In light of these circumstances, remaining ceases to be merely a transnational option and instead assumes the status of a transnational goal. The pursuit of remaining by young Korean women thus gives rise to a distinct transnational realm wherein the notions of home and identity are consistently subject to negotiation and (re)production. This transnational space serves as a dynamic arena for the ongoing construction and reconstruction of their sense of belonging and selfhood.

Race and Social Interactions in Everyday Transnationalism

The preceding chapters have engendered a comprehensive comprehension of the association between race and the prevailing mentality regarding the West within Korean society. During the course of my research, a fundamental inquiry emerged: Do these young Korean women find contentment in a nation that aligns with the Korean construct of a "superior society"? Nonetheless, the conversations surrounding these women's racial encounters and social interactions began to articulate their transnational realities, effectively serving as authentic sources for introspective examinations of their value perspectives on race. The objective of this section is to elucidate the response to the aforementioned question and explicate its implications through a detailed exploration of the distinctive race-related social interactions experienced by young Korean women.

Networking and Friendship: The Unexpected 'mono-cycle'

In alignment with the emblematic significance associated with the "American dream", the cohort of young Korean women studies in my research venture to London propelled by their fervour and anticipations, thereby embodying their own rendition of the "London dream" – an opportunity to embark upon an alternative lifestyle that they have long aspired for. As they take their initial steps in this reverie-like realm, forging new friendships and engaging in social interactions becomes paramount in navigating their newfound social milieu. Expressing her sentiment, one participant shared, "I thought I would at least have some English friends", a sentiment echoed by other women who also experienced a sense of unexpected social isolation, characterised by an unforeseen "monocycle" of social networks.

The formation of transnational communities often entails the combination of shared cultural norms and a connection to one's country of origin. Within this context, the acknowledgement of one's Korean cultural identity and the capacity to empathise with their transnational emotions emerge as crucial determinants in the process of socialisation. Two participants in my study, JiHae and Minji, reside together as flatmates in North London. JiHae, prior to her arrival in London approximately a year and a half ago, spent a semester as an exchange student in Sheffield, England. This experience left her with a positive impression of the UK and instilled in her the confidence to lead an independent life. Following the completion of her bachelor's degree in Korea, she seized the opportunity to apply for a working holiday visa, granting Korean citizens the opportunity to work in the UK for up to two years. This return to the UK provided JiHae with a reflective space to reassess her two ventures and the multifaceted aspects entailed therein. Her comparative perspective on networking echoes the sentiments of other young Korean women, illustrating their desire to cultivate friendships with individuals of non-Korean background, while also highlighting their profound yearning for emotional understanding and a sense of security that transcends such desires, thus shaping their "mono-network". During our conversation on social networking in London, JiHae delineated her personal shift in mindset regarding the selectivity employed in establishing her own social network.

> "Upon my initial arrival in the UK as an exchange student, I held the belief that forging connections with foreign peers was essential, given the considerable distance I had travelled. Yet, I soon realised that establishing friendships with individuals from different cultural backgrounds required substantial exertion. The endeavour presented numerous challenges at that juncture of my life, and it was my fellow Koreans who provided significant assistance and support."

She looked a bit nervous while talking, "why is that? I mean the efforts part." I probed.

> "Due to a distressing encounter, my perspective was profoundly shaped. I had resided in a shared household where an incident of sexual harassment involving a fellow Korean girl and a black male transpired. The disconcerting nature of the incident left me profoundly shaken, prompting me to swiftly relocate to a residence exclusively inhabited by Koreans. This transition engendered a heightened sense of security, fostering an environment reminiscent of familial bonds."

She then further explained herself:

> "My inclination towards forming friendships predominantly with Koreans was not a deliberate choice, but rather an outcome of circumstances. During the beginning (upon returning to the UK with a working holiday visa), I actively sought Korean companionship to mitigate the sense of solitude. While connecting with friends from various backgrounds is enriching, interactions with fellow Koreans, owing to our shard circumstances, and perspectives, exude a sense of ease and practicality. The linguistic congruence of conversing in Korean further fosters a comforting atmosphere. This connection offers a heightened sense of security and mutual understanding, enhancing the overall sense of company."

Numerous previous research endeavours investigating diaspora and transnationalism, with a particular emphasis on national and transnational identities,

have examined the proposition that negative encounters and challenges encountered while integrating into the host society may reinforce the national identity associated with one's country of origin. While I advocate for a more nuanced narrative surrounding this phenomenon, it remains indisputable that such adverse experiences compel these young Korean women to gravitate towards their own community – a space wherein they feel a sense of security and protection. In essence, these displaced individuals, as subjects, engender a novel sense of belonging and familiarity by establishing their social ontological security within their community of origin. Moreover, the language barrier and emotional connections assume significant importance throughout this process. JiHae, for instance, elucidated that the hindrance posed by the English language serves as a major impetus for her confinement within the confines of her "mono-cycle".

> "Furthermore, I encountered that conversing in English demanded a significant exertion on my part. Thus, the decision to relocate to an exclusively Korean-inhabited residence during my exchange in Sheffield provided a heightened sense of ease. Consequently, upon my recent relocation to London, I intentionally sought out Korean companionship at the outset of my journey."

JiHae's flatmate MinJi also thinks that English language is a huge obstacle while socialising.

> "The demands of using English extensively for my profession are quite exhaustive, often leaving me fatigued. The notion of dedicating my weekends to further English interaction seemed burdensome. Nevertheless, as I acclimated to this lifestyle, my perspective evolved. Yet, my pursuit of non-Korean friendships encountered constraints. As a young working professional but not a student, my interactions with non-Korean individuals primarily occur within my work context. Notably, despite my inherent extroverted disposition, particularly pronounced in conversations conducted in Korean, my ability to express myself in English, being my second language, becomes a hindrance. This linguistic

> limitation consequently fosters a sense of introversion in English - speaking environments for me."

The presence of language barriers undoubtedly exacerbates the challenges associated with effective communication and emotional exchanges. Nevertheless, diasporic emotions, such as the pervasive sentiment of "feeling lonely", exemplify a distinct transnational emotional state characterised by a profound yearning for a sense of understanding, even though such an expectation was not initially anticipated by these young Korean women prior to their relocations. Within MinJi's perspective, a stark contrast emerges between the Korean and British conceptualisations of friendship. She firmly believes that while Koreans perceive friends as companions who endure arduous times together, the British notion leans more towards the idea of "having fun together". This sentiment finds resonance among other participants in the research as well.

InHae, who characterises her social circle in London as notably exclusive, further elaborates on this aspect:

> "The accumulation of Korean friendships wasn't an intentional move, yet I find myself surrounded by a larger circle of Korean companions than I initially envisioned. This expanded network seems to facilitate a heightened understanding between us, particularly concerning the challenges inherent in navigating life within a foreign land."

InJung, who actively engages in social events organised by the Korean communities in London, observes that a sense of camaraderie with her fellow Korean diaspora emerges organically due to their shared cultural background and mutual understanding:

> "Predominantly, my interactions revolve around fellow Koreans. Occasionally, there are interactions with foreigners – English colleagues from work and acquaintances from church. However, the individuals with whom I share a genuine affinity and engage in meaningful dialogues remain primarily Korean. My inclination toward this dynamic was not

> premeditated; rather, it has organically unfolded. I did not consciously categorise people as Korean or English to determine my social circle; rather, it seems that those who naturally gravitated toward me were predominantly Korean. This alignment is rooted in our shared culture and mutual emotional resonance. The rapport with these Korean acquaintances burgeoned naturally." (InJung)

Kim (2016) highlights the phenomenon wherein migrants, faced with a dominant meaning system in their new cultural environment that perpetually irritates or reminds them of their non-belonging, may choose to retreat into an ethnic enclave (p. 538). In the case of these young Korean women, their arrival in the long-awaited land of London is initially perceived as a celebratory act of rebellion. Anticipating a new and improved life in London, they did not foresee the emergence of negative transnational emotions, such as a persistent "feeling of loneliness" and struggles to assimilate. However, the mundane transnational reality of continual rejection within their new cultural context, particularly when everyday life serves as a constant reminder of their emotional battles, compels them to confront and accept the stark cognitive dissonance between their physical proximity and psychological detachment. In the previous chapter, I elucidated the presence of anti-Korean sentiment among these young Korean women in the diaspora as a salient transnational emotion. These two seeminly contradictory sentiments encapsulate the genuine emotional struggle experienced by these women – a yearning to assimilate while reluctantly turning towards their fellow Korean diaspora for solace.

Hierarchical Foreigners and the Racial Ranking – "It Is All About National Images"

In the preceding section, an examination of the "West-" related social values prevalent in Korean society and the underlying factors that contribute to these value perspectives was presented. It was posited that the strong desire for emotional connection and cultural understanding imposes limitations on the network and friendships of these young Korean women, resulting in a predominantly "Korean only" social situation. Nonetheless, their subconscious biases and stereotypes significantly influence the composition of their social circles. In this section, attention will be

directed towards the cultural aspects of “hierarchical foreigners” and its subsequent implications, which manifest as a mainstream Korean mentality involving the evaluation and categorisation of different types of foreigners based on a racial hierarchy. Subsequently, an in-depth analysis will be undertaken to explore the strategies employed by these young Korean women in navigating such a mentality.

In the year 2019, a highly controversial incident unfolded online, involving an offensive comment directed at Lisa, a prominent Thai member of the K-pop girl group Blackpink. This comment, which pertained to the artist’s physical appearance, garnered significant attention and sparked widespread outrage. The remark, infused with racial undertones, compared Lisa’s appearance to that of a Russian elf when she wore makeup, but likened her to an average Thai woman when she was devoid of cosmetics. Remarkably, this offensive comment garnered substantial approval in the form of “likes” within the comment section of the corresponding article.

Figure 10 Lisa

Image retrieved from: https://kprofiles.com/black-pink-members-profile/

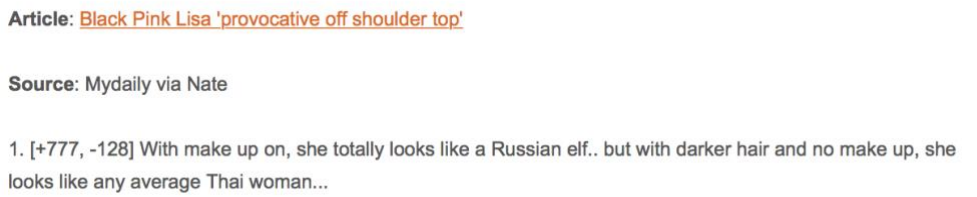

Figure 11 Korean netizen's controversial comment

Image retrieved from: http://netizenbuzz.blogspot.com/2019/01/jennie-makes-first-public-appearance.html

The stark contrast between the two expressions, namely "Russian elf" and "average Thai women", serves as a poignant reflection of discriminatory perceptions based on physical appearance. These expressions convey cultural implications and value perspectives that reinforce the preference for a "beautiful white" aesthetic as opposed to an "average Southeast Asian" appearance. This preference is deeply intertwined with the prevailing mentality in Korean society regarding "good" and "bad" foreigners. Specifically, there exists a widely held perception in Korea that the "right" and "desirable" type of foreigner is one who is white, preferably originating from Europe or the United States.

> "Koreans think Western people, white English speakers are the 'right' kind of foreigner', says Park Kyung-tae, a professor of sociology at Sungkonghoe University. 'The wrong kind include refugees, Chinese people, and even ethnic Koreans from China', because they're perceived to be poor. 'If you're from a Western country, you have more chances to be respected. If you are from a developing Asian country, you have more chances to be disrespected."[5]

In line with EunHae's statement, which she shared during her participation in my research, the notion that "It is all about national images" is highlighted. EunHae further elaborates that these images are constructed based on long-standing biases and stereotypical beliefs:

[5] Crystal Tai. (January 5, 2018) "The Strange, contradictory privilege of living in South Korea as a Chinese-Canadian woman." Available at: https://qz.com/1172515/living-in-south-korea-as-a-chinese-canadian-woman-is-a-lesson-in-the-complex-world-of-contradictory-privilege/

> "In Korea, there exists a prevailing belief in a racial hierarchy, wherein white individuals occupy the highest tier. Chinese and Japanese individuals are typically placed in the subsequent tiers, followed by those hailing from South-East Asian nations. Regrettably, black individuals are often relegated to the lowermost rung of this hierarchy."

Within the Korean context, the national image of a country is often associated with its economic status and political role on the global stage. However, these images tend to remain static and are confined within the confines of a long-standing Western-centric ideology that idealises Western power in various dimensions. Furthermore, the assumption of the West as inherently white has influenced the racialisation of the West as a "white people's country" in Korean society. Consequently, this mentality contributes to a racial ranking system within Korean society that categorises individuals primarily based on their race and skin tone rather than their true identities. The young Korean women who participated in my research expressed strong sentiments regarding this matter.

Echoing EunHae's addressing, InHae also acknowledges the presence of racial hierarchies within Korean social discourses:

> "In Korea, a discernible racial hierarchy is prevalent, characterised by a preference for white individuals, particularly those from economically affluent nations. The sentiments towards Japan are nuanced due to historical factors, generating both positive and negative attitudes. Additionally, individuals with darker skin tones, such as those from Thai and Indian backgrounds, often encounter unfavourable perceptions within Korean society." (InHae)

Despite their awareness that such judgments are misguided, these women's subconscious biases continue to distance them from more diverse environments. As discussed in the previous section, their strong emotional needs and daily challenges unexpectedly drive them towards seeking solace within the Korean community, thereby shaping their "mono-social network". However, the process of racial preference involves additional complex considerations. Upon reflecting on their

descriptions of racial attitudes within Korean societal discourses, it becomes evident that their race-related transnational emotions often intersect with negative emotions directed towards other minority groups.

InHae categorised these emotions as responses to conflicts associated with social norms and conventional behaviours:

> "I find it challenging to establish friendships with black individuals. My discomfort stems from not having encountered a black person with whom I felt at ease. Their reactions to situations appear excessively strong, which contrasts starkly with the cultural norms I am accustomed to in Korea. Similar feelings extend towards Middle Eastern men, as their manner tends to evoke anxiety within me."

In an article by Crystal Tai (2018) recounting her personal experiences as a Chinese Canadian woman living in Korea, she reflects on the paradoxical nature of her identity. Despite benefiting from her fluency in English and Westernised upbringing, she also faced discrimination based on her Chinese ethnicity and gender. She aptly describes this experience as a "contradictory privilege". In her case, this contradiction arises from the combination of a negative "Chinese image", which aligns with Korean stereotypes, and a positive "Canadian" image" representing Western modernity. Similarly, many of the young Korean women in this research explicitly voiced their grievances about being mistakenly identified as either Chinese or Japanese. Their interpretation of such misidentification is closely tied to Korean notions of "Chineseness" and "Japaneseness". For these women, such misidentification is not merely a matter of ignorance but rather judgmental actions that carry negative cultural implications.

YooNa observed and commented on the prevailing perceptions of Chinese individuals within Korean society, shedding light on the cultural implications of such portrayals:

> "In Korea, there exists a prevailing negative mindset rooted in the influx of Chinese migrant workers seeking employment opportunities. Despite a shift in recent times, with a growing number of middle-class Chinese individuals also choosing to reside in Korea, the prevailing perception of Chinese individuals remains unchanged. There is a prevalent belief that Chinese people are characterised by their impolite behaviour." (YooNa)

Within their racially diverse transnational social environment, young Korean women are still inevitably influenced by the subconscious influence of global Western ideology on their transnational racial cognition. As transnational subjects themselves, it becomes imperative to examine how hierarchical racial understandings intersect with their racially related social activities. Furthermore, it is essential to explore their reactions to the consequences arising from these interactions. In the subsequent section, I aim to elucidate the everyday racial experiences of these young Korean women, which are shaped within the context of their transnational social field.

Everyday racial experience

During the 1990s, Britain emerged as a prominent advocate of cosmopolitanism, with the term "cosmopolitan Britain" being widely used to convey a positive inclination towards European integration and global engagement (Kim, 2016). This period witnessed the emergence of what came to be known as "super-diversity" in Britain (Vertovec, 2007), signifying a level and nature of complexity that surpassed previous experiences in the country. The concept of super-diversity highlights the presence of a growing number of new, small, and dispersed communities comprising individuals with diverse origins, transnational connections, socioeconomic disparities, and ethnic backgrounds (Kim, 2016). Among these communities are young Asian women who seek to immerse themselves in different cultures and lifestyles, motivated not by political factors or economic burdens, but by a desire for alternative living environments. As discussed earlier, London serves as a destination for young Korean women, symbolising various cultural factors intertwined with Western-oriented mentalities aligned with traditional Korean values. Nevertheless, the lived transnational experiences of migrants contribute to the romanticisation of

London as a multicultural global city, which in turn fuels the rhetoric surrounding multiculturalism.

The young Korean women participating in this study frequently encounter various manifestations of racism, both implicit and explicit, in their everyday lives. These encounters have significantly challenged their perception of London as a multicultural city. They find themselves confronted with the consequences of their own biases, such as ignorance towards individuals with darker skin tones or the perpetuation of stereotypes and negative social values towards Chinese and Japanese individuals. Moreover, these everyday experiences of racial discrimination are often perceived as accepted "social norms" rather than as offensive acts, further complicating their understanding of their own transnational identities.

A Multicultural Utopia: From Discriminating to Being Discriminated

Within the Korean context, two dominant images of Britain prevail: its perceived "posh" character and its multicultural social phenomenon. As discussed in previous chapter, these preconceived images of London align with the representations of the West portrayed in Korean media, shaping the cultural framework for their reflexive imaginations. London is predominantly seen as a multicultural society, evident in its characteristic of "super-diversity". Statistical data reveals that among the 8.88 million residents in London, 3.32 million individuals (37%) were born outside of the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2018). This substantial proportion of non-UK born residents contributes to the linguistic and religious diversity within the city. In response to such social conditions, London has been commonly labelled as a multicultural hub, recognised for its inclusive and accommodating nature. Armed with these positive perceptions of London, young Korean women leave their homeland with the expectation of encountering an open and accepting society.

In the previous sections, I have asserted that upon their arrival in London, young Korean women encounter an unexpected phenomenon of forming exclusive social networks and friend circles limited to fellow Koreans. Additionally, their everyday

social interactions are significantly influenced by traditional Korean racial stereotypes ingrained in their habitus. Being transnational subjects living as minority women in a Western capital, they continually face new cultural experiences that broaden their reflexive space, allowing for critical examination of their habitus and value perspectives. The subsequent sections aim to explore the racial experiences of young Korean women in London and their tendency to normalise racial discrimination. These women endure unspeakable acts of racial abuse, both implicit and explicit, which permeate their everyday lives and foster a sense of non-belonging. In such circumstances, reflective statements such as "I started feeling for those people I used to discriminate against" emerge. To illustrate this, YooNa, who is married to a white European and resides in London with her husband, provides insights into her own racial shift based on her personal trajectory, having spent significant time working in Korea and Singapore prior to relocating to London.

> "While employed in Singapore, I encountered numerous Chinese individuals in both professional and social contexts. My upbringing in Korea had fostered negative preconceptions about Chinese people, associating them with notions of uncleanliness, impropriety, and discourtesy. I had held a rather ignorant perspective towards Chinese individuals. Yet, as the global economic landscape has evolved, the prominence of Chinese people has become undeniable. Interestingly, this phenomenon persisted upon my relocation to London. On one occasion, during a routine grocery trip, a cashier engaged with me in an exaggeratedly slow manner, articulating each world deliberately and gesturing towards carrier bags, as if addressing a child: 'Do…you…need…a…bag?' Her actions were seemingly predicated on assumptions derived solely from my appearance, presuming a lack of English proficiency. Such occurrences have become a regular part of my daily experiences. Paradoxically, I find myself in a position akin to the very Chinese individuals I once discriminated against, although here in London. This realisation has prompted introspection – who am I to pass judgment on others? I now encounter kind Chinese people whose social manner defies my prior stereotypes. This evolution in my perspective has led me to adopt a more inclusive stance, appreciating the diversity inherent in humanity."

YooNa's critical reflection on her racial cognition and transnational existence finds resonance among other participants in my study. As I have previously discussed, the pervasive stereotypes surrounding individuals with non-white ethnicity and the cultural biases directed towards Chinese and Japanese people hold significant sway within Korean racial discourses. These stereotypes and biases exert a profound influence not only on the racial perspectives of these young women but also on their transnational positionalities. Through their experiences, the interlocutors in my study express a spectrum of critical reflections, ranging from sentiments such as "I do not wish to be identified as Chinese or Japanese due to their associated cultural connotations" to the realisation that "who am I to discriminate against others". These introspective responses exemplify their engagement with their own transnational racial encounters and the subsequent reconsideration of their beliefs and attitudes.

For instance, Minji exhibits a heightened awareness of racial dynamics and expresses a desire to foster this heightened consciousness upon her return to Korea:

> "Back in Korea, prevailing sentiments are tinged with negativity towards black individuals and those from Southeast Asia. However, my own experiences as a foreign worker living here have engendered empathy towards them, given the shared sense of discrimination I encounter. This newfound awareness has kindled a desire within me to effect positive change for these marginalised groups. I contemplate the possibility of channelling my efforts towards this cause, even upon my potential return to Korea." (MinJi)

SoHee also deepened her awareness of racial consciousness through her transnational everyday experiences:

> "During the initial stages of my life in London, I engaged in a homestay arrangement with a middle-aged black woman. I was initially taken aback and harboured unfavourable preconceptions about the situation, driven by my limited exposure to individuals of African descent. Reflecting on this experience, I came to acknowledge the presence of prejudiced

> thinking within me. In hindsight, I recognised the inherent racism in my initial reaction and understood the importance of rectifying such biases." (SoHee)

The dissonance between their expectations and the reality of London as a global multicultural site, where young Korean women find themselves transitioning from being perpetrators of discrimination to becoming the targets of discrimination, fractures their perceived image of the city. Rather than overt acts of physical violence, it is the accumulation of subtle everyday encounters that shape their experiences and challenges. I argue that such everyday racial experiences create a reflexive transnational space for these young Korean women to critically examine, reconstruct, and redefine their preconceived West-centric racial constructs, as well as to renegotiate their interactions within the transnational racial realm. However, this reflexivity also exposes them to critical reflections on the traditional Korean social values that venerate the "white" West, intensifying their confusion and self-doubt. Due to the prevailing belief that problems of exclusion and foreignness stem from individual inadequacies (such as inadequate English proficiency) and personal choices (such as the decision to move abroad), these persistent self-questionings reshape the transnational existences and positionalities of young Korean women. Consequently, these unspoken and challenging situations are often met with silence, as the women perceive them as an inevitable aspect of living in a foreign country, leading to the normalisation of racial discrimination. The idealised multicultural image of London ultimately perpetuates the acceptance and normalisation of racial discrimination.

The Normalisation of Racial Discriminations

This section begins with an anecdote from my fieldwork, recorded in my field notes. While it may initially appear to be a startling account, it serves as a representative example of the daily experiences faced by young Korean women.

> I had the pleasure of meeting one of my participants, BoGyong, for a meaningful and in-depth conversation about her recent experiences in

> London since our last meeting. After our discussion, we decided to enjoy some light snacks together. BoGyong took me to a renowned Korean street food restaurant, where a sizable queue had formed. While engaged in random conversation while waiting, three English girls approached BoGyong, holding supermarket cupcakes in their hands. They offered, 'Would you like to try some cupcakes? They are £2 each.' Politely declining, BoGyong responded, 'No, thank you, I am good.' Despite her courteous reply, I could sense her unease. One of the English girls, adopting a sarcastic tone, remarked, 'Are you sure? These are Chinese cupcakes!' Observing BoGyong's discomfort, I felt compelled to intervene, addressing the English girl, 'Do you realise she's not even Chinese?' This unexpected confrontation seemed to surprise her. The other two girls chimed in, 'We just got these cupcakes from the Japanese store over there. They must be Chinese, right?' Caught off guard, I struggled to respond, finally stating, 'Perhaps you should consider returning to school.' In response, they hurled profanities at us and departed. In that moment, BoGyong and I were the only two Asians in the queue, and despite the incident, no one else intervened. The surrounding individuals merely observed the encounter.
>
> Field note, May 2017

After we entered the restaurant, she still seemed pretty uncomfortable, mostly embarrassed. She tried to cover her upset up. "Do you experience racial discrimination often?" I probed.

> "To be completely honest, I often find myself grappling with the challenge of identifying instances of racial discrimination. While I may encounter situations that could potentially be characterised as racism, I am frequently plagued by doubts regarding the accuracy of my interpretations. The complexity arises from a combination of language barriers and nuanced cultural implications. Given that many instances of discrimination are subtle and indirect, I often fear that my limited grasp of English my lead me to misinterpret the underlying dynamics. This uncertainty is compounded by the fact that I sometimes wonder if my own linguistic limitations might inadvertently distort my understanding of the situation." (BoGyong)

It is not only BoGyong who struggles with understanding the cultural implications and nuanced discourses of racial discrimination. Many interlocutors share their fears of misinterpreting as well as the leads to potential conflicts.

For example, MinJung underscored that her language barrier has posed a substantial obstacle in recognising subtle instances of racial discrimination:

> "Frankly, I doubt I would possess the confidence to assert myself if I were to confront instances of racial discrimination. The language barrier creates a significant obstacle, leaving me uncertain about my ability to effectively respond. Moreover, I confess that I am still developing the ability to discern such discriminations. My typical approach is to dismiss those who exhibit racist behaviour as ignorant individuals. In Korea, we have a saying that advises avoiding unproductive conflicts, much like avoiding unsanitary things due to their filthiness. Consequently, I often feel that engaging in arguments may not be worth the effort."

InJung echoed the challenge posed by language in discerning racial discrimination, emphasising her strategy of choosing to overlook confrontations:

> "I often find myself refraining from engaging in arguments, primarily due to a lingering fear of potential inaccuracies on my part. Given that English is not my native language, I worry about misunderstandings that may arise during discussions. In an effort to sidestep unnecessary conflicts, I have found it more convenient to simply disregard these situations." (InJung)

The language barriers encountered by these young Korean women render them voiceless when confronted with racial discrimination. Furthermore, the majority of participants in my study report experiencing frequent negative incidents related to race, leading to a concerning trend of "subtle racism" becoming "normalised and slipped into the context of daily life" (Simmill-Binning et al., 2003, p.48).

JiHae acknowledged the pervasive occurrence of such racial incidents in her daily experiences:

> "One day I found myself in a lift surrounded by a group of Asian women. Suddenly, a white woman entered and promptly remarked, 'Oh, it's filled with Asian girls here.' In that instance, I couldn't help out but ponder, 'would she make the same observation if the lift was occupied by a group of white women?' This incident prompted me to reflect on the potential biases that underlie such comments."

"What did you do? Did you say anything?" I followed.

> "No, I refrained from doing so. Frankly, I questioned the efficacy of addressing such a situation. I held the belief that attempting to alter their perspective would likely prove futile, as entrenched attitudes are not easily swayed. Engaging in confrontation might only lead to further conflict, without yielding any meaningful change. At times, I find myself contemplating whether this is simply the status quo, accepting the notion that we are residing in a foreign land, subject to the perceptions ingrained by the dominant culture."

In addition to resigning themselves to the futility of resisting racial discrimination, these young Korean women employ a strategy of normalising these negative experiences through the reconstruction of their gender and femininity. MinJi, for instance, reflects on her daily encounters with racial discrimination and its impact on her sense of self:

> "I often encounter such minor instances in my daily life. However, I speculate that due to my petite stature as an Asian woman, some individuals may perceive me through a lens of amusement, perhaps viewing me in a quaint or endearing manner. It is possible that these interactions stem more from a light-hearted intent, rather than any malicious undertones – a form of playful teasing, so to speak."

According to MinJi's perspective, her adherence to the code of Korean femininity serves as a form of social capital within Western society. This reconstruction of her gender role is utilised as an asset for her to adapt to the racial norms prevalent in London. The comments made by young Korean women, such as "maybe this is how it is going to be forever, and I should live with it", reflect a passive acceptance of the negative racial incidents they face on a daily basis. In this context, insights from the theory of normalisation can shed light on the situation. The philosophy of normalisation aims to restore a balance between individual inadequacy and the social processes that contribute to devaluing certain groups or individuals.

> "Normalization incorporates the explicit assumption that consciousness is preferable to unconsciousness, and that negative feelings and dynamics should, and usually have to, be made conscious in order to be adaptively addressed. Thus, normalization is extensively concerned with the identification of unconscious (usually negative) dynamics within human services that contribute to the devaluation and oppression of certain groups of people in society and provides conscious strategies for remediating the devalued social status of such people." (Wolfensberger and Thomas, 1983 p.25)

Therefore, within the realm of social science studies, normalisation theory often occupies a position as an anti-racial discrimination approach. However, the process of normalisation observed among these young Korean women regarding their negative racial experiences operates in a contrasting direction within the field. Rather than challenging or resisting such experiences, they tend to seek justifications that minimise and normalise them, along with the subsequent consequences. I argue that the normalisation of negative racial experiences among these young Korean women in their transnational social field is strongly influenced by the embedded western centrism within their subconscious. In their perception of a modern and civilised global city, such experiences are deemed as deviating from what is expected. Consequently, their western-centric subconscious drives these young Korean women to engage in continual self-questioning, attributing their experiences to "individual faults, weaknesses, and responsibilities" (Kim, 2016, p.538).

Summary

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the research findings derived from the exploration of research questions through a cultural transnational perspective. The discussion unfolds as an organic examination within the context of the second meta-theme that emerged from the extensive empirical data, namely western centrism. The analysis begins by delving into the portrayal of the "West" within Korean societal discourses, encompassing a critical examination of traditional social values pertaining to culture and race. Subsequently, the chapter clarifies the strategies employed by young Korean women to navigate and adapt to these value perspectives within their everyday transnational experiences.

In contrast to the conventional notion that assumes diasporas possess a strong emotional attachment to their ethnic homeland, the concept of "home" takes on a different meaning for young Korean women in London. Their pursuit of a sense of belonging and identity involves a continuous negotiation process, where the notion of home is fluid and subject to change. It is important to highlight that within this specific context, the act of remaining in the host society carries significant cultural implications. It is viewed as the ultimate goal of transnational migration rather than a mere option. Consequently, acquiring British citizenship and indefinite leave to remain serve as symbolic representations of transnational success. Previous chapters of this thesis extensively explore the western-centric Korean social culture and the portrayal of "being international" as social capital within Korean society. These cultural settings and social discourse have greatly influenced the migratory plans and self-positioning of the diaspora in their transnational social field.

Previous discourse on the conceptualisation of the "West" within Korean society reveals its association with a notion of modernity that remains elusive for Korean society itself. Simultaneously, the stereotypical perceptions of other Asian countries and their inhabitants portray a less sophisticated image, fostering a sense of superiority among young Korean women. Consequently, these women feel compelled to distance themselves from these "other Asians" in order to align more

closely with the ideals of the West. This mentality engenders a complex coexistence of both inferiority and superiority, as they perceive their own country as “better” than other Asian nations and seek validation from the West. This mindset reflects the dominance of Western ideology operating within the framework of Western-centric Korean social values, exerting significant influence on the young Korean women’s understanding of their transnational status and the power dynamics inherent within it.

The findings in this chapter highlight the everyday transnational reality faced by young Korean women in the global city of London, wherein they encounter constant rejection and are compelled to navigate an unexpected social network and friend circle consisting predominantly of fellow Koreans. This phenomenon, in conjunction with the anti-Korean sentiment discussed earlier in this chapter, provides insight into the emotional struggles these women endure as they yearn for acceptance from the hosting society while reluctantly seeking comfort within their Korean diasporic peers. Paradoxically, their subconscious adherence to Korean value perspectives, which perpetuate racial biases and stereotypical images, significantly shape their transnational social networks. This process is largely influenced by a racial philosophy deeply entrenched in Korean social culture, characterised by a hierarchical ranking system that assigns value to different categories of foreigners. Within this system, national images associated with a particular country, as perceived by Korean society, are believed to represent the characteristics of its people (“It is all about national images”). Such perceptions, heavily influenced by longstanding Western-centric ideologies prevalent in Korean society, contribute to the tendency to label individuals based on their race and skin tone. Immersed in their transnational social field with this mindset, young Korean women are prompted to engage in critical self-reflection regarding their racial cognitions. As they navigate life in London as minority women, their daily experiences of negative racial incidents shatter their multicultural utopian image of the city and prompt a shift in their transnational positioning, from being discriminators to being subject to discrimination. However, their inclination to normalise these negative racial

experiences and seek explanations for such incidents demonstrates the deep-rooted influence of Western-centric Korean value perspectives embedded in their subconscious.

Chapter 7 Performance and the Role of Media

The topics of identity and media usage within diasporic communities have long captivated scholars in the field. These debates often revolve around whether transnationalism fosters a cosmopolitan attitude among migrants or, conversely, reinforces their national identity from their home country. The arguments presented in the previous chapters of this study demonstrate the complexities faced by young Korean women in their transnational social field – the global city of London – indicating that a dual analysis of their transnational identity is insufficient. However, media plays a crucial role in shaping diasporic experiences and identities. Given the diverse forms in which media appears and its rapid integration into daily routines, it serves as a resource for self-imagining and a catalyst for the formation of diasporic spheres (Appadurai, 1996). Consequently, the internet and the everyday use of media create reflexive spaces where these young Korean women are encouraged to construct and modify their sense of self in the transnational field. As highlighted by Hall (1990), identity is a continual process of "production" that is never fully complete. Diaspora itself is a site of identity – one that entails living with and living through differences – and diasporic identities are perpetually evolving and manifesting in distinct ways. The diasporic media space serves as a transnational arena of contestation, where nation, race, gender, class, culture, and language intersect to generate complex identities. In this introductory section, I focus on the young Korean women's use of media and its influence on their identity. My goal is to closely comprehend how they perceive their transnational selves by exploring their overarching concerns, transnational emotions, and reactions. How do they envision themselves? How do they negotiate and reflect these self-portraits in their everyday lives?

This chapter delves into the dynamic interplay between media consumption, everyday life negotiation, and the performance of identity among young Korean women in London. While exploring the "input" and "output" roles of various media platforms, including films, social media, and other forms, the chapter examines how these mediums contribute to the construction of an imaginary West and the

negotiation of life in a cosmopolitan city like London. Drawing from the Participants' experiences, particularly their engagement with romantic comedy films and other media, the chapter investigates the ways in which specific portrayals of London shape their perceptions and expectations. It also explores the communities and networks formed through media consumption, shedding light on how digital spaces facilitate connections and shared experiences. Central to this discussion is the performance of identity on social media, considering the nuanced ways participants present themselves to different audiences, both local and back home. Ultimately, this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of how media engagement influences the participants' understanding of London, their integration into the city, the projection and performance of their identity across diverse symbolic spaces.

Constructing London through mediated imaginations

Media role in shaping imagination emerges as prominent theme within the context of this study. Media, encompassing diverse mediums such as films, television shows, literature, and online platforms, assumes a pivotal role in moulding individuals' cognitive constructs and anticipatory outlooks regarding foreign territories. For the cohort of young Korean women engaging in transnational sojourns to London, the process of conceptualising and constructing the urban landscape was profoundly entwined with mediated imaginings. This section examines the multifaceted ways in which media actively contributed to the participants' preconceived notions of London, thereby accentuating its profound influence on their aspirations, social interactions, and eventual articulations of identity. Notably, media portrayals of London frequently gravitate towards romanticised or embellished images, projecting the global city of London as a crucible of sophistication, cultural dynamism, and boundless prospects. The popular genre of romantic comedies, which the participants often mentioned, captures this image by telling charming love stories set against well-known landmarks in London. These movie stories not only inspire dreams but also create a unique visual language through which people see the city. The appealing charm of charming streets, busy markets, and diverse neighbourhoods depicted in media adds to the creation of an imagined version of

London. This portrayal motivates these young Korean women to relocate to London in the hope of experiencing such idealised version for themselves.

Throughout this research project, the influence of Western modernity and the deeply ingrained Western-centric Korean value perspectives among young Korean women have been emphasised. As demonstrated in previous chapters, these cultural factors have a significant impact on their transnational everyday lives. The media space within transnationalism is often seen as a site where transnational emotions emerge, along with the paradoxical consequences they have on identity construction. Prior to engaging in border-crossing practices, the symbolic media space serves as a crucial arena for young Korean women to experience, generate, review, and reflect on their sense of self and to imagine alternative life possibilities in a place that is "somewhere but not here".

MinJung initially moved to the UK under a working holiday visa. She intentionally chose London over more popular and accessible destinations like Australia and Canada because London held a distinct significance for her. Influenced by her exposure to English and American media, she nurtured a desire to lead a life akin to the portrayals she saw on television:

> "I once avidly consumed a plethora of English and American media productions. I would indulge in listening to music by The Beatles, relishing classic American sitcoms, and fervently following series such as Sherlock. These televised narratives often portrayed expansive households, imbued with an air of familial togetherness, set against the backdrop of carefree and jubilant everyday lives. This depiction of life, brimming with simplicity and mirthful company, starkly contrasts with the realities of existence as we understand it. This exposure instilled in me a yearning to immerse myself in a similar reality depicted in those media portrayals." (MinJung)

SoHee's envisioning of life in London was influenced by her admiration for the American television series "Sex and the City". Beyond romanticising the physical

setting of a specific place, she was particularly drawn to the opulent and carefree lifestyle depicted in such media:

> "I enjoy watching the television series Sex and the City. The lavish lifestyle and elegance showcased by the characters hold particular allure for me. Each protagonist maintains gainful employment and possesses an independent abode, while their interactions primarily revolve around leisurely weekend gatherings for conversations encompassing romantic entanglements and interpersonal relationships. This portrayal suggests a life untouched by financial concerns, contributing to a preconceived notion that existence within a Western context aligns with such carefree extravagance – a life I also aspire to attain."

"Liberty" emerged as a central theme for BoGyong, who linked her decision to relocate to her imaginative connection with London fostered through British music. She acknowledged that while she might not have comprehended all the nuances of English lyrics, the vibrant essence of British music significantly influenced her perception and imagination:

> "I have consistently harboured a profound fascination for Western cultures, including British bands, rock music, and American television series. These cultural influences have significantly shaped my inclinations and contributed to my choice of relocating here. while I may not have initially comprehended the nuances of English lyrics, the inherent dynamism and palpable sense of liberation conveyed through the music held an irresistible allure for me."

The analysis of Western media consumption reveals a pronounced inclination among young Korean women towards Western lifestyles as depicted in Western media products. These desired lifestyles are often characterised by a relaxed regimen and a sense of personal freedom, where individuals can pursue their desires without constraint. Within the framework of traditional Korean social norms and expectations, this yearning for Western lifestyles can be interpreted as an aspiration to cultivate an identity rooted in self-determination and autonomy.

The voices of young Korean women in transnationalism have expressed significant grievances regarding the Korean society's tendency to be excessively attentive and intrusive, with a prevailing sentiment that people care too much and pass unnecessary judgments on others. Their dissatisfaction is deeply rooted in the belief that deviating from societal norms or being perceived as different would lead to ostracization and an inability to fit into Korean society, as highlighted in chapter five on Korean sameness culture. While Western literature portrays identity in postmodern times as individualistic, fluid, and diverse, the Korean context continues to emphasise a "social, other-related mutual recognition" of identity (Kellner, 1992, p.141-142; Kim, 2002, p.245). Consequently, these young women find themselves in a stressful social environment where self-chosen identities may lead to isolation. Despite their pursuit of a new self and a different way of life through transnational movements, the question remains: Do these young Korean women ultimately achieve their long-standing yearning for a new identity? Gillespie (2012) suggests that the diasporic media space serves as a transnational arena of contestation, where notions of nation, race, gender, class, culture, and language continuously intersect to produce complex identities. Particularly in an era of global mass migration, the emergence of new forms of transnational mobility and media dissemination engenders unpredictable patterns of identification, as well as insecurities and uncertainties surrounding notions of being and belonging in the world.

Navigating London through everyday use of media

The study of the relationship between media and migration is a relatively new area of research that is currently being explored. Recent studies have begun to establish connections between media and global migration, recognising the significant role of media as a pull factor in the migratory process (King and Wood, 2001). Media usage creates symbolic spaces where diasporas can connect and reflect on their social and cultural existence both before and after their transnational movements. As Kim (2011) asserts, "those who wish to move and those who have moved rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of the media" (p.7). Young Korean women

residing in the global city of London extensively engage with media contents. In their complex transnational social context, where their existence and positionality are constantly subject to self-doubt and negotiation, their use of media can be understood as a significant cultural mechanism (Kim, 2011) that shapes and reconstructs their transnational self-consciousness. Prior to their migration to London, their engagement with media shaped their imagination of the West, as they consumed Western media to envision alternative lifestyles in another place. However, upon their arrival in the envisioned destination, do they continue to use media in the same way? The unpleasant and challenging realities of transnational life, juxtaposed with their hopeful aspirations for a better life based on their idealised image of the West, create a dominant mental conflict in their everyday transnationalism, resulting in an unresolved identity and life politics. This section aims to present the media landscape within their transnational experiences and examine how identity constantly undergoes shifts in these symbolic spaces. By exploring the dual role of media in transnational migration, I seek to demonstrate that identity construction operates at a performative level within diasporic groups. The transnational complexities and daily struggles faced by young Korean women, coupled with the influence of Western-centric Korean value perspectives, become crucial cultural dynamics that shape the emergence of their transnational performative identity.

Western and Ethnic Media? "No Longer Interested."

The scholarly literature on media consumption within diasporic communities is extensive. When diasporas experience social exclusion or marginalisation in their host society, they tend to respond in two distinct ways. The first response strategy involves importing more culturally acceptable media from their homeland, a phenomenon referred to as transnational media. The second response strategy entails creating locally based media that serves as an alternative to the commercially and publicly available media offerings (Hopkins, 2009). Diasporas are often seen as marginalised transnational subjects, leading to the assumption that their media

consumption is closely tied to content produced in their homeland or content related to their homeland.

Following their arrival in London, young Korean women experience a profound transformation in their lives and environment. The land they once envisioned becomes their tangible transnational social sphere, characterised by a sense of rapidity and constant change. In response to these rapid shifts, their media consumption patterns undergo a notable transformation. Media, which previously served as a means to construct reflective spaces for envisioning a new self and a different way of life, now assumes a role in negotiating and reconstructing their identity amidst the interplay of their old and new selves. Consequently, Western media products, which previously held a privileged position in creating symbolic spaces and facilitating self-reflection, appear to have diminished in prominence.

MinJung had avidly consumed a plethora of English and American media, an activity that fuelled her imaginative fascination with London and nurtured a deep longing to manifest that imagination within the city itself. However, upon her actual arrival in London, she found herself less inclined to delve further into the symbolic realm portrayed by media, opting instead to fully embrace the vivid reality she was experiencing:

> "I don't watch television. Primarily, this stems from a lack of available time. My current circumstances demand my full attention and involvement, leaving me little room for leisurely pursuit such as television. Afterall, the unfolding events in my own life are vividly real and compelling enough to occupy my focus."

Similarly, HyeJin also experienced a shift in her consumption of Western media products. She attributed this change to her immersion in the mundane aspects of her transnational reality, leading her to perceive everything portrayed in the media as "fictional". As her own lived experiences took precedence, her engagement with the imaginative constructs presented in media diminished:

> "Television no longer holds the same allure it once did for me. Even American TV series, which once captivated my imagination, have lost their lustre. This shift in perspective might be attributed to my current residence in this Western context. The exposure to real-life experiences has dispelled the romanticised notions I once held. I now recognise the commonality of human traits across cultures. Just like anywhere else, Western societies encompass a spectrum of personalities, from the superficial to the prejudiced. The disparity between the fictional narratives of shows like Modern Family or Friends and the complexities of actual life has become evident to me."

The shift away from consuming Western media among young Korean women signifies a transition from the realm of imagination to the realm of reality. The significance of imagination diminishes as they confront the actualities of life, prompting them to engage in the negotiation of their existence and positionality within tangible physical spaces, rather than relying solely on symbolic imaginative realms. The awareness and active negotiation of their ontological existence in these physical spaces stimulate their desire for a more interactive approach to their lived experiences.

SoHee deliberately chose to distance herself from engaging with ethnic and national media, aiming to immerse herself more in the English language and content that is closely aligned with her present transnational status:

> "I deliberately abstain from engaging with ethnic media, particularly Korean content. This intentional choice stems from my desire to focus on honing my English language skills and dedicating more time to conversing with English-speaking individuals, as I am already surrounded by Korean interactions through regular communication with family and friends".

In contrast, MinJung expressed a sense of detachment from both Western and Korean media, perceiving them as somewhat superficial or unserious. This perspective highlights her shift away from relying on media representations as a

guiding force in her understanding of her new environment, suggesting a preference for more direct interactions with her surroundings:

> "I do not give significant attention to either Korean or Western media content. My media consumption is primarily driven by the desire for entertainment. What matters most to me is the enjoyment factor, regardless of the specific content's origin. However, I have found myself straddling a middle ground. Previously, consuming Western media gave me a sense of hope and the belief that life could be drastically different. Yet, now that I am physically present in a Western capital and have experienced this reality, my needs have shifted. I seek empathy and genuine connections, which I find lacking in Western media. As for Korean media, is it centred on elements like K-pop or K-dramas? These are primarily focused on constructing images rather than depicting real like. When it comes to Korean politics, it often feels like a joke, exemplified by the issues surrounding the Park Geun-Hye government[6]."

MinJi's transnational experience reflected a notable shift in her media consumption patterns, particularly concerning the content she engaged with. Her transnational journey prompted her to reassess the types of media she consumed, moving away from traditional forms like television and towards more interactive and personalised online platforms. This shift indicates a nuanced adaptation to her new environment, as she sought out media content that aligned with her evolving experiences and social awareness:

> "My experiences in this new environment have led me to engage more with current global trends, particularly those related to humanity, animal rights, and feminism. These issues are at the forefront of public discourse, and I am keen on staying well-informed and up to date. Additionally, I find myself drawn to narratives and news stories featuring fellow Koreans living abroad. For instance, I was deeply moved by a story about a Korean girl residing in LA who became a victim of an attack due to her Korean

[6] During the time of my fieldwork, impeachment against former president of South Korea Park Geun-Hye was the biggest social and political event going on in South Korea. Park was accused for involving interventions to her presidency from her aide. The political scandal eventually led to Park's removal from the Blue House and 24 years sentence in prison.

> identity. Such incidents elicit strong emotional responses from me. Residing in London has also sparked my interest in pressing social matters, notably diversity, gender, and race. I hold a fervent desire to witness more media portrayals of these subjects within Korean media. Regrettably, the Korean media industry appears to prioritise entertainment over addressing these vital issues."

The interest and engagement of these young Korean women with political matters appears to be limited in scope. Apart from a mild disappointment with the political situation in Korea, such as the Park Geun-Hye political scandal and impeachment, their engagement with ethnic media from their home country and Korean news is primarily driven by a sense of obligation to stay informed for the purpose of conversation with family and friends back in Korea. Instead, their main motivation for media consumption is for entertainment purposes, described as "just for fun". In their quest for empathy and connection, these women often find themselves in a state of confusion when it comes to media consumption. As they navigate their "in-between" status, they struggle to find a sense of belonging in both Korean and Western media. Upon their arrival in the global city of London, their transnational reality constructs a new symbolic space where emotional connection becomes crucial for securing their ontological existence. They perceive Western/British media as lacking connection and relevance to their lives, while they view Korean media as unrealistic and not serious. This alienation from media produced in both the Korean and Western contexts creates a sense of disengagement within both settings. Consequently, their desire for connections, coupled with their transnational experiences, leads them to gravitate towards diasporic media spaces such as social media where they can manage their identity at a performative level.

Navigating Transnationalism: "Internet and Social Media are My Life."

Within this context, the internet emerges as a pivotal symbolic space that facilitates interactive negotiations for these young Korean women. MinJi, for instance, explicitly stated that traditional media, such as television, no longer holds much significance for her. In contrast, the internet has become an indispensable

component of her life, reflecting its role as a dynamic platform for accessing and engaging with information, ideas, and narratives:

> "No, I do not consider myself a regular consumer of traditional media in this context, particularly in terms of news consumption. It appears that a considerable number of individuals nowadays rely on traditional media outlets for staying informed about current events. However, I personally do not engage with news reading, and political matters hold little interest for me. In fact, I have forgone the presence of a television in my life. instead, the internet serves as an integral part of my daily routine, from the moment I wake up until my bedtime."

The smartphone and social media have swiftly evolved into the new frontier of transnational interactions, where a multitude of cross-border experiences and exchanges unfold. This digital landscape has become a nexus for diverse forms of transnational engagement, encapsulating the multifaceted interactions that encompass various aspects of individuals' lives across geographic boundaries. JiHae recognises the pivotal role of her smartphone, which serves as the embodiment of her comprehensive transnational social connections and networks:

> "My reliance on my smartphone is substantial, and it is indispensability in my daily life is undeniable. Traditional television occupies a marginal space in my interests, as I find myself deeply engaged in the virtual realm of social media. The ubiquity of smartphones is remarkable, as it seamlessly integrates into every facet of my existence. My communication channels are primarily facilitated through platforms like Instagram and Kakao Talk, while my pursuit of information is predominantly channelled through this device."

InJung further attested to the pivotal role of online platforms, with a special emphasis on Instagram. She regards Instagram as a significant interactive domain and a crucial social connection for her:

> "I am inclined towards online platforms, particularly in the current era where a wealth of information is readily available on the internet. My

> engagement on Instagram is notable, as it facilitates meaningful interactions with my friends in Korea, who derive pleasure from my shared content. It feels like Instagram is now my entire transnational connection."

The interactive nature of the Internet serves as a platform for young Korean women to stage, produce, and re-create their own identities within the context of transnationalism. Their frequent utilisation of the Internet, particularly social media platforms, underscores their desire to communicate and express their sense of belonging. Extensive discussions have been conducted regarding the influence of global Western ideology on Korean cultural capitals and the prevalence of West-centric value perspectives within Korean society. These cultural encounters have been found to significantly impact the transnational experiences and identity shifts of young Korean women. In light of this specific cultural context, it is pertinent to explore how these women position themselves in relation to the media content they choose to engage with while navigating transnationalism and seeking channels for communication and expression of their sense of belonging. Contrary to the conventional assumption that they primarily engage with Korean media content, their self-perception and understanding of themselves and the world around them are, in fact, more diverse and complex, particularly considering their "not-so-glamorous" transnational reality in London characterised by language barriers, racial discrimination, and other challenges discussed in previous chapters.

Paradoxical Formation of Digital Communities

The discourse surrounding two distinct social media platforms, namely Facebook and Instagram, has surfaced in the course of my engagement with these young Korean women. The participants have employed the term "tool" and associated expression to define their use of Facebook, as well as to expound upon the significance this specific platform holds for them. As discerned through multiple instances within this study, it becomes evident that previous research within the realm of diaspora and transnationalism studies frequently inclines towards the romanticisation of diasporic communities, often portraying them as unified entities that are bonded with strong

ties. This tendency to depict a seemingly cohesive unit, however, largely disregards the nuanced heterogeneity inherent within homogenous diasporic collectives. Consequently, a pressing exigency arises to delve further into the paradoxes inherent in the construction of digital communities and networks within these diverse diasporic contexts.

To commence, a considerable number of participants designated Facebook as "old-fashioned" and deemed it unsuitable for establishing their transnational connections:

JiHae, who was once an active user of Facebook, now maintains an account but is no longer active on the platform. She elucidated her choice:

> "For me, it faded away. No one around me is active on Facebook anymore. Initially, I felt overwhelmed by the excessive microtargeted advertisements. Subsequently, I realised that I could no longer engage with my friends on the platform."

MinJung, the only participant who granted me access to her Facebook account, similarly employed the term "tool" to characterise her utilisation of the platform.

> "I am not active on Facebook. The only reason I still keep an account is because of those groups I joined, to gain some useful information sometimes."

According to the participants to this study, the largest Korean "digital community" is a private Facebook group named KOMO-UK, with more than 10k members.

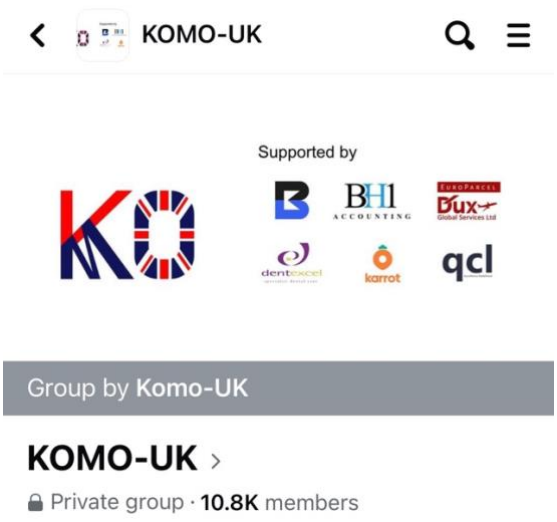

Figure 12 Private group exclusive to Koreans living in the UK

(picture provided by participant InJung, who is a member of this group)

Nevertheless, despite their membership in the group, many of them do not perceive KOMO-UK as a community formed through their utilisation of media within the transnational context. InJung, who is a member of this private group, elucidated her rationale and offered her definition of what constitutes a community:

> "Perhaps, from a technical perspective, it could be considered a community. However, my engagement with it is primarily focused on seeking solutions to practical issues related to my transnational life, such as visas and professional opportunities. I do not personally perceive it as a community where I have emotional interactions with others."

Within the context of this study, a significant number of participants exhibit a notable lack of intention to actively form or participate in any form of Korean communities, particularly within their transnational environment. This perspective is rooted in their positioning within a globalised context, where their experiences and aspirations extend beyond national boundaries. As residents of the global city of London, they express a preference for engagement within a more diverse setting. This inclination reflects their desire to embrace a broader spectrum of cultural experience as well as the longing to accumulate cultural capital within their transnationalism.

MinJung deliberately avoids close contact with her fellow Koreans in both her physical life in London and extends this disposition to her use of media and construction of digital space:

> "When discussing Korea, I find myself using phrases like 'the other Koreans', effectively excluding myself from the group, even though I am Korean myself. This critical self-reflection makes me question whether it is right to distance myself in such a manner, as I am still undeniably Korean. I deliberately choose not to take national airlines, despite their lower cost, simply because of my aversion to all things Korean. The thought of interacting with Korean people also causes me considerable distress. I look for information at local English websites, I don't check Korean people's travel blog when planning for a trip. I don't go to Korean church; Korean church is a crime."

In this dynamic, the platform of Instagram emerges as a particularly noteworthy. For these young Korean women, Instagram offers an interactive space where they can effectively create and cultivate networks that transcend geographical limitations, thereby enabling the formation of a global community that resonates with their cosmopolitan inclinations.

Crafting identity on Instagram: Visualisation and Performances

In the preceding section, I have contended that young Korean women, in their transition from consuming traditional media, exhibit a preference for more dynamic media platforms in their transnational experiences for the purpose of showcasing their everyday lives. It becomes evident that the internet holds significant importance in their lives. For these women, the internet is no longer solely a medium for simple information exchange; rather, the complexities inherent in their transnationalism have heightened their demand for more interactive means to renegotiate and reconstruct their transnational experiences and the resulting implications for their identities. Specifically, young Korean women who have

relocated to the global city of London, as transnational displaced individuals, are perpetually seeking connections in both their physical and symbolic transnational realms.

JiHae's reliance on her smartphone is pronounced, as she estimates spending around 18 hours per day with it. the substantial engagement underscores the pervasive role of social media in her daily life, marking a significant and consistent aspect of her everyday interactions. the integration of social media has seamlessly woven itself into her routine, reflecting its status as an essential tool for communication, information access, and self-expression in her transnational journey:

> "Social media has become an integral part of my daily routine, with a substantial amount of my time devoted to its usage. It serves as a crucial platform for me to maintain a connection with my life and engage with others, spanning both my current locale and my homeland in Korea."

MinJung's perspective on social media is noteworthy, as she considers both western and Korean media to be superficial in nature. In contrast, she attaches significance to Instagram within the context of her transnational experiences. This choice reflects a nuanced shift in her media consumption patterns:

> "Instagram holds a unique and essential role in my media consumption repertoire. I do not use it primarily for social interactions. instead, I have come to regard Instagram as a personal repository of memories, a digital archive where I curate and store moments that resonate with me. Through the browsing of feeds that align with my interests, I am able to engage with content that holds significance to my transnational journey and daily experiences. This distinctive usage of Instagram reflects its capacity to serve as a dynamic tool for preserving and revisiting my transnational journey."

Similar to the experiences of other women who participated in this study, BoGyong also recognised the comparative ease of establishing social connections through

online platforms compared to the challenges of forging connections in the physical realm:

> "Establishing connections in the physical realm can be challenging, yet surprisingly, establishing online friendships on Instagram proves to be comparatively effortless. While I am fully aware that these virtual connections do not equate to real-life friendships, the positive reactions and interactions sparked by my posts offer a sense of satisfaction and engagement."

Based on my previous examination (refer to Chapter Five and Chapter Six), it becomes evident that young Korean women's transnationalism is rife with contradictions. The less-than-ideal transnational reality disrupts their ontological security within their new social environment, compelling them to actively seek a sense of belonging. It appears that their utilisation of digital platforms, particularly social media, offers novel avenues for self-expression and symbolic inclusion. Instagram, specifically chosen as the platform for (re)constructing their transnational experiences and identities, serves as a repository for their mediated encounters. They perceive it as an archive, where their habits and strategies for (re)negotiating and (re)creating their sense of belonging in the diasporic digital space are developed and preserved. Appadurai (1996) asserts that media platforms provide resources for self-imaging and act as catalysts for the formation of diasporic spheres, given the multitude of forms in which media appears and its rapid circulation in daily routines. It is essential to not only comprehend the reasons behind young Korean women's shift from traditional media to digital platforms but also investigate their manner of engagement with these platforms and the consequent impacts on their identity transformations. Within the diasporic media space of young Korean women, visual representation of transnationalism, participation in both local and home communities, and self-promotion emerge as pivotal themes that can be discerned through their media engagements in transnationalism.

Visualising Transnationalism on Instagram

For young Korean women navigating the transnational social field, the visual representation of their transnational identity holds great significance, as digital platforms within the diaspora context capture and document their micro-level everyday experiences. The digital archive serves as a crucial space for these women to repeatedly revisit, reflect upon, and refine their transnational trajectory, ontological existence, and positionality. Notably, prevailing perspectives on media engagement among displaced individuals in diaspora often highlight a "search for social security", leading to a reliance on home communication channels. However, such a focus on symbolic inclusion and engagement with ethnic media by displaced subjects may diminish their interest in and connections to the host society (Kim, 2011). In the case of young Korean women residing in London, as discussed in previous sections, the pursuit of social ontological security through home communication channels does not adequately capture their experiences. Their lack of emotional connections within both the Korean and Western media contexts compels them to explore alternative strategies for restoring and redefining their sense of ontological security within the transnational social field. In this context, young Korean women in the diaspora recognise the equal importance of engaging with both local and home communities through their self-created digital space.

Rather than passively consuming media and feeling a sense of disconnection, young Korean women in London have taken the initiative to create their own transnational media space by actively engaging with social media, specifically Instagram. This digital platform and the symbolic media sphere it engenders have provided a balance for these women, seemingly enabling them to establish a sense of ontological security, maintain social ties and accumulate cultural capital within the realm of transnationalism.

MinJi, who upholds an active online presence, employs Instagram as her principal platform for fostering transnational connections. She underscores the pivotal role of Instagram's visualising function in facilitating this process:

> "Engaging with social media, particularly Instagram, has become my primary means of maintaining connections with friends both in my current London environment and those back in Korea. As my life has undergone a shift towards London, it has become imperative to foster a social network within this new setting. Simultaneously, sustaining bonds with friends back home remains crucial as they constitute my foundational support. Instagram visualises my life spanning various locations, both my friends back home in Korea and people I meet here in London will be able to see what is happening with my life."

Visualisation on Instagram provides a platform for these young Korean women to stage, curate, and perform their transnational experiences, positionality and self. In resonance with Goffman's (1959) definition of the "front", their participation within the realm of social media serves as a stage where they craft and curate their outward "appreance" and "manner", tailored to collectively embody the role of "social elites" as defined within the discourse of Korean society.

The visualisation of their transnationalism on Instagram centres around two primary themes: the ultimate art experience and travel around exotic Europe/UK. Within the Korean context, London is portrayed with its artistic vibes, as extensively expressed from different dimensions by the Korean women who participated in this study. The freedom of mobility across Europe and the UK is also perceived as a form of capital and privilege within Korean discourse. In particular, the notion of "Europe travel" (유럽여행) reveals a sense of posh taste and status. These two major themes are evident as key representation of transnationalism throughout the Instagram feeds of young Korean women. I will now provide two examples to illustrate this point.

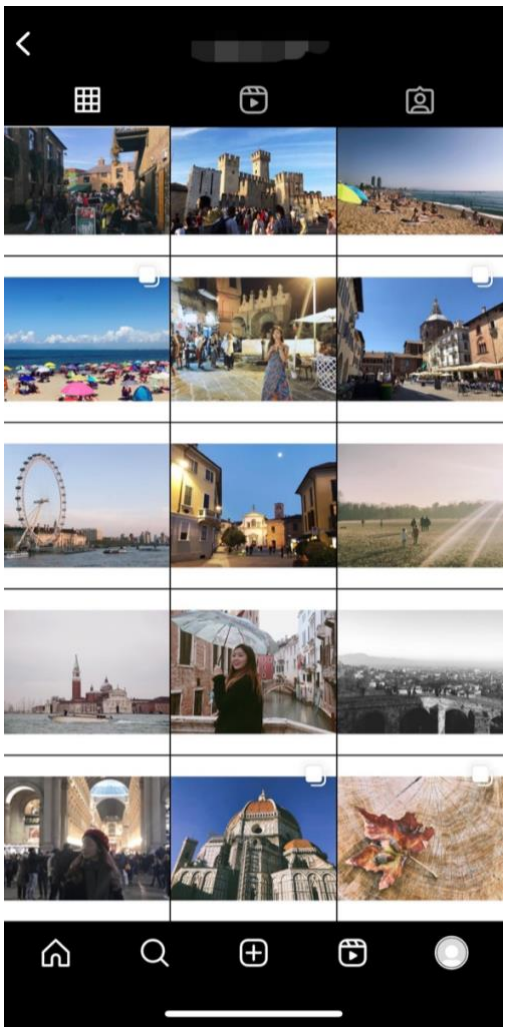

Figure 13 JiHae's Instagram feed

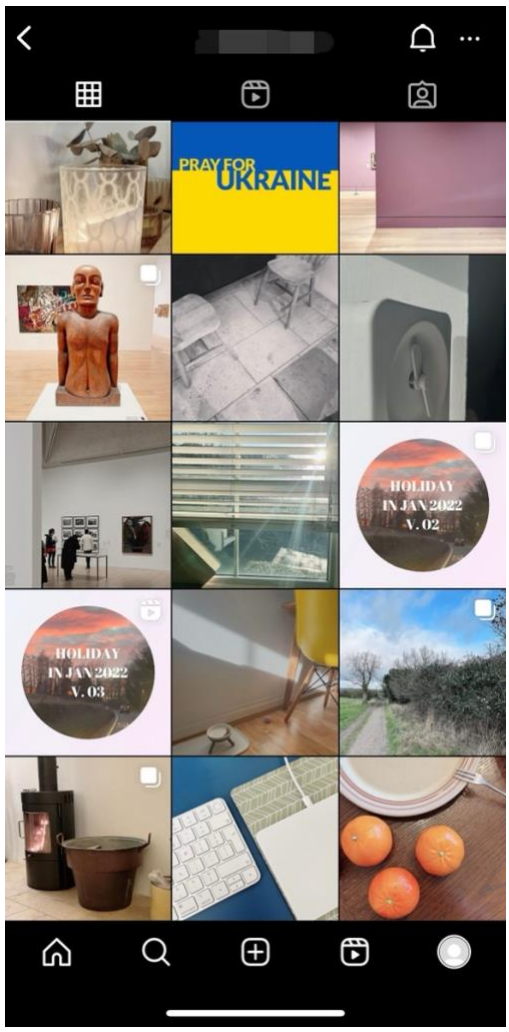

Figure 14 InJung's Instagram feed

JiHae dedicates considerable effort to curate her Instagram feed. A random screenshot of her Instagram feed I took reveals a deliberate focus on presenting her transnational status, capturing moments from her life in London and weekend escapades across Europe. In a departure from the practices of other participants, JiHae keeps her Instagram account public, aiming to draw a wider audience to her visual narrative of life in London. Her content curation strategy on Instagram is marked by a calculated approach, shaped by her understanding of the preferences of Korean viewers.

> "Travelling around Europe is remarkably convenient here. However, in Korea, it is not as straightforward and often carries connotations of social status – signifying one's financial means and available leisure time.

> People tend to be intrigued by such content, as a significant portion of them harbour a sense of envy towards those residing in Western countries."

JiHae's curation of her transnational life on Instagram provides a compelling insight into the substantial influence of perceived cultural capital on the self-representation of these women in a transnational context. Through the careful selection and presentation of images showcasing her London experiences and European excursions, JiHae not only captures her personal journey but also strategically aligns herself with the perceived prestige associated with such transnational movement. Her deliberate focus on highlighting travel serves as a means of conveying a certain cultural capital, signalling her access to a cosmopolitan lifestyle that is often revered and envied within the Korean cultural context. In this way, her visual depiction on Instagram reflects a conscious effort to leverage her transnational experiences as markers of status and distinction, resonating with the broader themes of aspiration and distinction that permeate the narratives of these young Korean women.

On the other hand, InJung holds the perspective that cultivating an artistic-themed Instagram feed aligns better with her status as a London resident. She recognises London's reputation as a prominent artistic hub within Korean society, and therefore, the visualisation of her transnationalism on Instagram is strategically tailored to resonate with this perception. As she indicates:

> "In light of my job in the field of art, London holds a distinctive reputation as a global art hub. By sharing art-related content on Instagram, I amable to amplify my profile as an art worker/designer. It not only enhances my personal image but also has practical implications. It opens doors to potential professional opportunities, such as collaborations with Korean artists, galleries, and art-related firms."

JiHae and InJung, representing prominent examples among the participants, illustrate distint strategies in the construction and performance of their transnational identity. They represent two different approaches to visualising

transnationalism on social media - JiHae strategically employs perceived cultural capital to assert her social status, leveraging her visual portrayal on Instagram to align with prevailing ideals. On the other hand, InJung adopts a reverse trajectory, accumulating capital through her perceived social status as a London-based art professional. These divergent approaches shed light on the nuanced ways in which these young Korean women navigate the visual articulation of their transnational experiences. Moreover, these examples offer a foundational basis for a deeper exploration into the mechanisms through which they craft and perform their identities within the diasporic context.

Performing Transnationalism on Instagram

Young Korean women's mediated experiences within the transnational digital space serve various purposes. It serves as a means to connect with friends and family members back home, a self-determined effort to establish a social network in London, a source of pleasure in presenting and enacting their transnational everyday experiences, and an outlet for expressing complex transnational emotions. Therefore, their engagement within such spaces is inherently intertwined with multiple cultural factors.

From the previous section, we acknowledged the pivotal role of capital in visualising young korean women's transnationalism on Instagram. This aspect now propels us into the realm of examining not just the static portrayal of transnational identity, but the dynamic and performative dimensions that Instagram offers as a stage for the enactment of their transnational narratives.

SoHee acknowledges a discernible pattern she has observed upon reflecting on her approach to Instagram posting.

> "I have noticed the intriguing shifts in how I present myself on Instagram. My approach tends to shift based on the intended audience. With my Korean friends, their curiosity leans toward my life in London, prompting

> me to showcase that aspect prominently. On the other hand, among my London friends, my Korean identity becomes a distinct facet, prompting me to embrace and highlight a touch of my Koreanness."

SoHee's articulation resonates with Kim's (2011) assertion that identity politics of young Korean women in transnationalism can be characterised by their navigation and code-switching within the diasporic media space. This practice is seen as a vital necessity in their quest for establishing and securing their transnational existence and social ontological security. While "being international/British" and "being Korean" serve as cultural codes imbued with distinct meanings, these women deliberately alternate between these codes to perform their identity in different cultural contexts, thereby maintaining and safeguarding their transnational positionality.

The emergence of "Britishness" and British identity takes centre stage within the Instagram profiles of young Korean women, signifying a complex interplay between their transnational experiences and the symbolic resonance of their host society. Among these narratives, YooNa's portrayal stands out as an intriguing example, illuminating the multifaceted ways in which she strategically employed "being international/being British" to shape and perform her transnational identity.

YooNa presents a paradoxical persona – an embodiment of what she terms the "ultimate Korean". Despite her extensive exposure to life outside of Korea and her immersion in British cultural aesthetics on her Instagram feed, she self-identifies as possessing an undeniably Korean mindset. Her deep affinity for Korean cuisine and her cultural values remain rooted in her Korean heritage, reflecting the complex ways in which transnational experiences intersect with unwavering ties to one's origin. YooNa's Instagram feed portrays a quintessentially British countryside lifestyle, replete with images capturing the serene beauty of rural landscapes. In one of her posts, she deliberately features her second son's British passport, a seemingly incongruous addition. This strategic inclusion transcends its immediate relevance and act as a cultural code introduced to delineate her transnational positionality. It

is noteworthy that neither YooNa nor her husband held British citizenship nor possessed prior social ties to the UK. However, the deliberate staging on Instagram of her son's British passport symbolises a profound cultural mark – as I have discussed in chapter six – her transnational success. In this light, "Britishness" operates as a cultural code that signifies her attainment of an identity milestone, aligning with the overarching goal of many Korean migrants: securing citizenship.

YooNa's case encapsulates the nuanced performative nature of identity representation on Instagram. The use of "Britishness" as both a visual and symbolic language within her Instagram post illustrates the convergence of cultural codes and performance in diasporic digital space.

Figure 15 YooNa's Instagram post of her mixed-race son

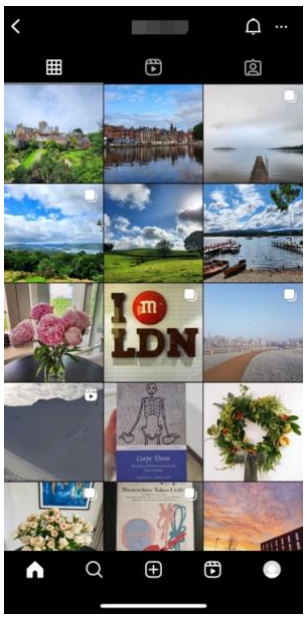

Figure 16 Random screenshot of YooNa's Instagram feed

JiHae also integrates "Britishness" as a cultural signifier and a performative element within her transnational identity. In one of her Instagram posts, she captions: "I appear like I have had some foreign water", which alludes to her assimilation into British style.

Figure 17 JiHae's post translates:"I appear like I have had some foreign water."

MinJi introduces another dimension for enacting identity within her transnational experience, strategically aligning her performance with specific situations:

> "My approach to interacting with various groups of people tends to adapt to the distinct expectations associated with each. For my friends and family back home, who hold a specific perception of my life in London, I aim to align more closely with that image. This divergence also influences how I craft my captions, with variations based on my comprehension of the cultural nuances within each language. For instance, in English, terms like 'baby', 'darling', and 'dear are commonly used and well-received, whereas I might refrain from employing such language in my Korean posts."

In essence, the identity of young Korean women in the diaspora is not fixed or merely constructed; rather, it is a context-dependent process where they assess, evaluate, and determine which aspect of their identity is most suitable for a given situation. More specifically, the act of switching between the two cultural codes reveals that these women are continually searching for distinctive characteristics in their transnationalism that facilitate the establishment and maintenance of both physical

and emotional connections. Moreover, such performances of identity within the diasporic media space also serve to solidify their social status back home in Korea. As discussed in chapter five, the cultural expectations and assumptions of "living in a Western capital" still exert a significant influence on the navigation of their identity performances. It is worth noting that these young Korean women in transnationalism face a struggle to break free from the cultural burden of pursuing their "true self" but simultaneously endeavour to uphold a transnational image that aligns with traditional Korean assumptions and expectations of "being international". This paradoxical mindset extends into their diasporic media space, where their extensive engagement in self-promotion through social media platforms celebrates their "international self". As emphasised by many of the participants in this research project, residing in London amplifies their visibility and provides a platform for showcasing their transnational identities.

Summary

In this chapter, a comprehensive analysis of the media usage and identity politics of young Korean women in the diaspora residing in London is presented and discussed. Responding to the literature reviewed in previous chapters concerning the 'in and out' role of media, the chapter initially examines the input role of media in constructing the imagination of London for these young Korean women. It then investigates whether this input role of media remains consistent after their move, revealing that young Korean women in the diaspora no longer engage with Western and ethnic media. Instead, they navigate transnationalism through the social sphere of the internet and social media. By discussing the paradoxical formation of digital communities, the chapter further explores how social media is utilised to articulate the complexities of diasporic identities in the context of negotiating modernity.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, young Korean women residing in London navigate a complex landscape in defining their positionality, as there exists an indistinct boundary between cosmopolitanism and Westernisation. They perceive 'cosmopolitanising', 'westernising', or 'internationalising' as equivalent endeavours

signifying their adoption of Western cultural values and social norms. Consequently, an individual's adjustment to Western cultural values and social norms becomes the measure of their cosmopolitan outlook. The label of 'being Korean' carries negative connotations for young Korean women in London, socially constructed with interpretations implying a perceived lack of advancement compared to the so-called Western modernity. Conversely, within the Korean community, 'Britishness' holds profound cultural capital, fostering bias and prejudice. Hence, the notion of a collective 'Korean identity' appears oversimplified. Infusing a touch of 'Britishness' into their transnational selves not only wields symbolic influence within the Korean diasporic community but also significantly impacts their social standing in Korea.

Subsequently, the latter part of this chapter delves into the output role of media to examine how these intricate notions inform the performative aspects of young Korean women's diasporic identity. By observing their engagement with Instagram, the analysis reveals that, to assert their social standing, maintain social connections, and achieve symbolic inclusion, young Korean women employ 'being Korean' and 'being international' as cultural codes shaping their identity politics within transnationalism. Consequently, the construction of their diasporic identity emerges as a contest-based process, wherein these individuals critically assess and deliberate upon which facets of their identity are most suitable for a given situation.

Chapter 8 Negotiation and Recognition of Multiculturalism

As noted by Stuart Hall (2000), “Just as there are different multi-cultural societies there are very different ‘multiculturalisms’ (p.210)”. The term “multiculturalism”, circulating within the global context, holds specific interpretations that vary in different local circumstances. Nye (2007) defines multiculturalism as a conceptual framework encompassing the complex range of issues related to cultural and religious diversity in society, as well as the social management of the challenges and opportunities posed by such diversity. However, within the context of Korea, often described as a “mono-ethnic society” by the government and its people, multiculturalism takes on an ideology shaped by perceptions of the Western world and its functioning. An interesting finding during my fieldwork was that the socially constructed concept of multiculturalism within Korean society carries its own implicit cultural meanings, divergent from the common understanding prevalent elsewhere.

While multiculturalism is a crucial theme in contemporary political philosophy and has been extensively studied in Euro-American societies, it remains relatively novel and unfamiliar with the Korean context, with limited exploration. From a social science perspective, the mainstream academic discourse in Korea often links multiculturalism to the rapid increase of migrant workers and international marriages, particularly referring to Korean men seeking romantic partners from less developed countries. Consequently, the current multicultural discourse in Korea is shaped by its distinct articulations.

In this section, I aim to focus on how Korean society interprets multiculturalism differently, as it is vital to comprehend the mentality of young Korean women in dealing with multiculturalism in their transnational everyday lives. I seek to understand how these women position themselves in multicultural settings and refine their multicultural consciousness within the transnational social field. My data reflects the general understanding of multiculturalism in contemporary Korea, with a specific emphasis on the discussions of these young women and their approach to

defining a multicultural society. These discourses substantiate their Western-centric subconsciousness regarding race and society. I intend to demonstrate that even in a multicultural society, these women's struggles with multiculturalism and diversity persist. The conflict between their entrenched Korean values and transitional perspectives being shaped by multiculturalism only serves to refine their multicultural consciousness within the transnational social field at a theoretical level.

The Rhetoric of Multiculturalism in Korea

"Multicultural"- based terms have been frequently observed in Korean society since the 1980s. However, initially, these terms were framed in political contexts to serve government propaganda. Consequently, the framing of multiculturalism within the Korean context often aligns with the model of integration. This approach to framing multiculturalism is highly controversial, as Korean scholars define it as the "assimilation" of foreigners into mainstream Korean social protocols and life policies (Kim and Kang, 2007). Such a theoretical framework reflects the hierarchical treatment of foreigners and the underlying racial ranking policy prevalent within Korean society (see chapter two and chapter six).

In Korea, international students are expected to attend lectures in the Korean language, even if these lectures are marked on the course syllabus as "English conducted learning". Foreigners are also expected to adhere to Korean social norms in their interactions, such as using the appropriate "respect style" of Korean language while speaking to a senior. Lack of knowledge in the Korean language is not considered an acceptable excuse. Migrant workers are likewise expected to fully comprehend and adapt to Korean professional workplaces, which may include working extra hours without additional pay, and the understanding that "your boss is your king", meaning one cannot leave work earlier than their boss. Ironically, these social standards are not uniformly applied.

Reflecting on my conversations with young Korean women in London about multiculturalism, an incident from my past in Korea comes to mind:

“During my enrolment in a master’s program at a prestigious university in Korea, I noticed that the majority of master-level courses in the department were conducted in English, despite the fact that 95% of the students were local Koreans. International students, including myself, were required to pass the highest level of the TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) exam for admission. While this language choice initially seemed beneficial to me due to my lack of confidence in academic-level Korean, I soon encountered challenges related to language and cultural dynamics.

At the beginning of each new term, I consistently requested that lecturers be conducted in English. However, my Korean classmates would disregard my request, insisting on switching to Korean during lectures and seminars. Being the only international student in the class, my preference for English seemed to hold little weight. This situation persisted until the third semester when a white, male exchange student from the Netherlands joined the class.

On that day, a remarkable change occurred. Everyone in the lecture hall suddenly began speaking English, including the professor, who previously criticised my Korean language skills. During the self-introduction session, which we routinely did at the beginning of every term, my Korean classmates confidently introduced themselves in English (only) to the Dutch exchange student. This incident led me to recall the same professor’s module from the previous term when he accused me of not speaking properly due to a mistake I made in the ‘respect style’ of Korean language during class.

As I reflected on this experience, I came to the realisation that the issue was not solely related to language proficiency in Korean or English. Rather, it was connected to perceptions of foreignness and appearance. As an Asian student with a similar skin tone to my Korean classmates, I did not fit their preconceived notion of a ‘foreign’ individual, resulting in a differential treatment compared to the Dutch exchange student.

Field notes, Jun 2017

The contradictory social standards prevalent in Korean society exemplify the rhetorical nature of multiculturalism. while the concept of multiculturalism is celebrated in the Korean context as a recognition of diverse cultures, it is, in fact, limited to an acknowledgement of individuals who are willing to conform to the official narratives of what constitutes Korean tradition. This form of multiculturalism is not based on appreciating and embracing different cultures themselves but rather "an acknowledgement of individuals as representative of these cultures who are willing to emulate the representation of official-led narratives of what counts as Korean tradition" (Watson, 2012, p.236).

This cultural policy is not universally applied to all foreigners. Instead, the visibility of cultural differences becomes a defining factor for being considered "multicultural". Consequently, multiculturalism in Korea remains largely rhetorical and does not operate at a practical level. This approach is influenced by the global western ideology that narrows and shapes how multiculturalism is perceived with Korean society.

The implications of this limited multiculturalism have significant effects on the young Korean women's understanding of the concept. Through their discussions on multiculturalism, it becomes evident that their experiences living in a global city like London do not necessarily lead to an enhanced recognition of the multicultural situation in Korea. However, their transnational experiences offer a reflexive space that allows them to refine their multicultural consciousness.

By exploring the perspectives of young Korean women on multiculturalism, this study aims to elucidate their distinct understanding of a multicultural society. Their transnational experiences contribute to a deeper reflection on multiculturalism, offering valuable insights into the complexities of identity, culture, and diversity in both Korean and transnational contexts.

A Different understanding of multiculturalism in Korea

In the Korean context, the framework for understanding the concept of multiculturalism differs significantly from the contemporary understanding found in other parts of the world. Multiculturalism in Korea is primarily associated with migrant workers and female marriage migrants originating from less developed countries. As a result, most studies related to multiculturalism within the Korean context are analysed through a social policy approach, where multicultural practices often serve as part of the government's migration-related propaganda and policies.

However, given Korea's status as a society heavily influenced by global Western ideology, a more nuanced cultural lens is required to comprehensively analyse the concept and the phenomena it gives rise to. The perceived knowledge of multiculturalism among young Korean women in their homeland reflects several distinctive characteristics:

1. Limited Scope: Multiculturalism is often seen in Korea as pertaining mainly to foreign migrant workers and marriage migrants. This narrative restricts the broader recognition of diverse cultural experiences and identities within the society.
2. Government-Driven Perspective: Multiculturalism is frequently viewed as a policy-driven agenda implemented by the government rather than a natural and organic expression of cultural diversity.
3. Homogenising Assumptions: The notion of multiculturalism within the Korean context is sometimes utilised to homogenise diverse cultures and experiences, reducing them to a singular representation of "foreignness".
4. Western Centric Perspective: There is a tendency to associate multiculturalism with Western cultures, further emphasising the impact of global Western ideology on the Korean perception of diversity.

The young Korean women's perspectives on multiculturalism, shaped by their experiences in London and their encounters with diverse cultures, provide a valuable

contrast to the fundamental understanding of the concept in Korea. These perspectives offer insights into the complexities of cultural identity and the role of global Western influence on the Korean society's perception of multiculturalism, as well as contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics and transnational consciousness within the Korean diasporic context.

MinJi attributes her heightened multicultural awareness to her transnational encounter in London:

> "Korea is a country known for its ethnically homogeneous nature. Before my experiences living in London, I had limited awareness of multiculturalism. However, residing in London for an extended period has provided me with exposure to a diverse array of people on the streets, representing various cultures and backgrounds."

InHae contends that for a society to realise true multiculturalism, it must embrace a wide spectrum of racial groups. She acknowledges the contrasting perceptions of multiculturalism between her home country, Korea, and the reality she has encountered in London:

> "I posit that a society must encompass diverse racial backgrounds to foster a true state of multiculturalism. in the context of Korea, the term 'multiculturalism' carries predominantly negative connotations, often associated with young women from Southeast Asia entering matrimony with Korean men in rural locales, thereby forming what is commonly referred to as a 'multicultural family'. Conversely, in the UK, one witnesses a vibrant demonstration of multiculturalism, where a myriad of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds coexist harmoniously within urban centres." (InHae)

These young Korean women's perceptions of multiculturalism highlight the fundamental struggle in comprehending the concept. "Homogeneity" and "mono-racial country" are the prevailing terms used to define Korean society and its multicultural situation. Within the specific context of Korea, multiculturalism is

predominantly framed as “multi-race”. This socially constructed framework underscores the significance of “multiculturalism works on the category of race in Korea” (Ahn 2011 p.103). Consequently, young Korean women experience confusion in navigating their multicultural environment and grapple with the ambiguity of their positionality in the transnational realm.

Ignorance of the Multicultural fact

According to data published by the Ministry of Justice (2020), more than 2.5 million foreign citizens were residing in Korea as of the end of 2019, accounting for 4.9 percent of the nation’s total population of 51 million. This nearly 5 percent foreign resident population indicates an undeniable emergence of a multicultural phenomenon in contemporary Korea. However, it appears that this phenomenon is largely ignored within the Korean community. Young Korean women who participated in this research project confirmed a race-based multicultural rhetoric and denied the existence of an emerging multicultural phenomenon in contemporary Korea. The most common reaction of these young women residing in London, when asked if multiculturalism is present in Korea, was, “No, I don’t think there is such a thing called multiculturalism in Korea, not even a little”. This widespread ignorance of the multicultural fact reflects the previous discussion on the racial ideology of “whiteness” and the West within the Korean context. The main discursive spaces of multicultural discussions revolve around the idea that “it is the skin tone that tells”. It is particularly interesting to observe how racial policy influences and shapes such ignorance of the multicultural fact. Multiculturalism, within the Korean context, has often been equated with multi-ethnic discourse, serving more as a political rhetoric than a constructive and analytical concept that describes the transformation of a society.

I was engaged in a discussion about the multicultural situation in Korea with MingJung, during which I enquired why Korea seemed to overlook the emerging multicultural phenomenon, given the notable presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese residents in the country. In response, she offered her perspective:

> "I would say, first, they all look like us. It's not easy to distinguish them as foreigners, and culturally, we are quite close. Moreover, they are not the type of foreigners that Korean people typically expect. You know, the word 'waeguk' (foreign in the Korean language) usually refers to people from Europe and America. For a multicultural phenomenon to feel real, it should somehow exude a sense of...sophistication?" (MinJung)

The discursive framework surrounding multiculturalism presents a compelling area of study. Despite the emergence of a multicultural phenomenon in contemporary Korea, it is deliberately ignored due to deeply ingrained socially constructed racial ideologies. Young Korean women's perception of multiculturalism as a concept tied to race is in alignment with the discussions presented earlier in this thesis, which probe into their value perspectives, self-positionality, and struggles in navigating transnational social contexts.

It is evident that Korean society's understanding of multiculturalism is influenced by its history and cultural norms, which, in turn, shape the perceptions of young Korean women. This can be attributed to the historical homogeneity of Korea, where ethnic uniformity has been deeply ingrained in the national identity. As a result, multiculturalism is often associated with the idea of introducing foreign elements into the Korean society, rather than celebrating the coexistence of various cultural backgrounds.

The transnational experiences act as a catalyst for a process of reflection and self-redefinition for young Korean women. As they navigate between different cultural contexts, they are forced to confront and reconcile the dissonance between their traditional Korean values and the new multicultural realities they encounter. This internal struggle between embracing diversity and adhering to ingrained cultural norms highlights the complexity of their transnationalism.

Refine Multicultural Conscious in the Transnational Social Field

The study of multiculturalism has long been recognised as significant within diaspora studies and cultural studies. However, in some societies, multiculturalism remains a complex and controversial issue rather than a mere conceptual framework describing a social phenomenon. In the Korean context, discussions surrounding multiculturalism often revolve around the implicit dichotomy of racial ideology and political engagement, such as the opposition between a mono-racial society and a desire to join the global flow, or between xenophobia and a fascination with "whiteness", as well as between unity and fragmentation.

To move beyond this unidimensional space, a more nuanced understanding of multiculturalism emerges, taking into account both its cultural and social dimensions. This perspective reveals three distinct types of multicultural ideologies: cosmopolitanism, fragmented pluralism, and interactive pluralism (Hartman and Gerteis, 2005). These approaches portray multiculturalism in relation to its positionality between macrosocial boundaries and internal groups. For young Korean women, the transnational social space thus becomes a symbolic site where they refine their multicultural consciousness while navigating between these macrosocial boundaries and internal groups.

Drawing from a psychological perspective, multiculturalism can be seen as a collective experience encompassing different ways of viewing, learning, and reacting to the world (Benet-Martínz, 2012). It is based on the theorisation of multiculturalism as a cultural, social, and personality process. Within this context, multiculturalism is perceived as a process that seeks to strike a delicate balance between recognising differences and developing meaningful communalities, between offering differential treatment and ensuring equality, and between embracing group identities and safeguarding individual liberties (Benet-Martínez, 2012).

In the transnational social field, young Korean women's multicultural consciousness is refined, albeit in a highly theoretical manner. This process involves navigating the complexities and tensions that arise from encountering diverse cultures and perspectives, both within and outside their home country. The exposure to different cultures and the negotiation of cultural identities in this transnational context contribute to the development of their multicultural consciousness, fostering a panoramic understanding of the complexities and nuances of multiculturalism.

EunHae acknowledges both the improving multicultural situation in Korea and the prevailing issue of colourism within the society:

> "In Korea, there are indications that the multicultural situation is improving; however, this progress does not extend to individuals with dark skin tones, such as Indians. The society tends to embrace Western culture but not other cultural backgrounds from around the world. To achieve true multiculturalism in Korea, it is essential for people to perceive one another purely as human beings, transcending cultural differences and focusing on common humanity. When discussions and preoccupations about cultural differences and multiculturalism itself diminish, a genuine multicultural situation can be achieved. In other words, people must view "foreignness" as something normal and integrate diverse cultural backgrounds seamlessly into the fabric of society."

Navigating the transnational social field between macrosocial boundaries and internal groups becomes a complex and nuanced social process for young Korean women in digesting multicultural situations. It is not merely a matter of strong or weak macrosocial boundaries and internal group memberships; instead, it involves grappling with the paradoxical status of belonging to different cultural groups. The interpretations of "being Korean" or "being Asian" differ significantly from "being British" or "being white". These conceptual frameworks are imbued with cultural connotations, adding further complexity to the dynamism that young Korean women encounter while refining multiculturalism in their transnational social field.

Consequently, their understanding and everyday practice of multiculturalism are significantly influenced by this dynamism.

For these young Korean women, multiculturalism is not solely a societal description, but rather a transnational objective that each individual must strive to achieve. They navigate a complex web of cultural influences and seek to reconcile their cultural identities with the multicultural realities they encounter in transnational settings. The complexities of belonging to multiple cultural groups and engaging with diverse cultural connotations shape their understanding of multiculturalism as a personal pursuit rather than a static societal description. This process involves introspection, adaptation, and engagement with diverse cultural perspectives. Multiculturalism becomes a personal journey that extends beyond the boundaries of one's home country and extends into the interconnected transnational fields.

Summary

In this chapter, I closely examined the concept of multiculturalism as it intertwines with the Korean context. Understanding how this concept operates within Korean society is crucial for comprehending the multicultural approach of young Korean women in their transnational experiences and gaining insight into their self-positionality and identity. This analysis aligns with the cultural transnational perspective that underpins my main research question.

I began by exploring how multiculturalism serves as a strategic cultural policy employed by the government to promote social integration, mainly focusing on migrant workers and brides from less developed countries. In this context, multiculturalism becomes a tool for assimilating foreign residents into mainstream Korean social norms and everyday life practices. However, this assimilation process is not applied uniformly to everyone, revealing the hierarchical treatment of foreigners and the existence of a racial ranking system within Korean society. The contradictory social standards expose the rhetorical nature of Korean multiculturalism, which also encompasses a cultural ranking system. Rather than

celebrating diverse cultures themselves, Korean multiculturalism tolerates the mere presence of diverse cultures as a way to acknowledge individuals representing these cultures who conform to the official-led narratives of Korean tradition. Global western ideology plays a pivotal role in shaping Korean society's understanding of the concept.

In this paradigm, young Korean women's comprehension and practice of multiculturalism in their transnational journeys predominantly operate at a theoretical level. Instead of fully embracing multiculturalism, these women residing in the global city of London, celebrate their multi-ethnic surrounding. For them, multiculturalism becomes a transnational social status, serving as a form of cultural capital acquired while living in the promising western capital. Despite their apparent disregard for the emerging multicultural phenomenon in Korea, multiculturalism still serves as a transnational standard by which they assess their own progressiveness or "wokeism".

Chapter 9 Conclusions

As the final chapter of this comprehensive thesis, this section serves as a culmination of the extensive inquiry undertaken across preceding chapters. It synthesises the investigative data and research findings meticulously examined throughout the study, encapsulating the distinctive contributions and novel insights the thesis offers. By defining the main findings and theoretical advancements, this chapter underlines the unique value and scholarly impact of the research within the academic realm. While this singular research endeavour cannot entirely unravel the intricate complexities of "Asian women on the move" (Kim, 2011) and the complex relationship of cultural transnationalism, it aptly paves the way for further enquiry.

By discerning future research prospects and ramifications, this chapter contemplates the latent potentials within the broader academic landscape, specifically within the field of the subject matter under examination. Synthesising from these potential avenues, it charts a trajectory for future explorations within the field. Concluding this chapter, I offer personal reflections and candidly acknowledge the limitations encountered during the course of this exhaustive research journey.

This study was precisely designed to illuminate a novel pattern of contemporary migration, unravelling the symbiotic relationship between media, western centrism, identity, and the mundane transnational experience. Focusing on the case of young Korean women embarking on a journey to and establishing roots in the global city of London, this research unveils the intricate cultural dynamics underpinning the diasporic existence of these individuals. Furthermore, this endeavour strives to unravel the complex relationship of media, societal values, and interpersonal dynamics that collectively mould the transnational mobility and identity politics of young Korean women. The initial chapters deftly introduce the global western paradigm entrenched within the Korean social fabric, thereby revealing the social textile woven with threads of xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and the phenomenon of "white fetish".

This thesis critically appraises the existing literature and prior studies within the field, identifying a conspicuous gap in the discourse pertaining to “women on the move”. Existing discussions predominantly diverge between viewing this phenomenon either as an inadvertent consequence of Western cultural influence or as an outcome of liberation from entrenched gender disparities. Moreover, the dearth of empirical studies within the Korean context accentuates the urgency of this enquiry. In response, this research embarks on an ambitious mission to integrate the field of media, western centrism, identity, and everyday transnationalism – a convergence often marginalised in extant theoretical paradigms.

Central to this exploration are two pivotal questions that guide the research: How are social values and interactions, whether mediated or unmediated, culturally transmitted within the realm of Korean female transnationalism? In a broader sense, how do these dynamics engender and shape the nuanced forms of transnational identities within this context? This enquiry is dissected into several sub-questions, collectively framing a comprehensive examination of the subject matter.

a. From a media perspective

In what ways are media being used to articulate the multiplicities of diasporic identities in the negotiation of modernity?

What are the specific functions and influences of media within the realm of displacement and migration, particularly in relation to the Korean diasporic community?

b. From a social interactive perspective

How do young Korean women in the diaspora perceive their own identities within the context of transnational flows?

In what ways are identities enacted and embodied in their lived experiences of transnational lives, both in relation to their home country and in Western contexts?

c. From a cultural transnational perspective

How do young Korean women negotiate and navigate mainstream Korean cultural values in the context of their transnational lives?

What are the implications and significance of "living in London" for these young Korean women in terms of their identities, experiences, and aspirations?

The questions that have underlined this enquiry have been extensively explored throughout the entirety of this thesis, intersecting with salient concepts such as racial ideology, cosmopolitan attitudes, and multicultural consciousness. These complex interconnections highlight the multidimensional relationship between macro power structures and micro-level everyday transnationalism, profoundly influencing the construction and evolution of self-positionality among young Korean women. The analytical chapters of this thesis delve deeply into the issues I have raised, offering a constructive review of the Korean context. Departing from conventional analytical paradigms typically applied to the study of media and migration, this research takes a pioneering approach, pivoting its focus onto the burgeoning phenomenon of "Asian women on the move" (Kim, 2011). As a result, it shapes a new analytical lens through which to probe contemporary migration patterns, the intricate social fabric of diasporic identity politics, and the mysterious "in-between" status prevalent to transnational spaces.

Within this culminating segment of the thesis, I synthesise the core of my analytical arguments. By centring the discourse on media's crucial role in shaping the transnational trajectories of young Korean women, I clarify the influence of media and cultural values on their self-positioning and identity manifestation within the transnational context. moreover, this section encapsulates my conclusive remarks on the symbiotic relationship between culture and transnationalism within this specific contextual framework. This synthesis subsequently transitions into an evaluation of the substantive contributions this research project extends to current theoretical and empirical knowledge. These contributions, in turn, offer an indication

for future research endeavours focused on the intersection of media, women, and migration.

This conclusion chapter concludes with a reflective exploration of the scholarly voyage embarked upon throughout this research journey. Additionally, I candidly address the theoretical and methodological constraints that surfaced during the course of this study, recognising their potential utility in guiding future investigations within the field.

Main Findings

At the outset of this thesis, I shared my personal trajectory as a non-white foreigner in Korea. The intriguing yet complex social and cultural encounters I experienced ignited my curiosity to delve into the field of media and cultural migration within the Korean context. In a society where xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and a pervasive phenomenon of "white fetish" coexist, where specific cultural codes are woven into the very fabric of concepts like "being international" and "multiculturalism", individuals' "personal choices" of transnational movement take on a nuanced and dynamic character. My underlying intention for conducting this research project was to unravel these complex dynamics and weave a comprehensive narrative that captures their essence.

In addition to the prevailing dichotomous perspectives that often portray "Asian women on the move" as either an unwelcome outcome of Western cultural imperialism or a means of emancipation from gender inequalities, this thesis takes a panoramic approach in its examination of young Korean women's transnational journeys. It highlights the fact that these seemingly "personal choices" are seldom truly individualistic. The act of "moving abroad" frequently unfolds as a multi-layered negotiation among interpretations of media representations, the plethora of discourses surrounding the notion of "being international" as a manifestation of "cultural grace" (Cheah, 1998) denoting social standing, and the performance of identity. This process delves into multidimensional discussions encompassing aspects of race, national image, and cultural capital. In this context, it becomes

evident that the discourse surrounding the choice of migration destination, as well as the plan for the migratory journey of cultural migrants, is profoundly shaped by the image of their homeland as projected by the media and the prevailing social narrative of their host society.

These formative cultural and value perspectives subsequently become the foundation upon which their transnational everyday politics and identity performance are built. This, in turn, guides them as they navigate the mundane yet transformative landscape of their transnational reality. Through this exploration, this thesis contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between media, cultural migration, identity, and the lived experiences of young Korean women in diaspora.

On the role of media

The existing literature on media and cultural migration has consistently underscored the pivotal role of media-constructed imagination pertaining to the West as a compelling push factor that spurs cultural migrants toward transnational movement (see Fujita, 2004; Kim, 2011). This imaginative portrayal often presents the West as a veritable "promised land", fuelling the notion of a seemingly superior life awaiting them. Within the horizon of this study, the media role has been dissected from both 'inside' and 'outside' perspectives, encompassing its status as both an object of study and a contextual framework.

Moving beyond Appadurai's (1996) articulation, which highlights media channels as crucial information gathering sites influencing decision-making in the migration process, this study enquiries into how the utilisation of media creates symbolic spaces. These spaces allow diasporas to engage with and contemplate their social-cultural existence, both before and after their transnational endeavours. In the midst of their complex and often conflicting physical transnational social sphere, characterised by perpetual self-evaluation and negotiation, the strategic

employment of media by young Korean women emerges as a crucial mechanism that moulds and reconfigures their transnational self-awareness.

The consumption of Western media, within the framework of traditional Korean social norms and gender expectations, can be construed as an endeavour to shape an autonomously determined identity for young Korean women. However, upon their arrival in London – their dreamland – their media consumption transforms from engendering contemplative spaces for envisioning a new self and lifestyle to a means for negotiating and reshaping the intermediary forms of their old and new identities. This process is a response to the rapid transformations that unfold in their lives. In this transition from the symbolic spaces orchestrated by Western media to the tangible, material spaces of their actual existence, young Korean women demand an interactive media approach. The inherently interactive nature of the internet effectively addresses these needs, serving as a platform for young Korean women to stage, fabricate, and recreate their own identities within the transnational context. Of particular significance is their extensive utilisation of the internet, especially social media, as a medium to articulate and express their profound sense of belonging.

The mundane reality faced by young Korean women in London – a reality often voids of glamour – features obstacles such as language barriers, financial uncertainty, and the persistent spectre of racial discrimination. In light of these circumstances, it is customary within the field to assume that diasporas maintain frequent engagement with ethnic media as part of their daily routine. However, this study reveals that young Korean women's engagement with ethnic media from their native homeland is less driven by preference and more by obligation. The precarious state of "living in between" leaves these women feeling detached from both Korean and Western/British media. This sense of alienation culminates in a disengagement from both social contexts.

This yearning for connection and a heightened sense of belonging propels young Korean women to embrace the realm of social media, where new modes of existence

and symbolic inclusion are within reach. The research findings substantiate that the visualisation of transnationalism, the preservation of ties to their homeland, active participation in local networks, and self-promotion are pivotal themes that underline young Korean women's media engagements within the sphere of transnationalism.

On the myth of self and performative identity

This thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of the profound influence of Western ideology within Korean society, unravelling its impact on cultural and social values, and how these factors significantly shape the ontological selves and transnational positionality of young Korean women. Four paradoxical dimensions – rebellion, celebration, contradiction, and anti-Korean sentiment – are unveiled as pivotal triggers for the border-crossing practices of these women. Rooted in Bourdieusian notions of habitus, capital and field, these dimensions highlight how young Korean women strategically leverage their cultural and social capital within the framework of an inherited social structure to delineate their selves and situational identity within the context of transnational movement.

Central to the study's findings is the profound association between the conceptualisation of self and the imagination of an alternative Western lifestyle within the Korean context. Prior to their transnational sojourn, young Korean women predominantly frame their self-reflection around the aspirational construct of "happiness". This narrative revolves around the belief that embarking on a different life path and integrating into Western society will ultimately lead to the long-yearned sense of fulfilment. However, the notion of "happiness" is inherently intricate, grounded in personal experiences, and intricately interwoven with discourses related to departure from one's homeland and the embrace of an international or British identity. Notably, the research identifies a collective framework of a "happy life" for young Korean women in diaspora, characterised by notions of freedom and the attainment of a state distant from their roots.

Furthermore, the study delves into the complexities of the evolving identity of young Korean women in diaspora, revealing a dynamic and fluctuating state. The deep-seated Western-centric perspectives deeply entrenched in their subconscious profoundly colour their perception of transnational self and positionality. A critical enquiry into the implications of this paradoxical cultural phenomenon elucidates its substantial impact on the recognition and construction of diasporic identity among young Korean women in London. In doing so, the study deconstructs the concept of "Koreanness", leading to the revelation that for these diasporic women, "koreanness" is often dismissed due to its perceived inadequacy vis-à-vis their narrative of Western modernity. Conversely, "Britishness" is seen as emblematic of a hierarchical power structure within the Korean diasporic community in London, thereby engendering internalised biases and prejudices.

This enquiry underlines that the attributes and characteristics underpinning the contextual-based concept of identity politics among young Korean women in transnationalism transcend mere constructivism; they are profoundly performative in nature. The study delves into the intricate process through which performative identity politics are harnessed and manifested within the transnational journeys of young Korean women. It becomes evident that navigation and code-switching serve as crucial elements of identity politics, enabling these women to manoeuvre seamlessly across diverse social settings. In a quest to foster social connections and attain symbolic inclusion, the identity of young Korean women in diaspora is revealed to be not fixed, but rather a contextual and adaptive process. The nuanced oscillation between culturally imbued codes of "being international" and "being Korean" illuminates the perpetual quest of these women to establish unique facets of identity within their transnational existence, facilitating the sustenance of both tangible and emotional ties.

On culture and transnationalism

This study has offered a multidimensional exploration into the intricate relationship between culture and transnationalism, particularly within the context of young

Korean women's cultural transnationalism in London. The findings of this study have illuminated the profound impact of culture on transnational trajectories of young Korean women, highlight the dynamic interplay between cultural dynamics and the practice of border-crossing.

Culture, as "distinct worlds of meanings" (Sewell, 2008), emerges as a central force shaping the forms of transnational experiences. The study has demonstrated how the fusion of media, social values, and identity constructs within the Korean context has given rise to a unique transnational social field. This field, characterised by its intersection of power dynamics, self-positionality, and cultural capital – both symbolic and embodied, has emerged as a crucial arena where young Korean women negotiate and perform their identities. It becomes evident throughout the study that the cultural context significantly influences the construction of self, the negotiation and performance of identity within young Korean women's transnational fields. The dominant cultural narratives, including the allure of western ideologies, the pursuit of cosmopolitan attitude, and the complex notion of "being international", have collectively fostered a nuanced yet dynamic landscape of transnational identity politics.

The concept of transnationalism has been redefined through the lens of cultural transnationalism. As evidenced in this study, transnationalism is far from a linear process of movement from one geographical space to another; it encompasses a dynamic continuum of imagination, interaction, and reconfiguration. The transnational experiences of young Korean women demonstrate the transformative power of migration, where physical relocation is intertwined with the migration of cultural meanings, social values, and facilitates identity performance. Moreover, the study challenges conventional narratives that reduce transnationalism to a simple binary between origin and destination. Instead, it reveals a multidimensional landscape where transnationalism is an ongoing process, a perpetual negotiation between the familiar and the new.

The Value of this Thesis

In a comprehensive vein, this study presents an expansive exploration of diaspora, media, and migration, specifically concentrating on the microcosm of everyday transnationalism among young Korean women in London. The thorough analysis of the cultural dynamics inherent in the migration and settlement of these women within the global city of London has significantly enriched the discourse within the realm of diaspora, media, and migration studies. This contribution is particularly pronounced in the context of addressing the feminisation of migration within the Asian context and situating "Asian women on the move" (Kim, 2011) within the relatively uncharted terrain of the Korean context.

Furthermore, the findings of this project seamlessly dovetail with and complement prior research projects centred around the compelling role of media-constructed imagination as a compelling catalyst for transnational movements. This study significantly enhances this discourse by departing from the traditional binary perspective that either interprets "Asian women on the move" (Kim, 2011) solely through the lens of Western cultural imperialism or perceives it as a conduit for liberation from social gender inequalities. Instead, it undertakes a broader, more nuanced enquiry that investigates into the complex relationship of interpretations, cultural values, and self-positionality throughout the stages of migration planning, execution, and post-migration experiences.

Central to this investigation is the portrayal of the overarching dominance of West-centric ideology within Korean society, where the complex combination of xenophobia, internalised racial discrimination, and a white fetish profoundly influences the transnational trajectory of young Korean women. By unravelling these power dynamics and social structures within the migrant' home country, this study highlights their pervasive impact on the sphere of transnationalism. The incisive analysis of the everyday transnationalism and cultural implications therein serves to enhance the prevailing understanding of the constructive nature of diasporic identity,

highlight the performative nature of said identity. Against this backdrop, it emerges that young Korean women in diaspora strategically select and adopt specific facets of their identity, based on a detailed process of review and evaluation, in order to foster social bonds and attain symbolic inclusion within varying fields.

Notably, the overarching intention of this thesis was to unveil a comprehensive tableau of the transnationalism experienced by young Korean women. Contrary to the customary paradigm prevalent within migration studies, which often oversimplifies international migration by dichotomising it into either progressive assimilation or marginalised alienation, this study precisely uncovers the subtleties and nuances inherent in self-positionality within transnationalism. Rejecting the rigid dichotomy, this thesis advocates for an exploration of the transnational social field as a complex "grey zone". This conceptual shift underlines the multidimensional nature of transnational sentiments and self-positionality, wherein emotional attachments to both homeland and host society coexist and interact in complex ways, producing a diverse and nuanced transnational social space.

Contribution to Existent Knowledge

This research has made a significant contribution to the field of media, diaspora, and migration studies by offering a fresh perspective that engages with several key concepts from existing literature, such as media-constructed imagination, social values, cultural transnationalism, and performative identity. By carefully reviewing and integrating these theoretical frameworks, the study has established a profound foundation to explore and comprehend the experiences of young Korean women residing in the global city of London.

One of the novel insights of this study lies in its endorsement and reinforcement of the notion of media-constructed imagination as a pivotal driving force behind cultural migrants' border-crossing practices. By examining the non-Western Korean context, where the spectrum of Western centrism prevails amidst chaotic social phenomena, this research offers a unique perspective on the subject. It not only

affirms media's role as a symbolic space continuously generating cultural meanings within the transnational experience but also sheds light on the workings of power relations and social structures that influence media imagination and shape the trajectory of cultural migrants' transnational journeys.

Additionally, the study delves into theoretical discussions on multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, race, and the concept of the West (modernity) to elucidate the constant influence of Korean social values on young Korean women's transnationalism. Notably, the concept of social value is deconstructed in this research to provide a more organic and nuanced analysis. The study reveals a significant departure from the conventional understanding of multiculturalism within Korean society, portraying it as the ultimate transnational subjectivity that diasporas are expected to attain. similarly, the concept of cosmopolitanism takes on a specific flavour for young Korean women in diaspora, blurring the boundaries between "cosmopolitanising" and "westernising" as both processes imply an acquisition of Western cultural values and social norms.

Aligned with the critical realist philosophical underpinning of this study, the use of a Bourdieusian notion of power has enabled a deeper understanding of how individuals deploy their cultural and social capital within inherited social structures, shaping their habitus and influencing the performance of their identities within their everyday contexts. This has provided a firm basis for comprehending the complex interplay between structure and power relations in the lives of young Korean women in diaspora.

Overall, this research has significantly expanded current knowledge on media, diaspora, and migration by offering an innovative perspective on the role of media-constructed imagination, social values, and performative identity in shaping the transnational experiences of young Korean women in London. The utilisation of critical realist philosophy and a Bourdieusian approach to power has added depth

and nuance to the analysis, providing a comprehensive and insightful understanding of the complexities and intricacies involved in their everyday transnationalism.

Implications for Future Research

Positioned within the expansive realm of media, migration, and cultural studies, this research project inherently acknowledges its limitations in providing definitive answers to the multifaceted unexplored aspects of this field. However, it stands as a precise and empirically driven exploration into an underrepresented context, introducing a novel approach that unravels fresh correlations and unveils previously unrecognised social structures within the transnational social landscape. In doing so, it lays the foundation for potential inspiration for future investigation.

Drawing from the extensive discussions that precedent, this study furnishes compelling evidence that the transnational experiences of young Korean women in diaspora are both products and perpetuators of the complex relationship between social structures and power dynamics within their operational social space. Challenging the prevailing tendency in the field to oversimplify "Asian women on the move" (Kim, 2011) as a consequence of Western cultural imperialism or as an act of liberation from gender-based inequalities, this research advocates for a broader, more nuanced perspective and a deeper exploration. It diligently probes into the mundane transnationalism of young Korean women in diaspora, accentuating the intricacies of different transnational fields.

A key revelation of this study lies in its exposition of the complicated relationships between fundamental concepts such as home, foreignness, and self within the realm of transnationalism. Diverging from previous research paradigms that often treat diasporic communities as monolithic entities, this study highlights the internal complexities and struggles within the diasporic community, particularly in relation to the nuances of belonging, cultural capital, and everyday transnational practices. Moreover, it disrupts the conventional binary framework of diasporic identity, which categorises identities as wither strongly or weakly linked to national affiliations based on the level of migrants' integration into their host society. instead, it unveils

the identity politics of young Korean women in diaspora as a performative cultural process of code-switching, marking a distinctive contribution to the Korean literature. By capturing the intricacies of contemporary cultural migration within both physical and symbolic transnational social spaces, this study fills a significant gap in Korean media and migration literature, enriching the limited theoretical framework addressing this phenomenon.

In essence, this research project, while acknowledging its limitations, significantly expands the horizons of scholarship in media, migration, and cultural studies. Its thorough exploration of young Korean women's transnationalism not only uncovers previously unexamined connections and structures but also offers a comprehensive platform for further enquiry into the complexities of transnational social dynamics.

The Way Forward

During my ethnographically informed fieldwork conducted in London, I embarked on a profound exploration that unveiled not only the complex cultural dynamics inherent to young Korean women in diaspora but also the delicately nuanced internal dynamics within broader East Asian diasporic communities. these internal relationships have given rise to a complex and somewhat paradoxical "frenemy" status among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean diasporas. In the interest of making a substantial and coherent contribution to the fields of media, diaspora, and cultural transnationalism, I propose a strategic shift for future empirical studies in the (East) Asian context, focusing research attention on the intricate web of migrant-migrant relations within multicultural social contexts.

This proposed shift from a singular investigation into a specific East Asian diasporic group towards a more encompassing analysis of the broader socio-cultural milieu presents an opportunity for deeper exploration and a more comprehensive discussion concerning diaspora and cultural transnationalism in a broader sense. This broader perspective inherently fosters a richer and more nuanced understanding of the intersections between race, the Western cultural influence, and social values, all

of which contributes to the complex textile of diaspora experiences. Furthermore, a comparative approach stands to illuminate the intricate correlations within the delicate multicultural social settings characteristic of diasporic communities.

Expanding the empirical investigation into this subject matter also serves to enhance the critical realist philosophical foundation that underpins relevant studies in the field. In the realm of realist research and analysis, the utilisation of retroduction reasoning is of paramount importance. This method identifies concealed causal forces that underlie observed patterns or changes in those patterns, ultimately facilitating a deeper comprehension of the mechanisms that give rise to specific social events within the context of Asian diaspora and transnationalism. Employing such scientific reasoning logic in future qualitative endeavours within this subject area empowers researchers to delve further into the intricate processes capable of generating various social phenomena within the realm of Asian diaspora and transnationalism. This, in turn, allows academic research in the fields of media, diaspora, and cultural transnationalism to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the tangible world, consequently providing valuable insights to inform contemporary migration policy making.

The prevalent emphasis on Asian representation and solidarity within multicultural social settings has gained prominence in both mainstream media and academic discourse. However, the concurrent tension within the ostensibly unified Asian diasporic community has remained conspicuously unaddressed. This oversight perpetuates an assumption of homogeneity among Asian diasporic communities, thereby failing to acknowledge the less celebrated yet deeply rooted transnational perceptions and sentiments that often underlie these communities. These sentiments are frequently intertwined with essentialist discourses and culturally embedded narratives.

During the course of my fieldwork for this study in London, I uncovered the existence of consequential social mechanisms through which young Korean women navigate

interactions with other Asian or even Korean diasporas in London. Such mechanisms manifest as competitive tensions and, at times, even a sense of resentment in the pursuit of social recognition and symbolic inclusion. I observed instances of marginalisation of Chinese individuals and culture, driven by the desire to avoid being stereotypically associated with certain cultural attributes that are erroneously attributed to the Chinese. These intricate dynamics, often referred to as the "Queen Bee" phenomenon within the diasporic context, are palpable in the microcosm of everyday transnational interactions.

While my analysis within this thesis offered glimpses into these complex dynamics, the focus remained centred on the most salient aspect of young Korean women's transnationalism. However, the recognition of such intricate diasporic interactions opens up avenues for future empirical exploration of the hierarchical social structures that evolve within the symbolic diasporic cultural space, within a broader and comparative context. Moreover, future research could effectively leverage critical race theory to delve into the interplay of race, social networks, and cultural values in shaping the delicate relationships between migrants within multicultural societies. This approach holds significant promise for unveiling deeper insights into the multidimensional world of diaspora, adding depth and nuance to our understanding of migrant-migrant relations and their role within the larger diasporic tapestry.

Reflections and Limitations

Conducting ethnographically informed fieldwork in London to collect empirical data posed several personal challenges that necessitated careful consideration and navigation. One of the primary challenges I encountered was accessibility. The research design, which involved a six-month period of combined "following" in-depth interviews and participant observation both online and offline, demanded unwavering commitment and dedication throughout the entire fieldwork process. This approach required participants to grant me access to observe their everyday lives, which could be perceived as a breach of privacy. Moreover, as a non-Korean

female researcher investigating the Korean context, I was acutely aware of the potential complexities in how participants might perceive and respond to my presence. Overcoming these challenges required significant effort, and although I initially aimed for a larger participant group, I had to reconcile with a relatively small number of participants due to the constraints.

The relatively limited number of participants could be considered a limitation of this study. However, it's important to emphasise that this does not undermine the validity of the research outcomes. The study was specifically designed to capture the nuanced microcosm of everyday transnationalism among young Korean women living in London. Additionally, the participants who did contribute to this study offered a unique perspective and observational data that is often challenging to obtain due to confidential concerns.

Engaging with a subject that I could personally relate to introduced ethical dilemmas that required thoughtful resolution. Despite my understanding of my role as a researcher, these dilemmas were not easily reconciled. For instance, participants in the study would often share their life struggles in London, particularly regarding financial insecurity and living conditions. This led me to grapple with the question of whether I should intervene and provide them with practical information, such as job opportunities or potential flatmates. Balancing my role as a researcher and a potential source of assistance posed complex ethical considerations.

Time management and the scope of research were additional critical aspects that I needed to address reflexively. As the months of fieldwork progressed and the data continued to accumulate, I faced a dual challenge. On one hand, the richness of the data encouraged me to explore deeper contexts and uncover more intricate dynamics within the subject. On the other hand, the need to adhere to the research scope and timeline required me to carefully manage the depth of exploration. Navigating this balance between in-depth analysis and the constraints of research scope presented a continual challenge.

A methodological challenge that is inherent to qualitative studies, including this one, is the issue of generalisability. While further qualitative studies are essential to establish a more generalised understanding of the subject, it is important to recognise that this study was intentionally designed to provide a specific analysis and a rich narrative of young Korean women's transnationalism. The data collected in the field, along with the resulting research outcomes, have contributed valuable insights into the mechanisms of diaspora among young Korean women and have crafted a panoramic portrayal of their border-crossing experiences. This specific and in-depth focus contributes a unique dimension to the broader academic discourse on media, diaspora, and cultural transnationalism.

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APPENDIX ONE: THE INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

First in-depth interview

1. Personal background

1) Occupation
2) Education
3) Experience abroad

2. The image of the West, motivation of migration, identity

Motivation, length and means

1) What was your motivation to move to London?
2) How long have you been staying in London?
3) Why did you choose this city?
4) How do your family and friends think about your living in London?
5) Why don't you want to remain in Korea?

Media, images of the West and origins of information

1) Did you have any expectation of the city before you moved here? What were they?
2) How have you heard/watched/read about the city?
3) How did you imagine your life in London before you moved here?

'Foreign', 'Being international' and the image of the West

1) What do you associate with the word 'foreign'?
2) About which countries do you hear most often in South Korea?
3) Where is the West?
4) How do you define South Korea? Part of West? Or part of Asia?
5) How have you got to know what the West is?

6) What do you think ‘being international’ means?
7) What is your standard of defining ‘being international’?

Languages

1) Do you think it is very cool of having the capability of speaking other languages? Is it different of speaking English from speaking other Asian language such as Japanese and Chinese, etc.?
2) When did you start to learn English and how?
3) How do people think of speaking English in South Korea?

Cultural identities

1) How do you think of yourself? Being Korean or culturally being westerner?
2) What do you think of ‘koreanness’?

"Following" interviews

1. Life in London and the image of the West

Everyday life

1) When and with whom do you live with?
2) What is your routine or normal weekly schedule? Please describe it.
3) Have you been meeting a lot of new friends? Are they Korean or other Asians, British or others?
4) How often do you share your experience here with your family and friends in Korea? By using which media?
5) Is the real life experience the same as what you were expecting before? or different?

Migratory plan

1) Do you feel this is the right place for you?
2) How long do you plan to stay here?

2. Identity experience and social factors

Race and ethnic relations

In the west

1) What is a 'foreigner' for you?
2) How is your identity experience here?
3) How do you feel being recognized as Chinese or Japanese?
4) Do you have a lot of local/European friends? How do you find them?

Asian and other ethnic groups

1) How do you think about other Asian groups (Chinese, Japanese, etc)?
2) How do you feel of being mis-recognized as Chiese/Japanese?
3) Have you ever experienced racial discrimination?

Korean

1) How do you think about Korean?
2) What are the good things you like of Korea? What are the negative aspects you don't like of Korea?
3) Do you mainly hang out with Korean people?

3. Gender and sexuality

1) How do you think about western men?
2) How do you think about Asian men?
3) How do you think about other Asian groups in London?

4. Korean communities

1) Are there any Korean communities in London?
2) How do you think about Korean people in London?
3) What type of Korean people are in London?
4) Do you think Korean here in London are different from Korean in Korea?

5. Media, migration and home

1) What kind of media do you use? And how often?
2) How do you use the internet?
3) Do you think Korea is somewhere you call home?
4) Do you want to keep staying here?

Third in-depth interview

Everyday media culture

Do you read Korean news? English news? Global news?

How often do you watch TV?

How often do you use Internet?

How often do you use your mobile phone?

What do you mainly do with your phone?

What types of media contents would make you feel uncomfortable? Offended?

Do you think the way you use media is changed after you moved to London? Why do you think is that?

Facebook and Instagram

How much do you think sharing life online is showing off?

Do you think SNS is essential in life?

Travel

I know you enjoy travelling around, what does travelling mean to you?

Do you travel along?

Do you prefer travelling alone or with friends and family?

Do you think travelling along represents independence? Is that why you like it?

Where would you like to travel to the most?

Aspiration

What is your life aspiration?

Are you trying to achieve it? How?

Are you positive about achieving your life aspiration?

Family

What does family mean to you?

Do you think you have a strong sense of family?

Are they supportive?

Financial situation

What is your financial situation at the moment?

Are you satisfied with your financial situation?

Do you want to make an effort to change the situation? How do you plan to do it?

Life challenges

What challenges you the most at the moment while living in London?

Personal struggles

What are your personal struggles?

Why are they struggling you?

Are you trying to sort it out for yourself?

Fourth in-depth interview (reflexivity)

Reflexivity towards the three interviews

What's new for you regarding your transnational life after you think about the questions we have been discussing on?

Racial discrimination

What is your understanding of multiculturalism?

In your opinion, what are the social conditions of multiculturalism?

Have you ever considered racial discrimination before moving here?

Did you expect that there will be no discrimination and prejudice within the multicultural society (London)?

Would you speak out for yourself if you are racially discriminated? If no, why not?

Would you speak out for other people if you witness racial discrimination?

Do you think all these racial experiences would hold you in a defensive position?

Do you think these racial issues are setting barriers for your transnational life?

About Korea

How is the multicultural situation in Korea?

Do you think there is a so-called multiculturalism in Korea?