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Is the Kirogi a fairy-tale ending? The lives of Kirogi: Experiences as Mother and Woman in
the New Zealand context

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and understand the lives of Kirogi (Goose mother); their experiences as mother and woman in a New-Zealand context. The Kirogi represents a goose analogy because these animals are known for their lifelong commitment to their partners and devotion to their young. Thus, Kirogi is used to describe Korean mothers in a transnational family set-up who migrates to Western countries for her child's education. Given the prevalent deficit mindset surrounding Kirogi mothers, this study sought to investigate these Kirogi mothers' intimate lives and sought to flip the negative narrative. The epistemological underpinning that guided this research aligns with the constructivist paradigm, and data analysis was completed using narrative analysis strategies from Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of four Kirogi mothers living in the urban district of Auckland, New-Zealand. Utilizing Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional approach, the researcher collected rich insights into the participant's life histories, current realities and future prospects. Participants provided in-depth narratives of their experiences as a Kirogi mother and women living in New-Zealand. After careful analysis based on multiple readings of the transcript four major themes with related sub-themes were discerned: (a) Escape from Korean society, (b) Different identities as women, (c) Marital quality- fidelity vs. infidelity, (d) Unique challenges experienced by Kirogi mothers.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this master's thesis could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many individuals.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my wonderful supervisor Dr. Richard Fletcher for his continuous support, invaluable guidance, and motivation during my studies. I am very fortunate to meet Richard for he has inspired me with confidence and gave me opportunities to learn and gain further knowledge. I am honoured to be supervised by Richard and his commitment to this research has contributed to the completion of this study.

I would also like to thank all the Kirogi mothers who contributed their time to tell intimate stories of their lives. Without their cooperation, this study would not exist.

Finally, I would like to express my biggest thanks to my family, Beeskys and Koms for always being by my side. Your unconditional love and limitless support helped me get through it all. I dedicate this study to you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Why explore the lives of Kirogi mother's in New Zealand? What is unique about their experiences within the New Zealand context?

Upward mobility aspirations, many South Korean families are engaged in a new split family structure for the sake of their child's education and future. Such transnational, split-household family arrangements are a growing migration trend for South Korean middle-class families because they view educational qualifications in Western countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United States as a channel for upward social mobility (Kang, 2012). They are referred to as Kirogi or wild geese families, whereby the mother accompanies her child to an English speaking country for educational purposes, whilst the father remains in Korea to financially support his family (Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014). The Kirogi or wild goose are known in Korean cultures as faithful animals believed to be known for their lifelong commitment to their partner and travelling vast distances to feed their offspring (Lee & Koo, 2006). A pair of carved wooden geese are often seen as mandatory wedding gifts for newly wedded couples to symbolise the virtues married couples should follow such as fidelity, loyalty, and most importantly, to bless the couple's everlasting love (Finch & Kim, 2012).

Although the Kirogi symbolises a fairy tale of togetherness and true love, this term coined by Korean media during the mass migration of the 1990s entails a different reality of split-household transnational families (Jeong & Belanger, 2012). Compared to two-parent immigrant families living together, Kirogi families face significant challenges that affect

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family functioning due to the family structure's changing dynamics (Lee & Kweon, 2018). In a qualitative study exploring Korean transnational families in the United States, the findings reveal that Kirogi mothers renegotiate traditional gendered roles by taking on masculine roles at homes such as maintaining vehicles, moving heavy furniture, and becoming the primary decision maker and discipliner for her child/ren (Jeong, Kwon, & You, 2014). In the physical absence of fathers, the overload of newly found responsibilities for Kirogi mothers has been associated with higher stress levels and ambivalent feelings towards their roles as mothers (Lee & Kweon, 2018). On the other hand, husbands who remain in Korea take on traditional feminine tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry (Lee & Koo, 2006).

Overall, little is known about Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand. It is important to explore what areas of their lives are flourishing or whether behind the façade of the New Zealand dream, there are difficulties in settling into the 'Kiwi society'. Thus, research in this emerging area of these mothers' unique role may provide valuable new insights into the challenges as a Korean Kirogi mother in New Zealand and how this affects their overall well-being.

The present thesis focuses on Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand and has been chosen for two primary reasons. First, although the Korean population in New Zealand is considered the fourth largest Asian ethnic group (Stats NZ, 2018), little attention has been paid in the psychological literature about the livelihood of Korean immigrants. In particular, the overall quality of life of Korean Kirogi mothers living in New Zealand is relatively under-researched. However, studies outlined by (Jeong & Belanger, 2012) have explored Kirogi mothers' perspectives in Canada based on their views on their family dynamics since migration and

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how their Kirogi family arrangements affected family functioning over time. Other studies by Tsong & Liu (2009), have explored similar transnational family arrangements in China and Taiwan, often referred to as 'Parachute Kids'. The children of these families are often young and immigrate to the host country alone to obtain primary and secondary education without parental supervision. Children are likely to remain with relatives, close family friends, or an unrelated caregiver (Tsong & Liu, 2009). Overall, the lack of research on Korean immigrants, in general, is often assumed to be due to their relatively short history of immigration compared to other Asian groups such as the Chinese (Chang, Morris, & Vokes, 2006).

Secondly, Korean Kirogi mothers seem unique in terms of their intentions for seeking early English education abroad at the expense of family separation and the risk of family dissolution. The motivation for Korean Kirogi mothers to migrate with their children to New Zealand differs from the reasons of other East Asian groups. For example, in transnational families from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, often referred to as 'astronaut families', mothers and children or children only migrate first to the host country, and the remaining family members join them later on in the host country (Aye & Guerin, 2001). A permanent resident's intention is evident in this type of migration, and family separation is considered a temporary option (Aye & Guerin, 2001). On the other hand, Korean Kirogi mothers temporarily stay in the host country for the duration of her child's education and return home once that has been achieved (Jeong, Kwon, & You, 2014)). On this basis, Korean Kirogi mothers are of particular focus in the present study because they generally bear the responsibilities for raising their child overseas for educational purposes and dealing with the challenges that arise from acculturative stress. There appears to be a need to better understand the unique, idiosyncratic experiences of this under-researched group of Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand.

1.2 Rationale of the thesis

As a Korean-born student who grew up in New Zealand from a very young age, the researcher has witnessed and heard stories from fellow Korean migrants about the difficulties in adjusting to a new life in New Zealand and the emotional challenges they face in a foreign land. In particular, prior to starting my research, I have listened to stories of Kirogi mothers who leave behind their husbands in their homeland in search for better opportunities abroad for their children but only to be dealt with depression and loneliness. Social support is one of the key protective factors for well-being and mental health; however, there is no literature published to date that has explored the barriers in seeking social support for Kirogi mothers and its possible association with their well-being (Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014). Thus, the researcher has been motivated to explore the voices of Korean Kirogi mothers. The voices of ethnic minorities such as Korean migrants are seldomly heard; thus the researcher wanted to fill in the psychological literature gap created by the lack of research and representation of Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand. With a specific focus on the unique experiences and culture of Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand, the researcher hopes the findings of the thesis will shed some light in enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of Kirogi mother's quality of life and how they navigate their life in New Zealand with their child/ren, as well as the challenges of living a split-family arrangement.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Background: The Kirogi Family

2.1.1. *The Kirogi family at a glance*

Traditionally, a family is defined as a group of two or more people who usually live together and share their daily life experiences (Liazos, 2016). Family members have a strong commitment to each other and are either related or unrelated by birth, marriage or adoption (Liazos, 2016). However, in recent years, transnational educational migrant families in South Korea, known as the so-called 'Kirogi families' or wild geese families are expanding globally. By Kirogi families, we specifically mean South Korean families living separately. The mother and child live abroad in an English speaking country for their education whilst the father remains in Korea to work and send money to his family. Kirogi fathers seasonally fly over abroad to visit his family once or twice a year during the child's education, usually between one, five, or even as long as ten years (Choi, 2007).

According to the available data from the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) in 2019, the total number of Korean students studying abroad, excluding students who went abroad to accompany their parents stationed in foreign countries and those who emigrated to foreign countries, was 9077 students. Of those 9077 students, United States, Canada and South East Asia countries were the most prominent destinations for South Korean students to study abroad. In New Zealand, there were 394 South Korean students in 2018. However,

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older reports outlined by Kim (2008) suggested that the estimated number of Kirogi fathers in South Korea was approximately 2,000,000 in 2008. The total number of Korean students who migrated overseas for educational purposes since 2001 was 186,807 students (KEDI, 2018). Although data from several reports have revealed conflicting figures, the exact number of Korean Kirogi families is unknown, as no available data about these families exist (Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014)

Nonetheless, the phenomenon of Kirogi families is expected to grow despite the risk of a family dissolution as parents are eager to pursue educational opportunities for their child's future in English speaking countries (Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014). This notable trend was initially conceived as a common practice amongst only upper-middle-class families because the economic boom in Korea during the early 1990s enabled these families affluent enough to manage two households in two separate countries (Cha & Kim, 2013). Typically, the upper-middle-class or 'elite' families tended to be families earning an annual income of over \$US100,000, with fathers who were well-educated men working prestigious occupations whilst mothers tended to be well educated and mostly stay at home housewives (Okazaki & Kim, 2018). However, recent trends of the Kirogi migration show that families of all classes, including less affluent families, send their children of all ages abroad for English studying (Okazaki & Kim, 2018). The desire to pursue higher education for Korean children can be seen as an educational strategy for Kirogi families to ensure a hopeful opportunity for social mobility and a brighter future.

2.1.2. Factors that motivate Kirogi migration

The driving force of the Kirogi phenomenon is best understood in contexts of South Korea's economic and social policies, as well as political conditions during the early 1990s. More specifically, South Korea embraced a globalisation policy known as the 'Sekewha' which became an avenue for Korean parents to send their children at an early age to Western countries to give them an advanced and more cosmopolitan education as overseas travel became more liberalised (Lee & Koo, 2006). Furthermore, South Korea achieved a global status as the 29th member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996. Following this achievement, the trans nationalisation of the South Korean economy advanced dramatically. English mastery became the most valued requirement for people to gain admission into prestigious cooperate occupations and professional careers for South Koreans (Okazaki & Kim, 2018). English developed into an essential skill for people to embrace as it became an important social capital for Korean competitiveness in the international market.

Albeit, Koreans have witnessed their country's economic advancement due to rapid industrialisation and technological advancements; however, this achievement was crippled by the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. It is widely understood now by scholars (Okazaki & Kim, 2018; Abelman, Newendrop, & Lee-Chung, 2014) that the driving force for early English study abroad for Korean children was due to the aftermath of the Economic crisis in the 1990s that lasted beyond into the 2000s. The South Korean government was incapable of warranting a brighter future for its citizens, fueling intense economic anxieties and uncertainty (Ablemann, Newendrop, & Lee-Chung, 2014). South Korean citizens realised

that to survive the harsh reality of the economic crisis, and the competitiveness in the global market, families, had to take sole responsibility to ensure their own and (their families) survival. On this basis, South Korean families became increasingly obsessed with investing in their child's education as they deemed it a strategy for success.

There are also other contributing factors that motivated Kirogi families to migrate with their child/ren. Several studies have explored Kirogi fathers and mothers' reasons for seeking early English education for their child (Lee & Koo, 2006; Okazaki & Kim, 2018). Overall, parents viewed the opportunity for Early study abroad for their young child/ren as an important investment that would increase the chances of gaining admissions to top, competitive entry, universities in South Korea (Okazaki & Kim, 2018). However, reports outlined by Kim, Chang, & Kim (2005) found that the main rationales for parents sending their child abroad for the study were due to the immense dissatisfaction they had with the Korean education system.

2.2 Korean culture, family, and social change

2.2.1 Confucian influences on the traditional Korean family

In order to understand Korean Kirogi families, it is important to review the influence of Confucianism that greatly guides the Korean familial system, culture and social structure. Confucianism, developed initially by Confucius in the 6th-5th century BC, is a Chinese moral and philosophical system that has deeply pervaded Koreans' consciousness for the past two centuries (Park & Cho, 1995). The values, ethics and principles laid out by the popular value

system of Confucianism have exerted a strong influence on the governments, societies, family life, and educational practices of East Asia, including Korea (Park & Cho, 1995). According to Stowell (2003) seven traditional values provided social-relational guidelines that people had to adhere too: (1) The Golden mean, (2) Generosity and Virtuousness, (3) Harmony, (4) Tolerance, propriety, and deference, (5) Submission to authority, (6) Discretion for self-preservation, (7) Pleasing superiors. Although much of these traditional values emphasise on harmonious and respectful relationships between one and another, Park & Cho (1995), and Chung (2015) identified five central human relationships, which is still prevalent in governing human relationships in Korea today. These are known as the 'Five Cardinal Relationships', which outlines the continuous harmony of the moral, social and political order between (1) Parent and child, (2) Husband and wife, (3) Older sibling and Younger sibling, (4) Friend and Friend, (5) King and People (Chung, 2015; Park & Cho, 1995). Amongst these relationships, there is a significant emphasis on familial relations which suggests that the family is the fundamental unit of society in Confucianism. Scholars such as Chung (2015) conclude that no other cultures have placed such high emphasis on family as have the Confucist cultures of East Asia in Korea.

2.2.2 Role-based family system

Confucianism has played a central role in influencing each family member to a distinct role. A role-based family is clearly defined as a functional unit where each family member identifies with their assigned role and works towards achieving a group goal (Cha & Kim, 2013) Traditionally in the patriarchal ideology of Confucianism, the roles between male and female are hierarchically segregated. The role of fathers functions to financially support

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the family, whereas female members or mothers' role ensured the domestic domain's responsibility, such as raising children, cooking, and cleaning (Cha & Kim, 2013). For children, they not only required to be obedient but had to show the highest respect for parents and work on improving the status of their family through educational success (Kim & Choi, 1994; Cha & Kim, 2013). This overarching system of Confucianism has not only shaped the paternal values and behaviours of the Korean family system but has motivated Kirogi mothers in continuing to adhere to such values in contemporary Korean families today.

Furthermore, family orientated collectivism has played a central role in the cultural value of educating children in Korean families. Whereas Individualism promotes autonomy, Collectivism promotes interdependence. Collectivist values amongst South Koreans are deemed essential to ensure continued harmonious relationships with families and others (Cho, Mallinckrodt, & Yune, 2010). Koreans strongly identify themselves as part of a 'we' in their families and pursue in-group goals rather than individual goals (Cho, Mallinckrodt, & Yune, 2010). Thus, it can be argued that the pursuit for Kirogi mothers to pursue higher education for their children can be seen as a collective goal for the entire family because their investment in their child meant that their child works towards placing their entire family on the path towards success.

Additionally, Confucian influences on education mastery have transformed Korea into a hierarchal society because there is a clear hierarchy in social statuses in modern Korean society. Koreans believe attaining the highest form of education as the 'gateway' to social recognition and success (Weidman & Park, 2000). This is supported by Kim and Chang's (2004) study on Kirogi families who found that both Kirogi parents believed that their

investment in their child's education served them well because it meant that their education success would lead to an entire family achievement towards higher social status. These views are still prevalent in Korea today as the uneducated are often discriminated against in society and considered the lower class (Cha & Kim, 2013). Furthermore, according to the New Jersey Minority Development (NJ Med, 2020), an American non-government organisation (NGO) that launched 'The World Top 20 Project' to monitor the education systems of over 210 nations, found that South Korea ranked the best-educated country in the world for four consecutive years in 2017. This suggests that educational attainment has been deeply ingrained in Korean people's consciousness, and the desire to succeed educationally has motivated Kirogi mothers to migrate to English-speaking countries in pursuit for better educational opportunities for their child/ren. Moreover, although Kirogi families live in a split-family arrangement, they still maintain a cohesive unit because each family member has dedicated to their assigned family-based role (Cha & Kim, 2013).

2.2.3 Mother-Child centred family structure

Whereas the spousal sub-system in Western countries is the centre of the family, the parent-child relationship is highly valued in Korea (Friedman, 1992; Cho, 1998). Specifically, the mother-child relationship occupies the central place in Korean families. Cultural prescriptions of Korean mothers were generally described as the 'benevolent mother' that devoted their entirety to their children emotionally, physically, and mentally (Kim & Choi, 1994). Although the traditional image depicted by Confucianism of the benevolent mother may seem from the distant past, two important values highly ingrained from Confucianism persists in Korea's contemporary society today: devotion and indulgence (Kim

& Choi, 1994). Korean mothers primarily are responsible for child-rearing, and their significant sacrifice towards child-rearing practices stems from the essence of '*Jeong*'. *Jeong* carries psychological connotations and is translated as 'love' or 'affection' that bonds and unite in-group members in Korean culture. The meaning of *Jeong* is much broader and complex, but its affective bond operates like an osmosis like process as it circulates amongst group members to closely bind them together (Kim & Choi, 1994).

Additionally, '*Mo Jeong*' translated as *Mo* (mother) and *Jeong* (affection), is associated with maternal wholeheartedness and encompasses a mother's deep unconditional love and generosity which goes beyond rationality in Korean family culture (Kim & Choi, 1994). For example, when a child makes a mistake, a mother tries to embrace, accept or even is lenient towards her child's fault. However, in a *Mo Jeong* relationship, the rational approach of the mother would be to empathetically understand her child's mistake from the child's perspective and critically appraise situations with the child and explain the proper behaviour to prevent the faulty mistake from being repeated (Kim & Choi, 1994). Thus, this emotional arousal reacts as a powerful dynamism that shapes a child's behaviour. Similar observations were reported to be found in mother-child relationships in Japan (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Suwalsky, & Bakeman, 2012).

Moreover, similar contrasts were also found in Rohner & Pettengill (1985) study, when they compared the parent-child relationship between the United States and South Korea. In their study, strict parental control of American parents was perceived by adolescents as parental hostility, aggression, rejection and is antithetical to a harmonious parent-child relationship. On the contrary, the findings of the result were reversed in Korea. Korean adolescents viewed

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Parental strictness as an indication of parental warmth and low neglect. Furthermore, parental involvement was viewed by both Korean parents and children as necessary to ensure academic, economic and social success. Thus, it can be argued that the findings reported by Rohner and Pettengill (1985) show that the majority of American parents in the study exert parental strictness when a child behaves inappropriately and primarily encourages independence and self-reliance of the child. However, in Korean families, parental involvement seems to foster and nurture children carefully and is seen as a positive contribution. These findings demonstrate that Korean mothers are immensely involved in their children's lives. Moreover, this supports the reasons for Kirogi mother's involvement in their children's academic lives by migrating with their young children especially during their early years by sacrificing significant time and energy to pursue high academic achievement.

2.2.4 Status of Korean women in the modern era

Korean women's status in the modern era has elevated to a point where both men and women have reached an equal social standing position regarding education, health, and legal rights (Choi, 2013). However, despite the rapidly changing era, Confucianism's influence is deeply embedded in Korean culture. Specifically, the relationship between women and Confucianism.

According to Uhn (2012), Gender inequality is ubiquitous in all areas of life in Korea because of its deeply rooted patriarchal ideologies derived from Confucianism. Specifically, regarding the familial relationship, Confucius precepts dictate the wife's obedience to her husband and his family, which prevails to maintain the lower status of women in Korea (Mee, 2012).

Thus, women in Korea still face rigid gender role stereotypes such as being subordinate to men, obedient to her husband, staying at home as housewives and being good mothers (Kim & Pettid, 2011)

Confucian family values support men's traditional sex roles as breadwinners and women as housewives (Kim & Pettid, 2011). Thus, in regards to Kirogi mothers, the role of being a mother becomes a priority. To fulfil that role, she must give up her own needs as a woman and her personal life in her home country for her family's prosperity (Lee & Keown, 2018). Although Kirogi mother's identity themselves solely as a mother, rather than a woman with her own needs, a small interview study by Lee (2010), found that their transnational living arrangement allowed Kirogi mothers to be free of traditional Confucian traditions. For example, being obedient to her husband and in-laws, and living up to the societal values such as beauty ideals allowed the women to feel a sense of freedom to explore their true selves.

Lee and Keown (2018), found similar findings in their study of Kirogi mother's child-rearing practices study in the context of New-Zealand. Their findings found that Kirogi mothers expressed feelings of freedom from the expectations of their traditional role and duties as a daughter-in-law and a wife. The transnational set-up had pulled the Kirogi mothers out from the Korean household's pressures and duties and the socio-cultural expectations of being a mother (Lee & Keown, 2018).

Thus, Korean Kirogi mothers are attracted to the prospect of living away from their home country. They are more-so attracted to New Zealand for a relaxed lifestyle, clean and less crowded living conditions and the opportunity for their children to acquire the English

language in an affordable country (Lee & Kweon, 2018). Thereby, New Zealand is one of the most popular destinations amongst Koreans for study abroad opportunities (Lee and Keown, 2018).

2.3 The challenges of the Kirogi family

2.3.1 Martial difficulties

As previously discussed above, Confucianism has heavily influenced modern Korean families as their values and ethics are still highly practised and followed. Korean families can be seen as a hierarchal system that consists of many sub-systems of dyadic relationships that operates to influence one another. Understanding how each sub-system influence each member of the family is important for understanding the functioning of families and their well-being.

Kirogi families are of particular interest because, in Confucian influenced values of traditional Korean culture, the child-parent relationship or parental bond is highly invested in at the expense of the husband-wife relationship or the marital bond. Despite South Korea's modernisation, mothers are solely responsible for child-rearing and their child's welfare. In particular, Korean mothers are devoted in all educated related decision of her child and are assumed to have a higher life satisfaction if her child does well academically and can be successfully launched into adulthood (Kim & Hoppe-Graff, 2001). The priority of education has become of significant importance to South Korean families, particularly for Kirogi

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families who seem to have a strong motivation towards their children's' achievement, at the risk of a family dissolution by living in a split-family arrangement.

Although the term Kirogi is used to symbolically represent the strong commitment wild geese have for their family, the characteristics, however, depict a different reality for its human counterpart. Kirogi families commonly experience various difficulties that arise from living apart for several months, years or even decades. Here again, because education is a priority, Kirogi parents make substantial sacrifices for their children; therefore, problems that arise between husband and wife are inevitable. For example, psychological stressors include loneliness, isolation, lack of intimacy, a distrust which often arises from affairs and ultimately leading to divorce in some Kirogi families (Jeong & Belanger, 2012; Choi, 2007). Many of these problems are reported amongst Kirogi wives at counselling sites because Kirogi husbands are left alone in isolation and often face extramarital temptations back home in Korea (Choi, 2007). Moreover, substantial research conducted with Kirogi fathers have found that fathers felt an extreme lack of intimacy and affection due to the absence of his wife, which may profoundly affect the marital relationship and eventually disintegrate the family (Lee & Koo, 2006; Ha, 2007; Choi, 2007; Chang, 2018).

However, contrary to the negative experiences faced by Kirogi husbands and wives, recent literature has reported that Kirogi couples were, in fact, able to maintain stable and intimate relationships due to advancements in technology such as using Skype and KakaoTalk messenger (Lee & Koo, 2006; Jeong, You, & Kwon, 2014). This is consistent with another small qualitative study conducted with Kirogi mothers in the United States that reported to maintain strong bonds as a family by spending virtual time with each other- sharing

immediate news, partaking in meals and daily activities by video calls, phone calls or photo sharing (Finch & Kim, 2012). The use of the internet and mobile phones have allowed transnational families to create a new concept of being 'together' through affordable means of communication which may not have been possible to imagine decades ago. These forms of virtual contact demonstrate that Kirogi families are capable of maintaining greater emotional intimacy and enhanced sharing, despite physical separation.

2.3.2 Child-Parent relationships

As previously discussed above, Kirogi couples are exposed to various marital difficulties that come at the expense of a transnational living arrangement for the sake of their child's education. The literature on family studies has typically investigated the association between marital satisfaction and parental depressive symptoms and have consistently found that positive and negative affective qualities in the marital relationships tend to "spill-over" to the parent-child relationship (Davila, Karney, Hall, & Bradbury, 2003; Kourose, Papp, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2014). For example, in a study by Erel & Burman (1995), found that problems in marital relationships were positively correlated with problems in the parent-child relationship. On the other hand, satisfaction in marital relationships has been found to be positively correlated with satisfaction in the parent-child relationship. Thus, these findings suggest that children are more likely to thrive and are happier when parents are together in harmonious relationships and have fewer conflicts in their marriage.

However, in Kirogi families, difficulties that arise between the child and parent are immense due to the father's absence. A study by Shin, Choi, and Kim (2014) on the mental distress of

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children in Kirogi families in the United States found that young children often experience emptiness and atrophy because of their father's placement in Korea which often fails to see a father role model at home and to easily regard him as a 'money-maker'. Furthermore, mental distress such as depression and anxiety were found to be higher amongst children who lived in the United States for longer terms which may be explained in part caused by the long separation from their fathers and exposure to acculturative stress (Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2014). These findings show that the lack of daily interactions and close emotional attachment children have with their fathers can have lasting negative impacts in the parent-child relationship and the mental health of Kirogi children because of their unique family situation.

Moreover, based on the traditional customs of Confucianism in Korean family culture, children must comply with several duties to ensure a harmonious parent-child relationship known as filial piety. Filial piety in South Korea is the foundation of all good conduct that dictates children's proper behaviour. For example, children are to show their utmost respect and love for their parents, obey their commands, continue the family line, and most importantly to bring honour to the family (Tam, 2016). The literature on filial piety in Confucian Heritage Cultures reports that parents facilitate the internalisation of filial expectations and norms to their children, which then frames academia's importance as a means for success and social mobility (Tam, 2016). On this basis, children strive to excel academically to meet their filial expectations to their parents by bringing honour to their family and repaying parents for their unconditional love and sacrifice they have endured for their upbringing.

2.4 Challenges of the Kirogi mother

In a society that is heavily influenced by Confucianism, Kirogi mothers typically fulfil her motherly role as her top priority for the sake of her family, rather than as a woman with her individual needs. There have been no studies to date that have explored the intimate lives of Kirogi mothers in New Zealand. Much of the available research has focused on the challenges and problems experienced by Kirogi fathers (Jeong & Belanger, 2012) because South Korean scholars had much easier access to exploring Kirogi fathers' insights in the same country. A study by Lee & Koo (2006) is one of the few studies investigating Kirogi fathers' lives living alone in South Korea. In their study, Lee & Koo (2006), found that Kirogi fathers are the real sufferers in this unique split-family living arrangement because they are exposed to various psychological challenges that arise from isolation, loneliness, and financial pressure to support his family overseas. Such a finding is not surprising, given that fathers are left alone, longing for their families whilst working tirelessly to financially support his wife and child overseas.

Moreover, there are extensive studies on the mental distress of Kirogi children, mainly on the effects of studying abroad at an early age (Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2014; Lee, 2010; Yeom, 2008). The central focus of research has been about whether there are benefits of studying abroad at an early age despite the risks involved such as acculturative stress and being separated from the father during the early socialisation process of young children. Findings in this area of research have often been mixed. For example, in Shin, Choi, & Kim (2014) study of Kirogi children in the United States found that problematic mother-child communication and low satisfaction with the father-child relationship were key predictors for depression and

anxiety amongst Kirogi children. Consequently, due to limited contact with fathers and a failure to establish a close father-child relationship, Kirogi children often feel disconnected from their fathers when returning home to their home country. However, Yeom (2008) suggests in her qualitative work with two Kirogi children found that there are also positive as much as negative impacts on children from Kirogi families and that much more time is needed for the findings in this area mature.

Nonetheless, the Kirogi is a recent phenomenon, and despite this growing interest in the field of academia, only a handful of studies have discussed Kirogi mothers. The existing literature on Kirogi mothers is usually uni-dimensional because they are described as women who sacrifice their lives for their children (Chew, 2009; Cho, 2004). Such narrow descriptions are occasionally negative and do not offer an alternative narrative to the actual lives of Kirogi mothers. However, several notable studies have explored the experiences of the Asian transnational family arrangement, particularly mothers who all reported to have felt a lack of social support and shifts in spousal relationships.

For example, in a study by Waters (2002) of Taiwanese and Hong Kong geese mothers living in Canada, mothers reported their experiences as predominantly negative due to a lack of social support, especially during the early phases of migration. These mothers reported feelings of isolation as they lost existing support from their husbands and social networks which often left them feeling depressed and lonely. Findings were consistent from Kim, Choi and Lee's (2005) survey data of 66 Korean Kirogi mothers in New Zealand. Mothers were asked about their migration experiences, opinions of their children's international study, frequency of contact with their husband in Korea, and communication with friends in New

Zealand. Findings showed that although 47% of the mothers were highly satisfied with their lives in New Zealand, 42% felt moderately satisfied. In general, these mothers expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation from having inadequately meaningful social relationships. For example, a few mothers reported that they tried to ease their loneliness by making friends with local Kiwis; however, expressed difficulties making friends with the locals due to language barriers.

In terms of marital relations between Kirogi couples, several studies have reported marriages to be failing due to long-distance, often resulting in a divorce (Waters, 2002; Lam, 1994). However, in Lee's study on Kirogi, mothers have shown cases where the agreement to live apart has been associated with a more improved marital relationship. It was seen as a strategy for the mothers to be free from any burden from their in-laws and Confucian values.

Overall, existing evidence from the literature reports that Kirogi mothers often face challenges and life difficulties associated with psychological and emotional issues (Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014). For example, feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem and confidence, fear and exhaustion were descriptions in several notable studies of Korean transnational mothers (Finch & Kim, 2012; Cha & Kim, 2013; Jeong & Belanger, 2012). The evidence suggests that Kirogi mothers are a vulnerable population at potential risk of various mental health-related issues. More research is needed to identify the risk factors and whether other domains of their lives are flourishing. Little information exists about the well-being and experiences of Kirogi mothers in New-Zealand and the possible challenges and life difficulties that unfolds in their intimate lives.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter aims to present the research design that guides the current study's methodology. More precisely, this chapter is organised in the following seven sections: (1) research design; including research purpose, methodological approach and epistemological underpinning (2) Situating the researcher as Bricoleur, (3) Ethical considerations, (4) Participant recruitment and portfolio (5) Data collection procedures, (6) Data analysis strategy

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore a relatively under-researched topic of the intimate lives of Kirogi mothers', their experiences as a mother and women in the New Zealand context. Because the Kirogi mother community and population have received little attention in the literature and particularly on the local levels in the New Zealand context, the researcher's goal was to expand the research body concerning this groups' experiences as both a Kirogi mother and women. By allowing this marginalised population's voices to be amplified, the researcher hopes to fill in the gap in the psychological literature of the intimate lives of ethnic minorities such as the Korean Kirogi migrants. This qualitative research also allows a chance to explore the dominant and negative narratives the Kirogi mothers' have often endured in the Korean media and existing literature (Chew, 2009; Cho, 2004; Choi

2006). For example, Kirogi mothers are often seen as women who have abandoned their husbands for only their children's interest and well-being and use migration as a strategy to flee and avoid the cultural burden they face home in Korea (Jeong and Belanger, 2017). These negative stereotypes and narrow descriptions are commonly associated with Kirogi mothers. However, little is known about what areas of Kirogi mothers' lives are actually flourishing and which domains of life contribute to their difficulties adjusting to a new host society. Thus, this study's purpose was to conduct a narrative inquiry as a way to better understand the experiences of Kirogi mothers' as a mother and women amid living and telling, reliving and re-telling of their stories which makes up their lives (Clandinin and Conelley, 2000).

3.1.2 Methodological approach

To meet the study's aim and obtain a better understanding of Kirogi Mothers' experiences, the researcher utilised a specific qualitative approach. A narrative inquiry construct by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space was used to explore the detailed and intimate lives of Kirogi mothers'. A narrative inquiry approach is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. However, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry allows for a multifaceted approach on inquiring into experience by engaging into the three common places of narrative inquiry- temporality, sociality, and place. The three common places are the conceptual framework central to narrative inquiry.

Moreover, its dimensions attend to all three common places by asking participants to look backwards, inward, outward, and forward, with attention to place(s), which creates an

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understanding of their experiences as a Kirogi mother and women in the New Zealand context as a whole.

This form of narrative inquiry differentiates from other forms of narrative inquiries that are frequently undertaken as merely a process of researchers asking people to tell their stories written down by researchers and then are "retold". Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach goes beyond this process and delves deeper by attending to participants' personal and social interaction time, continuity, and situational context. More specifically, it is an approach that is a collaborative process between the researcher and participants, which is integral to understanding the composition and co-composition of research texts by living, telling, and re-telling stories. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). On this basis, the narrative inquiry methodology allows us to study lived experiences of people's lives as a way of honouring important knowledge and understanding through story-telling that is situated in the social, cultural, familial, and institutional narratives within which their experiences were and are shaped, expressed and enacted (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Utilising this method to gather data through participants' stories (Kirogi mothers) allowed the researcher to have a multifaceted view into how they structure experience and construct meaning in their lives. Therefore, narrative inquiry methodology begins and ends in the participants' storied lives.

3.1.3 Epistemological underpinning

The epistemological underpinning that guided this research aligns with the constructivist paradigm. According to Hatch (2002), constructivist is a philosophical paradigm that assumes people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world by

experiencing things and reflecting upon those experiences. People's experience of the world and how they construe meanings are knowledge that is symbolically constructed and are, in fact, not objective (Hatch, 2002). On this basis, our understanding of the world is based on individual perspectives or constructions of reality, and that the truth is in fact, what we agree it is (Hatch, 2002).

Hatch (2002) further asserted that constructivist researchers and participants in their studies are joined together in the process of co-construction because relationships are integral to understanding and making sense of narrative inquiry (Hatch, 2002; Clandinnin & Connelly, 2000).

This small-scale exploratory study was conducted by the author, a Korean student who made it possible to establish rapport and a trusting relationship with participants. Within this position, and a member of the migrant community, it was possible for the participants to be more willing to participate and tell their stories openly. The rapport established between the researcher and the participants ensured to develop a mutual understanding and relationship which allowed the researcher to explore the multiple realities and subjectivities that existed amongst the Kirogi mothers through the co-production of meaning.

3.2 Situating the Researcher as Bricoleur

In developing a research identity for this narrative inquiry, the researcher learnt to play a bricoleur role. In terms, Bricolage explains the significant approaches qualitative

researcher has adopted in their method of inquiry through multiple eclectic ways and diverse theoretical lenses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001). Thus, the multiple methodologies qualitative research may be viewed as a bricolage, and the researcher as Bricoleur (Denzin, 1994).

Throughout the research process, it was important for the researcher as a Korean to form an on-going relational inquiry space, which is known as the *field*. It is integral to listen to participants tell their stories and live alongside participants as they live and their stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Negotiations of purpose, transitions and intentions are an on-going process as a Bricoleur researcher because I needed to negotiate ways to be helpful to participants both in and following the research and live out professional responsibilities and social positioning. Thus, the researcher immerses in ways to understand the participant's world being particularised through methods of diverse collections of oral histories, conversations, life histories, and interviews, as well as entering spaces that participants invite us to such as their homes and or communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

3.3 Ethical considerations

As a rule of thumb, ensuring human subjects' protection is essential in any partake of research because it involves ethical issues that require the collection of data from people and about people (Punch, 2005). All procedures were disclosed to and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) 4000022829 before the research commencing.

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Inadvertently, it is possible to cause emotional harm to participants because the interview requires Kirogi mothers to answer personal and intimate details about their livelihood, such as topics surrounding marital relationships, intimacy, past histories, financial issues, and the overall experiences of living as a Kirogi mother. Therefore, throughout the research process, it was crucial to develop a trusting rapport with the mother's through non-judgemental and empathetic listening so that they would feel comfortable to share their stories. Most importantly, Kirogi mother's were informed their participation was voluntary and had the right not to answer any or all questions that were asked, end the interview at any time, or withdraw themselves from the study.

Furthermore, another measure to ensure the protection of participants and confidentiality was the use of informed consent forms. Each participant received a copy of the informed consent form outlining detailed information about the research purpose and its nature. Additionally, participants were also asked for permission to be audio-recorded for the interview. Upon agreement to participate in the study, participants completed the consent form. They were provided with the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and have them answered by the researcher.

This study ensured to protect all participants' confidentiality and privacy by assigning pseudonyms at the onset and during the study to protect all participants' identities. Actual names will not be referenced in the study or used when referencing the participants' narratives in written, spoken, or audio forms. Moreover, all participants were informed about the storage and use of results. They were notified that they would be allowed to access the copies of the completed study from the researcher.

3.4 Participant recruitment

After receiving the ethics approval from MUHEC in June 2020, the researcher took several steps to recruit participants within Auckland's greater metropolitan area. First, because this study sought to find meaningful experiences from a targeted population of Korean Kirogi mothers, the researcher employed a non-random, purposive sampling method to recruit participants. As a method of identifying the potential participants, the researcher as an insider and a member of the migrant community, first contacted her previous employer at the English-Korean language school run by Korean teachers for Korean primary and secondary students at Chungdam Preparatory School.

This method of recruitment was warranted because as an insider-researcher, I was invited with the opportunity to meet and greet with Kirogi mother's at the school and disclose the nature of the research and distribute invitations for their voluntary participation in the research. The enclosed invitations outlined detailed information about the study's purpose, the ethical considerations involved such as emotional risks, confidentiality, informed consent, data storage, the researcher's contact information, and inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria of participants required mother's to (a) be born in the Republic of Korea, (b) currently reside in New Zealand with their children, (c) have child/ren currently enrolled in a New Zealand school, (d) Husbands are currently residing in the Republic of Korea, (e) be willing to participate. This study solely focused on Korean Kirogi mothers; therefore, the mothers who permanently or temporarily resided in New Zealand with their husbands and children were excluded from the study. There were no restrictions for the length of time spent in New Zealand. Overall, as an insider position and a member of the migrant community, the

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researcher made it possible to develop a positive influence on building rapport, allowing the Kirogi mothers to be more open and willing to participate.

Furthermore, to identify potential participants, the researcher placed advertisements frequented by Korean migrants such as Korean grocery stores. Additionally, using the social media platform such as Facebook, the researcher advertised the study requesting participation on the Korean community Facebook page "New Zealand Stories". Detailed information regarding the study's purpose, inclusion criteria, and contact details of the researcher was included in the above process.

3.4.1 Participant portfolio's

The research involved four participants, each of whom selected pseudonyms before the interview process. Following are the descriptive summaries of each participant.

Euni's Profile.

Euni is a 40-year-old woman with three children. A 10-year-old son, 8-year-old son, and a 5-year-old daughter. Euni has been a Kirogi mother in New Zealand for one year and eight months. Before Euni decided on becoming a Kirogi mother, Euni was a typical full-time housewife. Her husband works as a busy entrepreneur back in the city of Seoul, and is described as a "busy man who has no time for his family, but works very hard to earn money

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for his family". Euni and her husband, who is ten years older, have been married for well over ten years, and have dated an additional eight years before their marriage. Euni describes her relationship with her husband as a history with a "turbulent past" because they have broken up more than 20 times during their eight years of dating. Euni was pressured into marriage by her parents to get married for they feared she would become the "leftover women" who are culturally labelled in Korea as women in her 30's who failed to find a suitor. Euni's decision on becoming a Kirogi mother and coming to New Zealand was inspired by her friend Yuni because of the positive encounters she had experienced herself. Currently, with the global pandemic of Covid-19, Euni plans to extend her life as a Kirogi mother for an additional two years.

Yuni's Profile

Yuni is a 39-year-old woman with two children. A 10-year-old daughter, and 5-year-old son. Yuni has been a Kirogi mother in New Zealand for over three years. Before Yuni decided on becoming a Kirogi mother, Yuni was a full-time banker. Yuni worked full-time whilst also raising her children with her parents and husband's help. Yuni describes her marriage as a "loving and trusting marriage" because her husband is her "first love". Yuni described the first time she met her husband on a bus ride with her brother and friend (current husband). Yuni describes her first encounter as "instant chemistry, and knew they would be married one day". Yuni's husband is a general officer with the Korean army and is from a generals family. Yuni and her husband have been married for 20 years. Yuni's decision to become a Kirogi mother in New Zealand was encouraged by her husband who felt his children needed to experience education abroad and Yuni to "have a break from the cultural pressure for

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educating and raising children in Korea". Yuni's husband reflected his caring devotion towards his family and has led to a decision which Yuni appreciates deeply. Yuni has become fondly attached to her life as a Kirogi and plans to find a way to settle down permanently in New Zealand with her family as a whole.

Jenny's Profile

Jenny is a 42-year-old woman with two sons. A 10-year-old, and an 8-year-old son. Jenny has been a Kirogi mother for five years in New Zealand. Before Jenny's life as a Kirogi mother, she was a full-time English teacher in Korea teaching secondary students. Jenny felt the need to leave Korea with her children abroad to become a Kirogi mother because she believed it would be easier for her children to learn English whilst they are still young. Jenny's husband is a construction worker, and was reluctant to send Jenny and the children due to financial strains, but overall has let them come to New Zealand. Jenny describes her husband of 20 years as "distant" and is currently in the midst of a "relationship crisis". Jenny has become fondly attached to her life in New Zealand, and her children also feel the same. They half-jokingly witted that because of the global pandemic Covid-19, they found an excuse to extend their stay a little bit longer.

Ana's Profile

Ana is a 38-year-old woman with two daughters. A 10-year-old, and an 8-year-old daughter. Ana has been a Kirogi mother for three years. Before Ana decided to become a Kirogi

mother, she was a fashion designer who had her clothing line and a store. Ana devoted her life as a career woman for over 15 years and enjoyed working as a fashion designer.

However, once she became pregnant with her first daughter, Ana decided to quit her job and become a full-time housewife. With the educational pressure surrounding mothers at Korean schools, Ana decided to become a Kirogi mother with her husband's support. Ana and her husband have been married for ten years, and her husband works as a "typical full-time salaryman". What initially planned to be a 1-year trip led to Ana's decision to extend their stay in New Zealand whilst her husband wants his family to come back home.

3.5 Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews to explore Kirogi mothers' experiences as mothers and women in the New Zealand context. Given the in-depth and rich insights that narrative inquiry methodology requires, the researcher interviewed all four participants individually over three months. After gaining the interview consent forms from all the participants, the researcher audio-recorded the interviewee's responses with permission granted. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face for three continuous sessions lasting 90 minutes per session, totalling 270 minutes. The interviews were conducted at a café near the participant's home location and conducted at the interviewee's home. Due to the global pandemic crisis Covid-19, an alternate interviewing and contact method was also necessary through Skype and Facetime. Participant's preferred to be interviewed in their native language Korean, and these were translated and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, who is also a native Korean. To ensure the translation's accuracy, the transcripts were overseen and checked by a qualified translator. To identify and correct any discrepancies, the

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English version of the translated transcripts was translated into Korean by a professional translator and then back-translated into English.

The interviews were designed in alignment with Clandinnin and Conelley's (2000), three-dimensional space model to elicit a more in-depth response and discussion centred on the topic linked to the research aim. Participants were guided by questions that probed them to tell their stories by reflecting inward into their personal and social dimensions such as feelings, hopes, moral dispositions, and outward environmental conditions (Clandinin & Conelley, 2000). Additionally, participants were asked to look backwards and forward in time, thinking about their past, future and future aspirations in relation to her life as a mother and women. Finally, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as a Kirogi mother in relation to Clandinin and Conelley's (2000) three-dimensional framework in relation to place or situation.

Upon completing the translated and transcribed documents, participants were provided copies of their transcripts for review. Participants were asked to read and re-read the transcripts for accuracy and were asked to provide necessary changes and edits. It was crucial to work together with participants to co-construct meanings reported in the participant's narratives or interpretation to strengthen the research's authenticity and credibility. A mutual agreement was established based on a collaborative process of multiple readings and the editing of the narratives between the researcher and participants.

3.6 Data analysis

Narrative inquiry is a unique form of qualitative research which honours lived human experiences in a linguistic form that expresses the complexity of human thoughts and actions as a source of knowledge and understanding (Polkinghorne, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The current study employed a narrative analysis as a procedure to configure storied accounts or data into a coherent whole (Polkinghorne, 2016). As a research method, Polkinghorne (2016) suggests two types of data analysis methods in narrative inquiry. The first (a) paradigmatic analysis of narratives whose data consists of narratives or storied accounts, and (b) narrative type analysis whose data produces stories such as biographies, histories, case studies (Polkinghorne, 2016). In this study, I have emphasised the first of the two types of narrative analysis: the paradigmatic analysis of narratives. The paradigmatic analysis of data allowed the researcher to understand Kirogi mothers' narratives by categorisation, themes, and coding that gave an in-depth insight into the experiences and intimate lives of Kirogi mothers'.

Throughout the research process, the researcher utilised a specific data analysis technique from Clandinin and Connelly (2000) three analytic tools for a narrative inquiry: broadening, burrowing, storying, and re-storying. Throughout the first reading of the completed interview transcripts, the researcher employed the model of broadening from Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) model, to grasp an insight of the participant's character, values, and the culture and way of life. The second reading of the transcripts consisted of what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to as "burrowing" which focused on the participant's perspectives of moral qualities and the emotional attachments to events arising from their experiences as a Kirogi

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mother and women. During the third reading, the researcher employed the method of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) storying and re-storying to understand not only the experiences of Kirogi mothers' but to explore on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives which have shaped and expressed, and enacted the Kirogi mother's experience in the world through their storying and re-storying of their world.

By working collaboratively with participants using the aforementioned strategies, the researcher collected meaningful information to illuminate new understandings of the participant's world being particularised (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, tactics used were member checking, de-briefing, and providing participants with a written account of the findings to review and confirm the researcher's interpretation of their narratives (Choi, Park, & O'Brien, 2017). Furthermore, building rapport with participants by investing time and forming a trusting relationship over multiple occasions allowed to strengthen the authenticity of the research (Choi, Park, & O'Brien, 2017)

Based on multiple readings of the transcripts and working in partnership with participants, five major themes were developed and identified with related sub-themes that emerged: 1) Escape from the Korean society, 2) Gendered role expectations, 3) Martial disruptions, 4) Unique challenges experienced by Kirogi mothers, 5) Greater freedom, self-reliance and independence.

Chapter 4

Findings

This research explores four Korean Kirogi mothers' experiences in the New Zealand context and provides an in-depth analysis of their intimate lives as a Kirogi mother and woman. Utilising a specific data narrative analysis described in Chapter 3, the researcher investigated Korean Kirogi mothers' life histories by gaining a multifaceted view into their lives by looking backwards, forward, inward, and outward of their current realities and their future visions. On this basis, the researcher was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of their chosen path as a Kirogi mother in the New Zealand context, and how their experiences have shaped their lives as a mother and women.

The data collection supports this research's findings by building a trusting relationship and rapport with the Korean Kirogi mothers using semi-structured interviews. The following section provides emergent themes that represent a common experience amongst the mothers and similar experiences shared amongst the Korean Kirogi mothers. After a careful analysis based on multiple readings of the transcript and mutual agreement with the participants, the following major themes were developed and identified with related sub-themes.

1. Escape from Korean society
2. Different identities as women
3. Martial quality- fidelity vs infidelity
4. Unique challenges experienced by Kirogi mothers

Thematic findings

Theme 1: Escape from Korean society

As each participant shared her story, the notion of escaping from the patriarchal Korean society was ever-present. Throughout the interview, all the mothers mentioned the burden of domestic responsibilities as a woman and the stress of attending to in-law relationships. Because Korea is a patriarchal society, women indeed have substantial obligations to take care of their husbands and families since Korean families are enmeshed with each other (Choi, 2006). Thus, for the mothers' in this study, becoming a Kirogi was a way to become liberated and free from the constraining societal and cultural values of Confucianism.

Euni captures the notion of feeling relieved from the hardship and burden of being a woman in Korean society and how becoming a Kirogi gave her the exit from that pressure:

"I feel freer since becoming a Kirogi because my husband is not here, his parents are not here to bother me, and there is no one to tell me what to do after I send the children off to school!. Even if I don't do the dishes and I just lie down on the bed being lazy, there is no one to tell me off. I feel like a king! However, if I was back in Korea, I have to look after my husband...make his breakfast...lunch...dinner... there is no time for me to be lazy. If I had dishes piled up in the kitchen here in New-Zealand, there is no one to judge me or tell me off. My mother in law would sometimes come to our home unannounced and would always scold

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me because the house was so messy! So there is this peace and comfort. I am very much enjoying this free time alone. I found peace and comfort in my life for the first time".

In Euni's narrative, she notes the feeling of being free from the burdens of domestic responsibilities and her duties as a wife and daughter in law. She constructs her previous experience in Korea by comparing it to her present life in New Zealand, revealing how oppressed she felt back in Korea. Becoming a Kirogi allowed Euni to re-position herself as a liberated woman who became unbound to adhere to certain cultural expectations.

Similarly, in Yuni's narrative, she talks about how the standards of appearance and beauty are also heavily part of the Korean culture. Yuni noted that looking unkempt and "un-ladylike" can negatively judge other Koreans, especially amongst other women. Thus, feeling oppressed based on appearance was another hardship amongst mothers who felt pressured always to look and present their best to other peoples' viewpoints. Yuni noted:

"Becoming a Kirogi was such a good decision. I tell you what. In Korea, you are always conscious of how other people think about you. For example, in the morning when I have to put my kid on the bus for school, I must wash my face, put on full make-up and dress up in some nice clothes and look presentable, because People in Korea are very judgemental. But since moving here to New Zealand, No one gives a damn! Even I don't wash my face and drop my kids off, no one cares! And it feels so damn good! I don't have to care about being a perfect wife or looking like the next Miss Korea!".

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In Yuni's excerpt, she recounts how bound she was by judgements on appearance by other Koreans in Korea. However, since migrating to New Zealand as a Kirogi, Yuni felt more empowered from the exceptionally high standards of appearance and beauty in Korean culture and showed how living in New Zealand provided her with space and context with new alternative social values and practices. These ideas allow Kirogi mothers' to experience shifts in perspectives and allows them to feel free from living up to the high standards expected of Korean women.

Jenny and Ara also viewed their experience as a Kirogi in New-Zealand as a "paradise" away from Korea's societal pressures. Throughout Jenny and Ara's interview, both expressed similar experiences of facing privacy invasion regarding their personal livelihood in Korea. Jenny noted:

"New Zealand is such a paradise in heaven. In Korea, everyone is so nosy. They will always ask you which neighbourhood do you live? What car do you drive? These are such personal questions, and sometimes I feel very uncomfortable because I have to share my details with others. In here, no one gives a shit! They don't even ask!"

Ara similarly expressed:

"Nowadays, people go even further in asking personal questions which have become the norm now for our society. They will ask you: where do you live? What does your husband or father do? If you say you live in an affluent area, then you already have your answer to what

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your husband or your father does for his job. Your value is determined by which affluent neighbourhood you live, and how much money your husband or father makes. It makes you feel you have no privacy in Korea. You have to share everything to be part of this culture and community".

Because Korea is a hierarchal society, there is also a clear hierarchy in social statuses (Kim & Park, 2000). These views still seem to be prevalent as the above two excerpts by Jenny and Ara reveal how people in the Korean society casually ask personal questions to configure which social class status either one is sitting at. From this perspective, living in an affluent neighbourhood would classify one 'with a higher social status, whilst living in a non-affluent neighbourhood would be discriminated upon. Although Jenny and Ara's dissatisfaction with other people's evaluation determined upon a wealth criterion, the mothers' express a sense of freedom from being surveilled in Korean society.

Overall, all the mothers evaluated their positioning as a woman and mother differently in a transnational space. For all the mothers, becoming a Kirogi provided a new context to escape from the burden of traditional Korean values and practices and transform and re-position herself in the new host society. The mothers' narratives show that becoming a Kirogi was not only about the choice concerning their child's education, but more so of an opportunity to express their freedom as a woman and mother in a transnational context.

Theme 2: Different identities as a woman

As the Kirogi mothers' narrated their stories of living in Korea as a woman, all the mothers said their lives had dramatically changed once they became a Kirogi mother. Specifically, upon their arrival to New Zealand, the mothers' construct themselves as "devoted mothers" who can sacrifice her life as a woman and give up her happiness for the sake of her child's future. Much of the participants narrative relates to Korean familism, centred between the child and parent system, rather than a husband and wife centred system (Kim, 2002). Therefore, the mothers' described how their identity as a "woman" is very much non-existent, and solely view themselves as an educational manager and life planner for their children which is a crucial part of mothering.

For Euni, she expressed her need to sacrifice her life as a woman and was willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of giving her children a better education in New Zealand since education is of foremost importance in a Korean family.

"There are no women in me. I decided that there is no me for the next two years of my life here with the kids. I took this mindset because I am sacrificing a lot here for my kids, so that later on down the track I will be rewarded by them later on for all the sacrifice I have done for them. I put my heart and soul all in for my children".

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Similarly, for Yuni, she also stated that since becoming a Kirogi mother, there is no time to feel like a woman because she would bear double responsibilities of educating and parenting by fulfilling both parental roles of a mother and father.

"Since coming to New Zealand, I take the sole parental responsibility hereby being both a father and mother to my children. This double responsibility in the physical absence of my husband has been challenging. I just have no time to look after myself sometimes, which makes me feel like I'm not a woman. I would look in the mirror and wonder if that is a man staring back at me haha. But at the same time, I am enjoying being so carefree and going out make-up free, because no one here judges you like they critically do in Korea".

Jenny and Ara also similarly expressed their desire to sacrifice their womanhood to fulfil their responsibilities as a devoted mother so their child can excel in their studies given their limited time in New Zealand. The following two excerpts demonstrate both Jenny and Ara's perception regarding womanhood and motherhood.

Jenny summarised her feelings regarding single motherhood:

"Once you become a Kirogi, you're basically a single mom deserted in a foreign land to make sure your child has a chance to succeed when they return home to Korea. The next couple of years is all about your child, which becomes your life and role. You are no longer a woman, and you won't even be considered a woman when you are a Kirogi. It has been a long time since I felt like one."

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Ara also further added:

"Sometimes, I feel I don't even know who I am anymore. Am I a man or a woman? I have spent so much time doing household chores, and looking after my children, that I forgot to take care of myself. I have not felt sexy about myself for a long time, and it makes me wonder why I decided to carry all this burden alone. Oh! Now I remember, the reality of going back soon to Korea makes me realise that my family's future depends on my children's' education and future..so this reality makes me hang in there a little bit more..."

As the mothers' shared their views on woman and motherhood, their current outlook about themselves portrays an image of a woman who has lost her sense of identity at the expense of her child's education. This voluntary sacrifice demonstrates the importance of education and success in Korean families and reveals the devotion Kirogi mothers have for their child/ren. The mothers' ambivalent feelings about "not feeling like a woman" reflect a loss of identity and reveal their roles as Kirogi mothers in a foreign land as difficult to adjust due to their sole parental responsibilities. However, the mothers persevere as she knows precisely what is best for her family and that their sacrifice can positively be reciprocated by their children's' success in the foreseeable future. This investment is what makes their experience as a Kirogi mother all worthwhile.

Theme 3: Martial quality- fidelity vs infidelity

Transnational split family structures have limited relationships due to their lack of physical proximity. All the mothers' discussed the importance of maintaining their family life as a Kirogi; however, expressed emotional difficulties whilst adjusting to a new environment in the physical absence of their husbands'. Specifically, concerning their marital relationships, two mothers' discussed their strategies to maintain fidelity towards their husbands', whilst the other two mothers' experienced loneliness led to their infidelities. Overall, all the mothers' had experienced a change in their marital relationships with their husbands'.

For Euni and Yuni, strategies employed to maintain their fidelity and close relationship with their husbands were to connect with each other every day by using technology such as video calls, skype, and the Korean messenger platform "KakaoTalk". This reveals the central role of technology that helped reinforce positive marital relations in transnational split families (Jeong, 2014).

Euni represented her story about how she maintained close connections with her husband:

"Back in the days, you had to write letters and put a stamp on and send it away...but now it is so much easier to keep in touch. My husband calls me on KakaoTalk messenger or Skype every day to see what I am up to any time of the day. My husband and I have been together as a married couple for over ten years and known each other for 20 years. When we are apart, we realised that we are important beings to each other, so because of this longing the heart

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makes the heart grow fonder, and he is much kinder and understanding now towards me.

This distance has made us closer than before, and our marriage even stronger".

In Euni's excerpt, she highlighted that her marital quality had improved since living as a Kirogi because the physical proximity had made the couple realise how important they are to each other. Euni reveals her relationship is built upon strong mutual trust and partnership established since their marriage because she welcomes her husband calling her every day, any time of the day. On this basis, Euni's positive martial relationship reveals how important it is for both husband and wife to maintain intimacy and closeness through virtual communication.

Similarly, Yuni expressed her appreciation and longing for her husband since her experience of living apart from him. In particular, the global pandemic Covid-19 had imposed mandatory border restrictions and travelling, which had ultimately impacted Kirogi mothers' lives. Specifically, for Yuni, she discussed how previously before the Covid-19 pandemic, she would regularly visit her husband with her children up to four times a year. However, since the border restrictions and lockdown, she could not travel to see her husband, nor could her husband fly over to New Zealand to see his family. This meant that the forced separation had ultimately changed the Kirogi family arrangement. However, for Yuni, this unique experience had improved her marital relationship because the couple realised their appreciation and need for each other.

"If it were not for the Covid-19 pandemic, I would be with my husband right now. However, now, my husband can not fly over to see me, nor can I because my children are doing so well at school right now. This pandemic has seriously disrupted our lives and had brought along

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chaos. But at the same time, since this is beyond our control, my husband and I realised how important we are to each other. This has made him more loving and caring towards me, and I am also paying special attention to him. We make sure we make daily phone calls and skype to each other so we can feel close and connected”.

Although the global pandemic caused significant changes and functioning of Yuni’s family structure, their strong marital relations was due to their joint effort to maintain intimacy and closeness.

Out of sight, out of mind

On the contrary, for Jenny and Ara, they expressed their marriage quality as estranged due to various factors leading to their infidelities. Such factors included loneliness, acculturation stress, isolation, and lack of trust and support between wife and husband. One common sub-theme that emerged from both mothers was “out of sight, out of mind”. This theme occurred most commonly amongst the two mothers’, and refers to the traditional Korean proverb of being forgotten when one is no longer present.

Jenny’s story gave an account of the experiences that led to her feeling estranged from her husband, which led to her infidelities.

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“We had such a good relationship back in Korea, Once I came to New Zealand as a Kirogi, my husband was too busy making money to send to us, and I was also too busy sorting out the kids and doing everything on my own here with limited English skills. I was stressful, and so was he, so we would always argue over the phone because none of us understood each other. I was also suspicious he was seeing another girl because in Korea the nightlife is alive...the men can buy prostitutes if they want to. These entertainment for men are everywhere in Korea. So I was getting upset...and decided to meet up with my gardener and the refrigerator service repair man because I was feeling lonely and everything.

If my husband and I were together, we could make amends by having sex, but in this Kirogi situation, you cannot even meet up to have sex. Especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. So basically, our lack of intimacy of literally skin and skin contact and sleeping under the same blanket together became absent for so long. Moreover, as our elders say: Out of sight out of mind, this saying perfectly fits for me”.

In Jenny’s excerpt, she expressed her hardship of settling into New Zealand, whilst also expressing her frustration of being unable to make amends with her husband due to their current physical separation, leading to her infidelities. This finding indicates, various stressful factors can put pressure for Kirogi’s that can result in unwarranted consequences. Although Jenny had established a strong relationship back in Korea with her husband, the actual physical separation of living as a transnational split family structure proved to be deteriorating for their marriage. Thus, maintaining face-to-face interaction can be seen as a significant factor in maintaining close martial relationships.

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Similarly, for Ara, she mentioned that her marriage was already unstable before coming to New Zealand as a Kirogi. Moreover, due to a lack of family reunion and lack of communication, she regarded her feelings towards her husband as being distant and non-existent; thus, she noted:

“My husband and I fought quite a lot because of different perspectives and opinions, especially regarding our children’s education. I wanted to become a Kirogi in New Zealand for my children to feel less stressful and have a break from the crazy Korean education system. My husband disapproved of this choice initially due to financial problems, but I came anyway. He hardly visits us, and we hardly go back to see him, because the costs of moving back and forth are expensive. This is why the saying “out of sight, out of mind” is so true because I just feel like a single woman and mother here alone in New Zealand”.

Ara, further adds that her feelings of loneliness and isolation led her to be dependant on other men she had met in New Zealand. Specifically, Ara would attend the church to feel a sense of belonging and be part of a community where she could meet other Korean people to feel less isolated. According to Ara, the church is where most Kirogi mothers go to receive social support and to receive valuable information regarding insights on adjusting to the New Zealand life. Most intriguingly, she also discussed that the church is a place where Kirogi mothers are also a prime target for men because Kirogi mothers’ are stereotyped and viewed as the “lonely women without a man”.

Ara reflected on her experiences of infidelities and said:

“Kirogi mothers’ all go to church regardless they are religious or not. Because this is the hot spot for getting all the valuable information from all sorts of things such as where the best Korean restaurant is, finding out where to learn to play golf or hiring a service repairer, it is also a place where we can meet men. A few men target Kirogi mothers because they know their husbands are not with them. We are pretty much vulnerable, but at the same time, some of us give the men hint we are available for a casual date. For me, it is easier to find a man at church because first of all, they speak Korean, and second of all because they attend church you know, they cannot do anything harmful to you. These men know Kirogi mums might have a hard time alone, so they approach us by saying they can look after our kids and play with them, or fix some things around the house. Once they start doing the things your husband would have normally done, you start to feel connected. Well, that is what usually happens, and whats happened for me anyway”.

In the above excerpt by Ara, the Church is a site where Kirogi mothers go to be part of a community and a place where Kirogi mothers can find companionship. Despite their vulnerable status of being a Kirogi mother without her husband's presence, Ara fills her void in the company of other men for closeness and intimacy. Specifically, regarding roles that her husband would have previously fulfilled, such as fixing the car or replacing the lightbulb, Kirogi mothers become dependant on the men who come into their lives to fulfil the duties previously done by her husband.

Unlike Euni and Yuni who have established a close and stable marital relationship before coming to New Zealand, Jenny and Ara reported having unstable marriages before becoming

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a Kirogi mother. The mothers' narratives draw on two different experiences regarding their choice to remain loyal to their husbands versus their infidelity choice. Euni and Yuni's strategies to maintain close marital relations through frequent communications and reunions ensured the family remained close, and the husband and wife bond remained strong.

On the contrary, Jenny and Ara already felt estranged from their husband before coming to New Zealand as a Kirogi. The mothers' felt uneasiness with their husbands' and felt unsupported about fulfilling their roles as a single mother in a foreign land. To find comfort and solace, the mother's seek to find companionship from other men who provide emotional support and an intimate relationship. More so, the men fulfil the duties their husbands' would have typically done.

Overall, all the mothers' narratives highlight interesting insights on maintaining their family ties and their fragile, intimate relationship with their husbands in the Kirogi family arrangement. The findings reveal that the mothers feel their emotional connection was weakened by not sharing their everyday physical life.

Theme 4: Unique challenges and solutions experienced by Kirogi mothers

All the mothers' narrated their experiences of the unique challenges as a Kirogi. As I analyzed the participant's narratives, all the mothers shared a common theme of (a) sole parental responsibility, (b) loneliness and isolation. As the mothers navigate their life as a sole Kirogi parent, they also discussed the various coping strategies to cope with the changes

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they experienced upon their arrival in New Zealand and the solutions to overcome them. This notable theme was about (c) Kirogi mothers' self-reliance, responsibility and greater freedom.

Sole parental responsibility

All four Kirogi mothers' mentioned the burden they felt once they arrived in New Zealand as the sole parent to take full responsibilities for their child's future and education alone. For example, Kirogi mothers discussed the demands of fulfilling the parental roles of being a mother and father and the burden of domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. In particular, Euni remarked on the burden she felt if her child does not do well in their studies because she fears the repercussions she may face when returning home to Korea by her in-laws and husband.

“Parenting is so hard. Especially when you are doing it alone. So there is much responsibility. I have to take on my son's father's role to discipline them because I have sons strictly. They can be particularly naughty with me and unwilling to listen to me. Very often, I feel very disrespected by my sons. I tend to be a bit harsh with them like my husband used to be when disciplining them. If I do not be authoritative, I am afraid of my kids growing up to be spoiled little brats, and it will all become my fault. My in-laws and husband will blame me for raising the children wrong. They might say things to me like ‘oh this little witch takes the kids to overseas for her greed and to enjoy New Zealand’ ...so there is a tendency for me to pressure my kids to do well so that I will not get the blame later on down the track”.

Similarly, Yuni also expressed similar narratives as Euni as she feels the pressure to raise her children to the highest of standards, so they have a chance to have a successful future.

“I have to do well to break even. What I mean is..whatever happens, this very moment the children are in my hands, this period might backfire to me if my children do not do well. At first, I got so anxious and panicked to think if I could do all this myself. By this, I mean solo-parenting where I have to be my children's father and mother at the same time, housework, cooking, supervising with their homework and so on. On top of that, teaching my son how to be a good boy, not to be aggressive and being nice and gentle to female friends. I have to make sure they are good children and study well and, most importantly, grow up to be good people...I feel much burden on my shoulders to be doing this all by myself. It is stressful, physically and emotionally draining”.

For Yuni, not only are the responsibilities of housework and taking on the fatherly role to raise her child on her own proves to be challenging but bearing the pressure to make sure they grow up to be good children is also another sole responsibility as a parent. In the above two excerpts, both mothers' felt burdened to provide adequate care for their children in the absence of their spouse, and more so feared of the repercussions they may face by their in-laws for not raising the children to the standards they expect. Since Korean families are very much enmeshed together, the mother bears the responsibilities for raising their children. Her in-laws are the ones to judge her motherly performance usually. Thus, based on Euni and Yuni's narratives, their unique position as a Kirogi entails an intriguing insight on how they navigate child-rearing practices as a sole parent. They are pressured to do well despite their emotional and physical hardship to ensure their efforts will be acknowledged.

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Jenny and Ara shared their experiences as a sole parent. Jenny started her overall experience of sole parental responsibilities as:

“Tiring to the point of exhaustion. Especially because I have to keep up with my children, and they all have distinct personalities. If I have to please one child, then the other gets upset. Since without their father, I am tired to handle this alone because it is all new for me”.

Ara further adds on:

“It is all very burdensome for me to tackle the tasks of child care, sole parenting, house chores...Kirogi parenting is a huge responsibility. Since my husband is so far away, it is difficult to co-parent our children. Now I have double responsibilities to be firm like their father and be a caring mother for my children. It is a whole new challenge for all Kirogi mothers, not just me”.

For Jenny and Ara, both were challenged by the demands of sole parental responsibilities. From their narratives, it is clear that notable changes have occurred within their family structure dynamics. Mother's were all taking on the absent father's masculine roles, whilst still retaining their caring and nurturing side of their motherly role. Their adjustment to the newly prescribed double roles of being a father and mother was deemed exhaustive for the Kirogi mothers.

Loneliness and Isolation

Although Kirogi mothers' felt more liberated to escape from Korean society's social and cultural pressures, the mothers' discussed feelings of isolation and increased loneliness upon their arrival in New Zealand. Specifically, the physical absence of their husbands', and lack of close family and social support contributed to the Kirogi mothers feelings of loneliness and isolation.

For Euni, she discussed her feelings of helplessness when her son had an injury from school, and she had nowhere to find support and comfort. Moreover, due to her lack of English proficiency, Euni discussed feeling isolated in a foreign land, not independently seeking help for her son by herself like she would have if she had been in Korea. Thus, in certain circumstances such as seeking help for medical attention, Euni mentioned the lack of family and social support increased her feelings of loneliness.

“There was this one time my son had dislocated his shoulder and had to go to the emergency department. I was so scared and panicking because I could not say what I wanted to say to the nurses and doctors. I could not explain what happened to my son...it was so frustrating. Only by using body language...but I felt so stupid making funny gestures. I felt so helpless because I did not have any close friends or family in New Zealand to talk to...If I had told my husband, he would immediately tell us to return to Korea. So I tend not to tell him that we are sometimes struggling, because we do not want to go back to Korea yet...My kids are loving New Zealand and have settled down and are so happy. Even I always feel lonely; I just tend to swallow it in and drink beer to end my day”.

In Euni's above excerpt, she reported feelings of loneliness, more so because there was no-body to confide in. Discussing difficulties with her husband was not an option, because she worried he would ask the whole family to return to Korea when they are not ready to go back home. Therefore, forbearance and drinking were just one of the ways to cope with her feelings of isolation.

Yuni also discussed similar circumstances.

“My son had to extract his tooth at the dentist, which cost over \$200. At first, I was confused because Korea's tooth extraction only costs \$5 for children. I could not ask or find out why it was costly...I am a foreigner, and there will be no one to help me...so this is my concern as a Kirogi mother. I felt very lonely and isolated, which also made me feel terrified because of issues concerning your children's injury or medical attention”.

Jenny and Ara also discussed their feelings of loneliness and isolation, which changed their lifestyle.

Jenny mentioned:

“Kirogi mother in New Zealand all learn to play golf. Anyway, I go five times a week once the children go to school. Golf in Korea is considered a luxurious sport; it is a rich people's sport and only people with lots of money can play. The field in Korea is so good, and you would have to pay so much for this kind of field in Korea. So this is such a good opportunity for me...I would never be able to play Golf like this every day in Korea. So during the day

after sending off the children to school, I would get together with my coach to learn and play golf. Because I am just so lonely...I would go crazy if I stayed at home all day with no one to talk to”.

Similarly, Ara also noted:

“I love going to church because it is a community and a place you can gather much useless information about a lot of different things. It is also a place where I can be included in group gatherings or be involved in something. Kirogi mothers all go to church, and they try hard to be involved in a group or club. We have to. Otherwise, we would all end up with some mental illness for sure. Even I still try to make myself busy by meeting people, I still feel very lonely because these people are not people I can call my ‘best friend’, but its better than being isolated at home by yourself all day. At least I can go out and talk to Korean people in the same language”.

For Jenny and Ara, they both mentioned that if they were to be alone in a foreign country, there would be chances of their mental health deteriorating. Therefore, being actively involved with sports, clubs, and community is one strategy to avoid being alone and cope with feelings of isolation. Being involved with their community and speaking in the same language is a way to feel socially connected for Kirogi mothers. However, although being surrounded by people does alleviate their isolation, the quality of relationship is not as close as the mothers’ hoped for. Thus, their feelings of loneliness and isolation still linger around them.

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Kirogi mothers' self-reliance, responsibility and greater freedom

Despite hardships and difficulties Kirogi mothers' face whilst adjusting to New Zealand as a sole parent, all four mothers' indicated that their experiences had made them feel more independent. They had found solutions to navigate the challenges as a Kirogi mother by handling situations on their own as well as multi-tasking, and most importantly appreciating their freedom of being allowed to be the mother she wants to be and has learnt to become

For Euni and Yuni, they both mentioned the importance of learning and tackling situations independently, which had helped them become stronger and independent women.

"I always felt timid and indecisive without my husband around. However, since becoming a Kirogi, I was forced into situations where I had to handle things on my own. I did everything here on my own from finding a house and car to making important decisions for my child and family, parenting by myself, as well as moving furniture! I am now able to manage my family on my own, and this gives me the confidence to feel good about myself".

Yuni also expressed similar experiences:

"I feel I can live without my husband now (laughter). Coming to New Zealand has been a wonderful experience for me as a Kirogi. It is a sanctuary for me to learn more about myself as a mother and person. I feel I have evolved into a stronger woman that can make decisions

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on her own and to live more independently without asking permission from my husband and in-laws all the time about small issues”.

Jenny and Ara also mentioned appreciating their freedom to discover more about themselves as mothers and women and growing to be more responsible and self-reliant.

Jenny noted:

“I am freer here in New Zealand. Free from my in-laws and free from my duties towards my husband. I am so glad I have this opportunity as a Kirogi because it gives me the time and space to reflect upon myself and to build myself into a better version”.

Ara also expressed similar experiences of greater freedom from duties as a daughter-in-law and as a wife;

“The hardships faced in New Zealand are much more rewarding to tackle because it helped me make a big step towards becoming an independent woman and a strong mother. Whereas, if this were in Korea, my in-laws would have driven me insane because nothing would impress them no matter what I do. My husband would also stress me out. I am so happy here to have this freedom to explore myself, and also for my children to explore themselves free from the stressful and complicated life in Korea”.

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Overall, despite the hardship the mothers' face, they view these experiences as being a positive influence on their personal growth and development as mothers' and women.

Handling tasks previously reserved by their husbands, Kirogi mothers expressed how rewarding it was to settle down in New Zealand independently with her children, leading to their feelings of self-reliance and responsibilities. For Jenny and Ara, being away from their in-laws and husband led to their feelings of appreciation for greater freedom because it allowed them the space to explore themselves; free from the burdensome of their in-law and wife duties. Thus, on this basis, mothers' were able to overcome their challenges and find their unique solutions to navigate their positions as a sole Kirogi parent.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This qualitative study aimed to explore Kirogi women's lives and their experiences as mothers and women in the New Zealand context. This chapter presents a discussion of findings that discloses an intimate understanding of Kirogi mothers' lives, which could not be made evident by quantitative inquiry. Given the nature of this three-dimensional narrative inquiry, the Kirogi mothers revealed their past, present, and future experiences by looking backwards and forward in relation to their current status as a Kirogi.

The chapter discusses the first major theme of the Kirogi mother's evaluation of repositioning themselves in a new society by Escaping Korean society as women. Furthermore, the revelation of different identities as a woman and discussion surrounding Kirogi mother's marital quality are covered. Finally, insights into the unique challenges experienced by Kirogi mothers are discussed.

The following sections present the findings in relation to existing literature available, and where the findings are unique, the literature gap is also comprehensively discussed. Finally, implications, limitations of the present study, potential avenues for future research, and the thesis's conclusions are discussed.

5.1 Escape from the Korean Society

Given the nature of this study's three-dimensional design, the mother's shared their stories from their past, present, and future envisions that revealed their experiences as a woman and mother in Korean society. In general, Kirogi mothers from this study viewed the opportunity to live in a transnational split-family arrangement to escape from Korean society as a woman and mother. Their roles as mothers in a patriarchal society that still adheres to traditional Confucian values were overwhelmingly stressful and burdensome. In this study, the mothers all expressed their dissatisfaction and the constant pressure of meeting culturally prescribed expectations of being a "good mother". These findings are consistent with findings from Chang's (2018) study of the psychological well-being of Kirogi mothers in the United States (Chang, 2018). In her investigation, Chang found the main motivational reason for Kirogi mother's living transnationally was to increase one's life satisfaction. Similarly, in Lee's (2010) research exploring the life transformation of Kirogi mother's in Hawai'i, the mothers' in her study re-positioned themselves differently in a transnational space. The transnational set-up provided an opportunity for the mother's to be liberated from the constraining social values of Korean society and gender-role expectations, which provided a chance for them to reflect on their true-selves by repositioning their identity.

Additionally, the mother's in the current study also noted that being a woman in Korea came with additional pressures of always looking attractively presentable. Thus, our findings reveal that becoming a Kirogi provided an opportunity to escape for the mother's to be liberated from adhering to such high ideal beauty standards of always looking "lady-like". These findings are consistent with Lee's (2010) study, which found that appearance is judged

negatively in Korea and that judgements bind women's identities on appearance.

Furthermore, Lee (2010), noted that although Kirogi mother's sacrifices herself for her children's education, she in return gains empowerment for herself because she lives in a space where she is freed from the Korean values that oppressed her with unrealistic standards of women's beauty.

Thus, in reviewing the findings from the current study, it was evident that the motivational factor for Kirogi mothers was to re-locate to another society that provided them with a space and social context with alternative practices and values. Additionally, as consistent with the larger body of literature (Chang, 2018; Lee, 2010), living transnationally with their children deemed also a strategic attempt to provide a respite for their young children from Korea's harsh education system. Considering these findings, Kirogi mother's were not necessarily the stereotypical "educational managers" for their children, but rather as a mother seeking the best educational environment for her child, and as a woman seeking liberation from constraining Confucius values of traditional Korean culture.

5.2 Different identities as Women

Another major topic that emerged in the mothers' interviews was the differing identities as a woman. In our study, the Kirogi mothers revealed that although transnational living arrangement provided a respite from constraining societal values, fulfilling motherly roles in a foreign land was an essential duty to accomplish.

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Specifically, the mothers had construed their identities as the “devoted mother”, willing to sacrifice her life to pursue her child’s educational success. These findings are consistent with the broader body of literature on Korean motherhood's Confucian ideology (Finch and Kim, 2012). In their investigation to understand the cultural logic of Kirogi families, Finch and Kim (2012) found that motherhood is the upmost important factor of what makes the Kirogi project possible. Although men were found to play a crucial role in funding the whole Kirogi project, the authors concluded that it is the mother's wholehearted commitment to take sole responsibility of parenting and take on the primary responsibility for mobilising family resources for their child’s educational success. Thus based on these findings, the Kirogi mothers in our current study concluded their identity as a “women” became non-existent once they became a Kirogi whose entirety became focused on her child's future.

The mothers expressed their voluntary sacrifice as worthy, and an investment that they believe will positively be reciprocated in their children's foreseeable future. The findings are consistent with the broader literature of the highly valued relationship between the mother and child in Korean culture (Friedmann, 1992; Cho, 1998). Specifically, the concept of ‘Mo Jeong’ which translate to a mother’s deep unconditional love is a significant value that binds together the relationship between mother and child (Kim and Choi, 1994). The concept of Mo Jeong is supported by findings from an older study by Rohner and Pettengill (1985) who compared the parent-child relationship between the United States and South Korea. In their study, overt parental involvement was viewed as a positive contribution by Korean parents and children because they perceived parents' involvement as an indicator of parental warmth and low-neglect. Thereby, the findings of the current study support the reasons for the active involvement of Kirogi mothers for their children at the expense of experiencing an identity

loss of being a woman. Providing for her children in return gives an identity worth living for, that is of the exemplar of the “benevolent mother” as inscribed in the Confucian culture.

5.3 Martial Quality: Infidelity vs Fidelity

The analogy of the Kirogi or goose symbolically represents “good animals” by Korean because they are known as birds faithful to their partners for life and can care for their young (Portal, 2000). Thus, in addition to the two major themes discussed above, another novel finding was about the Kirogi mother’s marital quality and how they could maintain their husbands' fidelity.

All the Kirogi mothers agreed their lives had dramatically changed since becoming a Kirogi, especially regarding maintaining strong martial ties with their husbands despite the vast physical proximity. In particular, two mothers had already established strong bonds with their husbands before their separation and were able to collectively make a joint effort to maintain fidelity towards each other. For example, through the use of technology such as Skype, Kakao Talk, and video calls which helped maintain intimate marital and familial relationships. Consistent with this study’s findings, the literature supports the importance of using technology to maintain stable relationships for transnational split families (Lee & Koo, 2006; Jeong, You, & Kwon, 2014). Studies by Finch and Kim (2012), found that Kirogi mothers in the United States found a new concept of ‘virtual intimacy’ through means of video calls, photo sharing, and phone calls by sharing daily activities. This new concept allowed to form another concept of “being together” despite physical separation because it

provided the means for daily interaction in ways they never had before (Finch and Kim, 2012).

Moreover, the two mothers who maintained their fidelity realised their separation from their husband led them to realise the importance of their husband. The mother's both agreed their marriage had become stronger because they realised their mutual dependence for each other. These findings are consistent with Jeong and Belanger's (2017) study of virtual families in the United States who found that Kirogi women experienced greater emotional intimacy and sharing with their husbands after migration because their separation provided an opportunity to appreciate each other more. Furthermore, their study found that husbands were more understanding and generous towards their wife because living alone made them realise their meaningful existence.

On the other hand, another unwavering and novel finding emerged concerning the other two mothers who described their infidelity experiences. Thus, the sub-theme that emerged throughout the interviews of 'out of sight, out of mind' painted a rather negative picture in this current study's findings.

Various factors, such as estranged marital problems prior to migration and feelings of loneliness and isolation, led to the deterioration of marital quality for the two mothers in this study. Numerous studies on the perspectives and experiences of Kirogi mothers (Jeong & Belanger, 2017; Finch & Kim, 2012; Lee, 2014) have found the Kirogi arrangement to have improved their relationships after migration. While researchers have explored the benefits of separation for Kirogi families and their spousal relationships, a gap in the literature exists in relation to this study's finding on Kirogi mother's experience of infidelity. Although the

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literature was not very extensive, many studies on the experiences of Korean Kirogi fathers (Choi, 2007; Ha, 2007; Lee & Koo; 2006) have found that fathers back home in Korea face extramarital temptations due to the absence and physical intimacy and presence of their wives which ultimately led to divorce. In particular, in Choi's (2007) findings of Kirogi families, Choi reports most of the problems arising from Kirogi women and men are reported at counselling sites such as distrust, isolation, and affairs which then profoundly disintegrates the spousal relationship as well as the whole family. Choi (2007) noted that in-depth insight into the spousal relationship of Kirogi's is confined within the counselling sites, therefore exploring the experiences of infidelities are limited in the literature.

Thus, in reviewing the findings from this study and the current literature gap, additional research should be conducted into the area of marital quality of Kirogi mothers' and the factors that arise to infidelities. By knowing what disintegrates explicitly, marital relationships may assist in the prevention of permanent separation and honing in ways to enhance a better outcome for the Kirogi project.

5.4 Unique challenges experienced by Kirogi mothers

The current study has explored unique insights into the potential challenges and the benefits of becoming a Kirogi mother. It is one of the very few studies that explore the in-depth experiences and perspectives of Kirogi mothers. Thus, the thesis has provided new insights into the existing literature body. The interview findings suggest that all the mothers had agreed their lives had dramatically changed upon their arrival in New Zealand as a solo parent. Specifically, sole parental responsibility was a common theme that re-appeared

amongst the mother's discussion when reflecting upon their most challenging experience. For instance, mothers became responsible for child-rearing and domestic responsibilities as well as fulfilling both father and mother parental roles due to the physical absence of the father. Therefore, Kirogi mothers discussed how overwhelmed they felt with the heavy burden of raising their child in New Zealand without any familial support and social support. These findings are consistent with Lee and Keown's (2018) study of the challenges in parenting practices of Korean immigrants in New Zealand. In their study, Lee and Keown (2018) found that Kirogi mothers reported difficulties with role alteration within the family because they had to shoulder on the double responsibilities of educating and parenting which pushed them to go beyond the traditional Confucius expectations of being a mother in Korea.

In addition to sole parental responsibilities, the current study's findings found that mothers' burdened themselves with providing the best care and education for their children in New Zealand because they feared repercussions by their spouses and in-laws for not raising their child to the highest of standards. The mothers seeking the highest standards for their children were supported in the literature. Cha and Kim (2012) asserted that in assessing the role of culture in Korean Kirogi mother's lives, family-oriented collectivism is the primary factor parents seek for obtaining a higher social status through their children's' education. In particular, the mother-child centred family structure occupies the central place in Korean families. Thus, on this basis, mothers were often fully responsible for educating their children and that the child's educational achievement was often perceived as the mother's success.

Moreover, although our previous findings indicated the Kirogi mothers felt liberated from Korean society as a woman and felt a sense of freedom, the mothers' generally felt increased

loneliness and isolation upon their arrival in New Zealand. The physical absence of their husband, lack of social and familial support, and English proficiency had contributed to an increased feeling of helplessness. These findings are not surprising as a wide range of literature (Lee & Keown, 2018; Jeon & Belanger, 2017; Jeong, You & Keown, 2014) had found that Kirogi mothers are at an increased risk of detrimental psychological health outcomes because they frequently experience feelings of anxiety, stress, helplessness, and depression. However, Lee, Hwang and Stodolska (2020) asserted that transnational families' subjective well-being depended on the duration of separation, frequency of communication, home visits, and marital satisfaction. For example, the life satisfaction of Kirogi parents decreases as the duration of the family separation extends; therefore, social isolation is exacerbated (Lee, Hwang, Stodolska, 2020). Researchers (Lee and Koo, 2006; Jeong and Belanger, 2014) have also found frequent communication and home travelling for a family reunion were crucial for maintaining family ties and decreasing feelings of isolation. Our current findings from the interview show that the current global pandemic of Covid-19 had restricted families from travelling abroad for frequent home visits which had increased their isolation and loneliness even further. Currently, no literature exists on the impacts of Covid-19 for Kirogi families. Therefore, this study's findings illuminate the importance of understanding Kirogi mothers' unique challenges concerning their hardship.

Despite their feelings of loneliness and isolation, Kirogi mother's do find time to enjoy leisure activities and sports and try to stay active in the Korean communities to alleviate their feelings of isolation. Lee, Hwang and Stodolska (2020) are the first researchers to study the relationship between transnational families and leisure. They found that Kirogi mothers, despite their busy schedules, found time to pursue leisure activities such as golf, shopping, and church. Although the initial separation was difficult for mothers, they found that social

connection established through leisure activities buffered the stress from adverse life events and alleviated feelings of loneliness. Thus, on this basis, the literature findings support the view that social relationships are one of the main factors for increasing subjective well-being and happiness for transnational families.

Another ever-present theme in all the Kirogi mothers' stories was about the various coping strategies they encountered and the solutions to overcome them. Kirogi mothers' are often faced with traditionally prescribed gender role duties (i.e. household chores and child-rearing) back home in Korea, often also transferred to foreign countries. The interview findings suggested that Kirogi mothers' perceived their newly found parenting experiences as an opportunity for personal growth which helped them boost self-confidence and independence. These results are consistent with Lee and Keown's (2018) study of Child-rearing practices of Geese mothers who found the process of sole-parenting helped develop the ability to tackle challenging situations and cope better as a sole parent in a foreign country.

Furthermore, the current study found that mothers could appreciate the freedom of being allowed to exercise the motherly role she wanted to be and has become through a carefree space in New Zealand. For example, they were able to make sole decisions independently without seeking the permission of her husband and in-laws and allowing her child to have the freedom to play in a natural environment free from educational pressures. These results are consistent with Jeong and Belanger's (2012) study of Kirogi parents who found that the process of single parenting promoted personal growth and ability to handle challenging tasks independently.

Thus, despite their loneliness and isolation which often arises through difficult parenting challenges and burdens, the mothers' perceived the opportunity of freedom as a positive contribution towards their self-reliance, responsibility and personal growth to become the best mother and women she ought to be.

5.5 Limitations and future recommendations

Based on the preceding findings, the study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting results. First, the study has sampling limitations, which has its limited ability to generalise to the broader population and other ethnic groups. It primarily included four Korean Kirogi mothers recruited only from Auckland's urban district. The experiences and perceptions of other potential Kirogi mothers were not included. Thus, such inclusions may have allowed for different findings and discussions. Future research may investigate a more extensive and more diverse group of Korean Kirogi mothers from different communities and regions in New Zealand, where they are known to live.

Although the study has provided unique insights and significant strides in understanding the experiences and lives of Kirogi mothers, the singular methodology use demonstrated a need for continued research on this population. Utilizing a qualitative narrative inquiry methodology has provided in-depth findings; however, exploring other methodological approaches is worthy of consideration. Future research can conduct alternate approaches such as a mixed-method methodology to understand similar questions by employing survey questionnaires to explore psychological states and interviews to gain a greater breadth of understanding of the lives of Kirogi's. Finally, another alternative approach would be to

utilize multiple data sources such as interviews from Kirogi fathers and children, may provide a holistic view of the Kirogi family as one whole unit.

5.6 Conclusion

The Kirogi project is a bold endeavour for the few families that choose to fly onboard this journey. As aforementioned, the analogy of the Kirogi represents the faithful animals of the ‘goose’ known for their lifelong commitment to their partners. Korean married couples strive to follow goose virtues such as loyalty, fidelity, and devotion to their young. Thus, the expression of the goose mother or Kirogi mother is used to represent Korean mothers in a transnational family set-up in which she migrates to a foreign country with her child to further her child’s education whilst the father remains in Korea to financially support them. The results provided in this thesis has demonstrated compelling insights into the intimate lives of Kirogi mothers, their experiences as both a mother and women in the New Zealand context.

The mothers all agreed that living as a Kirogi mother provided means to feel liberated in a western country because they were continuously dissatisfied with the pressure and burdens of adhering to culturally prescribed traditions to be a woman and mother in Korea. Thus, the theme of escaping Korean society as a woman emerged and was a significant finding that provided insights into the motivational factors of becoming a Kirogi mother.

Second, although the mother felt liberated once they migrated to New Zealand, they had specifically re-negotiated their identities as a “devoted mother”, willing to sacrifice her all for

her child's education and future. The mother's discussed their identity of a woman is non-existent once they entered the Kirogi project because they believed their voluntary sacrifice is a worthy investment for their child. They believe they would be positively reciprocated in the near future.

Another intriguing finding was in relation to the mother's marital quality. Two mothers remained faithful, whilst the other two mothers' discussed intimate details in the factors leading towards their infidelity. Frequent communication through technology enabled establishing stable relationships despite the vast physical distance, whereas non-frequent communication led to feelings of isolation, distrust, miscommunication, and a lack of intimacy. Our final findings provided new insights into the unique challenges of Kirogi mothers in New Zealand. Kirogi mothers dealt with the newfound role alterations as they had to play both the father and mother's role. Thus, sole parental responsibility was a constant re-emerging theme from the mothers' discussing the challenges and hardships they had to deal with as a solo parent in a foreign country.

Moreover, although the Kirogi mothers encountered feelings of isolation and loneliness, findings suggested viewed these challenging tasks as an opportunity for self-reliance, responsibility and greater freedom. The mothers' indeed perceived it as a positive contribution towards her self-growth. Overall, Kirogi mothers live a unique lifestyle, and the findings of this study have shown that not always can our human counterparts live up to the virtues of the real Kirogi's. Reality has shown that there are many difficult challenges physically, emotionally, and psychologically to endure to live up to the Kirogi analogy's virtues.

Appendix A

INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Is the Kirogi a fairy-tale ending? The lives of Kirogi: Experiences as Mother and Woman in the New Zealand context

My name is Aelyn Lee, and I am a Master's student studying Psychology at Massey University. I am currently conducting a research project for my degree. I am writing to invite you to participate in this study voluntarily. This study involves an interview, and it will take approximately 60 minutes on more than a single occasion.

The primary aim of this study is to explore and understand the lives of Kirogi (Goose mother); their experiences as mother and woman in a New-Zealand context. The overall goal of the study is to provide information regarding Korean Kirogi mother's perspectives and overall quality of life in the Korean-New-Zealand cultural context and gain a more in-depth insight into important wellbeing concepts.

Your responses will be used to enable us to gain a fuller understanding of experiences as a Kirogi in New Zealand, and it is hoped that this study will enrich the psychological literature.

Participation:

If you are willing to be interviewed, a study ID number will be assigned to your interview as your name to assure your confidentiality. I will audio record and transcribe your responses by

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your assigned study ID, not your name. Any personal Identifiers and information will be removed once transcribed. The interview will take place at a location that is convenient for you, including a public location such as a café or library, home, or a meeting room at the university. During the interview, you may refuse to answer any of the questions that you do not wish to answer, or you may ask for the recording to be stopped. To acknowledge your participation in the research, you will receive a gift by the researcher as a token of appreciation.

Storage and use of results:

The anonymised demographic questionnaires will be kept in the researcher's room in a locked cabinet and will not be shared with anyone outside the research project.

Confidentiality will be maintained. All audio recorded files will be assigned by a study ID number, replacing participant's names. Interviews will be recorded on audio tape (digital voice recorder) or being recorded on written notes. The audio recorded files will be transcribed within a month. The transcriptions and recorded data will be stored in a password-protected computer file. Any printed transcripts and researcher's notes will also be secured in a locked file. All audio recorded files will be deleted, and transcripts, as well as written notes, will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

I intend to use the data to complete my Honours research project, and you will be able to access the copies of the completed study from the researcher.

Possible risks:

Your participation in this study may involve emotional risks because some of the questions involve personal and private issues which may upset you. Emotional risks can be reduced by refusing to answer any of the questions that you do not wish to answer, or you may ask for

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the recording to be stopped. A counsellor will be recommended for you if you feel distressed and would like this option.

If you would like to access counselling services and would like more information on counselling, please visit www.homeandfamily.org.nz, or contact from the number below:

Hibiscus Coast

498 Hibiscus Coast Highway, Orewa 0931

Phone: 09 419 9853

North Shore

2a Seaview Avenue, Northcote 0627

Phone: 09 419 9853

Other information:

If you have any questions regarding this project, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Aelyn Lee

Master of Arts (Psychology) student

Massey University

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Exploring the lives of Kirogi

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Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Yours sincerely,

Aelyn Lee

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study, and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive
4. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ [print full name]_____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Aelyn Lee

1. I agree to take part in a recorded interview conducted by Aelyn Lee as part of her research.
2. I understand that digital audio recorder will be used to record the interviews.
However, I have the option of being recorded on audio tape or being recorded on written notes.
3. I understand that I may refuse to answer some of the questions that I do not wish to answer, and I may ask for the recording to be stopped.
4. I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
5. I have been given detailed information about the research purpose, and the nature of the research has been fully explained to me.
6. I have had an opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and have them answered.
7. I understand that my name will not be used in the written report and that the researcher will maintain confidentiality.
8. I understand that my name will not be recorded with the interview data and will not be disclosed in any written report or publication.
9. I understand that I may stop the recording at any time during the recording.
10. I understand that the audiotapes will be transcribed by the researcher

11. I understand that I can request a full copy of the study from the researcher and I can access

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ [print full name]_____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:**

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