

ADOPTED GENEALOGIES: IDENTITY IN ADOPTEE HERITAGE CAMPS

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ABSTRACT

This is a project about space, identity, and history. It is a project that seeks to theorize identity as closely connected to the spaces and histories in and through which identity is lived. The project examines Korean adoptees' identity construction through an analysis of Korean adoptee heritage camps. Adoptee heritage camps are summer camps designed for Korean adoptees and their adoptive parents, with the stated purpose of reconnecting adoptees to their "birth culture." The camps engage adopted children in cultural activities such as Korean crafts and sports, with the underlying assumption that such exposure is critical to adoptees' sense of identity and wholeness. This project traces the history of adoptee heritage camps, locating them within a broader tradition of American camping dating back to the turn of the twentieth century. The contextualization of heritage camp within a wider social and historical framework helps us examine the function of specific discourses of gender, family, nature, origins, and citizenship that animate heritage camps in the contemporary moment.

To undertake an analysis of heritage camps, I look to theorist Michel Foucault's notions of genealogy and heterotopia. Heterotopia, according to Foucault, refers to paradoxical spaces that invert, reflect, and disrupt the rules that normatively govern spaces. I suggest that heritage camps be seen as heterotopias, for they reference but also disrupt iconic, normative constructions of summer camp. Foucault's genealogical methodology is also useful in theorizing heritage camp. Genealogical histories trace the branching, and non-causative relationships that link historical moments. In choosing to write a genealogical history of heritage camp, I allude to an understanding of "genealogy" that inverts its colloquial usage within the lexicon of kinship and instead posits its use to describe juxtapositional relationships and the commensurate representation of apparently contradictory concepts. Heritage camp, represented genealogically, emerges as a paradoxical and heterotopic space reflective of the complex experience of adoptee identity itself. This project seeks to represent heritage camp, its history, and Korean adoptee identity as heterotopic, creative spaces open to interpretation and inquiry.

To my parents, with much love. Thank you for all you've given me.

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* Hypertext File Attached

Introduction

This is a project about space. It is also a project about history and identity, but it does much of its thinking in spatial terms, theorizing identities and histories as inseparable from the spaces in which they occur. Space, in this project, is understood as not only geographically mapable or physically dimensional, but also virtual, discursive, potential, mythical. At the heart of this project is the Korean adoptee heritage camp – a space designed for Korean adoptees and their families, with the

ostensible purpose of helping adoptees reclaim and reconnect to their Korean roots via camp activities related to Korean culture.

This project traces a genealogy of adoptee heritage camps, locating their history within a larger tradition of organized camping in the United States dating back to the turn of the twentieth century. This tradition, I argue, was reliant on particular ideologies that located identity in origins and authenticity in biology. These ideologies, I argue, were both reproduced and inverted in the space of the adoptee heritage camp. Heritage camps, which reflect and reproduce as well as disrupt and challenge dominant constructions of nature and origins are thus paradoxical spaces, instantiating Foucault's notion of heterotopia, or counter-site.¹ Theorized as heterotopias, heritage camps become habitable spaces for adoptees, conducive to the multiplicity and irony characteristic of adoptee identity construction. Heritage camps-as-heterotopias are creative, difference-driven spaces reflective of the complex and paradoxical positionality of adoptee identity, itself.

Korean heritage camps arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in response to a shift within adoption discourse which began to view as crucial adoptees'

¹ See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16:1 (1986), 24.

(re-)connection to, or “reclamation” of, their so-called “birth culture.”² Korean heritage camps are conceptually compelling because they make explicit the linkages between the American camping tradition and conceptions of the family, citizenship and identity in ways that call into question their underwriting assumptions and ideologies.

Questions regarding difference, authenticity, the natural versus the artificial, family and kinship, and the meaning of American citizenship circulate within heritage camps, which serve as both physical and ideological spaces for discursive negotiations.

In this project, I ask: What other kinds of cultural work do Korean heritage camps do, apart from, and even in opposition to, their stated task of re-connecting Korean adoptees to the culture of their birth nation? What ideological claims does that work make, and whose interests does it serve? How are Korean heritage camps ghosted by the rhetoric of the American camping movement – the “back to nature” (or, as it translates onto the case of heritage camps, the “back to one’s culture”) rhetoric that at once valorizes nature and yet justifies its domination? To address these questions, I trace a genealogy of heritage camp, locating it historically and discursively in relation to a broader camping tradition that began in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

² Madelyn Freundlich and Joy Kim Lieberthal, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, “The Gathering of the First Generation of Adult Korean Adoptees: Adoptees Perceptions of International Adoption,” (June, 2000), <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/proed/korfindings.html>.

In Chapter One, I review the literature related to, first, the American organized camping movement and, second, to (particularly Korean-American) adoption. Chapter One also outlines my theoretical and methodological frameworks, placing my project in dialog with other conceptions of identity, place, and representation. In Chapter Two, I focus on the early twentieth-century American camping movement, examining the construction of nature, origins, family, and gender in early Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts texts, as well as in the 1961 film *The Parent Trap*. Chapter Three then traces these discursive constructions, focusing on their reproduction in present-day heritage camp brochures and websites. Here I ask how the texts produced by heritage camps reflect, reinscribe, challenge, or disrupt earlier camp constructions of nature, family, origins, and citizenship. Finally, in Chapter Four, I attempt to represent heritage camps as historically and culturally situated, animated by discursive traditions that can be traced back to the American camping movement's earliest days, and which, in the heterogeneous and paradoxical space of heritage camp, are disrupted, inverted, challenged, and reflected. In Chapter Four, I turn to Foucault's notion of the heterotopia and to the framework of the hypertext as productive tools for theorizing the space of heritage camp. My project thus ends with an invitation to the reader: I ask my reader to finally put down the page and to follow me into a new, virtual, and electronic

space where I attempt to represent not only heritage camp, but also the liminal, ironic, and complex space of adoptee identity itself.

Chapter 1

Related Literature:

The American Camping Movement, the Culture of Adoption, and Theoretical/Methodological Approach

The American Camping Movement

I begin this genealogical history of heritage camp at the rise of the organized camping movement in the United States. The camping movement began in the 1880s and 1890s, largely in response to a growing concern among American social commentators about the negative effects of urbanization and industrialization on the body politic.³ Historian Gail Bederman argues that anxiety related to urbanization often took a gendered form, expressed as the need to defend, reinforce, or re-interpret definitions of American manliness. Bederman writes that dominant constructions of manliness, at the turn of the twentieth century, were under negotiation, as “working class and immigrant men, as well as middle-class women, were challenging white

³ Abigail A. Van Slyck. *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. xviii.

middle-class men's beliefs that they were the ones who should control the nation's destiny."⁴ Historian of masculinity, Anthony Rotundo, notes that middle-class men employed a number of different strategies to revitalize and regain control over the construction of American manhood.⁵ Among them was a movement toward outdoor sportsmanship. Robert H. MacDonald, Jay Mechling, and David Macleod, among others, have noted that the rhetoric employed by the early Boy Scouting movement often positioned outdoor sportsmanship and camping as antidotes to the emasculating influence of "soft" city-living on the next generation of American boys.⁶ The organized camping movement, then, can be read as a heavily gendered phenomenon, reliant on the discursive construction of "wilderness" as a space where American manliness was to be shored up, improved, revitalized, and affirmed.

Sociolinguist Michael Kimmel argues that the "crisis of masculinity," as he puts it, that spurred the turn-of-the-century camping movement is being reiterated today – that masculinity, as a construction that is never complete, never definitively identified, continues to be a contested cultural site. Masculinity is, in Kimmel's

⁴ Gail Bederman. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. 15.

⁵ Anthony E. Rotundo. *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

⁶ Robert H. MacDonald. *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993.; David I. Macleod. *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.; and Jay Mechling. *On My Honor: Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

argument, deeply enmeshed in the history of the United States itself; in other words, “manliness” is discursively linked to national identity, binding notions of masculinity to a self-hood that is both private and local, and public and national in scope.⁷ It is important, then, to understand the history, and legacy, of the American camping tradition as a gendered – and gendering – process, one which still informs camping experiences in the contemporary moment.

Related to the concept of masculinity, notions of the traditional American family – what that family should look and behave like, and what kinds of values it was assumed to espouse – underwrote much of the discourse surrounding the organized camping movement. Like notions of American manhood, the all-American family was discursively tied to the health and well-being of not only individuals, but to the nation at large. The nuclear family, composed of an adult, heterosexual married couple and their biological children, emerged as a hegemonic social and political unit in American society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a number of authors and historians have noted.⁸ Stephanie Coontz, for example, while first pointing out that the “traditional family” is far more an abstract, historically-mutable idea than an actual, definable social entity, writes that the two-generational, nuclear family gained cultural

⁷ Michael Kimmel. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.

⁸ See Stephanie Coontz. *The Way We Never Were*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.; Abigail A. Van Slyck. *A Manufactured Wilderness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

and political dominance beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ Urbanization, smaller-sized families, and a rising middle-class created a backdrop for the emergence of the nuclear family as the locus where changing ideas, anxieties, and hopes about what living in America meant could be negotiated and lived out.

Accompanying the trend toward smaller-sized families was an increased attention to childhood as a distinct and separate space from that of adulthood. Historian of childhood, Leslie Paris, writes that the organized camping movement arose at precisely “a moment when notions of intimate family life and the preciousness of children were ascendant.”¹⁰ Other authors, such as Howard Chudacoff, in *Children at Play: An American History*; Steven Mintz, in *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*; and, again, Leslie Paris, in *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*, historically trace the rise of a “children’s culture” in the United States, with the contemporaneous recognition of play as an educational, valuable, and critical element in the sphere of childhood.¹¹ Importantly, one of the effects of a greater attention to childhood and an understanding of “the child” as a distinct and

⁹ Stephanie Coontz. *The Way We Never Were*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

¹⁰ Leslie Paris, “‘Please Let Me Come Home’: Homesickness and Family Ties at Early-Twentieth-Century Summer Camps,” pp. 246-261, in Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley, eds., *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003. 246.

¹¹ Howard Chudacoff. *Children at Play: An American History*. New York: New York University Press, 2007.; Steven Mintz. *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.; Leslie Paris. *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

fundamentally “other” form of subjectivity, was to consolidate and affirm American adult identity, locating it firmly in the role of care-taker, protector, and provider. Caring for the family, maintaining the proper conditions for the cultivation of children, became a directive intimately bound to what it meant to be an American adult. Thus, the nuclear family can be read as an important site for the intersection of various discourses, including those related not only to gender and reproduction, but also to generational and national identity.

Summer camp emerged as both an imitation of and foil to the American nuclear family. On the one hand, camp was a self-consciously fraternal space, where children were taught to form close, family-like relationships with their cabin-mates and counselors. On the other hand, however, camp was also a space separate from “normal” family life – outside the familial household, where children could create new, peer-based cultures of their own. The two sides of camp – its significance as both imitation of and foil to the nuclear family – were interwoven. If the “camp family” was formulated as an alternative, special kind of family, it always invoked, and thus helped consolidate as the norm, a notion of an ideal, nuclear family to which campers inevitably returned. Thus, the two sides of camp, as it was popularly constructed, were co-determinate; camp was both a mirror of, and an alternative to, everyday American family life.

The construction of the all-American family, both as ideal and norm, involves certain exclusionary processes which come into view as we consider various “alternative” summer camps. While adoptee heritage camps date back only a few decades, alternative camping movements associated with specific religious, cultural, ethnic, or political groups have a long history in the United States. The Jewish camping tradition, for instance, was well underway by as early as the 1920s, organized around an explicitly Jewish cultural education.¹² Social psychologists Amy Sales and Leonard Saxe, in their study of American Jewish camps throughout the twentieth century, point out that the Jewish camping experience was meant to foster a sense of shared, strong “Jewishness” that ultimately, however, proved ambiguous and fragile.¹³ Sales and Saxe note the difficulty in defining Jewish culture or heritage, especially within the archetypically all-American space of summer camp. They highlight the many ways that the processes of cultural assimilation and differentiation overlap, and call into question the values and ideologies that motivate those processes in the first place.

Like American Jewish camps, Korean adoptee heritage camps emerge as ambiguous spaces where the juxtaposition of different notions of culture, community, and belonging highlights the difficulty of defining such concepts universally.

¹² Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola, eds. *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006. 14.

¹³ Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe. *“How Goodly Are Thy Tents”: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press / University Press of New England, 2004.

Theorizing heritage camps, then (and, indeed, all camps in the United States that presumably focus on “other” cultures or ethnicities) is about parsing a dialog between “American” and “non-American,” belonging and differentiation, even while recognizing that these dualisms are overlapping, interwoven. It involves recognizing the specific ways that heritage camp is historically and culturally situated, taking into consideration those ideologies and discursive practices that have operated historically to make heritage camp as we know it possible.

Korea Heritage Camps and the Culture of Adoption: Related Literature

In their particular mission and goals, and certainly in their clientele, Korean heritage camps, like the Jewish camps studied by Sales and Saxe, are very different from the kinds of camps that first arose in the United States in the late nineteenth-century. To understand the development and significance of Korean heritage camps, it is necessary to situate them not only in relation to the American tradition of organized camping, but also as a phenomenon located within a specific culture of adoption. This contextualization, in turn, requires at least a general knowledge of the literature and discourse that constitutes adoption culture, as well as an overview of the history of Korean-American adoption as it has developed over roughly the last fifty-five years.

In general, Korean-American adoption has a relatively long and “successful” history in the United States. Historians Barbara Melosh, in *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption*, and E. Wayne Carp, in *Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives*, have characterized adoption as a characteristically American phenomenon, a practice reflective of particularly American values, such as openness, inclusion, and humanitarianism.¹⁴ While I hesitate to distinguish any set of values as universally “American,” I do recognize the United States’ leading role in international, and especially Korean, adoption. The roots of Korean-American adoption are often thought of in relation to the Korean War, in the American humanitarian response that provided homes for thousands of orphans in its aftermath. This scenario, however, is only part of the picture; Korean-American adoption was a much more complex development, stemming not only from a supposedly nation-wide feeling of humanitarianism, but also from a number of socio-cultural changes in the United States that made Korean-American adoption a viable, and desirable, method of family formation.

Korean-American adoption marked a shift in adoption discourse, as it introduced the pairing of white, adoptive parents with racially/ethnically “other” children. Early adoption authorities – social workers, counselors, and religious leaders

¹⁴ Barbara Melosh. *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.; E. Wayne Carp. *Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives*. Ann Arbor: The University

(many of the first international adoption agencies were religiously affiliated) – advocated that Korean adoptees be raised in a home environment that did its best to minimize adoptees’ racial otherness, in order to best assimilate them into American culture. This assimilation paradigm, however, came under attack beginning in the mid-1970s, as the first wave of international (including Korean-American) adoptees came of age, many expressing anger and feelings of loss or turmoil about the occlusion of their birth culture while they were growing up.¹⁵ Additionally, the discourse of multiculturalism was gaining ground, and interest in re-discovering or re-connecting to adoptees’ heritage became the dominant theme in adoption circles. It was within this discourse of multiculturalism that the first Korean adoptee heritage camps took shape. Adoption literature today is still largely concerned with adoptees’ relationship to their birth culture, stressing its importance, not only to the adoptee’s individual identity formation, but also to the ideal functioning of the adoptive family as a whole.

A large number of authors have addressed the subject of international adoption through various lenses, including historical, socio-political, feminist, psychological, and ethical/philosophical. Sociologist Sara Dorow, in *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship*; Barbara Katz Rothman, in *Weaving a*

of Michigan Press, 2002.

¹⁵ Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt, eds. *Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. 5.

Family: Untangling Race and Adoption; and Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein, in a number of books on adoption, race, and identity, all tackle the construction of race and family with an eye toward parsing how otherness is experienced and negotiated within international or transcultural adoptive families.¹⁶ Sara Dorow argues that “the experience of difference in adoption is multiple and disjointed,” a view that is echoed by many other authors.¹⁷ Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt, for example, have edited a collection of works that bring together a broad range of theoretical perspectives on adoption. Titled *Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays*, the volume features chapters by writers such as Drucilla Cornell, Sarah Tobias, and Hawley Fogg-Davis, all of whom approach adoption through the lenses of gender and race. The authors explore the tension between the compulsion to form a unified, singular sense of identity and the multiplicity inherent to the adoption experience.¹⁸ This project builds on the construction of adoptee identity as multiple, suggesting the possibility of inhabiting that multiplicity – not begrudgingly, as a merely acceptable alternative to an

¹⁶ Sara Dorow. *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship*. New York: New York University Press, 2006; Barbara Katz Rothman. *Weaving a Family: Untangling Race and Adoption*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005; Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein. *Transracial Adoption*. New York: Wiley, 1977; Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein. *Transracial Adoptees and Their Families: A Study of Identity and Commitment*. New York: Praeger, 1987; Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein. *Adoption, Race, and Identity: From Infancy to Young Adulthood*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

¹⁷ Sara Dorow. *Transnational Adoption*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 4.

¹⁸ Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt, eds. *Adoption Matters*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

idealized, unitary identity, but purposefully and positively. It figures multiplicity as a choice to engage contradiction as productive, rather than destructive, of identity.

Sociologists Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein have written extensively on adoption, race and identity. Their 2002 book, *Adoption, Race, and Identity: From Infancy to Young Adulthood*, represents the culmination of a decades-long study, begun in 1972, that traced the impact of transracial adoption on adoptees and their adoptive family members.¹⁹ Simon and Altstein open their volume, stating: “The history of adoption is the history of hard-to-place children.”²⁰ Here, they refer to the fact that the practice of locating transnational and transracial adoption is difficult – on both a conceptual and practical level. Conceptually, transracially or transnationally adopted children are “hard to place” –thought of as caught between two different cultures. Practically, too, transracial and transnational adoptees are often difficult to “place.” For a long time, American adoption policy had embraced “the matching concept,” by which adoptions were arranged based on the idea that “the adopted child and his or her

¹⁹ Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein. *Adoption, Race, and Identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1. The opening sentence quoted here reproduces the words of the authors’ 1977 book, *Transracial Adoption* (New York, Wiley, 1977. p. 9), in which they state: “*The history of adoption is the history of hard-to-place children. In the case of transracial adoption the children are nonwhite and the adoptive parents are white. The hard-to-place concept of the nonwhite child is not unlike the overall position of nonwhites in our society – hard to place educationally, socially, and politically.*” “Hard-to-place” is an apt characterization for transracial adoptees, whose “placement” in the idealized American family requires he or she be “de-othered” in both overt (i.e. the taking of a given “American” name) as well as subtle and internalized (i.e. being treated “just like everyone else in the family”) ways. The emphasis on “placement,” is also interesting to me, as my project attempts to “place” the production of

potential parents should be matched on as many physical, emotional, and cultural characteristics as possible.”²¹ The rise of international and transracial adoption required a re-working of such a policy, as white adoptive parents became paired with racially other children. While transnational and transracial adoptions challenged the “matching” paradigm in practice, it was often the case, however, that they were accompanied by an urgent directive to “Americanize” ethnically/racially other children. It may be possible, then, to read Korean heritage camps as addressing this need – offering a means of assimilating children into American mainstream culture. Heritage camps, which situate Korean culture within a quintessentially American context, may be read as domesticating spaces where otherness is rendered non-threatening by its placement within the familiar cultural framework of summer camp.

In terms of specifically Korean-American adoption, the most comprehensive volume to date is *International Korean Adoption: A Fifty-Year History of Policy and Practice* (eds., Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist et al.). The collection brings together a number of different authors – from Korean adoptees, themselves, to Korean and American historians, social workers, and philosophers – all writing from a variety of perspectives. In one essay, Korean author Dong Soo Kim gives a brief history of

gendered, racialized adoptee identities in the physical, geographic space of Korean-American heritage camp, and in the ideological, liminal “space” that I feel perhaps Simon and Altstein refer to here.

²¹ Ibid., 2.

Korean-American adoption, noting firstly that, in terms of adoption, “the initial and primary receiving country of Korean children has been the United States for the past fifty years.”²² Kim writes that, over that period of time, “about 160,000 Korean children, plus an unknown number of children privately arranged, have been placed for adoption in the United States.”²³ Kim, among other authors, notes that these children and their families constitute a sometimes remarkably tight-knit community. There are, for example, some fifty active Korean adoption-oriented Web sites to attest to the interest and motivation among Korean adoptees and their families to form and foster community.²⁴ Korean heritage camps are thus only one manifestation of a shared Korean-American adoptive culture.

Sociologist Kristi Brian, in her contribution to the collection, addresses changing trends in the Korean-American adoption community, noting that “one of the most striking changes in Korean-American adoption practice in recent years has been the emergent focus on *culture*.”²⁵ Acknowledging a past preoccupation with the goal of assimilating, or “Americanizing,” Korean adoptees, Brian writes that, today, the “discourse within adoption practice has morphed from an edict of cultural assimilation

²² Dong Soo Kim, “A Country Divided: Contextualizing Adoption from a Korean Perspective,” pp. 3-23, in Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, et al., eds. *International Korean Adoption: A Fifty-Year History of Policy and Practice*. New York: The Haworth Press, 2007. 6.

²³ Ibid. 14.

²⁴ Ibid. 19.

into one of celebrated multiculturalism.”²⁶ Brian goes on to criticize “offhand uses of culture and multiculturalism, those that reduce culture to race, aesthetics, traditions, or essentialist expectations for behavior.” Brian calls for the production of adoption discourse that is attentive to the complexity of culture, especially as, in the case of international adoption, it implicates wider, global power relationships and specific historical processes – even in the most personal, everyday identitarian practices of individuals.²⁷

One of the objects of this project, then, is to question whether Korean heritage camps can be read as instantiations of the trend toward “celebrated multiculturalism” that Brian criticizes. In participating in the adoption discourse that valorizes adoptees’ and adoptive families’ exposure to, celebration of, and community-building centered around Korean culture, do Korean heritage camps strip that very culture of its complexity, effectively essentializing adoptees’ ethnic heritage as always other, always foreign? While Korean heritage camps participate in and locate their roots in a wider history of organized camping in America, they also deviate from and challenge some of the very founding ideologies that have sustained and motivated that movement. It is

²⁵ Kristi Brian, “Choosing Korea: Marketing ‘Multiculturalism’ to Choosy Adopters,” pp. 61-78, in Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, et al., eds. *International Korean Adoption*. New York: The Haworth Press, 2007. 61.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. 64.

my project, then, to locate those points of contention and to suggest the possible meanings for adoptee identity they open up.

Authors Carolyn Ceniza Choy and Gregory Paul Choy note that there is great need for a more nuanced, qualitative approach to research regarding Korean adoption – especially as it pertains to racism, identity formation, and gender/sexuality construction.²⁸ Like Kristi Brian, Choy and Choy argue that the discourse surrounding Korean adoption in the United States has been marked by sentimentalism and romanticism, which mask underlying racial, nationalistic, and gendered power relationships.²⁹ Korean adoption has often been constructed as the realization of a specific liberal fantasy in the United States – namely, that of multiculturalism and the transcendence of race in American culture. Such hopeful constructions have been bolstered by research painting rosy views of Korean adoption. Rita Simon and Howard Altstein, for example, claim to find high levels of self esteem among Korean adoptees and strong degrees of attachment between adoptees and their adoptive parents.³⁰ Choy and Choy note that while these studies are valuable for their attention to the phenomenon of Korean-American adoption on a large scale, it is also necessary to recognize how overly romantic views of Korean adoption participate in a greater

²⁸ Carolyn Ceniza Choy and Gregory Paul Choy. “Transformative Terrains: Korean Adoptees and the Social Constructions of American Childhood,” in Caroline Field Levander and Carol J. Singley, eds. *The American Child*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003. 266.

²⁹ Ibid. 264-265.

dialog about the American family – what it is supposed (or is allowed) to look like, what purposes it serves, and what hierarchies of power it maintains.

As a Korean adoptee, myself, I do question the emergence of Korean-American adoption as a model for successful international adoption. Such a model assumes that all the players – the adoptive family, the biological parents, the adoptees themselves – gain from the process. Adoption is constructed as a “win-win” situation, a “fixing” procedure by which an extra piece there fills a hole, or gap, here. In the end, everyone wins, everyone is whole again. I resist such a construction of adoption – not because I do not believe that the process can be fulfilling for those involved – but because, in my experience, it is the overwhelming sense of loss that calls out to be grappled with – loss on the part of the adoptee, the biological parent/s, and the adoptive parent/s, as well. Despite, or perhaps even because of, an otherwise happy, “successful,” and very full childhood within my adoptive family, I am drawn to examining the losses that mark the adoption experience and the discursive activity that seeks to manage, control, and determine their meanings.

One of the great gaps in understanding, as I see it, is the (mis)recognition of Korean adoptees’ particular, racialized position(s) in American culture. Unlike other Asian or Asian American groups, whose members are also racialized in American

³⁰ Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein. *Adoption, Race, and Identity*. Westport, CT: Praeger

society, Korean adoptees are often raised in predominantly white, middle-class households and thus often find identification with Asian or Asian American ethnic/racial categories, as they are normatively understood, problematic. A survey conducted in 1999 by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute illustrates this complexity.³¹ The demographic information collected by the survey emphasized the fact that many Korean adoptees have been (and continue to be) raised in mostly white, rural or suburban communities, with little opportunity to experience Korean culture. The survey was completed by close to 200 adult Korean adoptees, who answered questions related to their perceptions of racial/ethnic identity, both while growing up and as adults. Many adoptees represented in the survey reported that their sense of ethnicity or race while growing up did not include any identification with “Asianness” or “Koreanness” at all. While many acknowledged a feeling of difference, or even alienation, from their (white) adoptive families, 45% of male and 36% of female adoptees reported identifying as “white/Caucasian” while growing up.³² The survey reflects the unique racialization of Korean adoptees, especially as children (only 0-14% reported identifying as white/Caucasian as adults). The process of adoption, which

Publishers, 1992.

³¹ Madelyn Freundlich and Joy Kim Lieberthal, The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. *The Gathering of the First Generation of Adult Korean Adoptees*. (June, 2000), <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/proed/korfindings.html>.

³² Ibid.

pairs white/Caucasian parents with Korean children, results in families wherein the adoptee is tied, through his or her visibly racialized body, to an Asian identity he or she may not relate to on a cultural level.

While adoption studies and literature written by social workers, adoptive parents, and other so-called “experts” constitute much of the public discourse surrounding Korean adoption, it is often the nuclear adoptive family that manages Korean adoptees’ unique racialization on a day-to-day basis. Oftentimes, management of adoptees’ racial identity takes the form of either downplaying difference or highlighting only the positive aspects of having a child from another race or nation in the family. Adoptee and adoption scholar Kim Park Nelson notes that such projects tend to either de-racialize the adoptee, claiming that he/she is “just like anyone else in the family,” or, on the other hand, racialize the adoptive family – for instance, claiming that members of the adoptive family “are all Korean-American,” or that the adoptive parents have “adopted” Korea just as their adopted child has “adopted” the United States.³³ Both of these strategies are aimed at achieving a sense of cohesion and “sameness” that helps adoptive families “cope with their outward differences and be more like a ‘normal’ family.”³⁴ Of course, embedded in the logic by which these

³³ Kim Park Nelson, “Shopping for Children in the International Marketplace,” in Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin, eds. *Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006. 101-102.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 102.

strategies operate are powerful assumptions about what a normal American family is supposed, or is allowed, to look like – how it is formed, what values it must articulate, and whose needs it is expected to prioritize.

A key discourse ghosting the practice of Korean adoption is that of “natural,” versus “artificial,” kinship relations. While some scholars, such as anthropologist Judith Modell, have argued that adoption provides the opportunity for us to recognize that all families are, in one way or another, constructed, others note that in the United States, there is nevertheless a powerful master narrative that naturalizes biological kinship as the expression of a universal reproductive imperative.³⁵ This narrative privileges the “natural,” genetic family construction, and is evidenced in everything from custody laws that have favored biological ties over adoptive or foster relationships to even our most ordinary, idiomatic sayings (“Blood is thicker than water,” for instance).

The privileged status of biological kinship relates, moreover, to a greater concept of biological, or genetic, determinism that pervades Western society – even as acceptance of the social construction of categories, like gender and race, once considered biologically determined, has gained traction. Genetic determinism survives in the continued assumption that genetics and biology play an important role in

³⁵ Judith S. Modell. *Kinship with Strangers*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

individual actualization. Intelligence tests or the idea of criminality as somewhat genetically determined are manifestations of the continued hold that biology and genetics has over cultural notions of the individual. When these beliefs are applied to the case of international adoption, they forge an ideology, according to anthropologist Christine Ward Gailey, “that ‘real’ kinship is based on genetic connection.”³⁶

Adoption, then, is cast as an inherently weaker mode of family formation than biological birth, and the adoptee is assumed to belong, ideally, with his or her birth family and nation – roots toward which he or she is destined forever to be pulled.

In the face of the continued acceptance and hegemonic power of biology as essential to kinship and belonging, adoptive families often participate in a number of “naturalizing” practices designed to transcend the perception of adoption as what Judith Modell terms “kinship with strangers.”³⁷ Anthropologist and adoptive mother, Barbara Yngvesson, notes that “the labor of naturalization” is a process with both legal and cultural dimensions.³⁸ Legally, “naturalization” refers to the process by which a child is officially transferred from biological to adoptive family. The adoptive parent/s exchange money for services surrounding the child’s adoption, the child’s birth record

³⁶ Christine Ward Gailey. “Ideologies of Motherhood and Kinship in U.S. Adoption,” in Helena Ragoné and France Winddance Twine, eds. *Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000. 11,15.

³⁷ Judith S. Modell. *Kinship with Strangers*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

(with all of its identifying information) is sealed, and custody of the child is legally assigned to the adoptive parent/s. Culturally, as Yngvesson writes, the process of naturalization is an ongoing one; the adoptive family must be rendered natural continuously, and through a variety of practices including “roots trips, culture camps, and other forms of immersion through which the child’s foreclosed roots and lost history can be recovered/recycled in the adoptive family environment.”³⁹ Yngvesson, who explores the economic dimension of international adoption, argues that “commodification and naturalization work hand in hand.”⁴⁰ She criticizes the reification of adoptees’ cultural heritage and roots in the form of tourist trips, souvenir collecting, and other consumerist practices – practices that can in no way compensate for the loss that many adoptees feel surrounding their adoptions.

Yngvesson includes adoptee heritage camps in her criticism, noting (although not explicitly) that they participate in a discourse of naturalization, through which adoptive families legitimate their kinship bonds. My project seeks to further examine Korean adoptee heritage camps. I ask what cultural work they do and what role they take in the process of naturalization. To this end, I attempt to trace a genealogy of

³⁸ Barbara Yngvesson. “Going ‘Home’: Adoption, Exclusive Belongings, and the Mythology of Roots,” in Janelle S. Taylor, Linda L. Layne, and Danielle F. Wozniak, eds. *Consuming Motherhood*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.170.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Korean heritage camps, locating their history within a larger tradition of organized camping in the United States, and seeking to parse the discursive constructions of family, nature, origins, and citizenship that heritage camps, as paradoxical and heterotopic spaces, both reproduce and invert.

Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

I. Ideologies of Nature, Race, and Origins

Ideologies of nature, race, and origins animate the discourse surrounding both adoption and the emergence and continuation of the American organized camping movement. One of the fundamental ideologies that motivated the early organized camping movement in the United States was the belief in the inherent salubriousness and purity of nature and the great outdoors. Organized camping was motivated by a complex ideology of nature which imbued the natural world with a spiritual and moral value, even while working, paradoxically, to sanction and justify its exploitation. In *Place and Belonging in America*, sociologist David Jacobson explores the symbolic meanings of the American land, meanings which he argues have long linked citizens – from the earliest colonists, to the leaders and followers of the 1960s and ‘70s “back-to-

the-earth” movement – to their environment, politically and metaphysically.⁴¹

Similarly, horticulturalist Alexander Wilson writes that the history of America can be written as what he terms a “cultural history of nature” – in other words, that the ways Americans talk about, imagine, live in, and define “nature” reflect their particular historical moments.⁴² These authors emphasize the changing, but powerful, ideologies of nature that have deeply connected Americans’ sense of identity and place by defining what it is to be “American” through the natural world.

The discursive construction of nature was (and continues to be) highly gendered and racially-loaded. Historian Philip J. Deloria, in exploring constructions of Native Americans in the American cultural imagination, has written extensively on the intertwining discourses of nature and race in the history of the United States. According to Deloria, the Native American as “natural, simple, naïve, pre-literate, and devoid of self-consciousness” was a common trope that, at the beginning of the American camping movement, served to construct the racialized other not only as more connected to nature, but also as closer to childhood as it was conceived by developmental models of the era.⁴³ The discursive association of nature, race, and childhood becomes problematized in the space of Korean heritage camps, where

⁴¹ David Jacobson. *Place and Belonging in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2002.

⁴² Alexander Wilson. *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1991.

⁴³ Philip J. Deloria. *Playing Indian*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. 106.

adoptive families come together to learn about, mimic, celebrate, and “inhabit” the culture of the other. The naturalization of the racially other adoptee as rooted in or, at least, closer to (an)other, foreign Korean culture is problematic, for it naturalizes racial difference, essentializing adoptee identity in an always other culture and ethnicity.

Modern-day camping organizations are still haunted by complex, gendered and racialized ideologies of nature that, on the one hand, valorize the beauty and inherent spiritual value of the wilderness, and on the other hand, facilitate and encourage its exploitation. Korean heritage camps, too, are included in this tradition of American camping, and thus have also inherited a complex understanding of the meaning and value of nature. In the case of heritage camps, however, the issue is further complicated by the additional connotation that “nature” holds in regard to human relationships, reproduction, kinship, and family-building. Within the space of the Korean heritage camp, ideologies that valorize nature and the natural intersect and conflict with discourse within the adoption community which denies the exclusive claim of “nature” to legitimate affiliations of citizenship and family.

Several authors have explored the connection between nature, reproduction, and adoption. Many authors, such as Judith Modell, in a number of publications, including *Kinship with Strangers: Adoption and Interpretations of Kinship in American Culture*; Katarina Wegar, in *Adoptive Families in a Diverse Society*; and

Signe Howell, in *The Kinning of Foreigners: Transnational Adoption in a Global Perspective*, have explored the challenge that adoption poses to traditional, blood-line notions of kinship.⁴⁴ These authors call into question the discourse that defines only blood-related kinship circles as natural and thus legitimate. Similarly, a number of writers question the naturalization of heterosexual, biological parenthood as the hegemonic norm in American society, pointing out that adoption explodes the myth of family as necessarily bound by genetic relationships. Much of this work, such as Julie Berebitsky's *Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950*; Helena Ragone and France Winddance Twine's volume, *Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood: Race, Class, Sexuality, Nationalism*; and Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt's *Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays*, takes a feminist or gender studies approach.⁴⁵ These works point out that, just as racial and sexual identities that were once supposed "naturally-" or biologically-based have now become understood as socially constructed, so too must the understanding of family be de-naturalized – uncoupled from its genetic and heteronormative definition and opened to other, alternative constructions.

⁴⁴ Signe Howell. *The Kinning of Foreigners*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2006.; Judith S. Modell. *Kinship with Strangers*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.; Katarina Wegar, ed. *Adoptive Families in a Diverse Society*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

⁴⁵ Julie Berebitsky. *Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000.; Helena Ragone and France Winddance Twine, eds.

Korean heritage camps, then, can be read as spaces where powerful discourses of nature intersect and interact. The camps participate in a tradition of American camping that has at once valorized the natural world and worked to dominate, or contain, it – often in gendered and racialized terms. At heritage camps, adoptive families gather to re-connect to, or “re-claim,” adoptees’ birth culture – an act that seems to essentialize adoptees’ identities in their natural, or biological, roots. At the same time, however, much of adoption discourse operates to de-naturalize the family, to open its definition to constructions of family that are not genetically based. In light of this ambiguity, it is fair to ask to what extent heritage camps function like the rhetoric of the earlier American camping tradition. If heritage camps claim to valorize and celebrate the Korean “natures” of adoptees, do they also function to contain, “domesticate” (Americanize?), or render less threatening the aspect of otherness that adoptees introduce into the family unit? It is the object of this project to trace the intertwining discourses of nature, reproduction, and race in order to address questions such as these.

II. Methodology: Genealogical Histories

Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.; Sally Haslanger

The tracing of discursive constructions of nature, family, and citizenship that this project entails necessitates a methodology that is both historical and non-causal. I am interested in representing histories of difference and contradiction, which might account for the ambiguous and paradoxical ways discursive constructions of family, nature, and citizenship operate through history. This project relies on theorist Michel Foucault's genealogical methodology for doing history. According to Foucault, genealogies function to oppose, disrupt, and invert traditional understandings of history as teleological, linear progression. The genealogist, in Foucault's philosophy, represents a new sort of historian, one whose task is not to seek the mythic origins or essences of things by tracing "unbroken continuities" through time, but rather, to understand history as a series of disruptions, errors, and the workings of a "rancorous will to knowledge" through which power circulates within heterogeneous systems.⁴⁶ The role of genealogy, in Foucauldian terms, is to record the history (not as truth or as a continuous unity, but as discursive, local, and fragmentary) of the irruption of difference into what has previously been construed as unified, immobile, consistent.

and Charlotte Witt, eds. *Adoption Matters*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in D. F. Bouchard, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. 163.

In his genealogical method, Foucault appropriates and inverts the traditional nomenclature by which kinship operates. “Descent,” for example, takes on a new meaning:

“The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself.”⁴⁷

Terms such as origin, descent, lineage, and, of course, genealogy, in Foucault’s treatment, are inverted and opened to difference, thus making it a useful tool for projects like mine, which seek to disrupt normative notions of kinship. This project traces the genealogy of Korean heritage camps with an eye toward the contradictions and disturbances that, having irrupted into camp discourses of nature, race, family, and gender, serve as points of entry for difference and mobility.

Here I distinguish between Foucault’s genealogical, as opposed to archaeological, methodology. Archaeology, as a synchronic method, seeks to analyze artifacts within the “archaeological strata” where they are found. It seeks to reveal the particular discursive conditions that enable and produce one statement over another.⁴⁸ Archaeology emphasizes enunciation, the statement, and the discursive framework that either limits or enables the text at hand. While both an archaeological and a

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. 147.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault. A. M. Sheridan Smith, transl. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York and London: Harper and Row, 1972. 27.

genealogical approach seek to re-theorize history as marked by rupture and discontinuity, genealogy is best suited to the type of diachronic “tracing” that my project entails. My project seeks to trace the intersecting discourses of family, nature, and origins – from their deployment within the earliest representations of American summer camp, to their articulation in the Korean heritage camp. A genealogical analysis reads Korean heritage camps (texts, artifacts, and physical space) as non-neutrally-produced sites. It seeks, then, to locate heritage camps in relation to and in tension with summer camp as it was discursively produced within a broader tradition of American camping.

III. Heterotopia and Deleuzean Difference

At the opening of this project, I emphasized the importance of space to theorizing heritage camps. Space, I noted, is understood as both physical and abstract, just as boundaries can be both geographic and metaphysical. My project thus takes a Foucauldian approach to the spatial, understanding that spaces occupy complex roles that are “at once architectural, functional and hierarchical.”⁴⁹ Of particular importance to my project is Foucault’s concept of “heterotopia” – a concept that captures the

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, A. Sheridan, transl. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage, 1977. 148.

notion of space as paradoxical, multiple, and complex. Heterotopias, according to Foucault, are both nowhere and everywhere. They are “real,” insofar as they are physically, or geographically, located; and yet, they also represent a rupture (or many ruptures) in the coherence of reality. In the heterotopia, reality is never experienced as seamless or unified; rather, multiple versions of reality “are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.”⁵⁰ In “Of Other Spaces,” the posthumously published text to a lecture given by Foucault in 1967, Foucault calls to mind the mirror as the preeminent example of heterotopia. In the mirror, “I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space.” It is that “unreal, virtual” image, however, that also, paradoxically, “gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent.”⁵¹ Thus, the mirror both disturbs and consolidates reality. That which is “known” to be real, dominant, uncontestable, becomes reflected and inverted in the heterotopia, which, itself, then attains a position of dominant, if perverse, reality. The space of summer camp, then, might be read as a heterotopia – dimensionally “real,” physically demarcated, and yet also multiple, abstract, and conceptually fraught.

Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is related to definitions of classical utopia, although its emphasis is on heterogeneity, on the deviant and the marginal – that which

⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

breaks open and destabilizes the unity of traditional utopias.⁵² Whereas utopia has been broadly understood to indicate “a good, but non-existent and therefore impossible, society,” heterotopias do, in fact, have material dimensions. Heterotopias exist as real, but contested spaces, disrupted by the introduction of difference. Here, “difference” is understood as theorist Gilles Deleuze conceptualizes it. Rather than theorizing difference as merely that which distinguishes between two things, Deleuze articulates a kind of productive, creative difference – a motor which drives all change. Difference, according to Deleuze, entails “movement” – the disruption and distortion of representation by the introduction of “a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments.”⁵³ It is in the heterotopia that this movement is possible; the heterotopia, animated by Deleuzian difference, becomes a dynamic site where static identity-representation schemes give way to more fluid, ambiguous, and indeterminate forms of subjectivity.

This project theorizes Korean heritage camps as exemplary instantiations of heterotopia. As such, heritage camps are best represented as multiple, contradictory, and juxtapositional spaces. In the last part of this project, then, I have called upon the

⁵² See Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York and London: Philip Allan, 1990) for an overview of the literature in the field of utopia studies. As Levitas states in her introduction, utopia studies did not emerge as a discernible academic field until the 1960s. She writes: “We would be hard put to it to identify an emerging consensus as to definition or the boundaries of the field, but a tradition does emerge as to what are the ‘key’ utopias. If we were to identify a handful of texts as the agreed core of utopias, it would be Plato’s *Republic*, Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* and Etienne Cabet’s *Voyage en Icarie*.”

hypertext, as a non-linear framework that rhizomatically performs the “multi-centered,” fluid experience of heritage camp and of Korean adoptee identity, as I see it. The last chapter of this project takes the form of a hypertextual meditation on adoption, identity, citizenship, and family. I offer my hypertext as a textual/formal representation of the conceptually multi-dimensional and contradictory space of heritage camp, itself. In doing so, I hope to convey a theory of adoptee heritage camp as fluid, heterotopic, open to the mobilizing and paradoxical irruption of difference that both problematizes and reaffirms heritage camp as a habitable space for Korean adoptee identities.

⁵³ Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 55-56.

Chapter 2

The American Camping Tradition: Early 20th-Century Representations

Heritage camps participate in an ongoing dialog about belonging, difference, and what it means to be (or not be) American. Participation in such a dialog is vital, for those topics – belonging, difference, and citizenship – are precisely the issues that heritage camps claim to have at their heart. Contextualizing heritage camp – particularly in relation to those ideologies that have supported an interpretation of summer camp as “uniquely American,” as one historian has put it – draws attention to the complexity involved in those issues and to the multiple and contradictory ways they affect adoptees’ lives.⁵⁴

This chapter seeks to contextualize heritage camps by examining historical constructions of camp, citizenship, family, and nature through the lens of two iconic texts influential in the American camping movement: namely, the 1911 publication of

⁵⁴ Lorge, Michael M. and Gary P. Zola, eds. *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006. 1.

the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, and the 1913 edition of the *Girl Scouts Handbook* (also titled *How Girls Can Help Their Country*).⁵⁵ I ask how scout identity is constructed in these texts, particularly in regard to gender, family, and origins. In the space of camp, where ideologies of nature take a prominent role in shaping discourse, constructions of gender, family, and origins take a particular significance. When it comes to these issues, related to sexuality and the body, what is deemed “natural,” as opposed to “unnatural” or “artificial,” has powerful implications for specific families, individuals, and groups. Heritage camps, as sites where adoptive (i.e. “non-natural”) families come together, enter into the conversation explicitly. Understanding the historical construction of nature, gender, and the family within the American camping tradition is thus important to contextualizing the meanings of heritage camp today.

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America were important organizations in the development of the organized camping movement in the United States. The Boy Scouts of America was modeled on the British Boy Scouting phenomena, founded and led by Sir Robert Baden-Powell. Baden-Powell founded his movement to address what, in his eyes, was a “crisis of character” among British men. “Character,” in Baden-Powell’s view, was a sort of vital individuality or sense of identity naturally

⁵⁵ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005. p. 15. (Unabridged republication of *The Official Handbook for Boys*, published for the Boy Scouts of America by Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, NY, 1911.); The Girl Scouts of the United States of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*.

imbued with certain virtues and strengths. Author David Macleod notes that the number and variety of these were “almost endless,” and included qualities that were “moral, muscular, and social, as well as intellectual” in nature. Indeed, Macleod notes that, to restore “character” in the British population, Baden-Powell “prescribed exercises in everything from thrift to good eyesight and thoughtfulness.”⁵⁶ Character-building, then, involved a wide range of regulatory practices, each seeking to fine-tune, control, and condition the minds and bodies of individuals. Seen in this light, the Boy Scouts was as much a disciplinary organization as it was a fraternal or recreational one.

As the scouting movement gained popularity, so did its tenets gain traction within American popular culture – along with the particular discursive constructions by which they operated. By the mid-twentieth century, scouting, camping, citizenship and character were powerfully, almost intractably, linked in the American cultural imagination. Such linkages would prove meaningful in the later development of adoptee heritage camps, which would explicitly take up many of those same ideas.

Gender in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Handbooks

New York: Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 1972. p. 5. (Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. 1912-1972 Sixtieth Anniversary Facsimile Edition, originally copyrighted in 1913 by Juliette Low.)

Both the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were formed during a period of rapid change in the United States. Urbanization, the influx of a new immigrant labor pool, class reorganizations, and racial tensions posed challenges to turn-of-the-century Americans. Both the Boy Scouts and the Girls Scouts were formulated at least partially in response to these challenges, motivated by conservative, middle-class anxiety which, interestingly, tended to be articulated as a problem of gender, of how “masculinity” and “femininity” were to be constructed, safe-guarded, and controlled.⁵⁷ Foucault has explained the discursive emphasis on gender as indicative of Western societies’ particular investment in “sex as history, as signification and discourse.”⁵⁸ According to Foucault, gender and sex are primary sites for the intervention of power. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, insofar as they participate in a field of power invested in the production of specific “scout” identities, thus reveal a high degree of concern for matters of gender in their texts.

The *Boy Scouts Handbook* and the *Girl Scouts Handbook* operate, through the language they use and the activities they advocate, to naturalize normative constructions of “girl” and “boy,” “feminine” and “masculine.” Even a cursory

⁵⁶ David I. Macleod. *Building Character in the American Boy*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. 30-31.

⁵⁷ Gail Bederman. *Manliness and Civilization*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

comparison of the handbooks' tables of contents would reveal a commitment to gender normativity, based on the gendered / gendering terms found in each text. The *Boy Scouts Handbook*, for instance, includes a chapter on "Chivalry," while the *Girl Scouts Handbook* offers chapters on "Hospital Work" and "Home Life," and sections on "Sanitation," "Housewifery," "Cooking," and "Care of Children."

There are many other, perhaps more subtle, ways that the two texts reinforce normative conceptions of gender and sex. For example, both handbooks include a list of "Scouting Laws" in their opening chapters. The handbooks formulate these laws to correspond to a list of character traits deemed vital to the scout identity.

Trustworthiness, loyalty, helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, and thrift are mandated by scout "law," whether "Girl Scout" or "Boy Scout." While the lists of traits are nearly identical between the two handbooks, there are important differences, many of which reflect the gendered nature of each text.

First of all, where the language used to articulate laws in the *Boy Scouts Handbook* is active, direct, brief, and declarative, the expression of the same laws, in the *Girl Scouts Handbook*, is often passive, circumlocutious, descriptive, and suggestive. Take the example of the law of friendliness (law #4 in both handbooks). In the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, the law is written simply and declaratively:

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*. New York: Vintage Books

“*A scout is friendly*: He is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout.”⁵⁹

In contrast, the law, as written in the *Girl Scouts Handbook*, is less declarative, its directness mitigated by description and qualification (“no matter,” “even though,” “she may”). The law is written:

“*A Girl Scout Is a Friend to All, and a Sister to every Other Girl Scout no Matter to what Social Class she May Belong*: Thus if a Scout meet another Scout, even though a stranger to her, she may speak to her, and help her in any way she can, either to carry out the duty she is then doing or by giving her food, or as far as possible anything she may want. Like Kim a Scout should be ‘Little friend to all the world.’”⁶⁰

Likewise, the “law of obedience” (law #8 in the *Girl Scouts Handbook*, and #7 in the *Boy Scouts Handbook*) is stated and described more declaratively in the *Boy Scouts Handbook* than in the *Girl Scouts Handbook*. In the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, the law is written:

“*A scout is obedient*: He obeys his parents, scout master, patrol leader, and all other duly considered authorities.”⁶¹

In contrast, in the *Girl Scouts Handbook*, the law is written:

“*A Girl Scout Obeys Orders*: Under all circumstances, when she gets an order she must obey it cheerfully and readily, not in a slow, sullen manner. Scouts

Edition, 1990. 78, 106.

⁵⁹ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. 15.

⁶⁰ The Girl Scouts of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*. 5.

⁶¹ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. 15.

never grumble, whine, or frown. In time of danger even a smile or a song will cheer and hearten up the wavering. So keep it up all the time.”⁶²

Here, we see a number of gendered assumptions at work – reflected in what the law says as well as in what it does not – in what is omitted. The question of authority is completely bypassed in the case of the Girl Scouts’ law. Where a boy scout is instructed to obey those who are “considered authorities,” a girl scout is told she must “obey orders” “under all circumstances” (and, in a “cheerful” manner, too), implying that the female subject, “under all circumstances,” is presumed subordinate. Similarly, while it makes sense in the *Boy Scouts Handbook* to formulate obedience as a law (“*A scout is obedient*”), in the case of the girl scout, the trait “obedient” is already presumed. Hence, the law in the *Girl Scouts Handbook* is written, “*A Girl Scout Obeys Orders*” – a directive that may be read as a mandate to scouts to act out the obedience only natural to them as young women. Indeed, the description that follows the law focuses more on the “cheerful” manner in which a scout should obey, rather than on the act of obeying, itself.

The gendering of obedience is a prime example of Foucault’s notion of power and of its operation according to the deployment of sexuality. Knowledge – particularly, of the body – is central to this concept. According to Foucault, it is

⁶² The Girl Scouts of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*. 5.

through a “technology of power and knowledge” that individual bodies are regulated.⁶³ The *Boy Scouts Handbook* reflects a deployment of Foucauldian power, promoting both physical exercise of the body as well as its submission to knowledge through examination and observation.⁶⁴ The handbook states: “(T)he first thing needful is to take stock of one’s physical make-up...”; “Every boy ought to have, as he takes up his boy-scout work, a thorough medical examination,” and “A boy should know the condition of his heart and lungs before entering any contest.”⁶⁵ As Foucault makes clear in *The History of Sexuality*, the focus on the body is part of a deployment of sexuality by which power enters into the social realm.⁶⁶ In the case of the Boy Scouts, this often involved restraint, self-discipline, and constant, meticulous monitoring.

Sexual restraint was a topic of intense concern, as evidenced by a paragraph titled “Conservation,” in the “Health and Endurance” chapter of the *Boy Scouts Handbook*. Here, “conservation,” a familiar term applied elsewhere in the text to the care of the environment, becomes associated with the “saving and storing up” of what the handbook authors euphemistically term the “sex fluid.”⁶⁷ As part of “conservation,” sexual self-discipline is discursively located within the purview of scout duty, alongside conservation of the woods, trails, or national parks, for instance. The text

⁶³ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage edition, 1990. 123.

⁶⁴ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. 219.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 219, 224.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage edition, 1990.

⁶⁷ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. 232.

makes explicit that the consequences, should a scout not exhibit sexual restraint, are insidious, affecting the scout's character as well as his body:

“Pity the boy, therefore, who has wrong ideas of this important function, because they will lower his ideals of life. These organs actually secrete into the blood material that makes a boy manly, strong, and noble. Any habit which a boy has that causes this fluid to be discharged from the body tends to waken his strength, to make him less able to resist disease, and often unfortunately fastens upon him habits which later in life he cannot break.”⁶⁸

In discursively tying sexual behavior to the duties of a scout, the text instantiates the ways that power masks its role in the production of knowledge. Scout identity becomes tied to a particular construction of manliness that, by definition, can re-affirm and reinforce its coherence only through acts of sexual self-discipline, self-monitoring, and self-restraint.

The particular emphasis on sexual restraint and the management of sexuality found in the *Boy Scouts Handbook* calls to mind a related anxiety pertaining to control and reproductive power often featured in contemporary adoption discourse. In this case, control of sexuality and the ability to reproduce become relevant as sensitive and often emotionally-charged issues related to infertility – a primary factor in the majority of adopting couples' choice to pursue adoption as a means of family construction. The camping tradition's historical interest in the regulation of campers' bodies and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

sexualities becomes linked, in the space of heritage camp, to adoptive parents' anxieties regarding infertility, sexual control, and reproductive power.

The Girl Scouting movement, like the Boy Scouting phenomenon, was heavily influenced by discourses surrounding sexuality and gender. In the case of the Girl Scouts, the question concerned “femininity” – its definition and its boundaries. While boys' camping organizations were becoming popular as early as the 1880s, the formation of all-girls' camping organizations such as the Girl Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls was still highly controversial well into the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Indeed, it was not until the interwar period that the idea of girls' camping gained mainstream popularity in the United States. Organizations like the Girl Scouts of America ran up against hegemonic constructions of gender that had firmly located femininity within the home. While, in many ways, the practice of girl scouting challenged traditional notions of femininity, the *Girl Scouts Handbook* indicates how deeply entrenched the belief in separate, gendered spheres continued to be at the time of its publication. That an entire chapter of a scouting manual be devoted to “Home Life,” for instance, may seem odd to readers in the contemporary moment; however, its inclusion in the 1913 edition of the *Girl Scouts Handbook* indicates the ambivalence of the Girl Scouting movement toward transgressing traditional gender boundaries. While

⁶⁹ Abigail A. Van Slyck. *A Manufactured Wilderness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. 10.

the organization advocated greater acceptance of women's participation in non-traditionally feminine activities, it also remained dedicated to a particular, heteronormative construction of gender and gender roles – especially as they related to home life and the family.

Historian of childhood, Abigail A. Van Slyck, notes that while advocates of the girls' camping movement encouraged girls to embrace alternatives to Victorian models of femininity, they were also by no means “interested in encouraging female campers to act like boys.”⁷⁰ This is evident in the opening chapter of the *Girl Scouts Handbook*, which begins with the directive, “Be Womanly.” The chapter goes on:

“No one wants women to be soldiers. None of us like women who ape men. / An imitation diamond is not as good as a real diamond. An imitation fur coat is not as good as real fur. Girls will do no good by trying to imitate boys. You will only be a poor imitation. It is better to be a real girl such as no boy can be.”⁷¹

The passage not only constructs “female-ness” as inherently lesser, or poorer, than “male-ness,” but also essentializes sex and gender so that it becomes possible to speak of “real” girls and “real” boys. The use of “real” naturalizes a view of male and female as mutually-exclusive, opposing binaries, rooted in and legible through the body. A girl scout, then, is bound to an identity that is constructed as inherently inferior to its counterpart in a binary system, and any effort on her part to appropriate power is bound to be ruled fraudulent – an attempt to claim a status that, because of her very

⁷⁰ Ibid. 11.

“nature,” is impossibly out of reach to her. The view of gender and sex as natural, or pre-given, has been vigorously denied by much of gender theory. Judith Butler, for instance, argues that the “recourse to an original or genuine femininity is a nostalgic and parochial ideal that refuses the contemporary demand to formulate an account of gender as a complex cultural construction.”⁷² Criticism by gender scholars such as Butler makes this passage from the *Girl Scouts Handbook* easy, perhaps, to dismiss as an outdated reflection of its time. The value, however, of calling attention to the text (and others like it) is not to re-establish its by now only too-obvious gender biases, but rather, to examine how those biases operate and what other assumptions they rely on and perpetuate. This, in turn, helps contextualize evaluations of contemporary camps (adoptive heritage camps included), which operate according to their own sometimes similar, sometimes different sets of biases and assumptions.

The language used in the passage, for example, reveals a normative assumption of the feminine as socially- rather than individualistically-oriented. The admonition, “None of us like women who ape men,” reflects and re-inscribes a presumption that women and girls (to whom the statement is directed) are primarily influenced by group opinion and social acceptance. The use of the “diamond” and “fur coat” analogies, too,

⁷¹ The Girl Scouts of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*. 12.

⁷² Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. 49.

reveals specific gender and class biases. Women are likened to imitation diamonds and fake fur coats – commodities that, on top of their certain “lack” or deficiency in comparison to their authentic counterparts, are also devoid of any practical use apart from the decorative or aesthetic. If the Girl Scouts stressed the importance of usefulness in the Girl Scout creed (law number three reads: “A Girl Scout’s Duty is to be Useful and to Help Others”), the comparison of women to luxury goods seems to construe usefulness in a way that reflects significant gender biases.⁷³ Indeed, the handbook’s chapters on ornamental crafts such as needlework and flower gardening also support a biased association of “the feminine” with aesthetic, or decorative, value.

In the space of heritage camp, the discursive association of the feminine with the decorative or aesthetic is further complicated by Orientalist ideologies that, traditionally, have feminized, eroticized, and commodified Asian cultures and people. The *Girl Scouts Handbook* attests to the early ideological entrenchment of femininity as aesthetic and commodity-oriented; heritage camp, as I discuss later, perpetuates this discursive association, while also introducing the element of race and cultural difference. In the space of heritage camp, Korean adoptees become aestheticized and commodified by discursive constructions that variously associate adoptees with gift-giving, exhibition, and commerciality. As I describe later, heritage camps that encourage activities such as adoptee parades, auctions, and souvenir shopping

⁷³ The Girl Scouts of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*. 4.

reinscribe Orientalist ideologies that aestheticize, feminize, and commodify Asian cultures and people.

Constructions of Family in the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts Handbooks

To understand summer camp as a gendered and gendering space, we must first recognize gender as a construction of power transferred in social relationships. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that power finds an effective vehicle, or “transfer point,” in sexuality.⁷⁴ Mapped onto the body via the regulation of sex, power operates pervasively within a field, or network. The production of gender normativity, then, must be seen not as an end in and of itself, but as part of a web of different interests and power interactions. The emphasis on gender exhibited by both the *Boy Scouts Handbook* and *Girl Scouts Handbook* reflects each text’s position within a larger field concerning class, race, citizenship, and especially family.

While both the *Boy Scouts Handbook* and the *Girl Scouts Handbook* support a particular, heteronormative construction of the American nuclear family, each operates according to different rhetorical strategies. The *Girl Scouts Handbook* is blunt in its explicit identification of the girl scout with her future role in the family. The text explicitly constructs the domestic sphere as both the concern of and proper space for

“the feminine.” The handbook includes chapters on “Home Life,” “Housewifery,” “Cooking,” and “Care of Children,” while no such allusions to a boy scout’s role in the home are to be found in the *Boy Scouts Handbook*. The association of domesticity with femininity in the *Girl Scouts Handbook* often conflates the two entirely. In the section titled “Housewifery,” the text declares:

“Every Girl Scout is as much a ‘hussif’ as she is a girl. She is sure to have to ‘keep house’ some day, and whatever house she finds herself in, it is certain that that place is the better for her being there.”⁷⁵

Here, the text makes it impossible for a Girl Scout to separate gender from familial role, femininity from responsibility. The passage naturalizes girls’ future roles as housewives, presenting it not only as a matter of course (“She is sure to have to ‘keep house’ some day.”), but also as intrinsic to girl scout gender identity itself (“Every Girl Scout is as much a ‘hussif’ as she is a girl.”). The text presents a model of static femininity that has at its heart the responsibilities of mature womanhood (i.e. familial duty and care-taking) as they were understood according to dominant gender constructions of the day.

The *Girl Scouts Handbook* elides distinction between girlhood and womanhood – a markedly different approach from that of the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, which constructs boyhood as a fundamentally unique and discrete stage of life from that of

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990.

adulthood. Cultural historian Melanie Dawson argues that, while early American literature aimed at girls encouraged its audience to “act out scenes of maturity” and “take on domestic duties,” boyhood was most often envisioned as carefree and unfettered by adult responsibilities.⁷⁶ The naturalized bifurcation of childhood into the distinctly separate, gendered spheres of girlhood and boyhood reflects a tenacious gendering process that conditions individuals from a very early age for specific roles in heteronormative family life. The naturalization of the heteronormative nuclear family excludes alternate kinship constructions, casting as “unnatural” gay- and lesbian-led families, adoptive families, and single-parent families, for instance.

The space of heritage camp represents the ambiguity and complexity of the adoptive family’s relationship to normative constructions of the nuclear family. On the one hand, heritage camp caters to adoptive families that, because of their non-biological basis, lie outside normative notions of kinship formation; on the other hand, however, adoptive families do reflect many *other* hallmarks of the heteronormative, dominant family model. In large part, this has to do with restrictions put into place by countries abroad, governing who is and is not allowed to adopt. The Korean government, for example, enforces a rather strict and conservative policy regarding

⁷⁵ The Girl Scouts of America. *How Girls Can Help Their Country, Handbook for Girl Scouts*. 77.

⁷⁶ Melanie Dawson, “The Miniaturization of Girlhood,” in Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley, eds. *The American Child*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003. 66.

international adoption. Couples adopting from Korea must not only be heterosexual, married, and between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four; they must also exceed a minimum annual income, be no more than ten years of age apart, and must even meet a certain height-to-weight requirement (prospective parents cannot be more than thirty-percent overweight).⁷⁷ Thus, besides being alternatively (that is, non-biologically) formed, adoptive families, by virtue of their selection process, reflect many of the characteristics traditionally associated with the model nuclear family. Heritage camp, a culturally liminal space itself, represents the ambiguous position – between, on the one hand, alternative formations of family and, on the other hand, traditional constructions – that adoptive families often inhabit.

Nature and Origins in the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts Handbooks

The rhetoric of the Girl Scouts and especially the Boy Scouts handbooks associates the value of nature with its mastery by humankind. The notion of mastery is not restricted to the physical sense of the term (i.e. the material transformation of nature into resources for human life), but includes also the *knowledge* of nature. The *Boy Scout Handbook* offers a variety of techniques and methods by which to mold the

⁷⁷ See Children's Home Society and Family Services, "Korea Program Adoption Requirements," (2006), http://www.childrenshomeadopt.org/Korea_Adoption_Requirements.html.

wilderness to furnish shelter, food, and other material resources, but also encourages scouts to *learn* about nature – to study, observe, and master the wilderness through knowledge. In this way, the text rhetorically links *action upon* nature (scouting’s “know-how”) to *knowledge of* nature (“knowing about”), consolidating both under the umbrella of mastery, or power.

The idea that knowledge of nature is required for its mastery is important especially to the development of heritage camps. The imperative that campers “know” nature translates, in the space of heritage camps, to the fetishization of adoptees’ origins. Knowledge of origins, of adoptees’ “natures,” becomes crucial to adoptee empowerment and identity – a belief that is corroborated, in fact, by a great deal of recent adoption discourse. In the same way that boy scouts and girl scouts have been called upon to master nature through studying, observing, and recording information about the wilderness, so then are adoptees, in heritage camps, called upon to master their origins through study, observation, and exposure to purportedly authentic examples of birth culture.

The tension between knowledge, nature, and kinship familiar to contemporary heritage camps is interestingly prefigured in some of the metaphors used in the *Boy Scouts Handbook*. Chief Scout Ernest Thompson Seton, for example, notes in his introduction, that the handbook is intended to provide scouts with the necessary “tricks

of winning comfort from the relentless wilderness – the foster-mother so rude to those who fear her, so kind to the stout of heart.”⁷⁸ That Seton should figure “the relentless wilderness” as a “foster-mother” is significant, especially when taking into consideration the role of knowledge in the Boy Scouts’ construction of nature and power. In figuring the wilderness as foster-mother, Seton introduces a degree of separation between knower and known that has a biological basis. The wilderness as foster-mother requires mastery through knowledge; it is by learning the “tricks of winning comfort” from her that she is tamed, made non-threatening. This construction relies on the implicit understanding of “foster-mother” as foreign, other, unknown – while also suggesting a “natural,” or biological mother, on the other hand, that *is* known, that *is* familiar. In other words, the metaphorical construction of the “foster-mother” as nature in its “relentless” and “rude” form calls upon another, obversely related metaphor – that of “mother earth” – as nature in its nurturing and friendly interpretation. The implied equation of natural, or biological, maternity (“mother earth”) with the known and thus friendly side of nature de-privileges so-called unnatural forms of maternity (the “foster-mother”), which indeed is figured as foreign, “relentless” and harsh according to Seton’s metaphor. This hierarchy has powerful implications for heritage camps and the adoptive families that attend them. The formulation of non-biological constructions of kinship as inherently foreign and other

⁷⁸ The Boy Scouts of America. *Boy Scouts Handbook, The First Edition, 1911*. x.

problematizes adoptive parent-child relationships. The suggestion that this degree of separation can, however, be overcome by knowledge (the learning of “tricks,” according to Seton’s formulation), interestingly seems to justify the mission of heritage camps, themselves – which purport to teach adoptees and their families about adoptees’ biological roots or “natures.” The notion, then, that through knowledge and learning, individuals may master nature – even in its foreign, threatening form – seems to resonate, both within early Boy Scouts rhetoric about camp and the wilderness and in adoptee heritage camps today.

Nature, in the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, becomes a transcendental sign of universality and belonging, on the one hand, and autonomy and individuality, on the other. In contrast to girl scout identity, which is constructed as primarily social and centered around the family, boy scout identity is discursively linked to independence and individuality. At the same time, the boy scout is also seen as part of a universal nature; rather than locating identity within the home, as girl scouts were encouraged to do, the boy scout was encouraged to identify with a universal, or natural, family of man.

The chapter titled “Campcraft” in the *Boy Scouts Handbook* illustrates this construction of boy scout identity. The chapter includes a story called “How Men

Found the Great Spirit,” presented to handbook readers as an ideal campfire tale.⁷⁹

Like many other origin stories or creation myths, the tale is set in an ambiguously primordial age, “when the woods covered all the earth” and “men lived on the fruits and berries they found and the wild animals they could shoot or snare.”⁸⁰ “Man,” in those times had learned how to survive in the wild, observing nature and developing techniques by which to live off the land. This practical knowledge, however, was not enough; man was still lacking, wanting a fundamental knowledge of his own being:

“These and many other things men learned, but no one knew why it all was or how it came to be. Man began to wonder, and that was the beginning of the path which led to the Great Spirit.”⁸¹

The story constructs the origin as a gap, an absence that is felt at the heart of primordial “man’s” identity. It is also constructed as a journey, or a search – one that led in the past, as it is destined always to lead in the future, to the “Great Spirit.” As an origin story itself, the campfire narrative performs a kind of self-reifying loop. It naturalizes the search for origins within mankind, mythologizing its own performance in a timeless and “natural” quest. In other words, the narrative positions modern-day boy scouts as descendents of primordial man and thus inheritors of the “Great Spirit” at mankind’s origin, while also suggesting through the *performance* of the tale, itself, that the quest for origins is timeless and enduring, a journey all boy scouts need to re-enact

⁷⁹ Ibid. 161-164.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 161.

for themselves. The effect is to enforce the fundamental importance of origins to human life, to naturalize the search for origins, and to dictate a predetermined end to that search – in the “Great Spirit,” which, as we shall see, becomes clearly recognizable as the story unfolds as the paternalistic, biblical God of Christianity.

The Boy Scouts’ emphasis on origins becomes even more complex when considered alongside the types of issues taken up by adoptee heritage camps. The notion of origins as crucial to identity-formation tends to fetishize adoptees’ birth cultures at the same time as it naturalizes an understanding of adoptees as fundamentally deficient, lacking an essential sense of self. In the Boy Scouts tale, the centrality of origins to identity is made explicit:

“In the ages when men began to wonder there was born a boy whose name was Wo, which meant in the language of his time, “Whence.” As he lay in his mother’s arms she loved him and wondered: ‘His body is of my body, but from whence comes the life – the spirit which is like mine and yet not like it?’ And his father seeing the wonder in the mother’s eyes, said, ‘Whence came he from?’ And there was no one to answer, and so they called him Wo to remind them that they knew not from whence he came.”⁸²

The boy’s name, “Wo,” indicates how explicitly a lack of origins was imagined to mark a person’s identity. In the story, Wo grows to be “stronger and swifter of foot

⁸¹ Ibid. 162.

⁸² Ibid.

than any of his tribe.”⁸³ Always, however, he is troubled by the question of origins, pondering over and over “whence” he came.

He tries to find an answer through communion with nature, listening to the “soughing of the trees and the song of the brook,” but he hears nothing.⁸⁴ Finally, one morning, “in the silence before the darkness gives place to light,” he seems to hear a voice stirring *within* him.⁸⁵ It directs him:

“Rise up like the stag from his lair; away, alone, to the mountain of the sun.
There thou shalt find that which thou seekest.”⁸⁶

The passage here echoes a command made directly to the boy scout in another part of the handbook. In a chapter titled “Chivalry,” which includes a number of other, highly gendered and nationalistic directives, the text instructs the boy scout:

“Every boy should remember that he is in reality just what he is when alone in the dark. The great quests of the knights were most often done singly and alone.”⁸⁷

While upholding the self-discipline and restraint required of “chivalry,” the text is also careful to re-affirm the self-sufficient “natural man” at the heart of the scout identity.

While scouts are instructed to behave as chivalrous gentlemen, they are also reminded by the passage that “in reality,” every boy is, like Wo, fundamentally a part of nature.

Every boy, like Wo, has at the core of his identity, an inner voice to which he is

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

responsible above all others – and that voice, like the voice Wo hears, directs him to seek his origin, find his place in nature, and ultimately, to recognize the “Great Spirit.”

The tale has Wo thus leaving his home, “like the stag from his lair,” to pursue his mission. Like a scout, who forges into the unknown, alone and independent of his family, Wo perseveres, and reaches the mountain after seven days of walking. He climbs the mountain, full of fatigue and hunger, and reaches the summit just as a huge storm begins. When the storm finally subsides, Wo hears a voice, “low and quiet,” but in which seem to mingle “all the sounds of earth and sky.”⁸⁸ It says:

“Wo, I am he whom thou seekest, I am the Great Spirit. I am the All Father. Ever since I made man of the dust of the earth, and so child of the earth and brother to all living, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, thus making him my son, I have waited for a seeker who should find me. In the fullness of time thou hast come, Wo the questioner, to the answerer.”⁸⁹

Here, the biblical reference is obvious: Wo reaches the mountain on his seventh day of journeying – on a day that in biblical terms has been sanctified, set apart, by God as a testament and memorial to His creative power. In the story, the voice that speaks to Wo identifies itself unambiguously: “I am the Great Spirit. I am the All Father.” Using language that mimics that of the bible, the voice explains to Wo (and to the boy scout, by proxy) his place in the universe. “Man,” according to the voice, is “child of the

⁸⁶ Ibid. 163.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 246.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 163.

earth and brother to all living.” Moreover, man is son to the All Father, breathed into life by the Great Spirit. If man receives biological form from a human mother, it is the All Father that gives him the “breath of life.”

In the tale, the All Father and Wo are bound together by that “breath of life,” by a self-reflexive dialog that intertwines Wo’s voice with that of the All Father or Great Spirit, who is his interlocutor. When Wo asks, “Whence?” (or “Wo?” in “the language of his time”), the All Father answers, from within Wo, himself, “It is I from whence you come.” Likewise, when the All Father calls Wo, it is “Wo!” (or, “Whence!”) and Wo answers, like Jacob in the bible, “Here I (Wo) am.” This mirroring of “Wo” and “whence,” taking place ambiguously apart from but within Wo, serves to conflate Wo’s essential identity with the Great Spirit, which dwells inside of him and answers him with his own name. Wo (and by extension, all the boy scouts who follow in his footsteps) is fundamentally what his nature, or origin, is; he finds his identity *in* his origin, receives it, as a new sense of meaning and self.

Significantly, the text identifies Wo not with his human, nuclear, biological family, but instead, with a universal family of nature. By the end of the tale, Wo is no longer the boy whose mother, even while wondering over the origins of his spirit, nevertheless identified him as part of her own body. Instead, in this passage, Wo is a

⁸⁹ Ibid.

“child of the earth,” formed by the Great Spirit from “the dust of the earth.” The text diminishes the significance of the human, nuclear family – especially of the embodied figure of the mother – instead emphasizing the sufficiency of origins and an inner “nature” that, when unlocked, provides individuals like Wo membership in a greater, universal family of man.

The emphasis on a mystical, abstract notion of origins – as opposed to an interpretation that would locate origins more concretely, in individuals’ specific biological families – is important for its applicability to heritage camps and the adoptees who attend them. In heritage camps, the focus on adoptees’ origins stresses the reclamation of some vital connection or sense of rootedness in adoptees’ birth culture. Significantly, then, heritage camps do *not* interpret the importance of origins as necessitating adoptees’ reconnection to their biological families. The distinction, of course, is important, for it affirms heritage camps’ fundamental investment in validating adoptive family formations as equal to biological ones in every way. The focus on origins as cultural rather than biological mitigates threats to the adoptive family while also suggesting to adoptive parents that, through heritage camps, their children can, in fact, “regain” a sense of their origins, and like Wo, be transformed into self-consciously “whole” individuals.

The ending of the Boy Scouts tale solidifies the centrality of origins to identity-formation and also demonstrates the idealized, proselytizing role imagined the inheritance of every scout:

“As Wo went down the mountain and took the journey back to the home of his people, his face shone, and the light never seemed to leave it, so that men called him, ‘He of the shining face.’”⁹⁰

After fulfilling his quest, Wo is given a new name – one that “naturally” replaces the question at the heart of his identity with the answer he has found. “He of the shining face” has a purpose – to go forth, as a light for his people, telling them about the Great Spirit and what he experienced on the mountain. Indeed, Wo tells his tribe:

“I went, I sought, I found the Great Spirit who dwells in the earth as your spirits dwell in your bodies. It is from Him the spirit comes. We are His children. He cares for us more than a mother for the child on her breast, or the father for the son that it his pride.”⁹¹

Here the text openly juxtaposes the story’s two different constructions of family – the human, biological family, on the one hand, and on the other, the spiritual, transcendent family headed by the All Father, or Great Spirit. The text thus constructs the biological, nuclear family as a version of the family of humanity, as it is seen in Judeo-Christian tradition. Boy scouts, then, are encouraged to see their family relationships as extensions, or expressions, of God’s love, and, moreover, to connote God’s love with nature and the wilderness – which, according to the era’s popular construction of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

boyhood, is already deeply a part of the boy scout identity. A boy scout, then, is concerned with nature because it is both his essence and his link to God. He is encouraged to see, in the woodland trees around him, the merging of his biological family tree with the expression of God's creative power in the natural world. Thus, the boy scout is asked to identify himself not merely as part of his human, nuclear family, but also – and primarily – with a transcendent, Godly nature within him that is shared by all living things. Such a construction was vital to the founding of the Boy Scouts, which sought to reinforce paternalistic, middle-class hegemony through the production of character, based on both Christian morality and American independence, or individuality. The story ends, interestingly, with a telling allusion to Wo's people:

“And the tribe grew stronger and greater and wiser than all the other tribes – but that is another story.”⁹²

Here, the Boy Scouts' sympathy for and participation in turn-of-the-century rhetoric expressing nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments is only thinly veiled. Nationalism and racism were also part of boy scout identity; the ideal boy scout, as conceived by the *Boy Scouts Handbook*, was member of a biological, nuclear family at the local level, a family of patriotic American citizens at the national level, and at the ultimate,

⁹¹ Ibid. 164.

⁹² Ibid.

highest level, a member of the universal, Christian family of man, which expressed its supremacy in the wilderness around and the nature within the scout.

The *Boy Scouts Handbook* and *Girl Scouts Handbook* are significant texts in the development of the organized camping movement in the United States. The Boy Scouts' and Girl Scouts' constructions of scouting and scout identity are, even today, significant to cultural understandings of camp. Early scouting constructions of gender, family, nature and origins are particularly significant to contextualizing the emergence and continued operation today of adoptee heritage camps – camps that explicitly take up many of those same issues in ways that variously challenge and reaffirm their past construction. Locating heritage camps in relation to the early scouting movement helps historicize their emergence and provides perspectives for parsing their many meanings.

The Parent Trap: Constructions of Family and Nature

As an example of how summer camp has historically been understood and represented in popular culture, I look at the 1961 Walt Disney film, *The Parent Trap*, starring Hayley Mills. The film provides a rich site for analysis, reflecting many of the same concerns for gender, family, and nature as are found in the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts handbooks written some fifty years before. Tracing the discursive construction

of these concepts helps us, again, to locate present day meanings of summer camp – heritage camps included. It allows for the juxtaposition of past and present constructions of gender, family, or nature with an understanding of their relationship not as evolutionary, or linearly progressive, but as genealogically related, in dialog with one another. It allows for an understanding of gender, family, and nature today that is continually in motion – genealogically related to past constructions but also open to disruption and change in the present and future.

The soundtrack to the opening credits of *The Parent Trap* is a duet, sung by Tommy Sands and Annette Funicello, of the film’s title song, “The Parent Trap,” by Richard and Robert Sherman. The song introduces the premise of the film – the idea of the nuclear family that is broken by divorce, but which is made whole again through the scheming of the children:

“If their love’s on skids,
Treat your folks like kids,
Or your family tree’s gonna snap!

So to make ‘em dig,
First ya gotta rig...
Uh, whaddya gotta rig?
The Parent Trap!

...
To set the bait,
Recreate the date –
The first time Cupid shot ‘em
Get ‘em under the moon,
Play their favorite tune...

John!
Marsha!
You got 'em!"

The lyrics disclose particular ideologies related to family, nature, and origins that are central to the film and which underwrite its main assumptions. Foremost among these is a notion of disobedience, or transgression, represented by parents who divorce, and the related idea of discipline as the proper corrective. Parents who divorce, according to the lyrics, behave against nature (they “snap” the family tree), and are thus deserving of punishment and discipline (they must be treated “like kids”). The idea of a “parent trap” indeed conveys the need to tame unruly, incalcitrant parents – to “re-domesticate” them, so to speak, in order to enter once again the domestic sphere and the heteronormative, two-parent nuclear family.

The lyrics also allude to the film’s fixation on the origin as a magical, healing moment of unity. The song offers “the first date” as the putative origin of the parents’ relationship, and suggests that the re-creation of that moment is critical to the parent trap’s success. The fetishization of origins as healing, unifying, and re-capturable becomes problematic in the case of adoptive families. *The Parent Trap* attests to the pervasiveness of such constructions of origins, both within the family and in relation to camp. In the film, Hayley Mills stars as both Sharon and Susan, twins who are separated at a young age when their parents divorce, but who are then reunited some

thirteen or fourteen years later when they coincidentally meet at the same summer camp. Camp, then, becomes the site for the magical re-capturing of origins. Like heritage camp, the summer camp in *The Parent Trap* is constructed as a natural site for the process of reclaiming one's lost, originary connections and starting down a path to wholeness.

The film's use of natural settings – summer camp, the family ranch, or a family camping expedition, for example –underscores the association of nature with the biological, nuclear family. Gender, too, plays an important role, as the film explicitly stylizes Sharon as the feminine character, as opposed to Susan, who is portrayed as the more masculine tomboy. Susan wears her hair short, for example, while Sharon's is long. That the twins are portrayed by the same actress is significant; their characterization as gendered, polar opposites becomes interpretable as a matter of balance. Sharon's femininity and Susan's tomboyishness are constructed as complements, forming a sense of balance, or "whole-ness," which is emphasized by the twins' consolidation in a single actress, Hayley Mills (who, of course, plays both roles).

The twins' gendered duality becomes even more significant when applied to the construction of the nuclear family. Susan, who has been brought up by her father (and therefore, according to the film, reflects in her tomboyishness his masculine influence),

must reunite with Sharon, her more feminine twin (who, according to the logic of gender normativity, has been, of course, brought up by the girls' mother). The enforcement of heteronormativity, then, takes place at the level of both the individual and the family. Susan and Sharon, as individuals, are constructed as "less whole" – needful of one another to realize their full identities; likewise, the twins' family is constructed as "broken" – in need of the reunification of "the feminine" and "the masculine" in order to be whole.

The narrative of *The Parent Trap* idealizes the biological, nuclear family, suggesting that the dissolution of Susan and Sharon's family because of their parents' divorce constitutes its "broken-ness," its need of fixing to make it whole again. Wholeness in the film is based not only on heteronormativity (as outlined above), but also according to a construction of nature and origins that echoes the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts handbooks. The twins' plan to re-unite their parents is intent on restoring the original marital relationship – recapturing or recreating "that old zing," as Susan puts it. As part of the plan, the girls stage a re-creation of their parents' first date, idealizing the origin of the relationship as a healing moment that, if recaptured, promises wholeness. The re-created date ends in failure, however, and the twins are forced to take more drastic measures. Dressed identically, they announce their refusal to part company – demanding, interestingly enough, that their family take a weekend

camping trip together before they reveal who is Susan, who is Sharon, thus allowing their parents to part again if they choose. The girls' ploy reads as a recreation of a time that was pre-identity, before their individuating characteristics showed themselves – a time when they were, in fact, “identical” for all intents and purposes. Indeed, the film does not reveal, even to the audience, which twin is which throughout the subsequent camping scenes.

The camping trip makes explicit the association of origins with nature. The twins' demand that their parents go camping together alludes to a view of the great outdoors as the ideal, fail-proof setting for recuperating the natural, biological family unit. The plan, however, is somewhat thwarted when, instead of the twins' mother, their father's conniving and snobby new girlfriend, Vicki, ends up going on the trip. Vicki's obvious distaste for the outdoors and her utter failure (with more than a little help from the twins) at hiking and camping serve to emphasize her fundamentally “unnatural” place in the family. Her plan to marry the girls' father, of course, would not only position her as the twins' non-biological and thus unnatural (step-)mother; it would also destroy the possibility of the permanent reunion of the girls' biological parents and the restoration of their original, and ordinary, nuclear family.

The film ends on an optimistic note, with Vicki storming out of the picture and Sharon and Susan's parents confessing an enduring love for one another, despite their

past troubles. The last scene of the film, pointedly enough, takes place as a dream sequence. The audience watches as one of the girls wakes suddenly in the middle of the night, turns to her twin, and says, “Oh my gosh! I just had the craziest dream!” She then narrates the dream, as it plays out on the screen:

“You and I were marching along real slow, sort of funny-like, in organdy dresses. And there was music coming from someplace. – Wedding march plays – And there were flowers and people...”

The scene, of course, is of the future re-marriage of the girls’ parents. The scene projects into the future a re-enactment of a past, mythic event (the original marriage) – mythic both to the audience and to the twins, as neither have explicitly witnessed it. The choice to represent the re-marriage as a dream sequence alludes to its strange, mirror-like relationship with the past and to its similarly mythical, fragile quality. In one reading, such mystification of the past and future – of the origin and its reclamation – serves to highlight the mythical quality of origins, themselves. Such a reading might suggest that the choice to portray the re-marriage as a dream alludes to its fairy-tale-like status and to the recognition that the origin as a healing, redemptive moment is, indeed, the stuff of dreams. While this reading is possible, the trajectory of the film – its unswerving reproduction of essentializing notions of origins and biology – makes it an unconvincing interpretation.

Another way to read the scene, however, holds the dream sequence as an indication of the insidiousness of those ideologies that fetishize origins and biology as the natural and thus legitimate seats of unitary identity. The dream collapses boundaries between internal and external, past, present, and future. It suggests the colonization of not only waking life but also of dream spaces – internal, psychic spaces – by essentializing ideologies. It leaves no space for the creative irruption of difference that might introduce the possibility of inhabiting alternative identities unmoored from origins and biology.

While such a reading may be criticized for being overly pessimistic, I offer it to emphasize the tenacity of ideologies of nature and origins, which I believe severely circumscribe the possibilities available for adoptee identity, among others. The colonization of psychic, creative spaces signifies as a warning for those, like myself, who rely on acts of creativity and imagination in order to expand possibilities for adoptee identity construction. It is one of the goals of this project, then, to deterritorialize the imagination – to re-define notions of origins and nature so as to reanimate adoptee identity and imagine it anew.

Chapter 3

Korean Adoptee Heritage Camps: Camp Brochures and Websites

Adoptee heritage camps reference past, familiar constructions of summer camp, in some ways reproducing and some ways disrupting those constructions and the ideologies they represent. Ostensibly, heritage camps serve to bridge a gap in adoptees' cultural identities, offering adoptees and their families an opportunity to experience Korean culture, language, and community. Some critics, however, argue that in practice, adoptee heritage camps can operate in much more ambiguous and even negative ways. In an article for *Mother Jones* in 2007, author and adoption researcher Kim Park Nelson argues for a reading of heritage camps that recognizes how Korean culture is Orientalized in both its presentation, its consumption, and its interpretation within camps.⁹³ She notes that the majority of heritage camps focus exclusively on

⁹³ Elizabeth Larsen. "Weekend at Culture Camp: International adoptees taste lives they've never known," October 24, 2007. *MotherJones.com*. Accessed at <<http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2007/11/weekend-at-culture-camp.html>> on November 2, 2007.

“traditional” Korean cultural forms, such as folklore, crafts, and traditional dance, thus freezing Korea and Korean people in an archaic, romanticized past and ignoring modern Korean society, which as she notes is “one of the most electronically and technologically advanced” of the world.⁹⁴

Critics like Park Nelson point out that heritage camps present a particular, necessarily limited construction of Korean culture. This chapter asks: first, what construction of Korean culture is presented within heritage camps, and second, why that particular construction? What purposes do different constructions of Korean culture, “Korean-ness,” adoption, and the adoptive family serve? What cultural work do heritage camps do and for which actors? Finally, how may we historicize heritage camps; how may we view the phenomenon of heritage camps within a larger field of power, one that takes into consideration their relationship to other, historical constructions of summer camp, family, race, and nationality in the United States?

In critically discussing heritage camp, I feel it important to emphasize my interest in effects rather than motives. Heritage camps gather a complex and often emotionally-loaded array of discourses related to race, ethnicity, the family, and reproductive politics, for example. Any reading of heritage camp must recognize that these discourses are socially and historically situated, and that the space of heritage camp is variously legible in different moments of time and from different locations and

⁹⁴ Ibid.

perspectives. In other words, no reading of heritage camp is ever definitive, and all readings of heritage camp are in some ways limited, incomplete, and reflective of their authors' historical and cultural situatedness.

My own perspective is that of a Korean, female adoptee, raised by an American Irish-Italian, Catholic family in upstate New York. While growing up, Korean heritage camp was something of a family tradition – an activity that my parents, my younger sister, and I would do together every summer. While today, I am interested in heritage camp for different reasons and in different contexts than those that concerned me in my days as a camper, I do look back on my experiences at heritage camp fondly, and with an understanding of the many caring people (my parents included) who put extraordinary effort into making camp a positive experience for adoptees and their families. My intention, then, in turning a more analytical and perhaps more critical eye on heritage camp as a cultural space is not to dispute its intentions or to impugn ulterior motives on the part of camp organizers, camp staff, adoption workers, or adoptive parents. Instead, my intention is to parse the very complex intersection of discourses surrounding race, nationality, family, and nature that animate heritage camps. My stated focus on effects is meant to draw attention not to the *intent* of heritage camp messages (as if intent, itself, was transparent), but rather, to the many

possible interpretations of those messages, especially in the context of their social and historical locations.

For this chapter, I have conducted an analysis of Korean heritage camp brochures, newsletters, and websites. My readings are informed by a broader pool of material (I collected information from up to fifteen active Korean heritage camp websites), although, in the interest of space, my focus is mostly confined to two heritage camps in particular: Camp Choson (Hudson, Wisconsin) and Camp Sejong (Park Ridge, New Jersey). I made my choice because of the large amount of information available – both have extensive websites, with brochures, itineraries, descriptions, and photographs available – and based on my sense that, taken together, the two camps address many of the important themes surrounding adoption, the family, race, and belonging that concerns this project.

Camp Choson

“Camp Choson is a place where the physical being is not in conflict with the inner spirit. Social interactions, culture classes and group physical activities build self-esteem and promote a sense of belonging... to family, to friends, to humanity.”

Camp Choson was founded, according to the camp website, in 1993 by a group of adoptive parents “looking for a way to expose their children to Korean culture.”⁹⁵ The week-long summer camp takes place annually and serves children and families from mostly the Minnesota and Wisconsin region of the United States. The camp website credits a “strong working relationship” with the Girl Scouts for its idyllic location at Camp Rolling Ridges, “550 picturesque acres in northeast Hudson, Wisconsin.”⁹⁶ The website includes quite a few photographs of Camp Rolling Ridges, some with campers present in the shot, some without. Like most heritage camps, Camp Choson caters to children ages kindergarten through high school, and encourages parental involvement – so that camp is “truly an experience for the whole family.”⁹⁷

The most remarkable thing about Camp Choson’s website (unlike some other camps, it does not offer brochures, fliers, or newsletters available for downloading) is its emphasis on nature and place. Descriptions, photographs, and rhetorical allusions to nature, the cosmos, and a sense of place and belonging in the world form the discursive framework for Camp Choson, the physical counterpart of which is found in the space of Camp Rolling Ridges itself.

⁹⁵ “Background Information” *Camp Choson*. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org/>> on November 2, 2007.

⁹⁶ “Camp Basics” *Camp Choson*. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org/>> on November 2, 2007.

⁹⁷ “Background Information” *Camp Choson*.

The name “Camp Choson” refers to the Choson dynasty, which ruled Korea from 1392-1910.⁹⁸ The reference evokes, on the one hand, a cultural “golden age” in Korea – an age which saw the birth of the Korean alphabet and the flourishing of architecture, art, and science; on the other hand, however, the reference is problematic – implying a construction of Korea that is frozen in a long-ago past. Historian Philip Deloria, in his book *Playing Indian*, argues that the relegation of ethnic/racial minorities to a distant, primitive past strips those people of agency and the power to shape the contemporary moment.⁹⁹ In imagining people of color as somehow rooted in antiquity, unable to adapt to modern life, dominant culture reproduces the myth of the dying, or vanishing, Indian, in which the presence of the other is an anachronistic reminder of both a romanticized, distant past and the march of progress into a newer, different age.¹⁰⁰ This discourse, as Deloria points out, supports and legitimates policies of discrimination, dehumanization, and violence, in which the other is constructed as an obsolete and incommensurable barrier to “progress.”

Camp Choson’s reference to Korea’s dynastic history enforces a vision of Korea and Korean culture that is stuck in antiquity and which has little relevance to the present. It allows adoptive families to contain adoptees’ Korean-ness (otherness) by situating it firmly in a romanticized and static vision of the past. The threat of

⁹⁸ Adrian Buzo. *The Making of Modern Korea*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. 2.

⁹⁹ Philip J. Deloria. *Playing Indian*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. 64-65.

difference, then, which continuously signifies via the adoptee's visibly other face and body, becomes neutralized, discursively denied relevance to the carefully-guarded present, and thus, also denied the ability to disrupt the adoptive family and the construction of "sameness," or inner cohesion, to which it aspires. Just as admiration of Korea's Choson dynasty necessarily involves a degree of separation (the distance required by the present to commemorate the past), so too does Camp Choson's construction of Korean culture require its separation from the present-day lives of adoptees. In this construction, however, adoptees are denied an on-going, dynamic dialog with their "Korean-ness" – which, more so than commemoration or appreciation from afar, would allow a possibly more integrative, personal experience of birth culture.

The name "Choson" is also, of course, significant as a double entendre: "Choson," as "chosen," refers to a common trope in adoption literature, which imagines adoption as a special process by which children are "chosen" by their adoptive parents. The reference also, of course, lends itself to an association with the biblical notion of a "chosen people," those specially selected by God to enter into His covenant. The idea of choice is an important and complicated theme in adoption discourse – one that relates to place and belonging as well. On the one hand, none of us

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

are able to choose how we are brought into the world or what kind of families we have. The adoptee's situation, however, complicates that reality; while adoptees cannot, any more than other individuals, choose for themselves what family they "belong" to or what culture they are raised in, adoptees do know that *someone* made those choices for them. From the biological parent/s who choose to make a child available for adoption, to the adoptive parent/s who choose to adopt, to the social worker or adoption agency acting as facilitator, the adoption process is full of people making choices. Nowhere, however, does the adoptee, herself, get to choose, and while the reasons are obvious (the adoptee is not an adult at the time of adoption), the awareness of choice and exclusion from choice can be profoundly disempowering for many adoptees. Furthermore, the idea of having been "chosen" – either by one's adoptive parents or by some construct of destiny or fate – can register as a burden for many adoptees. While the common explanation, "We chose you," may help some adoptive parents in reassuring and affirming their child's value or specialness within the family, it may also be internalized by the adoptee as an imperative to live up to expectations, to justify his or her parents' "choice" in the first place.

In the case of Camp Choson, the idea of choice is also linked to constructions of family and nature. The camp's home page features a short essay by an unnamed

author – presumably a camp director or staff member.¹⁰¹ The author reflects on camp, summoning a broad, almost metaphysical construction of family that is found throughout Camp Choson’s website. The essay states:

“It was nine o’clock on Friday evening and everyone had left camp a few hours before. I loaded the last few remnants of camp supplies into my car and paused to gaze toward the heavens. The sun had set and left Venus shining brightly in the western sky... It was quiet. Not an eerie silence, but one of contentment. The laughter and the tears of saying good-bye to old friends and new, were still silently echoing through the trees... And the ground itself, Mother Earth, was resounding with satisfaction that for one week her children came together and felt a part of something more than they did before... they left with more self-esteem, knowing they belong in this world and that they are loved. Standing at the back of my car looking all around, one word seemed to come from the rocks and stones themselves... “*fulfillment*.” Camp week was finished... at it was good.”¹⁰²

Here, the author appeals to nature, “Mother Earth,” and the cosmos, setting her reflections against a timeless and almost mystical backdrop. The appeal to cosmic forces and the grandeur of nature imparts a sense of universality to the author’s perspective – and yet, it is important to ask: who, in actuality, is speaking? What other possible perspectives are excluded or ignored? Perhaps most importantly, how does the claiming of a universal or omniscient voice preempt the expression of alternative voices? The passage, for example, constructs “contentment” and “fulfillment” as universally-felt, objectively apparent *conditions* of the after effects of heritage camp;

¹⁰¹ “Announcements” *Camp Choson*. Home page. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org>> on November 2, 2000.

¹⁰² Ibid.

“contentment” and “fulfillment” are described as emanating from the very rocks, the very land, itself:

“And the ground itself, Mother Earth, was resounding with satisfaction... Standing at the back of my car looking all around, one word seemed to come from the rocks and stones themselves... *“fulfillment.”*”¹⁰³

The author builds distance between herself and her surroundings. She claims the position of observer, standing “at the back of my car looking all around,” so that, consequently, the “fulfillment” she describes is constructed as *observed* rather than *felt*, a condition of the external environment rather than of the internal subject. It is important, then, to note the implications such a construction has for the expression of alternative interpretations. In constructing contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment as external, observable conditions of heritage camp – conditions that, emanating from Mother Nature, herself, are naturally occurring and universally felt – the passage enforces the containment of alternative, dissenting views to the dissenting (and effectively silenced) individual.

The passage assumes a universal experience, and constructs that experience in a way that manages dissent through preemption, isolation, and silence. The passage constructs heritage camp as part of a larger, almost mystical construction of family, similar to the “family of humanity” envisioned by the *Boy Scouts Handbook*. Also similar to the Boy Scouts text, the passage evokes a notion of the origin as the

essential, vital core of identity, both on an individual and humanity-wide level. The passage evokes biblical language, stating:

“Camp week was finished... and it was good.”¹⁰⁴

Here, a reference to Genesis rhetorically links heritage camp to the biblical creation story and the origin of humanity. Heritage camp, then, is about going back to one’s roots, to one’s origin, in order to see that “it is good.”¹⁰⁵ The notion of the origin as the ultimate good is tied to the belief that one’s definitive, or vital, kernel of identity emanates or is located at the origin. For adoptees, the location of origins is, of course, particularly complex; while many adoptees experience their origins as loss (associated with unknown birth circumstances, biological parents whose identities are lost or obscured, a birth nation and culture that feels remote and wholly unfamiliar), there is, at the same time, a strong, abiding preoccupation within adoption discourse that upholds the significance of the adoptee’s origins to his or her development of identity and self. Heritage camps, then, are constructed as spaces where adoptees have the opportunity to connect with or reclaim their origins.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *The Holy Bible*. King James Version. Genesis 1:10.

Often, the reclamation of origins is envisioned as a path to wholeness, unity, or “fulfillment,” as the above passage puts it. Elsewhere on its website, Camp Choson claims:

“Camp Choson is a place where the physical being is not in conflict with the inner spirit. Social interactions, culture classes and group physical activities build self-esteem and promote a sense of belonging... to family, to friends, to humanity.”¹⁰⁶

Here, again, we see the concept of family interpreted broadly to include a larger, humanity-wide sense of affiliation. Heritage camp’s role is to nurture that interpretation, discursively locating adoptee identity in a universal, transcendental family of humanity –much the same way that boy scout identity was envisioned in early editions of the *Boy Scouts Handbook*.

Through broadening the understanding of family to include a metaphysical “family of humanity,” the passage elides any cultural prioritization of biological over adoptive family connections. Thus, an adoptee who is encouraged to reconnect to her origins is significantly *not* encouraged to interpret that suggestion in terms of her biological family. Rather, the camp emphasizes an interpretation of origins and adoptee identity as located in a larger, metaphysical notion of humanity – a construction that, if it does include an adoptee’s biological family, importantly includes his or her adoptive family as well.

¹⁰⁶ “Background Information” *Camp Choson*. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org/>>

Ultimately, Camp Choson's emphasis on family serves to reinforce an adoptee's identification with his or her adoptive family. While at times, the camp accentuates constructions of family that are ambiguous or abstract (i.e. the notion of a universal family of humanity), ultimately, these serve more to de-emphasize and discursively render non-threatening an explicit articulation of the biological family. Camp Choson's primary concern is for the nuclear, adoptive family, demonstrated by the camp's stated commitment to affirming the adoptive family as a strong, cohesive unit:

“Our campers establish many new friendships based on self-esteem and mutual respect, while taking their family relationships to a new level of awareness; one that strengthens family bonds as peace for the inner spirit becomes possible.”¹⁰⁷

The reference, here, to a “new level of awareness” is vague, as is the allusion to a newly forming “peace for the inner spirit.” Not ambiguous, however, is the valorization of “family bonds” – the idea of family attachment as *necessary* for “awareness” and “peace,” and of Camp Choson's ultimate investment in nurturing the formation and maintenance of those bonds within the adoptive family.

Camp Sejong

*“A magical place for your adopted Korean child”*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *Camp Sejong* (Camp Brochure). Accessed at <www.koreanfocus.org/kffiles/sejongbrochure05.pdf> on November 3, 2007.

Like Camp Choson, Camp Sejong is a one-week long Korean heritage camp founded by adoptive parents. The camp is located at the “Happiness is Camping” campgrounds in western New Jersey and draws campers from mostly New York, Philadelphia, and the Boston metropolitan area.¹⁰⁹ As in the case of Camp Choson, the reference embedded in Camp Sejong’s name is to a piece of Korean antiquity – namely, to the famed King Sejong, who ruled Korea from 1418-1450, and is credited with the invention and development of the Korean Hangeul alphabet.¹¹⁰ Like Camp Choson, Camp Sejong thus reifies Korean culture in the past, denying its dynamism and the possibilities for its present and future active role in adoptees’ lives.

Camp Sejong figures the adoptee as characterized by a type of “double-consciousness.” In the words of the brochure, downloadable on the camp website:

“Internationally-adopted, Korean-American children straddle two different worlds: American in culture and lifestyle, but Korean by birth... Camp Sejong provides an opportunity for these children to make a critical link to their Korean heritage.”¹¹¹

The camp positions itself as a space wherein a “critical link” can be made between adoptees’ supposedly conflicting Korean and American identifications. The camp website features an image of a stone bridge, the reflection of which shimmers in the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Adrian Buzo. *The Making of Modern Korea*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

water beneath it.¹¹² Under the image are three photographs – apparently, all depicting Camp Sejong campers: two Korean-looking girls embracing; a young, Korean-looking boy, riding “piggy-back” atop another, older boy; and three Korean-looking girls, holding home-made masks and smiling for the camera.

The image of the bridge, with its reflection shimmering beneath it on the screen, is metaphoric. It catches the eye and conveys in one image Camp Sejong’s vision of the adoptee – namely, as a bridge stretched between “two different worlds,” in the words of its brochure. The shimmering reflection moving over the screen is unstable, almost incoherent; it signifies the presumed uncertainty with which an adoptee regards him or herself in the “mirror,” so to speak. The image conveys both the in-between location of adoptee cultural identity and the supposition that such liminality must translate into confusion or instability in terms of the adoptee’s self-perception. The photograph, below the image of the bridge, of the three girls holding masks reinforces the idea of adoptee identity as essentially being double – wherein one culture is “masked” by another (whether it be an “American” inner identity masked by a “Korean”-looking exterior, or a “true,” biological “Korean” identity masked by assimilation into an “American” culture).

Also striking is the photograph of the two boys, the older carrying the younger on his back – an interestingly common trope among heritage camp websites. The

¹¹² “Welcome to Camp Sejong.” Accessed at <<http://www.campsejong.org/>> on March 23, 2008.

image has to do with authenticity, shared experience, and an idea of “support” as intrinsic to relationships between minority group members. It also, however, alludes to a popular strategy used by many heritage camps, whose websites solicit members of the Korean-American community, whether adopted or not, to become camp counselors or mentors for Korean adoptees. While I believe that mentoring can, in many cases, provide adoptees with important reference points for racial/ethnic identifications, the list found on one heritage camp’s website, illustrates the role mentorship programs can play in enforcing a controlled, exclusionary, conception of Korean-American identity.

The list on the camp’s website reads:

- “We invite Korean adults, high school students and older, to serve as mentors and work with parent coordinators in each classroom. A mentor is one who:
- Is comfortable with who they are and who is proud of their Korean heritage.
 - Understands how learning about Korean culture helps instill pride in birth heritage.
 - Allows someone younger than themselves to ask “What was it like for you when you were my age?” or “What did you do when ____ happened?”
 - Does not dwell on themselves and yet is open to sharing their own experiences.
 - Mentors will be provided housing, a noon Korean meal, and an honorarium.¹¹³

The list of mentor requirements is remarkably specific, recalling the type of scouting laws outlined in early Boy Scout and Girl Scout handbooks. The similarity reflects the investment on the part of camp organizers in a technique of control secured by

¹¹³ “Kamp Kimchee: Korean Mentor Program.” Accessed at <<http://kampkimchee.org/index.cfm/pageid/7>> on March 23, 2008.

standardization. Like a boy scout or girl scout – by definition a model of American utility, efficiency, and citizenship – the ideal heritage camp adoptee mentor is required to project a model of Korean-American identity – “comfortable with who they are,” “proud of their Korean heritage,” and willing to subscribe to the camp’s fundamental belief – namely, that “learning about Korean culture helps instill pride in birth heritage.” The assumption, of course, is that “pride in birth heritage” is number one, a desirable, and two, a reasonable, goal for heritage camps. Critics have pointed out that to expect from a week-long heritage camp the same force and quality of experience as more long-term and personal engagements with Korean culture is at best a naïve fantasy, and at worst, a degradation of adoptees’ complex relationship to Korean culture and identity.

As with Camp Choson, the primary object of Camp Sejong appears to be the legitimation of the adoptive family. The camp encourages adoptive parents to view their adopted child as caught between “two different worlds,” and thus, needful of the type of facilitated reconciliation that heritage camp provides. The camp is constructed as a special, “magical” environment wherein Korean adoptees “magically” resolve any identity- or adoption-related personal conflicts. Adoptive parents are empowered by Camp Sejong in a situation they may otherwise feel incapable or inadequate to address:

they are able to give their child the opportunity, through camp, to reconcile conflicting Korean and American identifications. As the camp brochure states:

“Parents love Camp Sejong because their Korean children emerge truly enriched by the experience.”¹¹⁴

The camp also features what it calls a “Parents Mini Vacation,” a program designed especially to address “the unique child-raising and adoption issues” that adoptive parents face.

Focus on the adoptive parents’ perspective is perhaps most poignantly highlighted by the end-of-camp “Family Day” and performance, popular not only at Camp Sejong, but at many other heritage camps, as well. Camp Sejong describes the end-of-camp performance, the centerpiece of “Family Day,” in their brochure:

“...when parents arrive, the kids present a show highlighting the many new skills they have learned such as drumming, dancing and Tai Kwon Do.”¹¹⁵

The interest in showcasing the “new skills” learned by adoptees at camp reflects a cultural investment in measurable outcomes, in American parents’ desire for tangible evidence of their children’s progress in the form of a readily visible “product” available for consumption. The end-of-camp spectacle is a common feature of heritage camps. The Korean heritage camp sponsored by Colorado Heritage Camps, for instance, features an annual “Hanbok Parade,” in which adoptees are encouraged to

¹¹⁴ *Camp Sejong* (Camp Brochure). Accessed at <www.koreanfocus.org/kffiles/sejongbrochure05.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

dress in traditional Korean costume and parade for their parents. (“There will be some hanboks for boys and girls in the market on Thursday night if you’d like something new to wear!!” the brochure brightly offers).¹¹⁶

The performance of Korean-ness, then, is an expected part of heritage camps – an index of their “success,” defined as tangible, consumable evidence. From my own personal memories of attending heritage camps while young, however, I can attest to the discomfort produced from enacting a representation of (purportedly) one’s “own” culture which feels wholly unfamiliar and forced. The pressure to perform is only enhanced by the adoptee’s recognition that, in some way, the performance is seen as somehow “natural” to him or her. In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transnational Adoption*, author Rachel Quy Collier notes that adopted children, like many children, internalize their adult caretakers’ expectations for them. Collier notes that often, an adoptee “realizes that she plays an important role in identity formation and maintenance for her... adoptive parents... who derive a sense of meaning and worth from their roles as caregivers, nurturers, providers, benefactors, even saviors.”¹¹⁷

Heritage camps that ask adoptees to perform Korean traditional dances, tae-kwon-do routines, or Korean songs for their parents, as evidence of their “progress” in

¹¹⁶ Colorado Heritage Camps. Accessed at < <http://www.heritagecamps.org/camps.html> > on November 4, 2008.

¹¹⁷ Rachel Quy Collier, “Performing Childhood,” in Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin, eds. *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transnational Adoption*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006. 210.

reconnecting with their birth culture, exploit children's desire to fulfill parental expectations. These programs tend to not only essentialize adoptees' birth cultures, but also tap into a consumerist logic that, itself, reduces adoptees' Korean heritage to merely that which is consumable, own-able.

The strong consumerist theme that runs through many of the heritage camp websites I examined is an unsettling aspect of these camps. The reasons for this relate, largely, to the social prohibition of applying an economic framework to kinship relations, which, in the case of (especially international) adoption, is emotionally and ethically fraught. Several scholars have explored the economic aspects of adoption; Kim Park Nelson, for example, in her chapter titled "Shopping for Children in the International Marketplace," holds that transnational adoption, the "exchange of children for adoption fees across national borders," may in many ways "be described in terms of market supply and demand."¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, author Barbara Katz Rothman, in *Consuming Motherhood*, notes that "the essential aspect of capitalist ideology, the extension of ownership or property rights" has extended into the realm of motherhood, affecting how the maternal body and relationships between mother and child are conceptualized.¹¹⁹ Katz Rothman notes that ecologists have long invoked the

¹¹⁸ Kim Park Nelson. "Shopping for Children in the International Marketplace," in Trenka, et al., eds. *Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006. 103.

¹¹⁹ Barbara Katz Rothman. "Motherhood Under Capitalism," in Taylor, et al., eds. *Consuming Motherhood*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004. 20.

theme of motherhood to make ethical arguments against environmental exploitation: “They argue that it is inappropriate to think we can own the land, the waters: the earth, they claim – significantly – is *our mother*, not our property.”¹²⁰ Property rights, however, become suddenly relevant to motherhood in the case of adoption, fostering, or surrogacy, for example, when the definition of motherhood itself begins to become de-coupled from its normative associations with biological pregnancy, birth, and gestation. Katz Rothman examines the contested space of motherhood and asks how conceptualizing “parenthood in terms of sales and contracts” brings to light the assumptions upon which normative definitions of maternity rely.¹²¹

In Korean heritage camps, the issue of ownership is a sensitive and complex theme. Culturally, we frown upon the notion of “owning” one’s child. The explicit formulation of ownership registers as a “crass marketization” of a relationship – that between parent and child – that is socially understood as outside the realm of commodification. Not only are specifically familial bonds degraded by commodification, but in the United States, implied “ownership” of another human being evokes the specter of slavery, and – especially in the case of transnational adoption – a cultural history of imperialism and exploitation. Theorist bell hooks, in “Eating the Other,” critiques Western nations’ continued commodification of cultures

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid. 29.

of the “other,” arguing that American imperialism in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has shifted from a geographic to cultural emphasis.

Commodification of otherness is offered as a taste of the exotic, an enriching dose of multiculturalism: “[E]thnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish of mainstream white culture.”¹²² Korean-American adoption, then, is weighted by an imperialistic past that, in the eyes of critics such as bell hooks, has continued into the present. While social norms in the United States disavow the application of economic frameworks to human relationships, it is worth noting where and how capitalist ideology affects our conceptions of family – even down to the language we use to express, for example, the desire to “have” children, to make a child one’s “own,” or to question to whom a child “belongs.”

In Korean heritage camps, capitalist ideology is sometimes only too disturbingly apparent. Almost all of the fifteen or so camps I examined for this project featured “marketplaces” or “adoption shops” offering a variety of goods to be purchased by adoptive families. In many cases, the presence of the shops or markets at camp was accentuated on the camp website. Colorado Heritage Camps’ Korean heritage camp, for example, features an all-capitalized “Korean Market Announcement!”:

¹²² bell hooks. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1992. 21.

“COME SHOP OUR WONDERFUL KOREAN MARKET... WIDE VARIETY OF CELADON, HANBOKS... ART FROM THE STREETS OF KOREA... AND MUCH MUCH MORE... NEW ITEMS PUT OUT DAILY SO COME AND SHOP OFTEN!!!!”¹²³

Camp Choson, too, gives its marketplace particular primacy, stating: “The Market is a gathering point and central hub of activity at camp.”¹²⁴ The specific emphasis on authenticity is a common theme among heritage camps’ descriptions of their markets and shops. Camp Friendship, for example, proudly states that its “traditional Korean boutique” is “filled with a variety of authentic Korean items for purchase.”¹²⁵ Here, “authenticity” often means that the items are “directly” from Korea. Camp Choson, for example, declares:

“Are you looking for items that can only be found in Korea? One of the special features of the Market is its Silent Auction/Raffle. Travelers to Korea over the previous year bring back treasures to be offered in this, our primary fundraiser for camp.”¹²⁶

The language here is striking for its (no doubt, unintended) reproduction of imperialist discourse: the hawking of Eastern exotica, the appeal to Western buyers’ desire for “treasures” brought back by travelers to the Orient, and the allusion to the auction block, with its connotations of exhibitionism and power by purchase.

¹²³ “Korean Heritage Camp 2007,” *Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc.* “A Few Final Reminders,” “Korean Market Announcement!” p. 5. Accessed at <<http://www.heritagecamps.org/korean.html>> November 2, 2007.

¹²⁴ “Korean Market and Raffle” *Camp Choson*. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org/market.htm>>.

¹²⁵ “Camp Friendship New Jersey: A Korean Culture Camp.” Accessed at <<https://www.campfriendshipnj.com/registration.asp>> on November 2, 2007.

The “silent auction” was a surprisingly (at least to me) common feature of the heritage camps I examined. That the auctions were indeed “silent” is an interesting detail that engenders interpretations perhaps beyond the recognition that, practically speaking, silent auctions are relatively informal and easy to facilitate. “Silence” – that is, the ability of adoptive parents to silently bid on Korean goods – may be read as an instantiation of the primary means by which the threat of commodification is managed in adoption discourse. When bidding on an object, the adoptive parent takes part in a (potential) economic exchange – itself symbolically fraught, as the item for auction represents a piece of Korean authenticity – and yet, the silence with which the transaction occurs permits a circumvention of overt commodification. The silent purchase is a success because not only does it achieve its desired exchange, but it also does so within a measure of “privacy,” whereby the narrative that surrounds and shapes how adoption is understood – by parents, adoptees, and society at large – is protected from the explicit recognition of its economic quality. If adoption itself is haunted by an ideology of capitalism and commodification that threatens to cheapen or degrade adoptive family bonds, then the silent auction represents the management of that threat, the silencing of an overt discourse of commodification – even as the transaction, in practice, is fully achieved.

¹²⁶ “Korean Market and Raffle” *Camp Choson*. Accessed at <<http://www.campchoson.org/market.htm>>

The fetishization of “authentic” Korean goods also affords the adoptive parent the opportunity to enter into a gifting relationship with his or her adopted child, who is often figured as a gift given by God or fate to the adoptive parents. The idea of a direct, authentic, and uninterrupted link to Korea becomes accessible to the adoptive family via the purchase of the fetishized object. The adoptive parent, in purchasing the “authentic” Korean keepsake, is thus able to symbolically buy a direct link to Korean culture for his or her adopted child. In fact, Kamp Kimchee makes this logic plain, stating on its website: “Our [camp store] operates as a service to our kampers.”¹²⁷ The purchase of “authentic” Korean goods is thus narrated as a gift-giving activity. Sara Dorow, in her book *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship*, argues that the discourse of gifting is a common one in adoption – the adoptee as gift is one of the many ways adoptees and the threat of commodification that ghosts all aspects of the adoption process are mystified and laid to rest.¹²⁸ If an adopted child is narrativized as a “gift” of fate or God, then other conditions surrounding the adoption – including racial and class differences between biological and adoptive agents and the application of global power relationships to the exchange –

on November 2, 2007.

¹²⁷ “Buk-Dae-Mun Shijang (North Gate Market) Kamp Store” *Kamp Kimchee*. Accessed at <<http://kampkimchee.org/index.cfm/pageid/12>> November 2, 2007.

¹²⁸ Sara K. Dorow. *Transnational Adoption*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2006. 115.

can be avoided. Envisioning the child as free, or as destined for his or her adoptive family, relieves adoptive parents of the burden of contextualizing their child's adoption within local and global power relationships.

Historical, geographical, cultural, and political contextualization, then, is fundamental to understanding the ways power inflects the process of international adoption. Contextualization is also necessary to critically theorize adoptee heritage camp, drawing on an awareness of power as it is implicated in the process of adoption as well as the role of power in the construction of family formations and relationships. The next chapter calls on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome as a non-linear framework for representing the interconnected, multi-centered conceptual context within which adoptee heritage camps function.¹²⁹ By representing concepts, memories, photographs, and critical writings related to adoption and family in the form of a hypertext, the chapter seeks to represent formally the complexity of the space of heritage camp, itself.

¹²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Chapter 4

Heritage Camp as Heterotopia:

Theorizing Heritage Camp, Representing Identity

Like Korean adoptees, heritage camps are historically and culturally situated at the intersection of multiple and often contradictory discursive traditions. Heritage camp spatializes these discourses, which have constructed Korean adoptees as both American and other, natural and unnatural, present and absent. The result is a heterotopic space that reflects the uniquely liminal historical and cultural location of Korean adoptees themselves. This chapter suggests a conception of heritage camp as reflective of the multiple, liminal, and contradictory experience of Korean adoptee identity, and seeks to perform that experience in the non-linear, virtual space of the hypertext, which I invite you, the reader, to explore.

As a Korean adoptee, myself, I want to acknowledge the power that culturally dominant and hegemonic ideologies of nature and origins do wield over identity construction. Such ideologies, which locate identity in biology and authenticity in the

origin, hold powerful sway over our cultural understanding of the self. When it comes to the construction of adoptee identity, these ideologies, on the one hand, draw attention to adoptees' historical displacement from the nations, families, and cultures into which they were born – an important step in recognizing adoption's complicity in global power relationships. On the other hand, however, ideologies of nature and origins also encourage the fetishization of adoptee birth culture as the key to a wholeness or unity of self ultimately reliant on a metaphysical understanding of identity. Heritage camps figure as ironic testaments to the incommensurability of identity (as figured metaphysically) to adoptee experience. Within heritage camps, where the superficiality of camp activities poignantly underscores their inadequacy as proxy experiences of authentic Korean culture (as if culture were a thing that could, in fact, be offered or served up), the impossibility of a metaphysical recuperation of origins or roots is dramatically revealed.

This does not mean, however, that heritage camp must be viewed as a “failure” – inadequate in providing adoptees with meaningful experiences relevant to a more productive and positive experience of identity. Rather than viewing heritage camps negatively – as merely insufficient, simplistic attempts to fulfill powerful imperatives regarding origins and roots, I propose a theorization of heritage camps that recognizes their heterotopic qualities. As heterotopic spaces, heritage camps become legible as

complex, rather than simplistic, sites – aptly reflecting the ironic and liminal quality of Korean adoptee identity itself. Heritage camps become habitable, productive spaces for understanding the contradictory, multi-centered, and fluctuating ideologies that intersect within adoptee experience.

Theorist Gilles Deleuze’s notions of creative difference and of movement are key concepts in understanding heterotopic spaces and are thus useful for theorizing heritage camp.¹³⁰ The heritage camp as heterotopia is a space of difference that is also creative; its elements are “always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable.”¹³¹ The heritage camp, then, becomes fluid; it has “multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.”¹³² It is open, then, to multiple readings – readings that consider its function, its habitability, not only according to stated intentions, but also according to *potentiality* – to its possibilities via irony, paradox, and purposeful misunderstanding. In this view, heritage camps function not only in relation to their self-asserted goals (i.e. the re-connection of adoptees to their birth cultures); they also function according to the *possibility* of productive juxtapositions, fusions, unlikely couplings, and against-the-grain readings open to adoptees by virtue of their ironic cultural and historical location.

¹³⁰ See Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

¹³¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. 21.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Heritage camp as heterotopia thus becomes habitable for, or conducive to, adoptee identity (re-)construction when adoptees look beyond (over, beneath, to the side of?) its ostensible, stated mission, in order to see heritage camp as reflective of the multiple, liminal and ironic positionality of adoptees, themselves. Heritage camp then becomes a concrete space for performing adoptee identity – a space sympathetic to adoptees’ liminal position, which encourages experimentation and the direct confrontation of the many otherwise hidden, or un-recognized discourses that affect adoptees’ experiences every day.

Given the reflective, mirroring relationship between heritage camp and adoptee identity, it is no wonder that as I experiment with representing heritage camp, I inevitably also engage in an exploration into my own experiences with adoption and my own identification as a Korean adoptee. It may be, indeed, that parsing the genealogy of heritage camp has allowed me to simultaneously re-position *myself* within the heterogeneous discursive traditions I have examined and experienced. Heritage camp has become not only a real – that is, physically and geographically mapable – space I as an adoptee might go to dwell; it has also become a psychic space, a space of thought and contemplation where I locate my own identarian practices. Such a fusion acknowledges an overlapping of traditional notions of “external” and “internal.” External spaces are, after all, internally resonant or meaningful, just as

internal spaces always betray claims to insularity, reflecting the immediate influence of social and environmental contexts.

The representation of heritage camp, much like the representation of adoptee identity, requires the ability to imagine, in the words of Donna Haraway, “a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves.”¹³³ A representation of heritage camp, as well as a theory of adoptee identity, requires the imagination of a multiple kind of space – a space produced by difference, contradiction, and juxtaposition. To imagine the space of heritage camp, then, I turn to hypertext, as a non-linear, rhizomatic framework for representation.

Hypertext, as a form of electronic media, enables a different type of experience than traditional, printed text – one that involves mobility, non-linearity, and mutability. Theorist N. Katherine Hayles writes that electronic media translate “materially resistant text” into “text-as-flickering-image,” a transmutation that instantiates an epistemic shift toward “pattern and randomness” and away from “presence and absence.”¹³⁴ Indeed, within the space of heritage camp, traditional preoccupations with “presence and absence” construct adoptee identity, on the one hand, around an essential, originary absence, while at the same time also focusing on adoptees’

¹³³ Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” pp. 149-181, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 181.

¹³⁴ N. Katherine Hayles, “Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers,” *October* 86 (Fall, 1993): 69-91.

presence as the highly visible racial/ethnic other within their adoptive families.

Traditional fixations on presence and absence restrict adoptee identity (which, as I argue, is multiple, paradoxical, and mutable), forcing adoptees to choose between dualisms, to decide among a list of binaries which categories are “present,” which “absent,” in their lives.

Hypertext, then, becomes a mode of representation that allows juxtaposition and contradiction – the commensurate signification of apparent binaries within the same text. It allows non-linear and interactive movement through the text, and as a rhizomatically mobile construction, is always open to changes, additions, deletions, and fusions. The act of writing heritage camp as hypertext involves a sprawling and non-linear movement on my own part, through the variously emergent, long-abiding, hidden, and half-realized spaces of memory, theory, and imagination. The piece-by-piece act of creation resonates with an understanding (at least on my part) of identity as a piecemeal enterprise: our identities do not emerge fully-formed, whole – or as Haraway writes, we are “not born in a garden,” possessing a “unitary identity.”¹³⁵ Rather, identity construction is an assemblage, a putting-together of many, heterogeneous elements. It is a painful and also pleasurable process – and, as I was piecing together my hypertextual account, I was poignantly reminded of this, and also,

¹³⁵ Donna Haraway. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” 180.

of the degree of surprise involved even in the construction of our “own” accounts of history or identity. The linkages that run through various histories, ideas, representations, and texts are often surprising –emerging non-intuitively, a fine thread drawn through the heterogeneous fabric of our experience.

Many of the pages in my hypertext convey this sideways, associative type of linkage. For example, the page titled “Camp Sejong” quotes from the camp’s brochure:

“Internationally-adopted Korean-American children straddle two different worlds: American in culture and lifestyle, but Korean by birth. Most of these children have never been back to Korea and many have had little or no contact with other Korean-Americans. Camp Sejong provides an opportunity for these children to make a critical link to their Korean heritage.”¹³⁶

The page links, via the word “link,” to another page, titled “Stitch,” featuring a self-authored poem meditating on the act of hyphenation (as in the term “Korean-American”), re-defining it as an act of suture, and the hyphen as “a stitch, a bit of thread / holding together / two continents.” The page relates 1) to the act of adoption, as a “stitching together” of family, 2) to heritage camp as a heterogeneous suturing of cultures, geographies, temporalities, and subjectivities, and 3) to the creation of hypertextual accounts, themselves, which involve the non-linear linking together of text and image through electronic space.

The choice to link text from a camp brochure to a poem about adoption and the feeling of being rent, sewn, opened, and closed highlights the surprising, associative

meanings that reside in apparently disparate texts. The act of linking performs the productive, purposeful mis-reading I point to as one way adoptees can inhabit the space of heritage camp in unexpected ways. The poem “Stitch,” for example, inhabits the textual space of the camp brochure, literally using that text as a door to its own unfolding, to a new opening up of space that extends creatively and spontaneously.

Importantly, the mis-reading from which the poem emerges is a productive *but not destructive* act. The poem does not erase, obscure, or degrade the camp brochure text, even as it interprets that text in non-expected, even deviant, ways. The mis-reading approximates Deleuze’s notion of difference as creative and positive rather than negative, annihilating – a theorization of difference most compatible with adoptee subjectivity. Difference takes the form of poetry, of creativity in a newly opened space. It upends “official” heritage camp discourse, but in a way that is not violent, that does not seek to annihilate its interlocutor – which, after all, is its own dwelling-place. Such an interpretation of difference acknowledges the adoptee’s necessity to live not only with, but through, contradiction, and indicates an ecology of liminal spaces and subjects of which the adoptee takes part.

¹³⁶ *Camp Sejong* (Camp Brochure). Accessed at <www.koreanfocus.org/kffiles/sejongbrochure05.pdf>.

The page titled “Stitch” also links, via the word “twins,” to a page called “Sister.” “Sister” narrates, in prose, my memory of meeting my biological sister for the first time during a trip to Korea I made at age twenty:

“When I first saw my sister, whom I had never seen before but whom I instantly recognized, I found that suddenly I could not sense my own body. It was as though there was a rule: either she or I could exist – not both, but either the one or the other. And so, there I was – bodiless, a bundle of nerves released of their flesh...”

Here, the hypertext skips through space and time, performing, in a sense, the multi-temporal, multi-spatial stitching together of heritage camps. Heritage camps draw on past constructions of summer camp and are ghosted by discourses that have traditionally animated those spaces. The inclusion of memories, of quotes pulled from turn-of-the-century scouting handbooks, and of documents, artifacts, from my own personal history is intended to emphasize the multi-temporal nature of being and identity. Such a view also rejects definitions of identity that fixate on a singular and essential origin, located at the metaphysical beginning. Instead, it contends that identity is dispersed over many temporalities and many geographies, and that these can be held in juxtaposition with one another.

The content of “Sister” is about recognition and embodiment, and also, about a heterotopic moment when I saw, in my Korean sister, the image of myself reflected back to me. The mirror, of course, is an exemplary heterotopia according to Foucault:

it reflects to me where I am not, thereby both disturbing my sense of self and consolidating it, affirming where I *am* by showing me where I am *not*.¹³⁷ Meeting my Korean sister was similar to seeing my reflection in the heterotopic mirror. On the one hand, I identified my sister as other, as not-me; on the other hand, however, there I was, an adoptee, seeing someone for the first time who looked like me, who bore familial, visual resemblance to me. The effect was breath-taking, uncanny – for unlike the image of myself in the mirror, whose un-reality, whose status as “image” affirms my own reality as “me,” my sister *was* real. She was *not* an image – and her flesh-and-blood reality seemed to confuse my own sense of embodiment. The moment was indeed heterotopic, and the ironic statement: “And so, there I was – bodiless...” registers as an indication of the paradoxical, contradictory nature of that experience.

Deleuze and Guattari have a concept of a “Body without Organs” (BwO) which is virtual and “deterritorialized” – that is, stripped of signification and subjectivity, a purely *potential* body that is continually “becoming,” and which is thus theorized as an infinite event (“you are forever attaining it, it is a limit”).¹³⁸ Hypertexts represent bodies without organs; like the BwO, the hypertext is deterritorialized. It moves nomadically, in a virtual, electronic space that is extendable, mutable, and that is continuously in the state of becoming. The hypertextual representation of heritage

¹³⁷ See Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16:1 (1986), 22-27.

camp, then, becomes an exercise in theorizing adoptee identity along the lines of the BwO. It is an ironic gesture toward a *dis*-embodiment and *de*-materialization of the self that is paradoxically, according to Deleuzean theory, redemptive rather than reductive or annihilating. As the hypertext instantiates, dis-embodiment and de-materialization do not necessitate an erasure of identity; on the contrary, the move toward a deterritorialized notion of self is creative, spontaneous, productive.

Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg is similarly deterritorialized. In my hypertext I associate deterritorialization with, in the language of Haraway's *Manifesto*, a notion of "illegitimacy." In "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," Haraway describes cyborgian illegitimacy, also noting:

"But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential."¹³⁹

Here, cyborg "fathers" are "militarism and patriarchal capitalism," according to Haraway; thus, cyborgian illegitimacy means a freeing of cyborgian subjectivity from militaristic, capitalistic, and patriarchal colonization. Haraway's language of illegitimacy appropriates the pejorative terminology of dominant bio-logical

¹³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. 149-150.

¹³⁹ Donna Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century."

definitions of kinship and deterritorializes it, renders it useful for the theorization of new kinds of affiliations based not on biology, but on alliance and strategic, political coalition-building.

Taking a cue from Haraway, I also have attempted the appropriation and re-theorization of a language of illegitimacy in my hypertext. The specter of illegitimacy has haunted adoption discourse from its earliest days, and its influence and very real presence in adoptees' lives is testament to the power of discursive acts generally. The page titled, "Inheritance" in the hypertext quotes Korean adoptee Rebecca Hurdis, poignantly reflecting the tenacious hold over adoptee subjectivity that the discourse of illegitimacy continues to have:

"I have inherited not only the black hair, round face, small hands, and full lips of my birth mother, but I also have inherited the lineage of illegitimacy. My birth mother's illegitimacy flows through my consciousness just as her blood does. First and foremost, my existence lies in the exploitation of my birth mother. I am a product of the transnational relationship between Korea and the United States because I am their creation and their capitalist commodity. But despite my initial location in Korea and my relocation to the United States, I am destined to remain an illegitimate subject."¹⁴⁰

Hurdis's statement is a strong testament to the pervasive power of ideologies of biology and nature in the experience and construction of identity. It also explicitly addresses the territorialization of adoptee subjectivity by the "militarism and

¹⁴⁰ Rebecca Hurdis, "Lifting the Shroud of Silence: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Truth, Legitimacy, and Justice," in Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, et al., eds. *International Korean Adoption*. New York: The Haworth Press, 2007. 178-179

paternalistic capitalism” that Haraway writes against. Haraway’s image of the cyborg indeed becomes appealing as a model on which to base a new theorization of adoptee identity – one that is deterritorialized and illegitimate, non-essential and multiply dispersed.

“Inheritance” also features an image of a document taken from my own history as an adopted person. The image is of a scanned portion of my “Social and Health History” document, which traveled along with me to the United States at the time of my adoption. The document indicates, with an “x” for a check-mark, that I was “Illegitimate” and “Abandoned” by my mother. My legal guardian is listed as “Dr. Kim Dok Whang, President of Eastern Child Welfare Society, Inc.” I include the document as an artifact of my own personal past which corroborates the quote (with which it shares the page) from Rebecca Hurdis, testifying to the immense definitional weight the label of illegitimacy carries with it in the construction of adoptee identity. The document, in its terseness, in the strangely totalizing and violent way the “x” figures on the page, represents visually what Hurdis verbalizes in the quote. The juxtaposition of both of our (mine and Rebecca Hurdis’s) accounts represents the potentiality of adoptee affiliation, of a coalition of cyborgian adoptees, that may be linked together in the future. As such, the coalition exists only hypertextually, a Body without Organs, as it were – but, like the BwO, its becoming is immanent in its

virtualization. The hypertext, then, represents the potentiality of a cyborgian adoptee identity and the potentiality of its strategic recuperation of heritage camps as sites of affiliation and community.

The notion of cyborgian subjectivity is especially habitable for adoptees in its renunciation of biological determinism, dominant origin myths, and the nostalgic desire to seek unitary identity, a primordial re-birth in a garden. Haraway demythologizes – or, rather, re-mythologizes – origins, nature, and embodiment. She calls for a trans-species reconsideration of boundaries, questioning the concept of “human” and “non-human” as universalist, ultimately arbitrary and mystical constructions.

For adoptees, the uncoupling of identity from biology has obvious draws, as the imperative to recuperate lost origins or to resurrect a biological and essential linkage gives way to the possibility of self-creation and self-directed identification/affiliation. I have come to view the hypertext as one, possible iteration of such self-creation. The hypertext performs the coextension of my flesh-and-blood body with 1) the body of text quoted on the screen, 2) the virtualized and de-materialized “body” of the hypertext itself, 3) the bodies of other adoptees dispersed in time and space, and 3) the tools of the screen, the code, and the “flickering signifiers” themselves. The hypertext, then, visualizes for me a non-bodied, differentially-bodied, and variously-bodied

extension of psychic space, thereby expanding the possibilities for identity beyond my biological, material self.

In the hypertext, my BwO, I gather the artifacts, texts, and images that have come to define me and, with that act of gathering, that act of *adopting*, I see-saw back against my own construction, authoring myself anew. The adoptee identity, then, becomes an *adopt-ed* identity – non-essential, mutable, fluid, and creative. The hypertext allows me to continuously add to it; the process of weaving identity is ongoing, and the ability to differentially enter and re-enter the text supports a notion of identity that can be both familiar and secure, as well as mobile and spontaneous. With these intentions, dreams, and imaginings in mind, I invite you, the reader, to enter the space of my hypertext and to explore it as a virtual representation of both heritage camp and adoptee/adopted identity itself.

Conclusion

Heritage camp juxtaposes multiple perspectives, temporalities, and subjectivities. As heterotopic spaces, heritage camps are best represented non-linearly, off the printed page, in the electronic space of the hypertext. In hypertext form, the heritage camp unfolds by hints; it is never definitively plotted on the page, but rather, takes shape obliquely, extending accordion-like, plane by plane. Representing heritage camp through hypertext allows me to locate my own poetic voice, which itself operates according to metaphor, juxtaposition, unlikely or surprising couplings. It allowed me to put into motion a Deleuzean notion of creative difference: the poetic voice emerges, in my hypertext, as an expression that in its otherness (its “foreignness” from the more traditionally analytical work done elsewhere in the project) is also generative –

materially as well as conceptually productive. The poetic voice carves out a space for itself; the pages of poetry are heterotopias in their own right, inverting the logic of traditional, linearly analytical texts, replacing that with whimsical, associatively-generated meanings.

The process of theorizing heritage camp in both hypertext and poetic form was also a practical lesson in Time. To be more precise, it was a lesson in freeing oneself from a concept of Time as rigidly or unwaveringly linear, relentlessly progressive. It taught me the value of replacing a notion of Time with that of “times” – multiple, overlapping, fluid spaces that variously collapse into each other, intersect, lie side by side, generate infinite comparisons and strange loops and ladders. As I wrote the hypertext, I moved in and out of these multiple, differentially paced times. Sometimes the writing was slow – the piecing together of the hypertext was a painstaking process of stitching fragments together bit by bit. Other times, however, the writing was surprisingly fast – I could barely keep up with my thoughts, get them onto the page. The experience of these multiple kinds of time while writing the hypertext became, for me, a metaphor through which to view the project itself – the genealogical tracing and comparison of different historical periods was echoed in the nature of the writing process itself. The project’s fundamental stake in a conceptualization of time and

history as non-linear and multiple was thus performed in the writing of the hypertext, attesting to that form of representation's suitability to the heart of the project.

As heterogeneous spaces, heritage camps reflect, disturb, invert, and ironize those other spaces they reference. Irony, in this project, has emerged as a strategy for living the contradictions and paradoxes that our categorized, calculated, and tabulated lives unavoidably generate for us. As ironic spaces, heritage camps can be seen as paradoxical "illegitimate offspring," to use a phrase from Donna Haraway, begotten of traditional, iconic constructions of summer camp. As ironic spaces, heritage camps signify beyond their stated goal to re-connect adoptees to their birth culture, origins, or roots, becoming legible as spaces reflective of the ironic positionality of adoptee experience and identity itself.

Represented hypertextually, the heritage camp becomes synonymous with the non-linear psychic space of adoptee subjectivity. In the heritage camp-as-hypertext, memory, narrative, image, and imagination are juxtaposed alongside representations of heritage camp by camp brochures and websites. The effect is to disrupt official, manifest representations of heritage camp, revealing its habitation by difference and particularity, in the shape of adoptees' memories and histories. It is also to suggest the creative potentiality of heritage camp-as-heterotopia. Understanding difference as fundamentally creative, the space of heritage camp becomes a generative site for the

representation of multiple adoptee histories. This project has sought to represent heritage camp as a complex, paradoxical site and to suggest its habitability by adoptees, whose genealogies trace similar pathways through variously American and Korean geographies, temporalities, and subjectivities. It is my hope that theorizing heritage camp and adoptee subjectivity as fluid, de-territorialized, and multiple will open those spaces up to the continued inflection of difference and the generative possibilities it entails.

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