



Panel's title : The Child Migration and Its After: The Study of Transnational Adoption in South Korea

Coordinator (Affiliation, University...) : Jeongjun Park (Seoul National University)

Language : English

Topics : (Arts, Politics, History, Migration)

Critical adoption studies

Panel presentation : This study aims to clarify that in South Korea, it is the state that has functioned as a key agent to develop the transnational adoption phenomenon. The structure of the transnational adoption and its change show that the government has played a key role of as the agent actively producing social minorities.

Transnational adoption has developed into a specialized social services field since World War II. As a defeated country Japan has joined the group of sending country, but it has gradually been reduced its adoption number. Currently, only about 30 children are being adopted abroad every year. However, South Korea gradually made it grew the number of child sent abroad after the Korean War. In the mid 1980s, it peaked the number as many as about 8,800 children were sent abroad. The reason for this adoption phenomenon has clear social and cultural reasons. Both Korea and Japan maintain a strong Patriarchal society it causes to control on the women's sexuality. About 90% of Korean babies waiting for adoption are children of unmarried mothers. By contrast, in Japan, there are only roughly 30 babies waiting for transnational adoption, although many orphans are caused by domestic disasters. Why Japan keeps only few, but constantly, sending children abroad while Korea made it grow. This paper examines what different discourses on adoption and their institutions are present in Japan and Korea, and compare the two countries adoption agencies and government roles which influence on the national adoption affection.

Key words: "transnational adoption, Korean adoptees, loss, roots trip, reunion

Participants :

1) **Name(s) (Affiliation, University...)** : Seunghee Han Seo (Yonsei University)

Communication's title : The Comparative Study of overseas adoption systems in Korea and Japan

Language : English

Presentation : Transnational adoption has developed into a specialized social services field since World War II. As a defeated country Japan has joined the group of sending country, but it has gradually been reducing its adoption number. Currently, only about 30 children are being adopted abroad every year. However, South Korea gradually made it grew the number of children sent abroad after the Korean War. In the mid 1980s, it peaked the number as many as about 8,800 children were sent abroad. The reason for this adoption phenomenon has clear social and cultural reasons. Both Korea and Japan maintain a strong Patriarchal society, it ceases to control on the women's sexuality. About 90% of Korean babies waiting for adoption are children of unmarried mothers. By contrast, in Japan, there are only roughly 30 babies waiting for transnational adoption, although many orphans are caused by domestic disasters. Why Japan keeps only a few, but constantly, sending children abroad while Korea made it grow. This paper examines what different discourses on adoption and their institutions are present in Japan and Korea, and compare the two countries adoption agencies and government roles which influence on the national adoption affection.

Key words international adoption, adoption discourse, family registry, unwed mom, orphan, adoption system, adoption law



2) Name(s) (Affiliation, University...) : Jeongjun Park (Seoul National University)

Communication's title : The Study of Korean Visit of a Korean-born Male Adoptee

Language : English :

Presentation : The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of racialization of two male adoptee writers in Scandinavia. These adoptees face everyday racism based on their skin colour having difficulty in constructing identity as straight men due to the lack of masculinity based on the presumption. In order to get rid of obstacles against their existence, these adoptee writers try to behave as normal Scandinavians. This desire is apparent in the autobiographies of Brynjulf Jung Tjønn and Patrik Lundberg, both of whom are South Korean adoptees. In *Chinaman* by Tjønn, the protagonist tries to be not called Chinaman any longer. For this purpose, he does his best to become a middle-class Norwegian with a white wife with a stronger Norwegian identity. When it comes to *Yellow Outside*, the narrator is branded as a gay facing everyday racism, relative poverty, gossips against his kinship. Surprisingly enough, he has realised his Swedishness and masculinity thanks to the unexpected popularity staying in South Korea. However, their endeavours to go with the majority in their adoptive countries do not look very stable owing to the racism and exclusion in Scandinavia.

Key words male adoptee, Patrik Lundberg, *Yellowface Outside*, racialization, destruction/reconstruction, motherland tour

Name(s) (Affiliation) : Yoo Jin Choi (Hanyang Women's University)

Communication's title Adoption and After: Loss, Separation, and Reunion in Tammy Chu's *Resilience*

Language : Français / English :

Presentation : Tammy Chu's *Resilience* (2009) is a documentary film about a Korean birthmother, Myung-ja Noh, and her son, Sung-wook Hyun/Brent Beesley, a Korean TRA (transracial adoptee) who was adopted to America when he was a baby. An important frame of reference for *Resilience* is the reevaluation of birthmothers and adoptees, which lays ground for the truths about the veiled history of the Korean transnational adoption.

The film scrutinizes and deconstructs the commonly misconceived myths about birthmothers and adoptees, which have been, for the most part, re-/generated and re-/contextualized within Korean patriarchal norms. The most generally believed mythic representations of adoptees regarded them as rescued objects from the miserable state of orphanhood and birthmothers as pardoned wrongdoers who were generously saved from social disgrace and stigmatization of unwed motherhood by relinquishing their babies born outside of wedlock. In *Resilience* the myths about birthmothers and adoptees are dismantled and the truths about the forced migration in the system of Korean transnational adoption is divulged.



Contextualizing Avery F. Gordon’s mediation on the socio-political/-cultural significance of “the return of the ghost” within the Korean transnational adoption discourses, this paper reads Sung-wook/Brent’s narrative as a return memoir that examines the loss, separation, and reunion engendered by Korean transnational adoption by employing arguments and debates in trauma theory and adoption study. The pre-reunion, reunion, and post-reunion process between the Korean birthmother and the adoptee allows the peripheralized history of Korean transnational adoption to be repositioned in the forefront. Furthermore, by interweaving their pre-adoption and post-adoption memories together, the birthmother and the adoptee rewrite and reconstitute the suppressed past. However, despite the healing aspects of Sung-wook/Brent’s return to the place of origin and the reunion with his birthmother, the return and reunion process manifests the disjuncture between Sung-wook’s pre-adopted self and Brent’s adopted self; as Sung-wook’s Korean racial identity engendered a sense of exclusivity in his adoptive family/country, Brent’s White cultural identity generates another sense of non-belonging-ness within his biological family/birth country. The last scene of the film features Brent’s return migration to his adoptive country, with his wish “to return to Korea someday.”

Key words : *Resilience*, Korean transnational adoption, loss, reunion