Being Uprooted and Re-planted: An International Adoptee’s Experience of Belonging, Inclusion and Exclusion in Canada

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What is International Adoption?

- International adoption - legal process of adopting a child born in a foreign country and culture

- Canadians adopted 2,127 children internationally in 2009 (Statistics Canada)

- To adopt internationally prospective parents have to be legal or permanent residents, and comply with the laws of both sending and receiving countries
Research Objective

- Adoptees illustrate transnationalism with movements across borders (country of origin to country of adoption)

- The ethnographic paper focuses on the processes of inclusion, exclusion and belonging for international adoptees, within the spheres of the household, community and nation.
Emerging Themes

- **Identity Formation** - cultural identity and connectedness through participation in cultural activities
- **Family and community connectedness** - membership in the local community
- **Home and belonging** - focuses on ‘roots’ and ‘routes’
Methodology

● Autoethnography - reflect on self experiences and memories (photo-albums, discussions with family)

● Conducted interviews with international adoptees, for compare/contrast

● Asked four open-ended questions:
  1. Adoptee's age, where they were born, etc.
  2. Focused on inclusion and exclusion at the community level
  3. Questions on the relationship with family, friends & community
  4. Questions on the theme of home & belonging
Interview with an International Adoptee

Mary

- Adopted from South Korea
- Adoptive parents were not interested in the “why’s of adoption”
- Experience with the Korean Student Association in college
- Meeting her biological father- “[...] not emotionally prepared to go back”
- Mary identifies as American first, but still feels like an “imposter” and is “not fully Korean”
My Self-Reflection in the Autoethnography

- Adopted from India
- Arriving at Trudeau International Airport-, “I am home!”
- Memory of drawing a family tree in school- questions of my family structure & having to explain my background
- Viewing the photograph of my biological mother
- ‘Roots’ developed in Canada and India- “I find myself in the centre of both cultural belongings.”
## Analysis - Compare/Contrast

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<th>Family &amp; Community Connectedness</th>
<th>Home &amp; Belonging</th>
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**Identity Formation**

- Myself-adoption, and my biological mother was openly discussed.
- Mary-adoption was not discussed - inability to relate to her Korean identity.

**Family & Community Connectedness**

- Mary-going back to South Korea to meet her half-brothers.
- Myself-Connected with the Indian culture; in Canada identified with Canadian culture.

**Home & Belonging**

- My ‘home’ is in Canada, I still have ‘roots’ in India.
Conclusion

- I have been “uprooted” and “re-planted” from one country to another, and in order to understand my identity and sense of belonging from both “soils,” I find myself in the center of both cultural identities.

- I want to continue this study by focusing on international adoptees who have been adopted into families of the same ethnic background.