
"The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference" Critique

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They/Them/Their

"My name is Kevin Keo, I am a first-generation Archaeology student at CSUDH, with a particular interest in the Angkor Empire and its archaeometallurgical history. As a Mellon Mays fellow, I am conducting research on the impact of material culture in the Cambodian diaspora community. During my spare time, I enjoy sculpting and drawing comics."

Jessaca B. Leinaweaver's article, "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference," presents the reader with the issue that transnational adoptees are presented solely through a migratory view, which is not the best fit due to the nature of transnational adoption. Leinaweaver shifts into a new hybrid perspective for these adoptees and the people close to them through her position and skills as an anthropologist, rather than as a demographer. Though she does not make any noticeable change, promoting her viewpoint may help bridge the understanding between transnational adoptees and the communities they live in.

Throughout the paper, Leinaweaver addresses the problem of how transnationally and transracially adopted children are viewed in a migratory sense and hopes to alleviate the problem with a holistic anthropological perspective. Leinaweaver argues that using a migration lens when viewing this type of movement is limiting, as transnational adoption does not fall under the normal pull and push factors. This has to do with the term "quiet migration," since these child migrants are beings with very little autonomy and no voice.

Even though the push factors may be the same for adults, the pull factors are not, due to the desire for children from a privileged population. Leinaweaver believes that by utilizing an anthropological life course perspective, we can view these “‘migrants’ and those close to them, over time ... better understood as racialization than solely the product of migration” (Leinaweaver 2014, 62). Additionally, Leinaweaver provides another perspective, which presents with the social slights that these populations face and how it works to “preclude open conversations about racial difference and minority status in an adoptive context” (Leinaweaver 2014, 63) with their parents. Leinaweaver asserts that transnational and transracial adoptees continuously face the problem of identity after the “initial migration.” These new minority populations are different from the typical migrant communities due to the disconnect they experience when approached by the ethnic majority. The inherent racialization that the ethnic majority uses on adoptees causes a dilemma of identity. Their parents are the majority, but they are the minority whether they identify with it or not. For example, “... at an immediate, local level, it seems that Tina knows that when a stranger asks her where she is from, it is a question meant to make sense of the racialized disconnect between her body and her surroundings. When she knows what that question means and responds knowingly, she is interpellated as a foreigner” (Leinaweaver 2014, 66). To be constantly seen

as the other, despite growing up in circumstances in which adoptees believe themselves to be no different than the majority of society, is just one of the problems transnational adoptees face.

As a cultural anthropologist associated with Brown University, Jessaca B. Leinaweaver conducts most of her research on Peru and the Peruvian diaspora. She is able to bring a holistic viewpoint and cultural sensitivity given her background as a cultural anthropologist that most demographers would not (Researcher@Brown). Her ability to perform ethnographic research is what sets her apart from demographers, as she is able to connect with communities and produce substantial cultural research. This is a skill that is essential for cultural anthropologists. This article identifies some of the intersections between migration and adoption, and though it is more of an academic article than a needs assessment project, the formation of her hybrid understanding is key to understanding the problems these communities face.

The communities that would be most affected by the results of Leinaweaver’s work are transnational and transracial adoptees. These adoptees would benefit from a paradigm shift in how they are viewed and treated by the communities they live in, However, to truly bring about change, additional steps must be taken past Leinaweaver’s work in identifying the problem. Her work is the first step of many towards creating change. The family members

of this population would also benefit from this perspective as they would be able to communicate better with the affected minorities.

The effect of anthropology on the problem of racialization in adoptee populations is, so far, unpronounced. Leinaweaver has identified the problem plaguing this minority group, but the article does not present any solutions. It is safe to say that there has not been any behavioral shifts from the majority group towards the minority. While Leinaweaver's research has not yet resulted in change, perhaps her findings will influence a needs-based assessment project or a social movement in time. Convincing a majority group to change their perspectives on an entire group of people will be difficult, but steps can be made. Specifically, Leinaweaver can assist the Peruvian Spanish population with creating a social justice organization that helps transnational and transracial adoptees connect with their cultural heritage while forming a community with each other.

Jessaca B. Leinaweaver's article, "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference," explores the intersections between the adoption of transnational and transracial children and how it is understood as migration. Through her experience as a cultural anthropologist, she is able to utilize a thorough anthropological life course perspective to interview Peruvian transnational adoptees living in Spain and their families. While this was a research article

and no needs were met within this population, the promotion of this new outlook will help adoptees worldwide communicate with their family members without feeling displaced.

Works Cited

Leinaweaver, Jessaca B. 2014. "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference." *Human Organization* 73 (1) (Spring): 62-71. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.csudh.edu/10.17730/humo.73.1.f1x606xr745wnw4k>.

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