

Chris's Project Reflection

This project has been a great experience for me. I have learned a great deal about the adoptee community, race, ethnicity, culture, and identity. Before this project, I had never really thought about multiracial experiences within the adoptee community. In fact, prior to this semester, I have never really even thought about multiracial experiences in general. This class has opened my eyes to the unique issues that multiracial individuals face. By doing this project, I have been able to explore the issues surrounding multiraciality in the context of adoption, an issue that obviously hits home since I am a transracial adoptee myself. I have learned that I was very ignorant about multiracial issues and had many presumptions when it came to multiracial adoptees. This project has allowed me to dispel those presumptions and think critically about these issues.

I learned a lot from the multiracial adoptee interviews. I had always been very involved in researching the experiences of transracial monoracial adoptees, since that is my own experience, but I had never really even thought about multiracial adoptees. I learned that multiracial and monoracial adoptees share many experiences, but also have many different ones. The shared experience of being raised in a transracial family setting seems to be the binding factor that holds this adoptee community together. To have parents, friends, siblings, and peers who are all of a totally different race than you are confounds your identity development and views on the meaning of race and culture. It certainly had this effect on me. Indeed, both my multiracial and monoracial interviewees commented on the importance of the transracial adoptee experience within this community.

While multiracial and monoracial adoptees may share the transracial adoptee experience, monoracial adoptees normally do not have to navigate the "What are you" aspect of the multiracial experience. For most of us monoracial adoptees, people already assume we are Asian (or whatever race the case may be) and then are surprised and confused when they learn we don't speak the language or know the culture and have an American name. For multiracial adoptees, like multiracial individuals in general, the confusion starts right from the beginning. People want to know why you look the way you do. On top of that, they then have to navigate the experience of being a transracial adoptee. However, it did not seem that multiracial adoptees had a double identity problem as a product of being both multiracial and adopted, which is what I had assumed from the beginning. It seemed that for some, being adopted was much more salient, and for others, being multiracial was more salient. Still, for others, they chose to view race as a small part of who they were

and actively pursued an all-inclusive mindset. This reflects the vast diversity of experiences within the adoptee community.

It is interesting to note that the views on race, culture, and multiraciality within the adoptee community are based on the American understandings of these concepts. Adoptees were raised and socialized in this society, and thus have formed opinions and viewpoints that stem from this American worldview. Despite their physical looks, adoptees are in many ways part of the dominant culture in that they have gone through extensive white socialization, with the exception of the one Korean adoptee interviewee who was adopted by a Korean American mother. While the adoptees we interviewed had a vast array of opinions regarding race, culture, and multiraciality, the basic underlying foundation of understanding is rooted in the American worldview. They understand race in terms of physical looks and the racial hierarchy, and for the monoracial adoptees, multiraciality is a subject most have not even thought about critically.

I have learned the importance of understanding what race is. Race is a social construction that serves to divide people into groups. Adoptees, while having been socialized in this belief by virtue of being raised here in the U.S., seem to have a much more sensitive understanding of race because of their experiences. This is true for both monoracial and multiracial adoptees. Both groups of adoptees have to face issues concerning race, so race becomes an issue that they are forced to deal with. However, it appears that the experience of adoption is the most salient factor for most.

I can relate to this as an adoptee. Most of our lives, we have interacted with people who are of a different race than us. Indeed, our own families are of a different race. Therefore, when it comes to multiraciality, the issue is not as salient or meaningful or incendiary as it may be for other social groups. We understand what it's like to have to navigate two worlds and feel like you belong to neither. We understand what it's like to have people stare at you and your family. We understand what it's like to have race be *the* issue all the time. Therefore, I believe that the adoptee community is much more accepting of multiracial individuals than other social groups, and this project has validated this view.