

# Lily's Group Overview

In the context of understanding “race” as it is understood within the dominant U.S. dialogue, both multiracials and monoracials in the transracial adoptee community's racial identity takes precedent over their adoptee status because of the dominant role ascribed identity has in U.S. culture and institutions (Wijeyesinghe). Race is the primary means of categorizing people hierarchically: giving power to the privileged (white) and less to marginalized minorities (Tashiro). My interview with Bart revealed that his light skin as a multiracial black and white child made him adoptable; and that if he shared a phenotype more stereotypical of his African American heritage: he would not have been adoptable. His experience concludes that multiracials with more Caucasoid phenotypes versus more “ethnic” ones have more access to white privilege within the multiracial adoptee community. White families looking to adopt minority children preferred a biracial child, because of the ease of explaining a more ambiguous looking Childs' origin to their other family members, friends, and neighbors (McRoy, Grape). As a child his identity was assumed African because of his racial ancestry (Wijeyesinghe), however, his ascribed identity provided that despite being adopted into a white family and experiencing extensive white socialization: his experience remained culturally black.

The issue of white privilege is controversial within the multiracial community because of it's implications of “passing” being seen as opting out by monoracials, which caused a huge controversy in the 2000 Census debate. The Census was reformatted to allow multiracials the option to choose all that apply (MATA) instead of being forced to choose one racial category, however, many monoracials felt that this would dilute ethnic minorities' numbers and political power. As a multiracial adoptee Bart did not choose white privilege, the dominant white cultures need to define, categorize, and distinguish him using racial characteristics chosen for him; subsequently, his culturally black experience as an adult maintained he was not trying to “pass” nor could he. Multiracial's within the adoptee community face the challenge of fulfilling the dominant culture and the minority community's expectations of race, regardless of how they personally identify. It is people's understanding of race that is the problem: not being a multiracial, yet, all of the interviews with multiracial adoptees revealed that they continually had to justify their identity to others; therefore, making the problem theirs.

Different ethnic communities ascribe different identities for multiracial adoptees. For the mixed race Asian adoptees, J was confused for Thai when he went to Thailand and Latino by various communities. SI was told she was white by other Asians, Asian by Latinos and blacks, and exotic by whites. Meanwhile, others found their racial ambiguity caused people to inquire because they

could not categorize them at all. Asian multiracials experienced outside status from the Asian community because of the boundaries guarding entry into the community, such as, not looking Asian enough, not speaking the language, and/or not knowing the customs (Suyemoto). The dominant white society saw multiracial Asians as exotic or different, which is reinforced by the history of immigration legislation: "in 1909, the case of Knight, who was half-white, in a quarter Japanese, and one quarter Chinese, established that a person of such mixed ancestry could not be considered white, and thus was ineligible for citizenship" (Tashiro). Asians are seen as foreign by the dominant white culture, which forces multiracials into a space of rejection from the dominant and minority community's. Racial categorization completely disregards the individual experiences of multiracials, therefore, rejecting the possibility of integrating multiple identities: including adoptee. It also assumes an identity that is often incongruent to how multiracial people choose to identify. Their adoptee status assumes that they cannot be culturally Asian, even in the case of SI who's racially white and Japanese but her adoptive parents are both Japanese. She still faced rude remarks from other Asians, who told her she was not really Asian because she was adopted. Multiracials in the adoptee community must adhere to the challenges of negotiating a mixed identity, self-identity, ascribed identities, and the added complexity of their adoptee status.

Multiracial in this community experience a "multiple consciousness" to build off of W.E.B Du Bois idea of "double consciousness": "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity". Beyond negotiating a racially mixed identity, multiracial adoptees must negotiate their membership into racially different adoptive families. In the case of D, a mixed Asian, her parents are so used to people confronting their daughter about where she was from they would use humor to deflect the question. They would say things like, "Oh, she's ours! All ours! See what pretty babies we come out with!" All adoptees share the experience of being disconnected either culturally, racially, ethnically; and they are connected by their experience of justifying their membership within their adoptive families. Building off of Kich's idea of dissonance-being aware of differentness, multiracial adoptees experience multiple dissonance between two or more racial, cultural, and ethnic categorizes; in addition, to the dissonance of being in a racially different family.

Not all of the adoptees felt their dissonance was painful, interestingly, those two were monoracial adoptees. LF chose to associate with the white dominant culture despite being Vietnamese, and JY (Korean) chose to be colorblind which he believed eliminated his need to negotiate his identity. JY did not want to be defined by his race, and associated with others who considered race to be arbitrary. He felt that he could move fluidly across racial lines because of his easy going and out going attitude towards life. LF isolated herself into her

respective white comfort zone, interestingly; both believe they are asserting independence from the power dynamics of race by believing they are invisible to it. The fact that they are aware race has implications and that they choose not to buy into the labeling, proves that race does impacted them because of the fact they must choose at all. Being white implies you fit the social status quo, therefore, eliminating the need to re-identify and justify your membership into the community. In addition, LF and JY's experience reveals that the dominant white society has the power of representation, because people's identity is measured against the status quo's standards of race (Tashiro). None of the multiracial adoptees were able to ignore the implications of being multiracial, which most found overshadowed or equaled their adoptee status. In addition, their need to negotiate a racial identity proves they are aware of race, and want their integrated negotiation of multiple identities to be indicative of their identity.