

Lily's Project Reflection

As a transracial Asian adoptee myself, the interviews with other people from the same community secured a stronger sense of belonging for me. Before doing this project, I felt my experiences of dissonance and rejection were isolated because I had a difficult time finding others who shared similar experiences related to being adopted; however, this project revealed that there were others who shared those experiences. I wanted this project to create a space for others to feel they belonged to a community; which subsequently, fulfilled my need to connect with others who shared similar experiences. Although I am monoracial, I share a mixed experience like multiracials. I must negotiate being ascribed an Asian identity culturally and racially, despite, having more knowledge of the white culture because of my adoptive families heritage. I also face the challenges of being forced to identify in a way that maintains the status quo's standards of racial categorization.

Before doing this project I went through a progression of experiences similar to the monoracial people we interviewed, which shaped how I identify and what communities I want to be a part of. Growing up in a small town in a predominantly white neighborhood, my sense of identity was not race conscious. I was outgoing, opinionated, athletic, and accepted for the most part like JY and SI. Although I knew I was Asian, I had not formed a connection with other Asians. My family and I would periodically go into NYC, and I would find myself intrigued by the number of Asians I saw. I knew that I was Asian, but I did not feel I was one of them because I did not grow up with any relationships to Asians. Similar to multiracials who also negotiate cultural identities, I had to define what my identity was in relation to my white cultural upbringing versus my race (Asian). I did not have to negotiate multiple racial identities like multiracials, but I did have to negotiate different cultural identities. Unlike LF and JY, I chose to leave the comfort zone of white society and those I knew were colorblind. I tried to immerse myself into the Asian community via making friends and dating, and I too found the boundaries patrolling the Asian community to be very stringent, however, I continued to persevere after a slew of blatant rejections.

After making a few genuine friends from the community, I realized I would never be able to please the entire Asian community's perceptions of me as an outsider. I did have the power to say, "This is who I am, like it or not I am one of you!" This realization happened because I was inquisitive and active about understanding my identity in relation to how different communities saw me. All of the interviews with multiracials revealed they had to negotiate their self-identity with others perceptions of them. I had painful experiences much like the multiracial and monoracial adoptee's we interviewed, but I did not let those experiences jade my view on different communities as a whole. College was a

critical point in shaping my identity, because it was the first time I felt different. Up until that point my identity was indicative of what I did, however, now it was indicative of how I looked. Initially I felt like a foreigner in my own body, who was fooling I'm a fake Asian. These feelings subsided when I was surrounded by others who were of color and mixed race in the orientation group I chose to participate during my first year. It was a relief because I spent most of my time sharing experiences, thoughts, and philosophies about having mixed experiences, even though they were not adopted.

Unlike the other adoptees we interviewed, I experienced a dissonance with my adoptive family to the point of complete separation. I withdrew from college the second semester of my first year, and we both cut off contact for a year. We continued having limited contact for the next few years and have only recently begun to spend holidays together. This project has re-awakened past experiences for me, and has shed a new light on things. In light of the revelation I experienced from taking ownership of my identity in college, it transcended into my relationship with my adoptive family. I was tired of adapting myself to other people's expectations: parents, dominant, and minority cultures; and my tolerance expired. There were hurtful implications with my relationship with my adoptive family, and I did not want to look at myself through the eyes of someone else anymore. Today, my father has confided that he had an immense amount of respect for my ability to support myself on my own; however, I struggle with trying to get them to understand why I did it. I think multiracial and monoracial adoptees all struggle to have people see them through the adoptee's eyes.

I think my views are consistent with the attitudes and views of multiracial people in the adoptee community, however, multiracials face the added challenge of negotiating multiple racial identities: I do not. The monoracial experience in this community really correlates with my own experience the most. I experienced the same rejection from the Asian community as all of the Asian monoracial and multiracial's in the adoptee community, which has shaped our views on race similarly. All adoptees feel cultural expectations really define their experience, one I personally found challenging in my life.

This project presented the intellectual challenge of representing a community under the restraints of the vocabulary currently "established" without being offensive or inaccurate, which happened during my interview with Bart. Finding similarities between my experience and those we interviewed came with ease. I was fortunate to have such contrasting interviewees, which made my analysis more extensive. I think my role in the group took on the task of initiating action, and once that happened we had a balanced level of input. My schedule was the most open of all of the group members, and I think that enabled me to be in a position to take the initiative. As a group we learned how

to be efficient, which was facilitated through a strong work ethic throughout the group. We were almost always on the same page, and when we were not everyone brainstormed to make our thoughts collective again. I enjoyed working with the people in my group because we were able to work around the obstacle of our schedules.