

Avoiding Assumptions in Advising: Understanding Non-Traditional Families & Adoption

- **Doreen Hettich-Atkins**, Coordinator of Special Services & Programs
Ithaca College, dhettichatkins@ithaca.edu, @dhatkins, She / Her / Hers
- **Dr. John Sauter**, Assistant Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
Niagara University, jps@niagara.edu @johnpsauter, He / His / Him
- **Kartika Carr**, Graduate Student / Adoptee
Niagara University, Kartikacarr@gmail.com, @changemaker_T, She / Her / Hers
- **Christian Eshelman**, Adoptee

Adoption Overview

- Domestic Adoptions
- International Adoptions
- Relative Adoptions
- Foster Care (Goal Reunification)
- Open Adoption vs. Closed Adoptions

Transracial Adoption

Transracial / Interracial adoption “refers to the act of placing a child of one racial or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another racial or ethnic group.”

- Wikipedia

What Transracial is Not:

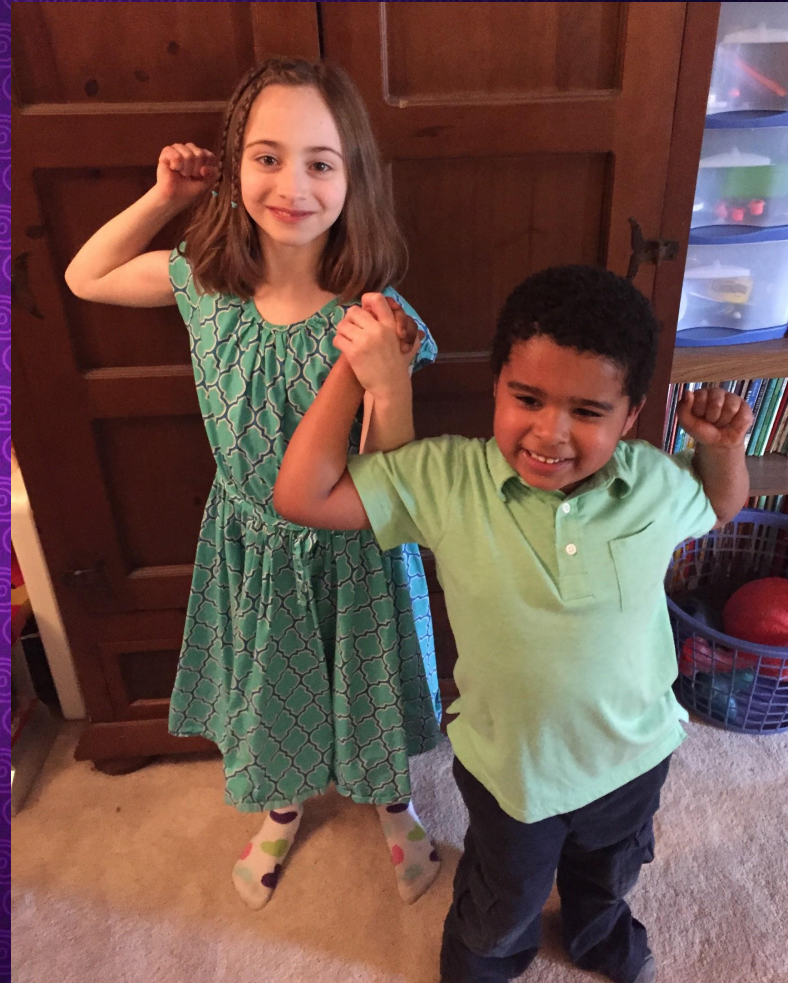
Transracial **does not mean** identifying with another race that you are not, like the Rachel Dolezal incident.



Image from the Today Show.

“One day...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

MLK - “I have a Dream”



Adoption: Loss & Assumptions

Adoptions Involve Loss

Assumptions

- Assumptions about Birth Parent(s)/Families
- Child is “so lucky”
- Love is all you need
- “Real” Parents / Siblings
- Adoptive Parents are not “Saviors”

“While plenty of critics have long questioned the impact of having white parents raise black children, I have always believed that children are better off being raised in a loving home, regardless of a parent’s race, than in a home without love. **But that doesn’t mean that there are no cultural gaps or learning curves that will exist for a parent raising a child of a different race.**”

• Keli Goff (The Root.com)

Conspicuous Families

Families that stand out

- Invites comments
 - positive
 - negative
- Different from “norm”

Out of Context In College?



Small Group Exercise

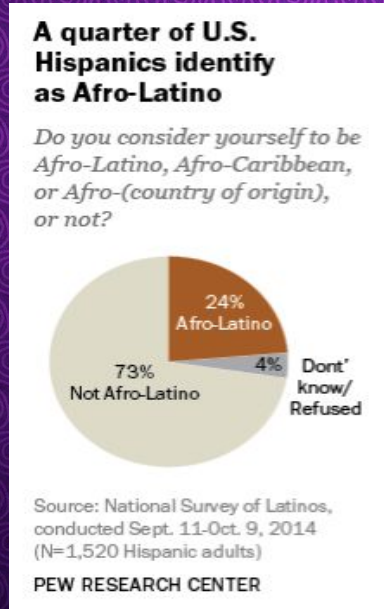
What was your family dynamic in college?

- How did that impact your college experience (positively / negatively)?
- How did that impact your identity exploration in college?

Identity Theory

Racial Census Categories

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- American Indian & Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other
- Two or More Races



Student Development Theory

Limited Lenses

- Many theories based on White CIS Males
- White Women Central
- Black/White Paradigm

Essential Lenses

- Intersectionality
- Multiracial development
- LGBTQ Scholarship
- Critical Theory
- Narrative Based Lens

<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/01/afro-latino-a-deeply-rooted-identity-among-u-s-hispanics/>

Most Salient (Relevant) Identity

How do we identify ourselves?

- What is important to you?
- How has it changed over time?

How might others identify us?

- Privileged Act of Naming - bell hooks
- Visible or Invisible Identities

Biracial / Multiracial Identity

Ecological Influences (Renn, 2008)

- Physical Appearance
- Cultural Knowledge
- Peer Cultures
- Inconsistent: Gender, SES, Family

April Dinwoodie

“See me as the strong yet vulnerable adopted woman of color that I am and understand that I am still realizing my full identity and that includes my racial identity. Realize that really seeing me means that you must also see and know yourself. Whether you are a person of color or not, know that I am still plugging into my racial identity and it can get messy and complicated especially these days. If you are a person of color that was raised by people of color, help me learn what you know more organically. If you are not a person of color, understand your privilege and what it means to be in the world with and without me by your side.”

<https://medium.com/@adoptioninst/how-to-love-a-transracially-adopted-person-c2a07e3868ed#.dd8467f64>

Adoption & Advisement

- Lack of visibility
- Similar Issues / different tools
- Unique exp. of transracial / multiracial students
- Challenges advisor assumptions & knowledge
- Racial identity dev. & exploration
- Impact of family dynamics
- Uncertainty with citizenship

Panelists' Narratives

Doreen Hettich-Atkins, Coordinator of Special Services & Programs

Ithaca College, dhettichatkins@ithaca.edu, @dhatkins, She / Her / Hers

John Sauter, Ph.D., Assistant Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Niagara University, jps@niagara.edu @johnpsauter, He / His / Him

Kartika Carr, Graduate Student / Adoptee

Niagara University, Kartikacarr@gmail.com, @changemaker_T, She / Her / Hers

Christian Eshelman, Adoptee

Adoption Star