

# *First Person Plural*

by Deann Borshay Liem

National PBS Broadcast on P.O.V. on Monday, Dec. 18, 2000 at 10pm ET

## **Companion Lesson Plan: Parts of Myself**

### Background

This lesson asks students to examine their own identity as they see themselves from a physical and mental standpoint. They will then evaluate how Deann Borshay Liem understands her identity as a Korean-American woman who grew up with a white adoptive family in California. Student will use a worksheet, view parts of the documentary, and write.

### Lesson Objectives

1. Students will explore the term “identity” in a personal and meaningful way, and will compare and contrast the aspects that make up their identity with those of their family unit using a chart.
2. Students will observe a video segment for a documentary titled, FIRST PERSON PLURAL, about a Korean-American woman who came to terms with her adoptive white American family and Asian family in Korea.
3. Students will participate in class discussion to evaluate Dean Borshay Liem’s personal identity issues as a Korean woman who grew up with an American family.
4. Students will define **identity** as the overlap of personal, familial, and cultural traits and experiences.

**Related Standards List** from [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org) for grades 6-8

### Language Arts Standards

*Writing* #1 Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process (extension activity)

*Media* #10 Understands the characteristics and components of the media

### Self-regulation standards

# 2 Performs self-appraisal

#5 Maintains a healthy self-concept

### Behavioral Studies Standards

#1. Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior

#3 Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance, and physical development affect human behavior

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### Time

Approximately 1-2 class periods, or one block class

### Students

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders

### Materials

Class set of Identifying Factors Table

Piece of paper and pencil

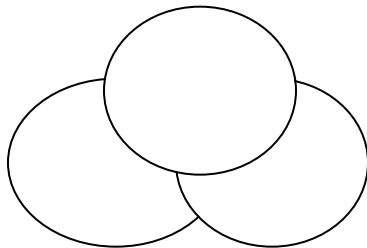
### Procedure

1. Ask students to think about what the word, “IDENTITY” means. Elicit examples from several students or ask them to share with a partner for 1-2 minutes. Then ask students what makes them similar to or different from other people. Explain that the people we grow up with since we were very young have great deal to do with our identity, even though each one of us is special in an individual way.
2. Pass out the Identifying Factors table and ask students to read it (*pre-viewing activity*). When they are finished reading, explain that they are to consider each characteristic, and write down a word or two in the ME column that describes or makes that characteristic a part of their IDENTITY. For example, a part of their identity may be that they prefer a certain type of music and that their hair is red. Then, they should consider the next column and put a check in that box if they can think of **at least one** close family member with whom they share that characteristic. Students may ask, “What about uncles?” It is up to the student to define their family unit, because there are so many types of families in modern America.
3. Ask students to put aside their papers, and view the segment of the documentary (the first half (25-30 min) of the film) ***During Viewing Activity:*** Tell students to pay careful attention to any mention of the word “identity” or “family”.
4. Stop the video immediately after the narrators voice says, “I see parts of myself” when Ms. Borshay Liem is visiting Korea.
5. Create a debriefing of the film: Immediately ask students to write TWO WORDS on their scrap of paper that describes how they feel after watching the film, and link them with the word “and”. For example, “happy and sad”. Collect all paper in a hat and mix. Walk around the room and ask 5-8 students to pick, stand up, and read one scrap aloud. Ask other students if there is anyone who wishes to share their feelings about the film.
6. Refer to the Identity Table and direct students to add “Ethnic Background”. Ask students to fill it in as they did before, for themselves and for their family unit. \*\*Everyone has an ethnic/ancestral background, no matter what color or race they are! Perhaps use examples like **Polish, Chinese, Guatemalan**, etc. Teachers should make judgments based on which region of the country they are in. Engage in class discussion with student desks placed in a circular arrangement that facilitates conversation and sharing.



**Possible topics and quotes from the video for discussion (in order of their appearance)**

- a. The term “ethnocentrism”
  - b. Deann’s parents: “You were terrified, but we were happy”
  - c. Deann’s brother: “You didn’t come from the same womb and you had different eyes, but you had the family smile”
  - d. How did Deann cope with being “different”? In her words, how did she learn to be an “American”?
  - e. What did Deann say about her personal appearance? Her eyelashes?
  - f. What did Deann mean when she said that she saw, “Parts of myself”?
  - g. How did Deann and her American mother misunderstand each other after it was discovered that she had a birth mother in Korea?
  - h. When Deann’s Korean mother says “my heart is aching” (Compare what she is saying with her body language. Does the way she physically looks and acts match the words that she is saying? Why or why not? Do students agree that she is saying what she really feels or vice versa?)
  - i. Korean brother- “By sending her away we thought we could offer her a better life...but instead she is filled with heartache.”
  - j. Deann was not able to comfortably mourn the loss of her Korean family with her American family.
  - k. Deann’s childhood fantasy of dreaming that if she were good enough and perfect enough, she would be sent back to her other family.
7. Draw a venn diagram on the board with three circles that looks like this:



Students should do the same on their own papers. Label one circle ME, the other MY FAMILY, and the last MY CULTURE. Explain that there are certain things that you do because you are unique (ME), certain things that make you who you are because you grew up in a certain type of family (MY FAMILY), and then you are also affected by a specific culture (MY CULTURE). Ask students to take the things they wrote on the Identifying Factors chart and put them into the venn diagram where they fit. Ask students to shade in the middle triangle shape. Discuss what the shaded area means.

Question: **What is identity?**



## Video Segments

Teachers will want students to view the first half (25-30 min) of the film, or the whole film if there is class time available

## Assessment

1. Collect and evaluate **Identifying Factors** chart
2. Develop a criteria for grading participation in the class discussion.
3. or Develop a criteria for grading the writing exercise and score it.

## Extension

1. Assign the writing exercise (for in-class or take home) with this prompt: **What does Ms. Borshay Liem mean when she said that she was “seeing parts of herself” when she visited Korea? Did she like or dislike this? What does this have to do with our lesson on identity and family? What is identity? Explain your answer using examples from class discussion and the Identity Table.**

2. Print a list of discussion questions and instruct students to read them **before** they view the documentary clip

## Other Resources

### **Online**

“Asian Views on Adoption: Synopsis of a Conversation with Estilita Reny”

“Adoption and Race: Articles”, both at [www.pactadopt.net/press/articles/latino-asian](http://www.pactadopt.net/press/articles/latino-asian)

Link to the “Discussion Guides for General Viewers” on the PBS website for additional discussion questions and exercises at [www.pbs.org/firstpersonplural](http://www.pbs.org/firstpersonplural)

### **Print**

Reid, Tim. Confucious Lives Next Door: What Living the East Can Teach Us About Living in the West.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. Why are all the black kids sitting together in the Cafeteria? Harpercollins,1999. (Includes a chapter on Asian-related issues).



## Identifying Factors

Characteristic	Me	My Family Unit
Height/ Weight		
General facial features		
Hair		
Eyes		
Body shape		
Sleeping habits		
Eating habits		
Hobbies		
Emotions and feelings		
Favorites		
Temper/Attitudes		
Dislikes		
Dreams and Hopes		
Other: <i>(ethnic group/racial heritage)</i>		