



**A Need to Know: The Importance of Origins**  
**A Key Component of Shifting the Adoption Paradigm**  
**From `Child Placement` to `Family Success`**

**Euradopt International Conference**

**National Center on Adoption and Permanency**

**[www.ncap-us.org](http://www.ncap-us.org)**

**Adam Pertman, President**

**[apertman@ncap-us.org](mailto:apertman@ncap-us.org)**

# National Center on Adoption and Permanency

## Our Vision: Successful Families for All Children

The **National Center on Adoption and Permanency** (NCAP) is a unique “one-stop” organization that provides a broad range of information, resources and multidisciplinary services relating to adoption, foster care and child welfare.



**NCAP's mission** is not only to achieve permanency for all children – in families of origin when possible and in new ones when necessary – but also to reshape policy and practice to enable those children and their families to succeed.

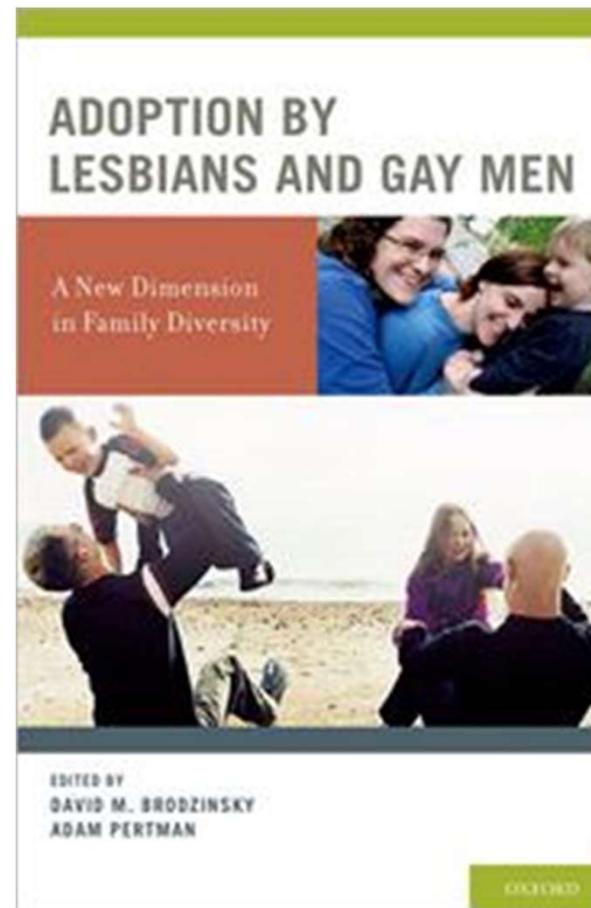
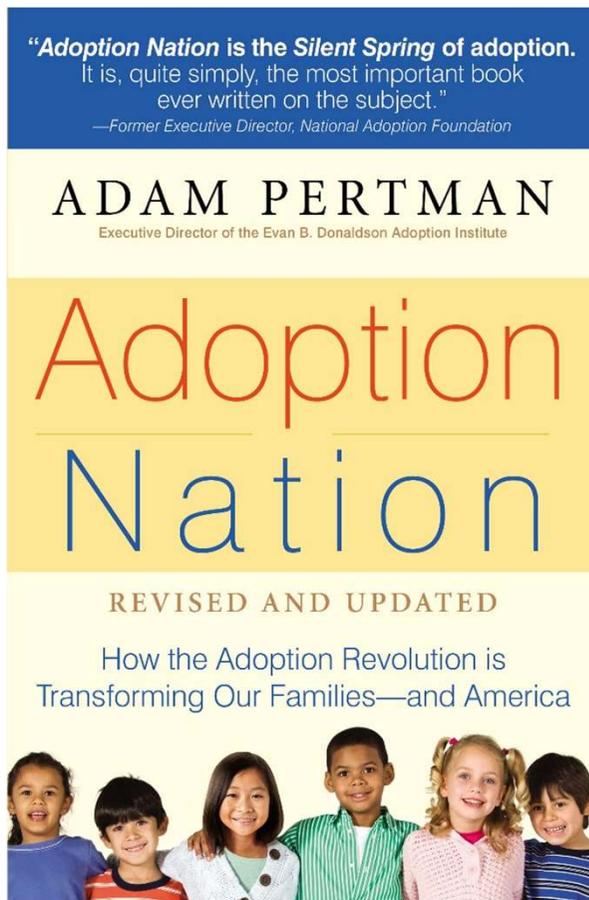
# Our Strength is in Our People and Services

NCAP is led by President Adam Pertman, former head of the Donaldson Adoption Institute; Executive Director Carol Biddle, former CEO of Kinship Center; and COO Allison Maxon, former Division Director of Kinship Center. Our work includes:

- Research, evaluation, program & project development, consultation
- Board development, consultation and/or executive transition planning
- Staff development and training to improve clinical and practice competence
- Parent/caregiver training for families with children with histories of trauma
- Communications: writing, editing, print, online/social media, related activities
- Consultation on development and fundraising, as well as community relations
- Conference/event consulting, including keynote speakers, other presenters
- Executive training/coaching, policy development/analysis, practice protocols

To learn more about our people and services, please write to Adam at [apertman@ncap-us.org](mailto:apertman@ncap-us.org), call him at 617-903-0554 or go to: [www.ncap-us.org](http://www.ncap-us.org).

# A Couple of Books of Interest (to me, at least)



# What We Know . . . About Everyone

“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage, to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning; no matter what our attainments in life, there is the most disquieting loneliness.”

– Alex Haley in *Roots*

# Openness in Adoption: From Secrecy and Stigma to Knowledge and Connections

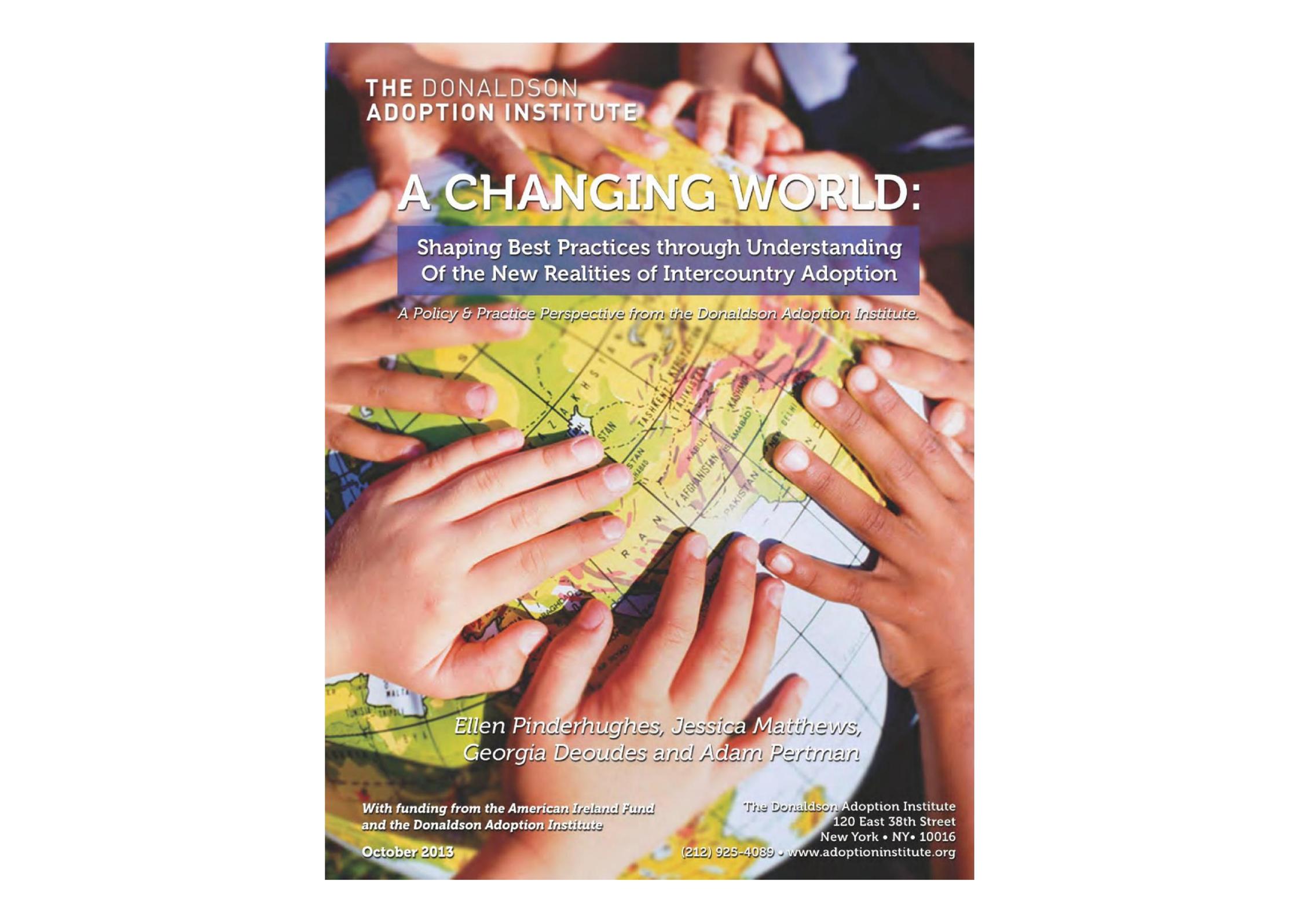
EVAN B. DONALDSON

adoptioninstitute



# Keeping the Promise: The Critical Need for Post-Adoption Services





THE DONALDSON  
ADOPTION INSTITUTE

# A CHANGING WORLD:

Shaping Best Practices through Understanding  
Of the New Realities of Intercountry Adoption

*A Policy & Practice Perspective from the Donaldson Adoption Institute.*

*Ellen Pinderhughes, Jessica Matthews,  
Georgia Deoudes and Adam Pertman*

*With funding from the American Ireland Fund  
and the Donaldson Adoption Institute*

**October 2013**

The Donaldson Adoption Institute  
120 East 38th Street  
New York • NY • 10016

(212) 925-4089 • [www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)

# For the Records: Restoring a Legal Right

*Certificate of Birth*

It is hereby certified and solemnly attested that  
**JNTHN MCKLRY**

was born at  
**Torrance Memorial Medical Center**

at **2:26 p.** m., this **26th** day of **MARCH**, 19 **99**

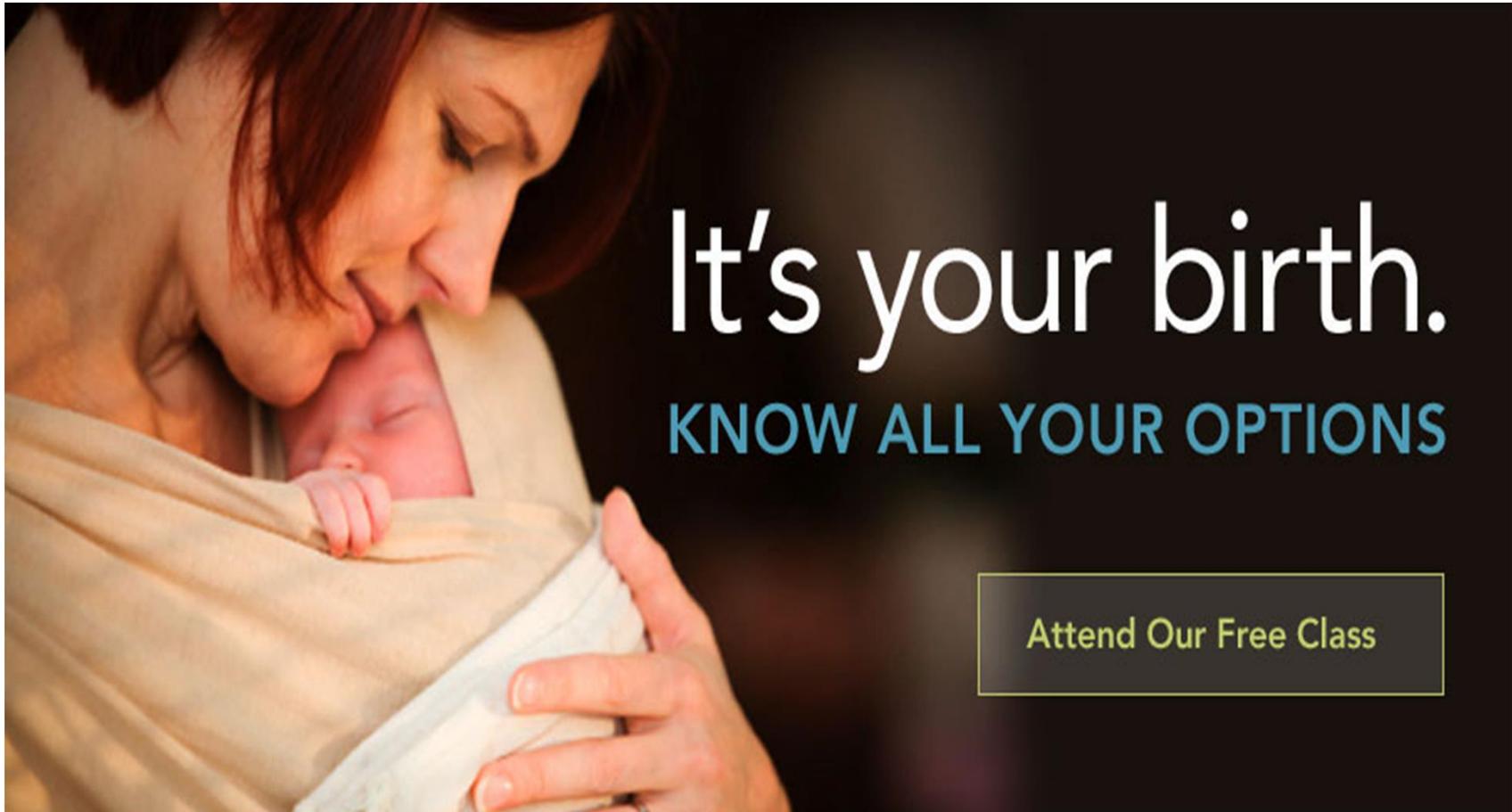
*Authorized under the hand and seal of*  
*Geo. H. Graham*  
President

*McKirdsey M.D.*  
Attending Physician  
(present to doctor's office signature)

 **TORRANCE MEMORIAL  
MEDICAL CENTER**  
3330 Lomita Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90503-2073

This is not a legal document.

# Safeguarding the Rights & Well-Being of Birth/First Parents in Adoption



It's your birth.  
KNOW ALL YOUR OPTIONS

Attend Our Free Class

# Beyond Culture Camp: Shaping Positive Identity in Adoption



# Examples of Findings and Insights

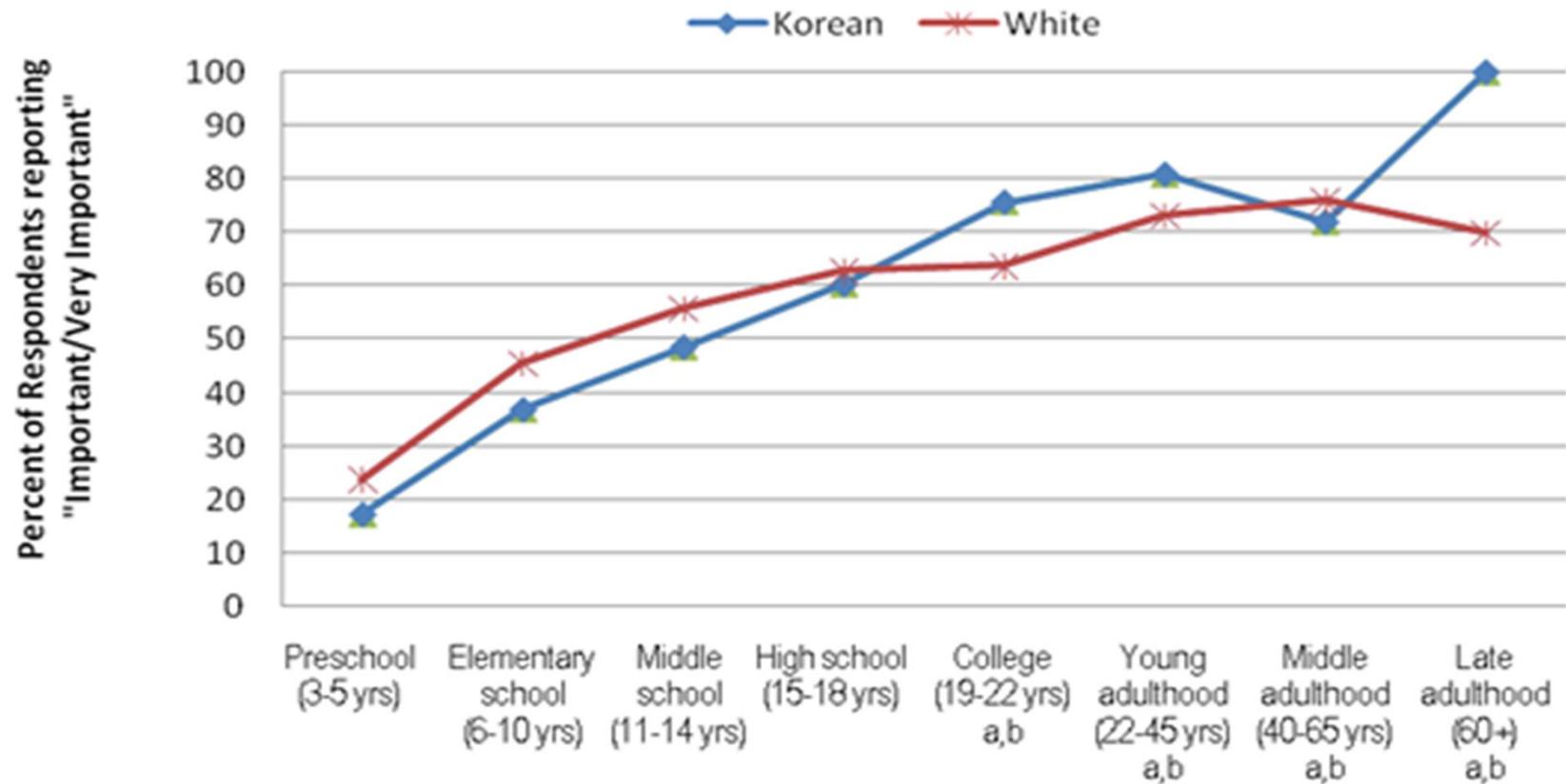
- Openness in Adoption: Only 5% of infant adoptions are closed, so vast majority know or have access to origins.
- Keeping the Promise: Most children come to adoption with trauma histories, so there's a need to know.
- A Changing World: A growing number of parents are changing their minds and opening their adoptions.
- Safeguarding Rights: Generally better outcomes related to ability to choose adoptive family and maintain contact.
- Beyond Culture Camp: Too many for this page alone!
- Medical, cultural, adoption, etc. information can be critically important to positive identity. Such info is the raw material to fill in missing pieces of life and derive integrated sense of self.

# Beyond Culture Camp: Key Findings

- Adoption and race/ethnicity are increasingly significant aspects of identity as adopted people age.
- Coping with discrimination, relating to both adoption and race, is a fact of life (but race trumps adoption).
- Positive racial/ethnic identity development is most effectively facilitated by “lived” experiences.
- White respondents: contact with birth relatives is most helpful factor for positive adoptive identity.
- Transracial adoptees: travel to home country, is most helpful factor for achieving positive identity.

# Importance of Adoptive Identity at Different Life Stages

**Fig. 1. Importance of Identity as an Adopted Person at Different Life Stages**

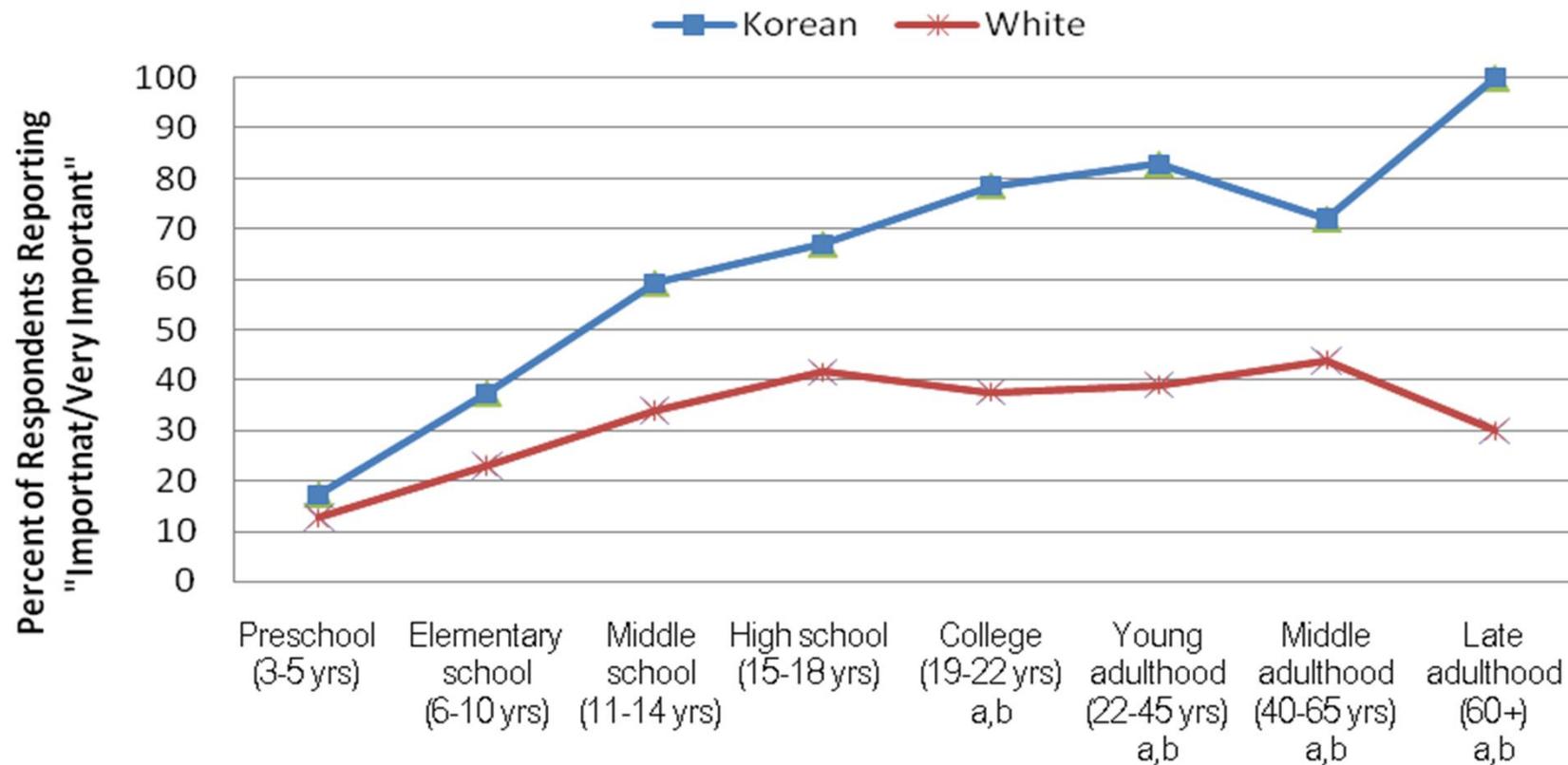


a. Use of valid percents. Whites: College (N=154); Young adulthood (N=153); Middle adulthood (N=100); Late adulthood (N=10).

b. Use of valid percents. Koreans: College (N=173); Young adulthood (N=146); Middle adulthood (N=25); Late adulthood (N=1).

# Importance of Racial/Ethnic Identity at Different Life Stages

**Fig. 2. Importance of Racial/Ethnic Identity at Different Life Stages**



<sup>a</sup>. Use of valid percents. Whites: College (N=154); Young adulthood (N=153); Middle adulthood (N=100); Late adulthood (N=10).

<sup>b</sup>. Use of valid percents. Koreans: College (N=173); Young adulthood (N=146); Middle adulthood (N=25); Late adulthood (N=1).

# Sources of Discrimination

Source	Korean/Transracial Adoptees N=179		White Adoptees N=156	
	ADOPTION	RACE/ETHNICITY	ADOPTION	RACE/ETHNICITY
	Sometimes/ Fairly often/Very often	Sometimes/ Fairly often/Very often	Sometimes/ Fairly often/Very often	Sometimes/ Fairly often/Very often
	%	%	%	%
Childhood friends	15	<b>48</b>	<b>28</b>	8
Childhood friend's parents	11	38	24	5
Classmates	<b>25</b>	<b>75</b>	9	7
Teachers	13	39	21	8
Partner (s)	8	22	12	3
Parent partner(s)	16	30	19	6
Coworkers	11	33	10	3
Employers	7	33	8	5
Extended family	<b>21</b>	33	<b>40</b>	6
Stranger	<b>31</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>24</b>	10

# Experiences and Services Utilized, Perceived as Helpful in Forming Identity

Source	Korean Adoptees		White Adoptees	
	% Utilized	% Helpful	% Utilized	% Helpful
Travel to birth country <sup>b</sup>	62	74	57	45
Attend racially diverse schools <sup>a,b</sup>	65	73	51	42
Having child care providers, teachers, adult role models same race/ethnicity	41	73	65	58
Family travel to culturally significant places <sup>b</sup>	53	72	53	54
Read information from Internet <sup>b</sup>	79	71	75	62
Live in racially diverse neighborhood <sup>a,b</sup>	65	70	44	53
Books/Articles on adoption <sup>b</sup>	73	68	75	66
Cook food or dine at restaurants <sup>b</sup>	84	68	77	54
Regular contact with people of same race/ethnicity <sup>b</sup>	74	67	75	51
Exposure to multi-cultural entertainment	68	64	70	55
Take classes learn history/culture of birth country <sup>b</sup>	49	64	46	30
Having siblings <sup>a</sup>	80	63	70	68
Events by adult adoptees/adult adoptee organizations <sup>a,b</sup>	62	63	42	47
Support group for adoptees <sup>b</sup>	51	62	46	50
Involve ethnically diverse religious, social groups/activities <sup>b</sup>	59	62	54	40
Culture camp <sup>a,b</sup>	48	61	12	15
Study birth language <sup>a,b</sup>	56	59	44	43
Events sponsored by own ethnic group <sup>a,b</sup>	62	55	31	28
Have traditional objects (dolls etc.) from birth country <sup>a,b</sup>	72	49	55	37
Having contact with birth relatives <sup>a,b</sup>	30	47	45	72
Study martial art, traditional dance etc.	41	38	51	31

# Random Thoughts and Conclusions

- Adopted people want/need information not because they are stalkers, ingrates or children in search of new mommies and daddies.
- Medical, cultural, adoption, etc. information can be critically important to positive identity development.
- Such information is the raw material to fill in missing pieces of life and derive an integrated sense of self.
- **Bottom line: Learning about one's origins is not just about curiosity, search, reunion or medical information; it's about being a complete person – and is a matter of human dignity and social justice.**

# Into the Future: What We Know Will Happen (Almost) for Sure



- The era of closed adoption will come to an end.
- Extended Family of Adoption will continue growing.
- The big majority of adoptions will not be of infants.
- Search and reunion will be routine and expected.
- The internet will enable great and awful practices.
- Access by adoptees to own information will grow.

# How Do We Get There?



- Educate parents, families, professionals and the public to understand the importance of openness, honesty and origins/connections in adoption.
- Educate parents to understand that seeking help is a strength.
- Learn and teach about the impact of the internet/social media.
- Reshape policy and practice into a “family success” paradigm – and advocate for systemic changes.
- **We can do this!**



*"Oh, I'm sorry. . . You couldn't adopt?"*