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DISCUSSION GUIDE
A JOURNEY OF SELF-EXPLORATION AND BELONGING

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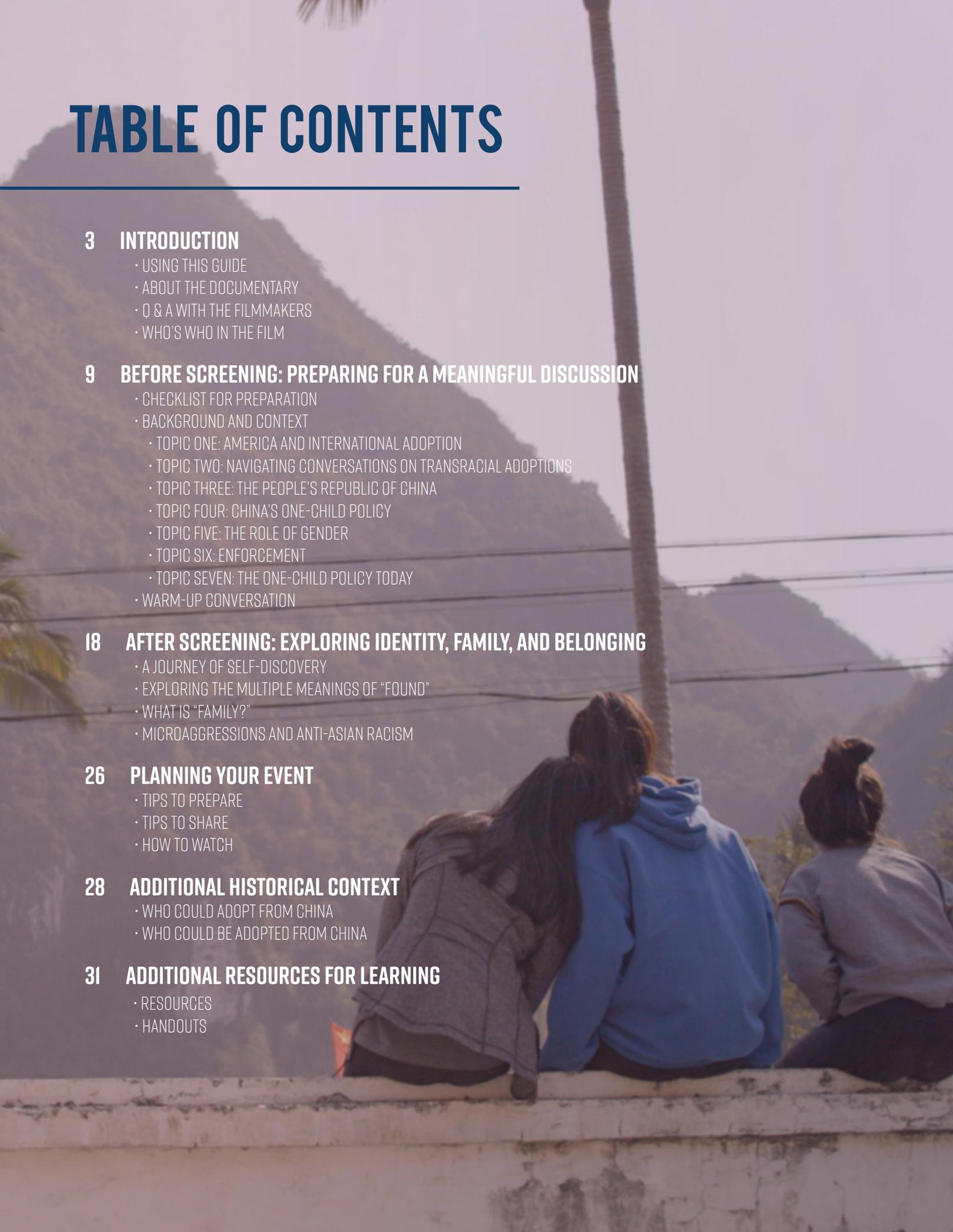
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INTRODUCTION

USING THIS GUIDE

SETTING THE STAGE FOR ANY CONVERSATION INSPIRED BY A DOCUMENTARY STORY DESERVES CARE AND THOUGHTFUL PLANNING. DOCUMENTARY FILMS OFFER INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING UNLIKE THOSE PROVIDED BY OTHER FORMS OF MEDIA.

Listening to and watching first-person accounts enables us to see into the lives and experiences of individuals who otherwise may not be available or as relatable to us, opening up the possibility to gain new insights into ourselves and expand our worldview.

Found is a story that can resonate across multiple audiences, from adults in community gatherings to students in classrooms, affinity groups, after-school clubs, and faith-based organizations. As you identify the goals and objectives for your screening, keep in mind that the *Found* Discussion Guide was developed with flexibility and creativity as a priority.

In other words, there are endless possibilities to adapt these materials to best meet your needs.

You will find:

- **BACKGROUND INFORMATION** to prepare facilitators and educators
- **STORY-TAILORED QUESTIONS** to spark ideas and challenge assumptions
- **CURATED QUOTES** from the documentary to focus attention on key themes
- **WRITING EXERCISES** for reflection and new connections
- **ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT** to forge new connections and expand learning

In **Before Screening: Preparing for a Meaningful Discussion** moderators and educators will find suggested pathways to help them tailor the content for events, classrooms, or other screening opportunities.



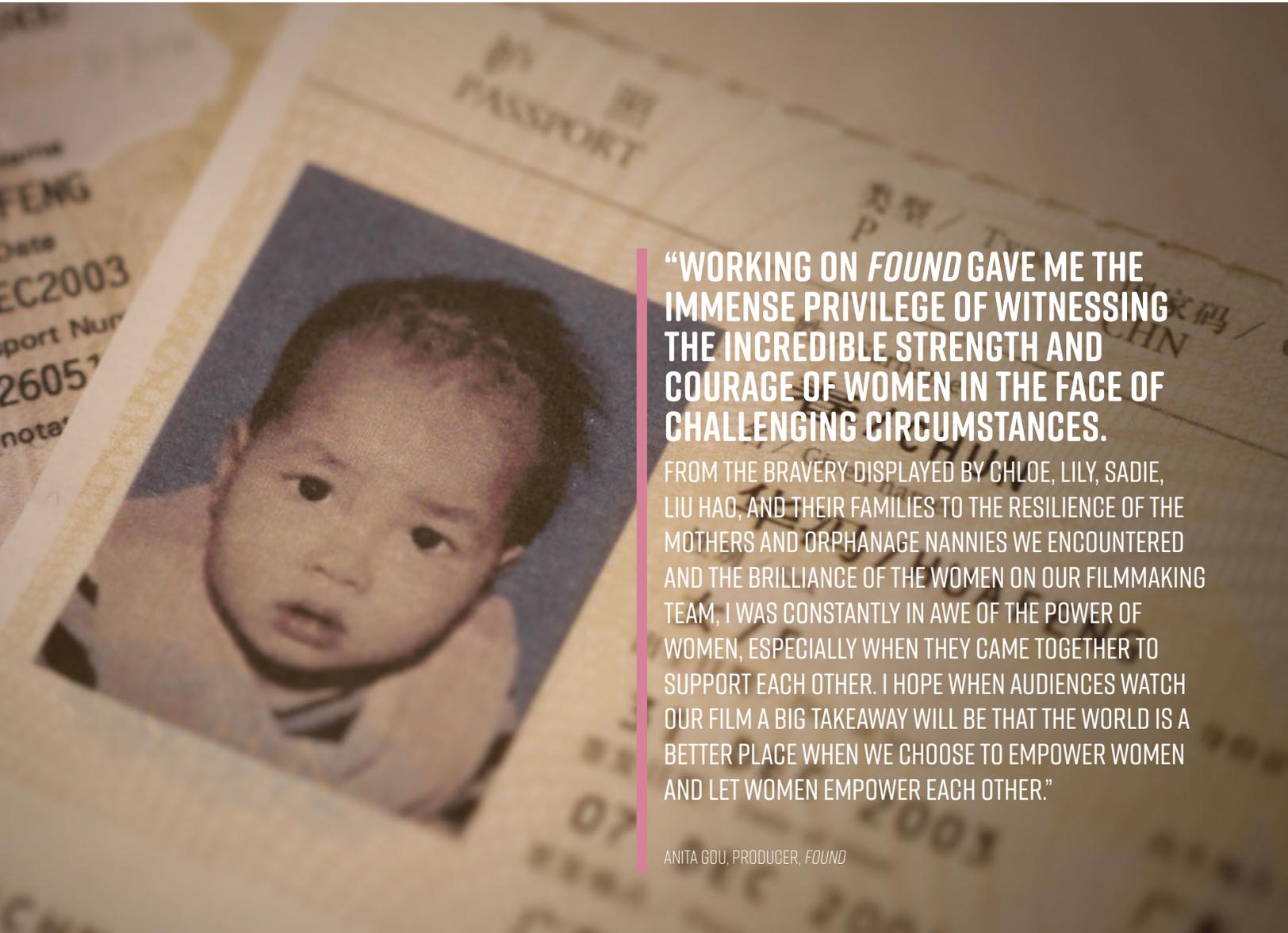
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I FEEL LIKE I'M STILL
JUST TRYING TO
FIND OUT WHO I AM.

CHLOE, *FOUND*

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY

The documentary *Found* follows three American teens—Chloe, Lily, and Sadie—who were adopted from China as babies into different white American families. Through DNA testing they discover they are cousins and then learn that two came from the same orphanage—but what connects them is something much deeper. Together with their families, they embark on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to China to meet the people and see the places where their lives began. Along the way they discover new facets of themselves, explore what it means to be family, forge new bonds and feelings of belonging, and take important steps on their path to better understand and accept their multiple identities.



“WORKING ON *FOUND* GAVE ME THE IMMENSE PRIVILEGE OF WITNESSING THE INCREDIBLE STRENGTH AND COURAGE OF WOMEN IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

FROM THE BRAVERY DISPLAYED BY CHLOE, LILY, SADIE, LIU HAO, AND THEIR FAMILIES TO THE RESILIENCE OF THE MOTHERS AND ORPHANAGE NANNIES WE ENCOUNTERED AND THE BRILLIANCE OF THE WOMEN ON OUR FILMMAKING TEAM, I WAS CONSTANTLY IN AWE OF THE POWER OF WOMEN, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY CAME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER. I HOPE WHEN AUDIENCES WATCH OUR FILM A BIG TAKEAWAY WILL BE THAT THE WORLD IS A BETTER PLACE WHEN WE CHOOSE TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND LET WOMEN EMPOWER EACH OTHER.”

ANITA GOU, PRODUCER, *FOUND*

Q & A WITH THE FILMMAKERS

Read excerpts from a conversation with Anita Gou (producer) and Amanda Lipitz (director) from the [New York Women in Film & Television Interview](#), January 13, 2022.

CHRISTINA KIELY (interviewer): You did an incredibly sensitive job at looking at this story from all these different points of view. Being so understanding of everybody—from the people who gave up their children, the girls, to the adoptive parents—is that just who you are, or did you have to think that through?

AMANDA LIPITZ (director): I would say that’s the type of storyteller I am, it wasn’t something I had to think through. I just wanted to tell the story of these girls. And see them come of age and see those dormant questions grow louder. As long as I stayed true to that everything else fell into place.

ANITA GOU (producer): When I first met Amanda she’d been following Chloe, Lily, and Sadie for a couple of years. I start talking to her about the story she was trying to tell through these girls, I felt this drive to explore—no matter statistics or the history, she goes for what is the human experience behind all of that. In this case, I was drawn to her desire to unpack a lot [of] these inherent stereotypes that we’re attached to: Asian [w]omen’s experiences, Asian American experiences or being a teenager. And there’s much more to these identities and the backstories that we often don’t get to see. I think the girls in their journeys organically lead us to these places in the same way, with Liu Hao and the families in China did as well.

CHRISTINA KIELY: Even though it is such a personal and emotional story, this film couldn’t have been made without the technology of today: DNA testing, FaceTime, etc. Starting with how the three girls built their relationship over FaceTime—allowing cameras on them at the same time.

AMANDA LIPITZ: They’re teenagers growing up today—this is how they talk. For us to eavesdrop on these moments was [one thing]—but to them this was their life and they were just living it. I think that all of them said to me in individual ways this is the first time I’ve ever spoken to a blood relative in my life. You realize how big that is and how technology serves to connect us. That’s where the whole film comes into play because my brother and sister-in-law [Chloe’s parents] put her DNA into 23andMe

as a fact-finding mission for her health. Then they switched to looking for relatives. We didn’t know 18 years ago the world [was going] to change this way. And then came COVID—we had no idea how the world was going to change. Technology helped us stay in it, helped build these relationships. It enabled us to tell a story.

This is why we called the film *Found*—because they found each other and found the nannies, we found Liu Hao and then you find yourself. What does it mean to be found and to find yourself? And it comes down to technology—it helps you find things.

ANITA GOU: When we finally met in person at the premiere in New York, it was a big reunion. Everybody has been apart for a whole year because of COVID. And even for us—[the crew met] for the first time because we had to do everything remotely. And then we watched the film and we saw when the girls all meet in China before the pandemic—we had no idea how the world was going to change.

Technology helped us stay in and build these relationships beyond any way we realize before. For the girls, at their age, there’s no distinction—you’ll build a connection however with whatever is available to you. That enabled us to tell the story.

CHRISTINA KIELY: Which part of the story in the film surprised you the most?

AMANDA LIPITZ: Liu Hao turned the story in a way we didn’t expect. The documentary gods shined upon you. I just wanted to learn where was this amazing woman going to take us. And I don’t think it was [a] surprise but it was a beautiful thing to watch the girls fall in love with one another.

ANITA GOU: When Lily talks about the first 13 months of her life being a total mystery to her. It seems it meant so much to her, this lost time. So Amanda and I wondered, what mysteries are we going to be able to solve for these girls. And we didn’t know until we walked into the orphanage to meet her nanny—and when she said “Lily grew up here for the first 13 months of her life,” it was a blessed moment.

WHO'S WHO IN THE FILM

As you watch and discuss the film, it may be helpful to refer to these biographical snapshots of its protagonists.



THE BOLKA FAMILY

LILY AND DEBORAH live in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Lily has just graduated from high school and is preparing to attend Oklahoma State University, where she plans to major in accounting. Lily plays many sports, including basketball and volleyball. She comes from a big Catholic family, which includes many aunts, uncles, and cousins who get together to celebrate milestones and holidays.



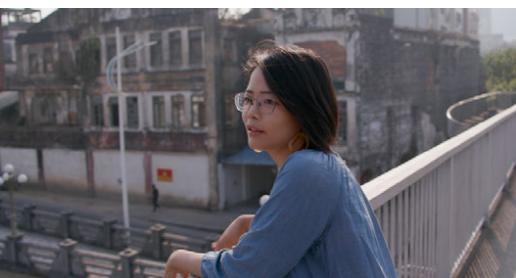
THE LIPITZ FAMILY

CHLOE, GENE, AND SARI live in Phoenix, Arizona, having recently moved from Seattle, Washington. Chloe celebrated her bat mitzvah in Jerusalem. Chloe is preparing to attend her new high school and plans to take Mandarin language classes and run track.



THE MANGELSDORF/TALBOTT FAMILY

SADIE, VICTORIA, AND CHUCK live in Memphis, Tennessee. Sadie loves animals, spends lots of time with her friends, and attends her local church. Sadie has an afterschool job at her local drive-in.



LIU HAO is a native of Western Guangdong Province, where Chloe, Lily, and Sadie were also born. Liu Hao is a genealogical researcher, which requires her to research and seek out information about family histories through direct interviews and investigation.



“

I BELIEVE LOOKING FOR ONE'S LOST HISTORY IS IMPORTANT. WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR FAMILY HISTORY, WHEN YOU KNOW WHERE YOU COME FROM, YOU CAN FIND THE PEACE IN YOUR HEART.

LIU HAO, *FOUND*



BEFORE SCREENING: PREPARING FOR A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION

Found is a story that will touch individuals, families, and communities in multiple different ways. For example, we watch Chloe, Lily, and Sadie build a strong bond as cousins who also share the experience of being adoptees. Developing new relationships while navigating their different religious upbringings, adolescence, and issues of gender and race are universal experiences that span age and geography. As these experiences are interwoven into the story, the girls are defined by more than their identity as adoptees, inviting a beautiful and unique

opportunity to bridge different communities, ages, and interests both within and outside the adoptee experience.

Found is also a story situated within a specific historical and cultural context. To best prepare yourself, your audience, or your students, review this content to help foster an informed, compassionate, and meaningful conversation and learning experience.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION



If you are familiar with international adoption in the United States, you may elect to skip Topic One and Topic Two.



If you are familiar with 20th-century Chinese history, the implementation of China's one-child policy, and the most recent changes in adoptions from China, you may elect to skip Topics Three through Seven.



If international adoption, the history of 20th-century China, and its one-child policy are unfamiliar to you, review Topics One through Seven.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



TOPIC ONE: AMERICA AND INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

After World War II, international adoptions became more available in the U.S. From 1948 to 1961, changes in immigration, refugee, and proxy adoption* legislation transformed international adoption from an emergency provision to take care of refugee children and orphans into a social policy.

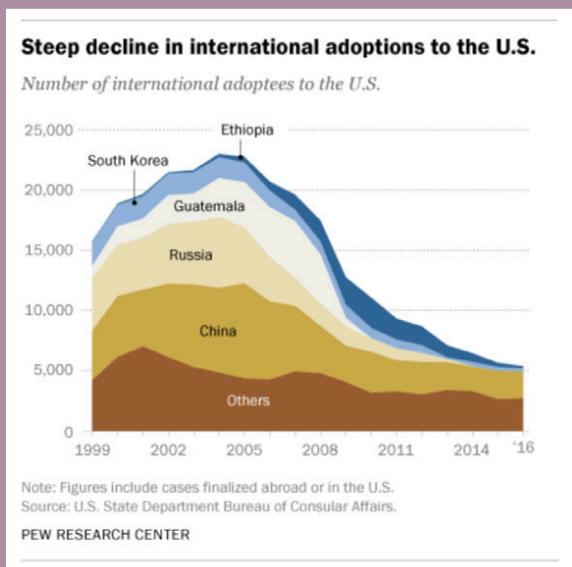
This shift can be attributed to several distinct developments during these decades:

- War, refugee migrations, famines, and other disasters worsened the plight of children, especially orphaned children abroad.
- Transnational adoption surged in the United States and other industrialized nations after the Korean War. Children of white American military personnel and Korean or Vietnamese women were put up for adoption. They were often stigmatized and even abandoned in their birthplaces because of their visible physical differences.
- After 1992, Chinese babies, often abandoned daughters of the one-child policy, joined the international adoption scene. Most were adopted by white Americans and Western Europeans. Today China remains among the leaders in international adoptions.¹
- Passage of [The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption](#), a multilateral treaty between the United States and about 75 other countries, went into force for the U.S. on April 1, 2008. The treaty provides safeguards for children and families involved in adoptions between participating countries and also works to prevent the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children.

In recent years there has been a sharp decline in international adoptions to the U.S. In the United States, 12,732 children were adopted from other countries in 2009. In 2019, that number was 2,971. This drop has been largely driven by a change of protocols in the five countries where most international adoptees were born. Together, these five countries account for 71% of all adoptions to the U.S. since 1999, and represent 88% of the total decline since 2004.

*** PROXY ADOPTIONS ALLOWED U.S. CITIZENS TO STAY HOME BUT ADOPT IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES BY DESIGNATING A PROXY AGENT TO ACT IN THEIR PLACE. PROXY ADOPTIONS WERE BANNED IN 1961.**

¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/23/world/americas/23iht-adopt.html>



IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A SHARP DECLINE IN INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS TO THE U.S. IN THE UNITED STATES, 12,732 CHILDREN WERE ADOPTED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IN 2009. IN 2019, THAT NUMBER WAS 2,971.

Despite the recent declines, the U.S. still adopts the most children internationally (46% of all adoptions among 24 receiving countries within the Hague Adoption Convention).

In 2015, the U.S. State Department reported that the U.S adopted the most children from these nations:

- **CHINA: 78,257** with a total **267,098** adoptees from 1999 to 2016.
- **RUSSIA: 46,113** adoptees. A diplomatic rift with the U.S. led to a ban of new American adoptions of Russian children as of 2013.
- **GUATEMALA: 29,805** adoptees, but reports of fraud and corruption within the Guatemalan adoption system prompted the government to suspend new adoptions from the country in late 2007.²
- **SOUTH KOREA: 20,318** adoptees.
- **ETHIOPIA: 15,317** adoptees with the government suspending all international adoptions as of April 2017.



TOPIC TWO: NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS ON TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS

The majority of Asian American adoptees are adopted into white families³ where, as we see in *Found*, they are often integrated fully into their white family and culture, and loved and cared for in the same way as a biological child. Yet, because of obvious physical differences between the parent(s) and child, the fact of the adoption is instantly visible and may elicit all kinds of assumptions that reflect racial biases present in the surrounding culture. In many cases, the adopted child may spend very little time with people who look like them or share the language and culture of their biological family. Tensions can arise when parents adopting transracially downplay their child's racial or ethnic difference and engage in the practice of cultural assimilation.

Psychologist Thema Bryant-Davis, a professor of psychology at Pepperdine University who specializes in marriage and family therapy, says, "In order to truly love and affirm a child, you want to let them know that you see and celebrate every aspect of them. You don't want their introduction to their identity to be something negative outside of the house when you should have prepared them with a foundation of a positive understanding of who they are."⁴ Nor is it helpful to dismiss a racist comment with a response such as "I don't see color" or "Some of my best friends are Asians."

She recommends that families who adopt children from another race or culture find community spaces, schools, and role models for their whole family to learn and draw support from. Those community resources will be helpful when and if the children have questions about their heritage or when they encounter racism.

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/17/amid-decline-in-international-adoptions-to-u-s-boys-outnumber-girls-for-the-first-time/>

³ [https://sahe.colostate.edu/asian-american-transracial-adoptees-identity-development-in-college/#:~:text=Approximately%2085%25%20of%20transracial%20adoptions.White%20\(Park%2C%202012\).](https://sahe.colostate.edu/asian-american-transracial-adoptees-identity-development-in-college/#:~:text=Approximately%2085%25%20of%20transracial%20adoptions.White%20(Park%2C%202012).)

⁴ <https://onlinegrad.pepperdine.edu/blog/empowering-adopted-children-of-color-in-the-face-of-racism/>



TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES—PEOPLE RAISED BY ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY—ARE EXPERIENCING A RACIAL RECKONING AS THE NATION CONFRONTS ITS HISTORICAL SCARS.

MOST OF THESE ADOPTIONS INVOLVE WHITE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN OF COLOR WHO, AS ADULTS, ARE REFLECTING ON THE RACISM THEY EXPERIENCED THAT WAS RARELY SEEN, IDENTIFIED, OR TALKED ABOUT.

CLASSMATES’ RACIST COMMENTS ABOUT THEIR HAIR AND EYES WERE DISMISSED AS HARMLESS CURIOSITY. AMERICA’S RACIAL DYNAMICS WERE EXPLAINED IN THE LANGUAGE OF “COLORBLIND” IDEALISM.⁵



TOPIC THREE: THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949 and led by revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. While Mao did not initially promote a particular family planning policy, he encouraged the growth of large families to boost production and support his army, banning birth control in the early 1950s.

Within the first few years of the PRC, the Chinese population doubled. Shortages of food and natural resources became rampant, and an estimated thirty-six million Chinese died of starvation in what became history’s worst famine in 1958–62.⁶ The scarcity of food and declining natural resources continued through the 1970s. Voluntary family planning became mandatory, and slogans such as “One is not few” and “Longer, fewer” encouraged couples to marry later, space their births, and have fewer children.

In 1976 Mao Zedong died. Two years later, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China’s new leader, promising to take the nation in a different direction with the Four Modernizations—expanding agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology—and bringing greater wealth, economic security, and economic growth for individual Chinese families and the nation. To ensure this transformation, fertility and population growth would need to be tightly controlled.



TOPIC FOUR: CHINA’S ONE-CHILD POLICY

An editorial in China’s *People’s Daily* dated July 8, 1978 reflects the government’s thinking on population and family at this time:

“IF WE DO NOT IMPLEMENT PLANNED POPULATION CONTROL AND LET THE POPULATION INCREASE UNCONTROLLABLY, RAPID POPULATION GROWTH IS BOUND TO PUT A HEAVY BURDEN ON THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE, CRIPPLE THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, ADVERSELY AFFECT ACCUMULATION AND STATE CONSTRUCTION, THE PEOPLE’S LIVING STANDARD AND THEIR HEALTH AND SLOW DOWN PROGRESS OF THE FOUR MODERNISATIONS.”⁷

⁵<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/transracial-adoption-racial-reckoning/>

⁶<https://www.asianstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/tombstone-the-great-chinese-famine-1958-1962.pdf>

⁷Quoted in Cross, Elisabeth, “Introduction: Fertility Norms and Family Size in China” in *China’s One-Child Family Policy*, Elisabeth Croll, Delia David and Penny Kane (Eds.), New York: St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1985, p. 26.

It is important to know that China's one-child policy did not exist in a vacuum. It was part of a broader decades-long program to reduce population growth. In 1979, China began its one-child policy and by 1982 it was written into the constitution limiting most families to one child. Article 25 stated that "both husband and wife have the duty to practice family planning" and that "the state promotes family planning so that population growth may fit the plans for economic and social development."⁸ Contraceptives were widely available.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY INCLUDED:

- The goal of curtailing **population growth to 1.1 billion, and certainly to 1.2 billion by the year 2000**, and eliminating third and higher order births.
- **Couples were encouraged to have only one child through a package of financial and other incentives**, such as preferential access to housing, schools, and health services. They were also discouraged from having larger families by financial levies on additional children and sanctions that ranged from social pressure to curtailed career prospects for those in government jobs.
- **Rural families could have two children if their first child was a girl.**
- Specific measures varied from province to province and **minorities were excluded from the policy.**
- **Punishment and coercion, peer pressure, and an extensive propaganda campaign** persuaded the Chinese people to embrace the ideal of a one-child family.
- The **use of propaganda in public spaces** to display slogans and images depicting happy, healthy, and prosperous one-child families was used extensively throughout the PRC.



TOPIC FIVE: THE ROLE OF GENDER

*The Guardian*⁹ stated that "China's preference for sons stretches back for centuries" and in 2008 *Scientific American*¹⁰ reported:

"THE CHINESE HAVE TRADITIONALLY PREFERRED SONS BECAUSE OF THEIR POTENTIAL TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THEIR PARENTS, CARRY ON THE FAMILY NAME, AND LEAD ANCESTOR WORSHIP, POPULATION EXPERTS SAY, AND THIS HOLDS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR RURAL AREAS WHERE SONS PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED LABOR. THIS CULTURAL PREFERENCE HAS LED MANY WOMEN UNDER THE ONE-CHILD RULE TO SEEK ABORTIONS, WHICH ARE LEGAL IN CHINA, IF THEY DISCOVERED A FETUS WAS A BUDDING GIRL."

⁸ <https://www.usconstitution.net/china.html#Article25>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/02/chinas-great-gender-crisis>

¹⁰ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/there-are-more-boys-than-girls/>

We hear from Liu Hao in *Found* how this cultural preference manifested in her own family, deeply influencing her sense of agency and identity:

“I ALWAYS KNEW ABOUT THE ONE-CHILD POLICY BECAUSE A LOT OF MY RELATIVES, THEY JUST GIVE UP THEIR CHILDREN. THEIR GIRLS.

AND MY PARENTS, THEY ALMOST GAVE UP ME, BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO PAY THE PENALTY.

BUT I'M VERY LUCKY BECAUSE MY GRANDPARENTS, THEY SAID, “NO, WE WANT TO KEEP HER.”

SO, I JUST DON'T HAVE A VERY GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FATHER. I REMEMBER ONE TIME, MY FATHER WANTED TO TAKE MY BROTHER TO A VERY FANCY RESTAURANT. YOU CAN GET LITTLE CUTE DIM SUM THERE. AND, I REALLY LOVED THAT ONE. HE JUST WANTED TO TAKE MY BROTHER THERE, AND I ASKED HIM IF I CAN GO WITH THEM AND HE JUST PUSHED ME OUT OF THE ELEVATOR, SAID, “NO, YOU CAN'T GO.”

IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT WELCOME.

YOU ARE IN THE WRONG GENDER, THEY DON'T WANT YOU, AND YOU KNOW THAT. IT'S VERY HARD, LIKE...SO THAT'S WHY I FEEL SO CONNECTED WITH THE GIRLS.

I CANNOT SAY I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND THEM, BUT, YOU KNOW, PART OF THIS, WE KIND OF SHARE SAME FEELINGS.”





TOPIC SIX: ENFORCEMENT

Chinese officials often used brutal tactics to enforce this policy and maintain order. For example, the so-called “population police” monitored women’s fertility by subjecting them to regular physical exams. If they discovered that a woman was pregnant with a second child, she would often be forced to undergo an abortion.

Some families defied the policy and had a second or third child. To avoid fines which were well beyond most families’ ability to pay, such parents kept their “above quota” children hidden from public view. Their official invisibility prevented these children from applying for a *hukou* (household registration), a necessary legal document that records the household population’s basic information. Registering for a *hukou* identifies someone as a Chinese citizen and as a permanent resident of an area thus enabling them to get health care, attend school, or even get a library card.¹¹

Rich families who could afford to pay fines were therefore able to get around the restrictions.

The traditional preference for male children together with the one-child policy led to large numbers of girls being abandoned or placed in orphanages, sex-selective abortions, or even cases of female infanticide.



TOPIC SEVEN: THE ONE-CHILD POLICY TODAY

In 2013 a relaxation of the policy allowed for families to apply for the right to have two children, and in 2016 China’s one-child policy [officially ended](#). It was replaced first by a two-child policy in 2016 and then in 2021 a [three-child policy](#) was adopted. Besides creating a considerable gender imbalance—30 million more men than women in 2020, according to [China’s Seventh National Population Census](#)—the consequences and legacy of the 36 years of this policy will extend beyond the borders of the nation and continue to surface and endure for generations.

While China remains the top country of origin for intercountry adoptions to the United States, today the pool of available children is overwhelmingly comprised of those with disabilities or older children, split evenly across genders. In 2016 males made up a slight majority of adoptees from the country (51%) for the first time—a stark change from 1999, when Chinese adoptees to the U.S. were 98% female.¹²

¹¹ The *hukou* system was introduced in 1958 and was a foundational policy for Mao, designating each Chinese citizen as either agricultural (rural) or non-agricultural (urban). <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/chinas-hukou-system/#:~:text=Hukou%20is%20a%20legal%20document%2C%20relatives%2C%20and%20marital%20status>. It wasn’t until December 2015 that the Chinese government finally announced that these 13 million children would be allowed to register for a *hukou*, a permit enabling them to become registered citizens.

¹² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/17/amid-decline-in-international-adoptions-to-u-s-boys-outnumber-girls-for-the-first-time/>



WARM-UP CONVERSATION

1) EXPLORE THE ORIGINAL SONG FROM *FOUND*, "MYSTERY OF ME,"

- » Refer to **Handout One: *Mystery of Me***, original song for *Found*.
- » Pick one segment of the lyrics that stood out to you and explain why.
- » What does the title *Mystery of Me* suggest to you?

2) EXPLORE AND DISCUSS SOME OF THE TERMINOLOGY USED IN *FOUND*

ADOPTEE

A person who is adopted.

BIRTH PARENT

The biological father and mother of a child.

DNA TESTING

See the [CDC website](#) for a helpful explanation. In *Found*, DNA testing was completed through the company 23andMe. Learn more about the science and process of their DNA testing [here](#).

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

An adoptive parent who adopts a child from a different racial or ethnic group.

AMERICAN

Someone who by birth or naturalization is an American citizen. As the United States is a nation of immigrants with many intersectional identities, the *Found* guide celebrates and names these to accurately reflect their complexity (eg, Asian American, white American, etc.).

IDENTITY

The sense of self, providing sameness and continuity in personality over time; the condition of being oneself and not another.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

The adoption of a child born in one nation by adults who are citizens of another nation. The adoptive adults will ordinarily raise the child in their own country.¹³ Also referred to as transnational adoption or intercountry adoption.

ONE-CHILD POLICY

In an attempt to control population growth, in 1979, China began limiting most families to one child. The policy was written into the constitution in 1982. It came to an end in July 2021.¹⁴

3) EXPLORE THE INTERVIEW

Watch the full Q & A from the [New York Women in Film & Television Interview](#) with Anita Gou (producer) and Amanda Lipitz (director), January 13, 2022. You can also revisit excerpts from this conversation included in this guide.

¹³Rosanne L. Romano, Intercountry Adoption: An Overview for the Practitioner, 7 TRANSNATL LAW. 545, 546.

¹⁴<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/07/21/china-scraps-fines-for-families-violating-childbirth-limits.html>



“

I FEEL LIKE BEING ADOPTED ISN'T MY IDENTITY. JUST LIKE YOUR MIDDLE NAME, NOT THAT MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT IT, BUT IT'S THERE.

SADIE, *FOUND*



AFTER SCREENING:

EXPLORING IDENTITY, FAMILY, AND BELONGING

There is so much to discuss after watching *Found*. Before delving into the focused topics for conversation and learning, consider asking a few open-ended questions as a way of transition.



- What scene(s) stood out or were particularly moving to you?
- What would you ask the filmmakers if they were in the room?
- Similarly, what would you ask Chloe, Lily, Sadie, Liu Hao, or their families if they were here?

A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

The first topic to explore is the universal experience of self-discovery. It takes a great deal of courage and vulnerability to hold up a mirror and examine who we are, our sense of self, our voice, and our sense of agency in the world. For most, it is a lifelong process. In *Found*, Chloe, Lily, and Sadie, their families, their Chinese “aunties,” and Chinese families looking for their children open up their lives and offer us a window into this chapter in their lives.



READ, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS

These story-focused questions can support self-reflection, spark conversation, raise awareness, deepen empathy, and challenge misconceptions.



- What elements of your identity are most clear to you? Which are still unclear?
- What attributes of your identity are you most proud of?
- Do you share any characteristics of your identity with Chloe, Lily, and Sadie?
- What kinds of questions about your identity are you continuing to explore?
- Which parts of our identity are shaped by our family?
- What do Chloe, Lily, Sadie, and their families have in common? What differences do you see?
- In what ways does genealogical researcher Liu Hao identify with the three girls? In your own words, how would you describe her connection to their adoption experience?
- How would you describe the connections that Chloe, Lily, and Sadie rekindled with their “aunties” in the orphanages?
- How would you describe the emotions of the Chinese families seeking to find their biological daughters?
- In what ways do the girls’ different religious affiliations and upbringings inform their identities?
- Sadie shares from her essay, “Family are the people who make an effort to be there for you. They know, love, and accept me for who I am. So perhaps it’s better that some things are left to be fairytales.”
- What do you think she is implying in saying “some things are left to be fairytales”?



EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW ON THE JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

In pairs, small groups, or as a larger community:

- Refer to **Handout Two**.
- Read the quotes individually or aloud in a group.
- Ask: What facets of self-discovery are revealed through these different points of view?
- Discuss the ways Chloe, Lily, and Sadie are uniquely exploring their identity, discovering new facets of themselves, and gaining agency.

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE: EXPLORING IDENTITY

For smaller classroom or workshop settings.

1. Who are you?

- Organize participants into pairs, assigning one as Person A and the other as Person B.
- Person A asks, "Who are you?" and Person B responds with a different answer each time. Switch. Person B asks, "Who are you?" and Person A responds with a different answer each time.

2. Sentence stems

Have students write these three phrases on a piece of paper, or computer, and complete each sentence:

I am...

I come from...

I carry with me...



"I THINK EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW THAT THEIR PARENTS PROBABLY LOVED THEM VERY MUCH AND WERE HEARTBROKEN TO GIVE THEM UP."

CHLOE, FOUND

EXPLORING THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF “FOUND”

This section takes inspiration from director Amanda Lipitz’s reflection on choosing the title to the documentary: “We called the film *Found* because they found each other and found the nannies, we found Liu Hao, and then you find yourself.” What does it mean to be found and to find yourself?”



READ, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS

These story-focused questions can support self-reflection, spark conversation, raise awareness, deepen empathy, and challenge misconceptions.



- After watching the documentary, share your thoughts on the title.
- What were Chloe, Lily, and Sadie each trying to find? Did they have different hopes?
- What do you think Chloe, Lily, and Sadie found through their searches?
- What do you think Liu Hao was searching for?
- Do you think Chloe, Lily, and Sadie’s families were searching for something similar?
- At the end of the film, there is footage of Amanda Phillips at the moment she finds out her birth mother has been located. Why do you think the director decided to include this?



EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW ON THE MEANINGS OF “FOUND”

In pairs, small groups, or as a larger community:

- Refer to **Handout Three**
- Read the quotes individually or aloud in a group.
- Ask: What are the different ways each individual in the story—the girls, the parents, Liu Hao, the “aunties,” and the birth families—express or experience the idea of being “found?”
- Discuss the different meanings of “found” you heard from different points of view.

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE: LETTER TO THE FILMMAKERS

For smaller classroom or workshop settings.

Revisit the Q & A with Amanda Lipitz and producer Anita Gou. After re-reading their insights and watching the documentary, write a letter to the filmmakers sharing your thoughts and questions about the multiple meanings. If helpful, use these prompts to get you started.

- What do you think it means to be “found”?
- The title chosen for the documentary has multiple meanings. From your point of view, what are different ways the film approached exploring these meanings?
- Think of a time when the idea of being found, or of finding, has a special meaning. If it feels right, share with the filmmakers a bit of this story.



“MOSES HAD TWO MOTHERS, HIS BIRTH MOTHER AND HIS ADOPTIVE ONE. AND SO MY DAUGHTER’S OTHER MOTHER, I THANK YOU. WE WILL NEVER KNOW EACH OTHER, BUT WE NEEDED EACH OTHER TO CREATE AND LOVE AND NURTURE THIS CHILD.”

SARI, *FOUND*

WHAT IS “FAMILY”?

Throughout *Found*, we are asked to consider what defines family, the conditions under which families are formed, and who gets to decide who is our family? Based on the love they all express, the girls’ American families, the nannies in the Chinese orphanages, and the Chinese parents yearning to meet and be reassured that their child is okay—these could all be considered parts of a family.

As you discuss and reflect on different ideas of family, be mindful that family relationships and family life may be a source of pain and grief for audience members or students in your group. When delving into this topic, approach conversations from a space of care and compassion and offer many opportunities for individuals to process and reflect.



READ, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS

These story-focused questions can support self-reflection, spark conversation, raise awareness, deepen empathy, and challenge misconceptions.



- What is your definition of family?
- Was your definition of family reinforced or challenged in *Found*?
- Do the stories in *Found* reveal new narratives about who is family?
- Chloe, Lily, and Sadie connect as cousins through DNA testing. There are multiple examples of how genetic testing can offer new insights and uncover unknown and important family history. Consider the benefits and drawbacks of DNA testing and discuss.
- How does your family express, share, and celebrate the qualities of your connection or bond?
- Is sharing a heritage or culture part of what it means to be family? Why or why not?
- What questions would you like to ask Chloe, Lily, or Sadie, or any of their family members?
- Chloe is *Found* director Amanda Lipitz's niece. How do you think this connection informed Amanda's point of view as a filmmaker?



EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW ON WHAT IS "FAMILY"

In pairs, small groups, or as a larger community:

- Refer to **Handout Four**.
- Read the quotes individually or aloud in a group.
- Ask: What qualities and characteristics of family are revealed from these different points of view?
- Discuss how these points of view are expanding or reinforcing your notions of family.

EXTENDED DISCUSSION EXERCISE: A SCHOLAR'S POINT OF VIEW ON WHO IS FAMILY

For smaller classroom or workshop settings.

- Read **Handout Five**, an excerpt from Kay Ann Johnson's book [*A Nation's Buried Pain*](#).
- Share one or more statements that stand out to you.
- Are her findings about Chinese parents who gave their child up for adoption new to you?
- Do you see evidence of this experience in *Found*?
- How does Kay Ann Johnson's research offer a point of view that you had not previously considered?

MICROAGGRESSIONS AND ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

In *Found*, we see many poignant moments of friendship, allyship, love, and support between the girls and within their families and larger communities. We also witness that each girl is deeply affected by anti-Asian racism and microaggressions that surface in everyday conversations, even from friends.

International and transracial adoptees often have a complex relationship to race and identity. Since “most Americans who bring Chinese children to the United States are white and upper-middle-class”¹⁵ (Source: [New York Times](#)), most grow up in white culture and “they begin to believe that they are almost if not totally white. That’s a danger for everybody involved.”¹⁶ (Source: [Los Angeles Times](#))



READ, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS



- The definition of a microaggression is “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority).”
 - Do you recall any microaggressions you heard in *Found*?
 - What do you recall about the context of this moment in the film?
- Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, attacks on Asian Americans have surged across the country.¹⁷ In the first half of 2021, New York City alone saw a [395% increase over the previous year in reported anti-Asian hate crimes](#).¹⁸ Why do you think this has happened?



EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW FROM *FOUND* AND ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

- Organize into pairs or small groups
- Refer to **Handout Six: Microaggressions and Anti-Asian Racism**.
 - Have participants review statements that Chloe and Sadie shared in the film.
 - Discuss what you hear in each of these reflections.
 - Do these moments reflect different facets of friendships?
 - Do they reflect something else?
- How do each of the girl’s navigate these microaggressions from friends?
- Why do you think the filmmakers included these moments in the film?
- How does Chloe’s sentiment in the following quote compare with the other conversations included in this section? ***“I’m happy we’re going through it with Sadie and Lily, because, like, we all have each other. I haven’t known them for long, but, like, there’s just—I don’t know. Unconditional, thing. You just know they know what you feel. You don’t even have to explain it to them.”***

¹⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/23/world/americas/23iht-adopt.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-04-16/asian-adoptees-and-their-experiences>

¹⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/05/09/about-a-third-of-asian-americans-say-they-have-changed-their-daily-routine-due-to-concerns-over-threats-attacks/>

¹⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/05/09/about-a-third-of-asian-americans-say-they-have-changed-their-daily-routine-due-to-concerns-over-threats-attacks/>

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE: ANTI-ASIAN RACISM TODAY

For smaller classroom or workshop settings:

Lily Zheng writes in the *Harvard Business Review*, “We all need to self-educate on anti-Asian racism... we need to fully understand the under-written histories of anti-Asian racism and the Asian American identity—and how today’s #StopAsianHate movement fits into those histories.”¹⁹

This extended exercise meets individuals where they are at in regards to their understanding of anti-Asian racism, microaggressions, and the roots of this history in the United States.

Have participants go to <https://stopaapihate.org/> and take time reading and exploring.

Start with: Asian American & Pacific Islander Historical Timeline: <https://stopaapihate.org/timeline/>

Explore current data and reports in the Stop AAPI HATE—[The Reports](#)

¹⁹ <https://hbr.org/2021/05/to-dismantle-anti-asian-racism-we-must-understand-its-roots>





PLANNING YOUR EVENT

TIPS TO PREPARE



ONLINE OR IN-PERSON

- If you will be watching the documentary in person, secure an accessible space that includes supportive tools to ensure that everyone can comfortably attend and that their viewing and listening needs are met.
- If you will be watching online, send out resources and specific instructions for how to participate prior to the scheduled time. It is helpful to have several people involved in an online screening, one acting as host and others taking care of technology and troubleshooting any problems.



MODERATING TIPS

You don't need to be an expert on any one issue in the film to moderate meaningful conversations. Familiarizing yourself with the film and this guide will help you guide individuals, small groups, or community discussions.

- Watch the film in advance so you'll have time to reflect on the topics and questions you will want to bring to your class or community conversation.
- Consider your priorities and goals for hosting a screening or incorporating the film into your coursework.
- Take a moment to reflect on how the documentary touches on your own personal experiences and consider bringing these into the conversation, if appropriate.
- When leading the discussion, introduce a question or theme and then step back and let the class or group share their own thoughts and reactions. Remember a moderator guides, rather than leads, a conversation.
- If one person starts to dominate the conversation, encourage other voices to step forward or transition to a new topic. It can be a good idea to keep an ongoing list of ideas so your group can return to them later.
- Encourage curiosity, active listening, and respectful exchange. The goal is for people to try to understand each other, not to change minds.

TIPS TO SHARE

WE ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO SHARE.

Some helpful parameters include not interrupting, asking for clarification when uncertain, listening actively, and practicing the habit of **stepping back**, if you tend to speak up readily, or **stepping up** if you tend to hang back and let others lead the conversation.

SPEAK ONLY FOR YOURSELF.

Avoid generalizations and phrases such as “Those people...” or “Everyone thinks...” or asking any one person to speak on behalf of an entire group.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND OTHER GROUP MEMBERS.

Discussing personal experiences such as adoption, family life, race, and disparities in education and opportunity can open deep wounds. If the intensity level rises within the group, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Think about how you might help people express their pain or discomfort while also seeking to find common ground and acknowledging the presence of first-draft ideas.

BE MINDFUL AND PATIENT.

People will have different levels of comfort and experience talking about the topics raised in *Found*. Strong emotions may surface during the film or the post-screening conversation. Take care of one another and be respectful when such moments arise.

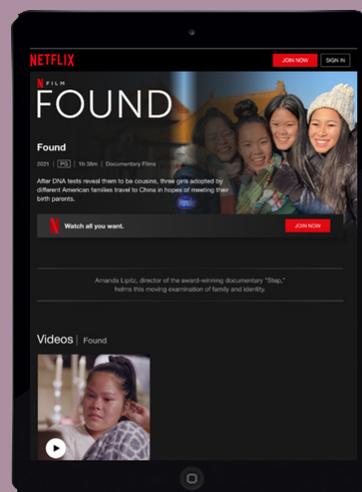
THIS IS A SPACE TO EXPLORE NEW THINKING.

The ideas that students or participants may share could be new and need more development similar to a rough draft. Remember that this is a space for learning and to refine and clarify ideas when such moments arise.

HOW TO WATCH

ACCESS THE FILM ON NETFLIX [HERE](#).

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A NETFLIX SUBSCRIPTION, AND WANT TO USE THE DOCUMENTARY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES, CONTACT INFO@LISMOREROAD.ORG

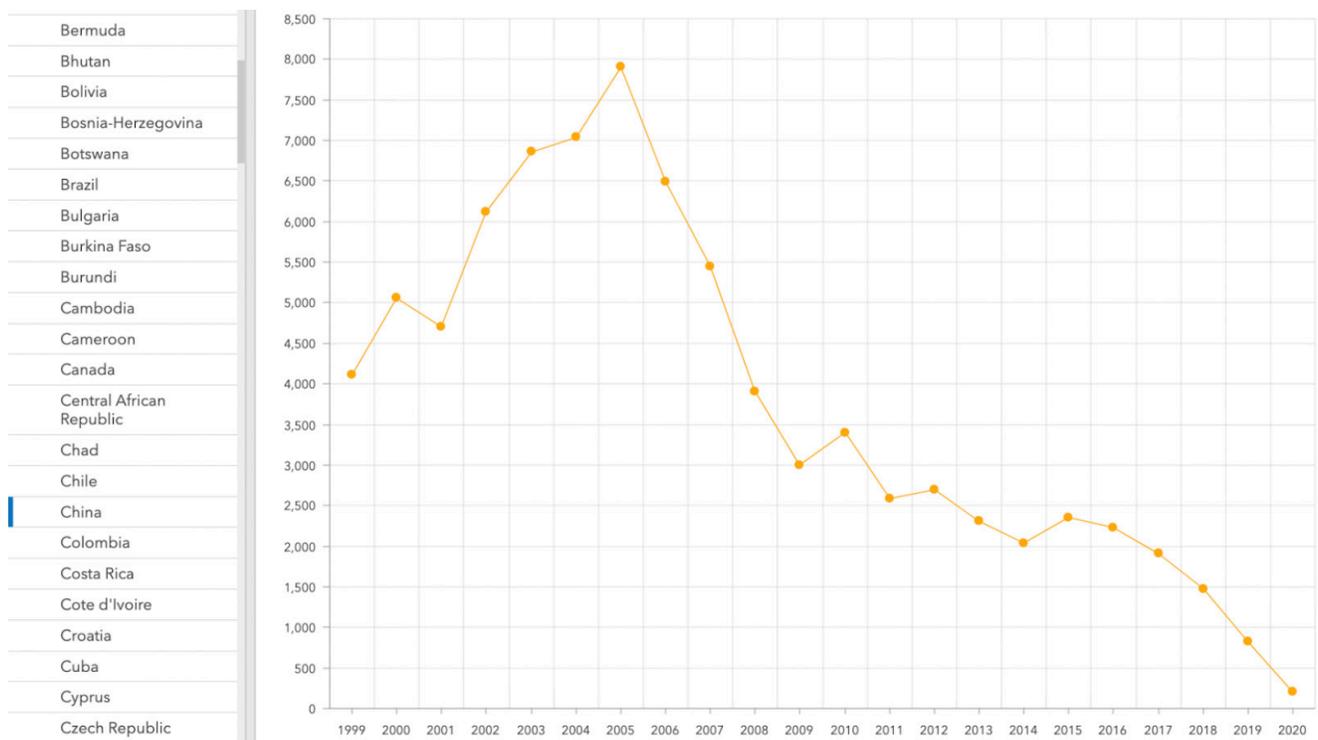




ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

WHO COULD ADOPT FROM CHINA

In April 1992, China implemented a law enabling foreigners to adopt its orphans. Initially the Chinese Central Authority invited potential adoptive parents. As demand grew, China changed the rules and beginning on May 1, 2007 began restricting applicants for its children by marital status, sexual orientation, age, mental and physical health, weight, income, education, family size, and more.



Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/adopt_ref/adoption-statistics-esri.html

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 280,367 CHINESE CHILDREN WERE ADOPTED BY AMERICANS BETWEEN 1999 AND 2020.²⁰

Sample requirements excerpted from U.S. Department of State—Bureau of Consular Affairs for prospective adoptive parents (PAPs):

RESIDENCY: China does not require PAPs to reside in China for a specified period prior to adopting. To finalize an adoption, at least one adopting parent must travel to China to execute the required documents in person before the appropriate Chinese authorities.

AGE OF ADOPTING PARENTS: The minimum age for PAPs to adopt from China is 30. China will allow married PAPs over 50 years of age to adopt a child. Single female PAPs may be no more than 45 years older than the child they wish to adopt.

MARRIAGE: Chinese law permits intercountry adoption by married heterosexual couples and single women. Married couples must adopt jointly and have been married at least two years; if either spouse has previously divorced, the couple must have been married at least five years. If individuals have been divorced two or more times they are ineligible to adopt. Specific age, income, and family environment requirements apply to single women. Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, or intersex (LGBTI) individuals or same-sex couples cannot adopt.

INCOME: China requires an adopting family's annual income equal at least \$10,000 for each family member in the household (including the child to be adopted.) China requires married PAPs to have a net worth of at least \$80,000. The net worth of a single prospective adoptive parent must be \$100,000. PAPs must be high school graduates or have vocational training equivalent to a high school education.

PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH: PAPs must be physically and mentally fit, with none of the following conditions:

- » HIV, AIDS, or an infectious disease that is actively contagious;
- » Mental disability; Blind in both eyes, or blind in either eye; Hearing loss in both ears or loss of language function;
- » Non-function or dysfunction of limbs or trunk caused by impairment, incomplete limbs, paralysis or deformation; Severe facial deformation;
- » Severe diseases that require long-term treatment and that may affect life expectancy; Major organ transplant within ten years; Schizophrenia; Severe mental disorders, including depression, mania, or anxiety neurosis (China may exempt this restriction for couples with proof of effective treatment);
- » Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or more.

OTHER: A single prospective adoptive parent must not have more than two children in her household under the age of 18 and the youngest child must be at least six years old. PAPs must have a history of honorable behavior and good moral character, and must not have a criminal record, including without evidence of:

- » Domestic violence, sexual abuse, abandonment, or abuse of children; even if not arrested or convicted;
- » Recreational drug use and those with substance abuse histories; including opium, morphine (unless medically administered), marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, etc. Alcohol abuse, unless the individual can show she/he has been sober for at least ten years.

²⁰ https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/intercountry-Adoption/adopt_ref/adoption-statistics-esri.html?wcmmode=disabled

The one-child policy in China formerly ended in 2016. As a result:

- The Chinese government promotes domestic adoption for children in need of permanent homes.
- The improvements in the Chinese economy have reduced the number of orphans while increasing the number of families willing to adopt.
- Chinese citizens now adopt 25,000 to 30,000 children each year.²¹

THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER REPORTS:

- FROM 1999 TO 2016, THE NUMBER OF FEMALE ADOPTees OUTNUMBERED MALES, 61% VERSUS 39%.
- IN 2016, 52% OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTees WERE MALE AND 48% WERE FEMALE.²²

WHO COULD BE ADOPTED FROM CHINA

According to the U.S. Department of State, because China is party to the [The Hague Convention for the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption](#)²³ children from China must meet the requirements in order to be eligible for intercountry adoption.

RELINQUISHMENT: Birth parents may voluntarily relinquish their parental rights by presenting credible evidence to the provincial authorities and the Chinese Central Authority that they are unable to rear the child due to “unusual difficulties.”

ABANDONMENT: Children with no known birth parents must be placed by a Social Welfare Institute (SWI) licensed by China’s Ministry of Civil Affairs. The Civil Affairs Department of the province where the child was abandoned will publish a public announcement in a local provincial newspaper to locate biological parents. If the biological parents or other legal guardians do not claim the child after 60 days of the date of publication of the public notice, the child will be certified as abandoned.

AGE OF ADOPTIVE CHILD: Chinese law permits the adoption of children up to and including age 13. An adoption involving the child of a blood relative of the same generation up to the third degree of kinship is exempted from the age limit.

²¹ <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/Intercountry-Adoption-Country-Information/China.html>

²² <http://pewrsr.ch/2kXimp6>

²³ <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=69>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

RESOURCES



ORGANIZATIONS

- China's Children International <https://chinaschildreninternational.org>
- Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute <http://www.ccaoinstitute.org>



ARTICLES

- Jenna Cook, "[A 'Lost' Daughter Speaks and All of China Listens.](#)" *Foreign Policy*, March 30, 2016.
- Jeff Gammage, "[DNA helping Chinese adoptees do what was once impossible: Locate blood relatives in this country.](#)" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 15, 2019.
- Brandy McDonnell, "[Journey of self-discovery: Oklahoma adoptee returns to China in Netflix documentary 'Found'.](#)" *The Oklahoman*, October 20, 2021
- Rachel Hatzipanagos, "['I know my parents love me, but they don't love my people': Adoptees of color with White parents struggle to talk with their families about race.](#)" *The Washington Post*, December 13, 2021.



ADOPTION INFORMATION: UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

- "How to" guide titled, [I am a U.S. citizen: How do I help my adopted child immigrate to the United States or become a U.S. citizen?](#)
- Bringing your internationally adopted child to the United States. <https://www.uscis.gov/adoption/bringing-your-internationally-adopted-child-united-states>
- U.S. Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/Intercountry-Adoption-Country-Information/China.html>
- Adoption Service Providers: <https://www.iaame.net/accreditation/accredited-approved-agencies-persons>

HANDOUT ONE: "MYSTERY OF ME" SONG LYRICS

MYSTERY OF ME

Written by MILCK and Simon Wilcox

Performed by Phillipa Soo, featuring MILCK

[Listen to "Mystery of Me"](#)

Listen to the original motion picture soundtrack here: <https://found.lnk.to/MysteryOfMe>

There's a light inside that never goes out, never goes out
If I look too close I might see things I don't want to find out, but I gotta find out
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am
These missing pieces don't mean I'm broken, no I'm not broken
So I keep my head up, I keep on goin', I keep on hoping
For the rest of my life
Somewhere deep inside
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am who I am
Who I am
Who I am
An unstoppable force, I'm trying get to the core
Day by day I know myself a little bit
I know myself a little bit
Day by day I know myself a little bit more
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am who I am
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for who I am
I will always be uncovering the mystery of me
I will always keep on looking for
That light inside
it never goes out, never goes out

HANDOUT TWO: EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW ON THE JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

"It's genetic. What the doctors have said is, you know, you had a mom and a dad that got together. And somebody had a short jaw, and somebody had a long jaw. And that's just kind of the way it goes. My jaw was an insecurity I had, but also, it's who I am... It's what my birth parents, it's like what I got from them. I have a lot of questions about my life in China when I was little. I mean thirteen months doesn't sound like a lot, but it's kind... it's kind of like a lot, like... It's definitely a big part of a mystery, like, I feel like I'll never know... I don't want to die where I don't know who my birth parents are."

"I decided to do a DNA test 'cause I... I wanted to find more about who I am and my past. When I heard from Sadie, it opened up new ideas about our adoption. I feel like I don't really truly know the reason. That's just, like, what they assume."

- **LILY**

"The whole process of adoption, it's grieving. They have to come to a point where they can grieve what they've lost."

- **DEBORAH BOLKA (LILY'S MOTHER)**

"It doesn't feel real that I came from here, honestly. Everyone keeps telling me it's my home place, but, like, I don't remember it at all. I just, I can't believe I was one of those kids in there [the orphanage]. I feel like I'm kind of just walking through a movie, but then I'm like, wait, no, this is real life. It's crazy to think that I was brought in this street, and then brought back out, like...sixteen years later, here we are."

"I used to watch this show called *Fresh Off the Boat*²⁴ and so I just kind of, like, imagined my parents just sort of looking like them. Sometimes, I play out scenarios in my head, like a big dramatic scene. I know I do that a lot. And I've done it a few times, I guess, thinking about meeting my parents from China."

"When I was younger, in 4th grade, I had a bottle where I would write little notes of my feelings and shove them into the bottle. Until, I guess, one day, when I'm ready to break it. So, that's how I dealt with it. I literally and figuratively bottled up my emotions. I don't know. I just don't know how to deal with it now."

- **SADIE**

²⁴ *Fresh Off the Boat* was an American sitcom television series loosely inspired by the life of chef and food personality Eddie Huang and his 2013 autobiography of the same name that depicted the life of a Taiwanese-American family in Florida in the 1990s. It was the first sitcom in the U.S. to feature an Asian American family as main characters in over 20 years.

HANDOUT THREE: EXPLORING THE MEANINGS OF “FOUND”

“The orphanage told my mom that I was left in a box near a busy street. I imagined it being really early in the morning. Someone found me and took me to the orphanage. Sometimes, I’m like, ‘Whoa, they’re out there. Like, I might have, like, siblings out there.’”

- **SADIE**

“They were left in cardboard boxes, found near a bridge or on the sidewalk. There used to be so many of them. More than 30 of them in a shift. We nannies had different tasks. Some fed the babies milk. Some did the laundry. I looked after the babies. I remember many of them. These babies... I brought them up. I held them in my arms and fed them slowly, as if they were my own children. My heart ached whenever I sent a baby away. They’d be sent so far away. What was to become of them?”

- **LI XUYIN, SADIE’S AUNTIE**

“She has no interest in—at least at this time—in finding her birth parents, because if she does that, then she has to start opening up and make herself vulnerable. And she’s not interested.”

- **GENE LIPITZ (CHLOE’S FATHER)**

“Well, and I think the fundamental question remains the same: Why was I given up? And I think she [Chloe] felt like it was just not something she would want to deal with. She doesn’t wanna go there.”

- **SARI LIPITZ (CHLOE’S MOTHER)**

“When Sadie was probably two or three years old, I decided that I’m gonna do the DNA on her. I wanted to find her biological family because I want her to at least have the opportunity to know her history. But it didn’t happen. Sadie... I think she struggles sometimes between, ‘I want to know all this’ and ‘I just want to be a typical teenager.’”

- **VICTORIA TALBOTT (SADIE’S MOTHER)**

FRIEND OF CHLOE: Do you know your real birthday?

CHLOE: Honestly, no. I thought I came with, like, a little tag or something, but my mom did it. She was like, “They guessed.” And I feel so sad, because I’m, I’m like, I’m like, “November 2nd, my birthday, two days after Halloween, I’m a Scorpio.” But like, I’m like— But then I’m like, “It might not be real.”

FRIEND OF CHLOE: I know, but still. I did the 23andMe thing too, but I haven’t done anything. But that’s cool that you found them.

CHLOE: Yeah. Sadie’s trying to find her parents, and Lily’s trying to find her parents, and then I’m not.

FRIEND OF CHLOE: You’re not gonna try? ‘Cause you don’t want to, or just—

CHLOE: I do, but also, like, not.

FRIEND OF CHLOE: But where would you even start? Like, how do you even...

CHLOE: Oh, the people, the tour people are like, “We do this all the time.” And then they put a picture of you out on the street, and then people call and they’re like, “Hey, that’s my baby.”... Sometimes I do wanna meet them, but most of the time I just...don’t. ‘Cause I think that would just be, like, scary, so...I don’t know, just like meeting them...I don’t know. I don’t know. It just seems... weird. Like, not meant to be, maybe?

“I just noticed she [Yang Mudi, the nanny who took care of Lily] had, like, tears in her eyes. That’s kind of when I got emotional. Because it showed that she cared about me. And I mean, like, I know she does. So...The first months of my life were a mystery. I think being here has helped a lot.”

- LILY

CONVERSATION BETWEEN LIU HAO FROM MY CHINA ROOTS AND HUANG LI, SADIE’S POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL MOTHER.

Liu Hao: Have you ever thought about the life of the daughter you gave away? Whether she is living a good life?

Huang Li: Yeah. How can I not think about that?... It was late in the night. At midnight. Someone took the baby away. We asked a neighbor. He said he would find someone to adopt her. We wrapped her in a small blanket. He wouldn’t tell us who he gave the baby to. He was afraid we’d want her back.

Liu Hao: When you are listening to other people’s stories, what they have been through. I think you can understand a lot of things that you never knew you would understand before. They do love their kids, they want to find their babies. It’s so sad.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN LIU HAO AND CHEN MUXING, LILY’S POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL FATHER

Liu Hao: Did you make the decision to give up the baby before she was born or after?

Chen Muxing: I decided after she was born. Because the village official found out. If we kept her, it was going to cost us at least \$8500. We were forced by the circumstances. We had no choice at all. I left her at the People’s Hospital. Next to the main entrance. It was 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning. Because it would have been too cold to leave her there overnight. I left a note with her date of birth. I left 300 RMB in her clothes. Nothing else. Just the money in her clothes. That’s what happened. Of course I felt awful. My own child would be taken by someone else. No matter if it’s a boy or a girl, it’s my own child.

“I saw how much that family [Mr. Chen] wanted to find their child, and how devastated they were when they didn’t find her. I hope that my birth parents are searching for me like this family.”

- SADIE

HANDOUT FOUR: WHAT IS “FAMILY”?

SADIE, DEFINITION ESSAY, AP LANGUAGE

AND COMPOSITION “When I was 8 years old, I remember watching the movie *Tangled* for the first time. In the movie, the baby is separated from her parents from a young age. And in the end, she ends up reuniting happily with her long-lost family. Like any human, we all hope to have the fairytale ending that we watch in these movies. Then, I had a realization: I might have been searching for the wrong family. Family are the people who make an effort to be there for you. They know, love, and accept me for who I am. So perhaps it’s better that some things are left to be fairytales.”

“I am an only child to a single mother with a big Catholic family, and I have 15 first cousins. My mom lived in various places: New York, Nicaragua, Connecticut. But when I was one, she moved in with my grandparents, to help raise me. Some people ask me, ‘When did you find out that you were adopted? Like, when was the big reveal?’ It was never a reveal. My mom, when I was younger, she always had these books. So she would, like, read me books all, like, the time. My mom, she’s my rock. I don’t want my mom to kind of feel like I don’t love her ‘cause I do.”

- **LILY**

“So many have said to us, ‘lucky girl.’ Maybe. Who am I to say? You came to us open and ready to be loved. We were lucky. You easily laughed and trusted. We are the lucky ones. No one really knows what goes on in that matching room in China. But as your Hebrew middle name says: ‘My God has answered... answered my prayers.’ From the moment I held you, I have felt like the luckiest woman in the world.”

- **SARI LIPITZ (CHLOE’S MOM)**

CHLOE’S THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE “When she said that, it made me think of, like, my other mom and, like, if she was here, or, how life would be different if I grew up with her. And what it would be like to be in a different family. I kind of want to get to know, like, more of my Chinese side. I wanna learn, like, Mandarin, and I want to go to China, and see all the places and stuff.”

“People never talk about these women [the ‘aunties’ at the orphanage] who took care of thousands of babies. I feel like they are the front, like, warriors, you know, in the orphanage, because they are the ones who take the heavy jobs to—to take care of the baby.”

- **LIU HAO**

CONVERSATION BETWEEN YANG MUDI, LILY’S AUNTIE FROM THE ORPHANAGE AND DEBORAH BOLKA, LILY’S MOTHER.

Deborah: I want to thank you so much for taking such good care of her. And for giving her to me, because she is such a joy.

Yang Mudi: I’m grateful to her mom for bringing her up into an excellent girl.

“You know we nannies are not coldhearted. My heart aches whenever I send a child away.”

- **LI LAN**

“When Lily asked me to come up here [Oklahoma State University] for the Dad’s Weekend, of course I was ov— you know, just happy to, to do that. You know, growing up, all of her friends thought I was her dad. So she would call me ‘Dad.’ And sometimes, she said I would not even...I wouldn’t even correct ‘em, because it was... What’s the point, you know? ‘I want a dad, so he can be my dad.’”

- **MIKE BOLKA (LILY’S UNCLE)**

HANDOUT FIVE: EXCERPT FROM KAY ANN JOHNSON'S BOOK *A NATION'S BURIED PAIN*

KAY ANN JOHNSON

Across China, there are tens of thousands of women and men who live with these scars, a rarely acknowledged, largely undocumented cost of China's population control policies. Untold numbers of people who were forced to abandon a child in order to hide a birth ache to at least know that the child they lost is okay. Although the adoption literature, like many of our interviews, focuses on birth mothers, many birth fathers also expressed a sense of great loss and shame for not being able to raise their own children. None of the fathers we met appeared as callous patriarchs who easily and willingly gave up "unvalued" daughters in the pursuit of a male heir. Many fathers we got to know were even more unwilling than mothers to lose a child and appeared humiliated if not broken by being unable to raise their own children.

Most parents we talked with felt that they were coerced by policies and circumstances beyond their control, that at that time they had "no choice"; yet they also bore the heavy burden of being made complicit in an act that violated the ethical obligations that parents have toward children, an act that broke bonds of parental love that should have held. The emotional consequences of coercion and complicity, loss and guilt follow some people for many years. Even those who literally had "no choice," whose child was seized from their unwilling arms by government officials, felt a painful mix of excruciating loss and personal failure for not effectively protecting their child from aggressive officials...

For international adoptees, the knowledge that many birth parents have never forgotten their children may help salve the hurt and trauma of being an "unwanted abandoned child," just as birth parents' pain is eased by the knowledge their child is well. But tragically, given the secrecy imposed by the need to hide births and children for so many years, most will likely carry the burden of these losses throughout their lives, with the buried pain of a nation reverberating through a generation of "lost children" whose lives began in fear and hidden sorrow.²⁵ (Source: [Adoptive Families](https://www.adoptivefamilies.com/birth-parent-perspectives/chinas-hidden-children-one-child-policy-kay-johnson/))

²⁵ <https://www.adoptivefamilies.com/birth-parent-perspectives/chinas-hidden-children-one-child-policy-kay-johnson/>

HANDOUT SIX: MICROAGGRESSIONS AND ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

QUOTE ONE

"I honestly don't feel Chinese. So many of my friends call me a 'banana.' They're like, 'Sadie, you act so white. Like, you are like the whitest Chinese person I've ever met.' I don't know. I've just always identified myself as an American."

- **SADIE**

QUOTE THREE

"I'm happy we're going through it with Sadie and Lily, because, like, we all have each other. I haven't known them for long, but, like, there's just—I don't know. Unconditional, thing. You just know they know what you feel. You don't even have to explain it to them."

- **CHLOE**

QUOTE FIVE

Friend of Chloe: I didn't even know you were Jewish.

Chloe: A lot of people don't. I told my tennis coach in Seattle that I was Jewish, and he was like, "No, you're not. You're Asian." And I'm like, "I'm a Jewish Asian."

Friend of Chloe: My mom's Greek Orthodox, so when I say I'm Greek, it doesn't make any sense.

QUOTE TWO

"I hadn't really thought about it much, that I was, like, one of the only Asians in the communities I had been in. But, as I grew, I just realized there was, like, more in the world, I guess, and I just wanted to find more people that I could relate to and that looked like me. When you're little, like, you grow up in your perfect little bubble. You grow up around all these white people and it's just who you think you are. Then you realize you're different."

- **SADIE**

QUOTE FOUR

Sadie's Friend: Can you speak Chinese? I mean, you used to live there.

Sadie: What origins are you? Like what's your...

Sadie's Friend: I'm Hispanic. I lived in Ecuador for like two years.

Sadie: Do you speak Spanish?

QUOTE SIX

"A close friend of mine... We were really close. It was middle school. I was the only Asian kid. And she said that, like... some very hurtful things about my birth parents maybe not wanting me, and that's [sniffles and cries] why they gave me up."

- **CHLOE**



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LIPITZ
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SOCIAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN PRODUCED BY: YENNIE LEE

DISCUSSION GUIDE WRITTEN BY: FRAN STERLING, BLUESHIFT EDUCATION

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