

[ FACTS & FIGURES ]

# FINDING FAMILIES

Should race play a role in adoption policies?

IN ITS MAY 2008 REPORT, *FINDING FAMILIES FOR AFRICAN American Children*, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, a nonprofit that works to improve adoption policies, found that transracial adoptees (children whose race or ethnicity differs from that of their adopting parent) are more likely to struggle to fit in with their peers, their communities, and even with their own families. As a result, the organization advocates cultural education for nonblack families who want to adopt black children—training adoptive families in the areas of bolstering self-esteem, defending against racism, and increasing their level of interaction with other African Americans.

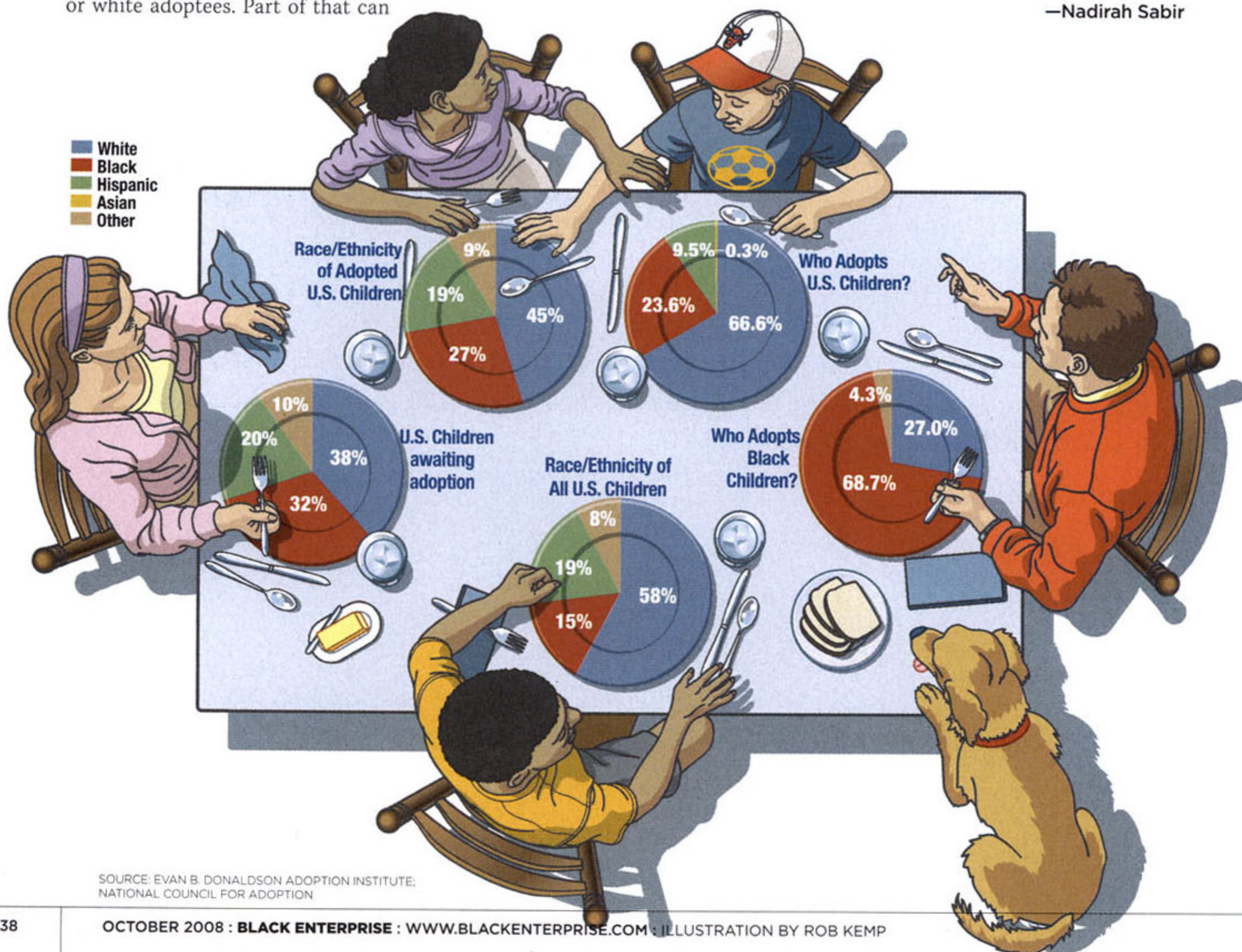
The study also says that minority children adopted by white parents are likely to express a desire to be white, and that black transracial adoptees have higher rates of behavioral problems than Asian or Native American children adopted transracially. African American adopted children also exhibit more adjustment issues than biracial or white adoptees. Part of that can

be explained by the fact that black children often stay in the child welfare system longer before they are adopted.

African American children are disproportionately represented in foster care. In 2006, these children accounted for 15% of the U.S. child population, yet represented 32% of the 510,000 children in foster care. African American children, as well as Native American children, are also adopted at rates lower than those of other races and ethnicities.

The message is not that only black families should adopt black children, but that those who adopt transracially should have the proper cultural sensitivity and training to help such children cope in society, says Adam Pertman, executive director of Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. "The fact is that any parent is going to do a better job if they understand their children and their children's needs," he says. "So, if the parent is white and the kid is not, then the best that parent can do is learn about that child's psychological and practical needs and to understand race and racism in American culture."

—Nadirah Sabir



SOURCE: EVAN B. DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE; NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION