

Testimony of Nancy Cannon Downey  
March 20, 2004  
Before the Nevada State Legislature  
Interim Standing Committee on Children, Youth, and Families  
Subcommittee on Adoption

---

To the Honorable Maggie Carlton, Chair of the Children, Youth, and Families  
Subcommittee on Adoption:

My name is Nancy Cannon Downey, but somewhere in the archives of the state of Nevada, there is a document pertaining to my birth which states my name as "Baby Girl DeRose". I would like to see that document. In fact, I would like to see the entire file which contains information about the circumstances of my birth because there is no apparent reason why I should not have access to that information – other than the state is bound by its own out-dated, ill-advised law which says that I cannot have it.

When I appeared before this committee last December, I asked you to continue to study the many complex and compelling reasons why the laws barring adoptee access to their own birth and adoption records should be changed. Thank you for this opportunity to share my personal perspective with you today as you further explore these issues.

As you already know, my father, Howard W. Cannon, was Nevada's US Senator for 24 years. He and my mother, Dorothy, adopted me as a baby in Reno in 1952. I am not only proud to be Howard and Dorothy's daughter, I am proud to be the daughter of Beverly Jean Moore, who, as my natural mother, joins me here today. We support the efforts of Nevada Open to restore civil rights to adopted citizens in this state.

I'd like to share some things that I've learned about the importance of knowing your true heritage. Knowledge of my health history has helped me tremendously (I have a predisposition to osteoporosis) and just knowing that I am part Italian and German has given me a more complete sense of self. Knowing one's true identity is vital. I remember Senator Orin Hatch encouraging all Americans to find out more about where they came from because in his words: "researching ancestry is a very important component of identity." During the brief time while I was suddenly unsure of who I really was, I developed a great deal of empathy for those adoptees who are still in this often frightening and unsettling state of limbo due to unjust laws which prevent them from learning about their true identity. I see the value of their argument through my own personal experiences.

I also learned that SB 267 was one of the top 50 pieces of legislation in the 2003 session for public opinion casting – it ranked number 31, with 105 of the 110 total opinion votes cast in favor, which means 95% in favor of open adoption records. In December I introduced a recent study conducted by FindLaw.com that indicates 84% of Americans believe adopted children should be granted full access to their adoption

EXHIBIT <u>L</u> ChildFam <u>Adopt</u> Document consists of <u>10</u> pages
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entire document provided.
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to size limitations, pages _____ through _____ provided.
A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775-684-6827 or e-mail library@icb.state.nv.us).
Meeting Date <u>3-20-04</u>

records when they become adults. Since then, I've reviewed many other reports of studies that have been published on this topic in Social Work and Child Welfare Journals and all identified the process of sealing adoption records as contributing to emotional and psychological problems for many members of the adoption triad. Through sources like the *American Adoption Congress* and the *National Adoption Information Clearinghouse* I learned about two arguments that often arise in efforts to defeat open records legislation: 1) that birth parents and adopted adults do not need to have information about one another because they do not wish to be found by one another; or 2) that adoptive parents oppose access by their adopted children to identifying information. I also learned that research statistics clearly refute both of these arguments and further demonstrate that "benefits flow to all members of the triad when information is freely shared".

I am submitting to the official record some of these pertinent studies for your review. Since it is your task to determine the best policy for all of us here in the state of Nevada, you should strongly consider these research results as well as the personal stories that you are hearing today, in order to make an informed decision which will reduce emotional and psychological trauma for many people touched by adoption.

Years ago Helen Keller once said: "Rights are what we get when we are strong enough to claim them." I hope you appreciate the fact that we are speaking to you today in a **strong** voice to claim the rights of all adopted citizens in Nevada to be granted full access to their rightful information concerning the circumstances of their birth. We need your protection to secure our rights – not protection from the truth which is rightfully ours to know.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and our rights as Nevada citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Cannon Downey, M.A.



## More Deception about Access, Abortions, and Adoptions

by Frederick F. Greenman Jr., Esq.

For years, the National Council for Adoption and its former president, William L. Pierce, told legislators and right-to-life groups that allowing adoptees access to identifying information about their birth parents would reduce adoptions and increase abortions. The claim is false because, as every active registry and confidential intermediary program has shown, the vast majority of birth mothers want eventual contact with their surrendered children, not secrecy from them. Nevertheless, NCFCA and Pierce attempted to support their claim with misleadingly incomplete statistics from England and Australia, while ignoring data from Kansas and Alaska that proved exactly the opposite.

In the Tennessee litigation, we exposed the deception concerning England and Australia, and we presented the data from Kansas and Alaska. Subsequently, AAC, BN and Adopt America Advocates publicized this information. Right-to-life groups, legislatures, and others began to realize they had been misinformed.

Late in 1999, NCFCA published its "Adoption Factbook III" (1999 "Factbook"), to which Pierce contributed two articles. In the first, he attempts to resuscitate his claim using another set of misleadingly incomplete statistics from England, while ignoring Australia. In the second, he gives up the claim as to Kansas and Alaska, and instead argues only that the data from those states do not prove that access to records increases adoption and decreases abortions. Once again, even regarding this more limited claim, his statistics are fraudulent.

### The Earlier Deceptions

In their earlier claims, NCFCA and Pierce pointed to declines in adoption in England and Australia after adult adoptees gained access to their records. NCFCA and Pierce ignored the years before adoptees gained access.

In the Tennessee litigation, we obtained from England and from New South Wales (the largest state in Australia) the annual numbers of adoptions *before* adoptees gained access. These numbers showed that in New South Wales adoptions had peaked in 1972, *eighteen years before* access was granted, and had declined *85 percent* before access was granted in 1990. Obviously access to records did not cause that decline.

In England and Wales, total unrelated adoptions had peaked at 14,641 in 1968. Before adoptee access became effective in 1976, unrelated adoptions declined 67 percent (to 4,777). In the following eight years, after the records were unsealed, these adoptions declined only 39 percent (to 2,910). Again, access to records could not have caused the decline. If unsealing adoption records in England and Wales had any effect, it was not to cause the decline, but rather to slow it, i.e. to *increase* adoptions over the numbers that otherwise would have been obtained.<sup>1</sup>

We also looked at state-by-state comparisons of adoption and abortion rates. Kansas and Alaska are the two states which have always allowed adult adoptees access to identifying information. If NCFCA and Pierce were correct, they should have had lower adoption rates and higher abortion rates (at least for their own residents) than other states. The facts are exactly the opposite. Both states have *higher* adoption rates and *lower* resident abortion rates than the U.S. as a whole. Indeed, Kansas has higher adoption rates and lower resident abortion rates than *any* of the four states that surround it.

We submitted this information to the court, through briefs and in my affidavit dated July 17, 1996. (The courts eventually upheld the Tennessee statute.) NCFCA and Pierce were fully aware of our submission, since NCFCA also participated in the lawsuit as an *amicus curiae*.<sup>2</sup>

They had long known that their claim was false. In NCFCA's 1989 Adoption "Factbook," it compiled an "Adoption Option Index," which it described as "a standardized ratio calculated by dividing the number of domestic infant adoptions by the sum of abortions and births to unmarried women, times 1,000" so as "to indicate the relative frequency of infant adoptions to that group of pregnancy outcomes which could potentially yield adoptions" (1989 "Factbook," pp. 66, 98). NCFCA ranked all the states and the District of Columbia according to their "Adoption Option Index" numbers. If NCFCA and Pierce's claim had been correct, Alaska and Kansas should have ranked 50 and 51. Instead they ranked 5 and 18 respectively (1989 "Factbook," p. 98).<sup>3</sup>

*continued on next page*

## More Deception about Access, Abortions, and Adoptions—Greenman

### The New Deceptions

In the 1999 "Factbook," Pierce ignores Australia. He begins by repeating the claim that granting access decreases adoptions and increases abortions (pp. 209-12), using incomplete statistics for England and Wales. Once again, he attempts to deceive by omitting numbers of which he is well aware.

This time Pierce uses the annual numbers of infant (under one year) adoptions (1999 "Factbook," p. 211). Once again he starts in 1975, the year in which England enacted the law that granted access. Once again, prior years are ignored. The complete figures going back to 1960 were available in Exhibit 3 to my affidavit of July 17, 1996, in the Tennessee litigation, but Pierce chose not to disclose them. They show the same pattern of continuous decline as do total unrelated adoptions. Figures for the key years are shown in Table 1.

In the eight years before adoptees were granted access to identifying information, unrelated infant adoptions declined 71 percent; in the eight following years they declined 49 percent. Once again, if granting access had any effect on the numbers of adoptions, it was to *increase* them over the numbers that otherwise would have been obtained.

In his second article, Pierce attempts to counter the impact of the Alaska and Kansas statistics. He does not contend that they support his claim. Instead he takes a defensive position, trying to show that granting access does not increase adoptions or decrease abortions. As modest as is Pierce's new, defensive contention, it too rests on bogus figures.

Pierce begins with abortion data, but the wrong data. The relevant state figures are those for abortions obtained by *residents* of each state. The numbers of women who leave one state to get an abortion in another state may indicate that abortions are easier to obtain in the second state, but they say nothing about the *adoption* laws in that state.

The Alan Guttmacher Institute compiles resident abortion rates for each state, and those are the rates that we used. Pierce, on the other hand, uses total numbers and rates of abortions performed in each state, even while noting that Kansas is a "magnet" for abortions because it allows

late-term abortions and has at least one "extremely widely known abortion provider" (1999 "Factbook," p. 216). But even using total abortion rates, Pierce has to concede that both Kansas and Alaska have lower rates than the U.S. as a whole (*Ibid*). Even Pierce, in other words, can find no statistical support for his claim that opening records to adoptees increases abortions.

On the adoption side, Pierce concedes that Alaska's adoption rate supports access to records. "Those who favor eliminating privacy may well point to Alaska as an example of success" (1999 "Factbook," p. 218). When it comes to adoption figures for Kansas, however, Pierce makes three misstatements. The first may be innocent; the others definitely are not.

First, Pierce uses figures for unrelated infant adoptions in 1996, as compiled and calculated by NCFCA. This would be reasonable if the figures were compiled in a way which allowed reliable state-to-state comparisons, but they are not. Most states compile reasonably accurate annual figures for total numbers of adoptions, but most do not compile numbers of unrelated infant adoptions, so that this number must be estimated. Usually this requires

two successive estimates, first the number or percentage of adoptions that are unrelated, and then the number or percentage of those that are of children less than a year old. In NCFCA's survey, these estimates often are made by different people for each state, using different and often undisclosed methods. (We used total numbers of adoptions in each state as reported by the National Center for State Courts.)

NCFCA's surveys were supervised by a reputable statistician, Dr. Paul J. Placek of the National Center for Health Statistics, working as a private off-duty consultant. In a note on the methodology of NCFCA's surveys, Placek states, "This [estimating] procedure yields reliable National estimates, but sometimes causes extreme variability in counts within individual states...." (1999 "Factbook," p. 51). Pierce's articles appear 150 pages away from Placek's note, and Pierce simply omits and ignores the limitation that Placek frankly admits (1999 "Factbook," pp. 213-18).

*continued on next page*

**Table 1**

Year	Unrelated Infant Adoptions
1968	12,382
1976	3,556
1984	1,805

Sources: 1968: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, *Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales*, Table T5. 1976 and 1984: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *OPCS Monitor*, Table 3. This excludes small numbers of adoptions by single individuals because the source tables do not break these down between related and unrelated adoptions.

## More Deception about Access, Abortions, and Adoptions—Greenman

Second, in NCFAs 1996 survey, it was unable to obtain an accurate number of total unrelated adoptions in Kansas because adoptions were privatized during that year. The Kansas state employee who supplied figures to NCFAs noted that her figure for total unrelated adoptions was a minimum, and that the actual number had to be higher (1999 "Factbook," p. 64). NCFAs used that understated number as the basis on which to obtain its estimate of the number of unrelated infant adoptions in Kansas in 1996. Pierce then used that understated number for his state-to-state comparisons, without any acknowledgement of the understatement (1999 "Factbook," p. 217). That understatement was essential to his contention. In other words, he deliberately used an erroneous figure, knowing that the error helped his contention, and without disclosing the error.

Pierce's third and most blatant misstatement was the intentional omission of NCFAs data that flatly contradict his claim. NCFAs compiled data on 1992 adoptions as well as those in 1996. This survey is reported elsewhere in the "Factbook," but totally ignored by Pierce. NCFAs 1992 numbers for Kansas do not suffer from the understatement of unrelated adoptions discussed above. NCFAs own 1992 figures reveal that the adoption rates in Kansas and Alaska are higher than in the United States as a whole, and that of Kansas is higher than in any state surrounding it. See Table 2.

NCFAs "Adoption Option Index" confirms this result. For 1992, Alaska and Kansas ranked Nos. 2 and 6 respectively (1999 "Factbook," p. 42). As noted above, if Pierce's claim were correct, they would have ranked 50 and 51.<sup>4</sup>

There is only one word that accurately characterizes Pierce's omission of pre-1975 data from England and Wales, his knowing use of an erroneously low number of adoptions in 1996, and his failure even to mention NCFAs more accurate 1992 number: *fraud*. If a publicly traded corporation made similar public misstatements about its finances, its executives could face imprisonment. It is sad that misstatements that prejudice the lives of adoptees are treated more casually.

### Footnotes

1. British authorities attribute the decline to more effective use of contraception and greater acceptance of children born outside marriage. The same is probably true throughout the industrialized world.

**Table 2**

### Unrelated Infant Adoptions

State/Country	per 1,000 Live Births	per 1,000 Non-Marital Live Births	per 1,000 Abortions
United States	6.6	21.8	19.6
Alaska	24.2	88.3	159.3
Kansas	16.2	66.9	59.4
Colorado	1.4	5.9	7.2
Missouri	8.8	27.9	50.1
Nebraska	10.2	45.2	42.4
Oklahoma	10.5	37.1	50.6

Source: 1999 "Factbook," p. 39. All the ratios above were calculated by NCFAs. No matter which ratio one uses, Kansas and Alaska are higher than the United States as a whole, and Kansas is higher than any of the four states surrounding it.

2. Pierce assiduously avoids acknowledging that all of these figures were discovered by us in the course of the Tennessee lawsuit, and first published there. Instead he cites a Web site, author unstated, even when quoting from my affidavit (1999 "Factbook," pp. 209-11 notes 3 and 6, and p. 215 notes 11 and 13).
3. For reasons stated on page 3, NCFAs data do not give reliable state-to-state comparisons, and for that reason we did not use them in the lawsuit.
4. Even with NCFAs understatement of unrelated infant adoptions in Kansas for 1996, NCFAs own Adoption Index ranking for 1996 puts Alaska at No. 4 and Kansas at No. 19. Pierce calls this "an accident of statistical creation" (1999 "Factbook," p. 217).

*Fred Greenman Jr., AAC legal counsel, is a partner with Deutsch Klagsbrun & Blasband, a NY law firm. He holds a B.A., an LL.B., and an LL.M. from Harvard, served in the U.S. Army, and was an assistant U.S. attorney before entering private practice. His daughter was born out of wedlock in 1959 and surrendered for adoption in 1960. They were reunited in 1991. He is active now in adoption reform and participated in the federal and state litigation in Tennessee and Oregon that upheld laws granting adoptees access to original birth certificates and other identifying information.*



National Adoption Information Clearinghouse

## Placing Children for Adoption

### How many women place their children for adoption?

- 2% of unmarried women at any age place their child for adoption. (*ChildTrends, 1995*)
- The percentage of premarital births **placed for adoption** has decreased since the 1970s. Analyses of three cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth show the following trend:
  - From 1952 to 1972, 8.7% of all premarital births were placed for adoption.
  - From 1973 to 1981, this percentage fell to 4.1%.
  - From 1982 to 1988, it fell further to 2%. (*Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992*)

### Who are the women who place their children?

- Less than 3% of white unmarried women and less than 2% of Black unmarried women. (*Mosher and Bachrach, 1996*)
- Of **Black** women with premarital births,  
From 1952 to 1972, 1.5% placed their children for adoption.  
From 1973 to 1981, this percentage fell to .2%  
From 1982 to 1988, it rose to 1.1%.
- Of **White** women with premarital births,  
From 1952 to 1972, 19.3% placed their children for adoption.  
From 1973 to 1981, this percentage fell to 7.6%.  
From 1982 to 1988, it fell further to 3.2%. (*Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992*)
- Women who **voluntarily place** their children for adoption are likely to have greater educational and vocational goals for themselves than those who keep their children. Women making adoption plans often come from **higher socioeconomic backgrounds**. These women come from **intact families** which are supportive of the placement, and which have not experienced teenage pregnancies by other family members. (*Stolley, 1993*)
- Women whose mothers completed at least **one year of college** were 3 times more likely to place their babies for adoption than women whose mothers did not complete high school. (*Bachrach, Stolley & London, 1992*)
- In a study of adoption trends in California, it was found **birth mothers** who place their children independently tend to be aged 17 to 30 years old, and have no more than a high school education. The majority are **not related** to the adoptive parents. Many mothers, though, have some **contact** with the adoptive family, and were involved in the selection of the adoptive parents. (*Barth, Brooks, Iyer, 1995*)
- The 1995 National Survey of Family Growth found that 15 percent of recent births to never-married women and 18 percent of those to formerly married were **unwanted** by the mother at time of conception. (*Freundlich, 1998*)

## What are influences on the number of children available for adoption?

### Declining numbers of women placing children for adoption

- The decline in the number of women placing their children for adoption is primarily due to the **declining numbers** of white women placing their children for adoption; rates for minority women who place their children have remained relatively stable. (*Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992*)
- The **initial drop** in placement rates among white women reflected the increase in abortion rates after the legalization of abortion in 1973. (*Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992*)

### Declining stigma of unwed motherhood

- The **continuing decline** in placement rates reflects the diminishing stigma attached to unwed parenthood. (*Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992*)

### Declining numbers of teens placing children for adoption

- The proportion of teens **placing** their children for adoption has declined sharply over recent decades. (*ChildTrends, 1995*)
- When they become pregnant, very few teens choose to **place their children** for adoption. In a 1995 survey, 51% of teens that become pregnant give birth; 35% seek abortions; 14% miscarry. Less than 1% choose to place their children for adoption. (*ChildTrends, 1995*)
- The **age** of unmarried mothers has increased with time. In 1970, half of nonmarital births were to teens; by 1993, the highest proportion of unmarried mothers were women in their twenties, a significant change. The birth rate for unmarried teens declined in 1995. Teen mothers, however continued to make up the largest single group of all first births to unmarried women. (*Freundlich, 1998*)

### Declining pregnancy rate

- Pregnancy rates **declined** by 1 percent for white women and by 5 percent for women of all other races between 1980 to 1991. (*NCHS, 1995*)

### Increasing use of contraceptives

- 4% of never-married women relied on their partners to use condoms in 1982; this number increased to 8% in 1988, and to 14% in 1995 - a more than three-fold increase. (*NCHS, 1997*)
- In 1995, 10.7 million women were using female sterilization, 10.4 million were using the birth control pill, 7.9 million used condoms, and 4.2 million were using male sterilization as a contraceptive technique. (*NCHS, 1997*)

### Declining abortion rate

- There has been no research showing that women are choosing to abort their children rather than place these children for adoption. Although the adoption rate has remained relatively steady, nationwide abortion rates have continued to **decline** since 1990. (*Freundlich, 1998*)

## Are there any statistics on birth fathers?

- Experts point out that only a very small percentage of **birth fathers** historically have taken an active part in the decisions surrounding adoption, but some agencies report that in recent years, a **quarter or more** relinquishments have included active involvement of birth fathers. (*Freundlich, 1998*)

## Bibliography

Bachrach, C.A., Stolley, K.S., and London, K.A. (1992). Relinquishment of premarital births: evidence from the national survey data. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 24, 27-32 and 48.

Barth, R.P., Brooks, D. and Iyer, S. (1995). *Adoptions in California: current demographic profiles and projections through the end of the century*. Executive Summary. Berkeley, CA: Child Welfare Research Center.

*Fertility, Family Planning, and Women's Health: New Data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth*. (1997). Washington, DC: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control.

Freundlich, M. (1998). Supply and demand: the forces shaping the future of infant adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 2(1), 13-42.

Moore, K. A., Miller, B.C., Sugland, B.W., Morrison, D.R., Gleib, D.A., and Blumenthal, C. (1995). *Beginning too soon: adolescent sexual behavior, pregnancy, and parenthood*. Executive Summary. Washington, DC: ChildTrends.

Mosher, W.D., and Bachrach, C.A. (1996). Understanding U.S. fertility: continuity and change in the national survey of family growth, 1988-1995. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 28(1).

Stolley, K.S. (1993). Statistics on adoption in the United States. *The Future of Children: Adoption*, 3(1), 26-42.

*Trends in Pregnancies and Pregnancy Rates: Estimates for the United States, 1980-92*. (1995). Washington, DC: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control.

[http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/s\\_place.cfm](http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/s_place.cfm)

NAIC is a service of the  
Children's Bureau,  
Administration for Children and Families,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/aboutus.cfm>

# Access to Identifying Information

## What the research tells us

By Madelyn Freundlich, Executive Director  
The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

One of the key adoption policy issues over the past several years has been the extent to which members of the adoption triad should have access to identifying information. The debate has raged both nationally - with the proposal currently pending in Congress for a National Voluntary Reunion Registry - and at the state level where bills are being introduced to allow adopted adults to obtain their original birth certificates. Two arguments have frequently been raised to defeat such efforts: first, that birth parents and adopted adults do not need to have information about one another because they do not wish to be found by one another; and second, that adoptive parents adamantly oppose access by their adopted children to identifying information. The research clearly refutes the rhetoric of both of these arguments. The following summarizes this body of research and provides a solid basis for responding to efforts to mischaracterize the interests and desires of all members of the adoption triad.

### **1. The research is clear that birth parents and adopted adults do wish to be found by one another.**

In a comprehensive study of the issues involved in adoption, the Maine Department of Human Resources Task Force on Adoption found in 1989 that adoptee and birth parents wish, in overwhelming percentages, to be found by one another. Noting that it was "startled...to learn...how few people did not wish to be found," the Task Force reported that every birth parent who was surveyed [130 birth parents] wanted to be found by the child/adult they had placed for adoption and ninety-five percent of the adoptees [164 adoptees] who were surveyed expressed a desire to be found by their birth parents. Similarly, Paul Sachdev's study in 1991 found that a substantial majority of birth mothers (85.5%) and adoptees (81.1%) supported access by adult adoptees to identifying information on their birth parents.

Practice-based knowledge further validates that birth parents and adoptee want to be found by one another. Contrary to the assertion that birth parents move on with their lives and live in fear that the children they relinquished for adoption will intrude upon them, research and the work with birth parents undertaken by Becker (1989), Demick and Wapner (1988) and Baran, Pannor and Sorosky (1976) uniformly finds that birth parents do not forget the children they relinquished for adoption and express strong desires to be found by them; wonder whether they are alive and healthy; and find that the grief they experienced in having relinquished their children for adoption was intensified by the secrecy surrounding adoption and the walls the adoption system has erected against any contact.

### **2. Research clearly shows that adoptive parents support the exchange of information and contact between their adult adopted children and their birth families.**

Rosemary Avery's 1996 research on the attitudes of adoptive parents in New York regarding access to identifying information found that 84% of the adoptive mothers and 73% of the adoptive fathers agreed or strongly agreed that an adult adoptee should be able to obtain identifying information on his or her birth parents. This research reflects higher levels of support than that found in Feigleman and Silverman's 1986 research on the attitudes of adoptive parents. That study - more than ten years old - nevertheless found that 55% of the adoptive parents of American-born children supported legislation easing restrictions on their children learning about their birth families and 66% of adoptive parents of internationally-adopted children expressed their support. The Maine Department of Human Resources Task Force on Adoption found an even higher percentage of adoptive family support than did Avery. In their 1989 study, the Task Force found that ninety-eight percent of the adoptive parents supported reunions between their adopted children and members of the adoptee's birth family. These findings of Avery, the Maine Task Force on Adoption, and Feigleman and Silverman are consistent with the practice-based literature. As pointed out by Gritter (1989) and Chapman, Dorner, Silber & Winterberg (1987) as well as others, many adoptive parents feel frustrated and a sense of helplessness because of their inability to help their adopted children connect with their biological origins.

In conclusion, the research makes clear that birth parents and adopted adults want access to identifying information and that adoptive families, rather than feeling threatened by their children's needs and their interests in their birth families, support that access. Other research, including that done by McRoy and Grotevant (1994), demonstrates that benefits flow to all members of the triad when information is more freely shared and there is greater openness in relationships. Policies that facilitate connections between birth families and adopted adults and access to information have strong empirical and practice support.

## References

- Avery, R. (1996) *Information disclosure and openness in adoption; state policy and empirical evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Baran, A., Pannor, R. & Sorosky, A.D. (1976). Open adoption. *Social Work*, 21, 97-100.
- Becker, M.E. (1989). The rights of unwed parents: Feminist approaches. *Social Service Review*, 63: 496-517.
- Chapman, C., Dorner, P., Silber, K., & Winterberg, T.S. (1987). Meeting the needs of the adoption triangle through open adoption: The adoptive parent. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 4: 3-12.
- Demick, J. & Wapner, S. (1988). Open and closed adoption: a developmental conceptualization. *Family Process*, 27: 229-249.
- Feigleman, W. & Silverman, A.R. (1986). Adoptive parents, adoptees, and the sealed record controversy. *Social Casework*, 67: 219-226. Gritter, J. L. (Editor). (1989). *Adoption without fear*. San Antonio, TX: Corona Press.
- Maine Department of Human Resources, Task Force on Adoption (1989). *Adoption: A life long process*. Portland, ME: Author.
- McRoy, R. G., Grotevant, H. D. & Ayers-Lopez S. (1994). *Changing practices in adoption*. Austin, TX: Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.
- Sachdev, P. (1991) Achieving openness in adoption: Some critical issues in policy formulation. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61 (2): 241-249.