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A 'Normal' Family

By [JEFF GAMMAGE](#)

It happened again — this time before Halloween — as we reached the cashier's station at The Party Store.

The clerk, who must have been about 18, took a long look at my daughters.

"Are they yours?" she asked.

"Yes," I said tersely, hoping my tone would dissuade further inquiry.

It didn't.

"Are they adopted?" she asked.

Now I was ready to give her a blast, a lecture about manners and boundaries.

"Yes, they are — "

But the young woman cut me off, interrupting with a perky, "I'm adopted, too!"

Oh. Um, never mind.

In the last year or so, I've noticed that I have these kinds of conversations more and more. People who once would have intruded with a boorish question seem to have been replaced by others who want to share their own abiding connection to adoption. They were adopted themselves. Or they're in the process of adopting — a "waiting family." Or their grown son or daughter is on his or her way back from overseas, about to make them a grandparent.

In fact it seems to me — dare I say it? — that adoption is becoming *normal*. Or least more normalized. Sure, it's taken 60-some years. But attitudes are changing. And that's not my imagination.

Ten years ago, 58 percent of Americans had a family member or close friend who had adopted a child, were adopted themselves, or had placed a child for adoption, according to a national survey by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute in New York. By 2002, that figure had risen to 63 percent. It's surely higher now.