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Review of *Clinical and Practice Issues in Adoption: Bridging the Gap Between Adoptees Placed as Infants and as Older Children.*

Victor Groza and Karen F Rosenberg (Eds.). Reviewed by Richard P. Barth, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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Victor Groza and Karen F. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Clinical and Practice Issues in Adoption: Bridging the Gap Between Adoptees Placed as Infants and as Older Children*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998. \$55.00 (hardcover).

Adoption has captured the interest of the American public as never before and the number of children being adopted each year is now at an all time high. About six in ten Americans reports having a personal experience with adoption. New federal initiatives have provided tax breaks for adoption (including costs for infant and international adoptions), smashed barriers to cross-racial adoptions, and provided incentives to states for increasing the adoptions of children from foster care. There is substantial evidence that these adoptions are likely to be successful but not uncomplicated. Post-adoption services to assist parents and children to understand, appreciate, and integrate the differences between adoption and other forms of family formation are being looked to as an important resource during this time of expanding involvement in adoption. Yet, little clinical information is available to guide the development of these services. Indeed, even conceptual guidance about the significance of similarities and differences between different types of adoptions is lacking.

Groza and Rosenthal have written a very useful volume nearly filled with well-grounded clinical wisdom and conceptualization (unfortunately, the part that is not filled by their work is not as strong, so I have chosen not to comment on all of these). In their opening chapter and later, the authors bring an empirical basis to evaluating the dominant dialectics in the field—a welcomed addition, since much of the adoption literature has strong ideological underpinnings. Their cautious embrace of the work done in attachment and adoption is particularly welcome—especially their point that attachment difficulties have multiple sources and that attachment-focused therapies are unproven.

The authors elected to include a chapter by Betty Jean Lifton that has a strikingly different tone than their own writing. This can be seen as an open-minded action that takes full advantage of the harmonic potentials of an edited collection. Or, this could be seen as a significant lapse in scientific judgement, because

the chapter is filled with references to discredited psychoanalytic theories, ghosts, mythic journeys, and the unborn soon-to-be adopted child's hidden relationship to the biological mother as the origin of the self. Reading this chapter left me with the experience of being in a time machine, as the average age of her published references is just over 21! I wish the authors had provided a bit of a commentary to explain the purposes of including this chapter.

Rita Laws wrote a fascinating chapter for this volume. It begins with one of the best histories of adoption in American that I have read-including many excellent references to adoption traditions among American Indians and in colonial America. The chapter proceeds on to become quite timely-including a very detailed section about netiquette in online adoption chat rooms-and eventually provides substantial guidance regarding receipt of ongoing financial and social support.

L. Anne Babb's chapter on ethics in adoption is the most thorough that I have seen and comes complete with a fascinating study of adoption organizations and their stances on a series of ethical dilemmas.

In the final chapter the authors, in concert with Joyce Maguire Pavio, discuss a variety of issues related to a family systems perspective on adoption within a developmental context. They propose a system family therapy model and point the readers to many other resources that can be used to help illuminate this model and its application to adoptive families-whenver and from wherever the adopted child and adopting family were joined.

All in all, there is much informative reading in this slim volume. The central premise of the volume is that clinical issues in adoption cut across infant, special needs, and international adoptions. The authors virtuously ensured that each of the contributors addresses this central premise. Adoption practitioners have few resources to choose from to assist them in the important work that they do. This book is certainly a good starting point.

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