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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 30
Issue 3 *September*

Article 21

September 2003

Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption. Barbara
Melosh.

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Recommended Citation

(2003) "*Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption.* Barbara Melosh.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 3 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol30/iss3/21>

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criticism that could be made of this book is that it ignores research undertaken outside sociology in explicitly applied fields such as social work. By transcending its own disciplinary boundaries, the book could have explored relationships between sociologists and others who contribute to the wider task of making the world a better place. Nevertheless, this is an excellent book that should be widely prescribed in sociology classes and in other fields as well.

Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. \$29.95 hard-cover.

In *Strangers and Kin*, Barbara Melosh provides a historical account of adoption in the United States. Whereas other books on adoption focus on the needs of children or on specific aspects of the adoption experience, she presents the overarching concept and how society's view of and agencies' policy toward adoption have changed throughout the 20th Century. Instead of a child-focused adoption book, Melosh is primarily concerned with the experiences of birth mothers and adoptive parents and she shows how their experiences reflect American society's views and the social issues surrounding adoption.

Strangers and Kin is organized as a timeline of adoption themes emerging during different parts of the century. Beginning with the crafting of more formalized adoptions in the 1920s–40s, the book continues through the 1990s addressing issues of adoption matching, transracial adoptions (both domestic and international), society's morality and its effect on birth mother relinquishments, adoption disclosure and non-disclosure, and the push for more openness in adoption. Within these main themes, Melosh intersperses topics such as adoptability assessments of children, religious matching, birth parents' rights and economic considerations.

One impressive accomplishment of this book is Melosh's ability to present a vast amount of information in an organized, lively and memorable manner. Her inclusion of case record narratives allows the reader a greater sense of adoption as experienced by the adoptive family, the birth mother and the social worker. Drawing primarily from records of the Children's Bureau of Delaware, Melosh includes case examples that bring to life her descrip-

tions of policies and procedures of the adoption agencies. This is especially true in the chapters addressing matching, transracial adoption and disclosure.

When addressing the more current trends, such as the advocacy for open adoptions, Melosh relies heavily upon works of others to convey the sentiment of Americans. She cites and documents published authors who have written of birth parent searches and of the experiences of adult adoptees. However, the inclusion of materials from other books and memoirs detracted from the authenticity of *Strangers and Kin* and was not as effective as drawing directly from case records. Nevertheless, the strengths of the book outweigh this weakness. Indeed, this is an enjoyable book which is recommended to anyone interested in adoption today, especially those who already possess a basic knowledge of adoption issues. It is especially recommended to adoption professionals and policy makers who are looking for a well-researched account of the history of American adoptions and how changes in societal values have impacted adoption practice.