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Adopting Maternity: White Women who Adopt Transracially and Transnationally. Nora Rose Moosnick.

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employees. The decision to introduce Social Security in the 1930s did not, therefore, occur in a vacuum but built on the gradual evolution of public pension programs.

The book provides helpful historical information for anyone wishing to understand the way government income maintenance programs evolved in the United States. It is well written and thoroughly documented. Unfortunately, the authors do not make much mention of the parallel development of social assistance programs, particularly for poor women, and of the way these programs undermined the principles of universality and inclusiveness which the social reformers of the late 19th-century extolled, and which many social policy scholars today still regard as of vital importance in income maintenance. On the other hand, they use the historical record to draw interesting lessons for contemporary debates on Social Security by emphasizing the role of political struggle and policy instability in the history of public pensions. These lessons are particularly relevant at a time that campaigns to privatize social insurance have intensified.

Nora Rose Moosnick, *Adopting Maternity: White Women who Adopt Transracially and Transnationally*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. \$54.95

Transnational and transracial adoption has a transformative effect on society, the family, and the individual. The literature on adoption covers what parents may expect regarding the adoption process, their child's health and development, and identity issues for the child and family. Few works have previously considered what internal transformations may transpire for adoptive mothers in their conceptualizations of maternity, race, and gender. In this book, Nora Moosnick juxtaposes feminist portrayals of motherhood against the statements of twenty-two adoptive mothers of White, Biracial, Black, and Asian children.

Social constructivism provides a theoretical framework for considerations of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. With a sample composed of White middle-class mothers who have adopted children from a variety of racial backgrounds, Moosnick examines the women's experiences for evidence of changed attitudes towards maternity, racism, and maternal fitness. She questions whether maternal identity is contingent on the adopted child's race and she

indeed finds differences. While the mothers of White and Asian children claim total ownership of their children, the mothers of Black and Biracial children express a shared sense of ownership with the Black community.

With families that do not fit the norm and children who experience acts of discrimination, Moosnick probes the women's attitudes and behaviors for examples of active resistance to racism. All the women who adopted children of another race voice a heightened racial awareness. Their actions vary: while many describe confronting racism in their own families, only three mothers have made attempts to address inequities in their schools and communities. In their position of what has been characterized as "legitimate" and "not legitimate" motherhood, as women who mother but did not give birth, Moosnick questions whether the adoptive mothers challenge cultural ideologies of maternal fitness that favor White, middle-class women and how they characterize the fitness of birth mothers. While some recognize the political nature of transracial adoption, the mothers distance themselves from political issues by ascribing fateful or religious rather than political interpretations to their adoptions. In describing their children's birth mothers, the adoptive mothers try to reconcile their gratitude for the opportunity to parent with an understanding of how they could relinquish a child. Their views of birth mothers vary by race; White birth mothers are most often described as unselfish, while Asian, Black, and White birth mothers of Biracial children are viewed with greater ambiguity. Women with open adoptions had experiences that present opportunities to confound traditional cultural notions of maternity and redefine restrictive notions about the role of birth mothers.

Moosnick ultimately finds that the women she interviews speak in the rhetoric of religion and that her research endeavor may have been better couched in the language of their own perspective rather than hers of feminist humanism. With a small sample and no clear cut answers, this book is not meant to prescribe policies or practice for adoption professionals. Rather, its value lies in emphasizing the importance of an ongoing critical examination regarding gender, class, and race ideologies in transracial and transnational adoption

Amy Conley, University of California, Berkeley