



2010

*Adoption in the United States: A Reference for Families, Professionals, and Students.* Martha J. Henry and Daniel Pollack. Reviewed by Dorinda N. Noble.

Dorinda N. Noble  
*Texas State University-San Marcos*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>

 Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Noble, Dorinda N. (2010) "*Adoption in the United States: A Reference for Families, Professionals, and Students.* Martha J. Henry and Daniel Pollack. Reviewed by Dorinda N. Noble," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol37/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [maira.bundza@wmich.edu](mailto:maira.bundza@wmich.edu).



other socioeconomic markers. Still, as he shows, differences linger in health markers, but there is no straightforward answer as to why these differences exist. Barr argues that while there probably is very little overt racism, many physicians (who are usually White) and other health care providers harbor unconscious biases toward racial groups different from their own. He presents arguments both supporting the bias explanation and those discounting it, though nowhere does he or anyone cite studies to support their claims. However, he presents a handful of anecdotes demonstrating unconscious biases among medical professionals. Barr meticulously analyzes the evidence and concludes that racial bias is a plausible explanation for at least some of the variance persisting in health.

Barr outlines some concrete steps to bridge the gap in health outcomes, including increasing trust in the medical field among African Americans. Researchers have suggested that as a result of systematic and historical differential treatment, African Americans have a low level of trust in the medical establishment, causing them to seek medical care and undergo recommended medical procedures less often. This phenomenon may account for some of the differences in treatment and health outcomes between racial groups. The natural reaction of those in the medical field is denial, but Barr asserts that in order to make meaningful strides in closing the health gap, the issue must be honestly addressed and physicians should receive extensive cultural competency training. This suggestion raises interesting questions, and should certainly be explored in more detail.

*Krista Drescher-Burke, University of California, Berkeley*

Martha J. Henry and Daniel Pollack, *Adoption in the United States: A Reference for Families, Professionals, and Students*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum, 2008. \$42.95 papercover.

Adoption is an intriguing topic. It raises many quandaries, such as whether a child is shaped more by genetics or environment; how similar a family created by adoption is to a family created by marriage and genetics; if and when a birth parent who chooses adoption can resolve the resulting emotions.

Similarly, legislatures argue about whether a suitable adoptive parent must be married, heterosexual, or even of normal weight. Seeing Americans spend small fortunes to adopt children from other countries triggers questions about what motivates such sacrifice. Besides generating lively debate, these issues also spawn rigorous (and sometimes not-so rigorous) research. Despite all the talk, however, many citizens are not well-versed in the real complexities of adoption.

This book is a solid resource for citizens to delve into the legal, monetary, social, and emotional complexities of adoption. It is a clear, straightforward overview of adoption history, current adoption laws, costs adoptive parents may expect, different types of modern adoption, physical and mental health issues adoptive parents should consider, and how adopted children may respond to their adopted status at different developmental stages. Citizens and professionals alike should find this reference handbook helpful in pointing them toward governmental and private resources that explain and facilitate adoption matters. The book is particularly useful for those who want to learn more about international adoption, as it gives a careful exposition of the governmental processes that prudent adoption agencies and adoptive parents should follow when pursuing inter-country placements. While the book identifies some prominent research addressing various aspects of adoption (such as the outcomes for transracial adoption), the book is not a research exposition; it is meant to broadly inform the reader on practical issues and useful resources that shape modern adoption.

Academic readers will find the book to be valuable for its up-to-date information about adoption processes, while general readers will find that the book provides a broad sweep of adoption information. The book's style is unadorned and unbiased; it is not a "feel-good" book softened by heart-warming stories or pictures of happy families but a book for serious readers, giving practical suggestions about what kinds of topics may emerge in a home study, what questions to ask when embarking on an international adoption, what documents an adoptive family should gather, and how to find a pediatrician who is sensitive to the garbled medical histories of most foster and adopted children.

One of the most informative and useful aspects of the book is the appendix. Here the reader can examine an array of data about such matters as state laws regulating access to original birth records; different states' time frames from placement to adoption finalization; states' legal stances toward adoption by same-sex couples; state safe-haven laws; allowable birth parent expenses; states with putative father registries; and the countries which most frequently send children to the United States for adoption. This information is quite illuminating, which would be challenging for most readers to collect individually. The book truly lives up to its name as a "reference source," and anyone interested in adoption should have a copy.

*Dorinda N. Noble, Texas State University–San Marcos*

Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Reassembling Social Security: A Survey of Pensions and Health care Reforms in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. \$150.00 hardcover.

Latin American countries, and particularly the countries of the region's Southern Cone, have long been social security pioneers. They were the first outside of Europe to introduce social insurance based on Bismarkian principles and in the 1980s, they pioneered the privatization of social security by establishing commercially managed mandatory retirement savings accounts. This latter development has been particularly important for social security policy in other parts of the world. Commercial savings accounts have been introduced in several Eastern European and Central Asian countries and there have been fierce debates about their impact. Privatization has also influenced health policy in Latin America and resulted in the greater marketization of medical services.

Although these developments have been extensively debated in the literature, this compendious volume by Latin America's most respected social security scholar provides a comprehensive overview of recent trends in the region with regard to pensions and health care. The book is divided into four parts. It begins with an introductory chapter tracing the history of social insurance and the key principles governing these programs. It then discusses the state of pensions and