



Blue-Ribbon Babies and Labors of Love: Race, Class, and Gender in U.S. Adoption Practice

Christine Ward Gailey

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Most Americans assume that shared genes or blood relationships provide the strongest basis for family. What can adoption tell us about this widespread belief and American kinship in general? *Blue-Ribbon Babies and Labors of Love* examines the ways class, gender, and race shape public and private adoption in the United States. Christine Ward Gailey analyzes the controversies surrounding international, public, and transracial adoption, and how the political and economic dynamics that shape adoption policies and practices affect the lives of people in the adoption nexus: adopters, adoptees, birth parents, and agents within and across borders. Interviews with white and African-American adopters, adoption social workers, and adoption lawyers, combined with her long-term participant-observation in adoptive communities, inform her analysis of how adopters' beliefs parallel or diverge from the dominant assumptions about kinship and family. Gailey demonstrates that the ways adoptive parents speak about their children vary across hierarchies of race, class, and gender. She shows that adopters' notions about their children's backgrounds and early experiences, as well as their own "family values," influence child rearing practices. Her extensive interviews with 131 adopters reveal profoundly different practices of kinship in the United States today.

Moving beyond the ideology of "blood is thicker than water," Gailey presents a new way of viewing kinship and family formation, suitable to times of rapid social and cultural change.

Blue-Ribbon Babies and Labors of Love: Race, Class, and Gender in U.S. Adoption Practice Details

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From Reader Review Blue-Ribbon Babies and Labors of Love: Race, Class, and Gender in U.S. Adoption Practice for online ebook

Sarah says

Gailey gets right to the heart of some of the many differences across different types of adoptive families (public, private domestic, international). What a breath of fresh air!

Jamie says

I picked up this book after a friend of mine from college adopted an African American baby. I read the chapter on transracial adoption, recommended the book to her, and then decided to read the rest of the book. As I read the book, I continued recommending it to pretty much everyone I know who has adopted children, was adopted themselves, or who works in the field.

There's a lot of very interesting information in this book. Some of it is heartbreaking. It covers public agency adoption, private agency adoption, older child adoption, transracial, special needs, international, and discusses the creation of family bonds. Due to the personal and private nature of adoption, the author admits to having to search to balance out her "snowball sample" of interviewees -- for instance, one group of lesbian parents refused to let her interview them for fear the loopholes in which they were able to adopt would close to them.

This book is a bit academic in flavor - not difficult, but definitely not an easy read. I found the subject matter so interesting that it went relatively quickly. The author is fairly critical of what she calls business/professional international adopters -- out of all her sample, this was the only group in which acceptance and love of the adopted child was contingent upon their behavior and academic performance.

Recommended for anyone interested in the subject.
