



They're All My Children

Danielle Wozniak

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The first book on foster care written from foster mothers' perspectives, *They're All My Children* voices the often painful experiences of contemporary U.S. foster mothers as they struggle to mother and care-work in the face of exploitative social relations with the state. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research, Wozniak, herself a former foster mother and an anthropologist, presents and analyzes women's personal stories about fostering to reflect on the larger socio-cultural context of American family life—namely, how we think about kinship, identity, and work. Foster mothers construct enduring kinship relationships with children, and often with the children's biological families. These relationships enhance children's chances to grow and thrive and in turn extend women's kin relationships into often distant and disparate communities. Wozniak also highlights the economic side of fostering to show how foster mothers are both mothers and workers; foster children are both providers and provided for, adored sentimental children and economic figures. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation, Wozniak argues that we have not gone far enough in understanding the experiences of these women whose life work lies outside the usual boundaries. Nor have child welfare gone far enough in revising the theories upon which child welfare policies are based. Foster mothers and their experiences challenge the patriarchal, nuclear family ideals upon which foster care programs are based, a challenge that *They're All My Children* takes forward.

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