actors from the public domain, exclude counter-narratives and maintain the electoral dominance of the PAP.

The insightful case study on the policing of lawyers, in Chapter 5, demonstrates how the authoritarian state has dismantled legal professional autonomy by prohibiting the Law Society from commenting on legislation. Rajah astutely observes that the relationship between the authoritarian state and the Law Society has been metaphorically reduced to that of a parent and a child, with "moments of adolescent-like subversion and rebellion" (218). The Religious Harmony Act, which attempts to separate religion from the political sphere, could have been discussed within a global context by examining the failed attempts of authoritarian regimes in Pahlavi Iran, Kemalist Turkey, the former Soviet Union and China in adopting this approach. This comparative approach would have more clearly exposed the key motive driving the separation of religion and politics—the control of religious actors and institutions by authoritarian secular states. That said, Rajah's eloquently written book is an impressive *tour de force*, in theoretical and empirical terms, and an important contribution to the academic literature on authoritarian governance.

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Children and the Politics of Cultural Belonging. By Alice Hearst. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012. 211 pp. $90.00 cloth.

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In the arena of adoption, consideration of "the best interest of the child" has arguably become central when facilitating placement of children. One key consideration of "the best interest of the child" is the cultural environment in which they will grow up. Alice Hearst challenges us to rethink perceptions of "the best interest of the child" and how they have been incorporated into adoption practices. Although much of the analyses in the book focus upon laws

and legal cases, the book should draw a wider audience of scholars who study the range of actors involved in adoption, such as adoption professionals, biological and adoptive parents, and adult adoptees.

Hearst initially identifies some problem areas in current thinking on cultural belonging of children with a discussion of theories of multiculturalism, politics of community and communal politics in particular. Subsequently, the study explores these problem areas by examining laws and legal cases in three types of adoption: domestic transracial adoption of non-American Indian children (Chapter 3), domestic adoption of American Indian children (Chapter 4), and transnational adoption (Chapter 5). The book's strength lies in how Hearst draws out the multiple dimensions of cultural belonging. The author interrogates the meanings of cultural belonging as it is debated and contested in the legal arena. A significant focus of the study is on the influence of adoption placement on communities, particularly marginalized ones.

To offer a theoretical contribution, Hearst draws from what Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann (1998: 89) call "constructed primordiality" to frame the effects of displacement on adopted and foster care children from a community. Thus, adoptive families endeavor to construct a firm identity for adopted children through blood ties or other types of commonalities in their "claim[ing] of [the] child as one of their own, regardless of whether the child has spent significant amount of time with the group" (49). From the child's perspective, the author argues that going through a process of searching for identity by seeking biological and ethnic origins cannot be dismissed. Moreover, the author critiques theories of multiculturalism, which argue that disenfranchised groups should be given autonomy to choose their own identity. Hearst responds that these theories lack applicability to adoptees' experiences and argues that most children typically do not have power to make choices as to which community or family they can belong.

By placing children's cultural belongingness as a contested issue in the context of three adoption types that are governed by different laws, Hearst shows how they all produce uneven responses from communities whose culturally and racially marginalized identities are at stake. The study traces disputes around several adoption laws. For example, Hearst discusses how racial-matching versus transracial adoption practices occurred after enactment of the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Interethnic Placement Provisions of 1996 (MEPA–IEP). Both laws prohibit consideration of race and ethnicity in denying or delaying adoption or foster care placement. To counteract such laws, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) strongly argued for consideration of race and condemned transracial place-

ment. Many critics offered that MEPA–IEP worked in favor of white families so they could adopt children who were overwhelmingly nonwhite (McRoy et al. 2007). Since 1972, NABSW has argued that it is inadequate for a black child to be raised by a white family in a white community. This debate prompted questions on "cultural authenticity" and the "cultural fitness" of white parents to raise a black child (Maillard 2003).

Hearst contends that usage of "racial culture" in adoption and foster care is problematic. Hearst argues that race and culture have become conflated and require conceptual disentanglement (83). Further, the author asks what can be considered as black culture and who most appropriately represents such a practice. Still, Hearst agrees with Twila Perry who argues that "transracial adoption devalues parenting and families in the African American community" (85) and that considering race in adoption procedures is appropriate. Although Hearst is correct that race is significant, a question remains as to how her argument dialogues with the multiculturalism literature, which tends to maintain that race is not a useful analytical tool for multiculturalism (Kivisto 2002). Drawing from the author's analysis on domestic adoption, race is very much part of multiple cultural areas where a child could belong.

Throughout the book, Hearst questions whether adoption is the only the solution to finding a place in which parentless children can fit. The book's overall contribution is to create a more flexible and meaningful way to think about "the best interest of the child" in adoption placement and a broader definition of community belongingness. More specifically, Hearst suggests the implementation of a mechanism for communities to be more inclusive so that a parentless child does not require adoption to be included in a community. This, in turn, will provide parentless children with the time and space to explore their own sense of belonging and identity.

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