When parents must rely on public assistance and family shelters to provide for their children’s most basic needs, they lose autonomy. Within a system of public assistance that already stigmatizes and isolates its beneficiaries, their family lives become subject to public scrutiny and criticism. They are parenting in public.

This book is an in-depth examination of the realities of life for parents and their children in family shelters. The author uses the Massachusetts family shelter system to explore the impact of asset and deficit-oriented help-giving approaches as they are experienced by mothers and service providers.

The format of the book is unique. Following each chapter are the “reflections” of a mother who has parented in a shelter, a front-line worker, and a shelter director. The author and contributors propose a “Power With” policy and practice framework that runs counter to the prevailing “Power Over” cultural policy trends.

Contributors include Rosa Clark, Brenda Farrell, Deborah Gray, Michelle Kahan, Margaret A. Leonard, Mary T. Lewis, Nancy Schwoyer, and Elisabeth Ward.

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