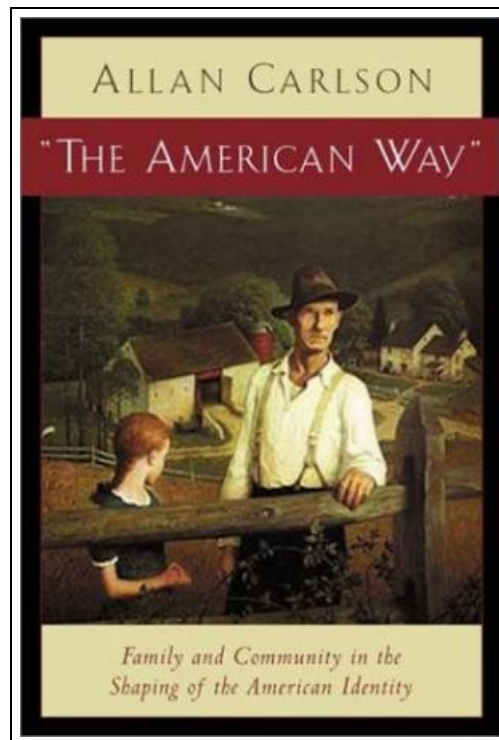


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Reviews

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(Marlin Bergstrom)*

THE "AMERICAN WAY": FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN THE SHAPING OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY



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ISI Books. Paperback / softback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The "American Way": Family and Community in the Shaping of the American Identity, Allan Carlson, The United States of America is arguably more family-centered than any other Western nation. If polling data can be trusted, the vast majority of Americans--a higher percentage than in any other nation--would rather build society around the family and the church than around the individual. In fact, family and religiously grounded community--not individualism, not capitalism, and not a commitment to polyglot cultural pluralism--have historically provided the basis of America's dominant self-understanding. The American Way, Allan Carlson's episodic history of the last century, shows how the nation's identity has been shaped by carefully constructed images of the American family and the American home. From the surprisingly radical measures put forth by Theodore Roosevelt to encourage stable, large families, to the unifying role of the image of the home in assimilating immigrants, to the maternalist activists who attempted to transform the New Deal and other social welfare programs into vehicles for shoring up traditional family life, Carlson convincingly demonstrates the widespread appeal exerted by the images of family and community. Carlson also shows how a family- and faith-centered discourse anchored Henry Luce's publishing enterprise and even American foreign policy during the Cold War. But many of the reforms and ideas championed by pro-family forces in the twentieth century--family activists' embrace of the federal bureaucracy, Luce's propaganda for suburban living and modern architecture--inadvertently worked to undermine family and community life, writes Carlson. And he shows that the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which effectively made it illegal for employers to offer malebreadwinners a living wage, has made it harder for traditional families to make ends meet, further helping to fracture family life. Carlson concludes by arguing that, despite the...



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