

Copyright American Psychological Association

Authors provide in-depth and actionable strategies for operationalizing trauma-informed and culturally responsive child welfare practice with children and families of color. This book also does a commendable job of outlining the importance of addressing families' economic and concrete support needs as a core strategy for improving child welfare outcomes.

—**Krista Thomas, PhD**, Senior Policy Fellow, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

This is a must-read book for those addressing the needs of children in foster care. The contributors outline important information and recommendations for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.

—**Michael J. Lawler, PhD**, President, Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences, Yakima, WA

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>ix</i>
1. Understanding Challenges for Children of Color in the Child Welfare System	3
Gloria J. O. Carpenter and Yvette R. Harris	
2. Decreasing Disproportionality of Children of Color in the Child Welfare System	23
Patrick R. Nelson	
3. American Indian Children in the Child Welfare System	55
Kathryn D. Moon-LaPlante	
4. African American Children in the Child Welfare System	69
Brenda Jones Harden, Danielle Burns, and Karen Watkins-Lewis	
5. Latinx Children in the Child Welfare System	99
Rosanna Sanchez John	
6. Asian American Children in the Child Welfare System	119
Anh-Luu Huynh-Hohnbaum	
7. Multiracial Children in the Child Welfare System: Balancing Traumatic Adversity and Cultural Resilience in Therapeutic Treatment and Advocacy	135
Rebecca N. Ezechukwu, Destiny M. Waggoner, and Raven E. Cuellar	

Copyright American Psychological Association

8. Immigrant Children in the Child Welfare System	165
Francesca Skowronski	
9. Reunification and Culturally Specific Parenting Practices for Families of Color in the Child Welfare System	187
Brien K. Ashdown and Amanda N. Faherty	
10. Adoption of Children of Color From the Child Welfare System	201
Yvette R. Harris	
Afterword: Ten Recommendations for Improving Outcomes and Experiences of Children of Color in the Child Welfare System	219
Yvette R. Harris and Gloria J. O. Carpenter	
<i>Index</i>	<i>223</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>235</i>

1 UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN OF COLOR IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

GLORIA J. O. CARPENTER AND YVETTE R. HARRIS

The status of children within the child welfare system (CWS), particularly children of color within the CWS, provides evidence for system-wide restructuring of current policies and practices. The current volume highlights the importance of flexible and culturally specific evidence-based resources and services for children of color in the CWS. Given the documented adverse outcomes for children within the CWS, along with a recent social trend for all policies and practices to be embedded within an antiracist framework, this volume appeals to the need for CWS policies and practices grounded in a framework of inclusivity and equity to promote healthy child and adult development. The chapters in this volume present a focus on policies and services that include families' cultural values for advancement and well-being, while reconciling the larger systems to be able to support these initiatives.

In the 1930s and also notably in the early 1960s, the CWS was intended to be a service providing financial aid to our most vulnerable population—children without adequate care. As the years progressed, that service evolved into a national system that now sets structural, yet often subjective, guidelines for child-rearing—with insufficient attention to the financial needs or the diverse societal and familial lifestyles that may not align with those

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000369-001>

Children of Color in the Child Welfare System: Psychological Research and Best Practices,
Y. R. Harris and G. J. O. Carpenter (Editors)

Copyright © 2024 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

guidelines. The CWS data show an increasing propensity for children of color to be removed from their familial homes with inconsistent services given to the range of families supported within the system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). Thus, children of color in the CWS today face unique challenges that are intertwined as different factors function to meet these guidelines. These factors include: (a) *disproportionality*, including placement issues; (b) *disparities*, including quality and quantity of services received during care as well as support in exiting the system; (c) *familial separation and cultural indifferences*, which contribute to mental illnesses and developmental dysfunction; and (d) *inherent racism* within the policies and practices of the CWS. The current text argues for a restructure of processes that would address these factors for effective protection and nurturance of children of color in the CWS as well as their continued development in the greater society.

DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITIES

It has been consistently documented that children of color are overly represented in the CWS (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a; Ganasarajah et al., 2017). The overrepresentation, or disproportionality, commonly refers to the percentage of specific racial groups represented in the CWS when compared with its actual existence in the population at-large. Thus, the child welfare literature tends to refer to this phenomenon as simply racial disproportionality. Similarly, within the child welfare literature, much is known of the deleterious outcomes, particularly for children of color, in comparison with White children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a; Doyle, 2007). This phenomenon exists across the continuum of the CWS, beginning with the initial referral for an investigation of child well-being through the child's exit from the system as legally aged adults. These outcomes represent immeasurable disparities that affect society at-large.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Children's Bureau, 2021), there were 407,493 children younger than 18 years old in foster care at the end of the 2020 Federal Fiscal Year (FFY).¹ The Children's Bureau (2021) indicated that the mean age of children in foster care was 8.4 years old, with 51% being male and 43% identified as White. Interestingly, the total number of children in foster care (i.e., 407,493) is a stark decrease from the previous

¹The 2020 FFY ended September 30, 2020.

FFY (i.e., 2019), which ended with approximately 427,000 children in care (see Table 1.1 for a monthly distribution of children entering foster care). The number of children in foster care at the end of FFY 2020 was the fewest in care since FFY 2014, and it is the largest single-year decrease during the previous decade (2010–2020). Although this might seem to have a positive implication for the number of children remaining in their familial home, this difference is most likely attributed to the agencies' temporary pause and limited availability of services across several months during the 2020 FFY (see below for a more detailed discussion).

Based on data released over the years by national research centers, children of color are disproportionately represented in the CWS (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, 2021; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a, 2021b). The data indicate that although Black children represent only 14% of the total child population, they comprise over 23% of all children in foster care (see Table 1.2). Similarly, American Indian children represented less than 1% of the total child population in the United States but comprise 2% of the children in the foster care system. By comparison, White children comprise 43% of children in foster care and represent 50% of the total child population.

Furthermore, data indicate that children of color remain in the CWS system for a disproportionately longer period of time than White children do (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). During these extensive stays, children of color suffer from adjustment disorders, traumatic experiences of familial separation, and other mental health illnesses. Psychotherapy and other interventions to support the children are often sparse and ineffective. Systemic interventions aimed at family reunification have also been only marginally successful for children of color (Kim & Garcia, 2016; Tarren-Sweeney, 2010). Despite a decade-long trend of stable or increasing rates of adoption outcomes for children in the CWS (excluding FFY 2020), this trend is less favorable for children of color, particularly African American and Native American children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). Moreover, scholars have suggested that children of color are more likely than their White peers to cross directly over from the CWS to the juvenile justice system (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, 2021; Children's Bureau, 2021). Consequently, once in the CWS, these same children of color may have a familiar pathway and greater likelihood of entering detention centers as adults. The overwhelming number of children of color in the CWS, combined with the unremarkable services while there and subsequent adverse developmental outcomes, create a dynamic of dysfunction that underscores a need for reconstructing the CWS.

TABLE 1.1. Foster Care Entries by Month for FFYs 2019 and 2020

	Sum													March, April and May Totals
	Entered	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	
FY 2019	252,400	22,100	18,600	17,600	21,800	19,700	21,500	21,900	22,800	19,700	20,800	23,600	22,200	66,200
2020	216,800	21,800	17,800	17,500	20,700	19,700	18,500	13,600	15,500	16,400	18,100	18,300	19,100	47,600
Change	-35,500	-300	-800	-100	-1,100	0	-3,000	-8,300	-7,300	-3,300	-2,700	-5,300	-3,100	-18,600

Note. FFYs = Federal fiscal years. Data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS; Children's Bureau, 2021). Reprinted from *Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY 2011-FY 2020* (p. 3), by Children's Bureau, 2021, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/trends-fostercare-adoption-11thru20.pdf>). In the public domain.

TABLE 1.2. Racial Distribution of General Population Children Versus Children in Foster Care

Race	General population of children	Children in foster care
Hispanic or Latino	25.41%	20.84%
Non-Hispanic American Indian	0.85%	2.40%
Non-Hispanic Asian, Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders	5.01%	0.73%
Non-Hispanic Black	13.71%	22.75%
Non-Hispanic multiple race groups	4.33%	7.56%
Non-Hispanic White	50.50%	44.37%
Race unknown	0%	1.36%

Note. Data from Annie E. Casey Foundation (2018).

Some researchers and practitioners have argued that the phenomenon of racial disproportionality is fundamentally inherent in American values of child-rearing, which is projected onto the American CWS (Dettlaff, 2021; Weber & Morrison, 2021). Many others have examined the confluence of social and systemic factors, such as racism and poverty, as underlying factors within a circuitous and duplicitous agency that creates and worsens the very cycle of dysfunction that it is intended to shield (Broadhurst & Mason, 2020; Roberts, 2021). Within these factors is a misconception of cultural values that influence parenting strategies, that are often mislabeled as maltreatment, neglect, or other indicators warranting investigations and subsequent support from the CWS. Although the CWS has acknowledged differences in outcomes for children based on racial background, there has been minimal effective interventions to address and alleviate the damaging outcomes (see Chapter 2, this volume).

FAMILIAL SEPARATION AND CULTURAL INDIFFERENCES

The CWS states their priority is to provide services that are designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020b). This agenda broadly covers prevention and intervention strategies with all systems that directly interact with children and families, particularly the core system—the family unit itself. These services include management of parenting styles and values that emanate within the home and family. When family values and parenting styles are believed to be harmful to healthy child

development, CWS intervenes with more appropriate services to promote the health and well-being of children. Unfortunately, much of this work is documented as contributing to mental illnesses and developmental dysfunction for children and for the family unit (Rosen et al., 2021).

A primary strategy used by the CWS to ensure child safety and healthy development has been to remove the child from their home and family unit. As stated earlier, this strategy of familial separation is implemented at higher rates with children of color than with their White counterparts (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). Data show that there is an increasing number of children of color, specifically, who are removed from the home as opposed to receiving services within their home and family unit (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). This separation brings added mental instability and increases the need for adjustment by the child.

Research indicates that many children in the CWS exhibit high levels of stress symptoms, and children of color exhibit higher levels of posttraumatic stress than their White counterparts (Kisiel et al., 2017; Kolko et al., 2010). In addition to potential reasons that precipitate a referral for services (e.g., child abuse, neglect, maltreatment), many children of color experience trauma and toxic stress by virtue of their encounter with CWS and the adjustment required to live in an out-of-home placement (Cerdeña et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2010; Pickett, 2020). Thus, the very system expected to intervene in support of our children is also contributing to their increased risks for mental illness. An exploration of this phenomenon is clearly needed, as it breaks a vital principle for most mental health and social service professions of “do no harm.”

In addition to serving as a conduit for increased mental illness, which does not ensure child safety, the strategy of familial separation threatens the unity and function of the family unit, thereby weakening the family and making family permanency even more difficult to attain. Family involvement with the CWS is known to have negative impacts on the parent–child relationship, particularly for children of color. Scholars have found that many children begin to question and lose trust in their parents once the CWS enters the family, even at an investigative level. Familial separation and foster care placement bring about an increased loss of respect for parents, and this disrespect continues even when the child is reunited with their families (Roberts, 2021). Furthermore, involvement with the CWS causes parents to doubt their own authority and ability to discipline and correct their children, out of fear of punitive intervention from the CWS. In addition, parents’ values of encouraging culturally specific and appropriate behaviors are thwarted while living under the guise of expectations delineated by the

CWS (see Chapter 9). Research has found these phenomena to be most prevalent among families of color and families who have a low socioeconomic status (Roberts, 2021). Thus, there is a need for the CWS to recognize their corollary impact on healthy child and family functioning within the priorities for achieving permanency and strengthening of families.

The forced separation of children of color from their familial home and cultural lifestyle is a continued historical and American practice of control with detrimental outcomes for children. The United States participated in these practices in separate instances with African American children during slavery, Native American children during the late 1800s through 1970s, and now unaccompanied/undocumented (UC/UD) immigrant children who travel from countries referred to as the Northern Triangle in Central America (i.e., El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). This practice of separating families with UC/UD immigrant children is even more problematic, as these children may have already experienced trauma during their migration to the United States, and they are dependent on their parents for stability and reassurance as they acculturate to their new environment (Crea et al., 2017). These UC/UD immigrant children are placed in the foster care system, often without an option to be placed with existing and known family in the United States.

It has been suggested that, in cases of familial separation, a natural bridge for maintaining the parent–child relationship and cultural traditions would be that of kinship care placements (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019; Falconnier et al., 2010). Data collected during the decade ending in 2020 showed a consistent trend of 4% of children within the CWS living in kinship care home placements (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022). Since 2020, the most recent data on the prevalence of kinship care show a decline in kinship care to 3%, but these data are reported with caution, given the lower response rate than in previous years (due to alternate data collection methods employed during the COVID-19 pandemic; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022).

Kinship care placement is often considered the least disruptive placement for children in the CWS who are removed from their parents' care. Unfortunately, this seemingly healthier route is not a seamless process. Many families of color report that it is financially more difficult for extended family members to take care of the child, because they do not receive the financial resources that a foster family would (Roberts, 2021). Kinship care can be informal or be a more structured, formal placement. Both placements allow for the state to take legal guardianship of the child, but only the more structured, formal kinship placement provides financial support to the child while in the extended family's care.

Despite the stable, low rate of kinship care, the federal government only announced in 2022 a proposal for a higher financial investment in kinship care resources as an alternative to the typical policy initiatives prioritizing foster-care placements (Children's Bureau, 2022; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a). Among other benefits, the Family First Prevention Services Act authorized a new optional title IV-E Prevention Program funding for time-limited prevention services to support programs such as in-home parenting skills and kinship care instead of foster care placements (Children's Bureau, 2022). These programs are crucial for preventing familial separation and prioritizing a respect for family values and autonomy in parenting.

The CWS needs an understanding and respect for the diversity of families whose parenting styles are indeed influenced by culture and generational experiences here in the United States, but also often in other countries that may differ from the social experiences of the United States. Understanding this phenomenon requires openness and flexibility to accept the differences that may emerge within families. Furthermore, respecting this phenomenon requires a priority for it to be incorporated within policies on familial separation and interventions to protect children.

INHERENT RACISM

Much of the literature discussing the ineffectiveness of the CWS suggests an inherent racism within its policies and practices. The factors highlighted here (e.g., disproportionality, disparities, familial separation, cultural indifferences) are all predominantly pervasive for children of color and, for decades they have been consistently linked to negative outcomes for children of color (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a; Rosen et al., 2021). Despite this, the policies and practices that perpetuate these factors are largely unnoticed or overlooked as determinants that could be impactful for improving outcomes for children of color. Scholars and practitioners suggest that the effectiveness of the CWS requires an antiracist examination of its underlying framework (Dettlaff, 2021; White et al., 2021). Without this antiracist lens to restructure its policies and practices, the CWS itself is considered a national legislative oppressive force for people of color within the United States.

An examination of the CWS for the inequities in its policies and practices requires an understanding of its purpose and function reconciled with its actual outcomes. The Child Welfare Information Gateway (2020b) has outlined a detailed process of how the CWS works to fulfill its purposes of ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families. This

national system is financially supported by the federal government, but it is enacted primarily by state governments. Thus, the CWS policies and practices may differ in different states. Despite these differences, the negative outcomes for children of color across the nation receiving services in the CWS generate concern and pause for the system's effectiveness in its care for all children in the nation but particularly for children of color.

Each level of the decision-making process for services within the CWS must be examined for its specific fit to the families in its state or catchment area. From the initial report of child maltreatment and request for services to the investigation of safety standards and resources within the child's family, the CWS should demonstrate culturally sensitive practices that work alongside all families to understand the family's values before imposing their standard of "good parenting" (Ashdown & Faherty, 2020). Unfortunately, the typical "good parenting" standard based on White, middle-class American and European families (e.g., Baumrind, 1996) that have been studied within the United States are not appropriate for families who do not fit the mold of those circumstances—usually families of color and particularly immigrant families who have a very different set of values and beliefs for child-rearing. The implicit bias established from formal education and training often influences the CWS agency and staff's decision-making process.

In cases of determining good parenting and child outcomes, the CWS requires flexibility and openness for accepting culturally diverse standards of parenting as well as what constitutes healthy child development. Furthermore, when separation must occur within immigrant families, reunification goals suggest a need for CWS to make every effort to provide a foster placement where children are encouraged to maintain meaningful connections to their culture of origin.

Researchers suggest that legislation during the 1970s began a major movement for reunification and permanent placement, specifically for adoption (Harris, 2014; McRoy, 1994). For example, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 gives tribal governments exclusive jurisdiction to determine removal and placement of children who reside on a reservation. This or similar legislation is not available for other cultural groups involved in the CWS. Most similar is the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), originally authorized in 1974 and amended and reauthorized over the years. This legislation was put forth to create and govern policies on child abuse and neglect, as well as related issues, to ensure optimal child well-being. CAPTA now includes a multitude of vulnerable populations and extensions of federal resources to fund initiatives to States in support of research and data collection. Those federal resources are used for initiatives to promote prevention,

assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities related to child well-being (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). Although CAPTA provides more resources to intervene in a variety of abuse and neglect incidents, there have been minimal legislative efforts aimed at resources to understand cultural differences in parenting and culturally related environmental factors that influence parenting and child development.

As such, another layer of complexity to be noted is that of structural racism imbedded in society and seen in the CWS. Data indicate 61.9% of poor African American children are living in areas of concentrated poverty without decent and affordable housing, excellent schools, or adequate health and consumer services; this is compared with 13.7% of poor white children living in similar conditions (Drake & Rank, 2009). A federal report identified four contributing factors to overrepresentation of certain children of color in child welfare: poverty, racial bias, inadequate access to services, and challenges in finding permanent homes (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007). These four factors are directly aligned with the structural racism found in the United States.

Family income is perhaps the single most important factor in determining where children and adolescents spend their lives. Poverty is often a high-risk indicator for being reported for child maltreatment. Although poverty is not a direct predictor of maltreatment, it is often found to influence a parent's ability to access basic needs, such as housing and food. Furthermore, the stress brought on by poverty can also affect a parent's mental health, which effects the parent's ability to be present and provide a nurturing space for their children (Duva & Metzger, 2011). Additionally, research has shown an association between poverty and increased rates of substantiated child maltreatment (Eckenrode et al., 2014). The deleterious effects of poverty cannot be understated.

Several noteworthy legislations have impacted the CWS over the more recent decades. These regulations and resources were meant to support and strengthen all children in the CWS and to especially target the inequities experienced by children of color. Legislation, such as the State Court Improvement Program of 1993, the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA; also known as MEPA/IEP to acknowledge amendments to the act passed in 1996), and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, have mostly focused on a macrosystem approach to policies meant to encourage permanent placements. For example, MEPA is intended to reduce barriers to transracial adoptions of African American children by prohibiting child welfare agencies that receive federal funding from using race as a factor to determine potential foster or adoptive parent placements (U.S. Department of Health & Human

Services, 2020). The law also requires diligent recruitment, whereby agencies recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in out-of-home care.

Research findings suggest these systemic policies have provided mixed direct benefits for families and children's well-being (McRoy, 2003; McRoy et al., 2007; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Although transracial adoptions increased over the past decade, since 2005, racial disparities have persisted in that a child's race remained associated with the percentage of adoptions and the time spent in care prior to adoption (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Specifically, the AFCARS Report (Children's Bureau, 2021) data indicate that Black and Native American children have consistently experienced lower rates of adoption than children of other races and ethnicities. Furthermore, Black children adopted between 2017 and 2019 (a time, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, of overall high adoption rates) had spent the longest period of time in foster care prior to adoption (a median of 33 months) when compared with White children (a median of 27 months) and Hispanic children (28 months; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020).

CAPTA's macrolevel Differential Response Policy (also known as alternative response or dual-track response), however, has indeed proven effective for child and family outcomes regarding placements and reunification, family stability and growth, as well as fewer substantiated rereports/repeat referrals (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020a; Fluke et al., 2016). This policy is recognized as a strengths-based approach that could potentially reduce disproportionality (Martin & Connelly, 2015). The Differential Response Policy promotes an alternative response to family referrals deemed low and moderate risk, whereby a supportive—rather than adversarial—approach is used to partner with parents to identify their individual needs. Thus, in addition to macrolevel policies, more direct, microlevel services are needed to support families and children. Direct training to staff that includes bias training, culturally specific assessment, and interpretation models for the decision-making process for different points of service is also needed.

More recent movements among scholars and practitioners suggest a need to address the root problem of negative outcomes for children of color in the CWS—the racist nature of the CWS. The upEND movement, as well as the deep-end movement, seeks to address racial disparities for children of color who experience high rates of familial separations and external placements in the form of foster care, detentions, or other institutional confinements. Although the upEND reformation supports an abolition of the CWS (Dettlaff et al., 2020), the deep-end reformation supports reducing the

various residential institutions of confinement to which youth are sentenced because of delinquency, status offenses, or technical violations of probation (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020).

The upEND reformation posits a system that supports families and youth to remain connected within their communities and also advocates for macro-level legislation and resources to support such a reform. To this end, the movement necessitates an investment of federal resources directly to families to determine parenting strategies that fit with their values and that provides opportunities for social and economic growth within society.

The deep-end reformation, funded and supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation since 2013, was created from the existing Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiatives to focus on reducing out-of-home placements, particularly for youth of color (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). The specific focus on youth and families of color is an antiracist approach to address systemic and structural barriers that perpetuate the racial disproportionality and disparities in the juvenile justice system. Data from the deep-end reformation has proven that micro-level interventions within a framework of respecting families' home life and their agency to parent, promoting healthy adolescent development, building safe communities with community members, and eliminating racial/ethnic disparities can be powerful determinants of youth success including a decrease in recidivism and later criminal justice involvement during adulthood (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). The deep-end movement has a primary goal of eliminating youth detentions by targeting delinquent behaviors and promoting paths for positive behavior change, personal growth, and connection within the community instead of and before any formal juvenile system involvement occurs (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). This goal allows for youth to remain at home within their neighborhoods while participating in diversion programs—creative community-based services that create partnerships within the community and teach skills that lead to long-term success for youth.

The deep-end movement and the upEND movement are different reformations, yet both aim to keep youth within their homes and communities instead of external residential placements or institutions. Both initiatives maintain that removal of youth from their families creates an oppressive hierarchy that is overwhelmingly impacting families of color and persists into adulthood. While the deep-end movement is focused on partnering with families and communities to reduce youth confinement within the juvenile justice system, the upEND movement has a focus on abolishing the current CWS in favor of a system that supports culturally defined flexible norms of healthy parenting and child development within a family's preferred childrearing environment.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

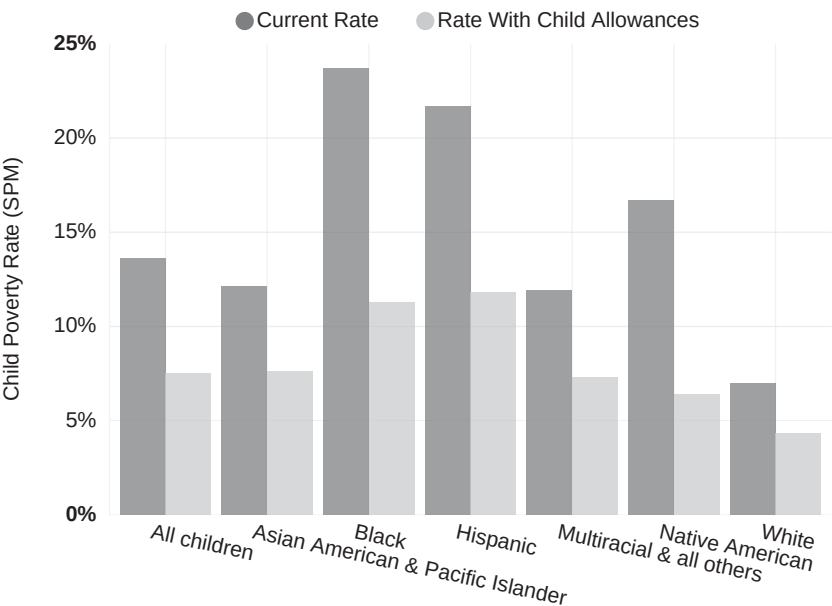
The complexities of the CWS necessitate a focus on macro and micro interventions, yet historical policies and practices struggle to provide equitable and flexible services directly to families, particularly families of color. The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 is akin to the Differential Response Policy mentioned earlier, where agencies partner with parents to understand their needs and provide direct support to the families. This policy aims to increase child safety and well-being via prevention services for treatment and family unification, instead of investigation services for child removal and family dissolution. The policy is intended to move child welfare toward care that is trauma-informed and meets the criteria for research-based programs with flexibility for culturally specific needs.

In general, this law provides greater access to family wrap around services, including mental health services, substance use treatment, and/or improved parenting skills. It has also created a Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, which provides a public list of prevention services and programs that states can use for federal funding to maintain family unification. Since the law was enacted, states with various policies have been slower than expected to submit Family First prevention plans and receive approval (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021a, 2021b). Additionally, rules determining eligibility for services create barriers and stressors for families to identify their need for the support. Therefore, communities of color continue to struggle for needed resources and services that will enable children to remain safely at home with their families.

Most recently, in response to and since the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act of 2020 (the CARES Act), followed by The American Rescue Plan of 2021. These plans were in direct response to the need for the economy's stimulation and recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they also provided a much-needed direct economic support to most Americans.

Both pieces of legislation targeted a major factor that leads to the growing number of children of color in the CWS: lack of income. Under the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan of 2021, most Americans (adults and children) received direct cash payments, an increase in the Child Tax Credit, and an increase and expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Other financial benefits, such as unemployment benefits, healthcare insurance benefits, and college student loan payment reprieves, provided financial incentives to families that combatted some of the economic hardship that resulted from the pandemic. Each bill was effective for 1 year, although the

FIGURE 1.1. Child Allowances Will Slash Child Poverty Across Racial Groups



Note. SPM = supplemental poverty measure. Adapted from *New Child Tax Credit Could Slash Poverty Now and Boost Social Mobility Later*, by C. Pulliam and R. V. Reeves, 2021 (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-child-tax-credit-could-slash-poverty-now-and-boost-social-mobility-later/>). Copyright 2021 by the Brookings Institution. Adapted with permission.

American Rescue Plan of 2021 is expected to boost social mobility later, particularly for Black, Hispanic, and Native American families. In fact, a study from the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University (2021) found that the American Rescue Plan of 2021 lifted more than 5 million children out of poverty, cutting the poverty rate by 50% in 2021 (Wimer & Curran, 2023; see Figure 1.1). However, their continued analyses project that poverty rates will return to prior levels without further policy interventions or strong improvements to the workforce (Wimer & Curran, 2023).

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Coinciding with continued legislative initiatives, given the harmful outcomes for children of color in the CWS, this volume proposes the need for a system-wide restructuring of our CWS to bring about real improvements in our

society at-large. A comprehensive approach to the factors discussed herein provides the openness and flexibility needed for a restructuring of the CWS. This restructure must prioritize family parenting values while dismantling the systemic racism in our country that hinders actual support and resources from reaching children. Furthermore, a restructuring of the CWS must be supported through specific funding initiatives for those healthcare providers and community agency and social service staff working with families and children at both the initial and continued levels of credentialing for licensure and approval certificates.

Thus, the purpose of this edited volume is to serve as a comprehensive resource for professionals who work in the CWS, as well as to those who teach and conduct research on children and families of color in the CWS. Our goal in assembling this edited volume is to provide knowledge to professionals about the challenges that children of color encounter in the CWS as well as to provide these professionals with suggestions on best practices of support.

The volume consists of 10 chapters and an Afterword and begins with a discussion of disproportionality and the unique challenges that children of color—specifically, American Indian, African American, Latinx, Asian American, multiracial, and immigrant children—encounter when they enter the CWS. In addition, the book addresses such placement issues as reunification and adoption and concludes with a discussion of disproportionality and framing research practice and policy for the future.

Each contributor provides background statistics on children of color in the CWS, addresses common types of out-of-home placement, discusses the federal legislation shaping the experiences and trajectories of children of color in the CWS, identifies the developmental and clinical outcomes of children of color in the CWS, and offers suggestions for practitioners working with children and families of color in the CWS. We conclude the volume with a list of top 10 recommendations for improving outcomes and experiences of children of color in the CWS.

REFERENCES

- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2007). *2007 Kids Count data book: State profiles of child well-being*. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-KidsCountDataBook-2007.pdf>
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2018). *2018 Kids Count data book: 2018 state trends in child well-being*. <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2018-kids-count-data-book>
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2020). *2020 Kids Count data book: State trends in child well-being*. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2020kidscountdatabook-2020.pdf>

- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2021). *Kids Count Data Center: Children in poverty by race and ethnicity in the United States*. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/44-children-in-poverty-by-race-and-ethnicity>
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2022). *2022 Kids Count Data Center: Children in kinship care in the United States*. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/10455-children-in-kinship-care#detailed/1/any/false/2479,2097,1985,1757/any/20160,20161>
- Ashdown, B. K., & Faherty, A. N. (Eds.). (2020). *Parents and caregivers across cultures: Positive development from infancy through adulthood*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35590-6>
- Baumrind, D. (1996). The discipline controversy revisited. *Family Relations*, 45(4), 405–414. <https://doi.org/10.2307/585170>
- Billingsley, A., & Giovannoni, J. M. (1972). *Children of the storm: Black children and American child welfare*. Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.
- Broadhurst, K., & Mason, C. (2020). Child removal as the gateway to further adversity: Birth mother accounts of the immediate and enduring collateral consequences of child removal. *Qualitative Social Work*, 19(1), 15–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325019893412>
- Brooks, D., & James, S. (2003). Willingness to adopt Black foster children: Implications for child welfare policy and recruitment of adoptive families. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 25(5/6), 463–489. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-7409\(03\)00031-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-7409(03)00031-8)
- Center on Poverty & Social Policy. (2021). *A poverty reduction analysis of the American Family Act* [Poverty and social policy fact sheet]. Columbia University. <https://rb.gy/3utgx0>
- Cerdeña, J. P., Rivera, L. M., & Spak, J. M. (2021). Intergenerational trauma in Latinxs: A scoping review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 270, 113662. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113662>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). *About CAPTA: A legislative history*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020a). *Differential response: A primer for child welfare professionals* [Fact sheet]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020b). *How the child welfare system works* [Fact sheet]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/cpswork.pdf>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021a). *Child welfare practice to address racial disproportionality and disparity*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/racial_disproportionality.pdf
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021b). *Foster care statistics 2019*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.
- Children's Bureau. (2021). *Trends in foster care and adoption: FY 2011–FY 2020* (AFCARS data). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. <https://>

- www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/trends-fostercare-adoption-11thru20.pdf
- Children's Bureau. (2022, October 28). *Title IV-E Prevention Program data elements* (Technical Bulletin #1). https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/technical-bulletin-revision_0.pdf
- Crea, T. M., Lopez, A., Taylor, T., & Underwood, D. (2017). Unaccompanied migrant children in the United States: Predictors of placement stability in long term foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 73, 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.12.009>
- Dettlaff, A. J. (2021). Introduction to racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. In A. J. Dettlaff (Ed.), *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system* (pp. 3–7). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54314-3_1
- Dettlaff, A. J., Weber, K., Pendleton, M., Boyd, R., Bettencourt, B., & Burton, L. (2020). It is not a broken system, it is a system that needs to be broken: The upEND movement to abolish the child welfare system. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 14(5), 500–517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2020.1814542>
- Doyle, J. J. (2007). Child protection and child outcomes: Measuring the effects of foster care. *American Economic Review*, 97(5), 1583–1610. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.97.5.1583>
- Drake, B., & Rank, M. R. (2009). The racial divide among American children in poverty: Reassessing the importance of neighborhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(12), 1264–1271. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.05.012>
- Duva, J., & Metzger, S. (2011). Addressing poverty as a major risk factor in child neglect: Promising policy and practice. *American Humane*, 25(1), 63–74. <https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/attachments/addressing-poverty-as-a-major-risk-factor-in-child.pdf>
- Eckenrode, J., Smith, E. G., McCarthy, M. E., & Dineen, M. (2014). Income inequality and child maltreatment in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 133(3), 454–461. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-1707>
- Falconnier, L. A., Tomasello, N. M., Doueck, H. J., Wells, S. J., Luckey, H., & Agathen, J. M. (2010). Indicators of quality in kinship foster care. *Families in Society*, 91(4), 415–420. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.4040>
- Flores, E., Tschann, J. M., Dimas, J. M., Pasch, L. A., & de Groat, C. L. (2010). Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and health risk behaviors among Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(3), 264–273. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020026>
- Fluke, J. D., Harlaar, N., Heisler, K., Darnell, A., Brown, B., & Merkel-Holguin, L. (2016). *Differential response and the safety of children reported to child protective services: A tale of six states*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/differential-response-and-safety-children-reported-child-protective-services-tale-six-states>
- Ganasarajah, S., Siegel, G., & Sickmund, M. (2017). *Disproportionality rates for children of color in foster care (fiscal year 2015)*. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. https://www.ncjfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NCJFCJ-Disproportionality-TAB-2015_0.pdf

- Harris, M. S. (2014). *Racial disproportionality in child welfare*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/harr15046>
- Hill, R. B. (2007). The role of race in foster care placements. In D. M. Derezotes & J. Poertner (Eds.), *Factors contributing to the overrepresentation of African American children in the child welfare system: What we know and don't know*. Child Welfare League of America.
- Kim, M., & Garcia, A. R. (2016). Measuring racial/ethnic disparities in mental health service use among children referred to the child welfare system. *Child Maltreatment*, 21(3), 218–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559516656397>
- Kisiel, C., Summersett-Ringgold, F., Weil, L. E., & McClelland, G. (2017). Understanding strengths in relation to complex trauma and mental health symptoms within child welfare. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26(2), 437–451. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0569-4>
- Kolko, D. J., Hurlburt, M. S., Zhang, J., Barth, R. P., Leslie, L. K., & Burns, B. J. (2010). Posttraumatic stress symptoms in children and adolescents referred for child welfare investigation. A national sample of in-home and out-of-home care. *Child Maltreatment*, 15(1), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559509337892>
- Martin, M., & Connelly, D. D. (2015). *Achieving racial equity: Child welfare policy strategies to improve outcomes for children of color*. Center for the Study of Social Policy. <https://cssp.org/resource/achieving-racial-equity-child-welfare-policy-strategies-improve-outcomes-children-color/>
- McRoy, R., Mica, M., Freundlich, M., & Kroll, J. (2007). Making MEPA-IEP work: Tools for professionals. *Child Welfare*, 86(2), 49–66.
- McRoy, R. G. (1994). Attachment and racial identity issues: Implications for child placement decision-making. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 3(3), 59–74. https://doi.org/10.1300/J285v03n03_05
- McRoy, R. G. (2003). Value dilemmas: Another look at placement issues for African American children. *Adoption Quarterly*, 6(4), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v06n04_01
- Pickett, L. A. (2020). Three trains running: The intersectionality of race-based trauma, African American youth, and race-based interventions. *The Urban Review*, 52(3), 562–602. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00575-x>
- Pulliam, C., & Reeves, R. V. (2021, March 11). *New child tax credit could slash poverty now and boost social mobility later*. The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/03/11/new-child-tax-credit-could-slash-poverty-now-and-boost-social-mobility-later>
- Roberts, D. (2021). The community impact of racial disproportionality: The racial geography of child welfare. In A. J. Dettlaff (Ed.), *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system* (pp. 375–395). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54314-3_13
- Rosen, M. L., Rodman, A. M., Kasparek, S. W., Mayes, M., Freeman, M. M., Lengua, L. J., Meltzoff, A. N., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2021). Promoting youth mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study. *PLOS ONE*, 16(8), e0255294. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255294>
- Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2010). It's time to re-think mental health services for children in care, and those adopted from care. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 15(4), 613–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104510377702>

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). *The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, 25 years later*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/multiethnic-placement-act-transracial-adoption-25-years-later>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2007, November 15). *Fiscal year 2007 performance and accountability report*. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-1sp>
- Weber, K., & Morrison, S. (2021). The institutional analysis: A tool for diagnosing structural contributors to racial disproportionality and disparity in child welfare. In A. J. Dettlaff (Ed.), *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system* (pp. 375–395). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54314-3_19
- White, S. A., Lustbader, I., Taykhman, N., Hyne, E. G., Mugambi, M., Hayman, J., Menon, A., & Skillings, M. (2021). *Fighting institutional racism at the front-end of child welfare systems: A call to action to end the unjust, unnecessary, and disproportionate removal of Black children from their families*. Children's Rights. <https://www.childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Childrens-Rights-2021-Call-to-Action-Report.pdf>
- Wimer, C., & Curran, M. A. (2023, January 19). *The increased antipoverty effects of the expanded childless earned income tax credit in 2021* [Fact sheet]. Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/610831a16c95260dbd68934a/t/63c9925dae65ab502184e087/1674154589958/Childless-EITC-Fact-Sheet-CPSP-2023.pdf>