

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

KATHLEEN KUFELDT and BRAD MCKENZIE, *Child Welfare: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 2003, x + 479 p._ Index.

This book grants its readers the opportunity to review a number of significant articles presented at the October 2000 National Child Welfare Research, Policy and Practice Symposium._ As such, it is a valuable resource for those involved in research into, advocacy for, and the practical application of knowledge relating to the care and treatment of children at risk._ It presents a snapshot of the state of the child welfare system in Canada as it adapts to constrained budgets and offers suggestions for future policy options that may be explored as society attempts to ensure ongoing improvements in the care accorded its most helpless members._ Among the most interesting features of the collected works is the fact that while much of the focus is on programs, outcomes, and areas that may require improvement, many of the chapters delve into the personal experiences of the children under care, the perspectives of those who have passed through the system, and the views of families of these individuals._ This form of qualitative research not only gives those most involved in the system a voice but also provides the reader with a more personalized sense of understanding of the benefits and problems associated with child welfare services today, knowledge that cannot be obtained from an analysis of facts and figures alone.

In developing this book, the editors had available to them a broad range of high-quality papers dealing with topics running the spectrum from statistical reports detailing the number and type of cases being handled by child welfare agencies in various provinces to studies analyzing specific programs and ethnicity based policy choices._ The topics chosen for inclusion in the book by the editors have been organized in four themed groupings that provide order and direction for the volume by progressing from discussions of the risks that exist, through program availability, to specific problem areas that have been studied, and finishing with an analysis of directions for future research and program development._ In particular, part one gives access to reports on the incidence and characteristics of child maltreatment through neglect and physical or psychological injury, while part two pursues topics related to the continuum of care provided by the government as surrogate parent._ The review ranges from an examination of 'front-end' services such as prevention and support programs, to out-of-home care services and finally an assessment of the process of transition from governmental care to self

sufficiency or a return to the home._ Part three is devoted to connecting research, policy and practice while part four addresses the future of the care system in articles relating to critical issues to be dealt with and the conclusions and directions that can be drawn from the symposium reports both with respect to progress made in improving the existing system and in terms of areas requiring attention in the future._ In developing this book, the editors have built upon the work of Hudson and Galloway (1995) who chronicled a similar child welfare symposium held in 1994 and have thereby provided a second baseline for the analysis of child care policies and a further spur for ongoing studies._ The field is of vital interest in that program policy choices will positively or negatively affect the lives of thousands of children and such choices cannot be made in a vacuum or be based on anecdotal evidence gathered over the short term if the goal is to provide adequate care suitable to changing conditions._ The importance of this book thus lies not only in its contents and suggestions for further research but also in its position as a link in a potential chain of similar volumes that identify concerns, review services, trace policy outcomes, critique existing systems and theories of care, and map out the progression of policy choices in this area of social concern.

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