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Child Welfare Revisited: An Africentric Perspective. Joyce E. Everett, Sandra P. Chipungu and Bogart R. Leashore (Eds.).

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It is clear that his extensive experience of working in the field is combined with a sound knowledge of the issues. Davis also makes a plea for the more extensive involvement of architects and planners in the field. He is highly critical of the ramshackle approach that has characterized shelter provision in the past. If homeless people are to be helped, they need to be provided with services in a secure, safe and positive built environment.

Davis has produced a very readable and informative publication that should be consulted by anyone working in the homelessness field today. Its emphasis on appropriate design and the use of diverse housing resources to address the problem will augment the services provided by social workers, psychologists and others who serve homeless people. The book deserves to be widely consulted and its message should be incorporated into all programs focused on the problem of homelessness. The book vividly demonstrates the need to incorporate a variety of intervention to address what has become an acute and apparently intractable problem.

Joyce E. Everett, Sandra P. Chipungu and Bogart R. Leashore (Eds.), *Child Welfare Revisited: An Africentric Perspective*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004. \$62.00 hardcover, \$23.95 papercover.

Research indicates that there are no differences in child maltreatment rates among ethnic and racial groups, yet the evidence of disproportional representation of minority children in the child welfare system is undeniable. Generally speaking, minority children make up a larger percentage of child welfare cases than their percentage in the general population. This is particularly the case with African American children. Race and ethnicity have been found by researchers to be linked with maltreatment report rates, removal and placement decisions, length of stay in the system, and likelihood of reunification. The causes of disproportionality are believed by many to be a complex interaction among system biases, social and economic conditions of families, and institutional racism. Race and ethnicity may combine with other predictors of child welfare system involvement, such as caretaker substance abuse, child disability, and Medicaid receipt,

to result in greater rates of child welfare involvement for minorities. Researchers are concerned with parsing out the roots of disproportionality so that they may be addressed through policy and programmatic interventions.

In this regard, *Child Welfare Revisited: An Africentric Perspective* takes a fresh look at an old problem. This book examines the disproportionate involvement of African American children in the child welfare system through a different lens: one that is "Africentric" instead of "Eurocentric." The Africentric perspective takes as its reference point the strengths, values, and history of African Americans and their tradition of self-help. The book's authors, over twenty in all, each add something to the Africentric framework. The first section provides a background, reviewing the demography of African American families, theories of institutional racism in the child welfare system, and impact of child welfare policies on African American families. The next several chapters in section two explore African American family dynamics. Practitioners may find of particular value the practice model laid out in chapter four. The final section posits the need for holistic interventions, necessitated by the connections between child welfare and a host of social problems such as substance abuse, homelessness, and HIV/AIDS. Several recent holistically-oriented innovations in child welfare are highlighted, including family decision making. In the conclusion, the editors urge reforms in child welfare that are Africentric and just good practice—preventative and integrated services at the community level.

This book was written with practitioners in mind, and each chapter provides highly relevant information to inform practice with African American families. An enjoyable and fluid read, the book can also be approached chapter by chapter for reference on particular issues. In the ongoing quest to discover and address the causes of disproportionality, the authors of this helpful book contribute an original perspective and offer much food for thought.

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Martha Shirk and Gary Strangler, *On their Own: What Happens to Kids when they Age Out of the Foster Care System?* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004. \$24.95 hardcover.