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The Impossible Imperative: Navigating the Competing Principles of Child Protection, by Jill Duerr Berrick

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segues into engaging in self-reflection and identity development. The concept of privilege is examined in subsequent chapters, as well as intersectionality and the positioning privilege and marginalization. The book concludes with an examination of what is meant by the pursuit of critical multicultural practice. The strengths of this book are many so long as the reader has an open mind and is willing to engage in critical self-reflection. Providing a more global perspective of multiculturalism is a particular strength. The case examples place the material into real life contexts. Given that the topics can be somewhat uncomfortable for less open-minded readers, perhaps the authors might have considered providing a warning of some sort to such readers that they may be entering some potentially dangerous emotional territory!

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Jill Duerr Berrick, *The Impossible Imperative: Navigating the Competing Principles of Child Protection*. Oxford University Press (2018), 244 pages, \$36.95 (hardcover).

Child welfare professionals are committed to protecting children amidst a complicated system of often-contradictory policies, best practices, and realities. From an initial report of suspected child abuse or neglect through the end of a case, child welfare professionals make assessments and determinations about the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. These difficult decisions often have life-altering consequences for children and families involved in the child welfare system. Jill Duerr Berrick argues that competing ideas shape the child protection system in the United States and specific principles are needed to guide child welfare practice and policy.

Proposed here are eight fundamental principles, which aim to go beyond the established code of ethics within social work and specifically address the unique field of child welfare. The fundamental principles include freedom from governmental intrusion for parents safely caring for children, safety for all children, a dedication to family preservation, extended relatives

as preferred placements, raising children in families, a commitment to permanency for children, respect for cultural heritage, and involving parents and children in decision-making processes. While these principles provide a guide for engaging in child welfare work, the principles are often in conflict and competition with each other, that is, upholding one principle can be in direct opposition to one or more other principles.

One case study in the book, for example, describes a child welfare professional making multiple decisions about safety, placement, permanency, and family preservation for a toddler named Shannon. Shannon was removed and placed in out-of-home care after it was determined that she was unsafe living with her parents (*principles 1 & 2*). Shannon's grandparents were willing to be a kinship placement, but the child welfare professional determined that, given their physical and mental health, this placement would be problematic and instead placed Shannon with a foster family (*principles 4 & 5*). After multiple foster placements, Shannon was placed with concurrent foster parents who were willing to adopt her and provide permanence (*principle 6*). She lived with the foster parents for six months, during which time a close relationship developed. After nine months of being in foster care, Shannon was safely reunified with her mother with the support of Family Maintenance services (*principles 1, 2 & 3*). While Shannon was successfully reunified with her mother, who was now sober and thriving, she and the foster family also grieved the change in their relationship and experienced loss (*principle 6*). This case study highlights the complexity of following the principles within child welfare practice the inevitability of one principle conflicting with other principles.

These eight principles serve as the outline for the book, with each chapter providing an in-depth exploration of one principle and its application to child welfare practice. The discussion about each principle centers on the current context and highlights topics such as disproportionality in child welfare and other critical issues of today. Each chapter also provides historical context to demonstrate how perspectives of the principle have changed over time through shifts in federal policies, advancing research, and further developing best practices. Additionally, Berrick explores how the principles are similar or dissimilar to those underlying child protection systems in other countries. Each chapter includes one or two case studies,

which emphasize practice dilemmas related to the principle of focus and other principles which may be in competition. After presenting the case studies, the author summarizes the competing principles to build connections to the current paradoxes within child welfare. The front-line child welfare professionals who co-authored the case studies as personal accounts of their field experiences represent diverse units within child welfare agencies, including hotline, investigations, on-going, and adoptions units. These co-authors are all graduates of the University of California Berkeley Master of Social Work (MSW) Title IV-E program, which specifically trains students to work in public child welfare in California.

A limitation of the book may be that all of the case studies highlight the experience of MSW graduates from one university program in California. Nationally, child welfare professionals have a variety of educational backgrounds, and the work may vary somewhat by location; therefore, the case studies may not be representative of the experiences of child welfare professionals with different training and working in other states.

The book clearly lays out an argument for each of the principles and describes how they are often in conflict with one another. Through the case studies, new professionals can gain an understanding of the experiences of other child welfare workers, the types of dilemmas often seen in cases, and the complexity of the work. Another strength of the book is the use of case studies to highlight diverse roles and perspectives within child welfare agencies. The co-authors highlight in-depth examples of how the proposed principles compete against one another in practice. The book starts a discussion about the competing principles in child welfare and provides a strong introduction into the field of child welfare for practitioners and policymakers. Overall, this book facilitates an important conversation about the principles underlying child protection in the United States as well as the opportunities and challenges of upholding them in practice.

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