

Mary Kay Keller, M.P.A., Ph.D., CEIM, CFLE
Chair of Applied Family Science
Wilmington University
Email: marykay.keller@wilmu.edu

A Policy Brief and a Call to Research Action

The History of Children's Human Rights: Childism and the Impact of Coercion and Control In American Culture - What Family Scientists and Future Family Scientists Need to Know Regarding the Impact of Prejudice on Children.

INTRODUCTION

“PART 1: THE MONSTROUS MISUNDERSTANDING”

“Our children have been signaling us for years that things are critically wrong for them. In our anxiety-ridden concern to "equip them fully for life" we have been deaf and blind to their distress calls. And now our training techniques, our teaching systems, our behavior modification and motivations are turning into chaos, both for our children and for ourselves. Perhaps at this critical point for the survival of the species, we can do more than make another futile gesture toward patching up the holes in our exhausted system of ideas. Perhaps we can seize this cubic centimeter of change that history is giving us and move, not just to correct some of the more blatant and tragic errors we have made with children, not just to curb the battered-child syndrome, but actually to turn again to that 3-billion-year development lying within us, that uncanny wisdom of the body clearly programmed into the child as unbending intent. In learning to learn again, we can learn of this wisdom and allow our children (and ourselves) to become the free, whole individuals this good earth has prepared us to be.”-- Joseph Chilton Pearce in *The Magical Child: Rediscovering Nature's Plan for Our Children*, 1977.

The United States is the only country on the planet that repeatedly refuses to sign the United Nations Children's Bill of Human Rights and as of 2022 still refuses to recognize the inalienable human rights of children regardless of their age despite the overwhelming evidence of the negative impact of the childist thinking and prejudicial actions upon children. Children in the United States are not doing well in any of society's ecological levels (Keller, 2021).

In CHILDISM, (2012) Elisabeth Young-Bruehl defined CHILDISM as the 'prejudice against children rising to the level of intense hatred.' "Prejudice is built into the very way children are imagined. The idea that children are possessions legitimizes their servitude with an idea, an 'ism.' People do not always hate those they subordinate; but those they subordinate with an 'ism,' a prejudicial political ideology, they cannot love" (p. 5).

Furthermore, the author reveals the systematic design in the 1800s to remove children's human rights from the discourse of the development of the 13th Amendment, for the political gains of the wealthy who owned businesses. The horrific outcomes for children were deemed to be due to being raised by mentally defective parents who could not move themselves out of poverty (the children were then separated from their parents and sent to homes where they were paid for doing labor only to then pay for their personal care), rather than discussing the oppression of the poor (Young-Bruehl, 2012). These children were being trained to become factory workers based on a new system developed in Germany which achieved greater outputs. After the second world war, the most wealthy families in the United States were invested in keeping the focus of education in the depth of this collusion. These same wealthy families still profit from the outcomes through their families' fortunes, The Rockefeller Educational Trust, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation, (Young-Bruehl, p.288, 2012).

PREJUDICE, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

First, we must have a basic understanding of the definition of Prejudice. Prejudice is an assumption or an opinion about someone simply based on that person's membership in a particular group. For example, people can be prejudiced against someone else of different ethnicity, gender, or religion. Essentially Prejudice is about how we "think" about others without evidence of the truth. When prejudicial thinking goes unchecked by facts in reality it supports patterns of discrimination actions (behaviors) that impact people negatively without cause. Racism is prejudice (thinking) about a group of people defined by the color of their skin. Racial discrimination is any discrimination against any individual on the basis of their skin color, or racial or ethnic origin. Individuals can discriminate by refusing to do business with, socialize with, or share resources with people of a certain group (OHCHR, 1991).

Secondly, the label 'racism' is a misnomer in that there are 8.7 million living species on the planet earth and there is only one race, the Human Race (National Geographic, 2022). However, our collective understanding of racism is that it's

about our beliefs and thoughts regarding people of color¹ (non-white) their cultural practices and ethnicity. Discrimination is a pattern of behavior based upon prejudicial and racial bias that disallows all people from benefiting equally. It is the grown up version of playing “keep away” with drastic and life threatening outcomes (H.R.C., 1965).

Prejudices cover many characteristics of people, typically those who are different from oneself, and often minorities in the community. Prejudices are held and supported by a variety of people, many of whom do not realize they are based on faulty information, lack of experience with others and empathy for people who are the targets of the prejudice. Prejudice and discrimination causes harm to individuals, families and cumulatively to the well-being, health, and social fabric of the community. Prejudices lead to inequity in opportunities and access for individuals and families in communities (H.R.C., 1965).

Prejudices develop beginning in childhood and then adolescence as individuals learn the culture through participation in the community. Prejudices are supported by the characteristics of the institutions and systems of the community, which often *discriminate* against targeted groups in implicit rather than explicit ways. Prejudices are learned through modeling and participation in cultural systems beginning in childhood and thus are transmitted intergenerationally. Just as prejudices are learned through experience in the community, they can be counteracted by changing these experiences (Young Bruehl, 2012).

It is essential that Family Scientists and Family Science Scholars understand the development of prejudices, racism and discrimination and the intergenerational transmission in order to learn how to counteract them through research and publications. This is how we reduce prejudices and discriminatory practices and the impact on the community and society.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

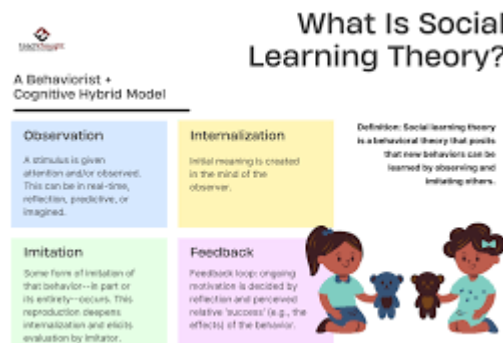
Theoretically, the intergenerational transmission of prejudice can best be explained by three Human Science theories: 1. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), 2.

¹ In the world people of color are 87% of the Global Population. In the United States, people of color are less than 30% of the population. This impacts how events of discrimination are reported. For children of color to represent a majority of reported abuse indicates they are targets.

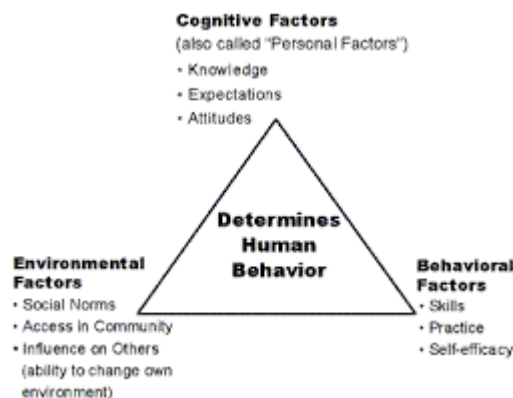
Skinner’s Operant Conditioning theory (1938), and 3. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory (1979).

Social Learning Theory

There are three core concepts at the heart of social learning theory. First is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next is the notion that internal mental states are an essential part of this process. Finally, this theory recognizes that just because something has been learned, it does not mean that it will result in a change in behavior.



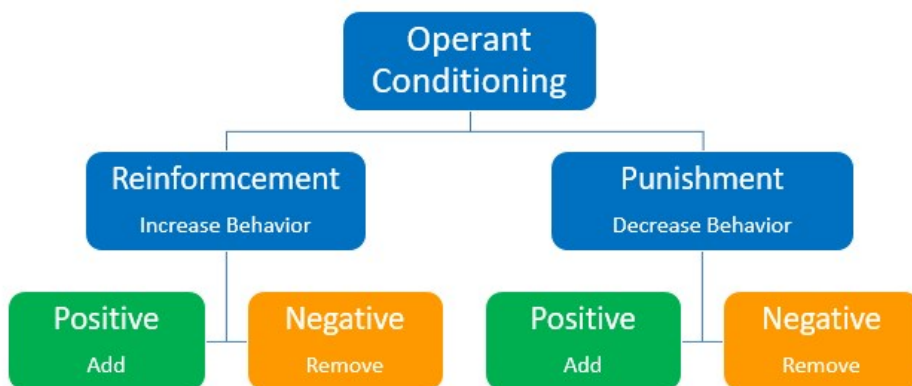
"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do," Bandura explained in his 1977 book *Social Learning Theory*. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action (Bandura, 1977).



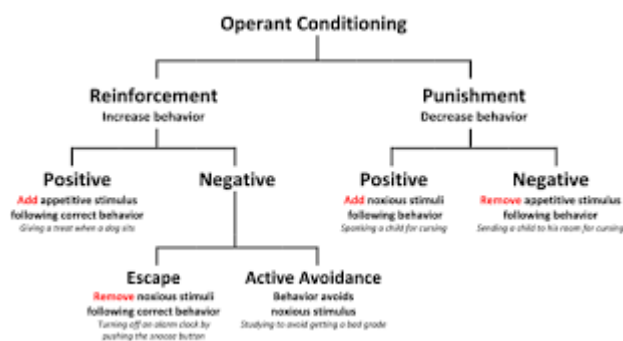
Operant Conditioning Theory

Unfortunately, this same process has a negative or positive impact when prejudice is a model for children. Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning, positive and

negative reinforcement, and positive punishment and negative punishment illuminates how prejudices are reinforced and adopted by vulnerable developing human beings in childhood.



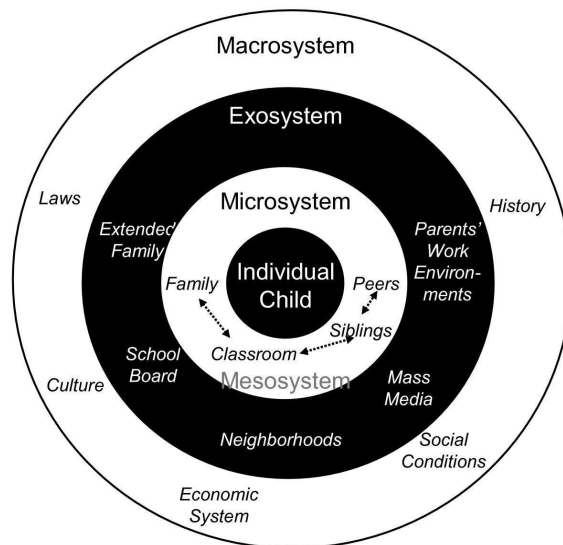
As both positive and negative reinforcement increases the behavior and duration of a behavior, growing up in a family of either intense prejudices or a family that suffers from intense prejudice is setting the stage for intergenerational transmission of prejudice (Skinner, 1938).



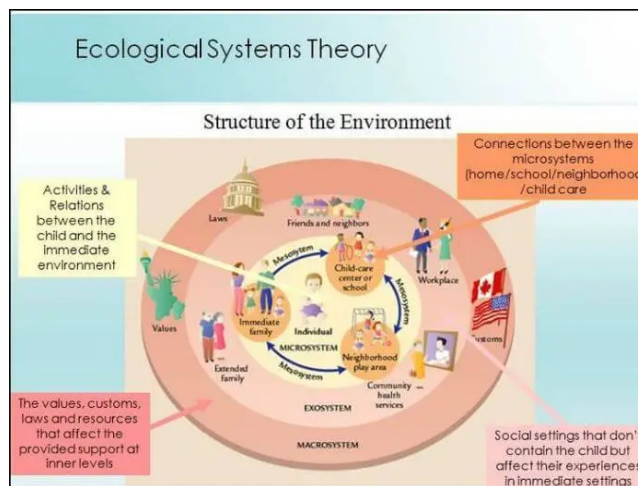
Ecological Theory

In Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1974), the concept is that families dynamically change according to the systems they interact with. This begs for further inquiry into how these family dynamics change for better or worse when all ecological systems in the United States are embedded with prejudices and reinforced by coercive control (thinking & behaviors); these are barriers that prevent diversity, equity, and inclusion of all people. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from the immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs. Bronfenbrenner divided the person's environment into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The microsystem is the most influential level of the ecological

systems theory. These are the most immediate environmental settings containing the developing child, such as family and school.



When developing children are exposed to prejudicial thinking in the home the seeds are planted and combined with the observation of prejudices acted out through discriminatory practices by their caregivers this has a powerful influence on the developing brain in a child.



Infant Development

“Humans learn and maintain positive behaviors through observing and modeling Connections.” Lori Desautels, Ph.D. Author of “Connection over Compliance.”

What happens in an infant's brain? Early childhood is when the infant's brain develops faster than at any other time in life. How a young child’s brain develops,

impacts their future ability to learn and succeed in school and in life. That's why your child's early years are so critically important in what they are seeing, hearing, and experiencing. A child is born with about 100 billion brain cells (neurons). By age 3, neurons get wired to other neurons, forming about 100 trillion connections. Different areas of the brain – which are responsible for different abilities like movement, language, and emotion – develop at different rates, and eventually, brain connections connect with each other in more complex ways, enabling the child to move and speak and think in more complex ways.

After the first three years, the brain begins to fine-tune itself. Connections that are used more often become stronger, while those that are not used are eventually eliminated. This is a normal process, (called pruning), that makes the brain more efficient. Building brain connections is like building muscles: use it or lose it (First Things First).

The making of the human brain from the tip of a 3-millimeter neural tube is a marvel of biological engineering. To arrive at the more than 100 billion neurons that are the normal complement of a newborn baby, the brain must grow at the rate of about 250,000 nerve cells per minute, on average, throughout the course of pregnancy. But it is not the volume of growth alone that makes the production of a human brain staggering to consider. The great number of functions that the brain reliably carries out and the specificity with which these are assigned to one or another type of cell or small location in the whole assembly are stunning in their complexity; yet the feat of growing a human brain occurs in hundreds of millions of individuals each year (Ackerman, 1992).

This human brain is a supercomputer primed to learn effectively and efficiently through powers of observation and practice play. What is missing at this age and stage of human development is the opportunity to choose what is learned.

Understanding the childist lens

Childism as an analytical tool, expands on childhood studies by establishing a new perspective on scholarship and society as a whole. Taking a perspective that is sensitive to individual and diverse living realities of children around the globe uncovers the adultist pre-construction of social norms and structures (cf. Wall 2019: 2, 4). Crucially, acknowledging children's own means of agency and subjectivity allows for the specific childist lens (Wall 2019: 2). This lens enables a new angle on age-based exclusion: Instead of asking where children are excluded from a specific

‘adult’ practice, childism asks how that specific practice is designed to serve adults, exclude children and marginalise their lived experiences.

For example, childism may serve as a tool to critically consider the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which aims at providing equal rights and safety to children around the globe. When applying the childist lens it becomes evident though that this aim does not suffice in acknowledging different livelihoods of children around the world, nor does it include the children’s own voices in the process of law formation. Questions arise on who these rights are designed by and for what purpose. A truly inclusive and fair approach towards a children’s rights convention *must consider the diversity of childhoods in a culture-sensitive manner and include children’s voices in the process* to prevent from enforcing and normalising a white, adult-based perspective of what ‘the child’ should do or be ‘protected from’ as well as what ‘childhood’ is (Wall, 2019).

The childist lens thus serves as an invitation to not only deconstruct social norms in a post-structural manner but rather to rethink and reconfigure these structures all together to make them age-inclusive for everyone and sensitive of multiple differences in livelihoods (Wall, 2019).

CHILDISM EVIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Currently, there are twenty identified actions imposed upon children without their consent or due process that are equally harmful to their emotional and social development and in some cases, physical development. Each of these CHILDIST issues are documented below.

1. Mass shootings in schools.

The number 1 killer of children in the US as of 2022 is death by guns. In the US owning and driving a vehicle requires a record of sale/purchase, registration of the vehicle with the State Government, car insurance purchased by the owner covering medical expenses and repair of the automobile(s), etc., and a state-issued Driver’s License. To drive a car, one must complete driving skills training education course and then, pass the written and driving test before a driver's identification license is purchased. Automobiles do not kill people; people kill people with automobiles. There is no credible rationale for failing to provide the same legal system for the purchase of guns in the United States. Registration, Licensing, and Insurance will not stop people from killing others, however, liability insurance will provide the medical and funeral expenses of the victims rather than burdening their families with

unanticipated and often astronomical expenses in one of the worst times of their lives. Protect the innocent support laws that require legalized gun ownership.

Gun incidents on K-12 school grounds, 1999-2022

Nearly 60 percent of active shooter incidents at educational institutions since Columbine have occurred in high schools, and 21 percent have occurred in middle or junior high schools. The remainder has happened in elementary schools, K-8 schools, and K-12 schools, according to the K-12 school shooting database. School shootings and gun incidents have become so common that the news coverage of these events has fundamentally changed, with the Columbine massacre getting months of press and current events only getting a fraction of Columbine's coverage. Some, like the Santa Fe shooting, which had ten fatalities, have gotten less attention due to the fact that other shootings, like the Parkland shooting, which had 17 fatalities, dwarf them (Vigderman, & Turner, 2022).

Since 1999, though, 392 people have been killed and 1,119 injured in K-12 school shootings, reflecting the rise in overall incidents. Injuries and fatalities. At the start of the pandemic in 2020, 77 people were killed or injured in K-12 shootings. This was the lowest number in several years, but that figure more than doubled again in 2021 (Vigderman & Turner, 2022).

Calls of “[never again](#)” rang out after shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. And yet, since the Parkland shooting in 2018 — a period of just four years — 140 people have died and more than 500 have been injured in shootings at K-12 schools (Vigderman & Turner, 2022). [These are active shootings in schools, not the shootings in the community or gun accidents in the home that children are often vulnerable to as well.]

2. Border babies' separations.

U.S. Representative Henry Cuellar, a Texas Democrat whose district includes about 200 miles (320 km) of the border with Mexico, slammed the proposal. “Bottom line: separating *mothers** and children is wrong,” he said in a statement. “That type of thing is where we depart from border security and get into violating human rights,” he said. About 54,000 children and their guardians were apprehended between Oct. 1, 2016, and Jan. 31, 2017, more than double the number caught over the same time period a year earlier.

Republicans in Congress have argued *women** are willing to risk the dangerous journey with their children because they are assured, they will be quickly released from detention and given court dates set years into the future. Immigrant rights advocates have argued that Central America's violent and impoverished conditions force *mothers** to immigrate to the United States and that they should be given asylum status. *Note: fathers are not mentioned in any of these policy discussions.

June 9, 2018 – A man from Honduras who suffered a nervous breakdown after being separated from his wife and child at the border died by suicide in a Texas jail in May, *The Washington Post* reports. The government has no comment on the man's death.

Nov. 29, 2021 – The reunification task force reports that 2,248 children are now known to have been reunited with their families in the U.S. and that it knows of 1,703 who have not been reunited. An additional 206 are in the process (S.L.P.C., 2022).

Dec. 16, 2021 – The following outrage by Republican lawmakers, the Biden administration halts settlement talks aimed at compensating families separated at the border. “It would be an understatement to say we are disappointed that the Biden administration allowed politics to get in the way of helping the little children deliberately abused by our government,” says the ACLU’s Lee Gelernt, who is leading the litigation against the government. The Justice Department says it remains “committed to engaging with the plaintiffs and to bringing justice to the victims of this abhorrent policy.”

Jan. 19, 2022 – The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) reports that the Biden administration is routinely separating families through detention and deportation as part of its interior immigration enforcement practices. People still forced to wait in Mexico for their immigration hearings in the U.S. are subject to kidnappings, assault, and murder, and Haitian families, including young babies, face mass expulsions back to a destabilized country. NIJC also reports that the Biden administration has moved to dismiss claims brought by separated families seeking compensation for the harm the policy has caused (S.L.P.C., 2022).

3. Child trafficking

Child trafficking a definition: Child trafficking is the recruitment, coercion, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of children under the age of 18 for the “purpose of exploitation.” It is a violation of their rights and their well-being and

denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential. Most trafficking victims in the United States are U.S. citizens. Many people assume the majority of trafficking victims in the U.S. are undocumented immigrants. In reality, most domestic trafficking victims are U.S. citizens (UNICEF, 2022).

Children account for half of the victims of human trafficking. In fact, the average age that a young person becomes involved in sex trafficking is 12 years old. If the victim is a minor, no force, fraud, or coercion is necessary to prove trafficking (Human Trafficking Search.org, 2022).

- Mississippi - 6.31 per 100k.
- Nevada - 5.99 per 100k.
- Missouri - 4.34 per 100k.
- Nebraska - 3.67 per 100k.
- Florida - 3.43 per 100k.
- Texas - 3.39 per 100k.
- California - 3.37 per 100k.
- Arkansas - 3.29 per 100k.

4. Adult marriage to a child

Critics have pointed out that laws regarding child marriage in the United States compare unfavorably to laws regarding child marriage in other countries. For instance, in 2017, Human Rights Watch pointed out that *Afghanistan* has a tougher law on child marriage than parts of the United States: in Afghanistan, the minimum age of marriage is 15, and that only with permission from their father or a judge; otherwise, it is 16. As of that date, 25 U.S. states had no minimum marriage age at all if one or more of the grounds for exception existed; this number has continually decreased since then.

From 2000 - 2015, 200,000 minors were legally married in the United States, and the majority of child marriages were between minor females and adult males. Most minors married were girls. The majority are children of color.

Every state except Delaware, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania allows underage marriage in exceptional circumstances if one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- consent of a court clerk or judge (sometimes the consent of a superior court judge, rather than a local judge, is required)
- consent of the parents or legal guardians of the minor
- if one of the parties is pregnant
- if the minor has given birth to a child
- if the minor is emancipated.

Where is the CONSENT of minors in the states without laws?

- In 2018 Delaware was the 1st state to outlaw marrying a child.
- In 2018 New Jersey became the 2nd State to outlaw marrying a child.
- In 2020 Minnesota became the 3rd State to outlaw marrying a child.
- In 2020 Pennsylvania became the 4th State to outlaw marrying a child.
- In 2020 American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the remaining US Territories also outlawed marrying a child.

Federal law There is not much federal legislation concerning child marriages. In 2013, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act mandated that the U.S. Secretary of State must "establish and implement a multi-year, multi-sectoral strategy to end child marriage."

5. Murder by caregiver's violence

In the past five years, over 650 people with disabilities have been murdered by their parents, relatives, or caregivers. We see the same pattern repeating over and over again. A parent kills their disabled child. The media portrays these murders as justifiable and inevitable due to the "burden" of having a disabled person in the family. If the parent stands trial, they are given sympathy and comparatively lighter sentences, if they are sentenced at all. The victims are disregarded, blamed for their own murder at the hands of the person they should have been able to trust the most, and ultimately forgotten. And then the cycle repeats (ASAN, 2022).

Premature death among youth, especially from preventable causes, is an enormous loss of potential life. Children and adolescents under age 18 represent 22.2% of the United States population (AHR, 2022). In 2020, there were 21,430 deaths among children and adolescents ages 1-19 in the U.S. Firearm-related injuries — mainly homicides — surpassed motor vehicle accidents to become the leading cause of death among children and adolescents, with nearly a 30% increase from 2019. Drug overdose and poisoning deaths increased by nearly 84% from 2019 becoming the third-leading cause in 2020. Cancer is the fourth-leading cause of death among children ages 0-14 overall and the leading cause of death from disease (AHR, 2022).

WHO IS AFFECTED?

The rate of child mortality is higher among the:

- Youth and young adults ages 15-19, have the highest mortality rate, followed by those ages 1-4 and 5-14.
- Boys compared with girls.

- Non-Hispanic Black and American Indian/Alaska Native youth, who have higher mortality rates compared with Asian and multiracial youth (AHR, 2022).

Most homicides of young children are committed by family members, while older children are more likely to be killed by acquaintances. Homicides and assault-related injuries among youth and young adults ages 10-24 are estimated to cost more than \$100 billion annually in medical costs, loss of productivity, and value of life (AHR, 2022). Suicide is also a serious concern. It is the second-leading cause of death among children ages 10-14 and third among those ages 15-19. Recently there has been an increase in deaths by suicide among children, teenagers, and young adults (AHR, 2022).

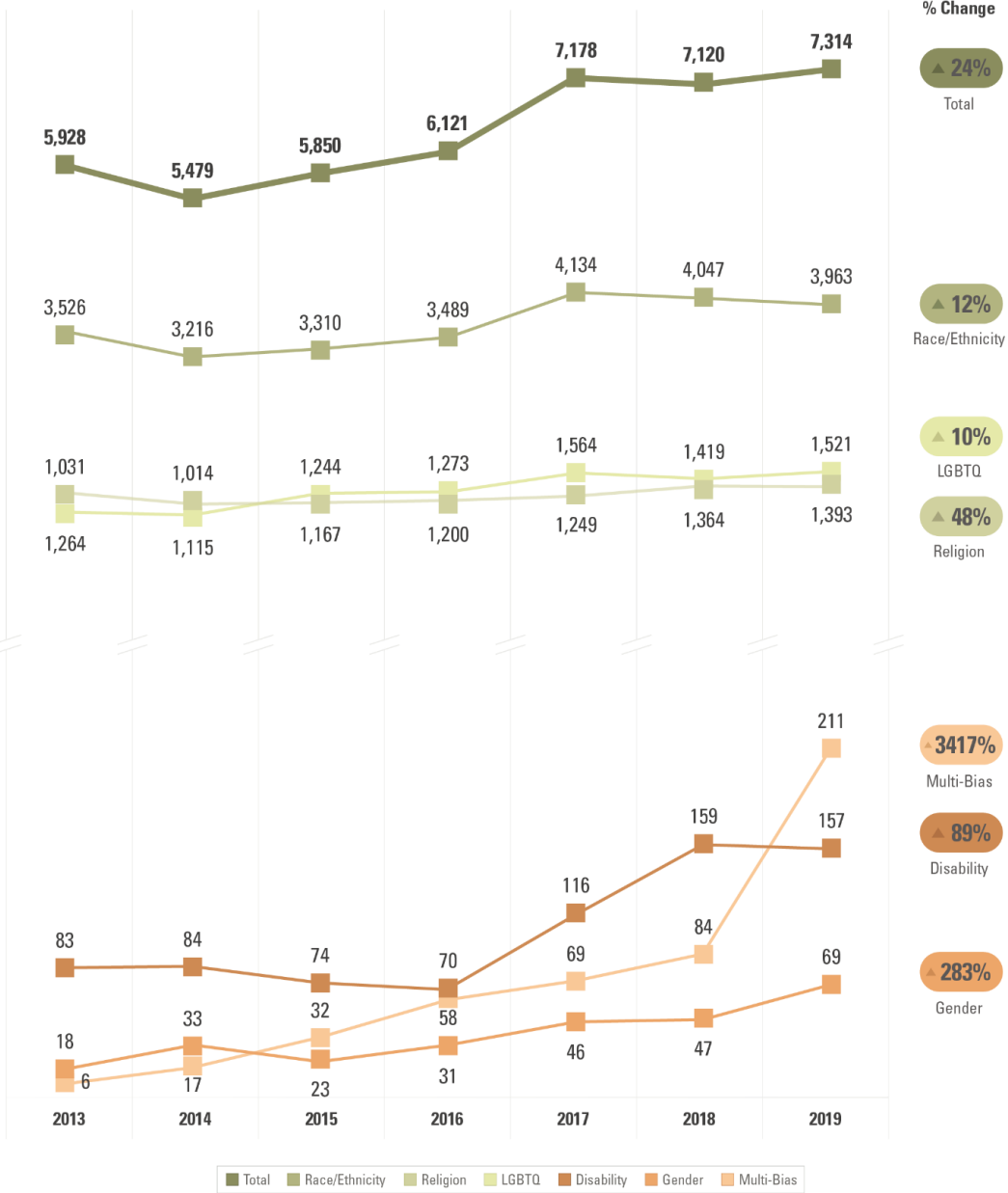
6. Hate crimes against LGBT and generally children.

Policy Spotlight: Hate Crime Laws provide a groundbreaking side-by-side look at the limitations and opportunities of hate crime laws as a means of preventing and addressing hate violence. Released in partnership with 16 leading civil rights organizations, the report includes a foreword by Judy Shepard, on behalf of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, as well as a state-by-state analysis of hate crime laws (M.A.P., 2021).

Hate Crime Laws Vary Widely Across the Country

The report finds that federal and state governments vary widely in their responses to hate violence. The report analyzes state hate crime statutes across more than 10 distinct characteristics. The common element across state hate crime laws is the use of criminal punishment, typically through sentencing enhancements (M.A.P., 2021).

Reported Hate Crimes in the United States Are Increasing
 Number of FBI Reported Hate Crimes by Bias Type, 2013-2019



Note: "LGBTQ" is the sum of all single-bias incidents based on either sexual orientation or gender identity, and does not include incidents based on "gender" or multiple-bias incidents.
 Source: FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, Hate Crimes, 2013-2019. www.ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime.

MAP
 movement advancement project
www.LGBTMAP.org

ADL
 Anti-Defamation League

AMERICAN
 ADVANCING
 JUSTICE
 AAC

equality federation
 1971-2019

JAMES BYRD JR. CENTER TO STOP HATE
 at the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism

JEWIS FOR RACIAL &
 ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Lambda Legal
 making the law for equality

LatinoJustice

Matthew Shepard
 Foundation
 From Hate to Hope

NBJC
 NATIONAL BLACK JEWELRY CENTER

NCLR
 NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
 TRANSGENDER
 EQUALITY

NCJ
 National Council of Jewish Women

NATIONAL
 DISABILITY RIGHTS
 ALLIANCE

THE SIKH-COALITION

SPLC
 Southern Poverty
 Law Center

UNION for
 REFORM JUDAISM

Challenges of Addressing Hate Violence Through the Criminal Justice System

Addressing hate violence when it happens, is imperative. State hate crime laws provide avenues for responding to hate crimes, but they also highlight the challenges inherent in the criminal justice system. These challenges include:

1. Failing to address root causes of violence.
2. Widespread bias in the criminal justice system. Evidence shows that, for example, even though the majority of hate crimes are committed by white people, many states' law-enforcement-recorded hate crimes disproportionately list Black people as offenders.
3. Flaws in hate crime data collection and reporting are widespread.
4. Changing the intent of the law, for example, by attempting to add police officers as a protected class in hate crime laws (M.A.P., 2021).

HATE CRIME LAWS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

No single law can solve the scourge of hate violence, and hate crime laws are only one part of larger efforts to end such violence and prejudice. That said, there are many limitations to contemporary hate crime laws—but these challenges also illustrate opportunities for creating more holistic responses to hate violence, including those that center harmed communities and that reduce reliance on the biased criminal justice system.

KEY CHALLENGES

FLAWS IN DATA COLLECTION



- Over half of all hate crimes go unreported, including due to fear of police.
- Extremely few law enforcement agencies report hate crime data to the FBI, leaving an incomplete picture of the scope of hate violence.

FAILURE TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES



- What can be done to prevent hate crimes—and hate itself—rather than only respond to it?
- Do these laws actually deter hate crime?
- How can we break a cycle of violence?

ABUSE OF ORIGINAL INTENT



- So-called "Blue Lives Matter" amendments exploit hate crime laws to add unnecessary protections for law enforcement—and often do so instead of responding to calls to end police violence.

BIAS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



- Biased systems can lead to biased outcomes, such as over-policing and disproportionate arrests, prosecutions, and sentencing.
- People of color are more likely to be victims of hate violence but are disproportionately listed as hate crime offenders in law enforcement reports.



Expanding Solutions to Address Hate Violence

The report highlights opportunities for both improving hate crime laws and better supporting communities affected by hate violence:

1. Investing in communities that are harmed by hate violence. Expanding nondiscrimination protections and investing in social safety nets will help reduce the instability caused by discrimination. In turn, this reduces vulnerable communities' exposure to potential violence.
2. Preventing violence through work not only aims to reduce hate crimes but also works to reduce hate and violence overall.
3. Improving law enforcement accountability and training, including addressing how law enforcement can disproportionately harm vulnerable communities.
4. Improving data collection can help connect people impacted by hate crimes to resources and support. More robust data can also support more tailored responses to hate violence, track potential disparities or bias in the enforcement of hate crime laws, and evaluate the efficacy of non-carceral responses to hate crime.
5. Shifting focus toward support and healing, such as through expanded measures to support victims and survivors of hate crimes, community education and response strategies, and non-carceral approaches to justice.

As the United States continues to grapple with racial injustice, bias in the criminal justice system, and rising hate violence against too many communities, it is critical that we re-examine our responses to hate crimes. Additional solutions are needed to address hate violence, including a careful review of how hate crime laws in their current and potential forms fit into the work of building safe communities for everyone (M.A.P., 2021).

7. Inequality in the Education system & underfunding.

The hope for the public education system in the United States is to provide a sound education equitably to all children regardless of where they live or into which families they are born. However, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed four interrelated, long-standing realities of U.S. public education funding that have long made that excellent, equitable education system impossible to achieve (EPI, 2022).

First, inadequate levels of funding leave too many students unable to reach established performance benchmarks. Second, school funding is inequitable, with low-income students often and communities of color consistently lacking the resources they need to meet their needs. Third, the level of funding reflects overall underinvestment in education—that is, the U.S. is not spending as much as it could afford to spend in normal times. Fourth, given that educational investments are not sufficient across many districts even during normal times, schools are unable to make preparations to cope with emergencies or other unexpected circumstances. An added, less-known feature is that economic downturns make all four of these

problems worse. Downturns exacerbate funding inadequacies, inequities, underinvestment, and unpreparedness, causing cumulative harm to students, communities, and the public education system, and clawing back any prior progress. The severity of these problems varies widely across states and districts, as do the strength of states and localities' economic and social protection systems, which may either compensate for or compound the problems (EPI, 2022).

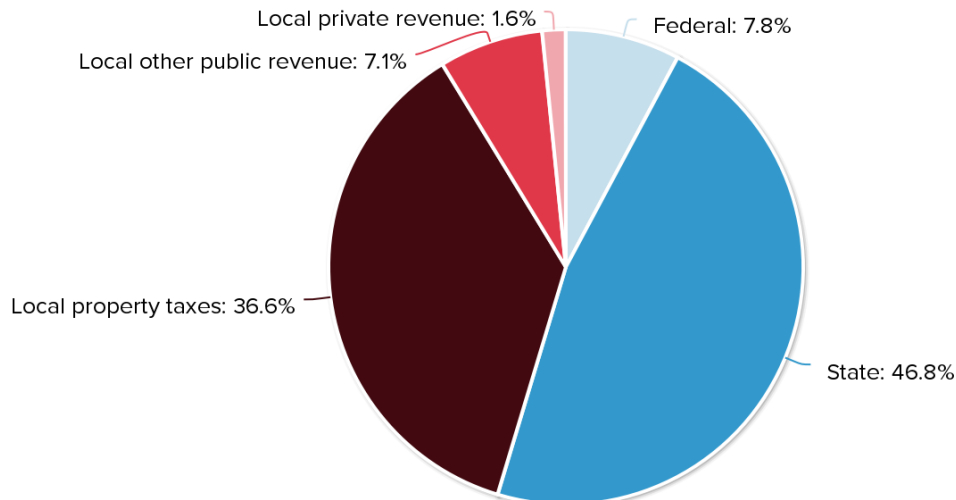
Education funding in the United States relies primarily on state and local resources, with just a tiny share of total revenues allotted by the federal government. Most analyses of the primary school finance metrics—equity, adequacy, effort, and sufficiency—raise serious questions about whether the existing system is living up to the ideal of providing a sound education equitably to all children at all times. Districts in high-poverty areas, which serve larger shares of students of color, get less funding per student than districts in low-poverty areas, which predominantly serve white students, highlighting the system's inequity. School districts in general—but especially those in high-poverty areas—are not spending enough to achieve national average test scores, which is an established benchmark for assessing adequacy. Efforts states make to invest in education vary significantly. And the system is ill-prepared to adapt to unexpected emergencies (EPI, 2022).

Our current system for funding public schools shortchanges students, particularly low-income students. Education funding generally is inadequate and inequitable; It relies too heavily on state and local resources (particularly property tax revenues); the federal government plays a small and insufficient role; funding levels vary widely across states; and high-poverty districts get less funding per student than low-poverty districts (EPI, 2022).

[Authors note: When we review the federal budget's percentages of allocation it says everything about how little regard there is for the education of our children. Example: check the states without a state income tax to see where they fall in school funding priorities. What is the great reveal?]

More than 90% of school funding comes from state and local sources

Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools by source of funds, 2017–2018



Source: National Center for Education Statistics' Digest of Education Statistics (NCES 2020a).

Economic Policy Institute

8. Failure to criminalize corporal punishment in public schools.

On August 18, 2003, 10-year-old Tim L. started the fifth grade at his public elementary school in rural east Texas. On the fourth day of school, Tim refused to run in gym class because he did not have his asthma medication. When the gym coach confronted him, Tim said, "coach sucks." The coach then took a wooden paddle and beat Tim severely on the buttocks. Faye L., Tim's mother, reported, "There was blood in his underpants.... I had to pull the underwear off his behind from the dried blood" (HRW, 2022).

Though Tim had always been an enthusiastic student, he begged his mother not to make him get on the school bus the next day. Three days later, with his bruises still fresh, Tim was hit again, this time by a teacher, for playing with a pen during band class. His genitals were bruised and swollen. With her son physically injured and

terrified of school, Faye decided she could not risk sending him back. She began to teach him herself, at home (HRW, 2022).

Faye wanted school authorities to hold the teachers accountable. They reminded her, however, that corporal punishment is legal in their district, and refused to take disciplinary action against the two teachers who had hit her son. When she tried to file assault charges, the police dissuaded her, saying she had to "follow school procedure." Next, she attempted to pursue private litigation, but her claims were dismissed in court because the law provides immunity for teachers who paddle (HRW, 2022). Faye was left feeling that she had no way to seek justice for the injuries her son had already sustained, and no way to protect him from future harm. Though Tim asked to go back to school, Faye felt she could not offer him a guarantee of safety in their public school district. "The law is supposed to be there to protect you. How do you explain this to your son, after this? 'Well, I'm sorry, honey.' That's all you can say,"(HRW, 2022).

Tim's mother's tenacity and commitment to protecting her son's rights make this story extraordinary. Yet in other ways, Tim's story is far from unique. In school districts in many states, students of all ages are routinely subjected to corporal punishment. Though some states have outlawed the practice, it is permitted by some federal and state laws. Hundreds of school districts *allow students to be beaten*, and state legislatures provide specific legal protection for educators who injure students when using corporal punishment. *Studies show that beatings can damage the trust between educator and student, corrode the educational environment, and leave the student unable to learn effectively, making it more likely he or she will leave school. African American students are punished at disproportionately high rates, creating a hostile environment in which minority students struggle to succeed* (HRW, 2022).

The United States is out of step with international practice and jurisprudence on the use of corporal punishment in schools. Today 106 countries outlaw the practice, including the United Kingdom and other European countries, following rulings on corporal punishment by the European Court of Human Rights. Experts charged with issuing definitive interpretations of international human rights treaties also consistently have concluded that corporal punishment by school officials and teachers violates governmental obligations to protect children from physical violence and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The disproportionate use of corporal punishment against African American students in particular violates the right to non-discrimination in accessing education (HRW, 2022).

As students across the United States return to school each year, they, like their parents, are hoping for academic success. Policymakers and educators have the important responsibility of creating an educational environment based on respect, including an effective disciplinary system. Yet for many students, "discipline" means extensive use of violence (HRW, 2022). According to the Office for Civil Rights at the US Department of Education, 223,190 students nationwide received corporal punishment at least once in the 2006-2007 school year, including 49,197 students in Texas alone, the largest number of any state. In Mississippi, 7.5 percent of public-school students were paddled during this period, the highest percentage in the nation. The actual numbers almost surely are higher: Human Rights Watch interviewees reported that corporal punishment is often administered in a chaotic environment in which many instances of the practice are not recorded. One administrator reported that 37 students in a single day were sent to his office for corporal punishment. A high school student in another district estimated that as many as 60 students a day are paddled at her school (HRW, 2022).

Today 21 US states permit corporal punishment to be used in schools. Corporal punishment usually takes the form of paddling (also called "swats," "pops," or "licks"). A teacher or administrator swings a hard wooden paddle that is typically a foot-and-a-half long against the child's buttocks, anywhere between three and 10 times. Paddling can happen in the office or elsewhere, as noted by one Mississippi teacher: "The principal would do it in the hallway, in the classroom, in the band room. He would patrol the hallways with a paddle." Students can be physically punished for a wide range of misbehavior, including minor infractions such as chewing gum, being late, sleeping in class, talking back to a teacher, violating the dress code, or going to the bathroom without permission (HRW, 2022).

Even students who are not punished find themselves in a hostile, violent environment designed to instill fear. One student told us that "licks would be so loud and hard you could hear it through the walls." A teacher reported that a principal turned on the loudspeaker while paddling a student: "It was on the intercom in every class in the school.... He was trying to send a message ... like, 'you could be next' " (HRW, 2022).

Minor bruising and stinging are the most common results of corporal punishment. Some children are more seriously injured. Some parents we interviewed sought medical care for their children who, like Tim L., sustained bleeding and deep bruising to the buttocks. Other children sustained blows to other parts of their bodies, including their hands or arms when they reached back to protect themselves.

Corporal punishment can also impact students' mental health, especially for some special education students (HRW, 2022).

For hundreds of thousands of school children in the US, violence inflicted by those in authority is a regular part of their experience at school. All corporal punishment, whether or not it causes significant physical injury, represents a violation of each student's rights to physical integrity and human dignity. It is degrading and humiliating, damaging the student's self-esteem and making him or her feel helpless (HRW, 2022).

Several teachers told us that as students are beaten, or see those around them beaten, the trust between administrators, teachers, and students is often destroyed. Over time, students may become less engaged in school and less interested in exploring and discovering new academic concepts. Corporal punishment may result in the student failing to thrive academically and may contribute to school dropout (HRW, 2022).

Though some educators believe that corporal punishment is an effective way to deter students from misbehavior, including students who may engage in physically disruptive and harmful behaviors like fighting, corporal punishment teaches students that violence is legitimate. Research suggests that children who are physically punished are more inclined to engage in aggressive conduct toward their siblings, parents, teachers, and schoolmates (HRW, 2022). As a consequence of the helplessness and humiliation felt by students who experience corporal punishment, some students become angry: students told Human Rights Watch that it only makes them want to lash out against teachers or other students. Others become depressed or withdrawn; still, others become immune to the constant violence, accepting it as a part of their daily lives (HRW, 2022). [What about trauma-informed care? How is paddling students a benefit on any level except to allow predators to humiliate and traumatize our children in a public school system paid for by our taxes? Are the silent parents also complicit?]

Some parents are concerned that the use of corporal punishment in schools could also legitimize domestic violence in the home. One mother observed: "What are we teaching our young women when a school principal can swat ... on the behind? We're saying that it's okay for a man to beat a woman ... [that's] something we don't want in our families."

Corporal punishment in the US disproportionately affects African American students, and in some areas, Native American-students. In the 2006-2007 school year, African American students made up 17.1 percent of the nationwide student population, but 35.6 percent of those paddled. In the same year, in the 13 states with the highest rates of paddling, 1.4 times as many African American students were paddled as might be expected given their percentage of the student population. Although girls of all races were paddled less than boys, African American girls were nonetheless physically punished at more than twice the rate of their white counterparts in those 13 states during this period. These disparities violate students' right to non-discrimination in access to education, making it harder for these students to succeed and undermining the social fabric of schools (HRW, 2022).

Special education students-students with mental or physical disabilities also receive corporal punishment at disproportionate rates. For instance, in Texas, the number of special education students who were beaten in the 2006-2007 school year amounted to 18.4 percent of the total number of students who received corporal punishment statewide. However, special education students made up only 10.7 percent of the Texas student population, *meaning almost twice as many* were beaten as might be expected. Corporal punishment damages these students' education as much as other students, and it may also adversely affect some students' underlying physical or psychological conditions (HRW, 2022).

[Authors note: Having lived in Florida for 20+ years the local news stories of the harm to children especially children of color and children with special needs in the public schools for paddling and isolation techniques are real and abundant and the stories never get picked up by national news. A state legislator was quoted as saying on the floor of the House of Representatives as paddling in the schools was discussed, “unless they (children) are bleeding and in the emergency room there is no abuse.” The Silence regarding these children’s experiences is notable...and complicit approval by the government, school educators, and to some extent parents.]

9. Children pipelined into prisons.

The most obvious arena in which the United States denies children their human rights —and their childhood — is the criminal justice system, which American children encounter far too early and with devastating consequences. From a young age, many children — particularly students of color and those with disabilities — are funneled out of the schoolroom and into prison for childhood behavior. Children as *young as six years old* have been removed from the classroom in handcuffs for

throwing temper tantrums. Others have been arrested for engaging in a *tug-of-war with a teacher or doodling on a desk* (EJI, 2022).

The United States remains the only country in the world to *sentence children to life in prison without the possibility of parole*, a severe punishment that is categorically prohibited under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While in recent years the U.S. Supreme Court has limited the application of this life and death sentence to children, around 2,500 people are currently serving this sentence for crimes they were involved in years ago as children (EJI, 2022).

Fourteen states have no minimum age for when a child can be prosecuted and punished as an adult. In some cases, children as young as eight years old have been tried as adults for committing a crime. Children confined in adult prisons are in an even more vulnerable situation, forced to grow up too fast in a dangerous environment where they are significantly more at risk for sexual assault and suicide (EJI, 2022).

10. Failed foster care systems.

How many children are waiting to be adopted in the United States?

Of the over 400,000 children in foster care in the U.S., 114,556 cannot be returned to their families and are waiting to be adopted (adoptionnetwork.com, 2022).

How many 'kids' go into foster care every year in the US?

In 2020, 213,964 children under 18 entered foster care in the United States, a rate of 3 per 1,000. The rate of entry has hovered at 3 or 4 per 1,000 for two decades. Kids ages 1 to 5 make up the largest share (30% in 2020) of children entering care. National data also show that Black and American Indian children continue to be overrepresented among those entering foster care. In 2020, Black children represented 20% of those entering care but only 14% of the total child population, while American Indian kids made up 2% of those entering care and 1% of the child population. The reasons for this are complex, and efforts to improve racial equity in child welfare have been underway for many years (A.E.C.F., 2022).

For whatever reason, the parents of these children are not able to provide for them and neither is their extended family. When this occurs, the child will be placed into the foster care system. More than 250,000 ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a million) children are placed into the foster care system in the United States every year. Although no more than 2% (6,648,073)* of Americans have adopted children, more than 1/3 have considered it (adoptionnetwork.com, 2022). *It is unknown how many were adopted from the child-welfare system.

Children in foster care are among the most vulnerable children in America. There were 423,997 children in care in 2019, 41 percent of whom were under the age of six. These children spend an average of 19.6 months in foster care, with 14 percent spending more than three years in the system. Children of color, particularly Black and American Indian/Alaska Native children, are dramatically overrepresented in the child welfare system. Of every 1,000 white children in the United States, 5.2 are in foster care, compared with 9.9 for every 1,000 Black children and 16.9 for every 1,000 American Indian/Alaska Native children.

- Nationally, Black children, are represented in foster care at a rate that is 1.66 times their portion of the overall population, and in 18 states at a rate that is more than double.
- American Indian/Alaska Native children are represented in foster care at a rate that is 2.84 times their portion of the population nationally. This disproportionality varies by state, with 11 states where the percent of the foster care population that is American Indian/Alaska Native* is more than double the percent of the overall child population that is American Indian/Alaska Native, including one state there is more than 15 times as high. (*It is unknown how many Indigenous girls and women go missing every year as there is no national US database that tracks these missing humans.)

Children do best when placed with families, preferably their relatives, but some require a level of mental or behavioral health treatment that can only be provided in a congregate (non-family) setting, such as a group home or childcare institution. Congregate care is meant to be temporary treatment, but children are often inappropriately placed in these settings without a clinical need or are held long after their clinical needs are met (CDF, 2022).

- More than 2.6 million children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives without their parents present. Approximately 133,000 children in foster care are placed with relatives, and the remainder of these kinship placements occur outside of the child welfare system with little or no government support.

Foster care is intended to be temporary, with the ultimate goal of returning children safely home to their families. When this is not possible, children must be placed into permanent homes, either through adoption, guardianship, or other arrangements with relatives. In 2019, 248,669 children left foster care after an average of 20 months in care

- In 2019, only 47 percent of children exiting foster care were reunified with their families, the lowest percentage ever recorded.

- In 2019, 64,415 (26 percent) children were adopted out of the child welfare system, the highest number recorded, 15 and 122,216 children were waiting to be adopted.
- After steadily declining since 2008, the number of children aging out of foster care jumped by more than 14 percent in 2019, with 20,445 youth reaching adulthood without a permanent family. When the system fails to find permanent homes for youth, they are significantly more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment, and incarceration.

More resources are needed to ensure that every child can grow up in a safe, stable, and loving family (CDF, 2022).

By dramatically increasing investments in family support, we can keep families strong and prevent the need for foster care. Making this early investment will free up necessary resources to improve the child welfare system for the families that do need it, including specialized treatment services to help children heal from the trauma they have experienced and robust support to help families reunify safely (CDF, 2022).

Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

More than 20,000 youth left foster care in 2020 without reuniting with their parents or having another permanent family home. The transition to adulthood is a significant and challenging developmental phase of life for all young people, but youth aging out of foster care on their own must face this without the support of a stable, loving family. Many also lose access to services and supports offered through the foster care system. Not surprisingly, these youth and young adults are more likely to experience behavioral, mental and physical health issues, housing problems and homelessness, employment and academic difficulties, early parenthood, incarceration and other potentially lifelong adversities. In line with the racial inequities noted earlier, youth of color are more likely to experience these challenges. The trajectories of these young people are not guaranteed, however. They can be positively influenced by policies and practices that ensure these vulnerable youths receive culturally-responsive, trauma-informed transition services and support to navigate the steps to adulthood, achieve stability and reach their full potential (A.E.C.F., 2022).

Recognizing the importance of focusing on this population, the Foundation provides in-depth resources on youth aging out of foster care and 30 indicators describing the challenges they face as well as the support they receive, including academic, employment, health, financial, mentoring and other transition services (A.E.C.F., 2022).

Key findings among youth transitioning out of foster care:

One in five reports experiencing homelessness between ages 17 and 19, and over one in four (29%) reports being homeless from 19 to 21. Among American Indian young adults, the figure jumps to almost half (43%) for ages 19 to 21. One in five reports being incarcerated between ages 17–19 and 19–21. One in 10 report having a child (i.e., giving birth or fathering a child) between ages 17–19, with nearly one in four (23%) saying they became parents between 19–21. By age 21, over two-thirds (70%) have a high school diploma or equivalent. The same is true for 64% of American Indian and 78% of Asian American young adults. Just 57% report being employed (full- or part-time) at age 21, with this figure ranging from 51% for American Indian young adults to 63% for Asian Americans.

The percentages of youth ages 14 and older who received transition services through the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program decreased for all types of services between 2015 and 2018. Four in 10 youth received academic support in 2018, the highest share for any service, while much smaller shares received important services like mentoring (16%) or education financial assistance (15%) (A.E.C.F., 2022).

11. Failed family courts.

Throughout their legal careers, judges have heard children do best with both parents in their lives. This is certainly true when both parents are safe and loving, but this is rarely true in DV custody cases. The problem is worse when courts conflate the benefits to children of relationships with both parents as if it means children need both parents equally. The research is clear, children need their *primary attachment figure* more than the other parent and the *safe* parent more than the abusive one (C.F.J.E., 2022). The courts place such a high priority to keep fathers in children's lives that they often sacrifice the child's relationship with a mother and the child needs so much more. This is the worst possible trade for a child. Courts create a catastrophic arrangement by severely restricting the mother and creating a harmful outcome case. We also see this outcome when courts give the father the power and control that he uses to destroy the relationship between the child and mother (C.F.J.E., 2022).

Domestic violence experts know context is critically important in recognizing domestic violence. Abusers and their attorneys routinely seek to decontextualize an incident to shift blame. Courts often undermine their ability to understand the context to save time. Practices in which courts arbitrarily create strict time limits benefit abusers for this reason. Victims need time to explain the context including

the fact that many standard court practices favor abusers. Victims need time to explain the research and how the failure to differentiate abusers' public and private behavior or the mistake of treating DV cases as high conflict. *Abusers need only deny their partners' reports and allow the court to use the flawed practices that tilt decisions against protecting children* (C.F.J.E., 2022).

In most DV custody cases, the father wanted or demanded the mother provide most of the childcare. In any other court, this would be properly understood as an admission by the father that the mother is a good parent. Otherwise, he would have sought other arrangements. When the mother leaves and reports his abuse, abusive fathers often respond by seeking custody and claiming the mother is unfit. The charge is usually that she is crazy and/or alienating. What are the chances a mother suddenly became unfit because the relationship ended, and she reported his abuse? In the real world the answer is close to zero, but family courts that *fail to use good scientific research* and rely on the wrong experts often reach this unlikely conclusion. Courts rarely discuss or consider this obvious context that strongly supports mothers (C.F.J.E., 2022).

Primary attachment is non-controversial and used in many areas of childcare and welfare. The parent who provided most of the childcare during the *first two years of a child's life* is and always will be their primary attachment figure. This is important to consider in family courts because the child needs their primary parent more than the other parent. Denying children a normal relationship with their primary parent increases the risk of depression, low self-esteem, and suicide. In most of these cases, the child is used to looking to the primary parent for most of their needs. This parent usually knows the child's needs and provides better than the other parent. Accordingly, there are many non-controversial factors that should favor the primary parent (C.F.J.E., 2022).

There are two major paths that courts take when they trade the children's safe, primary parent for an alleged abuser who has far less parental skill and knowledge. They are explained in the Saunders Study and the Meier Study that both come from the National Institute of Justice. The harmful outcomes are another illustration of the problem with family courts attempting to resolve DV custody cases without the benefit of current scientific research (C.F.J.E., 2022).

12. Children are gunned down in our streets by the police, school shootings, and gun violence.

More children have been shot than the police in the line of duty in 2022. More children have been shot and killed in the U.S. this year than police while on duty, according to new data.

A new study examining the use of force by police against children found that Black and Hispanic adolescents are significantly more likely to die from police shootings than their white peers. Researchers at the Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC, analyzed national data from death certificates compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics, including the cause of death and race and ethnicity (EJI, 2020).

They identified all adolescents between the age 12 and 17 who died from firearm injuries due to police intervention between 2003 and 2018 and compared rates of these deaths across racial and ethnic groups based on U.S. Census Bureau data. During the 16-year study period, 140 children died from police intervention, and of those, 113 involved firearms. About 93% of the children killed were boys, with an average age of 16. The researchers found that Black children were six times more likely to be shot to death by police than white children. Hispanic children's risk of death was almost three times higher than that of white children (EJI, 2020).

How Many School Shootings Have Happened Since Columbine?

Though it wasn't the first instance of violence inside an American school, the Columbine High School shooting has proven to be a watershed moment. In just the four years that followed the 1999 massacre, more than two dozen others were killed and even more were injured. And the ensuing decades have brought even more violence in schools (Security.org, 2022).

Another heartbreaking school shooting in May 2022 — these one more than 700 miles southwest of Littleton, Colorado, in the southern Texas town of Uvalde — has once again drawn the nation's attention to violence in American schools.

According to the K-12 School Shooting Database, a publication of the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS), a total of 118 active shooter incidents have been reported at K-12 schools in the U.S. since 1999. These shootings are defined by the CHDS as situations where the perpetrator killed or wounded targeted or random victims within the school campus during a continuous episode of violence (Security.org, 2022).

A Timeline of School Shootings* Since Columbine

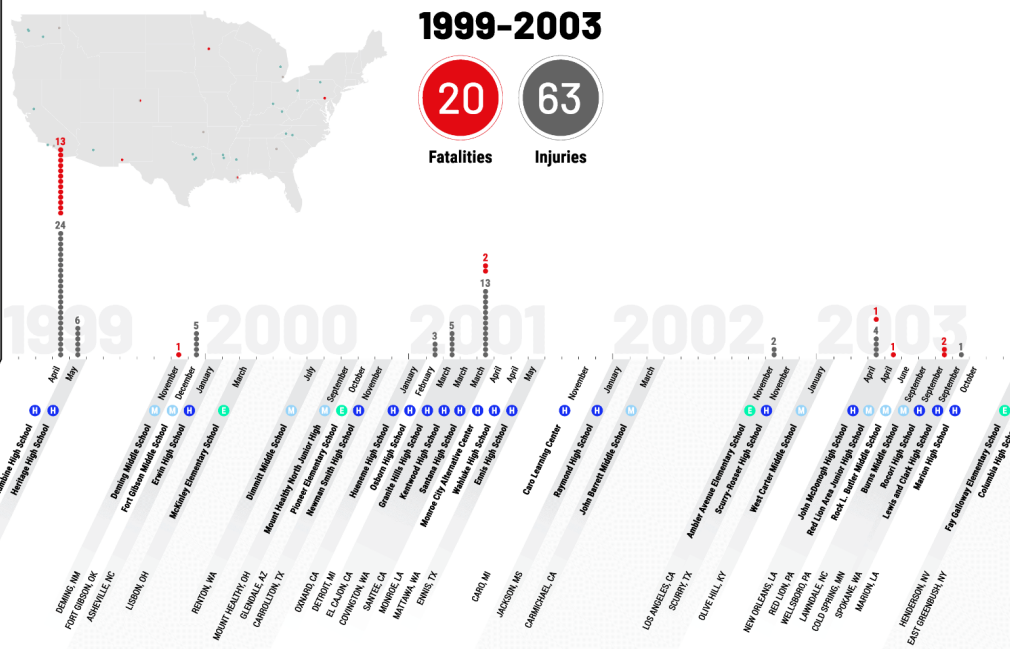
KEY

Fatalities Injuries None

TYPE OF SCHOOL

H High school
E Elementary school
U University
O Other
M Middle, junior high, or 6-12 school

*ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENTS AS CLASSIFIED BY THE FBI



Nearly 60 percent of active shooter incidents at educational institutions since Columbine have occurred in high schools, and about 21 percent have occurred in middle or junior high schools. The remainder have happened in elementary schools, K-8 schools, and K-12 schools, according to the K-12 school shooting database.

School shootings and gun incidents have become so common that the news coverage of these events has fundamentally changed, with the Columbine massacre getting months of press and current events only getting a fraction of Columbine’s coverage. Some, like the Santa Fe shooting, which had ten fatalities, have gotten less attention due to the fact that other shootings, like the Parkland shooting, which had 17 fatalities, dwarf them (Security.org, 2022).

Gun Violence in homes and communities

Over the past few years, gun violence has risen to the forefront of public consciousness. Much of the debate has focused on gun regulation and keeping deadly weapons out of the hands of potential killers, particularly those with mental illnesses. Unfortunately, far less attention has been dedicated to the impact of gun violence on victims. While individuals killed and injured in atrocities such as the Sandy Hook and Aurora Theater shootings are publicly remembered and mourned, victims of these tragedies are not limited to those men, women, and children killed, injured, or present during these horrific events (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

The consequences of gun violence are more pervasive and affect entire communities, families, and children. With more than 25% of children witnessing an act of violence in their homes, schools, or community over the past year, and more than 5% witnessing a shooting, it becomes not just an issue of gun regulation, but also of addressing the impact on those who have been traumatized by such violence (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Although mental health problems are part of the debate about gun regulation, the discussion has focused primarily upon the mental health of the perpetrators of gun crimes. In fact, most people with mental illnesses are not violent and are actually more likely to be victimized than they are to victimize others (Teplin et al, 2005). While much more can be done to address the problems of perpetrators with a mental illness, that conversation alone will not address the problems associated with gun violence.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) believes it is time to broaden the focus of the gun debate to include the social, emotional, physical, and mental health impact of those traumatized by gun violence, especially children and youth. In their 2002 article “Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth,” James Garbarino and his colleagues pointed out that “children exposed to gun violence may experience negative short and long-term psychological effects, including anger, withdrawal, posttraumatic stress, and desensitization to violence” (Garbarino et al., 2002). They also indicate that the research shows that “certain children may be at higher risk for negative outcomes if they are exposed to gun violence.” The groups they identified “include children injured in gun violence, those who witness violent acts at close proximity, those exposed to high levels of violence in their communities or schools, and those exposed to violent media.”

The consequences of exposure to violence on child development are very real. CWLA’s *National Blueprint* points out that children and youth exposed to chronic trauma can experience inhibited brain development, producing a lasting impact on life outcomes. Likely a result of such exposure, participants noted numerous skill deficits among the children and youth they serve who live in neighborhoods that have high rates of poverty and crime. As suggested by the research, many children experience problems with violence and aggression because they lack nonviolent conflict-resolution skills. Much of this violence and aggression is further exacerbated by emotional overload from exposure to violence. Children and youth exposed to violence experience significant stress, and often struggle to identify and regulate their emotions, as a result of developmental impacts from their frequent

exposure to trauma. Their emotions are often internalized and can later erupt in aggression and violence (CWLA, 2022).

The Listening Session attendees also acknowledged that these skill deficits can be the result of children and youth learning behavior through observing and mimicking the actions of those around them. When adults exhibit aggressive and violent behavior, such behavior is often interpreted as appropriate and acceptable. A cycle of violence starts when children and youth observe and embrace negative adult behaviors and, eventually, model such interactions with their own children. With much at stake, a laundry list of strategies and supports was offered to address the impact on child development and reduce the negative impact of exposure to violence. Participants lauded the importance of early, family-level prevention, suggesting that parents must be assisted in accessing the social services necessary to strengthen protective factors, build resiliency, help their children regulate their emotions, develop coping skills, and provide physical and psychological safety (CWLA, 2022).

Participants also identified numerous skills that must be taught directly to children and youth affected by violence to reduce the impact of traumatic stress, including conflict-resolution skills that demonstrate simple problem-solving techniques that are nonviolent and/or force-aversive. In addition to developing communication skills, children and youth need to be taught to identify and regulate their emotions; once they better understand their emotions and how they affect their behavior, they can learn how to appropriately respond to their feelings in ways that are not harmful to themselves or others (CWLA, 2022).

Gun Violence is the leading cause of death for all children

Even before COVID-19, another epidemic was killing our children at higher rates: gun violence. Gun violence was the leading cause of death for all children and teens ages 1-19 in 2018, surpassing motor vehicle accidents for the first time in history. Children and teens are far more likely to die from gunfire than COVID-19, yet our leaders continue to allow gun violence to go uncurbed and gun laws to go unchanged (Children's Defense, 2021).

After years of congressional inaction, a growing number of children are paying with their lives. In 2019, 3,371 American children and teens were killed with guns—enough to fill more than 168 classrooms of 20 (see Table 35).

- Child and teen gun deaths hit a 19-year high in 2017 and have remained elevated since.

- In 2019, nine children and teens were killed with guns each day in America—one every 2 hours and 36 minutes.
- Guns killed more children and teens than cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, HIV/AIDs, and opioids combined.
- While mass shootings grabbed fleeting public and policymaker attention, routine gunfire took the lives of more children and teens every week than the Parkland, Sandy Hook, and Columbine massacres combined.
- Since 1963, nearly 193,000 children and teens have been killed with guns on American soil—more than four times the number of U.S. soldiers killed in action in the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq wars combined.

Shamefully, gun deaths reflect only part of the devastating toll of America's growing gun violence epidemic. Many more children and teens are injured than killed with guns each day in our nation (Children's Defense, 2021).

- For every child or teen fatally shot, another 5 suffered non-fatal gunshot wounds.⁷
- An estimated 16,644 children and teens were injured with guns in 2018—one every 32 minutes.

Gun violence affects all children, but children of color, boys, and older youth are at greatest risk (Children's Defense, 2021).

- Black children and teens had the highest gun death rate in 2019 (11.9 per 100,000) followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children and teens (6.4 per 100,000).
- Although Black children and teens made up only 14 percent of all children and teens in 2019, they accounted for 43 percent of child and teen gun deaths.
- Black children and teens were four times more likely to be killed with guns than their white peers.
- Eighty-six percent of children and teens who died from gunfire in 2019 were boys. Boys were six times more likely than girls to die in gun homicides. Black boys were 18 times more likely to be killed in gun homicides than white boys.
- Eighty-five percent of children's and teen's gun deaths occurred among 15- to 19-year-olds, but infants and toddlers were far from immune. *Guns killed more preschoolers than law enforcement officers in the line of duty.* In 2019,

86 children under 5 were killed with guns compared with 51 law enforcement officers in the line of duty.

No child is safe in a nation with easy access to deadly weapons. Even before the pandemic drove up fear and gun sales, there were too many firearms in our homes and streets—and a shocking number were sold without background checks (Children’s Defense, 2021).

- As of 2017, American civilians owned 393 million firearms—more than one gun per person. In contrast, U.S. military and law enforcement agencies possessed 5.5 million.
- Americans accounted for less than five percent of the global population but owned nearly half (46 percent) of all civilian guns in the world.
- Nearly 1 in 5 guns are sold without a background check due to a loophole in federal law exempting sales at gun shows, online, or between private individuals.

Children are learning there are no safe spaces in our gun-saturated nation. Many children even live in homes with loaded, unlocked guns and know where they are kept. Too often, this leads to tragic accidents and preventable deaths. With a growing number of children learning and playing at home during COVID-related closures, the risk of gun accidents and suicides has only increased (Children’s Defense, 2021).

- A third of households with children have a gun and nearly half of gun-owning households with children do not store all of their firearms safely.
- An estimated 4.6 million children live in homes with at least one unlocked and loaded gun—and most children know where these guns are kept. About 3 in 4 children ages 5-14 with gun-owning parents know where firearms are stored and more than 1 in 5 have handled a gun in the home without their parents’ knowledge.
- Guns in the home are more likely to endanger than protect loved ones. The presence of a gun in the home makes the likelihood of homicide three times higher, suicide three to five times higher, and accidental death four times higher.
- Eight children and teens are killed or injured in accidental shootings involving an improperly stored gun each day in America.

It is long past time for leaders to end America’s gun violence epidemic. Congress must urgently pass common-sense gun safety measures like universal background checks and child access prevention laws to protect children from firearms in their

homes, schools, and communities. All children deserve the chance to live, learn, and play safely—free from violence and fear (Children’s Defense, 2021).

13. Teen Pregnancy (by adult males).

Teenage pregnancy is a misunderstood issue. Recently, we have begun to recognize the reality of the lives of teenage girls and make important connections between teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse, particularly in the following areas: Pregnant teenagers have experienced a higher-than-average incidence of sexual assault. The vast majority of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by adult men, not teenage boys (CC, 1996).

Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Assault 62% of pregnant and parenting adolescents had experienced contact molestation, attempted rape, or rape prior to their first pregnancy (Boyer & Fine, 1993). Sixty-one (61%) percent of pregnant teenagers had had an unwanted sexual experience (Gers Henson et. al., 1989). Seventy-four percent (74%) of women who had intercourse before age 14 report a history of forced sexual intercourse (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994). Between 11% and 20% of girls were pregnant as a direct result of rape (Boyer & Fine, 1993). Twenty-three percent (23%) of women who were victimized were pregnant by their perpetrator (Gers Henson et. al., 1989).

Girls who were victimized prior to their first pregnancy were more likely than girls not abused to: have voluntary intercourse earlier, use or have problems with drugs or alcohol, or have sex partners who use drugs or alcohol, or have sex partners who are older, or have had an abortion, or have second and third pregnancies, or have been in a violent relationship, or have experienced emotional abuse or physical maltreatment in childhood, or have experienced repeated victimization in the past year, or have had a sexually transmitted disease. (Boyer & Fine, 1993).

Who are the "Fathers"?

Seventy percent (70%) of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by *adult men*; only 30% are fathered by teenagers. (National Center for Health Statistics, 1992; California Center for Health Statistics, 1993). Nineteen percent (19%) of pregnant teenagers had partners 6 years older or more (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994). Of the pregnant teenagers who had an unwanted sexual experience, the ages of the perpetrators were: 18% were within two years of the victim's age, 18% were 3-5 years older than the victim, 17% were 6-10 years older than the victim, 40% were more than ten years older than the victim (Gers Henson et. al., 1989). All though there are statutory rape laws in many states the data on conviction and sentencing is

nebulous (CC, 1996). When was the last time you read or head a statutory rape conviction in the news?

14. The secret of all societal complicity, INCEST.

The United States of America Has an Incest Problem and people are rightly horrified by abuse scandals at Penn State and in the Catholic church. But what about children who are molested by their own family members? Mia Fontane

Child sexual abuse impacts more Americans annually than cancer, AIDS, gun violence, LGBTQ inequality, and the mortgage crisis combined subjects that Obama did cover. Had he mentioned this issue, he would have been the first president to acknowledge the abuse that occurs in the institution that predates all others: the family. Incest was the first form of institutional abuse, and it remains by far the most widespread.

Here are some statistics that should be familiar to us all, but aren't, either because they're too mind-boggling to be absorbed easily, or because they're not publicized enough. One in three-to-four girls, and one in five-to-seven boys, are sexually abused before they turn 18, an overwhelming incidence of which happens within the family. These statistics are well known among industry professionals, who are often quick to add, "and this is a notoriously underreported crime." (Atlantic, 2013).

Incest is a subject that makes people recoil. The word alone causes many to squirm, and it's telling that of all of the individual and groups of perpetrators who've made national headlines to date, virtually none have been related to their victims. They've been trusted or fatherly figures (some in a more literal sense than others) from institutions close to home, but not actual fathers, stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, brothers, or cousins (or mothers and female relatives, for that matter). While all abuse is traumatizing, people outside of a child's home and family—the Sandusky, the teachers and the priests—account for far fewer cases of child sexual abuse (Atlantic, 2013).

Intentionally or not, children are protecting adults, many for their entire lives. Millions of Americans, of both sexes, choke down food at family dinners, year after year, while seated at the same table as the people who violated them. Mothers and other family members are often complicit, grown-ups playing pretend because they're more invested in the preservation of the family (and, often, the family's finances) than the psychological, emotional, and physical well-being of the abused.

So why is incest still relegated to the hushed, shadowy outskirts of public and personal discussion, particularly given how few subjects today remain too controversial or taboo to discuss? Perhaps it's because however devastating sexual

molestation by a trusted figure is, it's still more palatable than the thought of being raped by one's own flesh and blood. Or is it? (Atlantic, 2013). Consider how the clergy abuse shook Catholics to their core, causing internal division and international disenchantment with a religion that was once the bedrock of entire nations. Consider the fallout from Sandusky's actions and Penn State's cover-up, both for students and football. Consider how distressing it is for Brits to now come to terms with the fact that the man they watched every night on TV in their living rooms was routinely raping kids just before going on air (Atlantic, 2013).

Given the prevalence of incest, and that the family is the basic unit upon which society rests, imagine what would happen if every kid currently were abused—and every adult who was abused but stayed silent—came out of the woodwork, insisted on justice, and saw that justice meted out. The very fabric of society would be torn. Everyone would be affected, personally and professionally, as family members, friends, colleagues, and public officials suddenly found themselves on trial, removed from their homes, in jail, on probation, or unable to live and work in proximity to children; society would be fundamentally changed, certainly halted for a time, on federal, state, local, and family levels. Consciously and unconsciously, collectively and individually, accepting and dealing with the full depth and scope of incest is not something society is prepared to do (Atlantic, 2013).

Authorities estimate incest occurs in over 10 percent of American families, yet only 20 percent of these offenses are reported. The crime often goes unreported because it is initiated by someone the child, usually a girl, loves and trusts. When a child does report a case of incest, friction usually develops within the family. The child may decide to say nothing, thinking that she is saving the family or assuming that this is normal behavior (Atlantic, 2013).

Americans prefer to ignore the reality of incest, and there are many myths about the subject. A small sector of society even advocates relaxing the age-old incest taboo, claiming that the harm is insignificant. In reality, victims of incest are more likely than other children to become involved in drugs or prostitution. The causes and effects of incest vary according to the relationship of the family member involved. The incestuous parent often lacks control or feels confusion about his role in the family, while stepparent incest does not have the strength of the incest taboo as an inhibition. Sibling incest, possibly the most common form, is less traumatic for children close in age who consider it play, but the stereotype of innocent games has only limited application (Barry, 1984).

Father-daughter incest creates the greatest emotional devastation: the daughter feels trapped, assaulted in her own home. In cases of father-daughter incest, the daughter typically has low self-esteem and relates to her mother poorly. Incestuous fathers

frequently have backgrounds of sexual abuse in their own childhoods, are commonly alcoholic, and are typically authoritarian, domineering, and unable to elicit the warmth and closeness they seek. A high-stress incident in their lives usually precipitates the first occurrence of incest. When caught, they try to blame someone else. Father-son incest, mother-son incest, and mother-daughter incest, occur infrequently. Twenty-six notes are included (Barry, 1984).

15. US parents reportedly still prefer violent parenting despite 3 decades of ACE research indicating the harm physically, emotionally, and intergenerationally.

More than 70% of Americans agreed in 2012 that, “it is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.” Of course, there is a wide range in how people define ‘acceptable,’ both in terms of frequency and severity.

When Minnesota Vikings’ running back Adrian Peterson was indicted for hitting his son with a ‘switch’ in September 2014, there was a public furor – with arguments on both sides, but a general sense that Peterson was in the wrong. However, this was a quick news cycle.

Why do adults hit children? Whichever euphemism is used – “spank,” “smack,” “pop,” “whup/whip”—the goal is typically the same: to correct or to punish a child’s behavior by causing physical pain. In terms of altering children’s behavior in the short run, physical punishment is mostly effective. But questions remain about its long-term effects, some of which we address in this memo:

1. What are the longer-term consequences of physical punishment in terms of behavior?
2. What are the longer-term consequences of physical punishment in terms of skill development?
3. Is physical punishment associated with stronger or weaker parenting?
4. What stance do governments in the U.S. and elsewhere adopt with regard to physical punishment of children? (Cuddy, E. & Reeves, R., 2014).

Studies dating back to the early 1960s suggest a relationship between corporal punishment and decreased cognitive ability in early childhood. Recent research has added support to these findings. A 2009 study examined two cohorts of children within the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY) and found that, even controlling for other parenting behaviors and demographics, children of mothers who used little or no corporal punishment “gained cognitive ability faster than children who were spanked.”

MacKenzie et al. (2013) show that father's high-frequency spanking at age five was associated with lower child vocabulary scores at age nine. Other studies have shown corresponding effects on school achievement. Bodovski and Min-Jong (2010) find that the use of physical discipline in kindergarten is associated with lower fifth grade math achievement. Margolin et al. (2010) find that children who were spanked are at higher risk of academic failure in the fifth grade (Cuddy, E. & Reeves, R., 2014).

Emerging evidence suggests that non-cognitive skills may also be affected. In an experimental study, Talwar, Carlson, and Lee (2011) tested whether attendance in a punitive versus non-punitive school environment had any effect on West African children's executive functioning (EF) skills. They measured children's abilities using three EF tasks: delay of gratification; gift delay; and dimensional change card sort. Their results suggested that—starting in grade 1—children who were in a punitive environment performed significantly worse than their peers in non-punitive school environments.

Paddling in relationship to slavery.

“In these few minutes, I'm going to try to alert you to the unfinished business of the civil rights movement. I want to remind you, or convince you if you're skeptical, that until children receive full protection against being assaulted and battered, the legacy of the plantation era lingers. This should have a special meaning for parents who are the descendants of slaves. The field boss's whip reaches across the generations in the form of spanking, beating, switching, paddling, belting -- or whatever else one wants to call it. It tells the child, “You're worthless. You're getting exactly what you deserve, so get used to it.” That message has its psychological roots in slavery (J. Riak, 2011).

When you compare the statistics of school corporal punishment with the statistics of lynching, you discover that the top 10 states in each category include 7 states that appear on both lists. That's no coincidence. The states that share this dubious distinction are clustered around the Gulf -- the heartland of the old Confederacy. Other facts you should know about those states are they rank among the worst in poverty, infant mortality, school drop-out, illiteracy, domestic violence and incarceration. Clearly, the heavy hitters pay a heavy price. School corporal punishment reinforces, and is reinforced by, spanking at home. Schools that allow it, typically offer the excuse that because parents spank, hitting is the only form of management those children understand. Some parents compound the mischief by urging teachers to use the paddle whenever they see fit -- which the paddlers are only too happy to do. The parents, then, feel reassured. Hitting naughty children must be right and proper if trained, licensed professionals do it too. One hand washes the other, (J. Riak, 2011).

Two factors set this issue apart from other forms of civil rights violations and make it so difficult to resolve. 1) The victims are voiceless. Children only know what they have been exposed to. They can't imagine a different world. They have no language with which to protest. When they act out in response to mistreatment, that only sets them up for additional mistreatment. 2) The perpetrators of violence against children -- parents, teachers and other caretakers -- are so profoundly ashamed of their own conduct, and in such a state of denial, that they desperately cling to, and defend, the spanking tradition. Meanwhile, in the US, 21 states still let teachers batter students on their buttocks with flat sticks, and any talk of reining in parental violence is met with ridicule (J. Riak, 2011).

“In conclusion, I'd like to share a brief anecdote which I hope you'll like. It's one of my favorites. It's a description of the parenting style of President and First Lady Lincoln. Their housekeeper, Mariah Vance, tells this story:

The missus always seemed to favor Willie. She said, "Willie, precious, tell Mother what you and Taddie were doing."

Willie was smart, and he answered meekly, "We were only playing."

But the missus asked, "How playing? Tell me about the pipe and this smoke. Give me the pipe, Taddie."

Taddie held the pipe in back of him for a spell, and then finally shoved it toward her. The missus looked at it, smelled it, and said, "Come to Mother, boys."

Taddie boldly stepped forward, but Willie hung his head and lingered.

"Now, boys," she said, "I know you were playing, but this is an order from Mother. No more such playing."

"But Mother," Willie said, "those men at your party last night smoked and chewed and you didn't tell them to stop. Why should they have more privilege in our home than we have?"

She answered: "Men can choose or can limit themselves when it comes to vices. But little boys must be guided or directed by parents who love them. Your father would not do what he would not have his boys do. You know he would not want you to pattern yourselves after men who are careless about their habits. Don't you want to please your dear father?"

They both of course said they do. No spanking, no scolding. That was the way Mr. Abe and the missus managed those boys. I never saw anything like it, for those boys went back to making soap bubbles without another word," (J. Riak, 2011).

Hitting Children: The International Picture

It is also worth noting that the U.S. is relatively unusual in terms of attitudes, prevalence, and legal sanctions. Hitting children is more culturally acceptable in American than in many other nations – not only by parents, but by teachers (corporal punishment in schools is still permitted in 19 states). In many nations, physical punishment of children has now been outlawed, even for parents.

16. Teen suicide and mental health.

Suicide is a leading cause of death. Suicide is death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. A suicide attempt is when someone harms themselves with any intent to end their life, but they do not die as a result of their actions. Many factors can increase the risk for suicide or protect against it. Suicide is connected to other forms of injury and violence. For example, people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence have a higher suicide risk. Being connected to family and community support and having easy access to health care can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Suicide is a serious public health problem.

Suicide rates increased 30% between 2000–2018 and declined in 2019 and 2020. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with 45,979 deaths in 2020. This is about one death every 11 minutes. The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher. In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.2 million attempted suicides. Suicide affects all ages. In 2020, suicide was among the top 9 leading causes of death for people ages 10–64. Suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death for people ages 10–14 and 25–34. Some groups have higher suicide rates than others. Suicide rates vary by race/ ethnicity, age, and other factors, such as where someone lives. By race/ethnicity, the groups with the highest rates were non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic White populations. Other Americans with higher-than-average rates of suicide are veterans, people who live in rural areas, and workers in certain industries and occupations like mining and construction. Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and behavior compared to their peers who identify as heterosexual.

Contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline if you are experiencing mental health-related distress or are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Need help? Know someone who does?



- Call or text 988
- Chat at 988lifeline.org
- All States have a 2-1-1. Hotline for referrals to Crisis counselors and Mental Health counselors and much more.
- Connect with a trained crisis counselor. 988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365.

Visit the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for more information at 988lifeline.org
https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/pdf/NCIPC-Suicide-FactSheet-508_FINAL.pdf

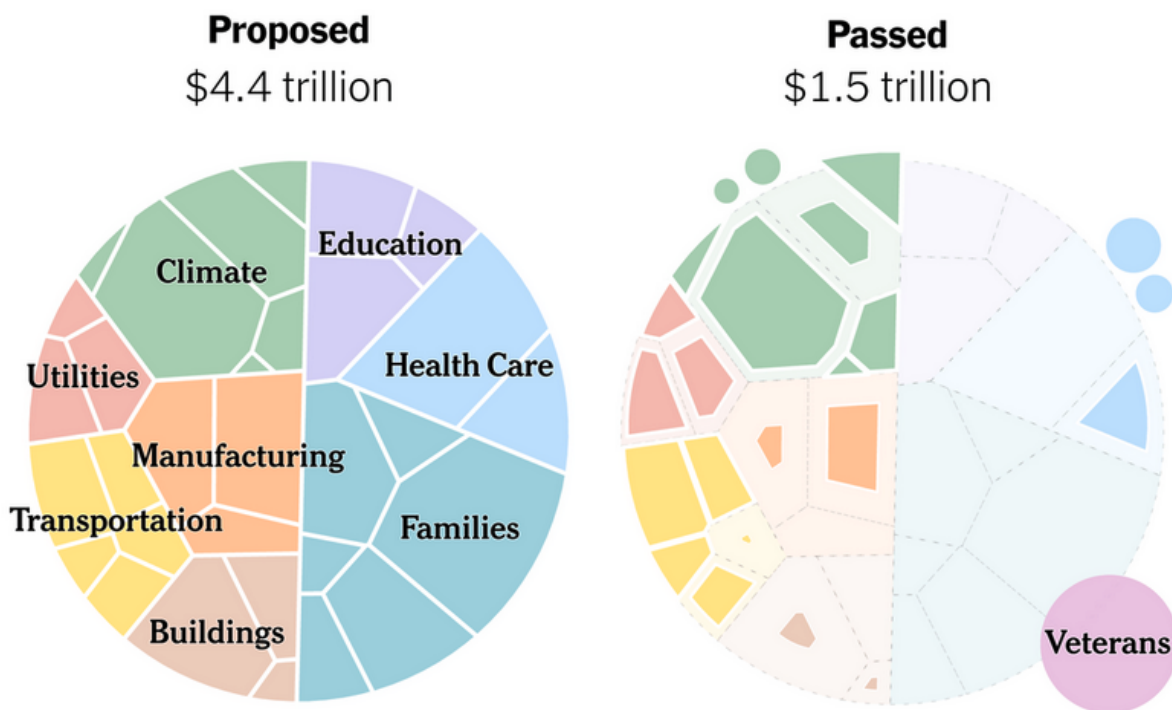
17. It is fact that we deny 90% of eligible families access to the Maternal Home Visiting programs that prevent abuse and ACEs and break the cycle of abuse and poverty.

Cutting Children from the Budget - The New York Times released a report today on the legislative successes and failures of President Joe Biden's first two years in office in advance of the US midterm elections. The report emphasizes where Biden's Democrats were able to work with Republicans to make important fiscal investments (Wall, 2022).

I could not help being struck, however, with the difference between those parts of Biden's agenda that passed and those that did not. The difference is stark if looked at it through a childist lens. It is as if a scalpel were taken to the initial proposals to cut out anything directly benefiting children (Wall, 2022).

While most of the agenda was at least partially funded, just about every proposal specifically helping children was entirely eliminated. This includes the entire budget for families (\$1,135 billion for childcare, parental leave, family health, child tax credits, and the like), the entire budget for education (\$446 billion including for prekindergarten and financial aid), and the entire budget for school buildings (\$99 billion, the only part of building infrastructure that received nothing). In all, children ended up losing \$1,680 billion in support, constituting 58% of all cuts (Wall, 2022).

The scale of this age-based disparity can be seen vividly in the article’s graphic comparison:



18. Deprivation of human sexuality education and social relationship skills appropriate for each developmental stage.

Why is providing science-based sex education to children and teens essential?

Here are the whys: #3 Child Trafficking, #13 Teen Pregnancy, and #14 Incest. Children and Teens deserve to know what healthy sexuality is and is not. Children and teens deserve to take part in the conversations regarding their bodies. This is how they learn to make healthy decisions and carry this healthy decision-making into their adulthood. While the best way to learn is from their informed parents we

can see that many children are exploited by those who are supposed to care the most for them, (see #3, #13, and #14).

“It is critical for young people to embrace the normal changes of puberty and to ultimately engage in positive and healthy sexual decision-making. The importance of clear, evidence-based guidance for sex education cannot be underestimated. These updated standards provide high-quality, evidence-based information with proven strategies to teach young people about sexual and reproductive development in a thoughtful and nonjudgmental manner.” - Maria Trent, MD, MPH, FAAP, FASHM Professor of Pediatrics, Public Health, and Nursing, Johns Hopkins University President, Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine

Development of Contextually-relevant Sexuality Education: Lessons from a Comprehensive Review of “The National Sex Education Standards provide much-needed content and skills to help children and adolescents grow up to be healthy adults with responsible approaches to sexuality, consent, and sexual behavior. The second edition of the Standards incorporates emerging evidence about how to address unconscious biases, trauma-informed care, and gender identity, among others. They provide a clear approach, recognizing that comprehensive school health programs should provide both age-appropriate information about human development and support for the critical role of families in setting values.” - Jonathan D. Klein, MD, MPH North American Vice President, International Association for Adolescent Health Samuel and Savithri Raj, Endowed Professor and Executive Vice Head, Department of Pediatrics, the University of Illinois at Chicago.

“SHAPE America envisions a nation where all children are prepared to lead healthy, physically active lives. Providing access to sexual health information is an important part of ensuring young people have the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their health. These standards are a road map for K-12 administrators and educators who are committed to providing their students with the imperative content they deserve to grow into healthy adults.” - Stephanie Morris, Executive Director, SHAPE America “Over the past decade we have seen a reawakening on several sexual health issues, including a new dialogue about sexual consent, the emergence of digital technologies shaping sexual health, greater awareness of intersectionality, and fundamental connections among sexual orientation and gender identity and the long-term consequences of stigma and discrimination. We have also seen the emergence of a new language about social, racial, and reproductive justice and equity that reflect this reawakening. All of these are reflected in the 2020 National Sex Education Standards.” - John Santelli, MD,

MPH Professor, Population and Family Health and Pediatrics, Columbia University
Past-President, Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.

Additionally, Human Sexuality Education for toddlers is about correctly naming all body parts. It is not about teaching toddlers how to have sex. They would not retain that information and because they would not retain it, is why it is not age appropriate. This is true of every child's stage of human development. Age appropriate is critical to the success of Human Sexuality Education.

National Sex Education Standards Core Content and Skills, K-12 Second Edition

<https://advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NSES-2020-web.pdf>

Adolescent Sexuality Education Across Cultures

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6406865/>

19. Expectations of children becoming adults at 18 when clearly their brains have not finished developing until age (Not that we need to change the legal age, we need to support them systemically in becoming independent.)

How did 18 become the legal age? 18 was chosen as the legal age in the U.S. because during WWII, the FDR administration conscripted people who were 18–20 years old. The same was true for the Vietnam War. This is why 18 is the legal age. The legal age is also known as the age of legal majority. This is the age at which a person gains the legal status of an adult. The legal age is set by state law and can differ from state to state. However, almost all states set the base legal age as 18 years old. This is the age at which a person gains control over their own actions and affairs and becomes responsible for the decisions they make. Those past the age of legal majority are usually tried as adults when charged with crimes. Once this age is reached, any existing parental, guardian, and child support obligations are considered terminated. However, minors may obtain the status of legal adulthood before reaching the legal age of majority if they are granted a court order for emancipation, or if they meet statutorily defined exceptions such as getting married as a minor or obtaining certain educational degrees.

Once a person reaches the legal age of their state, they may enter into legally enforceable agreements. Minors do not have the legal capacity to enter into a binding contract. However, an agreement made while a person was a minor may be expressly or impliedly ratified once they reach the age of legal majority so that the agreement becomes valid and binding. The age of legal majority is separate from legal age of license. A legal age of license is the minimum age a person must reach in order to legally to participate in certain activities, such as drinking alcohol,

voting, or driving. Legal ages of license vary by the activity and the jurisdiction, and can, but do not have to, match the age of legal majority.

Understanding the Teen Brain

It doesn't matter how smart teens are or how well they scored on the SAT or ACT. Good judgment isn't something they can excel in, at least not yet. The rational part of a teen's brain isn't fully developed and won't be until age 25 or so (emerging adult). In fact, recent research has found that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain's rational part. This is the part of the brain that responds to situations with good judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences. Teens process information with the amygdala. This is the emotional part. In teens' brains, the connections between the emotional part of the brain and the decision-making center are still developing—and not always at the same rate. That's why when teens have overwhelming emotional input, they can't explain later what they were thinking. They weren't thinking as much as they were feeling (Campinino & Turley, University of Rochester Medical School).

Why does age matter when renting a car?

Statistically, drivers under 25 years old are more likely to be involved in an accident, so rental car companies add the additional fee to help protect themselves from the added risk they are assuming. Insurance rates are generally much higher for younger drivers, which is the primary driver of rental age restrictions. Younger drivers are less experienced and more likely to take risks than older drivers, which leads to higher insurance rates. For decades, insurance companies have drawn an invisible line at age 25. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/legal_age Apparently, we only permit teens to become adults at the age of 18 because they are “more likely to take risks and the “decision-making center is not fully developed,” which means they are prime for front-line battle (less likely to realize the danger or the possibility of death). This is what car insurance companies have known since the beginning of the need to insure cars, that teen brains are not fully functional until they are 25. While this is a fact our society has not aligned for the best possible outcomes for 18-25-year-olds. Then we blame them for their failure to launch rather than questioning societal expectations. The military complex requires 18-25-year-olds to maintain its existence and to provide sacrifices to warmongering. The evidence is clear and compelling that the ecological structure of our society does not support the healthy development of emerging adults.

20. Failure to comprehend children deserve constitutional rights as protection even more so because they are vulnerable developing human beings.

Let's get real, corporal punishment is a less accountable term than "adults assaulting a child." In Qualitative research 'power' is the equivalent to the 'precision of the vocabulary.' We have failed to appropriately label behavior that has a tremendous impact upon our most vulnerable humans, our children. Childism is equal to exploitation (discriminatory behavior equal to exploitation).

Conclusion

Child abuse, Corporal Punishment, and Domestic Violence are terms used to avoid charging adults with Aggravated Assault which in reality are lesser volatile terms than assaulting vulnerable children. It is hideous behavior by grown-ups imposed on those who are least able to defend themselves. Seeking that type of coercive control indicates that adults also experienced trauma as children.

Primary Research Question: What is the ACE score of an any adult that releases their anger, frustration and seeks coercive control over a developing human being? [See a list of research questions at the end of this paper.]

IMPACT

What is the impact of 20 failures to protect children in the United State and denying them basic human rights?

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

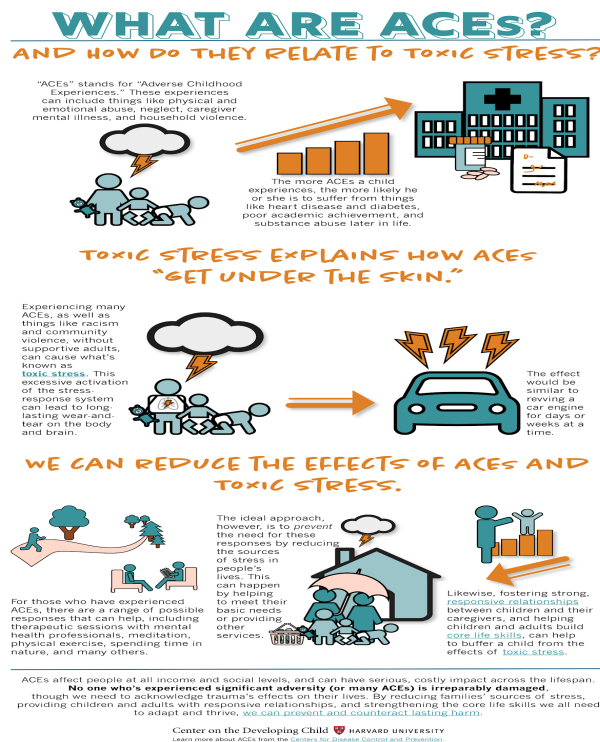
What are Adverse Childhood Experiences? Coercive parenting is using harsh parental behavior such as hitting, yelling, scolding, threatening, rejecting, physical and psychological control to enforce compliance with the child. These parents also use frequent negative commands, name-calling (emotional abuse), overt expressions of anger, and physical aggression. Parents/caregivers may also simply refuse to protect the child from others exhibiting these behaviors.

What is your ACE score?

1 point for each yes, range 0-10.

Before your 18th birthday: Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...

1. Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or attempt or have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?



5. Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
7. Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or sometimes, often, or very often

kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
10. Did a household member go to prison?

Source: NPR, ACEsTooHigh.com. This ACEs Quiz is a variation on the questions asked in the Original CDC Project.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

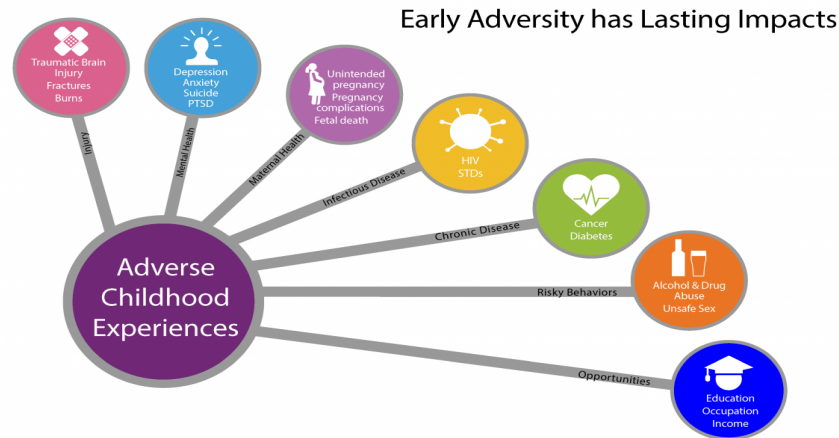
ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, and opportunity. These experiences can increase the risks of injury, and sexually transmitted infections, maternal and child health problems, teen pregnancy, involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

ACEs and associated conditions, such as living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods, frequently moving, and experiencing food insecurity, can cause toxic stress (extended or prolonged stress). Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and response to stress.

Children growing up with toxic stress may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. They may also have unstable work histories as adults and struggle with finances, jobs, and depression throughout life. These effects can also be passed on to their children. Some children may face further exposure to toxic stress from historical and ongoing traumas due to systemic racism or the impacts of poverty resulting from limited educational and economic opportunities.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/intergenerational.pdf>



Trauma - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children

Examples of PTSD symptoms include:

- Reliving the event over and over in thought or play
- Nightmares and sleep problems
- Becoming very upset when something causes memories of the event
- Lack of positive emotions
- Intense ongoing fear or sadness
- Irritability and angry outbursts
- Constantly looking for possible threats, being easily startled
- Acting helpless, hopeless, or withdrawn
- Denying that the event happened or feeling numb
- Avoiding places or people associated with the event

Because children who have experienced traumatic stress may seem restless, fidgety, or have trouble paying attention and staying organized, the symptoms of traumatic stress can be confused with symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Read: A guide for clinicians on deciding if it is ADHD or child traumatic stress. REFERENCE: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ptsd.html>

Eleven reasons why childhood abuse survivors are often targeted in adulthood by toxic people.

1. Abuse and neglect are the childhood abuse survivors ‘normal.’
2. When children are not taught to respect themselves and do not learn how they should be treated – with care, love, safety – they don’t realize this is what they need and deserve as adults.
3. Toxic people literally ‘home in’ on adults with no awareness of how to be treated well.
4. Childhood abuse survivors are often groomed by parents to be ‘people pleasers’ and often this a survival mode that is adaptive in childhood.
5. Childhood abuse survivors, have unmet emotional childhood needs.
6. Childhood abuse and neglect survivors often don’t learn healthy boundaries in childhood.
7. Childhood abuse and neglect survivors don’t learn healthy self-esteem and healthy self-worth.
8. Childhood abuse survivors often are unable to stand up for themselves, as they were not allowed to do this and it wasn’t safe to do this, in childhood.
9. Children want to believe their parents and family love them. No matter what abuse they are enduring. They grow to wrongly believe love and abuse can coexist.
10. Childhood abuse survivors are less likely to leave an abusive relationship with a toxic person in adulthood.
11. Some childhood abuse survivors are empathic and can wrongly believe if they just love the toxic person enough, the toxic person will change.

From 11 Reasons why.

“The devil doesn’t come to you dressed in a cape and pointy horns; he comes as everything you ever wanted” ~ unknown

People do not always hate those they subordinate; but those they subordinate with an ‘ism,’ a prejudicial political ideology, they cannot love” (CHILDISM, p.5, 2012).

PROTECTIVE CHILDHOOD FACTORS

Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being and Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect -

Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, and communities that promote the health and well-being of children and families. By using a protective factors approach, child welfare professionals and others can help parents find resources and support that emphasize their strengths while also identifying areas where they need assistance, thereby reducing the chances of child abuse and neglect.

Protective Factors and Adverse Childhood Experiences

Protective factors and adverse childhood experiences are frameworks utilized in prevention efforts to reduce the risk of maltreatment and prevent the recurrence of abuse or neglect by drawing upon the strengths of families and acknowledging traumatic events.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are conditions or attribute that, when present in families and communities, increase the well-being of children and families and reduce the likelihood of maltreatment. Identifying protective factors helps parents find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively—even under stress. There are 6 protective factors:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete supports for parents
- Social and emotional competence of children

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/about/protective-factors-aces/>

Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being and Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect

When Parents can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children. The following resources support parents and caregivers in building their resilience.

Building Resilience in Troubled Times: A Guide for Parents [↗](#)(opens in new window)

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Discusses ways for parent to build a better support during difficult times to continue to give their children what they need to grow up healthy and safe. Building the Skills Adults Need for Life: A Guide for Practitioners [↗](#)(opens in new window).

Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child (2017).

Presents a guide for practitioners that explains the science behind our core life skills, what affects their development, and how practitioners can help. The resource includes information on ways to help adults build skills, how stress affects our skills, and how to deliver services in ways that can help reduce stress.

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<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/#collapse3>

What are the protective factors to prevent child abuse and neglect?


There are a variety of protective factors approaches, with each highlighting a different set of factors. The following are the six factors included in the Children's Bureau's framework that community-based service providers can use to identify strengths within families and how those strengths can be further developed to prevent child abuse.


Protective Factor 1: Nurturing and attachment

A child's early experiences of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance, and protection. Research shows that babies who receive affection and nurturing from their [parents](#) have the best chance of healthy development. A child's relationship with a consistent, caring adult in the early years is associated later in life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

Essentials for Childhood: Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments for All Children)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Violence Prevention (2019)

Describes a framework to guide community activities to help build safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments for children and families. The guide outlines four main goals: to raise awareness and commitment to promoting safe, stable, and nurturing relationships; to use data to inform actions; to create the context for healthy children through norms change and program creation; and to create the context for healthy children through policy change. [Helping Caregivers Foster Secure Attachment in Young Children](#) 

Jackson (2017). *Social Work Today*, 17(4). Describes an intervention designed to help parents better identify behaviors that may contribute to insecure attachment and increase the quantity and quality of nurturing behaviors. [Responsive Care: Nurturing a Strong Attachment Through Everyday Moments](#) 

ZERO TO THREE (2016). Showcases a video on responsive care, the process of watching and tuning into a child's cues and responding in a sensitive way in order to nurture and build attachment with the child. [Essentials for Childhood: Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments for All Children](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Violence Prevention (2019).

Protective Factor 2: Knowledge of parenting for child and youth development

There is extensive research linking healthy child development to effective parenting. Children thrive when parents provide not only affection but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world, and motivates children to achieve. The following resources offer information that helps families build their knowledge of child and youth development.

Explore the Tool Kits [☞](#)(opens in new window)

Provides parents and caregivers with interactive videos, printouts, and resource guides that promote parent learning and engagement. Example topics include autism, brain development, and building resilience.

Positive Parenting Tips: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020)

Provides information for parents about their children's development, positive parenting, safety, and health at various stages of a child's life.

Protective Factor 3: Parental Resilience

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence—and financial stressors, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children. The following resources support parents and caregivers in building their resilience.

Building Resilience in Troubled Times: A Guide for Parents [☞](#) (opens in new window). Center for the Study of Social Policy Discusses ways for parent to build a better support during difficult times to continue to give their children what they need to grow up healthy and safe. Building the Skills Adults Need for Life: A Guide for Practitioners [☞](#)(opens in new window).

Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child (2017) Presents a guide for practitioners that explains the science behind our core life skills, what affects their development, and how practitioners can help. The resource includes information on ways to help adults build skills, how stress affects our skills, and how to deliver

services in ways that can help reduce stress. Engaging Resilience: How Responsive Caregiving Lays the Foundation for Children to Thrive [\(opens in new window\)](#) LENA (2020). Discusses the importance of the relationship with a caring adult provides children with the stability and security they need for healthy emotional, social, and behavioral development.

Protective Factor 4: Social connections

Parents and caregivers with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves compared with those who do not have such a network. All caregivers need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support. Research has shown that parents who are isolated and have few social connections are at higher risk for maltreating their children. The following resources provide an array of information that help families enhance their social connections.

Be Strong Families Café Trainings([opens in new window](#)) OR Be Strong Families: Offers professionals an opportunity to receive trainings on the Be Strong Families Birth Parent Café Model, which is a tool focused on promoting healthy and positive peer-to-peer interactions and conversations. Making Connections [\(opens in new window\)](#).

Annie E. Casey Foundation - Focuses on the premise that families do better when they live in communities that help them to succeed. This website provides information on theory, relevant websites, results, and reading materials.

Protective Factor 5: Concrete supports for parents

Many factors can affect a family's ability to care for its children. Partnering with parents to identify and access resources in the community may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children. The following resources outline resources that offer help to parents and caregivers.

2-1-1.org [\(opens in new window\)](#), United Way (2021). Offers a free, confidential hotline to connect people with local resources for food, employment, crisis support, health, and housing assistance. Find Support [\(opens in new window\)](#)

National Parent Helpline: Provides links to national resources for a wide range of supports, including basic needs, social support emergency numbers, parenting education, and more. The webpage also includes State-specific resources [\(opens in new window\)](#)

Making Connections  AND (opens in new window)

Annie E. Casey Foundation: This initiative operates on the premise that families do better when they live in communities that help them to succeed. Information on theory, sites, results, and reading materials are provided.

Protective Factor 6: Social and emotional competence of children

Protective factors framework: A protective factors framework provides a better understanding on how six protective factors may contribute to or explain positive outcomes for children, families, and communities, as well as prevent child abuse and neglect. The resources below provide examples of the protective factors approaches commonly used in child welfare systems.

Protective Factors and Protective Capacities: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families [Infographic] (PDF - 233 KB)

Capacity Building Center for States (2016). Describes the protective capacities framework and the protective factors framework, both of which are used by child welfare practitioners to assess, intervene, and serve families as well as explores the common ground the frameworks share to help strengthen consistency in services for families.

Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare. **Download (PDF - 554KB) Order (Free)**

Provides an overview of national protective factors approaches to prevent child abuse and neglect. It is designed to help child welfare professionals, administrators, service providers, policymakers, and other interested individuals understand the concepts of protective and risk factors in families and communities and learn ways in which building protective factors can help lower the risk of child abuse and neglect now and in the future.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>

RELEVANCE: FAMILY SCIENCE

The relevance of these three theories for Family Scientists and future Family Scientists is a multi-theoretical research approach to determine the extent, the intensity of the impact of prejudice on children and then developing a model of Prevention in order to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of prejudice against children. The ecological systemic change will come by evaluating cultural practices, parenting education, parenting, and caregiving practices, and appropriate expectations of children to illuminate childist thinking and how to prevent childist

behaviors. This requires testing interventions that promote healthy perspectives of children's development (to replace Childist beliefs and behaviors) and the development of practices and education that reduce childist thinking and prejudicial behaviors. Preparing family scientists and future family scientists/practitioners to assess, develop and implement a model of Prevention Science to provide effective services is essential to ending intergenerational transmission.

Are we asking the best fit of Research Questions?

By far, the most common ACEs in all 50 states are economic hardship, and parental divorce or separation. Nationally, just over one in four children ages birth through 17 has experienced economic hardship somewhat or very often. Experiencing 4 or more ACEs is associated with a significantly increased risk for 7 out of 10 leading adult causes of death, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, COPD, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and suicide. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>

Research Questions

Are our prisons full of people with High ACEs scores?

<https://healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-020-00115-5>

<https://interrogatingjustice.org/ending-mass-incarceration/adverse-childhood-events-more-common-among-adults-in-prison/>

How effective is the current prison system in the US at rehabilitating violent offenders?

<https://thecrimereport.org/2022/08/15/do-prison-rehabilitation-programs-really-work/>

What are our options for interrupting the intergenerational transmission of Adverse Childhood Experiences?

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8466272/>

What if any impact does high parental ACE scores have on parenting and child outcomes?

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6317990/>

These critical research questions need to be explored and results published to provide evidence of systemic CHILDISM and the intergenerational transmission of prejudices. These prejudices allow federal funding to leave children behind in every ecological system.

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