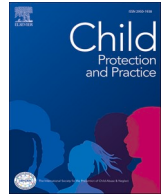


Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Child Protection and Practice

journal homepage: www.sciencedirect.com/journal/child-protection-and-practice

Assessing the impacts on child welfare practice of important articles of the UN convention on the rights of the child: A comparison of Australia, Canada and the USA

Bob Lonne^{a,b,*} , Ashley Stewart-Tufescu^c , Shawna Lee^d , Christine Morley^e 

^a School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, Australia

^b Department of Social Work, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

^c Faculty of Social Work and Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2, Canada

^d School of Social Work, University of Michigan, 1080 South University Ave, Ann Arbor, MI, 48109, USA

^e Head of Social Work, School of Public Health and Social Work and Centre for Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Best interests
Corporal punishment
Convention on the rights of the child
Cross-national comparative research
System reform

ABSTRACT

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) emphasizes the centrality of the family, culture and community in the nurturing and socialization of all children, and the responsibility of governments to develop laws, policies and programs that support families and children to achieve their human potentials, and to be protected from discrimination, violence, exploitation and other harms. Children requiring protective interventions should be placed in homes within their cultural or community milieu. However, in many countries protective interventions are not required by policy to enact a child rights approach, nor to ensure that children's best interests are required in case decision-making, and corporal punishment is not outlawed.

In this article we pose the question: How impactful has the CRC been upon the policy and practice in child protection/welfare systems in Australia, Canada and the USA? We apply a critical comparative lens to examine how the CRC has been implemented and operationalized in these nations, focusing upon two important Articles: the best interests principle and corporal punishment. We assess the current state of CYP's rights and describe and analyze the extent to which these countries have formally or informally embedded and operationalized the CRC into their child protection legislations, policies and practices. We compare and contrast these nation's protective system achievements using publicly available sources of analysis and commentary. We examine the ways in which the CRC plays a transformative role in child welfare systems and its potential to be a greater force for much needed system change.

1. Introduction

The [United Nations General Assembly \(1989\)](#) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was a landmark statement of children's position that has impacted law reform globally. This paper examines how important Articles of the United Nations' (UN) CRC have since its inception affected the policies and practices of the child welfare systems in three developed nations: Australia, Canada and the USA. In November 1989 Member States of the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the CRC, thereby replacing its predecessor the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child ([Child Rights International Network, 2019](#)). It has

since been ratified by all nations except the USA. Having ratified the CRC, nations are obliged to respect and protect the rights of all children within their jurisdiction. The centrality of the family, culture and community in the nurturing and socialization of all children and young people (CYP) is emphasized ([Lundy, 2014](#); [Melton, 2010](#)). Also included is the responsibility of governments to develop laws, policies and programs that support families and CYP to achieve their human potentials, and for their protection from discrimination, violence, exploitation and other harms.

Critically, CYP are seen as rights-holders "entitled to human rights and fundamental freedoms as any other human being is" ([Liefwaard &](#)

This article is part of a special issue entitled: Transforming the child welfare system published in *Child Protection and Practice*.

* Corresponding author. School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, Australia.

E-mail addresses: boblonne@gmail.com (B. Lonne), Ashley.Stewart-Tufescu@umanitoba.ca (A. Stewart-Tufescu), Shawna@umich.edu (S. Lee), c3.morley@qut.edu.au (C. Morley).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2025.100270>

Received 30 October 2024; Received in revised form 15 May 2025; Accepted 4 December 2025

Available online 4 December 2025

2950-1938/© 2025 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Sloth-Neilsen, 2016, p. 1). Yet, human rights law acknowledges minimal norms of action and basic protections that regulate the conduct of governments, rather than individuals (Melton, 2010). That is, the CRC is concerned with ensuring that the fabric of society and its institutions recognize CYP as essential and equal participants of that society, albeit with particular needs and requirements during their childhood. To achieve this the CRC has 54 Articles covering a diverse array of principles and aspects central to CYP's identity, development, culture, connection, health and wellbeing. Notably, Australia (1990) and Canada (1991) have ratified the CRC; the USA has not (Liefwaard & Sloth-Neilsen, 2016).

Numerous reasons are given to explain why the USA has not ratified the CRC. Notably, the United States legal framework strongly protects parental rights. The Constitution has been interpreted in case law as granting parents broad authority to make decisions concerning the care and control of their children without government interference (see *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 2000). There is political resistance to international treaties that could be seen as encroaching on parental authority (Todres, 2006). At the same time, the state retains authority under the doctrine of *parens patriae* to intervene when parental decisions jeopardize a child's welfare, including in situations involving child abuse and neglect (Sankaran, 2009). This creates tension between parental rights and child welfare systems, which embody the state obligation to protect children. These factors – and numerous others – contribute to United States' lawmakers' ambivalence and resistance toward ratifying the CRC.

Australia, Canada, and the USA were selected for this comparative analysis because, as developed nations, they share many structural and contextual similarities including their Child Welfare Systems' (CWS) approaches and, importantly, as the USA has not ratified the CRC there are differences which allow for critical examination of the influence of the CRC as both a binding legal framework (in ratifying countries) and a normative reference point (in non-ratifying contexts) (Skivenes & Sørdsdal, 2018). Additionally, the inclusion of the USA enables reflection about the CRC's influence in child welfare policy more broadly and helps highlight both the limitations and possibilities of child rights implementation in the absence of treaty obligations.

In this paper we pose the question: How real has the impact of the CRC been upon the common policy and practice in CWS in Australia, Canada and the USA? A critical lens is focused upon two important articles: The best interests of the child principle (Article 3) and children's rights to protection from corporal punishment (Article 19). When comparing national systems, it is important to describe and appreciate the overall characteristics of each nation's institutional context including its people, cultures, history, institutional arrangements and laws (Parton, 2017, 2022). We describe and analyze the extent to which these countries have embedded and operationalized these two CRC Articles into their child protection legislations, policies and practices. We then compare and contrast these nation's successes and limitations over the past decade using publicly available sources of analysis and commentary; namely the submissions and reports of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereafter the UN Committee) concerning Australia and Canada as well as academic research and grey literature from non-government and not-for-profit agencies with particular interest in the rights of children.

2. The national contexts

Each of these democratic nations have a national government and state/provincial/territorial governments and are well-developed, wealthy and pluralist, have aging populations and a British colonial past with populations of dispossessed Indigenous peoples, and a history of rule of law. Significant sections of their populations are poor. Neo-liberal policy frameworks and market-based systems dominate (McDonald et al., 2003), and each takes a child protection approach (Cameron & Freymond, 2006), rather than the family service approach or focus on

prevention of abuse.

2.1. Australia

Approximately 22.1 % of Australia's 27 million residents are aged less than 18 years (ABS, 2020), around 29 % of residents were born overseas, and 22 % have a parent born overseas (ABS, 2022). Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are the world's longest living continuous culture, comprise 3.2 % of the population (ABS, 2022). However, 5.4 % of children aged less than 15 years are Indigenous, and their younger age structure compared to others reflects higher fertility rates and higher mortality rates than the Non-Indigenous population (ABS, 2018). Indigenous Australians continue to be significantly disadvantaged across a broad range of economic, health, welfare and educational outcomes (AIHW, 2021a; Productivity Commission, 2021) despite national policies to address these disparities (Productivity Commission, 2020).

Australia's national government is responsible for nation-wide programs and primary funding of the six state and two territory governments that are responsible for the bulk of service delivery in health, education and welfare. The national government mostly funds family and individual support programs delivered by the state/territory CWS and an array of non-government organizations (NGOs) and for-profit agencies. Every jurisdiction's legislation and policy frameworks emphasize the best interests principle in case decision-making (AIFS, 2022), and case management, mandatory reporting, and investigation of reports of significant harm are proceduralized (Lonne et al., 2021). Placements into the out-of-home care (OOHC) system are dominated by NGOs. Between 2016–17 and 2020–21, notifications (reports of alleged maltreatment) of CYP across Australia increased by 40 % (AIHW, 2022). Nationally, 54 % of CYP in OOHC are in relative/kinship care, 37 % in foster care, with 7 % in residential care, due to their "complex needs" (AIHW, 2021b). "At June 30, 2021, more than 46,200 children (were) in OOHC, a 7.3 % increase from June 30, 2017" (AIHW, 2022).

There is significant disproportionality of Indigenous CYP in child protection reports, investigations and OOHC services. For example, Indigenous CYP on care orders increased from about 19,700 in 2017 to about 24,200 in 2021–22.8 % in 5 years (AIHW, 2022). As of June 2020, Indigenous CYP in OOHC were 11 times the rate for non-Indigenous counterparts (56 per 1000 children) (AIHW, 2021b). This increasing disproportionality is multilayered (AIHW, 2022), and stems from factors including intergenerational impacts of colonization, systemic racism, and marginalization (Duthie et al., 2019; Lonne et al., 2020).

Scores of judicial inquiries have occurred over the past 30 years into flawed investigation practices, failures in preventing serious harms, and scandals and tragedies in the OOHC system such as significant abuse and poor outcomes for CYP (Lonne et al., 2013). Considerable media and political attention has highlighted a CWS in crisis leading to ongoing workforce problems such as recruitment, retention and inadequate staff training (Russ et al., 2022). These systemic failures served as catalysts for significant policy, program and institutional reform agendas to provide timely and accessible help to CYP and families (Lonne & Parton, 2014). The national and state/territory governments initiated the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children that outlined priority areas and the need for public health prevention approaches to reduce child abuse and neglect (COAG, 2009; Commonwealth of Australia, 2021), but these initiatives have not yet reduced the rates of CYP in the care system, particularly Indigenous CYP.

2.2. Canada

Canada is the second-largest country in the world by total area (Statistics Canada, 2018) and comprises 13 distinct geographical regions, including 10 provinces and three territories. In Canada, health services and social protections are universal (e.g., universal health care), largely like the Australian system, and in contrast to the USA which

relies primarily on private systems with limited targeted public supports. Most of Canada's over 41 million people (Statistics Canada, 2024) reside within 160 km (100 miles) of its southern border with the USA, in urban settings, and nearly 60 % live in two provinces – Ontario and Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2017). Canada's population is changing dramatically and aging, with a growing proportion of seniors compared to children (Statistics Canada, 2022a) which has impacts on social and healthcare provision and resource allocation. More recently, international migration has driven Canada's growth; over 20 % of the population is foreign-born individuals (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Approximately 5 % of the population (1,807,250) identifies as First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) and this population represents the fastest growing and youngest proportion of the Canadian population.

The contemporary Canadian CWS is organized and governed by the 13 provinces and territories and Indigenous child welfare organizations (Trocmé et al., 2019), with differing jurisdictional models based on legislation and funding procedures including some by the federal government. The system follows a dual mandate model that focuses on both the protection of CYP from immediate harm and supporting the development and wellbeing of CYP living in difficult circumstances (Fallon et al., 2017; Trocmé et al., 2014, 2019). This framework primarily takes a child-protection, rather than family prevention and support focus. Over the past 15 years, the mandates of various child-serving agencies have expanded, and as a result, so have the number of investigations related to CYP's exposure to intimate partner violence and risk of harm assessments (Fallon et al., 2023).

FNMI CYP are 7.7 % of the population of children under the age of 14 yet are overrepresented and account for 14,970 out of 28,665 (52.2 %) of those in OOHC (Fallon et al., 2021; Government of Canada, 2023). In the province of Manitoba, close to 90 % of CYP in OOHC are Indigenous (Government of Manitoba, Manitoba Families, 2021). Today, FNMI CYP represent over 85 % of CYP and families involved with the CWS, primarily from neglect (Fallon et al., 2021). The recent Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) (Fallon et al., 2023) reported that over a 20-year period the rates of investigations of concerns increased 125 %, while the family services for those being investigated had not increased. Yet, cases classified as in need of urgent protection substantially decreased (28 % in 2008 vs. 10 % in 2019); often associated with family-level challenges, including stress and lack of support, yet not documented physical harm to the CYP.

The system is very complex and inequitable for FNMI families living on and off reserve. For families living on reserve, delivery of child welfare services is dependent on delegation of authority by the provinces and territories, whereas First Nations Child and Family Services agencies are funded and responsible for providing comparable care and services on reserve (Bennett, 2016). Generally, there are five jurisdictional models for the delivery of child welfare services for First Nations agencies that differ based on the level of involvement and shared responsibility of the provincial/territorial agency. These include a delegated model, a Pre-Mandated Child and Family Services model, a Tripartite Model, and a self-government model (Bennett, 2016); the delegated model being the most common arrangement. The delegation can take the form of full delegation (operating with full child protection and prevention authority), also known as fully mandated agencies or partial delegation (operating with partial delegation to provide support and prevention services to families whilst the provincial CWS provides child protection services) (Blackstock et al., 2007).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a) in its final report included 94 Calls to Action and issued calls to reform the CWS including for the federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments to take responsibility including annual reports on Indigenous CYP in care; along with increased resources for family support and preservation, acknowledging the devastating impact of residential schools, increased competency-based training to include community-based healing interventions, implementing culturally-informed parenting supports and devolving power within

Indigenous child welfare settings (Caldwell & Sinha, 2020). Furthermore, in 2019, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the restrictive funding and administration of on-reserve child welfare services constituted discrimination against Indigenous CYP (Caldwell & Sinha, 2020; First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada: 2016 CHRT 2). This ruling resulted in increased funding and more prevention supports, mental health services, intake and assessment, governance, infrastructure, and higher staff salaries for Indigenous child welfare agencies (Caldwell & Sinha, 2020; First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Government of Canada, 2019). In October 2023, the Federal Court of Canada approved a \$23.34 billion settlement agreement to compensate First Nations CYP and their families who were subjected to discriminatory child welfare practices and reflects the harms that FNMI children and their families have long suffered, including family separations and the denial of life saving and life wellness services (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, 2023).

Acknowledgment and recognition of the inequitable and discriminatory child welfare practices that led to devastating outcomes for First Nations children and families was the catalyst for the introduction of the federal Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families* (Government of Canada, 2019). It represents a significant step towards decolonization and reconciliation of child welfare in Canada through a fundamental shift in the approach to child and family services for FNMI Peoples in Canada and affirms Indigenous jurisdiction over child and family services. It recognizes that First Nations communities have the inherent right to make decisions about their CYP's wellbeing, and that Indigenous laws, customs, and practices should be respected and incorporated into child and family service decision-making and service provision. Notably, the Act centers the notion of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions regarding child and family services, and centers the importance of implementing culturally-informed, family- and community-centered services to promote child and family well-being.

2.3. The United States of America (USA)

The USA is a powerful nation economically, militarily and politically, having the largest gross domestic product (World Bank, 2021) but a relatively high level of poverty (World Bank, 2019) at 11.6 % of the population in 2021 (Creamer et al., 2022). There is considerable ethnic and cultural diversity within the USA About 19 % of the 331 million population is Hispanic or Latino, 14 % is African American, 2 % is Indigenous and 14 % are foreign-born. Roughly 22 % of the population is under age 18 years (United States Census Bureau, 2022).

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (United States Congress, 2010), amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111320), is the major federal legislation that established the modern CWS. CAPTA authorized federal funding for child welfare investigation and reporting in all USA states, which have responsibility for protecting children and providing family support. "The USA child welfare system can be classified as having a narrower focus than most other countries in terms of its emphasis on child safety and protection" (Slack & Paul, 2017, p. 404). For example, other CWS such as in Canada and Australia provide preventive services and intervention programs to families (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021; Trocmé et al., 2014). In contrast, the USA CWS is criticized as being largely reactive and center on substantiating abuse or neglect and enforcing compliance with child safety standards, with systems that tend to prioritize risk assessment and removal decisions over prevention services (Font & Gershoff, 2020; Slack & Paul, 2017). Additionally, the system's emphasis on surveillance and compliance can undermine trust between families and service providers, potentially deterring families from seeking help (Fong, 2020). The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), enacted in 2018, allows USA states to use federal funds for evidence-based services, including mental health treatment, substance use programs, and

in-home parenting support, to prevent children from entering foster care (United States Congress, 2018).

The USA system includes universal mandatory reporting laws for professionals who work with CYP (Slack & Paul, 2017, p. 407). Outcomes of child welfare involvement can include services such as family supports, sometimes through differential responses (Merkel-Holguin et al., 2019), but investigation and placement in OOHC for CYP is undertaken by child protection services at state and county levels. The USA system has been critiqued for not focusing on the welfare of CYP but, rather, on the limited perspective of protection from serious maltreatment (Font & Gershoff, 2020; Slack & Paul, 2017). The USA system lacks an orientation to child wellbeing and helping children thrive. While the FFPSA provides services to CYP and families to avoid OOHC, and provides families with greater access to evidence-based child maltreatment prevention services, it is too early to determine whether the FFPSA has contributed to broader shifts in the approach to child welfare. In addition, the Administration for Children & Families (2023b) recently released guidance to states to enhance supports to LGBTQI + CYP, enhance supports to relatives providing kinship care foster placements, and expand access to legal representation for CYP and families involved in the CWS.

Earlier child welfare policy efforts included the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1977 (25 U.S.C. 1902), which was a response to the continued removal of American Indian CYP from their reservation communities. For generations, American Indian CYP had been forcibly removed from their families to boarding schools, for the purposes of “assimilating them into mainstream American society” (The Children’s Bureau, 2013, p. 155). The CWS has been seen as a continuation of systems of family separation, through the removal of CYP from their families and communities via OOHC placements. ICWA set forth legal obligations “... to protect the best interest of Indian Children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children and placement of such children in homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture ...” (United States Congress, 1978, Section § 23.3). ICWA outlines legal obligations to ensure that American Indian CYP are provided with culturally appropriate services and care including OOHC placements that meet ICWA standards. Furthermore, tribes must be notified of such placements and be provided with an opportunity to care for the CYP in the tribal setting.

Current critiques of the USA system include the disproportionate representation of race and ethnic minority children in the CWS. For example, Indigenous children have the highest rates in the nation for entering care (Tajima et al., 2022; United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2023a) and African-American children are also disproportionately represented in the CWS (Barth et al., 2022; Wald, 2022). The upEND movement argues that because of the disproportionate harm caused to race and ethnic minority CYP and their families, particularly the high rates of removal of minority CYP from their families via OOHC, the abolition of the CWS is required (Detlaff et al., 2020). “Ending this harm [foster care] will only be achieved when the forcible surveillance and separation of children from their parents is no longer viewed as an acceptable form of intervention” (Detlaff et al., 2020, p. 500).

3. Key CRC rights of children

In this section we describe and analyze the three countries’ situations with respect to important CRC Articles, and critically examine how they are used within the legislative, policy and practice frameworks of the institutions holding primary responsibility for the protection of CYP. Contrary to some viewpoints, the CRC does not pit children’s rights against their parent’s rights or those of others, the universality of human rights being a key principle for all persons, and one which is grounded in moral philosophy (Melton, 2010). CYP’s rights are constructed as identical with those of all other persons, and the CRC emphasizes the

deeply relational connections that they have with family, culture and community, upon which their socialization depends (Melton, 2010). Obligations are placed upon adults in positions of authority to respect the rights of CYP to act in ways that further their ongoing social and cultural development, whilst also recognizing their needs and vulnerabilities as minors. The important Articles examined here are critical to the protection of CYP in contact with CWS who exercise the legal power of the state, and obligations to protect CYP from significant maltreatment. These responsibilities are acknowledged through the act of ratification of the CRC by States Parties. The UN oversees the CRC’s implementation through its UN Committee which periodically examines States’ Parties that have ratified the CRC.

3.1. Best interests of the child

Article 3.1 states that “in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, **the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration** (emphasis added)”; the best interests principle is also found in a further five Articles and is a core principle that has been incorporated into many countries CYP laws and policies. Yet, its policy inclusion requires embedding the CRC rights framework within practice that utilizes a child-rights approach whereby due weight is given to CYP’s views and that their age and maturity are relevant in the decision-making process as well as their participation (Schmahl, 2021, p. 22). States’ Parties obligations relate to all actions concerning CYP taken by courts and CWS agencies and partners. CYP’s best interests must be considered and also embedded into decision-making processes, with parents retaining a key responsibility for the determination of what is in CYP’s best interests (Schmahl, 2021). Yet, despite the processes of assessment and decision-making being central, vagueness and indeterminacy remain concerning exactly how CYP’s best interests are perceived and understood. Subjective evaluations by parents, communities and authorities abound, influenced by their particular social, cultural, political and religious beliefs and various perspectives balance the needs of CYP differently.

CYP’s best interests are contestable and contested. Best interests decision-making should not be seen as immutable and beyond challenge but instead as a viewpoint or perspective that needs to be interpreted relative to the other rights within the CRC as well as the rights of others; decisions must be justified as being reasonable and appropriate in light of the specific circumstances (Ainsworth, 2021; Lonne et al., 2016). Some critics contend that the principle is not determinant and has been misused in practice to become a decision-making process that excludes the participation of CYP and their families, apports blame, and bypasses critical structural factors at play such as poverty (Ainsworth, 2021; Hansen & Ainsworth, 2009, 2011). Others have argued that the principle is powerful because it establishes intervention thresholds and is an ideal and standard of reasonableness that has everyday applicability to guide protective actions by incorporating ethical and legal considerations (Kopelman, 1997). Indeed, the UN Committee (2013) has outlined elements to be taken into account when assessing the best interests of a child including the child’s views, their identity characteristics, the need to preserve their family environment and maintaining their relationships with the child, as well as the care, protection and safety of the child. Hence, the processes and approaches used to determine the best interests of CYP are a critical factor in ethically using power, exercising authority and appropriately implementing their rights into practice (Lonne et al., 2016) and thereby operates at broader principle/policy levels and also in very practical applications.

3.1.1. Australia

CYP’s best interests are contained within all Australian jurisdiction’s protective legislation as a key principle (AIFS, 2022; Health and Human Services, 2020). However, the UN Committee’s 2012 report (p. 8) noted its concern that “the principle of the best interests of the child is not

widely known, appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and in policies, programmes and projects relevant to and with an impact on children". It urged Australia "to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance for determining the best interests of the child in every area" and further to specify "the criteria used in the individual assessment of the best interests of the child" (2012, p. 8).

The [Australian Government's 2018](#) submission to the UN Committee noted that the best interests principle was contained in all states'/territories' laws, outlined the growing resources provided for CWS and asserted that OOHC was a last resort and that agencies worked collaboratively "to ensure children's wellbeing is upheld" (p. 18). The submission did not identify weaknesses or deficiencies in the efforts of the Australian Government ([Tobin, 2021](#), p. 12). However, submissions by other organizations reiterated ongoing concerns about these same issues. For example, the [Australian Child Rights Taskforce - UNICEF \(2018\)](#) submission highlighted that the best interests principle was inadequately understood and inconsistently applied, and cited increasing rates of removal of Indigenous CYP, and inadequate prevention and intensive support services (pp. 15–16). They also cited research that indicated practice frameworks contained inadequate information on all core domains including the child's best interests. None of the states/territories' frameworks reported having consulted with CYP and the principle was neither embedded nor interpreted evenly or consistently (2018, p. 30). Their submission argued that the need for OOHC placements far outweighed the capacity of the CWS and resulted in placement decisions often being based on availability rather than a need to ensure children's safety, care and development (p. 30).

The [UN Committee's \(2019, p. 5\)](#) Concluding Observations report recommended that Australia:

- (a) "Ensure that procedures and criteria guiding all relevant persons in authority for determining the best interests of the child and for giving it due weight as a primary consideration are coherent and consistently applied throughout the State party;
- (b) Make publicly available all judicial and administrative judgments and decisions regarding children, specifying the criteria used in the individual assessment of the best interests of the child".

The subsequent Australian [National Children's Commissioner's \(2019\)](#) report noted that best interests issues were found with respect to CYP in situations outside of child protection. Curiously, apart from Indigenous CYP experiencing family violence and in the OOHC system, there was no specific assessment of CYP's contact with the CWS such as was highlighted by the [Australian Child Rights Taskforce \(2018\)](#). Overall, much work remains to be done to embed nationally the best interests principle into the child protection policy and practice and thereby to effectively operationalize it ([Tobin, 2021](#)).

3.1.2. Canada

Despite Canada's 1991 ratification of the CRC, evidence of CYP's rights principles in its provincial/territorial child protection legislation is minimal: recent analysis by the authors found that only four of the 13 jurisdictions make a specific reference to the CRC. Moreover, only 10 of the 13 jurisdictions have independent representation for CYP via an ombudsperson, representative or child advocate (see Article 12(2)). The [UN Committee's 2012](#) examination of Canada noted that the best interests principle was not widely known and was inconsistently applied. It recommended developing procedures for determining CYP's best interests of the child and specific criteria for its application to all decision-making ([Canadian Bar Association, 2020](#)). Their 5th-6th periodic review was delayed following the [TRC's \(2015b\)](#) final report that chronicled the scope and scale of abuses of Indigenous CYP within the residential school system and associated intergenerational trauma and cultural destruction. The Committee focused upon the TRC findings and the issues facing Indigenous CYP, families and communities, including

discrimination, disappearances and murders of Indigenous girls and women. Many submissions were critical concerning the best interests principle (e.g. [Canadian Bar Association, 2020](#); [Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, 2020](#)), including:

- a) It should be included in all legislation, court decisions, and policy decisions affecting children;
- b) Children were treated inequitably concerning legal recognition of their rights, due process, and having their views and best interests considered in decision-making;
- c) Provincial child welfare legislation was quite inconsistent in having and utilizing the principle;
- d) Guidance on determining the best interests principle should be widely distributed along with education in its application; and
- e) Progress in application of the principle since the previous UN Committee report was limited.

The [UN Committee's 2022](#) Concluding Observations report recommended consistent with these submissions and specifically mentioned the need to "ensure adequate safeguards and clear criteria, based on the needs as well as best interests of the child, for determining whether a child should be placed in alternative care" (p. 9). Like Australia, the UN Committee gave recommendations concerning properly implementing the best interests principle in ways far broader than just the CWS such as for refugee, child justice and education programs. The Committee reiterated for Canada to "develop a comprehensive law on children's rights at the federal level in line with the principles and provisions of the Convention and ensure the equal implementation of its laws throughout the country" (2022, p. 2). There were also many recommendations concerning public and professional education programs needed to alert people to the CRC and its implications for the safety, health and wellbeing of CYP.

3.1.3. The USA

The longstanding best interests legal principle is widely cited and applied in law to USA child welfare decision-making. Yet it has no commonly accepted definition, and since the USA has not ratified the CRC, the best interests principles (e.g. it is a "primary consideration") arguably do not guide USA child welfare law and practices to the extent that they do in those countries that have ratified it. Within this context, one major tension is the extent to which the best interest principle allows CYP's wellbeing to take priority over parents' rights. [Font and Gershoff \(2020\)](#) argued that USA law prioritizes the rights of the parent over those of the child. In *Reno v. Flores*, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, ruled that "the 'best interests of the child' is not the legal standard that governs parents' or guardians' exercise of their custody: So long as certain minimum requirements of child care are met, the interests of the child may be subordinated to the interests of other children, or indeed even to the interests of the parents or guardians themselves." (Quoted in [Font & Gershoff, 2020](#), p. 23). Children's protections are viewed from the perspectives of "the parent and it is often their (*i.e., parents'*) rights that are the major concern" ([Polonko et al., 2016](#), p. 31).

When a CYP is placed in OOHC, they often become a ward of the state. Thus, the state can exercise discretion in terms of acting in the best interests of the child, and this standard encompasses several core principles that provide guidance for CWS decision-making, particularly for CYP in OOHC (Article 18(1)). Major tenets of the principles include, broadly, ensuring the child's safety from abuse and neglect (Article 19). When this standard is not met, and USA CWS are involved, they first prioritize family preservation and reunification; and when family preservation and reunification is not possible, maintaining connections to family, siblings, tribe and culture (Article 8). This may be through placements with kin or within the community or tribal setting, and in addition, maintaining stability and permanency in living situations, preferably with kin or sibling-based placements, or through adoption when reunification with the parent is not possible (Article 21).

Interventions to ensure the best interests of the CYP in this context can include intervention to retain and support high quality OOHC placements, moving children to permanency through adoption or reunification as quickly as possible, and, as suggested by [Font and Gershoff \(2020\)](#), an enhanced focus on promoting CYP's wellbeing rather than the current system focus on legalistic interpretation of physical safety, or 'imminent risk of harm'. An additional consideration in federal policy is for CYP in OOHC to remain in geographical proximity with the community from which they were removed. Another consideration is that of 'child voice' or eliciting and considering their perspective (Article 12).

Yet, despite the stated preferences of the CWS to promote the best interests of the CYP, there is evidence suggesting that the implementation of best interest practices is often limited ([Font & Gershoff, 2020](#); [Haarberg, 2024](#)). For example, legal representation is applied only in a very small number of child welfare cases. However, the [United States Administration for Children and Families \(2023b\)](#) issued new guidance that greatly expanded mechanisms and support for their independent legal representation of youth and families in OOHC or at risk of being so. Furthermore, there are other interventions intended to promote the best interests of the CYP, such as guardian ad litem and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) who are utilized in some jurisdictions to promote CYP's interests in child welfare decision-making ([Font & Gershoff, 2020](#)). These individuals are utilized as outside experts to assess child welfare cases and to help inform decision-making, for example, identifying what type of placement might best meet a CYP's current developmental needs.

Despite the USA not ratifying the CRC, the best interests principle in CWS decision-making remains a broad influence. However, while the *language* of best interests is sometimes invoked in USA child welfare law, the application of principle is quite limited in the USA context as practice is more often aligned with a focus on maintaining parental rights rather than on uplifting CYP's rights and challenging "adult oppression of children or adult privilege, particularly as it relates to parents and the family," ([Polonko et al., 2016](#), p. 30). [Zermatten \(2010\)](#) described three elements undergirding this principle. First, it is a rule of **procedure**. When decisions are made regarding a child or group of children, the decision-making process must consider the "impacts of the decision (positive or negative) on the child/children concerned," (p. 485). Second, the principle is the **foundation for a substantive right**, or "the guarantee that this principle will be applied whenever a decision is to be taken concerning a child or a group of children, or the right of the child to have his/her best interests assessed," ([Zermatten, 2010](#), p. 485). Finally, "... the best interests of the child is a **fundamental, interpretive legal principle**, developed to limit the unchecked power over children by adults ..." ([Zermatten, 2010](#), p. 485; [UN Committee, 2013](#)).

While in the USA CWS, best interest language guides decision-making procedure, there is little evidence supporting assertions that this principle is the foundation for a substantive right for CYP; more often, USA law prioritizes the rights of the parent first. When best interest principles are applied, "the language of 'best interests of the child' does not promote consideration of individual children's unique needs and circumstances; rather, it reinforces a set of universal social values," ([Font & Gershoff, 2020](#), p. 24). Hence, a child rights perspective in the USA is limited, as evidenced by the failure to ratify the CRC ([Cohen et al., 2019](#)). There is little evidence that best interests principles substantively guide or inform a 'fundamental, interpretive legal principle', given the tension between parents' rights and CYP's rights, clear precedent in USA law to prioritize parental considerations, and the lack of focus on assessing, incorporating and recording individual CYP's best interests into decision-making.

3.2. Corporal punishment

Article 19 of the CRC states that "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury

or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child". It entails obligations to establish social programs to provide support to CYP and their families. The UN Committee has defined corporal and physical punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" ([UN Committee, 2007](#); [WHO, 2021](#)). While there is agreement about the unacceptability of child maltreatment, the issue of corporal punishment is more socially contentious and contested, perhaps because in many countries majorities view spanking as an acceptable parenting practice ([Alla, 2021](#); [Durrant et al., 2020](#); [Lee, 2023](#); [Ward et al., 2023](#); [WHO, 2021](#)). As of September 2024, 67 countries have legally prohibited corporal punishment in all settings-including the home, and another 26 States have made a commitment to do so ([End Corporal Punishment, 2024](#)).

Clarifying statements by the [UN Committee \(2007\)](#) have addressed the issue of hitting CYP for punishment and concluded "but interpretation of a child's best interests must be consistent with the whole Convention, including the obligation to protect children from all forms of violence and the requirement to give due weight to the child's views; it cannot be used to justify practices, including corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment, which conflict with the child's human dignity and right to physical integrity" (p. 7, para 26). In the Committee's view there is an obligation on states to outlaw corporal punishment using a variety of legal reforms including criminal law, to cover all corporal punishment including within the family (p. 10, para 39), although they have argued that this ought not mean that trivial cases should be prosecuted.

The CRC includes protections for CYP against more normalized forms of violence including physical punishment. These examples are notable because they underscore the importance of the CRC in addressing gaps in local laws that inadequately protect children.

3.2.1. Australia

Australia does not have consistent laws across the nation that provide for a prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings but, rather, provides for a limited legal protection in circumstances where it is seen as reasonable in the circumstances, including within families, schools, OOHC and youth justice settings in some jurisdictions ([Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019](#), pp. 111–112). Nonetheless, there are within the CWS policies that prohibit physical punishment for CYP in OOHC, and in some jurisdictions there are laws that are in place. The limited progress in addressing this issue has been put down to the near universal acceptance of corporal punishment in child rearing in Australia ([Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children & Save the Children Sweden, 2017](#); [Alla, 2021](#); [Durrant et al., 2020](#)). In 2022, End Corporal Punishment noted that the Australian Government reported to the Committee that "corporal punishment was 'not accepted as a social norm in Australia', but no progress has been made on enacting a legal prohibition at the federal or state level" (pp. 2–3). Political will appears to be lacking regarding enacting laws prohibiting corporal punishment, notwithstanding the recommendation by the [UN Committee \(2019a\)](#), p. 6) to urge Australia to:

1. "Explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in law in all settings, including in homes, public and private schools, detention centers and alternative care settings, and repeal the legal defence of 'reasonable chastisement'; and
2. Develop awareness-raising and education campaigns to promote positive and alternative forms of discipline, and the adverse consequences of corporal punishment".

Despite evidence from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study of the prevalence of corporal punishment and its associations with ongoing mental health issues for CYP ([Higgins, 2022](#)) and ongoing advocacy from Australia's [End Corporal Punishment \(2022\)](#), there has been a

glacial effort by governments to strengthen laws. Even with the numerous state/territory responsibilities regarding child protection and the Australian Government's national oversight role for the CRC, slow progress may well continue.

3.2.2. Canada

The protection of CYP's rights to not experience corporal punishment has long been contentious in Canada. Over three decades there have been several efforts and legal challenges to right the wrongs of maintaining the legal justification for corporal punishment of CYP that has caused undeniable historical and contemporary harms to CYP and their families, most notably for FNIM Peoples. Since its 1991 ratification of the CRC Canada has made a global commitment to uphold CYP's rights by fully implementing its principles in all legislation and policies. Yet Section 43 of the Canadian Criminal Code, the 'Spanking Law', remains as a legal defense and justification for the use of force against a child (Durrant, 2023). This is despite several Private Members Bills put forth to the Canadian Senate and House of Commons to repeal it (Durrant, 2023; Stewart-Tufescu, 2023), including a constitutional challenge of Section 43 against the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In 2004, in a split 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the ruling that Section 43 was not a violation of the Charter. The Court did, however, conclude that the definition of corporal punishment was broad and went on to define the parameters of acceptable corporal punishment. It stipulated that:

- a) Corporal punishment could only be used on children older than two and not yet teenagers;
- b) The force must not involve objects or hits to the head;
- c) It must not be degrading, inhumane or harmful;
- d) It may only be used on children that were capable of learning from it; and
- e) It must not be done in response to a caregiver's frustration, loss of temper or 'abusive personality', as examples (Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General), 2004, para 40; Durrant et al., 2020).

Due to lengthy parliamentary processes and stalling from conservative members opposed to repealing Section 43, the majority of the 17 Private Members' Bills previously introduced in the House of Commons or the Senate have languished and expired without a vote rather than being defeated (see Durrant, 2023). Recently, two more Private Members' Bills were before the Canadian parliament; Bill C-273 was before the House of Commons and Bill S-251 was before the Senate. However, Prime Minister Trudeau announced his resignation in 2025 and prologued parliament, calling an election, this essentially extinguished all bills before consideration.

Once considered a beacon of human rights and freedoms, Canada has arguably become a global laggard. Canada remains uncommitted to prohibiting corporal punishment. This lack of progress on equal protection of CYP in Canada has not gone unnoticed. Since 1995, the UN Committee (2019a) has repeatedly expressed grave concerns with Canada's Section 43 and unequal protection of CYP in the law. The Committee has also noted frustration with Canada's continued resistance to advancing this child rights issue, and on-going justification for Section 43. For example, the UN Committee's (2022) concluding comments to the Government of Canada stated that it "... notes the 2019 Road Map to End Violence, but regrets that the Bill S-206, which was aimed at repealing the defence allowing for 'reasonable force' under section 43 of the Criminal Code, was not passed. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2006) on corporal punishment, it urges the State party to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code to remove existing authorization of the use of 'reasonable force' in disciplining children and explicitly prohibit all forms of violence against all age groups of children within the family, in schools and in other institutions where children may be placed". Calls for repeal of Section 43 are growing. The Truth

and Reconciliation Calls to Action (#6) proposed abolition of the law, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) #16, which aims to promote peace and justice, has made it a target to end all forms of violence against CYP including corporal punishment. A key indicator of progress toward this goal is a reduction in the proportion of CYP who have experienced corporal punishment. Canada has committed to achieving the SDGs and is obligated to report on this indicator of the program (Durrant, 2023).

3.2.3. The USA

As in most countries, physical punishment of CYP is legal in the USA (Durrant, 2019; Lee, 2023), including in the home by parents/caregivers in all states. One exception is that in some states physical punishment of CYP in OOHC is not allowed by foster parents and caregivers. In addition, public-school teachers and administrators in 19 USA states, and private school teachers and administrators in all states, may use physical punishment, including implements such as paddles to punish students. In some states, teachers may use physical punishment without the permission of the parent.

While social attitudes have become less supportive of spanking in the USA (Ryan et al., 2016), behavior change seems to lag these attitudes. Finkelhor and colleagues (2019) found that spanking remains a common parenting practice in USA homes and has declined only slightly in the past two decades, and parental self-report research indicates that 76 % of children aged 2-4 were spanked in 1995 compared to 65 % in 2014.

USA law does not provide adequate protections to children in relation to the very common experience of physical assault, whereas the CRC clearly lays out the States Parties' obligation to protect CYP from exposure to all forms of violence, including corporal punishment. The law in the USA distinguishes physical *punishment* from physical *abuse* mainly based on whether there is physical injury to the child. Physical punishment, which can include a wide variety of behaviors including hitting, slapping, or beating a child with a bare hand or an object remains legal in most cases, so long as there is no physical injury, such as a bruise, mark, or injury to the child that lasts for 24 h or more (Dupper & Montgomery Dingus, 2008; Fuselier, 2007; Gershoff & Font, 2016). However, there are examples of serious injury or even death to a child that were not deemed criminal offenses based on the lack of intent - the perpetrator stating that they did not intend to cause injury to the child (Durrant, 2019; Durrant et al., 2017; Fuselier, 2007).

4. Discussion of implications

There are similarities and differences in how the best interests principle is functioning within CWS practice in the three countries. Whilst it is used inconsistently within the protective laws and legal processes, it seems that it is likely used more broadly in practice decision-making in Australia (AIFS) and Canada than in the USA. Nonetheless, even within these CRC-ratifying nations, the UN Committee has found that the best interests principle is not widely known, or evenly and consistently applied and has recommended that procedures and criteria for its application be developed. It features infrequently and inconsistently in practice frameworks, and although it probably has greater use in OOHC decision-making, child advocates are also not readily accessible in any of the three nations examined here. Too often reforms have merely led to glacial change in the application of the best interests principle. Legislatively, Australia (AIFS, 2022) and Canada utilize the best interests more widely than the USA, where its use within the latter's legal processes is limited by courts often ruling toward parental rights and subordinating CYP's **best interests**.

Whereas Article 19 is clear that children have a right to be protected from violence and that includes corporal punishment, there has been little if any action in any of these countries toward prohibiting it by altering the current legal situation concerning lawful use, particularly in the USA. Noticeably more so in Australia and Canada, it is prohibited in CWS policies especially for CYP in OOHC. Many writers have opined

that the reluctance of lawmakers to make these changes relates to most parents/caregivers who continue to spank CYP (Durrant, 2019; Finkelhor et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2023). Yet, in our view this only partially explains the situation in Australia and Canada which are obliged to act to protect CYP. We conjecture that there may be political and administrative reluctance to broaden the outlawing of corporal punishment for fear of the possible repercussions upon already overstretched CWS in all three countries in criminalizing widely used parental behaviors. Perhaps, as Higgins and colleagues (2019) argued, corporal punishment is an area of family life that politicians see as being private and not a realm for governments to intrude upon in a democracy?

Despite the implementation issues outlined above regarding the best interests principle and prohibiting corporal punishment of CYP, understandably it appears that progress is more discernible in Australia and Canada and we suggest that this is because of the UN Committee's public process undertaken every five years to require these governments to demonstrate progress and outcomes. Whilst the USA federal government exercises some oversight of the CWS and makes national policy/funding changes, there is no regular mechanism for public scrutiny of policy, practice and program outcomes such as provided by the UN Committee. But even so, the UN Committee's national progress report processes have not so far been capable of illustrating the shortcomings and system failures that, for example, Canada's TRC uncovered. Moreover, the UN Committee does not have any enforcement authority regarding its recommendations. Given this, it seems like too many countries have considered the 'rhetoric' and 'symbolism' of the CRC to be sufficient and that they have window dressed the CRC's obligations upon them to ensure that their frameworks for protecting CYP from harm within the home and within the CWS protective decision-making processes.

But in our view, despite these limitations, the CRC has demonstrable validity because of its articulation of a rights agenda for CYP and taking children's rights seriously (Freeman, 2020). There is nothing preventing countries implementing rights-based practice frameworks although staff would require the knowledge and skills to do so. Moreover, there is much more to be gained from grounding a CRC-based child rights framework into CWS law and policy, including:

- a) Providing detailed frameworks for the consideration of the best interests principle in the variety of decision-making processes within CWS;
- b) Reframing/recalibrating CYP's positionality in the CW system by requiring their active participation in protective decision-making;
- c) Redesigning services and programs to more fully embrace CYP's best interests as foundational to protective interventions and to consistently utilize their participation in decision-making processes;
- d) Ensuring that decision-making facilitates ongoing connection of CYP to family, community and culture particularly when they are in OOHC; and
- e) Utilizing practice that is truly child centered in its approaches to protecting CYP from harm.

These measures would go some way, in our opinion, to enhancing the visibility of CYP with key decision-making concerning how to best protect them, and ensure that their safety, wellbeing and health were prioritized in CWS interventions. It potentially could aid their move to the center of the CWS. But there remains much work to be done to make these a reality, including the development of external accountability mechanisms that oversight how well CWS practice is delivering on rights-based decision-making processes and assessing the outcomes of this for CYP, especially those in OOHC; Children's Ombudsperson/Commissioners are one option. Implementation requires creation of guidance and frameworks for how to correctly determine that case decision-making is ensuring that CYP's best interests are being used as well as an administrative data system to collect information about when and where this is occurring, or not. Such reforms may well provide a timely system reconfiguration that can redress in important ways the

disproportionalities occurring for Indigenous and other CYP.

5. Conclusion

As we have shown here, there have been tangible impacts because of the CRC - laws have changed, principles and practices have altered for the better. But despite these real advances systemic progress has been variable and is open to criticism about the implementation and operationalization of the important Articles of the best interests principle and prohibiting corporal punishment. We argue here for a re-doubling of efforts to embed a rights-based policy and practice framework within CWS systems, and from the available evidence it appears that this would have tangible positive benefits for CYP around the globe. There are opportunities for those countries that are creating their CWS systems (e.g. UAE, Mongolia etc.) to 'steal a march' on countries such as the ones we have examined.

Whilst Western countries like to see themselves as leaders in the protection of CYP, such claims are debatable, particularly when the progress of the three nations examined here regarding implementation of key Articles of the CRC remains slow, and their CWS outcomes continue to fall short in critically important ways. Yet the implementation of child rights policy and practice frameworks offers real benefits to CYP, their families and communities, and has significant potential to be positively transformative. Hence, in our view, the role of the UN Committee is an important one to highlight systemic progress or lack thereof. It is an important accountability mechanism. Child rights-based frameworks have real potential to assist in reforming contemporary approaches that are failing to consistently deliver what is required to protect many CYP from harms and ensuring that they are properly connected with their families, communities and cultures.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Bob Lonne: Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Ashley Stewart-Tufescu:** Investigation, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Shawna Lee:** Writing – original draft, Conceptualization, Investigation. **Christine Morley:** Investigation, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors have not used any generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies in the research or writing processes for this article.

Funding statement

No external funding source has provided any financial support for the conduct of the research and/or the preparation of this article. There is no funding to declare.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

References

- Ainsworth, F. (2021). The best interests of the child: More questions about this construct? *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 33(2), 104–113. <https://doi.org/10.11157/anzsvj-vol33iss2id872>
- Alla, K. (2021). What does the evidence tell us about physical punishment of children? *Australian Institute of Family Affairs. Web Report*. from <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/>

- short-articles/what-does-evidence-tell-us-about-physical-punishment-children. (Accessed 21 November 2023).
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2018). Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/jun-2016>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2020). National, state and territory population. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/dec-2020>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2022). Snapshot of Australia: National summary data. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/snapshot-australia/2021>.
- Australian Child Rights Taskforce - UNICEF. (2018). The Children's Report. Australia's NGO coalition report to the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child. <https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/social-welfare-systems/child-care-and-protection-policies/the-children%E2%80%99s-report-australia%E2%80%99s-ngo-coalition-report-to-the-united-nations-committee-on-the-rights>.
- Australian Government. (2018). Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Australia under article 44 of the convention, due in 2018. https://digitalibrary.un.org/record/1653855?ln=zh_CN.
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2019). Children's rights report 2019—In their own right: Children's rights in Australia. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/publications/childrens-rights-report-2019>.
- Australian Institute of Family Studies. (AIFS). (2022). Australian child protection legislation. <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/australian-child-protection-legislation>.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2021a). Indigenous Australians. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/population-groups/indigenous-australians/overview>.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2022). Child protection Australia 2020-21. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2020-21/contents/about>.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (AIHW). (2021b). *Child protection Australia 2019-20. Child welfare series no. 74. Cat. no. CWS 78*. Canberra: AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2019-20/summary>.
- Barth, R., Berrick, J. D., Garcia, A. R., Drake, B., Jonson-Reid, M., Gyourko, J. R., & Greeson, J. K. P. (2022). Research to consider while effectively Re-Designing child welfare services. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 32(5), 483–498. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315211050000>
- Bennett, M. (2016). First nations fact sheet: A general profile on first nations child welfare in Canada. *The First Nations Caring Society*. Retrieved from <https://fncaringociety.com/sites/default/files/docs/FirstNationsFS1.pdf>.
- Blackstock, C., Brown, I., & Bennett, M. (2007). Reconciliation: Rebuilding the Canadian child welfare system to better serve Aboriginal children and youth. In *Putting a human face on child welfare: Voices from the prairies* (pp. 59–87).
- Caldwell, J., & Sinha, V. (2020). (Re) conceptualizing neglect: Considering the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare systems in Canada. *Child Indicators Research*, 13, 481–512.
- Cameron, G., & Freymond, N. (2006). Understanding international comparisons of child protection family service and community caring systems of child and family welfare. In G. Cameron, & N. Freymond (Eds.), *Towards positive systems of child and family welfare* (pp. 3–27). Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Canadian Bar Association. (2020). Alternative report to the UN committee on the rights of the child. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2502&Lang=en.
- Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children. (2020). Children's rights in Canada: Reports from the field for the review of Canada. <https://rightsofchildren.ca/childrens-rights-under-review/>.
- Child Rights International Network. (2019). UN declaration on the rights of the child (1959). <https://archive.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/un-declaration-rights-child-1959.html>.
- Children's Bureau. (2013). *The Children's Bureau legacy: Ensuring the right to childhood*. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.
- Cohen, S. S., Fry-Bowers, E., Bishop-Josef, S., O'Neill, M. K., & Westphal, K. (2019). Reframing child rights to effect policy change. *Nursing Outlook*, 67(4), 450–461. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2019.02.012>
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2021). Safe and supported: The national framework for protecting Australia's children 2021–2031. *Department of Social Services*. https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/12_2021/dess5016-national-framework-protecting-children-accessible.pdf.
- Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2009). Protecting children is everyone's business. *National Framework of Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/protecting-children-is-everyones-business>.
- Creamer, J., Shrider, E. A., Burns, K., & Chen, F. (2022). Poverty in the United States: 2. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html>. (Accessed 15 January 2024).
- Detlaff, A., Weber, K., Pendleton, M., Boyd, R., Bettencourt, B., & Burton, L. (2020). It is not a broken system, it is a system that needs to be broken: The upEND movement to abolish the child welfare system. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 14(5), 500–517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2020.1814542>
- Dupper, D. R., & Montgomery Dingus, A. E. (2008). Corporal punishment in U.S. public schools: A continuing challenge for school social workers. *Children and Schools*, 30(4), 243–250. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/30.4.243>
- Durrant, J. E. (2019). Corporal punishment and the law in global perspective. In J. G. Dwyer (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of children and the law* (pp. 1–29). Oxford University Press.
- Durrant, J. (2023). Canada at a crossroads. *Canadian Journal of Children's Rights Revue Canadienne Des Droits Des Enfants*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.22215/cjcr.v10i1.4313>
- Durrant, J. E., Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., & Allan, K. (2017). Defining reasonable force: Does it advance child protection? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 71, 32–43.
- Durrant, J. E., Stewart-Tufescu, A., Ateah, C., Holden, G. W., Ahmed, R., Jones, A., Ly, G., Plateau, D. P., & Mori, I. (2020). Addressing punitive violence against children in Australia, Japan and the Philippines. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 14, e19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/prp.2020.12>
- Duthie, D., Steinhauer, S., Twinn, C., Steinhauer, V., & Lonne, B. (2019). Understanding trauma and child maltreatment experienced in Indigenous communities. In B. Lonne, D. Scott, D. Higgins, & T. Herrenkohl (Eds.), *Re-visioning public health approaches for protecting children* (pp. 327–348). New York: Springer Publishers.
- End Corporal Punishment. (2022). Corporal punishment of children in Australia. <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/australia/>.
- End Corporal Punishment. (2024). Progress. <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/>. (Accessed 8 September 2024).
- Fallon, B., Filippelli, J., Black, T., Trocmé, N., & Esposito, T. (2017). How can data drive policy and practice in child welfare? Making the link in Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(10), 1223.
- Fallon, B., Joh-Carnella, N., Houston, E., Livingston, E., & Trocmé, N. (2023). The more we change, the more we stay the same: Canadian child welfare systems' response to child well-being. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 137, Article 106031.
- Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hélie, S., Montgomery, H. M., ... Soop, S. (2021). Denouncing the continued overrepresentation of first nations children in Canadian child welfare: Findings from the first nations/canadian incidence study of reported child abuse and Neglect-2019. *Ontario: Assembly of First Nations*.
- Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Wormuth, B. K., Vanderminden, J., & Hamby, S. (2019). Corporal punishment: Current rates from a national survey. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(7), 1991–1997. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01426-4>
- First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. (2016). Attorney general of Canada: 2016 CHRT 2. https://fncaringociety.com/sites/default/files/2016_chrt_2_access_0.pdf. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. (2019). Our children, our future: Transforming child welfare for the well-being of children and families. <https://fncaringociety.com/sites/default/files/2023-07/Ontario%20Special%20Study%202019%5B63%5D.pdf>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. (2023). Caring Society's October 10 2023 submission to Tribunal. <https://fncaringociety.com/sites/default/files/2023-10/2023.10.10%20Caring%20Society%20Submissions.pdf>. (Accessed 18 January 2024).
- Fong, K. (2020). Getting eyes in the home: Child protective services investigations and state surveillance of family life. *American Sociological Review*, 85(4), 610–638.
- Font, S. A., & Gershoff, E. (2020). *Foster care and "best interests of the child": Integrating research, policy, and practice*. Berlin: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41146-6>
- Freeman, M. (2020). Taking children's rights seriously. In J. Todres, & S. King (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of children's rights law* (pp. 49–69). Oxford University Press.
- Fuselier, C. B. (2007). Corporal punishment of children: California's attempt and inevitable failure to ban spanking in the home. *Journal of Juvenile Law*, 28, 82–99.
- Gershoff, E. T., & Font, S. A. (2016). Corporal punishment in U.S. public schools: Prevalence, disparities in use, and status in state and federal policy. *Social Policy Report*, 30(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2379-3988.2016.tb00086.x>
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children & Save the Children Sweden. 2017. Ending legalised violence against children: Global progress to December 2017. <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/resources/global-report-2017/> [Accessed 1 May 2025].
- Government of Canada. (2019). An act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. S.C. 2019, c. 24. Retrieved from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-11.73/>.
- Government of Canada. (2023). First nations child and family services. Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- Government of Manitoba, Manitoba Families. (2021). Manitoba Families, Annual Report, 2020-2021. http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/about/annual_reports.html [Accessed 8 February 2024].
- Haarberg, F. L. (2024). What do we know about children's representation in child protection decisions? A scoping review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, Article 107588.
- Hansen, P., & Ainsworth, F. (2009). The "best interests of the child" thesis: Some thoughts from Australia. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 18(4), 431–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2009.00673.x>
- Hansen, P., & Ainsworth, F. (2011). "The best interests of the child": Critical reflections on an overused construct. *Children Australia*, 36(1), 12–17. <https://doi.org/10.1375/jcas.36.1.12>
- Health and Human Services. (2020). *Best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth*. Victorian Government. <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/best-interests-framework-vulnerable-children-and-youth>.
- Higgins, D. (2022). The national prevalence of childhood corporal punishment and associated mental health outcomes. In *Paper presented at the Australian child maltreatment study symposium – AIFS 2022 conference*. June 16. Available at: <https://www.australianchildmaltreatmentstudy.org/the-prevalence-of-corporal-punishment-in-australia/>.

- Higgins, D., Sanders, M., Lonne, B., & Richardson, D. (2019). Families – Private and sacred: How to raise the curtain and implement family support from a public health perspective. In B. Lonne, D. Scott, D. Higgins, & T. Herrenkohl (Eds.), *Re-visioning public health approaches for protecting children* (pp. 127–144). New York: Springer Publishers.
- Kopelman, L. (1997). The best-interest standard as threshold, ideal and standard of reasonableness. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 22, 271–289.
- Lee, S. J. (2023). Social workers should stand against physical punishment of children. *Social work*, 68(3), 241–249.
- Liefgaard, T., & Sloth-Neilsen, J. (2016). 25 years CRC: Reflecting on successes, failures and the future. In T. Liefgaard, & J. Sloth-Nielsen (Eds.), *The united nations convention on the rights of the child: Taking stock after 25 years and looking ahead* (pp. 1–13). Brill/Nijhoff.
- Lonne, B., Flemington, T., Lock, M., Hartz, D., Ramanathan, S., & Fraser, J. (2020). The power of authenticity and cultural safety at the intersection of healthcare and child protection. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, 3(4), 393–408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-020-00053-7>
- Lonne, B., Harries, M., Featherstone, B., & Gray, M. (2016). *Working ethically in child protection*. London: Routledge (Taylor & Francis).
- Lonne, B., Harries, M., & Lantz, S. (2013). Workforce development in child protection in Australia: A pathway for successful reform of child protection systems. *British Journal of Social Work*, 43(8), 1630–1648. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcs064>
- Lonne, B., & Parton, N. (2014). Portrayals of child abuse scandals in the media in Australia and England: Impacts on practice, policy and systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(5), 822–836. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.04.020>
- Lonne, B., Russ, E., Harrison, C., Morley, L., Harries, M., Robertson, S., Pearce, T., & Smith, J. (2021). The front door to child protection – Issues and innovations. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, 3(4), 351–367. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-020-00051-9>. See <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42448-020-00051-9>.
- Lundy, L. (2014). United nations convention on the rights of the child and child well-being. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9063-8_94
- McDonald, C., Harris, J., & Wintersteen, R. (2003). Contingent on context? Social work and the state in Australia, Britain, and the USA. *British Journal of Social Work*, 33(2), 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/33.2.191>
- Melton, G. B. (2010). It's all about relationships! the psychology of human rights. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80(2), 161–169.
- Merkel-Holguin, L., Fuller, T., Winokur, M., Drury, I., & Lonne, B. (2019). How can differential response inform a public health approach to child maltreatment prevention? In B. Lonne, D. Scott, D. Higgins, & T. Herrenkohl (Eds.), *Re-visioning public health approaches for protecting children* (pp. 181–196). New York: Springer Publishers.
- National Children's Commissioner. (2019). Children's rights report 2019—In their own right: Children's rights in Australia. *Australian Human Rights Commission*. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/publications/childrens-rights-report-2019>.
- Parton, N. (2017). Comparing child protection systems: Towards a global perspective. In P. Dolan, & N. Frost (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of global child welfare* (pp. 225–242). Routledge.
- Parton, N. (2022). Comparative research and critical child protection studies. *Social Sciences*, 11(4), 156–171.
- Polonko, K. A., Lombardo, L. X., & Bolling, I. M. (2016). Law reform, child maltreatment and the UN convention on the rights of the child. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 24(1), 29–64. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02401010>
- Productivity Commission. (2020). Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators report. [Web report]. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2020>.
- Productivity Commission. (2021). Closing the gap information repository. <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard>.
- Russ, E., Morley, L., Driver, M., Lonne, B., Harries, M., & Higgins, D. (2022). *Trends and needs in the Australian child welfare workforce: An exploratory study*. Canberra: ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies.
- Ryan, R. M., Kalil, A., Ziol-Guest, K. M., & Padilla, C. (2016). Socioeconomic gaps in parents' discipline strategies from 1988 to 2011. *Pediatrics*, 138(6), Article e20160720. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0720>
- Sankaran, V. (2009). Parens Patriae run amuck: The child welfare system's disregard for the constitutional rights of non-offending parents. *Temple Law Review*, 82(1), 55–87.
- Schmahl, S. (2021). In Schmahl (Ed.), *United nations convention on the rights of the child: Article-by-article commentary* (1st ed.). Nomos/Hart. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781509954469>.
- Skivenes, M., & Sorsdal, L. M. (2018). The child's best interest principle across child protection jurisdictions. *Human Rights in Child Protection: Implications for Professional Practice and Policy*, 59–88.
- Slack, K. S., & Paul, J. (2017). Child welfare policy. In E. Dearing, & E. Votruba-Drzal (Eds.), *The handbook of early childhood development programs, practices, and policies: Theory-based and empirically-supported strategies for promoting young children's growth in the United States* (pp. 403–423). Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 978-1-118-93732-7.
- Statistics Canada. (2017). Population size and growth in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- Statistics Canada. (2018). Publications – Geography. 11-402-X. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/geo/geo-eng.htm>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- Statistics Canada. (2022a). *The Daily*. In the midst of high job vacancies and historically low unemployment, Canada faces record retirements from an aging labour force: The number of seniors aged 65 and older grows six times faster than children 0-14. *Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-001-X*. Ottawa. Released April 27, 2022 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427a-eng.htm>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- Statistics Canada. (2022b). *The Daily*. Immigrants make up the largest share of the population in over 150 years and continue to shape who we are as Canadians. *Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-001-X*. Ottawa. Released October 26, 2022 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>. (Accessed 8 February 2024).
- Statistics Canada. (2024). Annual demographic estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2024 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-215-x/91-215-x2024001-eng.htm>.
- Stewart-Tufescu, A. (2023). Corporal punishment: The global picture. *Canadian Journal of Children's Rights Revue Canadienne Des Droits Des Enfants*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.22215/cjcr.v10i1.4373>
- Tajima, E. A., Day, A. G., Kanuha, V. K., Rodriguez-Jenkins, J., & Pryce, J. A. (2022). What counts as evidence in child welfare research? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 32(5), 514–520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315211069549>
- Tobin, J. (2021). Incorporating the CRC in Australia. In U. Kilkelly, L. Lundy, & B. Byrne (Eds.), *Incorporating the UN convention on the rights of the child into national law*. Intersentia. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781839701764>.
- Todres, J. (2006). Analyzing the opposition to the U.N. ratification of the U.N. convention on the rights of the child. In J. Todres, M. Wojcik, & C. Revaz (Eds.), *The U.N. convention on the rights of the child: An analysis of treaty provisions and implications of U.S. ratification* (pp. 19–31). Brill Academic Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9781571053633.i-376.13>.
- Trocmé, N., Esposito, T., Nutton, J., Rosser, V., & Fallon, B. (2019). Child welfare services in Canada. In *National systems of child protection: Understanding the international variability and context for developing policy and practice* (pp. 27–50).
- Trocmé, N., Kyte, A., Sinha, V., & Fallon, B. (2014). Urgent protection versus chronic need: Clarifying the dual mandate of child welfare services across Canada. *Social Sciences*, 3(3), 483–498.
- Troxel v. Granville, 530 U.S. 57. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/99-138.ZS.html>, (2000).
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015a). Call to action. <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015b). Truth and reconciliation commission reports. <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>.
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2013). General comment no. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration. *art. 3, para. 1* https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/gc/crc_c_gc_14_eng.pdf.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2007). General comment no. 8 (2006) the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/460bc7772.html>.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2012). Consideration of reports submitted by states parties under article 44 of the convention. <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhkB7yhsK5X2w65LgIRF%2F3dWpS4NXPlJlvMuC13J9Hn06KCDkN8AgEcc%2BNlWRMULqB84PSI9FicZROAZolAudnAZ3CxmSjw7k%2BrD6GQTcCq8b4gpWq>.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2012). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic report of Canada, adopted by the committee at its sixty-first session. <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhkB7yhsK5X2w65LgIRF%2F3dWpS4NXPlJlvMuC13J9Hn06KCDkN8AgEcc%2BNlWRMULqB84PSI9FicZROAZolAudnAZ3CxmSjw7k%2BrD6GQTcCq8b4gpWq>.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2019). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Australia. <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhkB7yhsK5X2w65LgIRF%2F3dWpS4NXPlJlvMuC13J9Hn06KCDkN8AgEcc%2BNlWRMULqB84PSI9FicZROAZolAudnAZ3CxmSjw7k%2BrD6GQTcCq8b4gpWq>.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2019a). UN experts urge states to strengthen protections for children. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/09/committee-rights-child-reviews-report-australia>.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2022). Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Canada. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2502&Lang=en.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1989). Convention on the rights of the child. <http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
- United States Census Bureau. (2022). Quick facts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/POP010220>.
- United States Congress. (1978). Indian child welfare act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-608, § 3, 92 Stat. 3069, codified at 25 U.S.C. § 1902. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-25/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-23>.
- United States Congress. (2010). CAPTA reauthorization Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-320, 124 Stat. 3459. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-111publ320>.
- United States Congress. (2018). Family first prevention services Act, Pub. L. No. 115-123, §§ 50701–50781, 132 Stat. 64. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1892/text>.
- United States Department of Health & Human Services. (2023). Administration for children and families, administration on children, youth and families, children's

- bureau. In *Child maltreatment 2021*. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.
- United States Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2023b). Administration on children, youth and families, children's bureau. *Foster Care Legal Representation*. Retrieved 30 November <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/28/2023-20932/foster-care-legal-representation>.
- Wald, M. (2022). Redesigning state intervention on behalf of "Neglected" children. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 32(5), 504–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315221080934>
- Ward, K. P., Grogan-Kaylor, A., Ma, J., Pace, G. T., & Lee, S. (2023). Associations between 11 parental discipline behaviours and child outcomes across 60 countries. *BMJ Open*, 13(10). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-058439>. e058439–e058439.
- World Bank. (2019). Gini index - United States. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=US>.
- World Bank. (2021). Gdp. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=true.
- World Health Organization/(WHO). (2021). Corporal punishment and health. *Web Report*. from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/corporal-punishment-and-health>. (Accessed 9 November 2023).
- Zermatten, J. (2010). The best interests of the child principle: Literal analysis and function. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 18(4), 483–499. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157181810X537391>