

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-62985-0 - *Escape from Poverty: What Makes a Difference for Children?*

Edited by P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

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The poverty rate for children in the United States exceeds that of all other Western, industrialized nations except Australia. Moreover, poverty among children has increased substantially since 1970, affecting more than one-fifth of U.S. children. These persistent high rates require new ideas for both research and public policy.

*Escape from Poverty* presents such ideas. With an eye on welfare reform, the volume examines changing public policies at federal, state, and local levels. Four arenas of possible change are addressed from both policy and research perspectives: mothers' employment, child care, fathers' involvement, and access to health care. Yet much of the policy debate regarding poverty in the United States is not taking children into account. The unique contribution of *Escape from Poverty* is its assessment of the impact on *children* of changing public policies. Regardless of how welfare reform unfolds in the future, the issues facing children are not being heard.

This volume was designed to fill this void. The editors have developed an interdisciplinary perspective, involving demographers, developmental psychologists, economists, historians, health experts, and sociologists – a framework essential for addressing the complexities inherent in the links between the lives of poor adults and children in our society.

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# Escape from poverty

## What makes a difference for children?

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*We dedicate this volume to*

**Dr. Julius B. Richmond**

*who has made an extraordinary difference*

*in the lives of our nation's children*

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## Foreword

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The Foundation for Child Development, in its grant making and related work, maintains a strong interest in two broad strategies for improving the lives of children and families in poverty: (1) interventions to promote children's health and development, and (2) efforts to strengthen the employment prospects of parents through education and training. The foundation believes that these strategies, often pursued in isolation from one another, should intersect.

This belief prompted the foundation's decision in 1989 to focus a portion of its grant-making program on the Family Support Act, the 1988 federal legislation that has been an important step in our nation's progress toward welfare reform. Taking an expansive view of the new law, the foundation sought to maximize the potential to link educational and training services provided under the act to other systems of support that could help children grow up healthy and ready to learn.

In the years of start-up and early implementation of the law, the foundation made a number of grants to organizations that share the interest in influencing the Family Support Act of 1988 to benefit children and families. Projects funded under these grants have included policy and program development initiatives focused on such issues as the improvement of the quality of subsidized child care available to children whose mothers were participating in the new training program (JOBS) implemented under the Family Support Act and the assessment of the needs of the entire family when a parent is entering the JOBS program. The Foundation for Child Development is also supporting several key research studies that use observational techniques from the field of child development to enrich survey data on child and family outcomes of welfare-to-work programs. In addition, the foundation has produced several analyses of welfare-to-work issues, including the 1991 monograph, *Pathways to Self-Sufficiency for Two Generations*.

The essays in this volume, written as part of the foundation's program regarding the Family Support Act of 1988, have provided important conceptual guidelines for the foundation's grant-making work. This volume will be a significant resource for those interested in improving the lives of children in poverty, particularly from the perspective of welfare reform.

Barbara B. Blum  
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## Preface

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This volume is the result of the work and inspiration of many people. First, we would like to express our deep appreciation to Dr. Julius B. Richmond, who has devoted himself to enhancing the lives of children and families, especially those in poverty. Barbara Blum's leadership and vision regarding the ways in which policy and research can benefit low-income children were invaluable. The support of the Foundation for Child Development is deeply appreciated. We wish to thank the contributors to this volume, each of whom brings considerable expertise to the complex challenge of how to help children escape poverty. We also acknowledge the generous institutional support of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, and the Educational Testing Service. Cassandra Britton, Tracey Deutsch, and Melissa Lowe provided invaluable help in manuscript preparation. We are also grateful for the insights and guidance from our editor at Cambridge University Press, Julia Hough.

As national and regional policy making focuses increasingly on the challenges of poverty in this nation, we hope that this volume will target attention on children – important members of our society who can be lost in the midst of policies developed for adults. The volume is intended as well for scholars who wish to gain multidisciplinary perspectives on past and present research and policy for poor children, in addition to knowledge of the scope of work yet to be done.

P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale  
Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

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