

'Collective caregiving': A new way to frame the dialogue around better supporting kids and families ^[1]

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Excerpts

The Frameworks Institute is a nonprofit research institute that uses various social science disciplines in the service of economic justice, racial justice and other issues that matter to families with young children. A recent paper from the organization presents a new framing strategy for building support for kids: "Collective Caregiving." In a recent interview, Andrew Volmert, the institute's senior vice president of research, and Dr. David Alexander, pediatrician and president of Leading for Kids, an advocacy group that centers the well-being of children, talked about the underlying research and findings that powered the report.

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In other countries I visited, in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, there was a sense of responsibility as a society to make sure kids did okay. Whereas in the United States, we see it as the family's responsibility.

...

People will buy into something called "Collective Caregiving" more than they will government-sponsored caregiving.

Volmert: For sure. Now, we didn't test "government-sponsored caregiving," but I can tell you that would not work. "Collective Caregiving" gives people a sense that they are part of it.

They sometimes struggle to think about themselves as part of government. So it's not that you're hiding the ball. It's just that you're talking about government policies and programs as a set of actions for providing care as a society.

Alexander: People like the programs that government provides. They just don't like the government because they think of it as "those people that we don't like doing things that we don't trust." The joke was, the more excited I got about a way of talking about government, the worse it did.

It's the G word.

Volmert: You can say it, but don't lead with it.

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Volmert: In order to provide collective care, we have to make sure that we are doing it for all kids, not just our own kids. And we are explicitly talking about race partly by highlighting the ways in which historically and currently our society doesn't provide care evenly across groups, that we don't extend the same kind of collective care to Black children, other children of color, that we do to white children.

...

Volmert: Care is the central thing that people think kids need. So is it possible to stretch that idea so that when people think about care, they're not just thinking about interpersonal caregiving; they're thinking more broadly about the range of actions that we can take as a society, including public policies?

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And so it becomes a way to prevent people from defaulting back to this idea that, "Oh, it's just the family's job. This must be parents' responsibility." Instead they think: "Okay, wait a minute. I wouldn't usually think of this as a kid's issue, but it requires collective action in order to make sure that all kids have what they need to do well."

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