

**Child Protective Services as Political Socialization:
Investigating the political consequences of an early life experience with government¹**

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Abstract

Intervention by social services should ideally be a positive moment in a child's life, improving the circumstances they grow up in. However, in practice, social services intervention has been used as a racist tool of control over poor families of color, targeting single Black women, in particular (Roberts, 2017). Despite the often well-meaning intentions of government actors and other concerned citizens who make reports of abuse and neglect (Fong, 2020), children who become surveilled and/or removed from the custody of a parent or caregiver have early life experience with the coercive face of the state. What lessons about government are learned from such experiences? We argue that for most of these children, contact with social services is a socializing experience that causes political distrust and alienation in young adulthood. We plan to use the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) dataset to investigate this possibility, applying coarsened exact matching to estimate the effect of early life contact with social services.