Disproportionality And Disparity of Outcomes In Child Welfare

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Goals of the Conversation

- Define the terms
- Describe how disproportionality is evidenced in child welfare
- Explore the historical roots
- Impact on children and communities
Disproportionality & Disparate Outcomes

- Disproportionality - the relationship between a group's presence in the general population and their presence in the child welfare system
- Disparate outcomes - the varied levels of resolution (reunification, adoption, guardianship) of child welfare cases by group
Institutional Racism - the way in which the policies and practices of organizations disadvantage certain populations on a consistent basis
According to AFCARA, in 2002

- 896,000 children were found to be maltreated
- Kinds of substantiated maltreatment
  - Neglect = 60%
  - Physical Abuse = 20%
  - Sexual Abuse = 10%
- One fifth of the victims were placed in foster care
SCOPE

- 523,000 children were in foster care on September 30, 2003
- 800,000 children were served in that same fiscal year
- Entries (297,000) exceeded exits (281,000)
The Child Population: The Baseline

According to the 2000 US Census the composition of the child population was:

- 1% Alaskan Native/Native American
- 4% Asian Pacific
- 15% African American
- 16% Hispanic
- 64% European decent
ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL INCIDENCE STUDY OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT # 2 and # 3

There were no significant race differences in the incidence of maltreatment and maltreatment related injuries.
According to Child Maltreatment 2002, rates of substantiated maltreatment vary by race and ethnicity.

Native America/Alaskan Native and African American children have the highest rates of substantiated maltreatment when compared to white children.

- White = 10.7 per 1,000 children
- American Indian/Alaskan native = 21.7 per 1,000
- African American = 20.2 per 1,000
Question #1

If there are no differences in incidence rates and injury rates why are there such dramatic differences in substantiation rates?
Entry into Care: Decision Two

- Of the 297,000 children entering care in 2003, AFCARS reports
  - 2% were Alaskan Native/American Indian as compared with 1% of the child population (2x)
  - 17% were Hispanic as compared with 16% of the population (1x)
  - 27% were Black as compared with 15% of the population (1.8x)
  - 46% were white as compared with 64% of the population (.71x)
Questions

- Are there differences in family characteristics, and or needs?
- Are there differences in pre-placement service delivery?
- Are there cultural factors that influence the decisions and service delivery?
- Are there racial factors that influence decisions and service delivery?
Length of Stay

- Average Length of stay for children exiting care
  - Black children - 18 months
  - White - 10 months

Source: Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System, Interim report for 2003. Administration for Children and Families
Of the 281,000 children exiting care, AFCARS reports:

- 29% were Black although they comprise 40% of the foster care population (.73x)
- 16% were Hispanic and they comprised 15% of the foster care population (1x)
- 46% were white although they comprised 38% of the population (1.2x)
- 2% were Alaskan Native/Native American and they comprise 2% of the foster care population (1x)
Exits to Reunification

- The proportion of children being reunified has declined over the last two decades.
- In 2003, 55% were reunified with parents and 11% were reunified with other relatives.
Exits to Adoption

- Of the 50,000 children exiting to adoption
  - Black: 39%
  - Hispanic: 14%
  - Native: 8%
  - White: 38%

- Exits to adoption have increased and were comparable in to the proportion of children in care.

- Only 68% of the children legally free and 40% of the children with a goal of adoption found permanency through adoption.
Waiting children

- Of the 119,000 children waiting to be adopted on September 30, 2003
  - 40% (48,000) were African American
  - 14% (16,200) were Hispanic
  - 37% (44,000) were White
  - 2% (2,200) were Native American

Source: AFCARS 2003 Interim report
Alaskan Native/Native American children

- Are more likely to be substantiated
- Enter care in higher proportions
- Are overrepresented in care
- Exit care in proportions similar to their proportion in the foster care population
- Comparable but inadequate proportion are adopted.
- African American children
  - Comparable incidence of maltreatment
  - Higher risk of being substantiated
  - Higher risk of placement
  - Longer length of stay in care
  - Less likely to exit care
  - Comparable but inadequate adoption rates
Hispanic Children

- Appear to be proportionately represented throughout the child welfare system
- Concern about the accuracy of the data and possible undercount.
- White children
  - Less likely to be substantiated
  - Underrepresented at entry into care
  - Underrepresented in placement
  - Shorter time in care
  - Slightly over-represented in adoptions
Child welfare history and themes

- Child welfare services and outsiders are linked
- Common themes
  - Cultural dominance
  - Religious continuity
  - Child rescue/resocialization
Colonial Times

- Problem: unattached children, abandoned and orphaned children
  - Indenture
  - Apprenticeship
  - Bonding out
  - Slavery ....peculiar protection

- Tribal children as enemies: war and removal
Almshouses

Specialized institutions
- Orphanages
- Houses of refuges
- Schools for the deaf and blind
- Expressions of philanthropy
Post Civil War Era

- Context
  - Disruption of the war
  - Immigration increases bring new ethnic and religious groups
  - Urbanization
  - Social Darwinism/fear of the intergenerational transmission of pauperism
  - Visibility of street children
Post civil war era

- Child caring societies / child protection societies
- Free foster home movement in the west / children’s aid societies
- Tribal boarding schools are federally funded
- African American children are cared for within the community and in segregated institutions
Early 20th Century

- Juvenile court...recognizes the special status of children
- Mother’s aid
- Private confidential infant adoption services develop
- Theory and practice of child placement is developed
- African American and Native children are excluded from these programs
Late 20th Century

- Child welfare legislation institutionalized child welfare
  - CAPTA
  - ICWA
  - 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Amendments
  - ASFA
  - MEPA/IEP
During the last fifty years the mainstream child welfare system has gone from exclusion of Tribal and African American children to:

- Over-inclusion
- Disproportionality
- Disparate outcomes
Disproportionality and disparate results have effects that have long term impact on:

- THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN
- THE LIVES OF THEIR FAMILIES
- GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOW
- THEIR COMMUNITIES