California Social Work Education Center

C A L S W E C

Use of Cultural Brokers as an Approach to Community Engagement With African American Families in Child Welfare

An Empirically Based Curriculum

Curriculum Developed By:
Dolores Siegel
Margaret Jackson
Salvador Montana
Virginia Rondero Hernandez

Research Conducted By:
Salvador Montana
Virginia Rondero Hernandez
Dolores Siegel
Margaret Jackson

Department of Social Work Education
California State University, Fresno
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

CalSWEC PREFACE v

ABOUT THE AUTHORS vii

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS x

INTRODUCTION xii
- Rationale of Module…xii
- Background…xiii

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW xvii

OBJECTIVES xviii
- Intended Audience…xix
- Organization of Curriculum…xx
- Time Estimates for Training…xxiii
- Guidelines for Section Activities…xxiv
- Tips on Conducting Training Sessions…xxv
- Suggested Tools and Materials…xxvi

MODULE I: HISTORY OF CULTURAL RACISM AND OPPRESSION IN CHILD WELFARE 1
- Instructional Guide…2
  - *Learning Objectives…2*
  - *Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)…3*
  - *Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors…3*
  - *Materials Needed…4*
- Introductory Activity I-1…5
- The Origins of Racism and Oppression in America…5
- The History of Institutional Racism in Child Welfare…9
- Implications for Child Welfare Practice…12
- Activity I-2: Historical Event Timeline…13
- Activity I-3: People Sorting According to Physical Features…14

MODULE II: PREVALENCE OF RACIAL DISPARITIES AND DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHILD WELFARE AND THE NEEDED CHANGES TO REACH FAIRNESS AND EQUITY 16
- Instructional Guide…17
  - *Learning Objectives…17*
  - *Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)…18*

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2011). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors…18
Materials Needed…19
Understanding Institutional Racism, Racial Disproportionality, and Disparities…19
Disparities in Child Welfare…20
Institutional Racism and Biased Decision Making…22
Fairness and Equity in Child Welfare Services…23
Key Findings…24
Implications of Findings for Child Welfare Practice…26
Activity II-1: Recognizing Bias in Child Welfare Service Delivery…27

MODULE III: ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION W ITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY **28**
Instructional Guide…29
Learning Objectives…29
Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)…29
Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors…31
Materials Needed…31
Growing Shift to Collaborative, Community-Based Practice…31
The Purpose and Benefits of Community Partnership in Child Welfare Practice…32
Understanding the Cultural Context of African American Communities…34
Shared Child Rearing…35
Spirituality…36
Introduction to Study…36
Key Findings…38
Incentives for Brokering…38
Evolution of the Cultural Brokers…39
Effective Broker-Agency Partnerships…40
Implications of Findings for Child Welfare Practice…40
Activity III-1…41

MODULE IV: THE CULTURAL BROKER APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE **43**
Instructional Guide…44
Learning Objectives…44
Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)…45
Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors…47
Materials Needed…47
Understanding of the African American Community's Perceptions of Child Welfare…47

Cultural Broker Approach to Engagement With African American Communities…50
Cultural Broker Theory…50
Cultural Broker Approach…53
Social Workers Partnering With Cultural Brokers…55
Key Findings…56
The Role of Cultural Brokers…56
Characteristics of Effective Brokering With Families...58
Help Families Received From Cultural Broker…59
Effects on Client Case Outcomes…60
Collaboration and Shared Decision Making…62
Implications of Findings for Child Welfare Practice…63
Activity IV-1…66

MODULE V: KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVED CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIPS W ITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES **67**
Instructional Guide…68
Learning Objectives…68
Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)…68
Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors…70
Materials Needed…70
Community-Based Child Welfare Practice and Partnerships With African American Communities…70
Agency Preparedness for Child Welfare Partnerships With the African American Community…73
Key Findings…78
Characteristics of Effective Agency-Broker Partnerships…78
Challenges…79
Suggestions for Improvements in the Cultural Broker Approach…80
Implications of Findings for Child Welfare Practice…81
Activity V-1…83

REFERENCES **84**

APPENDIXES **89**
Appendix A: Demographic Summary of Cultural Brokers and Social Workers…90
Appendix B: African American Population in Fresno/Clovis…91
Appendix C: Demographic Summary of Families With and Without Cultural Brokers…92
Appendix D: Handout 1: Activity I-3: People Sorting Activity…93
Appendix E: Handout 1: Activity I-1 History Timeline…103
Appendix F: Handout 2: The History of Institutional Racism in Child Welfare…107

ABSTRACT

This empirically based curriculum addresses a number of issues related to disparity and disproportionality experienced by African American families involved with child welfare. It is well documented that for decades African American children have been overrepresented in child welfare throughout this country. Yet little is known about what strategies might be implemented in order to reverse this phenomenon. This curriculum is based on findings from a Community-Based Participatory Research Project that brought together African American community leaders and university faculty to examine both the historical evolution and prominent features of a cultural broker approach to promote engagement and partnership with the African American community and the county child welfare agency.

This curriculum provides research highlights, historical perspectives, conceptual frameworks, approaches for community engagement, tools and experiential opportunities to strengthen social worker understanding, and knowledge and skills regarding issues related to disproportionality and disparity experienced by African American families in child welfare. It addresses five areas:

- the history of cultural racism and oppression in child welfare,
- the prevalence of racial disparities and disproportionality in child welfare,
- the role of community partnership and collaboration with African American families in child welfare service delivery,
- the cultural broker approach to community engagement in child welfare practice, and
- key considerations for improved child welfare partnerships with African American communities.

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CalSWEC PREFACE

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) is the nation's largest state coalition of social work educators and practitioners. It is a consortium of the state's 20 accredited schools of social work, the 58 county departments of social services and mental health, the California Department of Social Services, and the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

The primary purpose of CalSWEC is an educational one. Our central task is to provide specialized education and training for social workers who practice in the field of public child welfare. Our stated mission, in part, is "to facilitate the integration of education and practice." But this is not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to improve the lives of children and families who are the users and the purpose of the child welfare system. By educating others and ourselves, we intend a positive result for children: safety, a permanent home, and the opportunity to fulfill their developmental promise.

To achieve this challenging goal, the education and practice-related activities of CalSWEC are varied: recruitment of a diverse group of social workers, defining a continuum of education and training, engaging in research and evaluation of best practices, advocating for responsive social policy, and exploring other avenues to accomplish the CalSWEC mission. Education is a process, and necessarily an ongoing one involving interaction with a changing world. One who hopes to practice successfully in any field does not become "educated" and then cease to observe and learn.

To foster continuing learning and evidence-based practice within the child welfare field, CalSWEC funds a series of curriculum sections that employ varied research methods to advance the knowledge of best practices in child welfare. These sections, on varied child welfare topics, are intended to enhance curriculum for Title IV-E graduate social work education programs and for continuing education of child welfare agency staff. To increase distribution and learning throughout the state, curriculum sections are made available through the CalSWEC Child Welfare Resource Library to all participating schools and collaborating agencies.

The section that follows has been commissioned with your learning in mind. We at CalSWEC hope it serves you well.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dolores R. Siegel, LCSW, MSW, ACSW is a Faculty Lecturer and Title IV-E Field Liaison in the Department of Social Work Education at California State University, Fresno. Her research interests have addressed the impact and outcomes of CalWORKs on families, children's mental health, and the service needs of elders in the central valley. She has over 20 years of practice experience in mental health and child welfare. Her practice has included clinical services with an emphasis on child welfare, family violence, clinical supervision, and administration. Ms. Siegel has been a clinical supervisor and program coordinator. She currently teaches graduate-level practice courses and provides training for the Specialized Foster Parent Training Project. Ms. Siegel earned her MSW from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Margaret Jackson, MSW has over 25 years of child welfare experience as a line worker, supervisor, and trainer. She served briefly as the Director of the California Disproportionality Project and is currently a Professional Trainer and Consultant. Ms. Jackson is a Supervisor Mentor/Field-Based Trainer for the Central California Child Welfare Training Academy at California State University, Fresno, and has also been employed as a Lead Trainer, Regional Training Coordinator. She is also an Adjunct Faculty member at California State University, Fresno, teaching child welfare, diversity, and practice courses in the Department of Social Work Education. Ms. Jackson has written, developed, and trained curriculum in Child Welfare Services for the Foster Parent Training Project and is a Facilitator for the African American Nurturing Parenting

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Program. She is also a trained Family Group Conference and Team Decision Making Facilitator, is a certified trainer for the Attachment and Bio-behavioral Catch-up (ABC) Intervention, and a Certified Facilitator in Racial Sobriety through the National Training Center in Washington, DC. Ms. Jackson is the primary developer of the Cultural Broker approach featured in this curriculum and assisted with the development and training of a Cultural Broker Paraprofessional training curriculum that was used to prepare participants for interactions with Fresno County child welfare services.

Salvador Montana, PhD, MSW is an Assistant Professor at the College of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Work Education (DSWE). He serves as Faculty Evaluator/Research Consultant at the Social Welfare Evaluation, Research, and Training Center. His research projects also include a wide range of topics linked to public social services in Central California, primarily in California's San Joaquin Valley. Dr. Montana worked 20 years in public social services before joining the DSWE and has worked extensively with the Central California Training Academy. He currently serves as faculty consultant/liaison to the Central California Area Social Services Consortium, a regional consortium for public human service directors. Dr. Montana earned his MSW from California State University, Fresno and his PhD from the University of Texas at Austin.

Virginia Rondero Hernandez, PhD, LCSW is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work Education at California State University, Fresno and a Faculty Researcher/Evaluator for the Central California Social Welfare Evaluation, Research, and Training Center at Fresno State. She has taught at the university level

for 18 years and her social work career includes service in clinics, hospitals, schools, and community-based agencies. She has published research related to child health disparities, children's mental health, and substance abuse, and recently completed a sabbatical research project fielding an evidence-based shame resiliency curriculum to women in residential treatment for substance abuse. Dr. Rondero Hernandez earned her MSW from California State University, Sacramento and her PhD from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University.

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INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE OF MODULE (Slide 1)

This empirically based curriculum addresses issues related to disparity and disproportionality experienced by African American families involved with child welfare. It is based on findings from a Community-Based Participatory Research Project that brought together African American community leaders and university faculty to research cultural brokering in the Fresno County child welfare system.

The research focused on the effects of cultural brokers on both the quality of experiences African American families had with child welfare services and the constellation of services they were offered and that they received. The research also focused on the use of cultural brokers in the child welfare system and their impact on decision making in the cases of African American children. A final area of focus was to identify the salient features of the cultural broker approach to community engagement that contributed to the success of the approach and challenges encountered.

Findings from the research project were used to develop this empirically based curriculum that will increase social worker knowledge about working collaboratively with community participants to achieve safety, permanence, and well being for African American children and their families. In an effort to enhance social worker skills and knowledge of how to work effectively with African American community partners, this curriculum will focus on five areas: (a) the history of cultural racism and oppression in child welfare, (b) the prevalence of racial disparities and disproportionality in child

welfare, (c) the role of community partnership and collaboration with African American families in child welfare service delivery, (d) the cultural broker approach to community engagement in child welfare practice, and (e) key considerations for improved child welfare partnerships with African American communities.

BACKGROUND (Slide 2)

For over 40 years African American children have been overrepresented in the child welfare system in foster homes, group homes, and institutions. Currently 34% of children in foster care nationwide are African American, even though African American children constitute only 15% of the nation's youth (United States Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2007). In California, 26% of children in foster care are African American even though African American children represent only 6% of California's child population (Center for Social Services Research, 2008). In Fresno County, African American children are represented three times more frequently in foster care at 15% compared to 5% of Fresno County's general child population (Fresno County DCFS, 2008). The phenomenon of disproportionality is not a secret, nor is it confined to child welfare. Disparate outcomes and disproportionate representation of children and families of color are also an issue in juvenile justice, education, health care, and mental health. Many of these systems interact and serve the same families. The key fact is that in all of these systems families of color experience disparities (Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2008).

This curriculum is based on the examination of the community partnership that developed between Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services

(DCFS) and a West Fresno African American Community to address the disparities in the child welfare system. As the result of the implementation of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family initiative in West Fresno, the efforts of a group of local residents in the African American community ignited into a community collaborative effort to address the disparities in their community. Over time their efforts resulted in the emergence of community representatives and cultural brokers who worked side by side with DCFS social workers to address the disparities that existed in their local child welfare system.

Historically, African American children and families have always been treated differently by the child welfare system (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2002). From its origin, child welfare systems have excluded and discriminated against African American children in care resulting in the current overrepresentation of these children in child welfare systems and the disparate treatment they receive. Overrepresentation and disparate treatment of African American children and families by the child welfare system is still prevalent. The disproportionate representation of African American children in foster care is currently being addressed on national, state, and local levels. **(Slide 3)** Disproportionality in child welfare is defined as a "circumstance in which a particular racial or ethnic group is represented in the child welfare system or in a system of care in the child welfare system at a higher or lower percentage than their representation in the general population" (Race Matters Consortium, 2010). It occurs across racial and ethnic groups of children in relative ratios at different points throughout the child welfare system (Race Matters Consortium).

The reasons for the disproportionate representation of African American children in the child welfare system include multiple social, political, economic, and attitudinal disadvantages. Specific factors leading to disproportionality in the child welfare system include poverty, classism, racism, organizational culture, service strategy, and resources (Hill, 2006). Of these factors, poverty is often singled out as a major contributor since foster children of color are primarily from families living in poverty (Drake, Lee, & Jonson-Reid, 2009; Hill; Roberts, 2008). Research has historically shown that there are no significant racial differences in abuse and neglect rates (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). This suggests that race more likely influences the institutional response to child abuse resulting in higher substantiations and placement rates for children of color, in particular African American and Native American children (Hill; Roberts). However, the recently released NIS-4 report shows that maltreatment rates reported for African Americans are higher than other racial or ethnic groups (Sedlak et al., 2010). Although discussion of the NIS-4 is just beginning among scholars, practitioners, and communities, its findings imply that more research on disproportionality and disparities in child welfare systems is warranted. While this debate continues, the fact remains that African American children and families are treated differently by the child welfare system. African American children are separated from their parents more often, remain in foster care longer, receive inferior services, receive less desirable placements, and are less likely to be reunited with their parents than White children (Hill; Roberts, 2002).

Although researchers and state child welfare departments are investigating the extent of and reasons for racial disproportionality in child protective services (Courtney et al., 1996), they have not studied its community impact. The community-level effects of child welfare agency involvement in neighborhoods of color suggest that solutions to racial disproportionality must be community based (Roberts, 2008). The formation of cultural brokers in Fresno County represents such a response. Through their participation in Team Decision Making meetings with child welfare staff, community representatives and cultural brokers are able to provide advocacy and offer support to African American families who are either involved with or at risk of involvement with the child welfare system. West Fresno's community collaborative effort plays a critical role as a community-based effort to address the disparities that exist in child welfare.

This research-based curriculum was primarily developed to increase social worker knowledge and skills about working collaboratively with African American community participants. This curriculum may also be of value to agencies and communities that embark on partnerships to achieve safety, permanence, and well-being and to eliminate the disparities experienced by African American children and their families in the child welfare system.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

This curriculum provides research highlights; historical perspectives; conceptual frameworks; approaches for community engagement; and tools and experiential opportunities to strengthen social worker understanding, knowledge, and skills regarding issues related to disproportionality and disparities experienced by African American families in child welfare. Specifically, this curriculum addresses five areas:

- History of Cultural Racism and Oppression in Child Welfare
- Prevalence of Racial Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare
- Role of Community Partnership and Collaboration With African American Families in Child Welfare Service Delivery
- The Cultural Broker Approach to Community Engagement in Child Welfare Practice
- Key Considerations for Improved Child Welfare Partnerships With African American Communities

This curriculum is based on the following assumptions:

- A better understanding of the roots of institutional racism in child welfare will assist child welfare social workers in the engagement process with African American families.
- A better understanding of the issues that impact the delivery of fair and equitable child welfare services to African American families will inform child welfare practice in an effort to improve outcomes.
- A better understanding and knowledge of engagement with and development of community partnerships in which families live will build a network of service and support in order to achieve child safety and permanence.
- A better understanding and knowledge of the cultural broker approach and its developmental process will promote partnerships with the African American community in the effort to reduce disproportionality and disparity.

OBJECTIVES

The curriculum objectives for each section are described below. This section is intended to orient the instructor to the goals, objectives, and curriculum content and provide helpful tips for classroom use.

Section I: History of Cultural Racism and Oppression in Child Welfare

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Have an understanding of the origins of racism and oppression in America, and
- Have an understanding of the history of institutional racism in child welfare.

Section II: Prevalence of Racial Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Understand institutional racism, racial disproportionality, and disparities that impact African American children and families served in child welfare,
- Understand and identify the issues that impact the delivery of fair and equitable child welfare services to African American families, and
- Recognize biased decision making in child welfare service delivery with African American families.

Section III: Role of Community Partnership and Collaboration With African American Families in Child Welfare Service Delivery

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Have knowledge of the growing shift from individual case practice to collaborative, community-based practice,
- Understand the purpose and benefits of community partnership in child welfare practice with African American families,
- Understand the cultural context of African American communities and neighborhoods, and
- Develop skills in establishing partnerships with African American communities.

Section IV: The Cultural Broker Approach to Community Engagement in Child Welfare Practice

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Develop an understanding of the African American community's perceptions of child welfare,
- Have knowledge of cultural brokers as an approach to engagement with African American communities,
- Develop skills in partnering with cultural brokers as a means of engaging African American families to promote safety and permanency,
- Have knowledge of how the use of cultural brokers can improve the quality of African American families' experiences with child welfare, and
- Obtain knowledge and understanding of how cultural brokers can be used as an effective strategy for addressing disproportionality and disparities.

Section V: Key Considerations for Improved Child Welfare Partnerships With African American Communities

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Have knowledge and understanding of the ideals, values, and principles involved in partnerships with African American communities,
- Gain understanding of the importance of agency preparedness and communication to work with community partners, and
- Obtain knowledge and understanding of how to develop partnerships in community-based child welfare practice.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The primary audiences for this curriculum are advanced child welfare social workers and Title IV-E MSW students. This curriculum is intended to build on prior foundational and core knowledge and skills of social workers with experienced practice in child welfare. It is further intended to be included in the Advanced Child Welfare education of Title IV-E MSW students. The sections in this curriculum are designed to

provide advanced understanding, knowledge, and skills in building partnerships with African American communities in an effort to reduce disparity and disproportionality and to promote safety, permanence, and well-being for African American children and families.

ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum sections are intended to build upon one another. It is recommended that Section I serve as a prerequisite for Section II, and that Sections III and IV be taught together. Also, Sections III and IV should serve as prerequisites for Section V. While it is possible for instructors to independently use each of the sections, it is advised that they be taught in the combinations and sequences recommended above. A brief description of each section can be found below.

Section I: History of Cultural Racism and Oppression in Child Welfare

This section provides knowledge and an introduction to the topic of racism and oppression in child welfare and how its roots can be found in American history. The origins of institutional or structural racism in child welfare and how this contributes to oppression of people of color, particularly African American families, is addressed. Activities are included to provide understanding of how institutional racism impacts people of color, particularly African Americans. This section serves as a template for the development of exercises and activities and how they may be incorporated in Sections II-V in order to support the acquisition of desired knowledge and skills.

Section II: Prevalence of Racial Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare

This section addresses the prevalence of institutional racism, racial disparities, and disproportionality, and their impact on African American families served in child welfare. Individual attitudes, values, and beliefs and how these influences can lead to individual and/or institutional biased decision-making practices in service delivery with African American families are addressed in this section. Activity suggestions illustrate the impact of these key factors in child welfare practice and increase understanding of their importance. The suggested activities will serve as the basis for the development of group activities or case scenarios that are customized to accurately reflect county-specific issues related to racial disproportionality and disparities.

Section III: Role of Community Partnership and Collaboration With African American Families in Child Welfare Service Delivery

This section provides knowledge and an introduction to the growing shift from individual case practice to collaborative, community-based practice. Promising practice models are discussed and their key characteristics are presented. The purpose and benefits of community partnership with African American families are addressed as well as the importance of their cultural context and history. Suggestions for activities are included to better increase knowledge of and skills in developing partnerships with African American communities and can be adapted for use with one's unique community circumstances. The suggested activities will serve as the basis for the development of group activities or case scenarios that are customized to accurately reflect county-specific issues related to racial disproportionality and disparities.

Section IV: The Cultural Broker Approach to Community Engagement in Child Welfare Practice

This section highlights how engagement with the African American community can improve the quality of African American families' experiences in child welfare. The use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement is introduced. Key features of this approach are presented from the perspectives of cultural brokers, families, and social workers. Advanced knowledge and skills in developing partnerships with cultural brokers and developing relationships with African American families are presented. Suggestions for activities are included to illustrate this approach and to facilitate skill development. The suggested activities will serve as the basis for the development of group activities or case scenarios that are customized to accurately reflect county-specific issues related to racial disproportionality and disparities.

Section V: Key Considerations for Improved Child Welfare Partnerships With African American Families

This section introduces issues for consideration in the development of community-based agency practice with community partners. The shared power and decision making that accompanies transparent, community practice are presented. Included in this section is a discussion of the importance of agency preparedness for developing community partnerships. Suggestions for activities are included to illustrate these key concepts and to facilitate skill development. The suggested activities will serve as the basis for the development of group activities or case scenarios that are customized to accurately reflect county-specific issues related to racial disproportionality and disparities.

Appendixes

The appendixes include demographic information for each of the groups interviewed for the study on which this curriculum is based and a map that illustrates the zip codes in which the families interviewed were concentrated.

TIME ESTIMATES FOR TRAINING

Increasing knowledge, understanding, and skills related to building community and family partnerships is very important to achieving a reduction in disproportionality and disparities. The time estimate to complete the entire curriculum is 12 hours that can be divided into two 6-hour trainings. Estimated time requirements for completing each section are as follows:

Section	Description	Est. time
Section I	Content: Racism and oppression in child welfare and how its roots can be found in American history Activity I-1: Introductory Activity Activity I-2: Timeline Activity Activity I-3: People Sorting Activity Serves as a template for Curriculum Exercises and Activities	1½ Hours
Section II	Content: Prevalence of institutional racism, racial disparities, and disproportionality and their impact on African American families served in child welfare Suggested Activities	1½ Hours
Section III	Content: Introduction to the growing shift from individual case practice to collaborative, community-based child welfare practice Suggested Activities	3 Hours
Section IV	Content: Cultural broker approach to engagement with African American community in child welfare practice Suggested Activities	4 Hours
Section V	Content: Considerations for the development of community partnerships in child welfare practice Suggested Activities	2 Hours

GUIDELINES FOR SECTION ACTIVITIES

Each section of this curriculum includes at least one activity that is designed to develop increased understanding, knowledge, and skills in order to address the objectives for that section.

Three activities are included in Section I. The first activity serves as a means of audience introduction. The second activity raises awareness of the historical roots of racism in child welfare, while the third activity addresses the socially constructed classifications that serve as the basis for racial categories in this country.

The remaining four sections provide guidelines for suggested activities that are based on scenarios that should represent the community or issues facing child welfare practice in the community in which this curriculum is delivered. The guidelines offer instructions for developing scenarios that depict issues or challenges experienced in the community where this training is being conducted and specific instructions for the activities associated with the scenario in which the audience will participate. For example, in Section II participants are asked to develop a scenario that is representative of an actual family case, decision making practices, and institutional factors specific to the participants' respective agencies and counties. Participants are then asked to engage in an experiential exercise that includes small group discussions for the purpose of completing a case assessment and service plan in which county-specific issues are identified that typically go undetected and have the potential to contribute to disproportionality and disparities.

TIPS ON CONDUCTING TRAINING SESSIONS

This empirically based curriculum is intended to serve as a catalyst for child welfare agencies and local communities that are prepared to transform their local child welfare system and impact the delivery of fair and equitable child welfare services. If the goal is to develop a collaborative, supportive network that incorporates community-based practice in conjunction with best practices in child welfare service delivery, then this curriculum may be of use.

However, this curriculum is not intended to serve as an instruction or implementation manual for the development of a *Cultural Broker Program*. Information is being shared regarding one child welfare agency's effort to collaborate and partner with members of an African American community around a targeted issue: disproportionality. It is believed that this information might be helpful to other child welfare agencies that choose to include local communities in their efforts to reform child welfare and address long-standing issues such as the disparities and overrepresentation of African American children in the child welfare system. It is also believed that the information shared is transferrable and can be adapted for use with other cultures, groups, ethnicities, and communities. The findings from the research that informed this curriculum suggest that community and child welfare partnerships lead to greater trust, understanding, and honest communication around sensitive issues such as racism, poverty, disproportionality, and disparities. These enhanced relationships provide the opportunity for agency and community partners to establish concrete goals and discuss strategies to address targeted issues. Working in partnership, the child

welfare agency and community can weather the conflicts and disagreements that arise and remain committed to improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. It is believed that this curriculum will enhance such an effort.

SUGGESTED TOOLS AND MATERIALS

This curriculum is intended for use with advanced child welfare social workers and Title IV-E MSW students. It is strongly recommended that local community partners participate and be actively involved in the training session to model the desired outcomes. If inclusion of community partners is problematic or overly concerning, then it is very likely that additional work in developing agency and community partnerships is needed before this training would be of benefit to participating agencies or educational institutions. It is further recommended that individuals who plan to deliver this training participate in the pilot project or training for trainers session prior to delivering this particular curriculum. In addition, the trainer must possess extensive knowledge of the disproportionality and disparities that exist in child welfare (including the roots and causes) and must be skilled in facilitating difficult conservations around sensitive issues such as racism, poverty, bias, and shared child welfare decision making. The trainer must also be knowledgeable of effective methods to develop and maintain community partners.

MODULE I

HISTORY OF CULTURAL RACISM AND OPPRESSION IN CHILD WELFARE

(Slide 2)

MODULE I
HISTORY OF CULTURAL RACISM AND OPPRESSION IN CHILD WELFARE

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Learning Objectives

This section provides knowledge and an introduction to the topic of racism and oppression in child welfare and its roots in American history. The origins of institutional or structural racism in child welfare and how they contribute to the oppression of people of color, particularly African American families, is addressed. An activity is included at the beginning of the module to engage participants and raise awareness of one's cultural identity. A choice of activities is included to increase understanding of historical and current racism in America. The activities and exercise included in this section serve as a template for Sections II through IV to provide an opportunity for trainers and participating counties to customize the curriculum to accurately reflect the issues that each county faces as it relates to the content for each section. If, for example, a county is specifically targeting their efforts towards addressing the overrepresentation of Native American children in the child welfare system, the exercises and activities can be customized to focus on this target population.

By the end of this section, participants will:

- have an understanding of the origins of racism and oppression in America, and
- have an understanding of the history of institutional racism in child welfare.

Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)

I. Ethnic Sensitive and Multicultural Practice

1.2 Student demonstrates self-awareness and the ability to address and overcome personal bias in assessing and working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

III. Core Child Welfare Practice

3.13 Student demonstrates the ability and self-awareness to assess his or her own value conflicts or emotional responses to clients, coworkers, and situations; and seeks consultation when needed.

3.15 Student is aware of forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, non-traditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services.

V. Human Behavior and the Social Environment

5.4 Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics.

VIII. Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration

8.1 Student understands how professional values, ethics, and standards influence decision-making and planning in public child welfare practice.

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors

Time allocation: Approximately 1½ hours

Introduction

- Sign in and complete self identification card
- Introduction of trainer(s)
- Brief introduction to section content and review of section objectives
- Introductory Activity I-1: Introduction of Participants

PowerPoint presentation

- Discussion of racism and oppression in child welfare and how its roots can be found in American history

- Activity I-2: Historical Event Timeline

Brief review of people sorting activity materials and PowerPoint slides #1-15.

- Activity I-3: People Sorting According to Physical Features

Instructors are encouraged to use this section as a means to provide a context for the topic of racial disproportionality and disparity in child welfare. This section is also intended to provide knowledge that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in our American history. Some of the activities may also be omitted or adapted for use in other sections of this curriculum.

Materials Needed

- LCD projector
- PowerPoint slides 1-24
- Activity I-2 Handouts
- Activity I-3 Handouts
- Markers and flip chart with "post-it" adhesive back for mounting on walls
- 3 x 5 Index cards and a drop box or basket
- Handout of PowerPoint slides 1-24

As participants enter the training room and sign in, have each participant discretely complete (information should not be shared with trainer or the other participants) an index card answering the following question:

Please identify what you consider to be your race or ethnicity utilizing the six United States racial categories. You may have multiple responses but must collapse your responses into only one category. The six categories are as follows:

a) American Indian or Alaska Native

b) Asian

c) Black or African American

d) Hispanic or Latino

e) White

f) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

After participants complete their cards have them drop them in a drop box. Inform participants that the cards will be used later for another activity.

Introductory Activity I-1 (Slide 3)

Purpose: To give participants an opportunity to interact and become familiar with one another. Participants will also share at least one objective of interest.

Instructions: Ask participants to introduce themselves including name, county/agency, current assignment, years of experience with child welfare, and identify at least one objective they are particularly interested in focusing on for today's training session. If participants are MSW students, ask them to identify their field placement agency and assignments.

Process: Trainer(s) will go around the room allowing participants to introduce themselves to the larger group and will note the identified focus objectives to acknowledge their areas of interest for today's session.

THE ORIGINS OF RACISM AND OPPRESSION IN AMERICA

Historically, African American children and families have been treated differently by the child welfare system. Over time, the disparate treatment of African American children and families by child welfare systems has resulted in the exclusion of African American children from care and the current overrepresentation of this group in child welfare systems.

For decades, practitioners and scholars have been aware of the overrepresentation of African American children in the child welfare system (Hill, 2004) despite evidence that African American children do not experience higher rates of child maltreatment when compared to other children from different racial and ethnic groups

(Sedlak & Broadhurst 1996; GAO, 2007). However, the recently released NIS-4 report demonstrates that maltreatment rates reported for African Americans are higher than other racial or ethnic groups (Sedlak et al., 2010). Although discussion of the NIS-4 is just beginning among scholars, practitioners, and communities, its findings imply more research on disproportionality and disparities in child welfare systems is warranted.

(Slide 4) Racism and oppression towards Africans began the very moment they stepped foot on American soil. The first African people who came to America arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 when they were exchanged by a Dutch trader for food. Although their status is not clear, it is probable that they were sold as indentured servants who served as the primary source of labor to the developing colonies of America. A common practice in England and colonial America, indentured servants were laborers who were sold under contract for a fixed period of 3-7 years in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter. Many immigrants entered this country as indentured servants. However, due to the grueling conditions, many did not survive. Over time the conditions of working in the fields, particular the tobacco crops, became widely known. This led to increased difficulty in recruiting indentured servants. This difficulty contributed to the rise of the importation and sale of Black slaves to do this hard labor.

(Slide 5) In the mid 17th century, colonial laws began to differentiate between indentured servants and slaves based on race. Slaves became the property of their masters for life. One such law reflects the changing times. In 1640, *Re: Negro John Punch* was one of the first legal cases that made race a distinguishing factor among indentured servants (Craig, n.d.). Three indentured servants, one Black and two White,

ran away from their master and were recaptured. The two White servants were given what was known as *thirty stripes* and an additional 4 years of indentured servitude; however, John Punch, who was a Negro, was sentenced to serve the remainder of his life as a slave (Craig).

America's history of racism and oppression, particularly toward African Americans, continues into the 21st century. Among the many laws that were passed in the 17th century, there was one that focused on the birthright of children born to Negro women. In 1662 Virginia passed a law that based the status of slaves on heredity by ruling that the offspring of a slave woman would become the property of her master, resulting in that child facing a lifetime in slavery (Hening,1810).

(Slide 6) Toward the end of the 18th century the 1790 Naturalization Act reserved the right to American citizenship for Whites only. African Americans were not guaranteed citizenship until 1868. Without citizenship, those who were not White were not allowed to vote, own property, bring suit against another party, or testify in court. All of the privileges that were exclusively afforded Whites were eliminated for African Americans and other people of color.

The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted on December 6, 1865, officially abolished slavery. However, beginning in the late 19th century, southern states enacted the Jim Crow laws that spread throughout the country between 1876 and 1965. These laws authorized the subordination of Black Americans to Whites through segregation of the two races in all public places and institutional settings. Although the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Furgeson* in 1896 stipulated "separate

but equal" accommodations for Black Americans, they continued to be denied the freedom of assembly and movement and full participation as citizens in many states. Integration would not occur until the mid-1960s.

(Slide 7) Efforts to define those who were Black began as early as the 17th century. In 1924 the Virginia Racial Purity Act more clearly defined Black persons as having any trace of African ancestry. The *one-drop* rule of this Act, which stipulated that anyone with one drop of African blood was considered to be of African ancestry, was adopted by several states. However, most people could not prove their ancestry. Therefore, the determination of ancestry was solely based on observation of skin color. If you appeared to be Black you were Black; that is if you *looked* Black you were Black. Due to the subjectivity of this rule, a person could literally cross state lines and be perceived as another race.

It wasn't until the mid 20th century that shifts in the social and political climate began to occur. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made a landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.* The Court ruled that state laws that established separate public schools for White and Black children denied Black children equal educational opportunities. There was widespread resistance to integration in public schools during this time. The civil rights movement organized peaceful protests and marches that focused on public school integration but soon expanded to public transportation, voting rights, and other social liberties. **(Slide 8)** These efforts culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

In spite of these changes, laws prohibiting interracial marriage remained in over half of the 50 states. It wasn't until 1967 that such laws were overturned. In 1959 a Virginia couple was tried and convicted of miscegenation. The couple filed a lawsuit challenging the law that reached the Supreme Court. In *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) the Court unanimously ruled that a person's individual right to marry cannot be restricted by race. The Loving decision reversed the racist policies that were based on Virginia's 1924 Racial Purity Act.

THE HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE (Slide 9)

The early settlers were predominantly Anglo-Saxon immigrants from England. Their beliefs, values, and traditions were rooted in the English culture. These beliefs and values played a significant role in shaping child welfare in America. One such belief was that in a new country rich with resources and opportunities, no man should be poor except by one's own hand (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). This belief led to the general opinion that poverty was due to laziness and lack of industry and that no public provisions would be offered to those living in poverty. The early settlers came from an English culture that valued family, Christianity, and a strong work ethic. Importance was placed on developing a new identity; a new country. Primary goals were the ability to govern themselves, religious freedom, and commerce. Ethnocentrism was a characteristic in the early settlers' philosophical approach to colonization and social policy. **(Slide 10)** The colonial poor laws, imported by British colonials, authorized that children from poor families could be indentured to private families or sent to the poor house, also known as the almshouse.

Slavery, the first form of institutionalized racism, significantly influenced the development of child welfare. The first African people who came to America were viewed as a means to an end; the goal of commerce. They were forced to give up their culture, which was very different from that of this newly developing country. Theirs was a culture rich in spirituality and freedom of voice and the arts. Their foods and customs were very different, yet they were categorized based on skin color. Slave owners restricted their expressions of their culture for fear of advancing their freedom of expression. This practice led to the development of a rich oral history within African American culture and expanded their use of community child care among themselves. While most children of slaves lived on the property of their masters, oftentimes they were recruited to work or serve as apprentices alongside their parents. How they were treated was often used as the measure for the treatment of or service to White children. That is, the general rule was that “no White child will be worse off than a Black child and no Black child will be better off than a White child” (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). **(Slide 11)** This attitude still prevails today when child welfare reforms focus on the needs of Black children in foster care. A common response to such efforts is that “the system doesn’t work for any children.”

(Slide 12) By the early 19th century, the institutions of poor houses or almshouses emerged as a public welfare system in response to the increasing prevalence of poverty. They housed those who were indigent, orphans, and children whose parents were unable to care for them. However, some free Black children were

also found to be living in them. Those who lived in the almshouses faced deplorable living conditions and maltreatment.

(Slide 13) Social policy began to shift in the 19th century amid growing concerns for the plight of poor children. The establishment of orphanages emerged in response to the dire conditions of the almshouses and as a means to save these children from parental indigence and maltreatment (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2002). Although referred to as orphanages, most children placed in them were poor children, not orphans. Black children were excluded from these orphanages. The only alternative for Black children were small, segregated orphanages often referred to as *asylums*, which were far inferior to the more predominant orphanages that housed White children (Billingsley & Giovannoni; Hill; Roberts).

(Slide 14) A second reform measure in the late 19th century followed the abolition of slavery. Poor children who lived in indentured servitude were placed with private families, known as free foster homes. Such placements were also used as a means of housing children exiting orphanages (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Jimenez, 2006). Free foster homes were very similar to indenture in that the children were expected to work for the family and remain until adulthood. Such placements often occurred across state lines. Although, the children were free to leave at any time, this was usually not a viable option, given the children had no alternative to their foster home. These free foster homes were the predecessors of our current child welfare system.

(Slide 15) By the early 1930s there was a shift from institutional to foster care and from private to public agencies. This shift was notable because more Black children

were placed in publicly funded foster homes compared to White children, the majority of whom were placed in residential settings (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Hill, 2006).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE (Slide 16)

Throughout American history, African Americans have suffered racism and oppression at the hands of the dominant society. They were sold into slavery and forced to reject their cultural traditions. Laws were passed to suppress, segregate, and subordinate them. This painful history impacted their identity and culture in such a way that a primary theme in African American culture today is one of defense and protection. By understanding the impact of historical events on African Americans, social workers can achieve a greater understanding of the potential for these families to respond to child welfare workers with suspicion and mistrust. This phenomenon requires social workers to invest in engagement and in developing relationships with African American families. More information and training are needed in these areas.

(Slide 17) The *one-drop* rule determined ancestry based solely on how a person looked to another. Racial sorting and profiling continues today based exclusively on how one person is perceived by another. This practice is an imposed identity, instead of how one self-identifies with one's culture. **(Slide 18)** Culture includes how one defines one's self and therefore assigns meaning to one's own identity. As part of relationship building with African American families, social workers need to be culturally sensitive in learning how they self-identify and what that means to them regarding their worldviews, beliefs, and traditions.

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

Child welfare has a long history of institutional racism that began by excluding Black children from orphanages to removing children from their families based on the belief that these children would be better protected from harm by living with strangers. African American families have been regarded based more on their deficits and challenges than on their strengths. More information and training are needed to promote understanding of the history of cultural racism and oppression in child welfare and how this impacts the way African American families are perceived.

Activity I-2: Historical Event Timeline **(Slide 19)**

Purpose: To give participants the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the origins of racism and oppression in America and to promote an understanding of the historical roots of institutional racism in child welfare.

Instructions: Divide participants into groups. Evenly assign and distribute the following timeline events to the groups (Handouts 1 & 2).

1. (1619) The First African People Came to America
2. (1640) First Legal Case Making Race a Factor for Indentured Servants
3. (1662) Law Regarding the Birthright of Children Born to Negro Women
4. (1865) U.S. Constitution Abolishes Slavery
5. (1790) Naturalization Act
6. (1876-1965) Jim Crow Laws
7. (1924) Virginia Racial Purity Act
8. (1954) Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka
9. (1964 & 1965) 1964 Civil Rights Act & 1965 Voting Rights Act
10. (1967) Interracial Marriage Laws Overturned

(Slide 20) Have each group review and discuss their assigned timeline event utilizing information presented by trainer(s) and information from participant's training packet. Instruct each group to summarize key information and prepare a brief presentation on adhesive flip chart paper provided to present to the larger group. Instruct each group to include in their discussion how their assigned historical event connects to the institutional racism that exists in child welfare. Have each group present their information in chronological order and have them line the walls with their information reconstructing the timeline of historical events that are linked to the institutional racism that exists in child welfare.

Process: Trainer to lead a large group discussion, briefly allowing participants to share their insights and observations from information presented on key historical events that are linked to racism and oppression in America and the institutional racism that exists in child welfare.

Activity I-3: People Sorting According to Physical Features **(Slide 21)** (Adapted from the documentary series, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, courtesy of California Newsreel)

Purpose: To raise awareness of the fact that racial categories are socially constructed classifications that are cultural and not scientific. Participants will also understand how classification of people into groups is a subjective process influenced by cultural ideas and political priorities. This subjective aspect of classifying people based on appearance supports an atmosphere where bias and racial prejudices may thrive.

Instructions: Divide the group into 5 or 6 small groups of 5 to 6 participants and distribute a set of race sorting picture cards to each group (See Instructional Materials; Activity I-3).

Give each group 7 minutes to review the race sorting cards and assign each photo card to 1 of the 6 following United States racial and ethnic categories:

a) American Indian or Alaska Native
b) Asian
c) Black or African American
d) Hispanic or Latino
e) White
f) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Sheets for each ethnic category (6 total) having four blank squares each are provided. Participants place the photo of the person in the blank square of the ethnic category they believe the photo best fits.

After each group shares their responses with the larger group the trainer reveals the correct answers explaining that the answers are based on how each of the individuals on the race sorting cards identified themselves utilizing the United States racial categories.

The trainer retrieves the drop box (or basket) with the index cards each participant completed at the start of today's session. The trainer asks for 3 or 4 volunteers to pull out a card, read the card and is then instructed to match the card with the participant they believe completed the card. For example, if the card states African American, then the volunteer would give the card to a participant that appears to be African American. If the volunteer is incorrect then he or she must try again to select another

participant he or she believes matches the information on the card. After the participants make 3 or 4 correct matches, instruct the rest of the participants to pick up their card and reveal their response to the larger group. Trainer then poses the following questions to the group **(Slide 22)**:

a) Can you identify someone's race by looking at them?

b) Is it easy to group people into *races* based on appearance?

c) Does everybody classify the same way?

d) Does the way that we sort and categorize individuals match how people think of themselves?

e) Does knowing one thing about a person or particular group (such as their race) tell you anything else about that individual or group?

Process: Trainer leads a group discussion allowing the participants to briefly share their thoughts, feelings, and observations as a result of participating in the people sorting activity.

MODULE II

PREVALENCE OF RACIAL DISPARITIES AND DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHILD WELFARE AND THE NEEDED CHANGES TO REACH FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

(Slide 23)

MODULE II
PREVALENCE OF RACIAL DISPARITIES AND DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHILD WELFARE AND THE NEEDED CHANGES TO REACH FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Learning Objectives

This section defines the issue of disproportionality and disparities that exists in child welfare and sheds light on the necessary changes that would support a fair and equitable approach to servicing African American children and their families involved in the child welfare system. Issues that impact the delivery of fair and equitable services will be highlighted as well as a discussion of how biased decision making contributes to the disproportionality and disparities that exist in child welfare practice with African American families. Focused learning activities and experiential exercises are suggested in order to support the acquisition of concepts and knowledge in addition to the development of related skills. They may be customized to reflect county-specific issues and support the acquisition of concepts, knowledge, and related skills.

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Understand institutional racism, racial disproportionality, and disparities that impact African American children and families served in child welfare.
- Understand and identify the issues that impact the delivery of fair and equitable child welfare services to African American families.
- Recognize biased decision-making in child welfare service delivery with African American families.

Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)

I. Ethnic Sensitive and Multicultural Practice

1.2 Student demonstrates self awareness and the ability to address and overcome personal bias in assessing and working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

1.4 Student recognizes personal knowledge limitations regarding specific groups and seeks consultation and expertise as needed to assess and work effectively with clients.

III. Core Child Welfare Practice

3.12 Student understands the inherent power differential in working with clients and can effectively manage and balance that power.

3.13 Student demonstrates the ability and self-awareness to assess his or her own value conflicts or emotional responses to clients, coworkers, and situations, and seeks consultation when needed.

3.15 Student is aware of forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, nontraditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services.

V. Human Behavior and the Social Environment

5.3 Student demonstrates understanding of the potential effects of poverty, bias, inequity, and other forms of oppression on human behavior and social systems.

5.4 Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics.

VIII. Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration

8.1 Student understands how professional values, ethics, and standards influence decision-making and planning in public child welfare practice

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors

Time allocation: Approximately 1½ hours

Introduction

- Introduction of trainer(s)
- Brief introduction to section content

Materials Needed

- LCD projector
- PowerPoint slides 25-41
- Handouts
- Markers and flip chart with “post-it” adhesive back for mounting on walls
- Handout of PowerPoint slides 25-41.

UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM, RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY, AND DISPARITIES

African American children and families have always been treated differently by the child welfare system. The child welfare system’s initial relationship with African American children and families was overtly discriminatory. Prior to World War II, the child welfare system was openly segregated and African American children were intentionally excluded from care; a form of racial discrimination (Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2002). Throughout history the relationship between America’s child welfare system and African American children and families has been plagued by racism, prejudice, and a disregard for the inherent value of African American families. To date the relationship between African American families and the child welfare system remains precarious at best. The relationship has shifted from one of exclusion to the current state of African American children being overrepresented in the child welfare system; that is disproportionately represented in care. Disproportionality in child welfare is defined using the following two dimensions:

> (a) Disproportionate representation, i.e., the over- or under-representation of minority children in child welfare as compared to their representation in the general population; and (b) disproportionate treatment, i.e., the disparate treatment or services provided to minority children as compare to those provided to similarly-situated Caucasian children (Hill, n.d., para.3).

Today, **(Slide 24)** 34% of children in foster care nationwide are African American, even though African American children constitute only 15% of the nation's youth (GAO, 2007). In California, 26% of children in foster care are African American even though African American children are only 6% of California's child population (Center for Social Services Research, 2008). In Fresno County, African American children represent 15% of children in foster care even though African American children constitute only 5% of Fresno County's child population (Fresno County DCFS, 2008). In addition to the disproportionality, or overrepresentation of African American children in child welfare, it has been well established that African American children and families experience disparate treatment (Drake et al., 2009; Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2008).

Disparities in Child Welfare

(Slide 25) The term *disparity* in child welfare means "unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a nonminority" (Hill, 2006, p. 3). In Billingsley and Giovannoni's (1972) seminal book, *Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare*, the child welfare system's treatment of Black children is described as discriminatory and inequitable. Significant inequities existed in the child welfare system in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The inequities that existed were:

- Public agencies served a larger proportion of Black children than did voluntary agencies,
- There were inequities in the distribution of services in both public and private sectors, but they were even greater in the private agencies than in the public agencies,
- Foster home placements were more heavily relied upon for Black than for White children, and
- Adoption and institutional placements were more frequently given to White than to Black children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

It is difficult to understand how some 30 years later inequities, also known as disparities, continue to exist in the delivery of child welfare services to African American children and families. **(Slide 26)** Research shows that African American children:

- Are more likely to be separated from their parents and placed in foster care,
- Remain in foster care longer,
- Receive inferior services
- **(Slide 27)** Are more likely to remain in foster care,
- Receive less desirable placements than White children,
- Are more likely to be reported and substantiated for child maltreatment, and
- Are less likely to be reunited with their families (Hill, 2004; 2006; Roberts, 2002).

(Slide 28) The causes of disparities in service delivery as well as the disproportionate representation of African American children in the child welfare system have been debated for several years. Leading scholars in the field have determined that disparities and disproportionate representation of African American children in the child welfare system can be attributed to multiple disadvantages that are social, economic, and attitudinal in nature (Drake et al., 2009; Roberts, 2008). Specific factors leading to disproportionality in the child welfare system include parent and family risk factors, community risk factors, and organization and system bias (Hill, 2006). **(Slide 29)** Parent

and family risk factors include; poverty, unemployment, single-parent status, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other negative social conditions (Drake et al.). These are all factors that are typically prevalent in communities of color. **(Slide 30)** The interplay of parent and family risk factors, institutional racism (Hill, 2004, Roberts, 2002), and organizational and system bias (Jimenez, 2006) come together to create the disparities and disproportionality experienced by African American children and families in the child welfare system.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND BIASED DECISION MAKING

Since it has been established that institutional racism plays a part in the disproportionality and disparities that exist in the child welfare system, it is important to define the concept. **(Slide 31)** Institutional racism refers to “societal forces and policies that intentionally or unintentionally have adverse effects on racial and ethnic groups” (Wedding, 2009, p. 27). Institutional racism has been recognized as a contributing factor to the disproportionality and disparities that exist in the child welfare system. Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) defined institutional or systemic racism as:

> The systemic oppression, subjugation and control of one racial group by another dominant or more powerful racial group, made possible by the manner in which the society is structured. In this society, racism emanates from white institutions, white cultural values and white people. The victims of racism in this society are Black people and other oppressed racial and ethnic minorities (p. 8).

This definition acknowledges the unconscious nature of racism. **(Slide 32)** Well-intentioned people, unconsciously and without malice, can engage in practices that

have negative effects on African American children and their families. Wedding states "Colorblindness and stereotyping allow individuals and institutions to apply and create rules that result in racist outcomes" (p. 29). **(Slide 33)** It is imperative for child welfare workers to understand institutional racism and bias and remain vigilant as colorblind practices of "not seeing color" can be damaging to families of color. Ignoring the race and culture of a family impacts the ability of a child welfare worker to recognize the individual needs of a particular family. **(Slide 34)** It is also important to recognize the implicit stereotyping, bias, and prejudice that impact beliefs and get infused into child welfare laws, customs, and social practices to produce intentional and unintentional inequalities that result in the disproportionality and disparities seen in child welfare today (Wedding).

FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

For over 30 years the child welfare system has attempted to address the existence of disproportionality and disparity that exists. In California, statewide efforts have been under way to achieve a fair and equitable child welfare system. **(Slide 35)** Fairness and equity is defined as the

> modification of policies, procedures and practices, and expansion of the availability of community resources and supports to ensure that all children and families (including those of diverse backgrounds and those with special needs) will obtain similar benefit from child welfare interventions and attain equally positive outcomes regardless of the community in which they live (California Social Work Education Center, 2009, p. 11).

(Slide 36) The term *fairness* implies the absence of bias and *equity* implies the application of justice and conformity to the law in a just and impartial manner (California Social Work Education Center, 2009 p. 11).

KEY FINDINGS

(Slide 37) A research study was conducted to examine the salient features and effects of the cultural broker approach on the provision child welfare services to African American families in Fresno, California. To gain a multidimensional perspective of the approach, four groups of interviewees were included in the research sample. The first was the cultural broker group, which included individuals who had served in this capacity during 2007-2008. The second was comprised of 20 families who had cultural brokers to help them through the child welfare system, and the third was comprised of 20 families who did not have cultural brokers. All families were parents of African American children involved with the child welfare system during 2007-2008. The fourth group was comprised of DCFS social workers who interacted with cultural brokers who had been assigned to families in their caseload. (Refer to Appendix A for full demographic profile of the cultural brokers and social workers.)

Most of the families interviewed in each group were single-parent families who resided in high poverty neighborhoods. The majority of these neighborhoods were concentrated in three primary ZIP Codes (See Appendix B). The majority of these families became involved with child welfare due to allegations of neglect. The demographic characteristics of these families are consistent with research findings in which poverty is a predominant feature (Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2008). Table 1 summarizes

the demographic data for the two groups of families who participated in the study. Appendix C shows a more complete demographic description of family participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Family Participants

Demographic characteristics	Research findings	
Family group	**Families with cultural brokers**	**Families without cultural brokers**
Single-parent household	80%	90%
Gender of parent	85% Female	100% Female
High-poverty areas	100%	100%

In addition to the demographic characteristics of families interviewed, data was collected regarding the number of children per household at a given point in time. The findings revealed that the largest percentage (40%) of families who were assigned a cultural broker had four or more children. In contrast, of the families who were not assigned a cultural broker, only 10% had four or five children per family and no family had six or more children. Table 2 offers a summary of the number of children per family for each of the point-in-time samples of family groups in the study. Refer to Appendix C for a complete demographic profile of the families.

Table 2: Number of Children Per Family

Family group	# of Children per family					
	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Families with cultural brokers	30%	15%	15%	5%	10%	25%
Families without cultural brokers	25%	25%	40%	5%	5%	0%

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

Many African Americans would argue that racism and oppression, either overt or covert, are still present today. They view the under- or overrepresentation and differential treatment of their families and communities by today's institutions as evidence of this argument. This situation continues to fuel distrust, anger, and suspicion among African American community members toward societal institutions. For child welfare policymakers, administrators, and social workers, there must be a better appreciation, understanding, and acknowledgement of the African American's cultural worldview that is shaped by history and ongoing societal mistreatment.

Most families who participated in this study were from single-parent households living in poverty whose children were removed due to neglect. Multiple factors must be carefully weighed by social workers when making difficult decisions about child safety and well-being. **(Slide 40)** Social workers must ask themselves whether in their efforts to achieve child safety and well-being the best decision is to remove children from their families and place them in unfamiliar environments (that are often culturally different than their own) where they then expect them to thrive. Poverty does not equal neglect. It may be better to assist and support families in learning how to better provide for and nurture their children with what they have so that children can safely remain in their families and neighborhoods.

(Slide 41) Careful consideration must be given to factors that contribute to decisions that lead to the removal of African American children from their families. Social workers must regularly conduct self-examinations and seek supervision to

evaluate for the possible presence of conscious or unconscious racism in their child welfare practice and decision-making processes. They need to examine their own beliefs and biases in order to address decisions that may contribute to disproportionality and disparity. Child welfare practice must focus on strengthening and preserving parents' efforts to be better parents.

When making decisions about child removal from their families and about foster care placement, social workers must ask key questions such as:

- What factors led to this situation?
- What risk factors are present?
- What does this family need?
- What cultural and family strengths are present?
- What support system is available to this family?
- Can a child safety and well-being plan be developed with this family?
- What support, resources, and services does the family need?

Activity II-1: Recognizing Bias in Child Welfare Service Delivery

Purpose: To give participants an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the nature of bias in child welfare practice and decision-making on an individual and institutional level as well as the role bias plays in contributing to the disproportionality and disparities that exist in child welfare.

Instructions: It is suggested that participants engage in an experiential exercise that includes small-group discussions for the purpose of completing a case assessment and service plan. It is recommended that the case scenario accurately depict the individual and systemic issues that frequently go unnoticed, but have the potential of systemically contributing to disproportionality. The scenario should be representative of an actual family case, decision-making practices, and institutional factors specific to the participants' respective agencies/counties.

Process: The participants will engage in a process to identify county-specific issues that typically go undetected and have the potential to contribute to disproportionality and disparities and support the acquisition of desired skills and knowledge.

MODULE III

ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY

(Slide 42)

MODULE III
ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Learning Objectives

This section provides knowledge and an introduction to the growing shift from individual case practice to collaborative, community-based practice. Promising practice models are discussed and key characteristics of these models are presented. The purpose and benefits of community partnership with African American families are addressed as well as the importance of their cultural context and history. Suggested activities and exercises are included and may be customized to better illustrate these concepts and accurately represent county-specific issues while supporting the acquisition of desired knowledge and skills.

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Have knowledge of the growing shift from individual case practice to collaborative, community-based practice;
- Understand the purpose and benefits of community partnership in child welfare practice with African American families;
- Understand the cultural context of African American communities and neighborhoods, and
- Develop skills in establishing partnerships with African American communities.

Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)

I. Ethnic Sensitive and Multicultural Practice

1.2 Student demonstrates self-awareness and the ability to address and overcome personal bias in assessing and working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

1.4 Student recognizes personal knowledge limitations regarding specific groups and seeks consultation and expertise as needed to assess and work effectively with clients.

II. Culturally Competent Child Welfare Practice

2.5 Student demonstrates the ability to collaborate with individuals, groups, community-based organizations, and government agencies to advocate for equitable access to culturally competent resources and services.

III. Core Child Welfare Practice

3.9 Student demonstrates the ability to engage and work with involuntary clients in a manner that includes the exercise of client self-determination.

3.11 Student recognizes the importance of working with biological families, foster families, and kin networks, as well as involving them in assessment and planning strategies.

3.12 Student understands the inherent power differential in working with clients and can effectively manage and balance that power.

3.13 Student demonstrates the ability and self awareness to assess his or her own value conflicts or emotional responses to clients, coworkers, and situations and seeks consultation when needed.

3.15 Student is aware of forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, nontraditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services.

IV. Advanced Child Welfare Practice

4.3 Student works collaboratively with biological families, foster families, and kin networks, involving them in assessment and planning and helping them access services and develop coping strategies.

V. Human Behavior and the Social Environment

5.3 Student demonstrates understanding of the potential effects of poverty, bias, inequity, and other forms of oppression on human behavior and social systems.

5.4 Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics.

5.5 Student demonstrates understanding of how the strengths perspective and empowerment approaches can positively influence growth, development, and behavior change.

VII. Workplace Management

7.5 Student is able to work respectfully and effectively with clients and agency personnel in an environment characterized by human diversity.

7.8 Student understands the purpose of outcome measurement and is able to seek client, organization, and community feedback for purposes of monitoring practice, service refinement, and outcome evaluation.

7.9 Student is able to utilize collaborative skills and techniques to enhance service quality in organizational settings.

VIII. Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration

8.1 Student understands how professional values, ethics, and standards influence decision-making and planning in public child welfare practice

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors

Time allocation: Approximately 3 hours

Introduction

- Introduction of trainer(s)
- Brief introduction to section content

Materials Needed

- LCD projector
- PowerPoint slides #42-#61
- Handouts
- Markers and flip chart with "post-it" adhesive back for mounting on walls
- Handout of PowerPoint slides #42-#61.

GROWING SHIFT TO COLLABORATIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE

(Slide 43) The prevalence of racial disproportionality and disparity in child welfare is well documented and has led to a nationwide call to action to reform child welfare practice in order to reduce the number of African Americans in the child welfare

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

system and to eliminate their disparate treatment. In efforts to combat disproportionality, there is a growing trend in child welfare to shift practice from an individual case practice approach to a community-based approach that promotes collaboration with community leaders and families. (Bass, Shields, & Behrman, 2004; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2003; Roberts, 2008; Usher & Wildfire, 2003; White, 2008).

(Slide 44) An example of this shift can be found in one such approach; the Family to Family Initiative that is funded through the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Family to Family Initiative is based on four key principles:

- “a child’s safety is paramount,
- children belong in families,
- families need strong communities,
- public child welfare systems need partnerships with the community and with other systems to achieve strong outcomes for children” (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, Introduction section, para. 2).

This initiative provides public child welfare agencies and their communities throughout the country with funding and technical support to help reform child welfare practice. It is the value of strong partnerships with the communities in which families live that is at the core of this growing shift. It is also the belief that within these communities are strengths on which to build a network of service and support in order to achieve child safety and permanence.

THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

(Slide 45) Public child welfare agencies are understaffed, underfunded, have limited resources, and face public outcry. Because of these circumstances, agencies

are recognizing that they can no longer do the work of child protection and welfare alone. There are a number of emerging practice models that are currently underway throughout the country that hold promise for reducing disproportionality, eliminating disparity, and achieving child safety and permanence through community partnerships (Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2003; Clark, Buchanan, & Legters, 2008; White, 2008). **(Slide 46)** These models hold several characteristics in common. Among them are goals of:

- Improved outcomes,
- Emphasis on strength-based strategies,
- Collaboration with families and communities,
- Innovation in family engagement,
- Shared power and accountability,
- Practice transparency, and
- Fiscal reform (Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2003; White, 2008).

(Slide 47) Several of these practice models adopted the Family to Family Initiative both as a framework for reshaping their infrastructure and as a source of needed funding. All of them employ some type of formalized partnership between the child welfare agency staff, the community, and neighborhood leaders as a means of community engagement in the form of task forces, coalitions, or steering committees to address racial inequities (Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005; Center for the Study of Social Policy 2003; Clark et al., 2008; White, 2008). For example; the King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality was formed in King County, Washington (Clark et al.). The Racial Disparities Workgroup was established in Wake County, North

Carolina and includes partnerships with the local faith community as part of its membership (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2006).

Another key component of these reforms was the development of innovative strategies for engagement with families who are involved with child welfare. This component was based on the premise that in order to work successfully with families, you need to know and understand them from their cultural perspective and that one needs to understand the lived experience of those served in order to best meet their needs. Time devoted to family engagement increases the likelihood of developing a relationship marked by understanding and trust. One such strategy is used in Polk County, Iowa where the Department of Human Services employs a former client to help engage families in their own change process (White, 2008). Talking Circles are used in Native American communities to convey their stories, cultural values, and world views in Ramsey County, Minnesota (Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005). Another strategy in Ramsey County is the use of cultural consultants, who are well respected individuals in their respective cultures, who provide information regarding cultural perspectives, history, issues, and concerns. Cultural consultants represent African American, Latino, Hmong, and Native American families and communities (Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005).

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

(Slide 48) Most research and child welfare practice have characteristically been deficit based, comparing African American culture to White culture, which is the typical standard of measure (Hill, 2006; Murry et al., 2004; Roberts, 2008; Rockymore, 2006).

Consequently, the strength and resiliency with which African American families have survived slavery, institutional racism, and disproportionality and disparate treatment have gone unnoticed (Murray et al., Rockymore). **(Slide 49)** Gibson and McCroy (2004) identify values that are central to African American culture:

- Importance of family and community,
- Support for multigenerational and interdependent kinship systems,
- Valuing the helping tradition,
- Spirituality,
- Extended family and kinship system of help,
- Strong education and work ethic,
- Interconnectedness,
- Elders as keepers and maintainers of the culture and history.

Many of these values are reflected in the practice of shared child rearing and the importance of spirituality found in African American culture.

***Shared Child Rearing* (Slide 50)**

The values of importance of family and community and support of kinship systems are embedded in African American practices of shared child rearing. Shared or community child rearing has a long history in African American culture and is considered a response to the conditions of slavery, economic hardship, and privation among families (Gibson & McCroy, 2004; Jimenez, 2006). When parents were unable to care for their children, it was customary for extended family members or community members to take on child care responsibilities. Grandmothers often assumed this role. Values of helping each other and of having an extended family and kinship system of help can be found throughout African American history. These practices led to a kinship

system that offered a network of support for struggling parents. This practice of family helping family remains strong today and is a core feature of the Family to Family Initiative.

***Spirituality* (Slide 51)**

Another source of strength and support in African American culture is spirituality. A common belief among African Americans is that faith will bring them through times of hardship and crisis (Rockymore, 2006). The church plays a prominent role in African American communities and promotes interconnectedness in the community. It is a source of strength and unity where members are viewed as extended family that are there to support and offer help to one another. The neighborhood church also serves as a central meeting place in most communities.

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

(Slide 52) In 2003, Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) adopted the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family (F2F) Initiative to assist in the redesign of service delivery to families involved with child welfare. An impetus for adopting Family to Family was DCFS' recognition of high disproportionality rates in Fresno County. A goal of Family to Family was to identify and initiate new ways to serve neighborhoods noted for high rates of referrals and entry into the child welfare system. One of the four strategies implemented as part of the Family to Family initiative was *Building Community Partnerships.*

(Slide 53) A Family to Family community collaborative was established in a West Fresno community, a high-poverty area heavily populated by African American families.

This collaborative was known as the *06 Collaborative*, representing the community's ZIP code. Through this collaborative, DCFS sought to learn from community members about the experiences of families living in their neighborhoods. Members were particularly sensitive to the disproportionate representation of their neighborhood children in the county's child welfare system. **(Slide 54)** They perceived their neighborhood children were more likely to be placed in long-term foster care or the parents of these children were more likely to experience termination of parental rights. DCFS recognized the leadership of this group of concerned community members and invited them and other residents of the community to attend meetings arranged in their community to begin discussions with top administrators around these concerns.

(Slide 55) One major result of the *06 Collaborative* was the establishment of a pool of *community representatives* who were invited by Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to attend Team Decision-Making meetings on behalf of families and their children referred to or in the child welfare system. These community representatives functioned as a community resource to inform families of available resources in their communities and served as a support to them during Team Decision Making meetings at DCFS. Over time, these community representatives evolved into the role of *cultural brokers*, a more formalized and specialized approach to advocacy and assistance to families.

The purpose of the study upon which this curriculum rests was to examine

- the salient features of and challenges associated with the cultural broker approach,

- the effects of cultural brokers on the quality of families' experiences and services resulting from working with cultural brokers, and
- the differences in safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes in families working with cultural brokers compared to those who did not received the services of a cultural broker.

KEY FINDINGS

In order to learn more about the origins of the cultural broker approach and its initial implementation, the cultural brokers were individually interviewed and asked to define what a cultural broker is, how the approach evolved, and to describe what contributes to effective broker-agency partnerships.

Incentives for Brokering

(Slide 56) Several factors prompted them to become cultural brokers; primarily observing the needs of families in their African-American community, their own personal background, and witnessing injustice that occurred in their community and the emotional effect this had on them. Their community membership and profession backgrounds (e.g., social worker, pastor, drug and alcohol treatment provider, teacher, parent educator) ideally positioned them to assume the role of cultural broker. Their descriptions of what prompted community members to engage in cultural brokering and the importance of this role points to their need to do something about the long-simmering conflict between their community and Fresno's child welfare system. Conflict was expressed as a sense of injustice and a sense of pain stemming from historic unfair treatment by a number of local institutions. Adding to the conflict was the sense of powerlessness felt by families and community members who felt they could not control culturally conflicting child welfare outcomes, such as the fast-tracked adoptions of

African American children. These experiences fueled their involvement with the Family to Family initiative in their neighborhood and the formation of the *06 Collaborative* to address disproportionality and disparity.

***Evolution of the Cultural Brokers* (Slide 57)**

Prior to the Family to Family Initiative and to becoming brokers, a group of concerned members of a West Fresno community were already responding to the needs of families in their community, some of whom were involved with child welfare. These families had sought out these community members either as members of their local church (New Birth Evangelistic Church) or because they were known to have professional experience with the child welfare agency. This organic response to community need coincided with the beginning of Fresno County DCFS's Family to Family Initiative and the development of the *06 Collaborative*. One of the strategies for the Family to Family initiative was *Building Community Partnerships*. This effort provided an infrastructure for this organic process and functioned as a catalyst for merging agency and community concerns about disproportionality and disparity. Members of the original group organized themselves as community representatives whose role was to offer support to families and serve as a resource to them. They attended Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings at the invitation of DCFS administrators and began to assist families, including several with which they had already developed a relationship, in navigating the child welfare system.

Effective Broker-Agency Partnerships (Slide 58)

The brokers cited several factors that contributed to the establishment of the *06 Collaborative* and their partnership with Fresno County DCFS. Among them were:

- There was a cohesive group of African American community leaders who were concerned about community families involved with child welfare and were committed to seek change,
- DCFS administrative leaders possessed an awareness and concern about disproportionality,
- Both community and DCFS administrative leaders knew that there were concentrated areas of disproportionality with high rates of referrals and entry into the child welfare system; the 06 area being one of them,
- DCFS leadership was committed to addressing this issue, and
- DCFS was willing to learn about disparate treatment of African American families from community leaders and develop new ideas for serving them.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

(Slide 59) Child welfare agencies operating in isolation and with a strict reliance on traditional institutional norms and values have proven disastrous for African American families and communities (Hill, 2006; McRoy, 2002; Roberts, 2002, 2008). Understanding this, Fresno County's DCFS was willing to take a risk and pursue a vision of community engagement based upon the principles of Family to Family.

The African American community in West Fresno responded to DCFS's efforts to reach out to them and was willing to take an active role in improving the safety, permanence, and well-being of their children. They were willing to help close the cultural divide between DCFS and their community that had existed for far too many years.

(Slide 60) Concerned African American community members in Fresno County had independently formed as a group to respond to the needs of families involved with

child welfare. This indigenous group gave voice to the needs of their community and were seen by DCFS as a community strength from which the agency could learn.

The initial stages in the development of the *06 Collaborative* demonstrate key factors in beginning community partnerships. Both the agency and community members recognized the high rate of African American families entering the child welfare system. There was a shared concern and a mutual goal of reducing these numbers.

DCFS leadership demonstrated a willingness to learn about the lived experience of families from respected and trusted community leaders in the African American community. This participatory approach led to the beginning of a shared partnership and collaboration between the community and the DCFS.

(Slide 61) These findings indicate that identifying and reaching out to respected leaders in the African American community can lead to the development of collaborative partnerships that can serve to address key concerns. Such partnerships lend themselves to shared responsibility, decision-making, and ultimately, accountability for the safety, well being, and permanence of children within their own environment.

Activity III-1

Purpose: Participants will gain a better understanding of the benefits of shared decision-making and expand their awareness of the many benefits of community partnerships in child welfare practice.

Instructions: It is suggested that participants engage in small-group table talk discussions focused on the completion of a sentence related to their fears or concerns around agency-community partnerships. Participants are divided into small groups. Each group is asked to select a recorder for the group and select one of the following two sentences.

- I am concerned about community members sharing in the decision-making process on cases assigned to me because I fear________.

- In order for me to feel comfortable collaborating with community partners when making child welfare case decisions, I need________,

Each group member thinks about how to complete the sentence. Each group then engages is a conversation based on each member's response. All members should be allowed the opportunity to share their responses. The recorder notes major themes that arise during this conversation without identifying specific members. For example, a major theme might be, "fear of being blamed if something goes wrong in the case" or "I need to be able to trust a community partner if I am going to share decision-making with them." Themes are then shared with the larger group in a way that does not identify individual participants' responses, but captures the essence of the participants' needs and concerns.

It is also suggested that participants engage in an activity that requires them to develop a community presentation for their agency that will engage community partners and encourage their participation in an agency-community effort to address a specific issue in child welfare, such as disproportionality.

Participants remain in their small groups and are asked to think about initiatives or issues that they are currently addressing in their agency that might benefit from community partner collaboration. Participants are then asked to develop a brief presentation that would be delivered to their community partners for the purpose of inviting them to work together with child welfare agency staff to address the issue selected. Each group is then asked to deliver their presentation to the audience.

Process: Participants will engage in a small group process to identify county-specific issues that impact their ability to establish community partnerships and support the acquisition of desired skills and knowledge to encourage the development of agency/community partnerships.

MODULE IV

THE CULTURAL BROKER APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

(Slide 62)

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

SECTION IV
THE CULTURAL BROKER APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Learning Objectives

This section highlights how engagement with the African American community can improve the quality of African American families' experiences in child welfare. The use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement is introduced. Key features and challenges of this approach are presented from the perspectives of cultural brokers, social workers, and families. Advanced knowledge and skills in developing partnerships with community cultural brokers and developing relationships with African American families are presented. Suggested activities are included that may be customized to accurately reflect county-specific issues that illustrate this approach and facilitate skill development.

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Develop an understanding of the African American community's perceptions of child welfare,
- Have knowledge of cultural brokers as an approach to engagement with African American communities,
- Develop skills in partnering with cultural brokers as a means of engaging African American families to promote safety and permanency,
- Have knowledge of how the use of cultural brokers can improve the quality of African American families' experiences with child welfare, and
- Obtain knowledge and understanding of how cultural brokers can be used as an effective strategy for addressing disproportionality and disparities.

Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)

I. Ethnic Sensitive and Multicultural Practice

1.1 Student demonstrates respect, fairness, and cultural competence in assessing, working with, and making service decisions regarding clients of diverse backgrounds

1.2 Student demonstrates self-awareness and the ability to address and overcome personal bias in assessing and working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

1.4 Student recognizes personal knowledge limitations regarding specific groups and seeks consultation and expertise as needed to assess and work effectively with clients.

II. Culturally Competent Child Welfare Practice

2.1 Student demonstrates knowledge of legal, socioeconomic, and psychosocial issues facing immigrants, refugees, and minority groups and is able to devise culturally competent and effective interventions.

2.5 Student demonstrates the ability to collaborate with individuals, groups, community-based organizations, and government agencies to advocate for equitable access to culturally competent resources and services.

III. Core Child Welfare Practice

3.3 Student is able to identify the major family, health, and social factors contributing to child abuse and neglect as well as positive factors that act to preserve the family and protect the child.

3.8 Student demonstrates the ability to respectfully relate to, engage, and assess family members from a strengths-based "person-in-environment" perspective, and to develop and implement a case plan on this assessment.

3.11 Student recognizes the importance of working with biological families, foster families, and kin networks, as well as involving them in assessment and planning strategies.

3.12 Student understands the inherent power differential in working with clients and can effectively manage and balance that power.

3.13 Student demonstrates the ability and self-awareness to assess his or her own value conflicts or emotional responses to clients, coworkers, and situations and seeks consultation when needed.

3.15 Student is aware of forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, nontraditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services.

3.17 Student understands the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and practices accordingly.

3.18 Student understands the dual responsibility of the child welfare social worker to protect children and to provide services that support families as caregivers.

IV. Advanced Child Welfare Practice

4.3 Student works collaboratively with biological families, foster families, and kin networks, involving them in assessment and planning and helping them access services and develop coping strategies.

V. Human Behavior and the Social Environment

5.3 Student demonstrates understanding of the potential effects of poverty, bias, inequity, and other forms of oppression on human behavior and social systems.

5.4 Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics.

5.5 Student demonstrates understanding of how the strengths perspective and empowerment approaches can positively influence growth, development, and behavior change.

VII. Workplace Management

7.1 Student is able to identify the strengths and limitations of an organization, including its cultural competence and commitment to human diversity, and can assess the effects of these factors on services for children and families.

7.2 Student understands client and system problems and strengths from the perspectives of participants in a multidisciplinary team and can effectively integrate the positive contributions of each member.

7.5 Student is able to work respectfully and effectively with clients and agency personnel in an environment characterized by human diversity.

7.9 Student is able to utilize collaborative skills and techniques to enhance service quality in organizational settings.

VIII. Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration

8.1 Student understands how professional values, ethics, and standards influence decision-making and planning in public child welfare practice.

8.5 Student understands how leaders/managers use the collaborative process for the purpose of planning, formulating policy, and implementing services.

8.6 Student demonstrates knowledge of how organizational structure, climate, and culture affect service effectiveness, worker productivity, and morale.

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors

Time allocation: Approximately 4 hours

Introduction

- Introduction of trainer(s)
- Brief introduction to section content

Materials Needed

- LCD projector
- PowerPoint slides 62-92
- Handouts
- Markers and flip chart with "post-it" adhesive back for mounting on walls
- Handout of PowerPoint slides 62-92.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD WELFARE

In order to successfully engage the African American community in the effort to improve child welfare practice, there must be a clear understanding of the African American community's perception of the child welfare system. Roberts' recent research (2008) has shed light on the attitudes and perceptions held by the African American community about the child welfare system. Her work addresses concentrated child welfare involvement in African American neighborhoods. While conducting interviews with residents in a predominantly African American neighborhood on Chicago's south

side, Roberts discovered some revealing perceptions about the child welfare agency. Everyone who participated in the study either had a friend, relative, or personal involvement with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

(Slide 63) The predominant belief was that the main function of DCFS was to remove children from their homes (Roberts, 2008). Most of the participants in the study expressed a negative perception of the child welfare system. In particular, one interviewee stated that "it just seems like they're all about taking the child out of the home" (Roberts, p. 131). Another interviewee stated she would not contact DCFS to seek help for another friend with a substance abuse problem (Roberts). Yet another interviewee stated, "personally, me, just picking up the phone calling DCFS, I couldn't do it. It would be on my conscious knowing that I made the phone call and that this girl would probably never see her kids" (Roberts, p. 132). There was a general sentiment of fear of the child welfare agency.

This sentiment is true for many African American communities across the nation. From June 2006 through June 2007, the United States Government Accountability Office administered a state survey, conducted site visits, interviewed researchers and federal agency officials, conducted a literature review, and analyzed federal legislation and policies to determine why African American children are overrepresented in foster care. Interviewees reported that "Families are fearful and do not seek services because of fear, and distrust which in turn increases the risk of a child's removal" (GAO, 2007, p. 24). In fact, child welfare directors from 28 states reported that this phenomenon was a factor contributing to the entry of African American children into foster care (GAO). It

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was also reported that “African American families’ distrust of the child welfare system stems from their perception that the system is unresponsive to their needs and racially biased against them” (GAO, p. 23).

(Slide 64) There is also a general perception within the African American community that the child welfare system has interfered with natural parent-child relationships as a result of so much concentrated agency involvement (Roberts, 2008). Parental authority is impacted, and the children may even use DCFS as a threat to ward off parental discipline. This theme is shared repeatedly by parents participating in Fresno County’s African American Nurturing Parenting Program. According to M. Jackson (personal communication, January 10, 2010), African American parents feel as though DCFS compromises their authority. When parents begin to incorporate appropriate discipline techniques learned during the course of the African American Nurturing Parenting class, the children would question their parent’s authority and threaten to call the CPS hotline. In Roberts’ study, she also found a similar phenomenon in that some relatives and parents in the African American community would call DCFS to report their children’s misconduct in an effort to resolve parent-child conflicts.

Another byproduct of concentrated child welfare involvement and the negative perceptions of child welfare in African American communities is the common practice of using DCFS as a means of retaliating against others in the community. False accusations of child abuse are made for the purpose of seeking retribution, revenge,

and/or retaliation between friends, neighbors, and in some cases relatives, in order to solve problems or seek recrimination (Roberts, 2008).

The impact of concentrated child welfare involvement has a dramatic effect on the norms that govern family, neighborhood, and community relationships. As child welfare agencies begin to embark on efforts to engage the African American community they must make an effort to become aware of entrenched perceptions within the African American community and be prepared to invest adequate time and energy in developing trusting relationships. Child welfare agencies must recognize that the key to building trust is consistent behavior over time. Child welfare agencies must engage the African American community in the spirit of sincerity, respect, dignity, and positive regard. This should improve the likelihood of gaining committed community partners to champion the work. Complex issues such as addressing the disproportionality and disparities that exist in the child welfare system require well established partnerships with the child welfare agency and the impacted communities.

CULTURAL BROKER APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Cultural Broker Theory (Slide 65)

The concept of cultural brokering refers to a process in which someone serves as a go-between, a bridge, or middleman between two diverse groups (Gertz, 1960; Jezewski, 1995; Singh, McKay, & Singh, 1999). Cultural brokering can be traced back in history to first encounters between cultures (Gertz; National Center for Cultural Competence, 2004). The term cultural broker was first used by anthropologists when they observed those who served as mediators or negotiators between governments and

the societies they governed (Gertz; Jezewski; National Center for Cultural Competence). Cultural brokering is well documented in the health care and medical literature where it is viewed as a valuable approach in health care delivery to culturally diverse and marginalized populations (Jezewski; National Center for Cultural Competence). Jezewski (1990) defines cultural brokering as "the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change" (p. 497).

Jezewski (1990, 1995) and Jezewski & Sotnik (2005) have done considerable work developing the concept of *Culture Brokering Theory* and its application to nursing and other health-related services delivered to populations with limited political and economic power. **(Slide 66)** Cultural Brokering Theory incorporates key factors that involve conflict and institutional breakdown that require eventual conflict resolution between institutions and marginalized groups and the support for cultural brokering. Jezewski's theory is comprised of several components and is explained in the context of an intervening condition that leads to conflict between a patient and healthcare provider. For example, if healthcare provider recommendations for treatment collide with patient cultural beliefs, values, or traditions, this may lead to conflict and patient noncompliance (Jezewski, 1995). In Cultural Brokering Theory, this situation is assessed to determine if cultural brokering is needed. If such a need is determined, then intervention is provided by developing a trusting relationship between the nurse and the patient. The nurse offers the patient assistance such as advocacy, negotiation, mediation, and information-sharing in an effort to establish a connection between the patient and the health care

provider (Jezewski, 1995). The goal of culturing brokering, therefore, is to reach a resolution to the conflict between the patient and healthcare provider. Another key component of this theory is what Jezewski (1995) refers to as "staying connected" (p. 23). Staying connected involves linking the patient to the healthcare system and keeping them connected to this system in order to meet their needs.

The National Center for Cultural Competence (2004), housed at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, developed its national Cultural Broker Project (CBP) using the work of Jezewski and others and adopted Jezewski's (1990) definition of Cultural Brokering. The project also adopted the following principles for Cultural Brokering in healthcare settings:

- Extension of concept of self-determination beyond individual to the community;
- Communities have an inherent ability to recognize own problems;
- Respect or community engagement inferring:
    - Communities determine own needs,
    - Community members are full partners in decision-making,
    - Communities should economically benefit from collaboration,
    - Communities should benefit from transfer of knowledge and skills;
- Cultural brokering honors and respects cultural differences within communities;
- Cultural brokering is community driven;
- Cultural brokering is provided in a safe, nonjudgmental, confidential manner; and
- Cultural brokering involves delivering services in settings accessible and tailored to the needs of the community

The CBP currently encompasses a number of health and medical programs that utilize cultural brokers.

Cultural brokering is also documented in mental health literature. Singh et al., (1999) define cultural brokers as “people acculturated in one or more minority cultures and the mainstream culture” (p. 3) who are able to bridge the two cultures for the purpose of facilitating accurate communication. Although the term cultural broker is rarely found in the social work literature, it is consistent with the profession’s work and commitment to cultural competency. Additionally, many features of the cultural broker approach are aligned with community-based practice approaches found in the child welfare literature (Rycraft & Dettlaff, 2009; Usher & Wildfire, 2003).

***Cultural Broker Approach* (Slide 67)**

Cultural brokering and the importance of this role pointed to the need for the African American community to do something about the long-simmering conflict between their community and Fresno County’s child welfare system. The community felt this conflict was expressed as a sense of injustice and pain stemming from historic unfair treatment by a number of local institutions. Adding to the conflict was the sense of powerlessness felt by families and community members who felt they could not control racially based child welfare outcomes, such as the fast tracked adoptions of African American children. Cultural brokering was envisioned by the Fresno *06 Collaborative* as a response to this conflict and the disproportionate representation of African American children in Fresno County Child Welfare Services.

The leading proponent and visionary of the cultural broker approach was Margaret Jackson. Ms. Jackson was a member of the *06 Collaborative* and a nationally recognized expert on disproportionality and cultural competency. In 2006, the cultural

broker approach was developed in Fresno using the Georgetown University Center's Cultural Broker model and implemented for use in training the original group of concerned community leaders operating as community representatives. Ms. Jackson assumed the leadership for developing the approach and the required 42-hour Cultural Broker Training. **(Slide 68)** She and the original cultural broker team delivered the training to incoming trainees.

Cultural brokers were recruited by the group based on the following qualifications:

- Must be a regular attendee of neighborhood collaborative meetings,
- Must have a basic understanding of the child welfare system,
- Must be a family TDM Community Representative for at least 6 months, and
- Must have the capacity to work with ethnically diverse families.

Those selected received the Cultural Broker Training as well as training on the Family to Family Initiative, the DCFS child welfare system, and juvenile dependency court processes. **(Slide 69)** The role of the cultural broker was to act as a liaison between the family and the agency. The cultural broker role was defined as:

- Educating the family about DCFS processes,
- Providing support to the family by attending TDM meetings with the social worker,
- Encouraging the family to work with the social worker,
- Educating the social worker on family cultural traditions and values,
- Educating the social worker on family needs, and
- Assisting the social worker by providing written reports or information about the family that would be used in agency decision-making processes and court reports (Jackson, n.d.).

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

(Slide 70) DCFS administrative leaders met regularly with the cultural brokers to learn from the experiences that families in their community faced in the child welfare system that led to disproportionality and disparities. The process required many meetings where administrators learned of mistakes they were making in their efforts to protect children. These meetings demonstrated consistency and commitment to tackle disproportionality and disparity, and over time, helped to establish a mutually trusting relationship between the agency and the brokers.

SOCIAL WORKERS PARTNERING WITH CULTURAL BROKERS

(Slide 71) Despite the support of the Family to Family 06 Collaborative and the DCFS leadership, establishing trust and acceptance with social workers within the child welfare system was difficult. Adding to the difficulty, brokers stated there was little organizational preparation and readiness by DCFS for the implementation of cultural brokering. Their role ambiguity with social workers was evident. Not surprising, when cultural brokering was implemented, brokers felt they were treated as outsiders, regarded poorly, and were subjects of agency rumors and misperceptions. **(Slide 72)** Some social workers stated they had “no idea” or needed more information about cultural brokering and could have benefitted from cultural brokering training. In contrast, some social workers felt they were being told what to do by the brokers. Social workers voiced concerns about sharing power and decision-making because of their responsibilities to the courts. Efforts to resolve conflict, build trust, and develop relationships between social workers and cultural brokers was a long, painful process that in some cases negatively impacted the families being served at the time. **(Slide 73)**

However, over time many of these relationships strengthened through the efforts of brokers to better understand the positions of social workers and of social workers learning how cultural brokers could help them and African American families. As trusting relationships grew between social workers and cultural brokers, they functioned better as a team. In many cases they achieved greater understanding of their respective roles and social workers were more confident in sharing power and decision-making with cultural brokers regarding family situations. The families benefitted by feeling more supported and gaining a better understanding of the child welfare system.

As stated earlier, this study is based on data that was collected from four groups of subjects: cultural brokers, families who received cultural broker services, families who did not receive cultural broker services, and social workers who worked with cultural brokers assigned to families on their caseload. A series of interview questions was developed to gain information about the cultural broker approach, challenges encountered, and the effects of cultural brokering on family experiences and services. The questions elicited rich data about the characteristics of cultural brokering, the struggles and successes the cultural brokers experienced, and how families experienced cultural brokering.

KEY FINDINGS

The Role of Cultural Brokers

(Slide 74) Cultural brokers described themselves as a bridge, advocate, support, and voice for families. Being a bridge involves mediating relationships and functioning as a *go-between* for families and the agency. As advocates they address the *power*

differential between the agency and family and strive to *even the playing field between these two systems.* Cultural brokering provides a sense of security and offers a voice for families.

(Slide 75) Parents defined the cultural broker as someone who helps them navigate through the child welfare system and helps to *get kids back*. A cultural broker explains agency processes, reinforces the importance of abiding by court orders and social worker recommendations, and explains the consequences if parents do not comply. The cultural broker was described as a liaison or *go between* for families with social workers or the court and an *interface with client and agency*. Some parents described the cultural broker as an advocate who *spoke for me* and understood the African American culture.

(Slide 76) Most social workers indicated that the cultural brokers were there to support and/or help the families. They were viewed by several as mediators between the family and the child welfare system. Social workers further described them as *culturally aware* members of the family's community and ethnic group and someone who advocates for families. All of the social workers expected the cultural brokers would assist, support, or help in some way. Many social workers expected cultural brokers to focus their efforts on families, while others indicated expectations for the cultural brokers to work primarily with them. Workers also expected the brokers would facilitate family understanding and communication and assist in conflict resolution. Table 3 summarizes the perspectives of the cultural broker role by each of the respondent groups.

Table 3: Cultural Broker Role as Perceived by Each Group (Slide 77)

Cultural brokers	Families	Social workers
Advocate Go-between Support Mediator Bridge	Advocate Go-between Liaison	Advocate Support Mediator

***Characteristics of Effective Brokering With Families* (Slide 78)**

Cultural brokers stated that compassion, humility, patience, transparency, open-mindedness, and respectfulness were important characteristics to possess. They also reported that sound communication skills are necessary, including the ability to be honest and straightforward with families and the agency, good listening skills, and the ability to talk in ways that convey you are approachable. Brokers also need to stay client-focused, yet maintain strong interpersonal boundaries, framed as *knowing when to say when.* They need to be willing to not be right, resist biases toward a family, and be strategic about where they can have the most impact. They also need knowledge of the child welfare system. Finally, cultural brokers need to advocate with endurance and tenacity, *think outside the box* and have the ability to *see the vision and believe in it*.

Social workers were asked what knowledge or skills a cultural broker needs in order to work effectively with families. Almost all of the social workers reported knowledge of DCFS, the court system, or child welfare system processes as important skills. They further reported that cultural brokers need to be compassionate, patient, understanding, and supportive of families. Finally, cultural brokers also need to have

understanding of the parent, family, and their culture. Table 4 summarizes the cultural broker knowledge and skills identified by brokers and social workers.

Table 4: Needed Cultural Broker Knowledge and Skills (Slide 79)

Cultural brokers	Social workers
Compassion Patience Sound communication Knowledge of the child welfare system	Compassion Patience Sound communication Knowledge of the child welfare system

***Help Families Received From Cultural Broker* (Slide 80)**

The cultural brokers reported that they help families distinguish between needs and wants. They emphasized the importance of supporting family needs. Forms of support include advocating for families (e.g., writing observations or family profile reports, identifying problematic issues, negotiating best courses of action, focusing on progress made) and attending TDMs or other meetings with them while serving as a role model for them.

Cultural brokers also encourage, educate, and empower families. This may involve devising strategies to help families get their needs met from DCFS or helping families accept *with reservation* what they are told by the DCFS. Additional types of help provided to families are: managing attitudes, acknowledging their vulnerabilities, and showing them how to comply with agency expectations. The cultural brokers also interpret the client's culture and address the concrete needs of the family (e.g., food, transportation, bed), doing *whatever needs to be done, within reason*.

(Slide 81) Almost every parent stated the cultural brokers were very helpful, offering concrete needs (e.g., food, transportation, clothing, assistance with utility bills) and explaining the DCFS system in understandable terms. One parent stated the broker "made things more clear" and that it helped having "someone to vent with." Other families stated the cultural broker helped them by teaching them self-control and to focus on the situation at hand.

Almost all social workers also described the direct or concrete services cultural brokers provided families (e.g., child care, transportation, and food) as the most important services offered by cultural brokers. Knowledge, explanation, and education about the CWS were noted. Table 5 summarizes the help provided to families by cultural brokers as noted by each group.

Table 5: Type of Help Provided by Cultural Brokers to Families (Slide 82)

Cultural brokers	Families	Social workers
Concrete needs Explained child welfare system Attitude management	Concrete needs Explained child welfare system Self-control	Concrete needs Explained child welfare system

Effects on Client Case Outcome **(Slide 83)**

When asked if their efforts had an effect on client case outcomes, cultural brokers had mixed opinions. They indicated that outcomes depended on the social worker and were affected by the complexity of the cases they were assigned. They were assigned cases where "too many factors [were at play] by the time we got involved." This suggests that in complex cases the timing of entry may be too late for a

cultural broker to have a positive impact. However, cultural brokers believed that the support and sense of empowerment they conveyed to families had a positive effect on them. They also thought their impact on the progression of the case through the system was “50-50” at best. The positive impact was highest at the Emergency Response and TDM level, where they had the “opportunity to effect equal weight of voice.”

(Slide 84) When parents were asked if having a cultural broker affected the way their case turned out, the majority of them responded “yes,” citing the broker was helpful and assisted them with reunification or a placement for their child. The remaining parents stated “no” either saying cultural broker presence “didn’t help” or had a “negative” effect on the case outcome. However, the majority of the families thought the cultural brokers “did everything they had to do” and “helped immensely.” When asked to select a response that best describes their experience with a cultural broker, almost all parents selected, “Great! I think everyone should have one.” **(Slide 85)** Similarly, almost all parents without cultural brokers felt they could have benefitted from having someone from the African American community involved in their case, especially with understanding how the child welfare system works. One parent noted, “connecting with one’s culture is always a plus,” and another noted, “having any kind of help is welcomed.” Some added that the ethnicity of a cultural broker doesn’t matter as long as the person “knows what’s going on” at DCFS and can advocate for families.

In order to compare differences on services and help received, both family groups were administered eight identical questions about services received and help

acquired. Services received and help acquired were defined as whether the parent received: services (e.g., treatment services, parenting), support, advocacy, and information they needed, and assistance with DCFS, police, the district attorney, and the courts. **(Slide 86)** The mean rank scores for 7 of the 8 questions were higher for families with cultural broker services. Of these, the rank score differences on three of the questions was statistically significant: (a) received support needed (z = - 2.158, p <.05), (b) received advocacy needed (z = -2.622, p<01), and (c) help with the court (z = -.112, p<.05).

For both family groups, recurrence of maltreatment, length of time to case closure, termination of placement episode, type of placement and number of placement moves, and social worker visitations with children and parent interviewed for the study were examined retrospectively using county administrative data. These analyses revealed no differences between these two groups.

Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making **(Slide 87)**

Social workers were asked questions regarding collaboration and shared decision-making with cultural brokers and families. Collaboration with cultural brokers was described as “valuable,” “appreciated,” “positive,” and “helpful” by the majority of social workers. Collaboration was described as pooling or sharing ideas and resources. Only two dismissed collaboration, indicating it was not needed. Thoughts about sharing decision-making provoked a range of positive and negative responses. The majority stated that sharing decision-making was “important”, “great,” or “positive” and that cultural broker input was valued. Seven responses indicated disagreement with this

idea. Several workers thought broker input was valuable, but that the responsibility for decision-making rests with the DCFS, the social worker, or the court. Other responses indicated that decisions should be made “solely with families,” not the cultural broker.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE (Slide 88)

What we have learned from the cultural broker experience in Fresno, California, is that its implementation has been a long and precarious journey that is still ongoing. It is not a program per se, but rather a commitment and an approach that incorporates local history, conditions, and awareness that are more than likely different in other communities. For these reasons, these researchers strongly caution other communities about replicating the Fresno cultural brokering approach as it is currently known.

In deciding whether to adopt cultural brokering as an approach to addressing disproportionality and disparity, agencies and communities must consider local conditions, circumstances, and political will as these variables can ease or impede the development and effectiveness of the approach. Child welfare agencies and African American communities must be willing and prepared for difficult and painful conversations about racism, distrust, and suspicion. This means that communities must find their own way. However, there are features of culture broker theory and Fresno’s cultural broker approach that can assist in the process. Ultimately, community partnerships and collaborations will need to decide for themselves whether cultural brokering is a useful strategy for combating disproportionality and disparities in child welfare practice.

(Slide 89) African American families described their experience with the child welfare system, which from their perspective is daunting, intimidating, and difficult to understand, often leading them to a state of powerlessness. It is perceived as an unjust system that exists to remove children. Cultural brokering offers support to families during this difficult process and helps them to better understand child welfare decisions affecting them and their children. Families feel they are better able to negotiate the system, know what they need to do, and that they have the support to do it. They feel better educated, informed, motivated, and empowered to try and change circumstances in their lives. These are all positive and desirable qualities that social work practitioners should want parents to possess. Brokering allows families to experience many of the principles found in the NASW Code of Ethics concerning social justice, the dignity and worth of a person, the importance of human relationships, and a greater sense of competence.

(Slide 90) Although many families experienced beneficial results from cultural brokering, it is also clear that some families felt that cultural brokering did not have a positive impact on the outcome of their case. This could be a result of brokers being assigned to families too late, brokers missing key decision points in the case history, or the complexity and severity of the cases assigned to the brokers. **(Slide 91)** Whatever the reason, it does suggest that decisions concerning the timing of broker involvement with families and broker participation in key decision points need to be carefully considered. Similarly, the type of family characteristics that are best suited for cultural brokering is another consideration that will require substantial input and thoughtful

deliberation with community members who serve as cultural brokers. If developed properly, cultural brokering can represent a significant resource to child welfare agencies; however, their capacity to assist families on an ongoing sustained basis is often difficult due to their limited resources. Child welfare agencies and their community partners need to provide brokers some level of tangible support (e.g., food subsidies, clothing, transportation) so that they can operate well in that space between community and institution.

(Slide 92) Child welfare work is stressful, busy, and complex and social workers often find it difficult to engage and meet the needs of all families in their caseloads. Social workers interviewed for this study welcomed the assistance provided by cultural brokers in a number of ways. Brokers provided families with tangible assistance which they could not provide (e.g., transportation, arranging child care, household items). They also appreciated the brokers' assistance with changing parents' perceptions of them as child snatchers, by clarifying to the parents the agency's role on matters related to child safety, permanence, and well-being. Brokers also provided social workers with important information about families and helped operationalize the concepts of shared power and decision-making with community. This assistance with shared decision-making with community is an important one, as it works to transmit family cultural values and norms to practitioners and provides a more holistic view and understanding of the family in community. In the context of culturally competent practice, it can work to affirm the worth of family values, traditions, and norms as sources of strength for families and their communities, thereby supporting the ability of practitioners to work cross-culturally.

Activity IV-1

Purpose: Participants will be given an opportunity to participate in a group decision-making process that includes community partners sharing their input and insights in regard to key case decisions.

Instructions: It is recommended that a case scenario be utilized for this exercise that accurately depicts the pivotal case decisions that are frequently made by child welfare staff without the benefit of community input or support. The scenario should be representative of an actual family case, decision-making practices, and institutional factors specific to the participants' respective agencies/counties.

Process: Participants will engage in a group process to develop and identify county-specific exercises and case scenarios that will realistically represent issues and case practices that impact (positively or negatively) the ability to include community in case decision-making. This process will support the acquisition of desired skills and knowledge.

Siegel, D., Jackson, M., Montana, S., & Rondero Hernandez, V. (2010). *Use of cultural brokers as an approach to community engagement with African American families in child welfare: An empirically based curriculum.* Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Social Work Education Center.

MODULE V

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVED CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

(Slide 93)

MODULE V
KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVED CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Learning Objectives

This section introduces issues for consideration in the development of community-based agency practice with community partners. The shared power and decision-making that accompanies transparent, community practice are presented. Included in this section is a discussion of the importance of agency preparedness for developing community partnerships. Suggested activities are included and may be customized to illustrate these key concepts and accurately reflect county-specific issues as they relate to community-based agency practice and to facilitate skill development.

By the end of this section, participants will:

- Have knowledge and understanding of the ideals, values, and principles involved in partnerships with African American communities,
- Gain understanding of the importance of agency preparedness and communication to work with community partners, and
- Obtain knowledge and understanding of how to develop partnerships in community-based child welfare practice.

Public Child Welfare Competencies (MSW)

I. Ethnic Sensitive and Multicultural Practice

1.1 Student demonstrates respect, fairness, and cultural competence in assessing, working with, and making service decisions regarding clients of diverse backgrounds

1.2 Student demonstrates self-awareness and the ability to address and overcome personal bias in assessing and working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

1.4 Student recognizes personal knowledge limitations regarding specific groups and seeks consultation and expertise as needed to assess and work effectively with clients.

II. Culturally Competent Child Welfare Practice

2.5 Student demonstrates the ability to collaborate with individuals, groups, community-based organizations, and government agencies to advocate for equitable access to culturally competent resources and services.

III. Core Child Welfare Practice

3.12 Student understands the inherent power differential in working with clients and can effectively manage and balance that power.

3.15 Student is aware of forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination pertaining to low-income, nontraditional, and culturally diverse families and uses this knowledge to provide equitable and effective child welfare services.

V. Human Behavior and the Social Environment

5.3 Student demonstrates understanding of the potential effects of poverty, bias, inequity, and other forms of oppression on human behavior and social systems.

5.4 Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of culture on human behavior and family dynamics.

5.5 Student demonstrates understanding of how the strengths perspective and empowerment approaches can positively influence growth, development, and behavior change.

VII. Workplace Management

7.1 Student is able to identify the strengths and limitations of an organization, including its cultural competence and commitment of human diversity, and can assess the effects of these factors on services for children and families.

7.5 Student is able to work respectfully and effectively with clients and agency personnel in an environment characterized by human diversity.

7.7. Student understands the need to negotiate and advocate for the development of resources that children and families require to meet their goals.

7.9 Student is able to utilize collaborative skills and techniques to enhance service quality in organizational settings.

VIII. Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration

8.1 Student understands how professional values, ethics, and standards influence decision-making and planning in public child welfare practice.

Agenda and Suggestions for Instructors

Time allocation: Approximately 2 hours

Introduction

- Introduction of trainer(s)
- Brief introduction to section content

Materials Needed

- LCD projector
- PowerPoint slides 93-105
- Handouts
- Markers and flip chart with "post-it" adhesive back for mounting on walls
- Handout of PowerPoint slides 93-105

COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Although researchers and state child welfare departments are investigating the extent of and reasons for racial disproportionality in child protective services (Courtney et al., 1996), they have not studied its community impact. The community-level effects of child welfare agency involvement in neighborhoods of color suggest that solutions to racial disproportionality must be community based (Roberts, 2008). This point takes on special significance because as Becket & Lee (2004) state, "African American communities generally espouse values such as community responsibility, collective action, spiritual groundedness, and support for children" (p. 104), which must be respected and perceived as assets. As a result, child welfare agencies should strive to

understand the attitudes, values, and principles held by the African American community so that any efforts to engage their support are congruent with the prevailing values and reflect the values held by the community with whom the child welfare agency desires to establish partnerships.

(Slide 94) As previously mentioned, community partnerships and community-based approaches are showing promise in child welfare agency efforts to address existing racial disproportionality and disparities. It is the very tenets of community-based child welfare practice that support the long-held values and beliefs of African American communities. Community-based child welfare practice builds upon common concepts and shared values that include the following presumptions:

- that children require a safe and stable family;
- that the community should support the family in caring for children;
- **(Slide 95)** that the community has the responsibility to intervene when a child is at risk of harm;
- that family support services should be nearby and responsive to the linguistic, cultural, and religious needs of the family;
- that services should be based on strengths as well as the needs of an individual family;
- **(Slide 96)** that partnerships within the community require open communication and the sharing of information, decisions, and resources by the public child welfare agency; and
- that the continuity of relationships, supports, and services will provide security to children who must be separated from their families (Barth, Goodhand, & Dickinson as cited in Everett, Chipungu, & Leashore, 2004, p. 277).

These presumptions of community-based child welfare practice are congruent with the essential elements identified by Billingsley and Giovannoni for the delivery of effective child welfare services to Black children and their families. In their seminal book

entitled, *Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare* (1972), they described the following essential elements:

- Child welfare services must be based on the historical experience out of which Black children have emerged;
- Black children must be seen as members of Black families and Black communities in all their variety and complexity;
- A set of child welfare measures must not only be designed for Black children, it must reflect the views, the feelings, and the aspirations and the satisfactions of Black people (p. 6).

These authors affirm what scholars have recognized for years; that the attitudes, values, and beliefs held by the African American community are essential to any effort to address the inequities experienced by African American children and families involved with the child welfare system. They also are the cornerstones to healthy partnerships with this community. **(Slide 97)** Child welfare agencies that are willing to shift from a Western/Eurocentric perspective and approach African American communities and families using African-centered principles for service delivery will be more likely to establish successful partnerships that embrace and support the attitudes, values, and beliefs held by the African American community.

African-centered principles for service delivery incorporate principles that are collectively referred to as the Nguzo Saba. The Nguzo Saba are principles that serve as guideposts for meditation and daily living for African Americans. The seven Nguza Saba principles are the focus of an annual spiritual celebration called *Kwanzaa*, that is observed December 26 through January 1. "This celebration offers the African American community a means to reaffirm their commitment to themselves, their

community, and to the black struggle" (Terry, 1996, p. 5). Crawley (1996) highlights the following seven principles of Nguza Saba **(Slide 98)**:

- Umoja (Unity)—To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race;
- Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)—To define, name, create, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created, and spoken for by others;
- Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)—To build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together;
- Ujamma (Cooperative Economics)—To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together;
- Nia (Purpose)—To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness;
- Kuumba (Creativity)—To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it;
- Imani (Faith)—To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle (pp. 118-119).

A clear understanding of these African-centered principles can be helpful to the child welfare agency when engaging the African American community to elicit their participation in child welfare reform efforts if such efforts embrace these core African-centered principles.

AGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

In these trying financial times marked by dwindling resources, staff cutbacks, and mandates for improved outcomes, it is no longer feasible for child welfare agencies to assume sole responsibility for the safety and protection of children. Researchers have determined that local communities can play a key role in efforts to reform child welfare and address long-standing issues such as the disparities and overrepresentation of

African American children in the child welfare system. One such effort that is being utilized to combat disproportionality is the shift from individual case practice to community-based approaches that promote collaboration with community leaders and families (Bass, Shields, & Behrman, 2004; Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equality, 2005; Roberts, 2008; Usher & Wildfire, 2003; & White, 2008).

In 2003, utilizing Annie E. Casey's Family to Family initiative to build community partnerships, Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) embarked on a journey to redesign service delivery to families involved in the child welfare system. As a result of that effort a group of concerned community members evolved into the specialized role of cultural brokers. Cultural brokers assist families involved with the child welfare system by providing general support, advocacy, brokerage, and assistance in navigating the child welfare system. Fresno County's cultural broker approach exemplifies a community-based approach to reforming child welfare practice.

This Cultural Broker Research Project examined both the historical evolution and prominent features of the cultural brokering approach with African American families in Fresno County. The key findings in this study help to shed light on the key considerations for child welfare partnerships with African American communities as well as those essential elements that must be in place as agencies prepare for work with community partners. Over the course of the study cultural brokers reported that there must be adequate family support throughout the child welfare agency for a successful community and child welfare collaboration around case practice. There is a

considerable amount of agency preparation that must take place before bringing the community into the effort to reform child welfare and improve family outcomes. **(Slide 99)** First and foremost the Child Welfare Director must develop an agency infrastructure and prepare a strong message in support of agency and community partnerships. It must be clear to everyone that the agency and community-based partnership approach is not just a passing fad but is in fact, the best way of doing business. In general, it is an acceptable practice to welcome community partners to the table to initiate the delivery of a required service for a family, but it is quite another level of practice to welcome community partners to the table to share cultural insights, improve decision-making, and provide advocacy and support for families. Absent of adequate support and an agency atmosphere that educates, informs, and encourages staff to shift their practice to welcome and include community partners, community can be seen as interfering outsiders as opposed to welcome resources.

(Slide 100) The ability to engage in open and honest dialogue, while remaining committed to a mutual goal is pivotal to the process of shifting from individual case management to a community-based approach. The agency Director and the entire administrative staff must be supportive and create an atmosphere that supports an ability to hear the community's perceptions of the child welfare agency without becoming defensive and/or attempting to justify past practices that may have contributed to a poor agency reputation.

(Slide 101) The cultural brokers who were interviewed stressed the importance of having genuine, open, and honest communications with child welfare staff. This

includes the ability to have difficult conversations around race, cultural misunderstandings, and disparities in the delivery of child welfare services. Social workers who were interviewed during the course of the study also recognized the need to have cultural insights and improved communications with families. Social workers viewed cultural brokers as culturally aware members of the family's community and ethnic group and expected brokers to serve as mediators between the family and the child welfare system. The social workers also expected the brokers would facilitate family understanding and communication and engage in conflict resolution. Social workers who were interviewed also recognized the importance of being open to differences of opinions

Authentic, honest conversations between the child welfare agency and community are essential to the building of trust and the establishment of lasting relationships. Child welfare staff must be able to hear the stories of frustration and anger from biological parents, relatives, care providers, and friends and maintain an ability to remain focused on the big picture—"better outcomes for the families." The brokers repeatedly expressed the fact that their commitment to improving outcomes for African American families and other families within their community has kept them at the table despite the numerous challenges they have faced. Establishing and maintaining agency and community partnerships is not an easy task and can be the most difficult for child welfare staff to achieve due to the necessary shift from individual practice to shared decision-making—the hallmark of true partnering.

As the agency tried to support the work of brokers, social workers found policy changes difficult and blamed the brokers for these changes, which fueled more animosity toward brokers. Their lack of organizational preparation and readiness may have been a contributing factor to social workers' perceptions that brokers were not knowledgeable about the child welfare system or their role as social workers. Some of this criticism may be warranted, as large, complex systems working to address multifaceted social problems attached to many of these families are difficult to grasp and comprehend for most people, even for persons working in these systems.

DCFS leadership also offered insight regarding the perceived lack of organizational preparation and readiness for cultural brokering. They viewed the new partnership with the 06 Collaborative as fluid and evolutionary. As the community cited their desire to pursue cultural brokering as a way to address disproportionality, they supported the concept despite its vague meaning early on. Their lack of organization preparation was almost intentional and a risk that leadership was willing to take, because they wanted to develop culture brokering jointly with the African American community. From the leadership's perspective it was the evolutionary journey with the community and the lessons learned along the way that helped bring meaning and clarity to cultural brokering and slowly advance better acceptance by staff. They acknowledged the early difficulties cited by brokers, but believed it helped develop trust and confidence with the community, which were critical for work on disproportionality and disparities in their county.

Both the cultural brokers and social workers expressed frustrations about the ambiguity and ongoing evolutionary nature of the cultural broker role. It is important to recognize that due to the individual needs of each community and the specific reform efforts or circumstances the community and child welfare partnerships are attempting to target, this work will more likely than not be evolutionary. This evolutionary process includes constant feedback and evaluation involving ongoing communication to make sure that the institutional nature of child welfare work does not contaminate the passion and commitment that initially inspired the community to partner with the child welfare agency. Child welfare agencies have a long-standing history of desire for community partnerships, but typically expect the community to fit into their vision for protection and safety as opposed to embracing what the community might envision as safety and well-being for the children and families in their communities. “True partnering can only begin when the internal agency culture has changed to a more open atmosphere built upon the beliefs of team building and shared decision making in order to improve the outcomes for children and families” (Ali et al., 2003, p. 45). As partnering and team building occurs, community leader-agency staff communications will deepen, effective problem solving and conflict management will occur, and an atmosphere that supports shared decision-making will evolve.

KEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of Effective Agency-Broker Partnerships

Cultural brokers identified several prerequisites for an agency to establish effective partnerships with cultural brokers:

- Open-mindedness reflected in the form of acceptance and mutual understanding, new ideas about serving families, and willingness to learn;
- **(Slide 102)** A conducive agency climate characterized by respect, tolerance, patience, humility, flexibility, an awareness or concern about disproportionality, a willingness to change, and appreciation of the cultural brokers;
- Willingness to share work by facilitating entry of brokers into the agency, developing social worker-cultural broker roles, increased communication with and acceptance of paraprofessionals;
- **(Slide 103)** Open and honest relationships that generate trust over time, being aware and open to personal biases and epitomized by “a sense of we;”
- Administrative leaders who are committed to addressing disproportionality are “ready to work,” establish policies for access to client information, and offer adequate training and preparations to staff. This latter point is essential so the cultural brokers are perceived as “as (an) advocate and not (a) bully.”

Challenges

Cultural brokers faced a number of challenges, primarily at the agency and social worker levels, despite agency leadership support and endorsement. Cultural brokers reported difficulties with being accepted and in gaining trust with agency personnel. They were viewed as *interfering* and as *outsiders* who were greeted with a “who do you think you are?” attitude, rather than community partners working together for the safety and well-being of children. They attributed these challenges to poor implementation of the cultural broker approach, role ambiguity, and inadequate introduction of the cultural brokers to the agency personnel. These circumstances at times provoked animosity and hostility toward the brokers among social workers.

Brokers encountered social workers who questioned their involvement with families and complained the cultural brokers told them what to do. Social workers blamed them for policy changes that allowed them to work with DCFS families. Cultural brokers were the subjects of agency rumors, misperceptions, and their presence initially

caused dissention in the social work ranks. In order to cope with these challenges, the brokers strove to maintain their perspective on what was occurring around them. They tried "to understand the social workers' story" (perspectives), look beyond characters and perceptions, and keep "the spirit of the big picture" (i.e., addressing family needs).

Finally, cultural brokers reported that they were challenged by the families that they were assigned—families with multiple and complex needs who had been in the child welfare system for years. They felt in some of these situations it was too late for them to make a difference.

The social workers reported a wide range of challenges they faced while working with cultural brokers. Some responses indicated that the worker and broker need to be "on the same page" and open to differences of ideas and opinions. Taking things personally, logistical issues, staying focused, and communication were also cited as challenges by the social workers.

Suggestions for Improvements in the Cultural Broker Approach

Cultural brokers offered advice that fell into three categories—preparing for cultural brokering, the value of culture brokers, and the benefits of being a broker.

They urged aspiring brokers to prepare for the realities of cultural brokering. There are families who are not ready for change. One broker explained, "Children only have one chance. You have to get where the family is, not where you are." The misery and despair is overwhelming and "the system is not fair." Cultural brokers need to be properly staffed and have access to resources "otherwise [they] are just a Band-Aid."

They suggested that the agency focus on the need for training social workers about working with cultural brokers. Brokering is a form of shared accountability for all parties involved; families, social workers, agency, and cultural brokers alike. It's important to "not let egos get in the way" and to constantly remember that "the cause is bigger than our differences."

Social workers were asked to offer suggestions on how to improve the cultural broker experience. Their most common response was social worker training. Understanding of broker roles and improving effective communication was also cited. A few workers indicated they would not change anything about the cultural broker experience. The majority of social worker responses indicated that the cultural brokers were helpful and a resource to families and the worker, and they found cultural brokering to be a positive experience. Only a few thought the experience was negative.

The majority of parents interviewed suggested the cultural broker experience could be improved if they entered the case earlier, had more education and skills to do their job more effectively, or offered more involvement and support. One parent stated they needed "education with the Welfare and Institutions Code. A lot of women get struck in the system because we don't know our rights and the whole process."

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE (Slide 104)

In anticipation that other communities will adopt cultural brokering, lessons learned from Fresno County's experience should be useful. One major consideration is whether child welfare agencies should engage in some form of organizational preparedness and readiness in anticipation of cultural brokering. Fresno DCFS made

modest efforts at preparedness as a matter of preference that was based on their philosophy and their guiding principles of community engagement. However, given some of the brokers' comments, there is reason to believe that higher levels of agency preparedness might be beneficial to implementation. For example, agencies should consider how brokers are introduced to the agency staff, which could take the form of specialized training especially with case-carrying staff. Communication to all agency staff about cultural brokering as a strategy for community engagement is also important.

For child welfare agencies and practitioners wishing to adopt community-based practices, cultural brokering does offer an avenue for inclusion of the African American community in child welfare decisions regarding families and their children. Cultural brokering can lead to greater transparency in child welfare practice and more honesty about the reasons disproportionality and disparity exist. Cultural brokering can create greater trust, understanding, and honest communication between the community and the child welfare agency if there is real commitment to address disproportionality and disparities. At least in Fresno County, sustained efforts at community engagement and cultural brokering has allowed the community and agency to work together to establish concrete objectives and discuss other strategies for addressing disproportionality and disparities. This work is not without its ongoing conflicts and disagreements, but there remains a commitment to further this work for the safety, permanence, and well-being of African American children.

(Slide 105) In Fresno, California, African American community members, working as cultural brokers, are making important contributions to redressing past

wrongs done by the child welfare system, which always seemed to know best and operated with relative autonomy and perceived impunity outside of the community. Currently, Fresno County is engaged in changing the course of the system by *bridging the gap* between provider and family cultural systems. Much to their credit, they are working productively with institutions that have not always understood the African American community's needs and perceptions for protecting their children and strengthening the well-being of their families. In the words of DCFS leadership and cultural brokers, theirs is a vision of fairness, justice, and a call for child welfare institutions to "do the right thing."

Activity V-1

Purpose: Participants will gain an understanding of the importance of transparency in child welfare practice especially when working with community representatives. Participants will also gain a greater understanding of the need to establish and maintain open and honest communications with community members who desire to partner with child welfare staff in an effort to address issues such as the disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.

Instructions: It is suggested that participants engage in an exercise that utilizes a case scenario that requires participants to engage in difficult conversations that require open and honest communications with community partners as well as transparent case practices. The scenario should be representative of actual case decision-making practices and institutional factors specific to the participants' respective agencies/ counties.

Process: Participants will engage in a group process to develop and identify county-specific exercises and case scenarios that will realistically reflect issues that require difficult conversations and transparency around case practices. This process will support the acquisition of desired skills and knowledge and provide opportunities for participants to engage in open and honest discussions around sensitive issues.

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APPENDIXES

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF CULTURAL BROKERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Demographics of culturalbBrokers (N = 8)	
Characteristic	n
Age	
Under 40	0
40-50	2
50-59	3
60-69	3
Gender	
Female	6
Male	2
Education	
1-2 years college	1
2 years college or more	1
Bachelors degree	3
Masters degree	3
Profession	
Social Work	2
Pastor	1
Drug & Alcohol Specialist	1
Program Director	1
Educator	2
Foster Parent	1

Demographics of social workers (N = 15)	
Characteristic	n
Age	
Under 30	2
30-39	7
40-49	5
50-59	1
Gender	
Female	14
Male	1
Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	7
African American	1
Hispanic/Latino	5
American Indian	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1
Education	
BA—Social Work	2
Other Bachelors	6
MSW	5
Other Masters	2
Length of time in CWS	
Less than 5 years	4
5-10 years	6
over 10 years	5
Assignment when working with broker	
Emergency Response	4
Permanency Planning	2
Family Reunification	9
Length of time working with broker	
3 months or less	2
3-6 months	5
7-12 months	7
1 year or more	1

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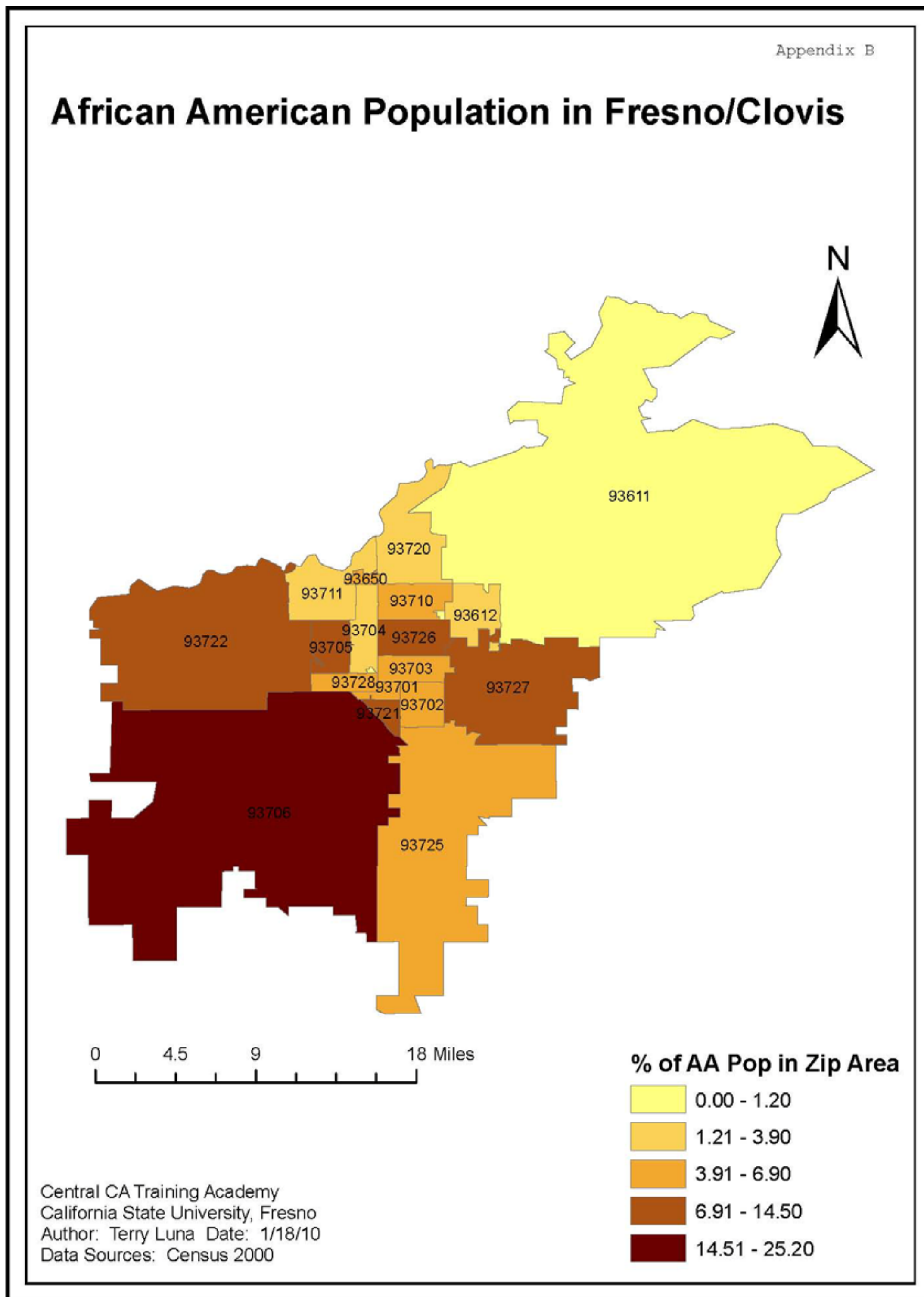
AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION IN FRESNO/CLOVIS



DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF FAMILIES WITH AND WITHOUT CULTURAL BROKERS

Demographics of families with cultural brokers (N = 20)	
Characteristic	n
Age	
Under 20	1
20-29	1
30-39	12
40-49	3
50-59	3
Gender	
Male	3
Female	17
Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	3
African American	16
Hispanic/Latino	0
American Indian	1
Number of children	
1	6
2	3
3	3
4	1
5	2
6 or more	5

Demographics of families without cultural brokers (N = 20)	
Characteristic	n
Age	
Under 20	0
20-29	6
30-39	11
40-49	3
50-59	0
Gender	
Male	0
Female	20
Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	1
African American	14
Hispanic/Latino	5
American Indian	0
Number of children	
1	5
2	5
3	8
4	1
5	1
6 or more	0

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ACTIVITY I-3 PEOPLE SORTING ACTIVITY

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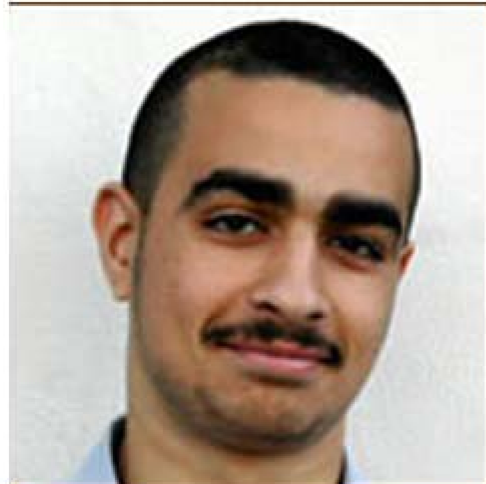
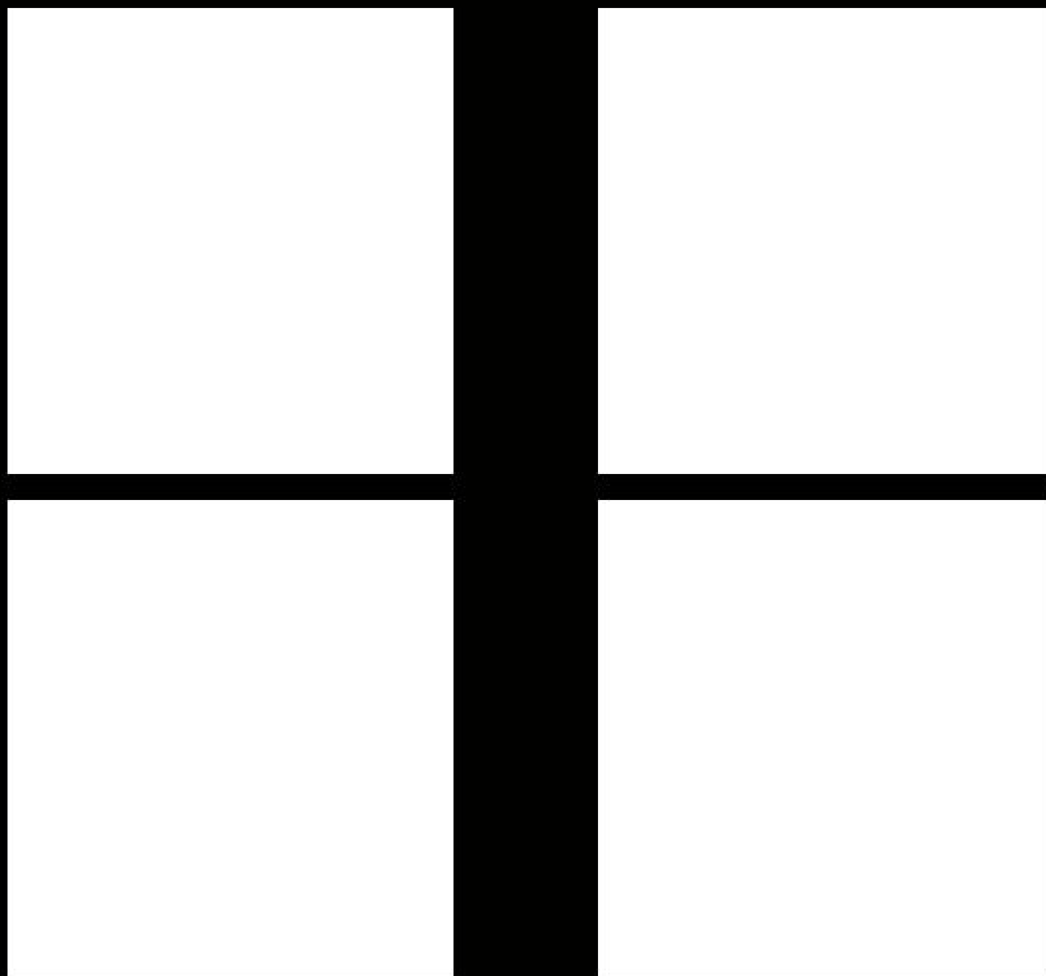
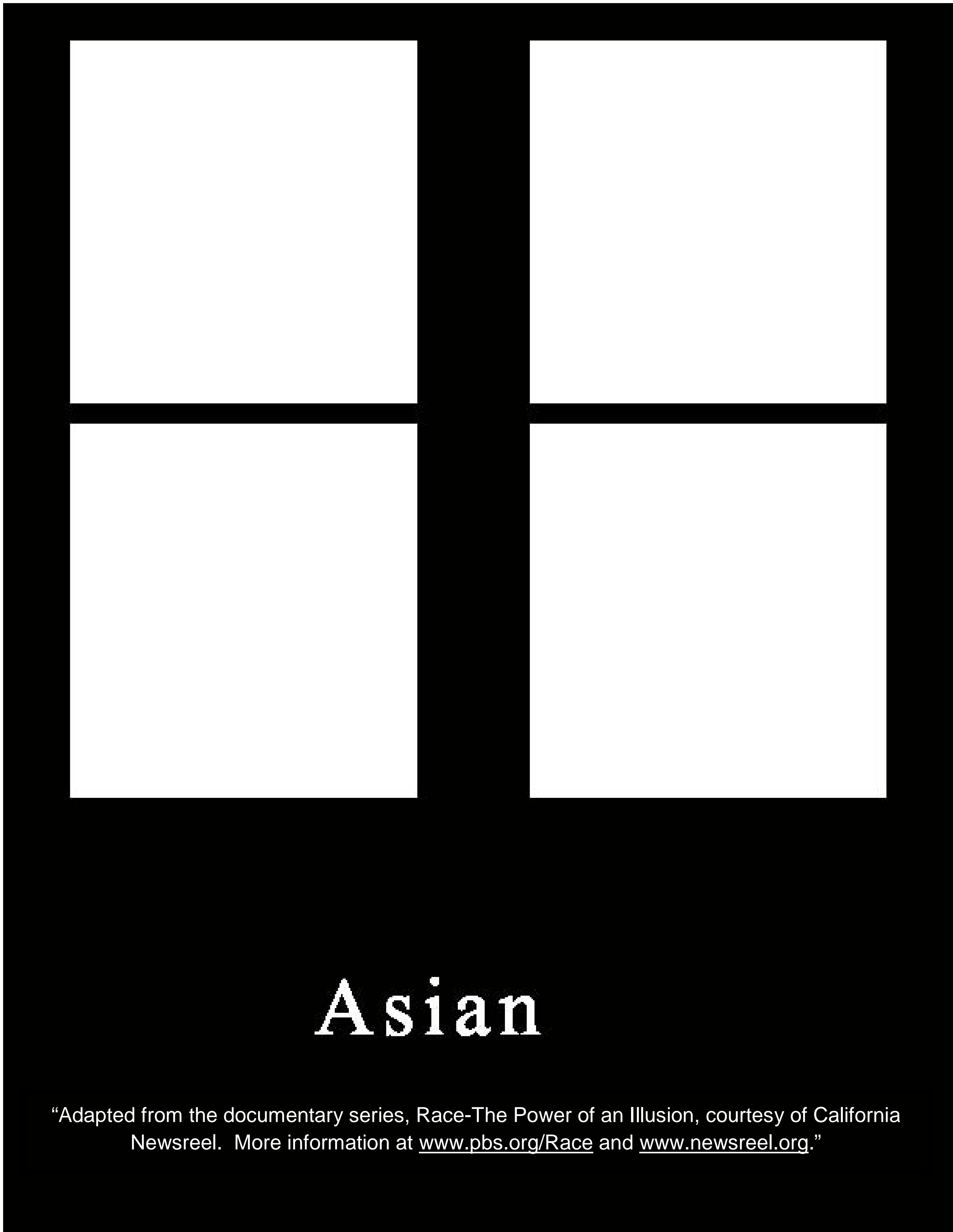
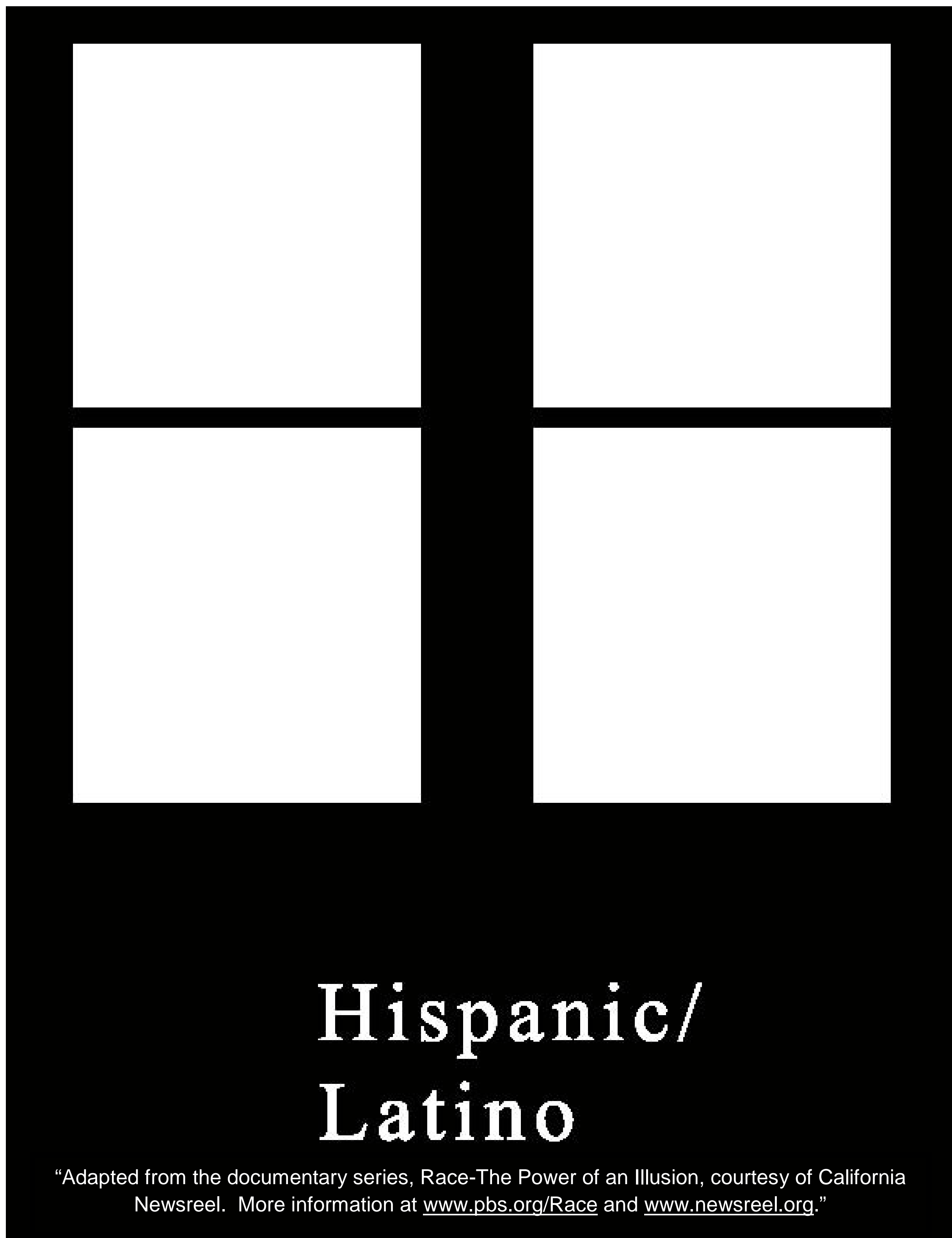


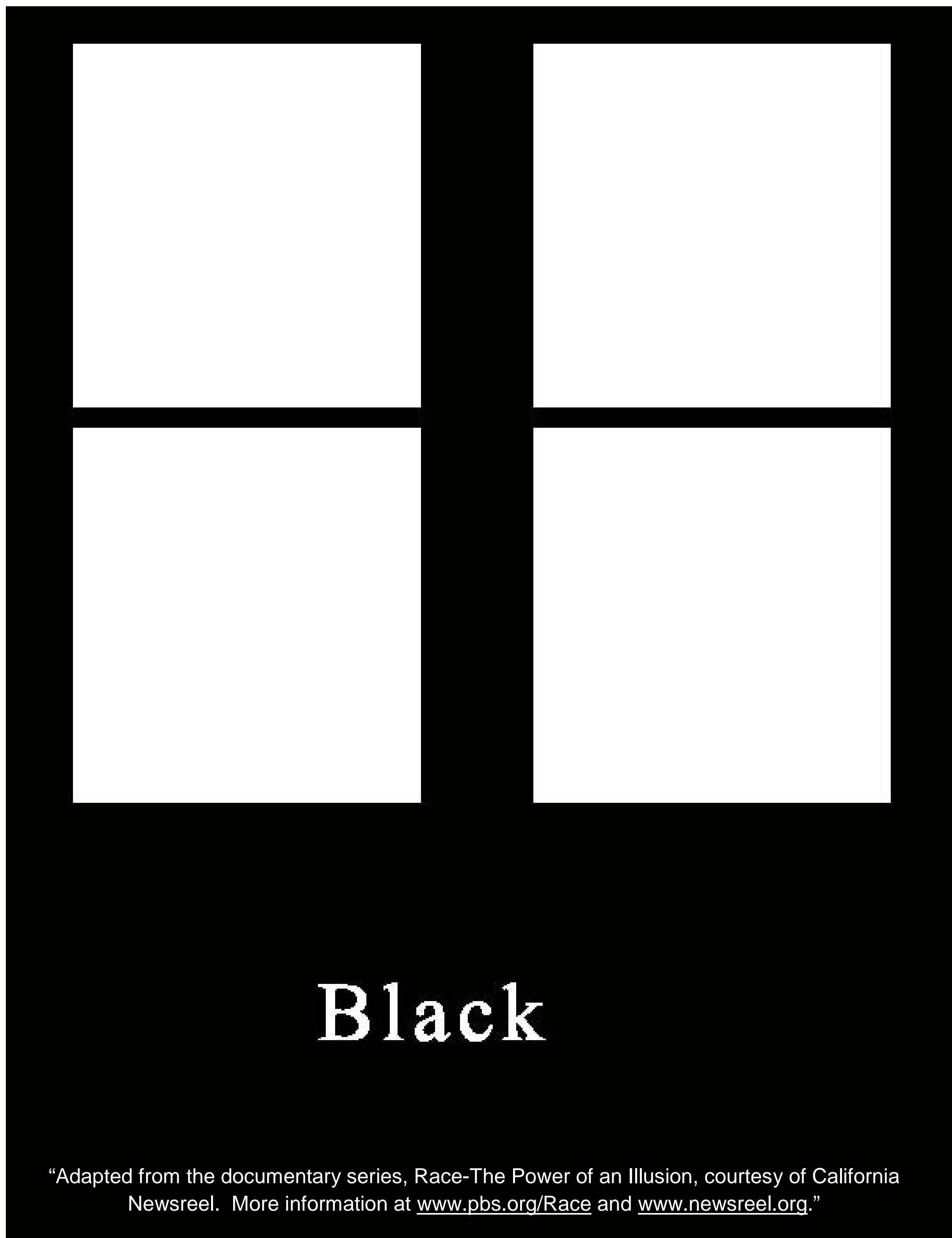


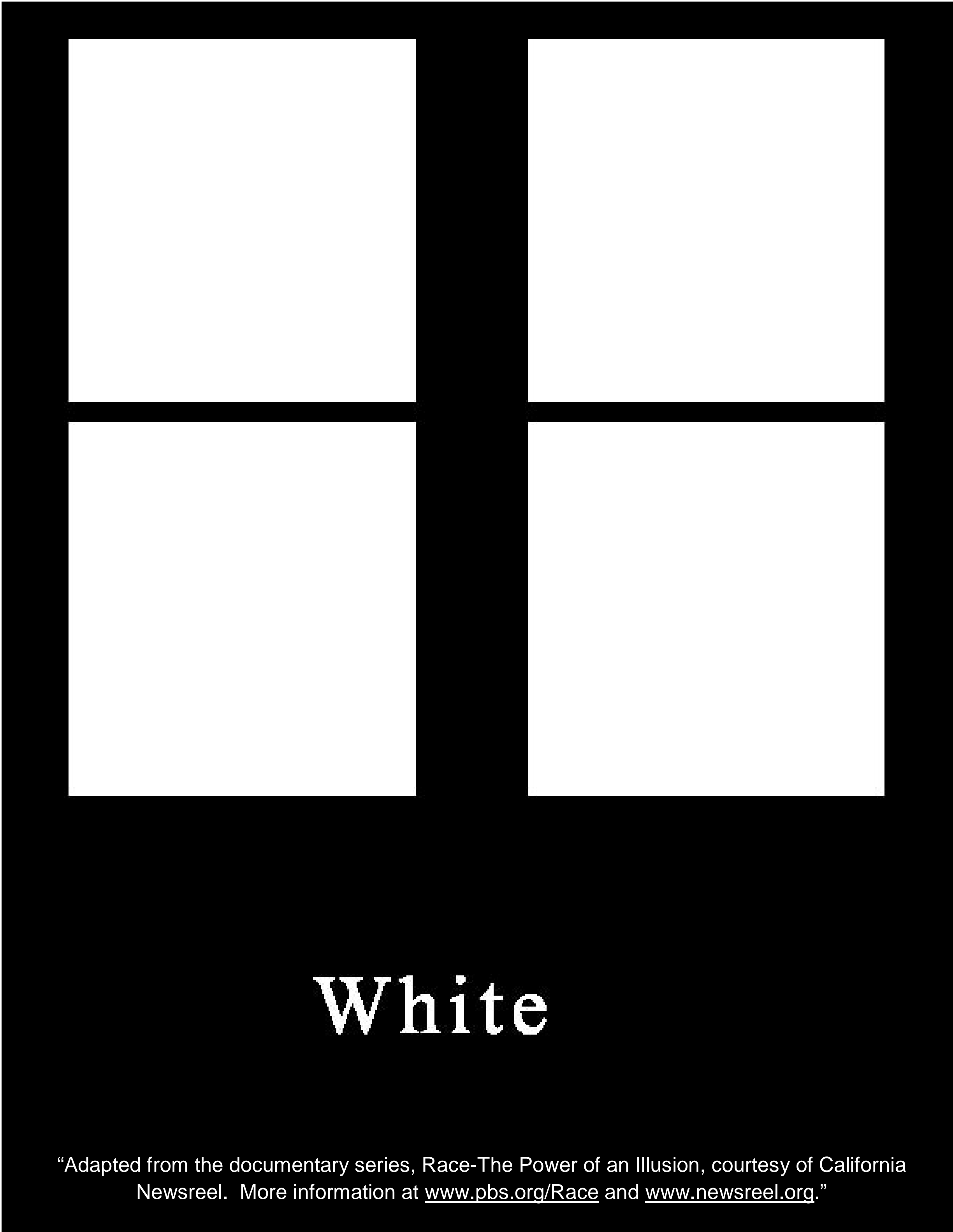
American Indian

"Adapted from the documentary series, Race-The Power of an Illusion, courtesy of California Newsreel. More information at www.pbs.org/Race and www.newsreel.org."


Asian
"Adapted from the documentary series, Race-The Power of an Illusion, courtesy of California Newsreel. More information at www.pbs.org/Race and www.newsreel.org."


Hispanic/
Latino
"Adapted from the documentary series, Race-The Power of an Illusion, courtesy of California Newsreel. More information at www.pbs.org/Race and www.newsreel.org."


Black
"Adapted from the documentary series, Race-The Power of an Illusion, courtesy of California Newsreel. More information at www.pbs.org/Race and www.newsreel.org."


White
"Adapted from the documentary series, Race-The Power of an Illusion, courtesy of California Newsreel. More information at www.pbs.org/Race and www.newsreel.org."

U.S. Race Classification
American Indian
Asian
Black
Hispanic/ Latino
White

ACTIVITY I-1
HISTORY TIMELINE

Purpose: To give participants the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the origins of racism and oppression in America and to promote an understanding of the historical roots of institutional racism in child welfare.

Instructions: Divide participants into groups. Evenly assign and distribute the following timeline events to the groups:

1. (1619) The First African People Came to America
2. (1640) First Legal Case Making Race a Factor for Indentured Servants
3. (1662) Law Regarding the Birthright of Children Born to Negro Women
4. (1790) Naturalization Act
5. (1865) U.S. Constitution Abolishes Slavery
6. (1876-1965) Jim Crow Laws
7. (1924) Virginia Racial Purity Act
8. (1954) Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka
9. (1964 & 1965) 1964 Civil Rights Act & 1965 Voting Rights Act
10. (1967) Interracial Marriage Laws Overturned

Instruct each group to review and discuss their assigned timeline event utilizing information presented by trainer(s) and information from handout provided. Instruct each group to summarize key information and prepare a brief presentation on adhesive flip chart paper provided to present to the larger group. Instruct each group to include in their discussion how their assigned historical event connects to the institutional racism that exists in child welfare. Have each group present their information in chronological order and have them line the walls with their information reconstructing the timeline of historical events that are linked to the institutional racism that exists in child welfare.

Process: Trainer to lead a large-group discussion, briefly allowing participants to share their insights and observations from information presented on key historical events that are linked to racism and oppression in America and the institutional racism that exists in child welfare.

(1619) The First African People Came to America

Racism and oppression towards African Americans began in this country the very moment they stepped foot on American soil. The first African people who came to America arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 when they were exchanged by a Dutch trader for food. Although their status is not clear, it is probable that they were sold as indentured servants who served as the primary source of labor to the developing colonies of America. A common practice in England and colonial America, indentured servants were laborers who were sold under contract for a fixed period of 3-7 years in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter. Many immigrants entered this country as indentured servants. However, due to the grueling conditions, many did not survive. Over time the conditions of working in the fields, in particular the tobacco crops, became widely known. This led to increased difficulty in recruiting indentured servants. This difficulty contributed to the rise of the importation and sale of Black slaves to do this hard labor.

(1640) First Legal Case Making Race a Factor for Indentured Servants

In the mid 17th century, colonial laws began to differentiate between indentured servants and slaves based on race. Slaves became the property of their masters for life. One such law reflects the changing times. In 1640, *Re: Negro John Punch* was one of the first legal cases that made race a distinguishing factor among indentured servants (Craig, n.d.).

(1662) Law Regarding the Birthright of Children Born to Negro Women

Among the many laws that were passed in the 17th century, there was one that focused on the birthright of children born to Negro women. In 1662 Virginia passed a law that based the status of slaves on heredity by ruling that the offspring of a slave woman would become the property of her master, resulting in the child facing a lifetime in slavery (Hening, 1810).

(1790) Naturalization Act

Toward the end of the 18th century, the 1790 Naturalization Act reserved the right to American citizenship for Whites only. African Americans were not guaranteed citizenship until 1868. Without citizenship, those who were not White were not allowed to vote, own property, bring suit against another party, or testify in court. All of the privileges that were exclusively afforded Whites were eliminated for African Americans and other people of color.

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(1876-1965) Jim Crow Laws

Beginning in the late 19th century, southern states enacted the Jim Crow laws that spread throughout the country between 1876 and 1965. These laws authorized the subordination of Black Americans to Whites through segregation of the two races in all public places and institutional settings. Although the Supreme Court decision *Plessy vs. Furgeson* in 1896 stipulated "separate but equal" accommodations for Black Americans, they continued to be denied the freedom of assembly and movement and full participation as citizens in many states. Integration would not occur until the mid-1960s.

(1865) U.S. Constitution Abolishes Slavery

The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution was adopted on December 6, 1865, officially abolishing slavery.

(1924) Virginia Racial Purity Act

Efforts to define those who were Black began as early as the 17th century. In 1924 the Virginia Racial Purity Act more clearly defined Black persons as having any trace of African ancestry. The *one-drop* rule of this Act, which stipulated that anyone with one drop of African blood was considered to be of African ancestry, was adopted by several states. However, most people could not prove their ancestry. Therefore, the determination of ancestry was solely based on observation of skin color. If you appeared to be Black you were Black; that is if you *looked* Black you were Black. Due to the subjectivity of this rule, a person could literally cross state lines and be perceived as another race.

(1954) *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

It wasn't until the mid 20th century that shifts in the social and political climate began to occur. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made a landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.* The Court ruled that state laws that established separate public schools for White and Black children denied Black children equal educational opportunities. There was widespread resistance to integration in public schools during this time.

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(1964 & 1965) 1964 Civil Rights Act & 1965 Voting Rights Act

The civil rights movement organized peaceful protests and marches that while focused on public school integration, soon expanded to public transportation, voting rights, and other social liberties. The efforts of the civil rights movement culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

(1967) Interracial Marriage Laws Overturned

Laws prohibiting interracial marriage remained in over half of the 50 states. It wasn't until 1967 that such laws were overturned. In 1959 a Virginia couple was tried and convicted of miscegenation. The couple filed a lawsuit challenging the law that reached the Supreme Court. In *Loving v. Virginia*, in 1967, the Court unanimously ruled that a person's individual right to marry cannot be restricted by race. The Loving decision reversed the racist policies that were based on Virginia's 1924 Racial Purity Act.

THE HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE

The early settlers were predominantly Anglo-Saxon immigrants from England. Their beliefs, values, and traditions were rooted in the English culture. These beliefs and values played a significant role in shaping child welfare in America. One such belief was that in a new country rich with resources and opportunities, no man should be poor except by one's own hand (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). This belief led to the general opinion that poverty was due to laziness and lack of industry and that no public provisions would be offered to those living in poverty. The early settlers came from an English culture that valued family, Christianity, and a strong work ethic. Importance was placed on developing a new identity; a new country. Primary goals were the ability to govern themselves, religious freedom, and commerce. Ethnocentrism was a characteristic in the early settlers' philosophical approach to colonization and social policy. The colonial poor laws imported from the British colonials authorized that children from poor families could be indentured to private families or sent to the poor house, also known as the almshouse.

Slavery, the first form of institutionalized racism significantly influenced the development of child welfare. The first African people who came to America were viewed as a means to an end; the goal of commerce. They were forced to give up their culture, which was very different from that of this newly developing country. Theirs was a culture rich in spirituality and freedom of voice and the arts. Their foods and customs were very different, yet they were categorized based on skin color. Slave owners restricted their expressions of their culture for fear of advancing their freedom of expression. This practice led to the development of a rich oral history within African American culture and expanded their use of community child care among themselves. While most children of slaves lived on the property of their masters, oftentimes they were recruited to work or serve as apprentices alongside their parents. How they were treated was often used as the measure for the treatment of or service to White children. That is, the general rule was that "no white child will be worse off than a Black child and no Black child will be better off than a White child." (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).This

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attitude still prevails today when child welfare reforms focus on the needs of Black children in foster care. A common response to such efforts is that, “the system doesn’t work for any children.”

By the early 19th century, the institutions of poor houses or almshouses emerged as a public welfare system in response to the increasing prevalence of poverty. They housed those who were indigent, orphans, and children whose parents were unable to care for them. However, some free Black children were also found to be living in them. Those who lived in the almshouses faced deplorable living conditions and maltreatment. Social policy began to shift in the 19th century amid growing concerns for the plight of poor children. One social reform emerged in the establishment of orphanages in response to the dire conditions of the almshouses and as a means to save these children from parental indigence and maltreatment (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Hill, 2006; Roberts, 2002). Although referred to as orphanages, most children placed in them were poor children, not orphans. Black children were excluded from these orphanages. The only alternative for Black children were small, segregated orphanages often referred to as “asylums,” which were far inferior to the more predominant orphanages that housed White children (Billingsley & Giovannoni; Hill; Roberts, 2002).

A second reform measure from the late 19th century followed the abolition of slavery. Poor children who lived in indentured servitude were placed with private families (free foster homes). Such placements were also used as a means of housing children exiting the orphanages (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Jimenez, 2006). Free foster homes were very similar to indenture in that the children were expected to work for the family and remain until adulthood. Such placements often occurred across state lines. Although, the children were free to leave at any time, this was usually not a viable option, given the children had no alternative to their foster home. These free foster homes were the predecessors of our current child welfare system.

By the early 1930s there was a shift from institutional care to foster care and from private to public agencies. This shift was more notable because more Black children were placed in publicly funded foster homes compared to White children, the majority of whom were placed in residential settings (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Hill, 2006).

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