Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System in North Carolina

by

D. F. Duncan
UNC-CH School of Social Work
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Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- The approach in this presentation is drawn from a similar presentation developed by Emily Putnam-Hornstein made by Barbara Needell from the Center for Social Services Research at the University of California at Berkeley available at (http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/ppts/CA_CW_Q307_040408.ppt)

- The data on North Carolina in this presentation are drawn from the US Census Bureau and a set of longitudinal files maintained by researchers at UNC-CH School of Social Work
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

☐ This analysis is based on children investigated as victims of maltreatment, children who enter care for the first time, and children who are in foster care at some time between July 1, 2008 and December 31, 2010

☐ The composition of the population is based on US Census estimates for July 2009
North Carolina: First Entries to Foster Care by Race
North Carolina: Foster Care Caseload by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- Traditionally, we have looked at four different points when we explore disproportionality in the Child Welfare System:
  - Acceptance of a report for investigation
  - Determination of maltreatment
  - Initial entry to foster care
  - Composition of the foster care caseload
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- We compare a breakdown by race and ethnicity of children at each point with a breakdown of children in the entire population.
- By comparing percentages, we can observe instances in which categories are over or under represented in child welfare.
North Carolina: Race and Path Through the Child Welfare System, SFY 09-10

Population: 2,552,692
- Black: 24.47%
- White: 69.13%
- Other: 4.97%
- American Indian: 1.44%

Investigations: 123,734
- Black: 34.83%
- White: 54.39%
- Other: 8.82%
- American Indian: 1.96%

Substantiations: 33,639
- Black: 33.22%
- White: 56.58%
- Other: 8.24%
- American Indian: 1.96%

Entries: 4,557
- Black: 31.73%
- White: 57.52%
- Other: 8.84%
- American Indian: 1.44%

In Care: 15,365
- Black: 39.77%
- White: 51.61%
- Other: 7.26%
- American Indian: 1.36%
Definitions

- **Overrepresentation**: situations in which a number or quantity (such as children, in this case) is disproportionately high or low.¹

Definitions

- **Disproportionality**: the state of being disproportional. ... disproportionality and over- and underrepresentation are used with regard to a reference population. If more than one group represents more than its share of the total, another group will necessarily account for less.¹

- **Disparity**: a comparison of one group (e.g., regarding disproportionality, services, outcomes) to another group.²

North Carolina: Disparity Index for SFY 09-10

Black Disproportionality
39.77%
24.47% = 1.625

White Disproportionality
51.61%
69.13% = 0.746

Disparity Index
1.625
0.746 = 2.18
North Carolina: Disparity Indices for Race and Ethnicity, SFY 09-10

Investigations
- Hispanic: 2.09
- American Indian: 1.73
- Other: 1.81
- Black: 2.26

Substantiation
- Hispanic: 1.67
- American Indian: 1.66
- Other: 2.03
- Black: 2.03

Initial Entries
- Hispanic: 1.60
- American Indian: 1.56
- Other: 2.14
- Black: 2.14

In Care
- Hispanic: 1.27
- American Indian: 1.96
- Other: 2.18
- Black: 2.18
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- In many instances, additional insight on disproportionality is obtained by looking below the top level.
- This is especially true in exploring the findings of investigation into reported maltreatment.
- It is also true exploring the composition of the foster care caseload.
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- We saw earlier that 33.22% of the children who had maltreatment substantiated were black.
- That percentage varies by the type of maltreatment found.
North Carolina: Race and Type of Most Serious Finding, SFY 09-10
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- Of the 1,089 children whose most serious type of maltreatment was abuse and neglect, only 28.74% were black.
- That is only slightly higher than the proportion in the state’s child population (24.47%).
- Also, 39.85% of the 394 children whose most serious maltreatment was dependency were black.
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- Between 31% and 33% of the children whose most serious maltreatment was "abuse" or "neglect" were black
- 33.63% of the 13,657 children whose most serious finding was "services needed" were black
North Carolina:
Race and Other Findings, SFY 09-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (2,552,692)</td>
<td>1.44%</td>
<td>69.13%</td>
<td>24.47%</td>
<td>1.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Recommended (26,218)</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
<td>49.09%</td>
<td>38.62%</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Not Needed (43,139)</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>56.15%</td>
<td>33.35%</td>
<td>1.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsubstantiated (20,738)</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>53.91%</td>
<td>35.73%</td>
<td>1.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- Almost 38% of the 26,218 children whose most serious finding was “services recommended” were black.
- About 34% of the children in MRS with a finding of “services not needed” were black.
- More than 35% of the 20,738 children whose report was “unsubstantiated” were black.
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- This analysis is presented using survival curves that illustrate the rate at which children with certain characteristics leave care.
Exits from Foster Care by Age for Initial Entries in SFY 2007-2008

Days Since Entering Care

- 0 to 6 Years
- 6 to 12 Years
- 13 or Older Years

Remaining In Care

- 0 to 6 Years
- 6 to 12 Years
- 13 or Older Years

Days Since Entering Care

0 120 240 360 480 600 720 840 960 1080 1200

Remaining In Care

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Exits from Foster Care by Race for Initial Entries in SFY 2007-2008
Exits from Foster Care by Race for Initial Entries For Children Under Age 6 in SFY 2007-2008
Exits from Foster Care by Race for Initial Entries for Children Between Age 6 and 12 in SFY 2007-2008
Exits from Foster Care by Race for Initial Entries for Children 13 and Older in SFY 2007-2008

Days Since Entering Care

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Remaining In Care

White
Black
Other Racial Category
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- The findings indicate that older children leave care more quickly than younger children.
- The median length of stay in care for all black children who entered care for the first time in SFY 07-08 is about 55 days longer than for white children.
- The median length of stay in care for black children who are under age 6 when they first enter care is slightly shorter—47 days—or less than two months—longer than white children.
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- The median length of stay in foster care for black children who were between age 6 and 12 years old when they entered care was about 77 days—about two months longer than white children.

- The median length of stay for black children who are 13 or older when they first enter care is about 69 days.
Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

Additional analysis of the dynamics of children leaving foster care can be found in Changes and Trends in the Child Welfare Caseload in North Carolina: March 2010 at:

Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

- Disparity in the current caseload can be due to many factors
- It can reflect past instead of current practices, especially when examining children in care
- It also is related to difficulties in finding permanency for children who are in care
Child Welfare in North Carolina: Ethnic and Racial Disproportionality and Disparity

D. F. Duncan

dfduncan@email.unc.edu

919-962-7897

http://ssw.unc.edu/ma