

Children *and* Family Research Center

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



DISPROPORTIONALITY IN ILLINOIS CHILD WELFARE

Nancy Rolock

Updated October 2008

CHILDREN AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER

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Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Illinois Child Welfare

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It has long been established that African-American children are over-represented in foster care – that they enter foster care at a much higher rate than other groups of children^{1 2}. But, what happens to disproportionality when looked over the life of a case? Does this disproportionality persist when looking at which groups of children are most stable, are more likely to live with kin, or who exits foster care to a permanent home? How does the racial/ethnic makeup of a particular community factor into this?

Building on research and methodology developed to look at educational outcomes across school districts within a state, we have applied this logic to look at child welfare outcomes at several points of intervention: at the point of indicated or founded cases, at the prevalence of placement with kin, and the likelihood of stability while in foster care, and at exiting foster care to permanence. To determine disproportionality, we look at the race/ethnicity of the population at risk of these foster care outcomes and then compare the outcomes for this specific group to the outcomes for the remaining foster children of different races and ethnicities. Comparing, for example, victimization rates, kinship placement, the prevalence of stability and the likelihood of permanence among different racial/ethnic groups allows one to look at disproportionality at the different stages of a child's time in care. In Illinois, the point of entry into foster care – the differential rates in indicated reports – is the point at which the greatest disparity exists. Once in care, groups of children from different races/ethnicities have different living arrangements, likelihoods of stability, and permanence. Knowing this, public and private agency staff can target resources at improving foster care outcomes for specific racial or ethnic groups at different locations within the State.

¹ Hill, Robert B., (2007) “An Analysis of Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparity at the National, State and County Levels”.

² United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, July 2007, [African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf). <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf>

Summary

In this report we look at disproportionate representation in the child welfare system in Illinois for children of different races/ethnicities. Since geography (where a child lives) plays a significant factor in child welfare outcomes, and since there is wide variation in the racial composition of the state, we look at this issue by region within the state – Cook County, Northern, Central and Southern regions. We employ an innovative method for examining racial over/under representation – a weighted risk ratio. When the racial composition varies from region to region, it makes it difficult to compare one region to the next. In short, this method takes into consideration the racial makeup of the state when looking at disparity within a region.

In Illinois, the point of entry into foster care is the point at which the greatest disparity exists. Once in care, groups of children from different races/ethnicities have different likelihoods of continuity, stability, and permanence. In this report we examined disproportionality at these different stages and decision points to assess over and under representation in child welfare in Illinois.

CPS Decision Making:

- The greatest amount of disparity is in the likelihood that an African American child will be investigated for maltreatment. This disparity exists in each region of the state, and the magnitude is greater than any other decision point reviewed in this report.
- Children of all races/ethnicities have about equal likelihood of being indicated for maltreatment following an investigation. While there is no disparity, per se, at this stage, it does serve to reinforce the disparity at the investigation stage.
- African American children are over represented in the rate at which they enter foster care in every region, and this disparity has worsened over the past five years.

Continuity and Stability:

- Five years ago, African American children were more likely to be placed with kin, particularly in Cook and Northern regions, but this is no longer the case. In addition, Hispanic children are more likely to be placed with kin than in previous years.
- Very little difference exists in the likelihood of stability across ethnicities and regions, and this has not changed in recent years.

In Care or Permanence After Three Years:

- Three years after entering foster care, African American children are less likely to have exited to permanency, and more likely to remain in care than children of other races/ethnicities.
- African American children in any part of the state are less likely to be reunified than children of other ethnicities.
- For children exiting to subsidized adoption or guardianship, the likelihood for African American children is similar to that of children of other races/ethnicities. Disparity is more prevalent among Hispanic children in the Northern region and Caucasian children in the Southern region.

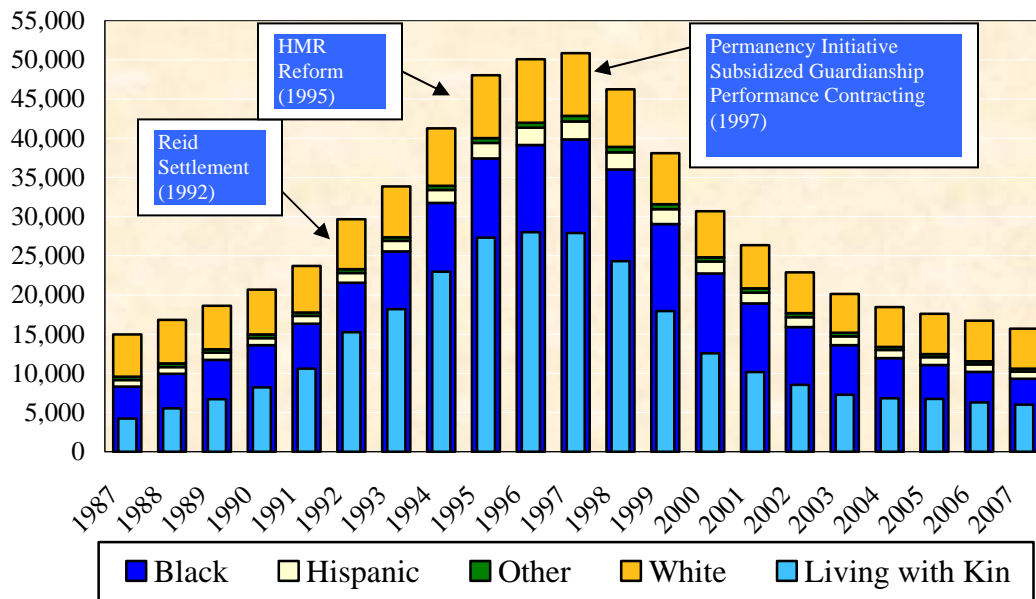
Background

Figure 1 shows the foster care population in Illinois over the past two decades. It shows the foster care population climbed from 15,000 children in care in 1987 to 51,000 children in care in 1997, and declined back down to 16,000 children in 2007. It also shows that this growth in population was primarily in the African American and kinship care populations.

In 1987, 56% of the children in care were African American, and 28% of the population was living with kin. Beginning in the early 1990s, there was an increase in the number of African American children living with kin that came into foster care. At that time (prior to 1995), children left by a parent in the care of kin could be brought into state custody on a neglect petition (neglect by a parent who may have been absent from the home since birth). Whether the child was safe, or in need of protection, was not the top consideration. By 1996, national data showed that Illinois had the highest per-capita rate of children in foster care in the nation at 17.1 per 1,000, and the majority of the children in foster care (79%) were African American.

Reforms were put in place by DCFS that resulted in a reduction in the number of African American children entering foster care while increasing the number of children exiting foster care to permanent homes, and the caseload began to decrease. By 2005, national data showed that Illinois was among the lowest per capita foster care rates at 6 per 1,000 -- and African Americans made up 63% of the population of children in foster care.

Figure 1. Illinois Children in Care



While these reforms resulted in a significant reduction in the magnitude of over-representation of the African American population in foster care, over-representation persists and additional efforts are necessary.

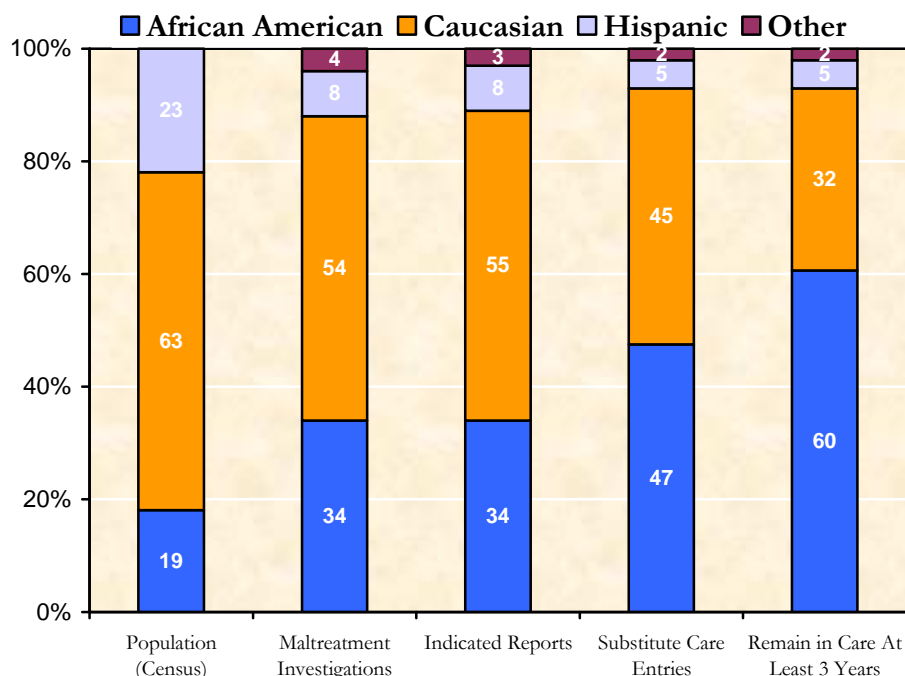
In 2007, African American children made up 19% of the state's population yet they made up 59% of the population of children in foster care. From where does this disproportionality arise? There are several points at which disproportionality can be addressed:

- **Prevent the removal of children** from their nuclear and extend families when their safety can be assured.
- Provide **continuity and stability** through placements with kin when foster care is needed.
- Restore children to **family permanence** by connecting them to kinship adoptive and guardian homes when reunification is no longer recommended.

Over-representation occurs when there is racial or ethnic disparity at any of these points of intervention, which contributes to the over-representation of a specific racial or ethnic group of children in the child welfare system compared to all other children of different races or ethnicities. In this report, we examine the racial makeup of children at various points of intervention with the foster care system. First, we examine the rate at which investigations occur in relationship to the proportion of children who live in Illinois. Next, we look at those who are investigated, and which of those cases are indicated for maltreatment. The next step requires us to ask, of children with indicated cases, who enters foster care? Research shows that foster care placement with kin has many benefits – kin placements tend to be safer and more stable and often result in long-lasting relationships. So we question, of those who enter foster care, how many are placed with kin? We also look at those children who enter foster care, how many are in stable placements in foster care, and how many, after three years of foster care, have not exited to a permanent home? Figure 2 shows the percent of children, by race, at each of these stages: In Illinois, African American children make up 19% of the child population³, yet they make up 34% of subjects of reports to DCFS of maltreatment. This disproportional representation increases at the next stage -- 47% of children who enter foster care are African American. Furthermore, African American children are more likely to remain in foster care and less likely to attain permanency than other children – African American children make up 60% of the children who remain in care (not in a permanent home) after three years.

³ DCFS data identifies children by a primary race/ethnicity. For this analysis we assume that African American and Caucasian refers to non-Hispanic African American and Caucasian children.

Figure 2. State of Illinois Child Welfare System



Understanding overrepresentation often requires a more detailed analysis that takes into consideration the dynamics at a local level – in specific counties, LANs or regions. Often the racial makeup of these smaller communities impacts racial disproportionality. Looking at disproportionality within the state allows one to compare disproportionality across the state, and ultimately to target policies and practices to areas that are most in need. For this analysis, we will look at data by DCFS regions – Cook, Northern, Central and Southern. In addition, this analysis also looks at these outcomes five years ago. By doing this we can begin to understand how disproportionality is changing in relationship to the policy and caseload changes outlined above.

Results

Pre-Custody

As depicted in Figure 2, the difference in the percent of the child population that are African American and the percent of African American children that have a maltreatment investigation is of concern. Research shows that in the United States, African American families are no more likely to maltreat their children than families of other ethnicities, yet this disproportional representation of African American children is prevalent in child welfare systems across the country⁴.

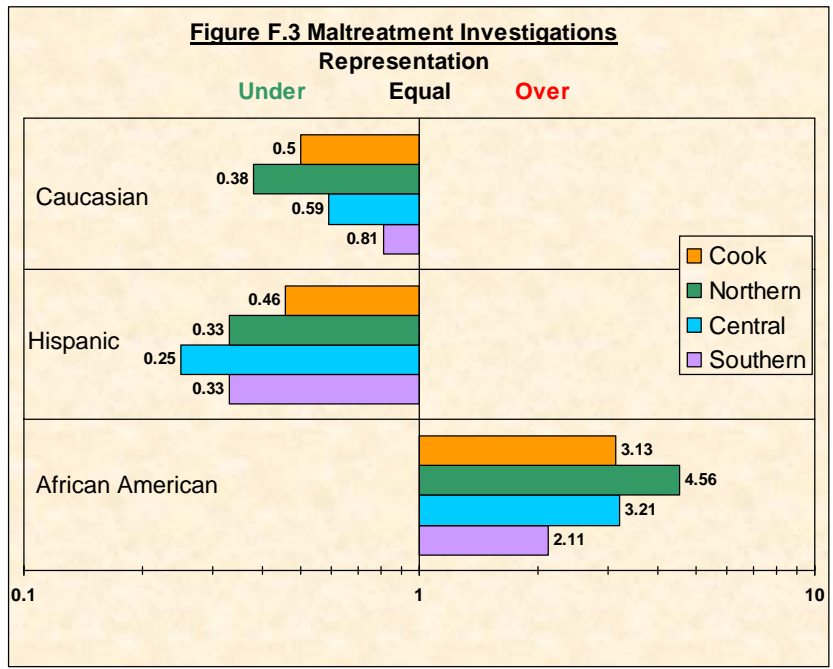
⁴ Sedlak, A, & Schultz, D. (2005). Racial differences in child protective services investigation of abuse and neglected children. In Derezotes et al. (Eds.). (2005). *Race matters in child welfare. The overrepresentation of African American children in the system* (pp. 97-118). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Discussion of Figures

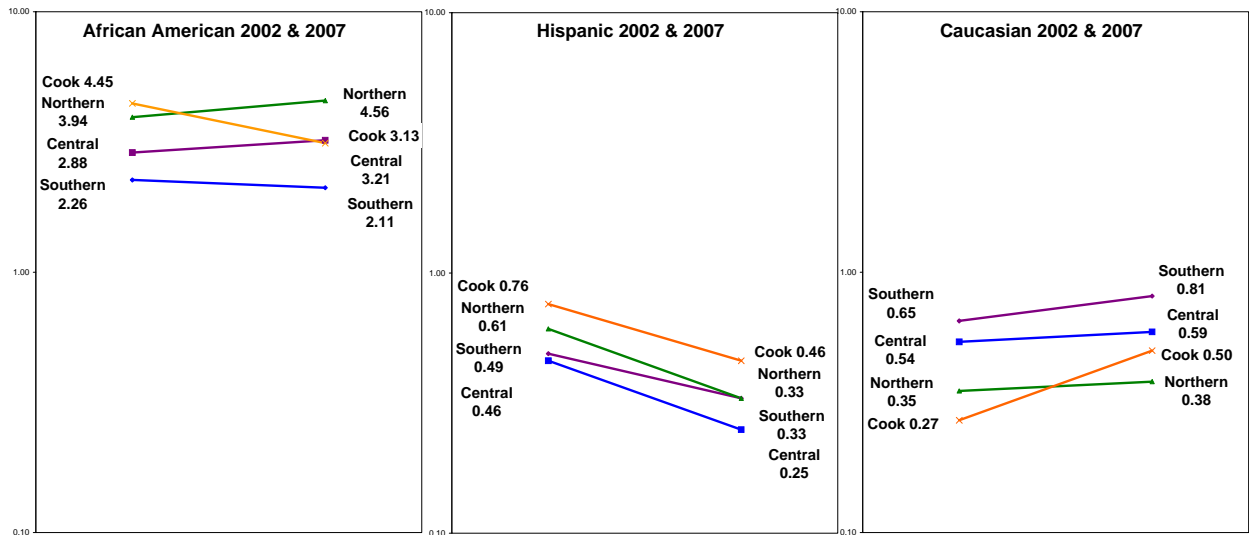
In Figures 3-10 the dark line going down the middle is equal to one. At one, all is equal: all children of all races are just as likely to experience the outcome. Ratios greater than one show disproportionality. The racial group with a disproportionality ratio greater than one is that much more likely than other racial groups in the state, to experience the outcome. Conversely, a number less than one means that the racial group is less likely to experience the outcome. For example, in Figure 3, African American children in the Northern region are 4.56 times more likely to have a report of maltreatment than other racial groups in the state, and Hispanic children in the Northern region are only one-third (.33) as likely to have a report of maltreatment. It should be noted, however, that in some instances experiencing an outcome (for instance, stability in foster care) is a positive outcome and other times (for instance, a report of maltreatment) is a negative outcome. We have therefore colored 'Under' or 'Over' red when it is a negative outcome (such as an indicated allegation of maltreatment) and green when it is a positive outcome (such as stability).

Another item of note is that there is no clear standard for what is significant disproportionality. We leave that choice to the reader. Is .90 or 1.10 too close to 1 to be concerned about? We use 10% on either side as a guide for highlighting over or under representation. In addition, we have used a logarithmic scale to graph these odds. This allows us to show bars that are equal in length on either side of one. For instance, a bar that shows a population of children in two times as likely is the same length as a bar that shows a population that is half as likely (0.5) when plotted on this scale.

It is our intention for these ratios to be compared to one another, so that policies and practices can be aimed at curbing disproportional representation with the largest of those ratios within each outcome. It should be emphasized that the appearance of disparity is not in and of itself sufficient evidence of racial bias or institutional discrimination. These data are descriptive and should be interpreted as invitations to investigate the issue more thoroughly in order to determine whether the disparity arises from greater family income needs or deficits in social support as opposed to prejudice or discriminatory treatment.

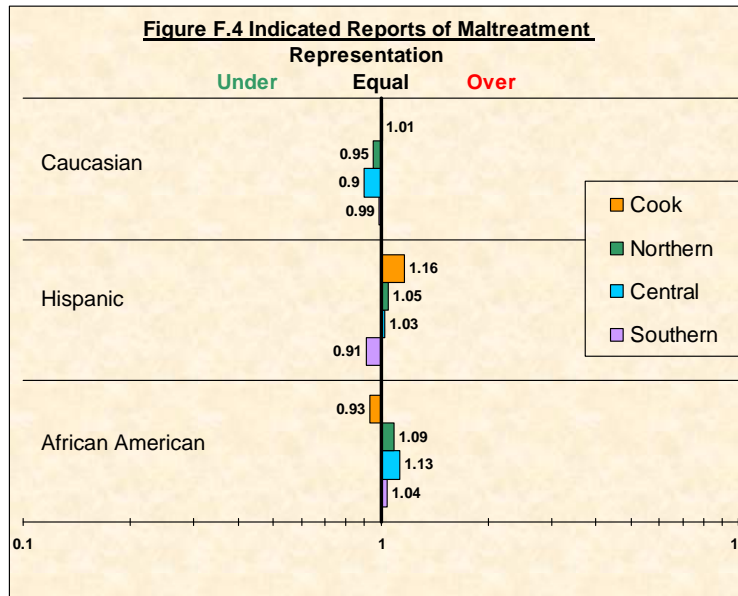


Trends in Maltreatment Investigations
 (Note: downward movement means that things are improving)



When explored within Illinois, across all DCFS regions, this disproportional representation persists. As shown in Figure 3, in Northern region, African American children are 4.56 times more likely to have a maltreatment investigation than any other children in the state. African American children in the Central region are 3.21 times more likely, 3.13 times more likely in Cook County and 2.11 times in the Southern region. Caucasian and Hispanic children across the board are less likely to be investigated for maltreatment anywhere in the state, but Caucasian children in the Southern region are the least likely.

This same outcome was examined five years ago, and that data (above) shows that over representation for African American children has improved (less disparity) in Cook (from 4.45 to 3.13), but is worse for African American children in Northern (from 3.94 to 4.56) and Central (2.88 to 3.21) regions. This also shows improvement among the Hispanic population across the state and an increase among Caucasian children in Cook (from 0.27 to 0.50).



Trends in Indicated Reports of Maltreatment (Note: downward movement means that things are improving)

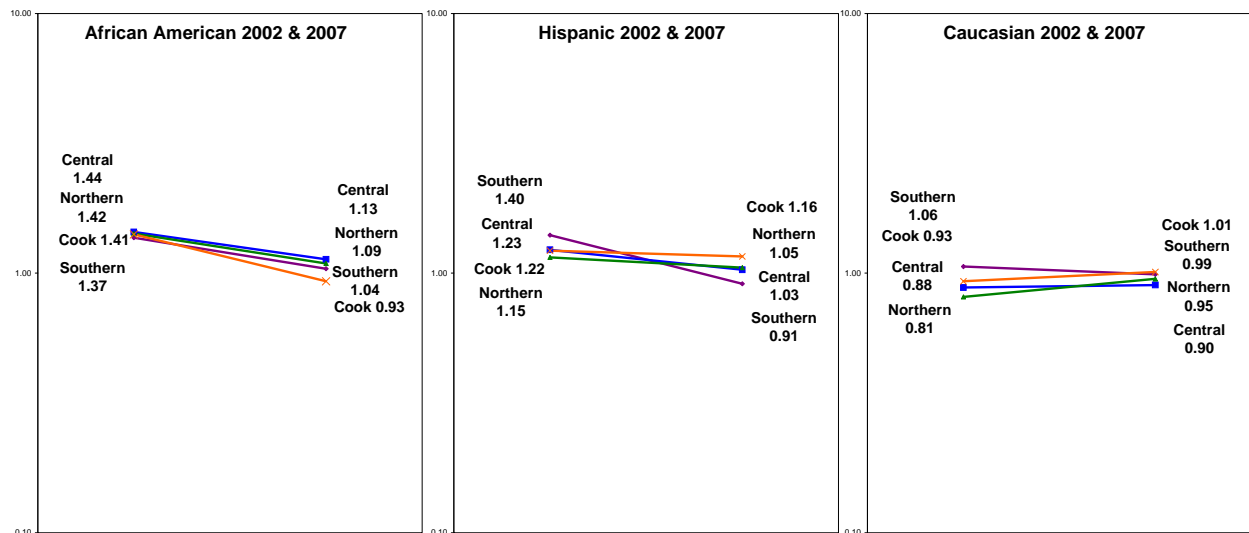
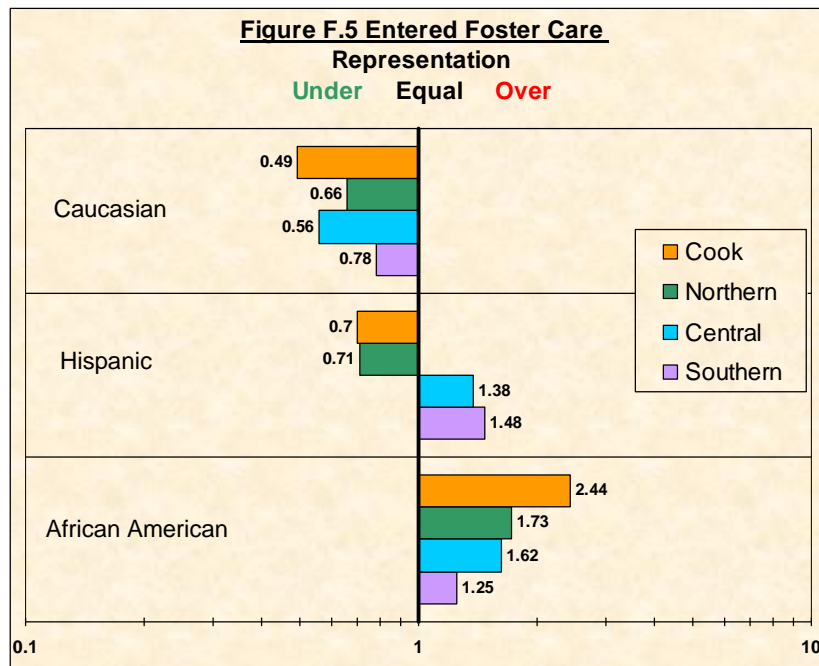


Figure 4 shows the representation as it relates to indicated reports of maltreatment (or reports of maltreatment where the maltreatment was believed to have occurred). This figure shows very little over representation at this stage. This is similar to findings reported earlier by Center staff that

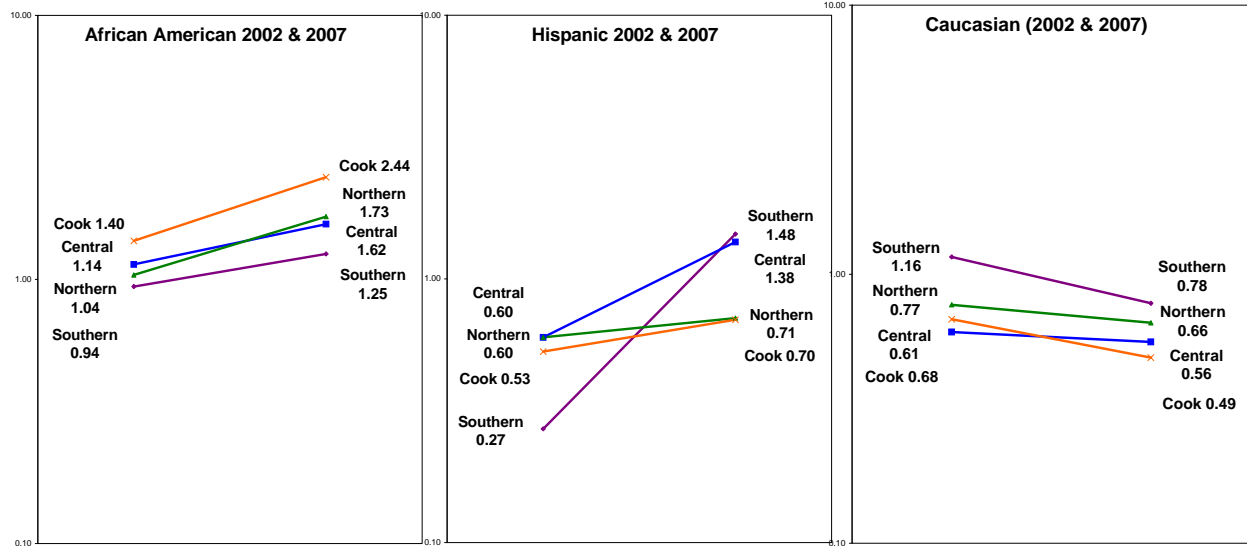
showed no cross-racial bias at the point of indication⁵. That research looked at the likelihood that a Caucasian investigator would find reason to indicate a maltreatment investigation if the family being investigated was African American, and, conversely, the likelihood that a African American worker would indicate a maltreatment report if the family was Caucasian. Researchers found no reason to believe that a cross-race bias was occurring. They did find, however, that Caucasian workers were, across the board, more likely to indicate a maltreatment investigation than an African American worker, and that African American families were more likely to be indicated than Caucasian families, regardless of the race of the investigator. It should also be noted that while there appears to be no over representation at this stage, this reinforces the disparity that occurs at the point of investigation. As depicted in the trend lines above, when examined five years ago under representation has improved for African American children in all parts of the state, and for children of Hispanic ethnicity in the Central region.



⁵ Rolock, N., & Testa, M. (2005). Indicated child abuse and neglect reports: Is the investigation process racially biased? In Derezotes et al. (Eds.). (2005). *Race matters in child welfare. The overrepresentation of African American children in the system* (pp. 119-130). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Trends in Entering Substitute Care

(Note: downward movement means that things are improving)



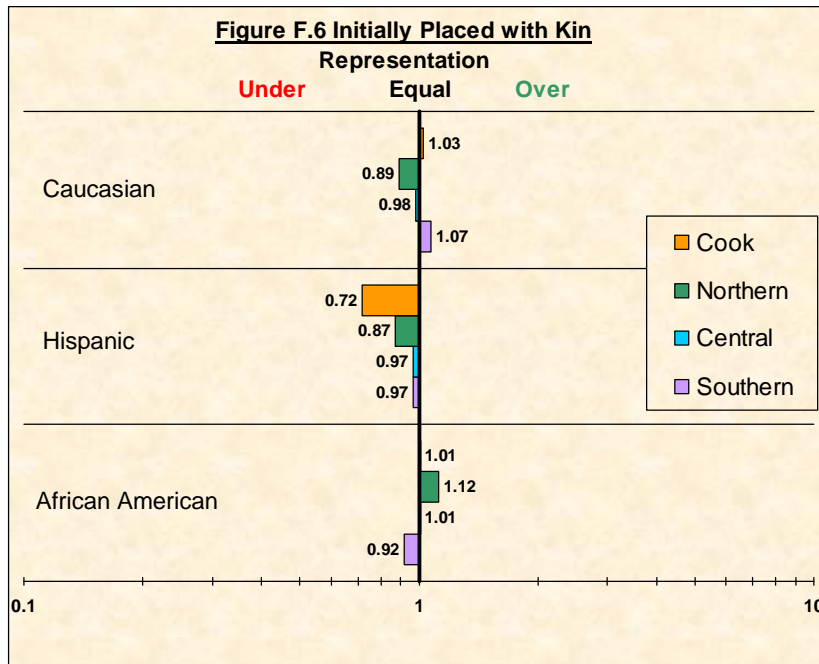
As depicted in Figure 2, the next big jump in percent of African American children involved with the child welfare system is at the point at which they enter foster care. This outcome looks at all the children with an indicated report of maltreatment, the number that enter substitute care. As shown in Figure 5, African American children are over represented at the rate at which they enter foster care in every region, and this disparity has worsened over the past five years: African American children are 2.44 times more likely to enter foster care in Cook (up from 1.4 five years ago), 1.73 times more likely in the Northern region (up from 1.04), 1.62 in Central region (up from 1.14) and 1.25 times more likely in the Southern region (up from 0.94). Hispanic children are also over represented in Southern (1.48) and Central (1.38) regions. Both of these rates of involvement of Hispanic children are increases over the five years ago when Hispanic children were under represented (0.27 and 0.6 respectively).

Outcomes for children that have entered foster care

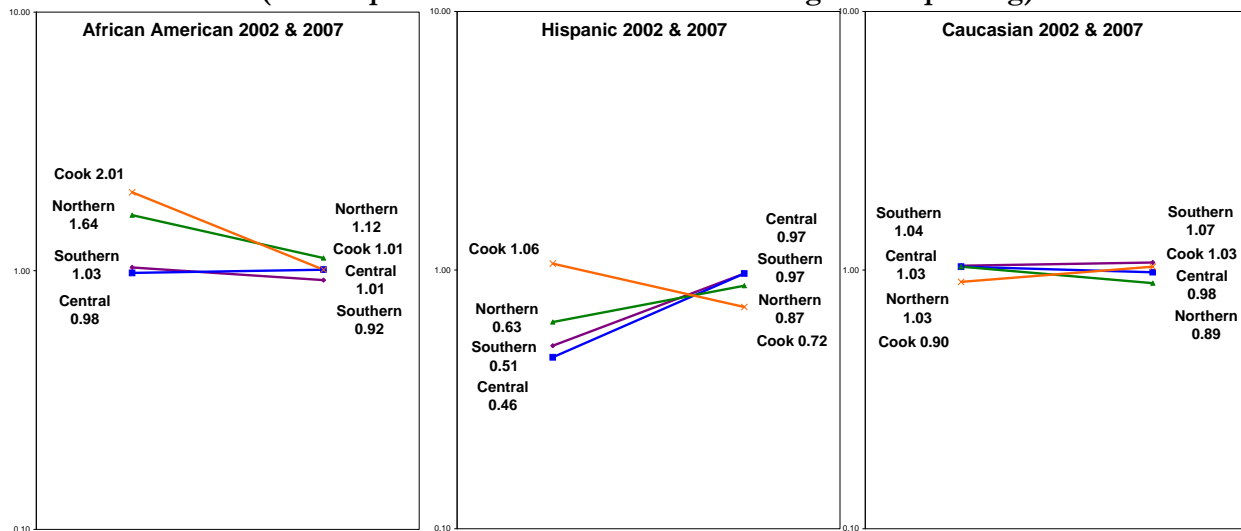
Once a child has entered foster care, child welfare systems should seek to provide continuity, stability and the likelihood of permanence. Each of these outcomes will be examined. ***Please note that continuity, stability and permanence are positive outcomes and, as such, being over represented – more likely to achieve the outcome – is desirable. Yet, the outcome of remaining in care and not attaining permanence would be undesirable, and the color and direction of the graphs reflect this difference.***

To assess continuity, we look at the likelihood of placement with kin. As previously mentioned, Center research has shown that placement with kin provides stable and safe homes for foster children. Stability is measured in terms of three or fewer moves within the first year of a child entering foster care. Permanence is measured in terms of those children for whom a permanent

home is found, either through reunification or subsidized adoption or guardianship within three years of entering foster care.

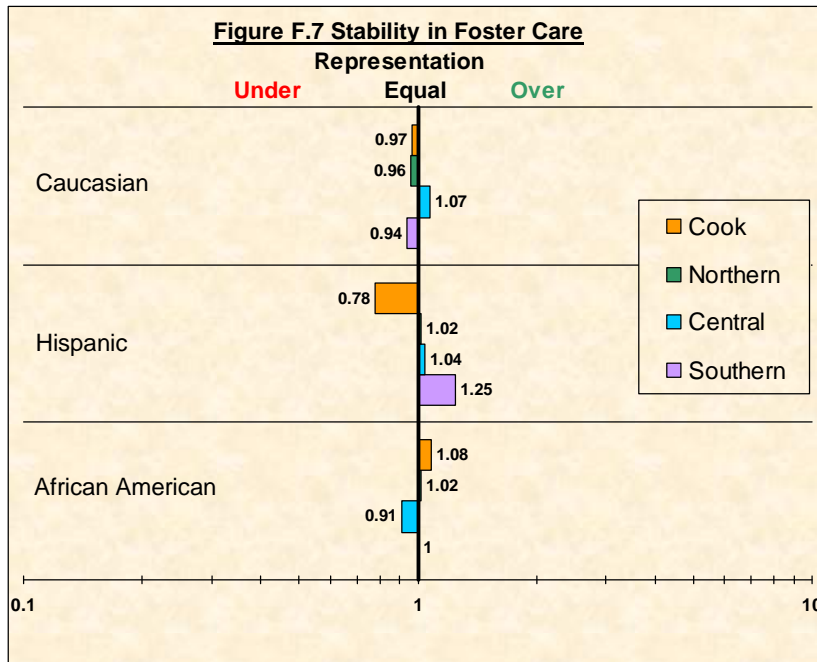


Trends in Being Initially Placed with Kin (Note: upward movement means that things are improving)

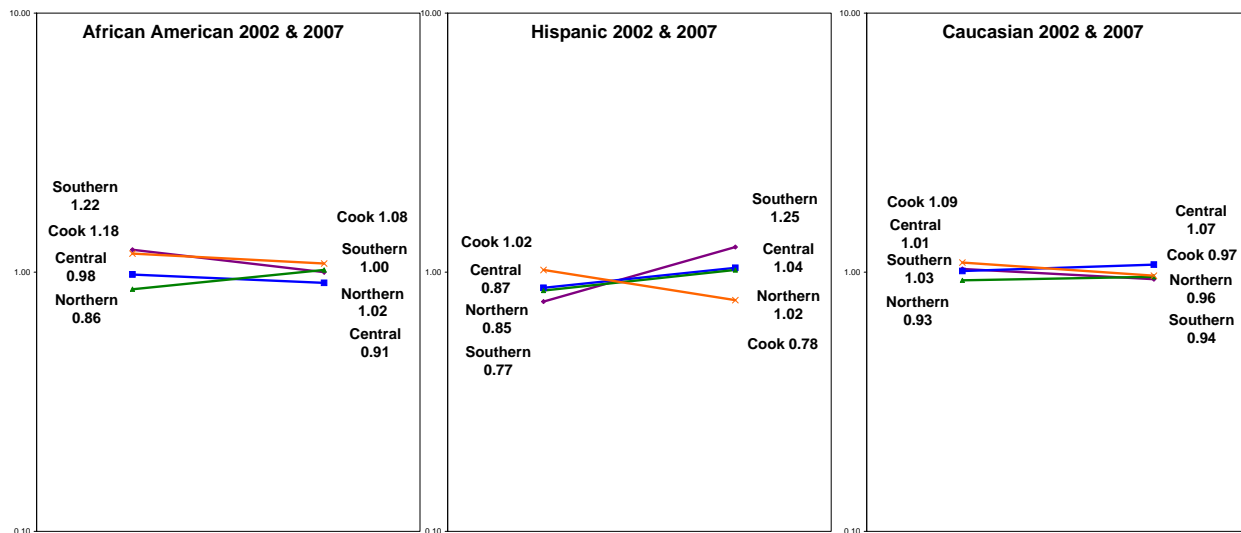


Continuity: Placement with kin This outcome looks at the cohort of children that entered care during the year and were initially placed with kin. As depicted in Figure 6, this is an area with very little disproportionality by race across all regions. If we assume that a 10 percent variation around the ‘equal’ line is attributable to normal variation, then, aside from Hispanic children in Cook (0.72), none of the other groups fall outside these bounds. Five years ago, African American children were more likely to be placed with kin in Cook (2.01) and in the Northern region (1.64) and Hispanic

children were less likely in Central (0.46), Southern (0.51) and Northern (0.63) regions, but this variation has changed in recent years.

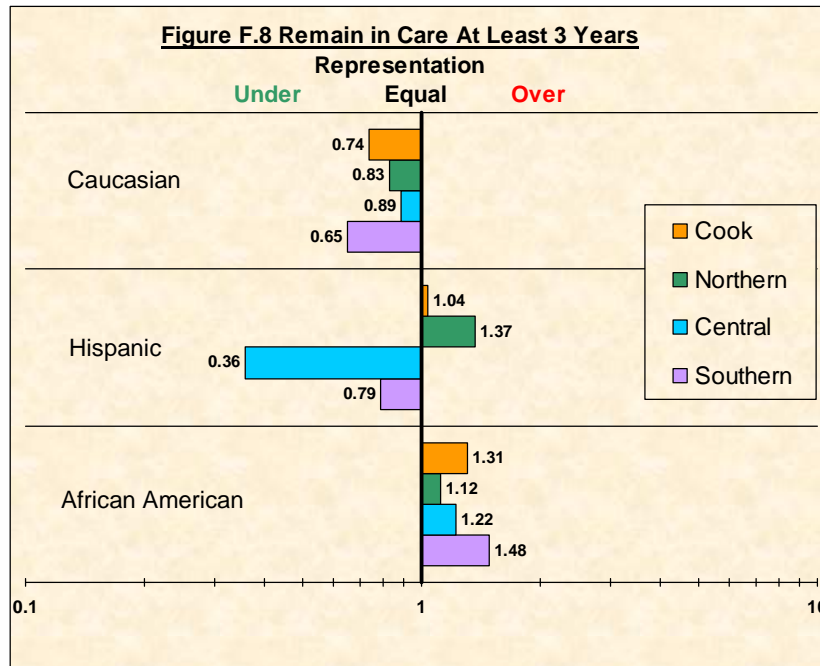


Trends in Stability in Foster Care (Note: upward movement means that things are improving)

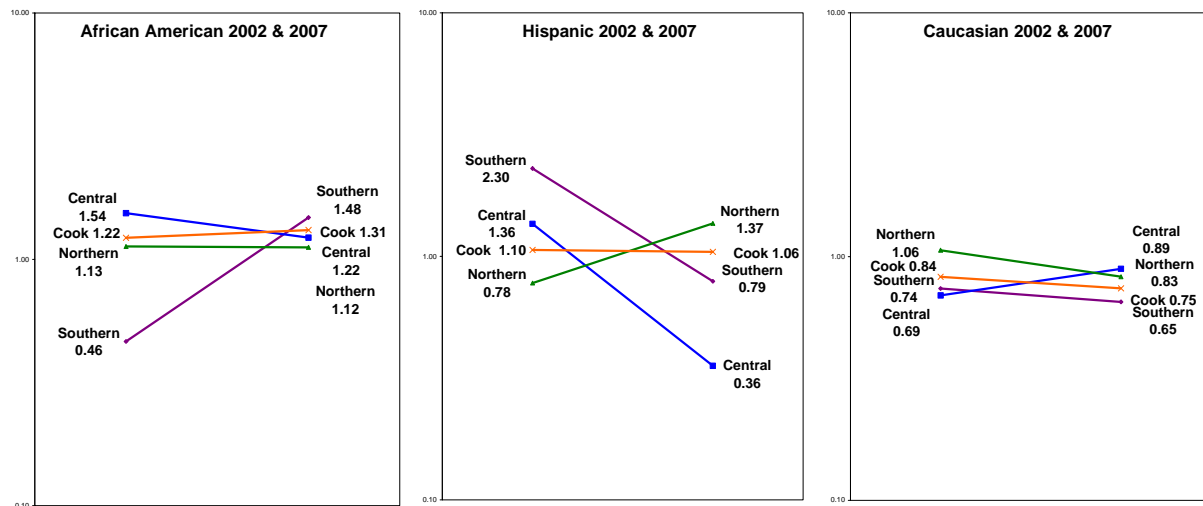


Stability: Three or fewer moves This measure looks at all children that entered foster care during the year, and the percentage of children that had no more than two placements within their first year of care. Figure 7 shows the results for stability. Very little difference exists in the likelihood of stability across ethnicities and regions. Hispanic children in Cook are the least likely to experience stability (0.78), and this is worse than five years ago when they experienced very little difference (1.02). Perhaps this has something to do with their placement with non-kin, as shown in the previous figure. Hispanic

children in the Southern region are more likely to experience stability (1.25, when using the alternative risk ratio – please see the methodology section at the end of this report for more explanation). Very little has changed for African American or Caucasian children.



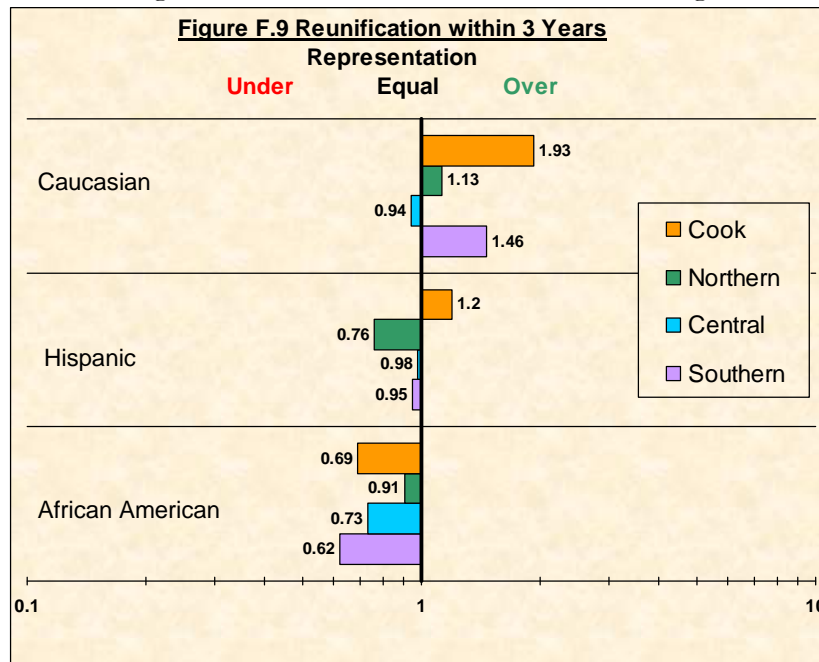
Trends in Remain in Care at Least 3 Years (Note: downward movement means that things are improving)



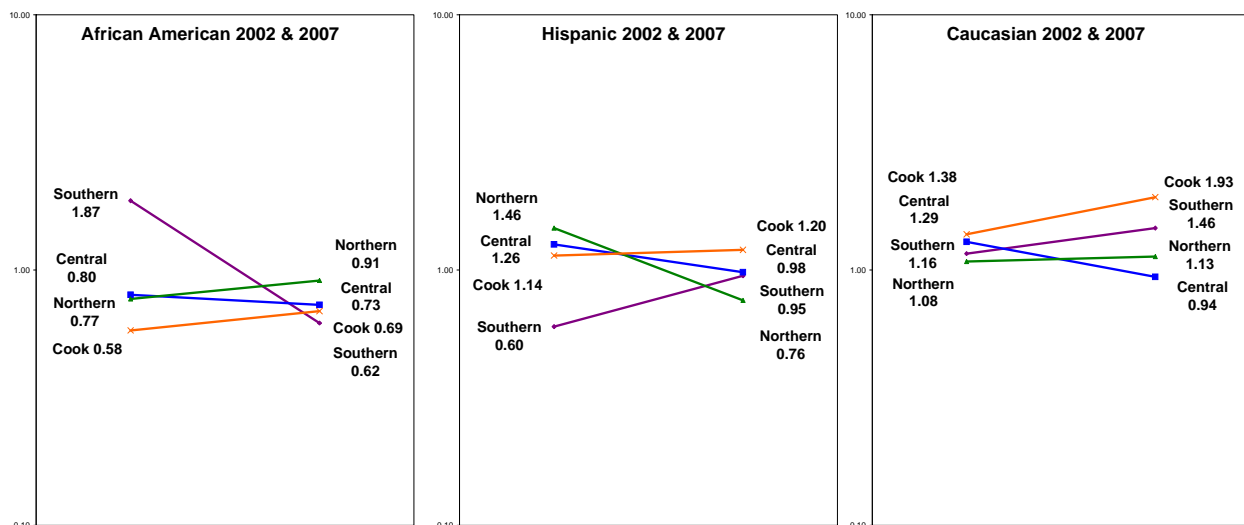
Likelihood of remaining in care for at least three years For this measure we look at all children that entered substitute care three years ago, and have not exited to a permanent home (through reunification, adoption, or subsidized guardianship) within three years. Going back to Figure 2, African American children make up 60% of the children who remain in foster care for at least three years without finding a permanent home. This difference compounds the impact of disproportionality of African American children because more African American children enter foster care, fewer African

American children exit foster care to permanence thus more African American children are in foster care longer than any other children.

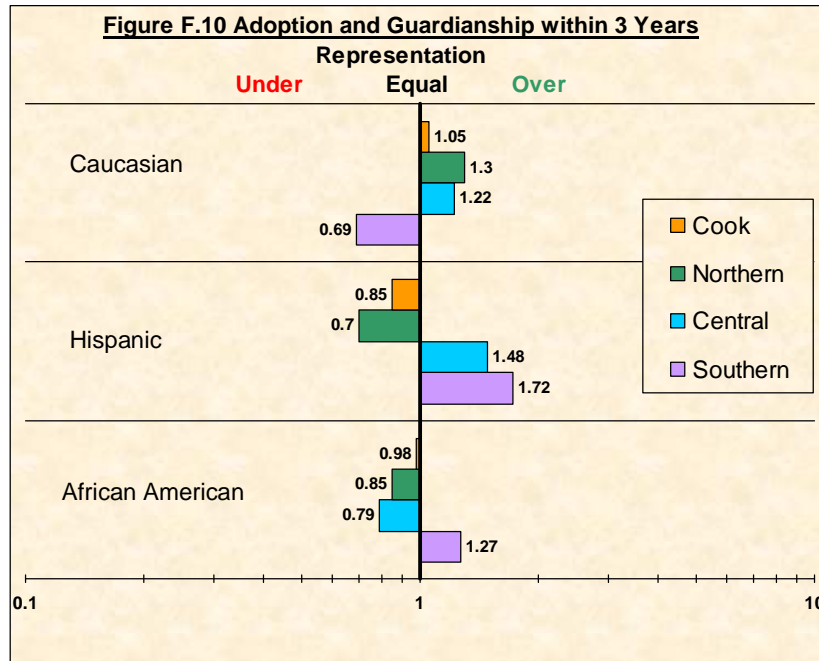
As depicted in Figure 8, African American children are more likely to remain in foster care for at least three years, regardless of the region in which they live. The Cook rate is 1.3, followed by Southern at 1.48, Central at 1.22 and Northern at 1.12. In addition, children of Hispanic ethnicity in the Northern (1.37) region are also over-represented in this measure. The trend lines show that these trends are similar to what they were five years ago for African American children in all regions except for the Southern region where this measure has reversed among African American children.



Trends in Reunification within Three Years (Note: upward movement means that things are improving)

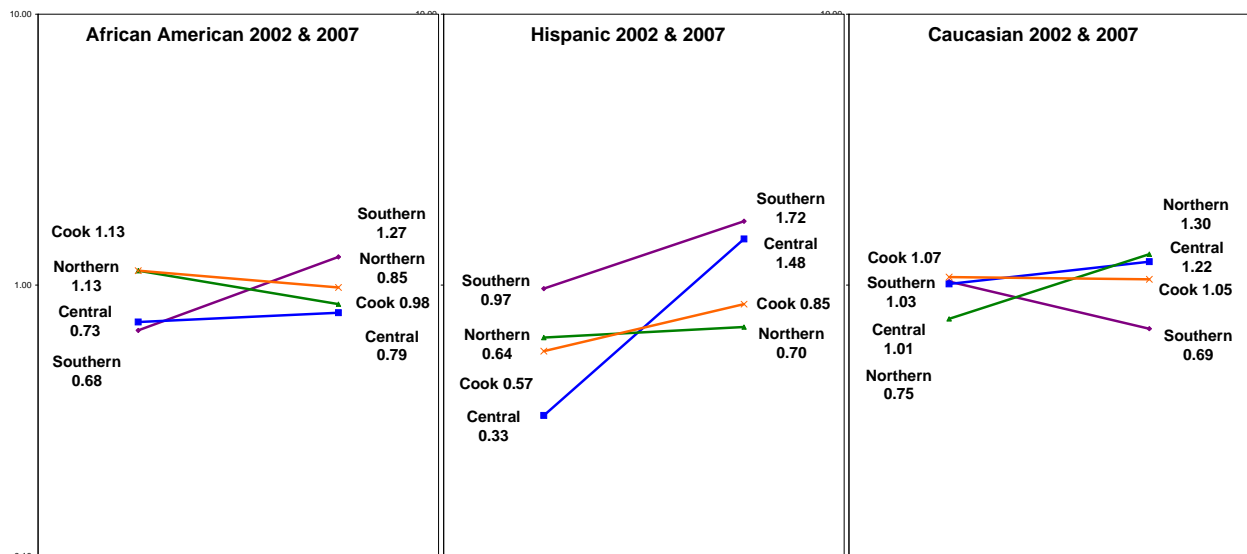


When broken out by the type of permanence, African American children are under represented in their likelihood of reunification within three years. As shown in Figure 9, African American children in the Southern region are 0.62 times as likely to be reunified, and this under representation has increased (it was 1.87 five years ago) significantly. In Cook County and in the Northern region African Americans faring better – in Cook the likelihood has gone from 0.58 to 0.69, and in the Northern region from 0.77 to 0.91. In addition, Hispanic children in Northern (0.76) are also under represented, and they were doing better five years ago (1.46). Conversely, Hispanic children in the Southern region have seen their likelihood increase – from 0.6 to 0.86.



Trends in Adoption or Subsidized Guardianship within Three Years

(Note: upward movement means that things are improving)



As depicted in Figure 10, we have grouped children exiting to subsidized adoption or guardianship together. For these children, under representation occurs among Caucasian children in the Southern region (0.69), Hispanic children in the Northern region (0.7) and African American children in the Central region (0.79) and Northern region (0.85). Five years ago African American children were over represented in both Northern and Cook (both 1.13), so this has declined while the likelihood of African Americans in the Southern region experiencing adoption or guardianship has improved (from 0.68 to 1.27). Hispanic children have also seen their likelihood of adoption or guardianship increase in the Southern region (from 0.97 to 1.72) and in the Central region (from 0.33 to 1.48).

Summary of Methodology

Overrepresentation in the child welfare system can be evaluated through a variety of methods – each one taking a slightly different approach to answering the same question: is the likelihood that one racial/ethnic group will experience an outcome greater or less than the likelihood for other racial/ethnic groups. For instance, we might want to know if African American children are more or less likely to experience stability in foster care, or to exit foster care to permanence compared to children of other races and ethnicities.

Over the years researchers have employed a variety of tools to address this issue. Some differences in the methodologies employed in this type of analysis relate to which groups of children are being compared. For instance, one could look at the percent of the foster care population by race or ethnicity, and compare that to the percent of that race or ethnicity in the child population as a whole. This provides a general understanding of the degree of over- or under-representation of a particular racial group in the foster care population. In addition, one could look at the racial or ethnic composition of the children that enter foster care, and compare it to those that exit foster care to a permanent placement. Understanding overrepresentation, however, often requires a more detailed analysis that takes into consideration the dynamics at a local level – in specific counties, LANs or regions. Often the racial makeup in these smaller communities impacts racial disproportionality. Looking at disproportionality within the state, one can compare across the state, and target policies and practices to areas that are most in need.

This work is based upon research and methodology developed at Westat⁶, an independent research firm, to look at disproportionality in the special education arena and the need to target specific school districts within a state. The author would like to acknowledge that she has followed the example set out by Westat and applied it directly to this work. The author would like to thank Westat for their clear and concise explanation that served as a model for this explanation. What follows is Westat's methodology and explanations, applied to child welfare in Illinois. According to

⁶ Methods for Assessing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: A Technical Assistance Guide, July 2007 ([PDF](https://www.ideadata.org/TAMaterial.asp)) available at: <https://www.ideadata.org/TAMaterial.asp>

Westat, the most common measures for assessing disproportionality are composition, risk and risk ratio⁷. Each of these will be discussed next.

Risk measures the likelihood that children from a particular ethnic/racial group will experience an outcome – for instance, the likelihood that African American children will attain permanence within three years. This likelihood is then compared to the likelihood of another group attaining the same outcome. With the large numbers associated with state-level data, the risk ratio works well, but often there is a need to dig deeper to understand regional differences in representation because the racial makeup varies throughout the state. For instance, the low numbers of Hispanic children in foster care in the Southern region make it impossible to calculate the risk for this population. There are areas of Illinois where one racial or ethnic group is not very prominent, yet there is interest in understanding disproportionality in all regions, of all ethnicities/races. Risk ratio is influenced not only by the racial break-out of the race in question, but also of the comparison group – all the other children. The article that this analysis is based on does a nice job of showing how a racial group may have the same risk in two communities, but very different risk ratios because of the variability in the community-level racial distributions. It is precisely because of these variations that the Westat authors developed a weighted risk ratio to allow for comparisons within a state.

When the racial breakout of a population varies from community to community, a weighted risk ratio⁸ can be used that allows for comparison across communities within a state. The weighted risk ratio standardizes the racial distribution of a community to match that of the state, thus allowing states to discern where the greatest disproportionality exists within a state and target resources accordingly. The weighted risk ratio uses regional level risk for the racial group in question (in the numerator) and a weighted risk ratio of all other children (minus the target group) in the denominator. It is suggested that the alternate risk ratio⁹ be used when fewer than 10 children of a specific racial group experience the outcome, or less than 10 children of the racial group have entered foster care.

How does this method compare to a risk ratio?

A risk ratio compares the risk of a targeted population with the risk of all other children, or to a specific racial group, depending on how it is set up. For the purpose of this illustration, we will

⁷ Bollmer, Julie, Bethel, James, Garrison-Mogren, Roberta, and Brauen, Marsha, *Using the Risk Ratio to Assess Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education at the School-District Level* Journal of Special Education, v41 n3 p186-198 Fall 2007.

⁸ Weighted risk ratio for African American = [(1-state African American composition) * Region African American risk for outcome] / [(State Caucasian composition * Region Caucasian risk for outcome) + (State Hispanic composition * Region Hispanic risk for outcome) + (State Other composition * Region Other risk for outcome)]

⁹ Alternate African American risk ratio = [(African American children in region / All African American children that experienced the outcome in the region) / (All other children in the state) / (All other children that experienced the outcome)]

discuss a risk ratio that compares one race to all other races since this is what the weighted risk ratio does.

The biggest difference in the two methodologies is that a risk ratio is not weighted to consider the racial makeup of the entire state. Borrowing once again from Westat, we will compare three fictitious communities within a state to look at the differences between the weighted risk ratio (WRR) and a risk ratio. By looking at data from this fictitious state we are able to present an extreme example that will help illustrate the differences.

In our fictitious state, African American children make up 12% of the child population in the state, 14% are Hispanic, 70% Caucasian and 4% children of other races, yet the three communities under review within that state are very different in terms of their racial composition. The racial composition of the three communities is:

- Community X is 10% African American children, 35% Hispanic, 50% Caucasian and 5% children of other races.
- Community Y is 5% African American children, 80% Hispanic, 10% Caucasian and 5% children of other races.
- Community Z is 40% African American children, 15% Hispanic, 40% Caucasian and 5% children of other races.

The fictitious part comes in when we examine the likelihood of a child of a particular race attaining an outcome. In each of these communities, the risk for attaining an outcome (reunification, for example) is exactly the same for all children of the same ethnicity: 45% of African Americans are reunified, regardless of where in the state they live; 30% of Hispanic children and 20% of Caucasian children.

Remember that what we are trying to understand is the likelihood that a child of one race (African Americans, for instance) will experience an outcome (reunification). Since we know that 45% of African American children in this state will be reunified, no matter where they live, we apply the weighted risk ratio formula to our data and find out that African American children are 2.18 times as likely as all other children in the state to be reunified. Because the risk for attaining the outcome is the same for all children of the same race/ethnicity, the WRR method shows exactly the same risk in each of our three communities.

A risk ratio, however, is influenced by the racial composition of the community. Using this same data, the risk ratio shows that African American children in Community X are 1.92 times as likely to be reunified, and in Community Y are 1.60 times as likely, and in Z are 2.14 times as likely to be

reunified. The community with the largest African American population (Community Z) has the greatest risk for African American children to attain reunification according to the risk ratio methodology. By standardizing according to the population of the state, as done with the WRR, we arrive at community-level data that is comparable across the entire state and we can compare outcomes in one community with the outcomes of a neighboring community.

| Fictitious State Data | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------|------|---------------------|
| | Risk Ratio | | | Weighted Risk Ratio |
| Community: | X | Y | Z | X, Y or Z |
| African American | 1.92 | 1.60 | 2.14 | 2.18 |
| Hispanic | 1.29 | 1.20 | 1.07 | 1.33 |
| White | 0.64 | 0.67 | 0.59 | 0.63 |

Discussion

This report outlines a framework for looking at racial disproportionality. It shows where in the state over or under representation exists and at what decision points it is most prominent. The method outlined here allows the reader to compare ratios across regions, across races/ethnicities, and even across outcomes. This report does not, however, promote a standard for when over or under representation should be of concern – we leave that to the reader.

It is our hope that these ratios can be used to target policies and practices that address racial disproportionality. It should also be noted that these data are descriptive and should be the beginning point for looking at under and over representation more thoroughly. We have not discussed such things as family income or structure, community or social supports, or other factors that may play a part in who is initially involved in foster care, or the likelihood of reunification, for instance. These factors need to be addressed in future analysis. We also hope to better understand the trends in each region of the state through additional analysis.