



**Children's
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Racial Disproportionality and Poverty in Child Welfare

Centennial Topical Webinar Series

May 30, 2012



Agenda

- Dr. Fred Wulczyn, Senior Research Fellow, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
- Dr. Lonnie Snowden, Professor, University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health
- Dr. Brett Drake, Professor, Washington University in St. Louis, School of Social Work
- Questions and Answers

Child Welfare, Race, and Disparity: New Insights, New Opportunities

Dr. Fred Wulczyn

Support and Collaboration

- Support
 - Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs
 - Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data
- Collaborators
 - Robert Gibbons
 - Lonnie Snowden
 - Ada Skyles
 - Bridgette Lery

The Premise

- Looking at new questions
 - Is and where?
- The approach
- The findings
 - Maltreatment
 - Foster care
 - The specifics and the patterns

Basic Questions

- Where is disparity the greatest?
- What else can we say about where we find the greatest levels of disparity?
- Focus is on the social characteristics of place for blacks and whites

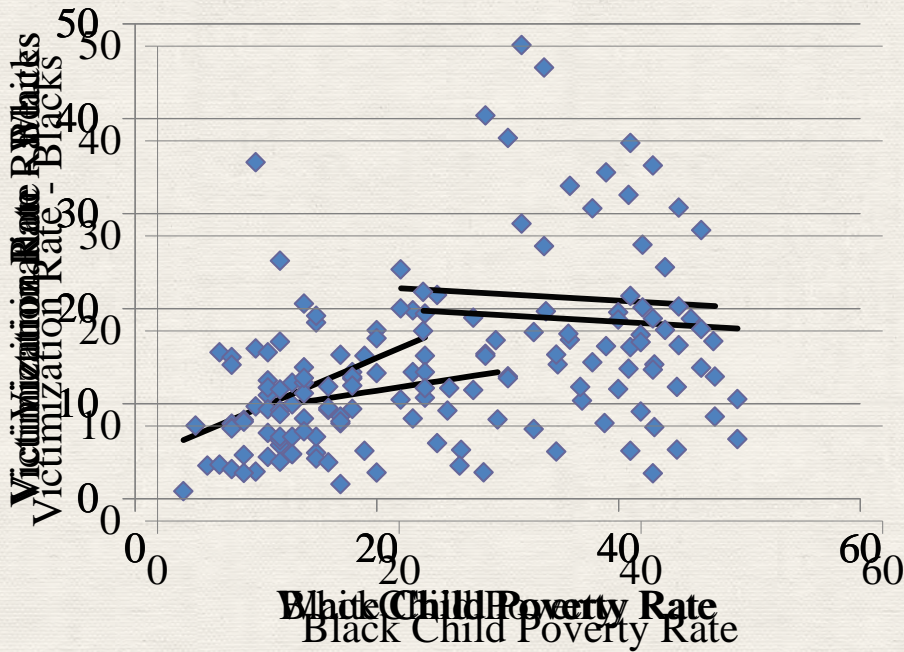
Disparity

- Maltreatment
 - Ratio of black victims per 1000 black children to white victims per 1000
- Placement disparity
 - Ratio of black placements per 1000 black children to white placements per 1000
- Exit disparity
 - Rate of placement exit for blacks relative to the rate of exit for whites

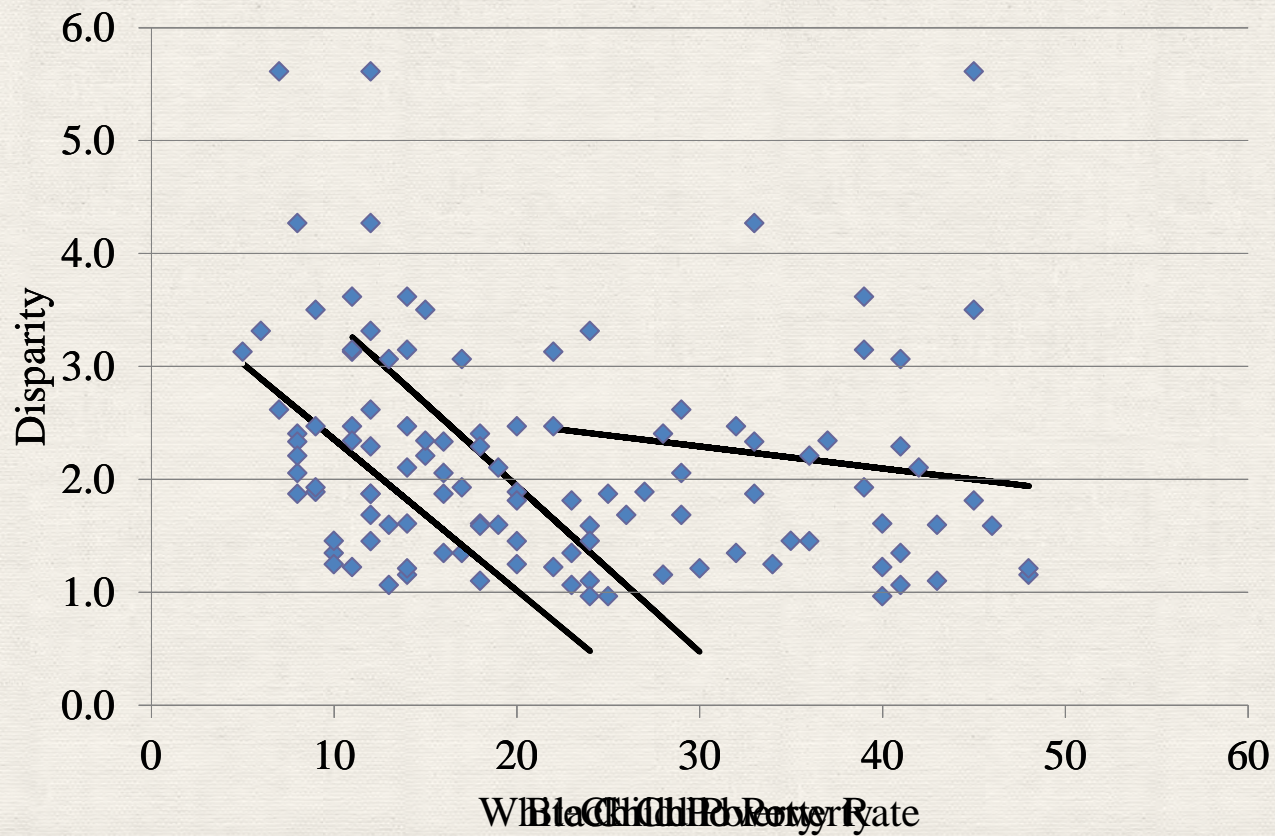
What are we looking for?

- A way to talk about the role that social and economic disadvantage play relative to disparity.
 - Are our poorest counties the places where we find the greatest disparity?
 - Why start here?

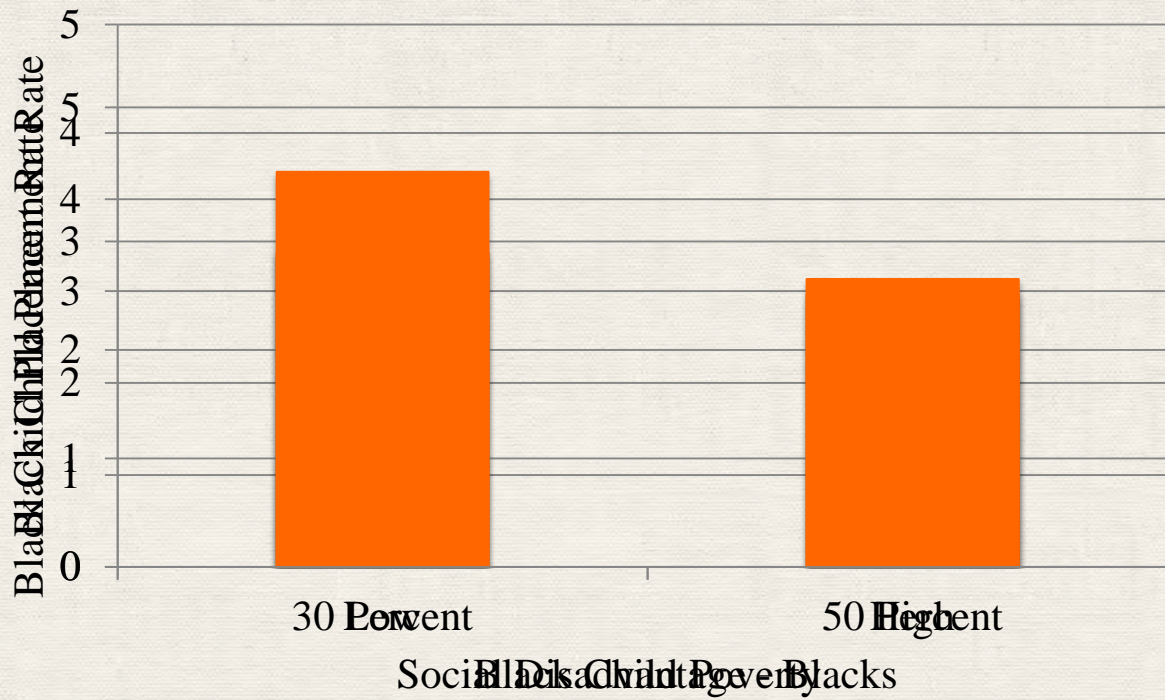
Maltreatment Rates by State Poverty Rate



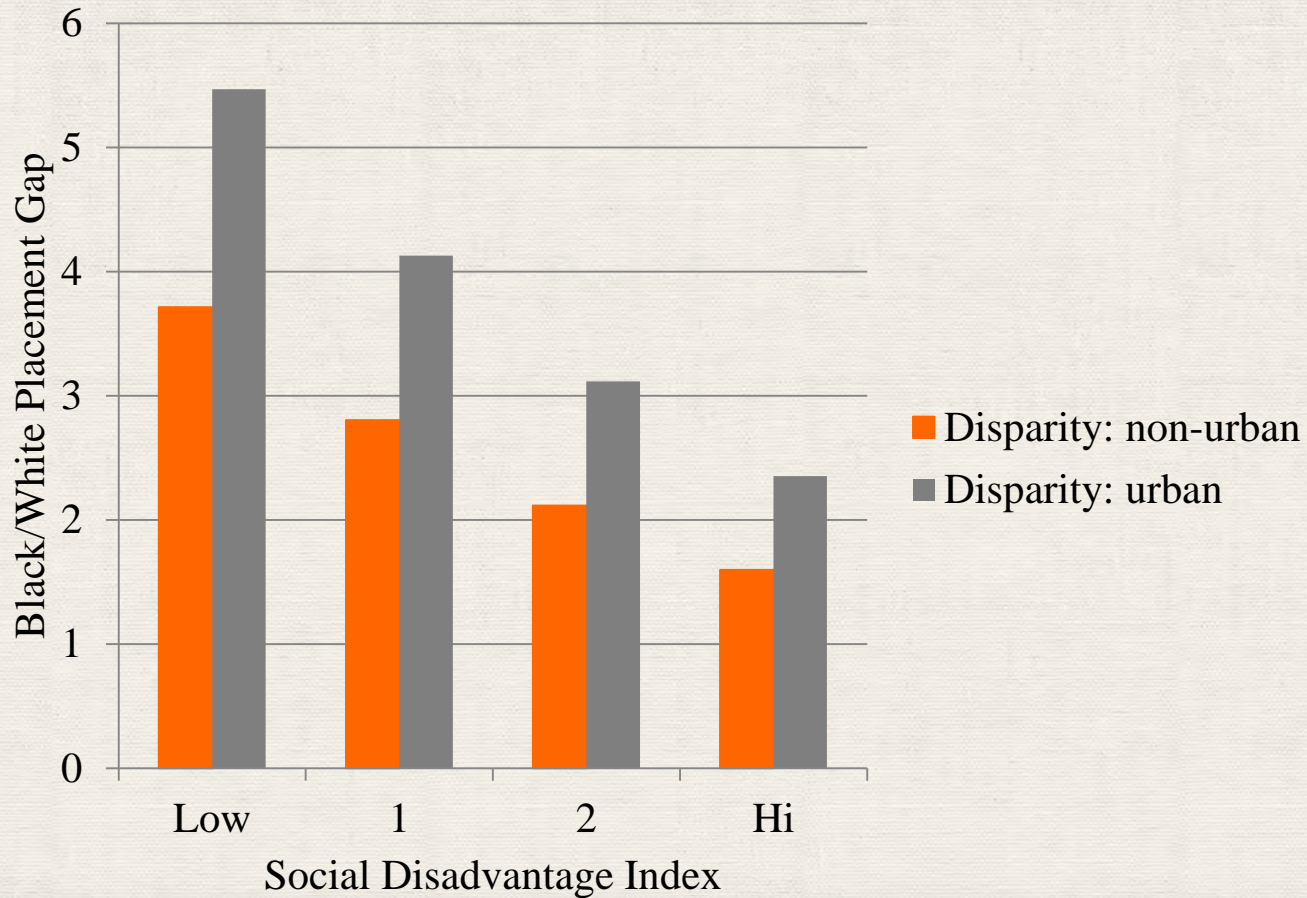
Maltreatment Disparity by State



Placement Rates and Social Disadvantage

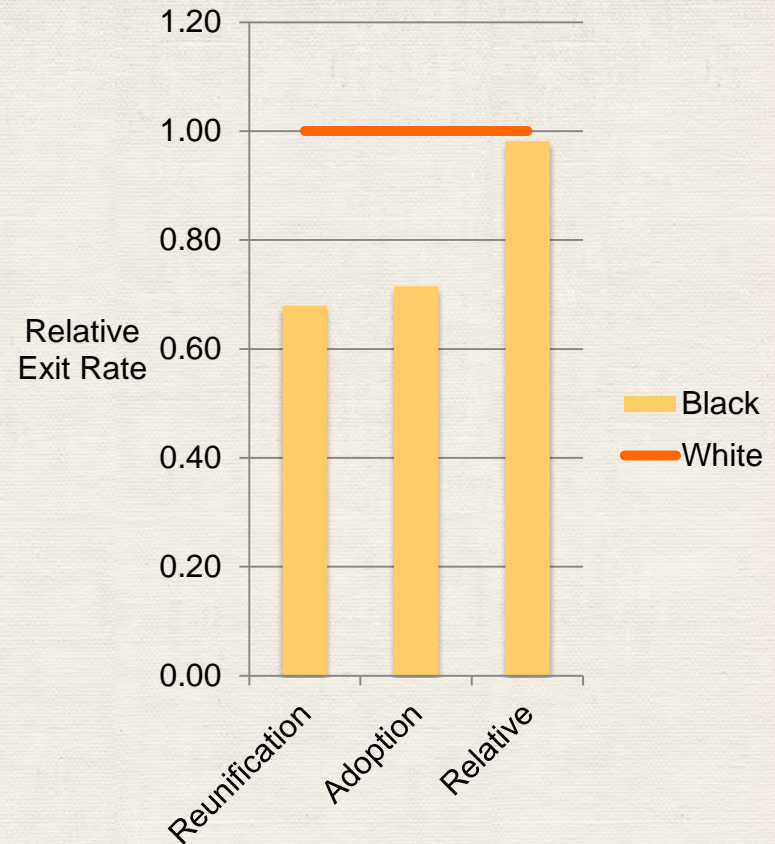


Placement Disparity



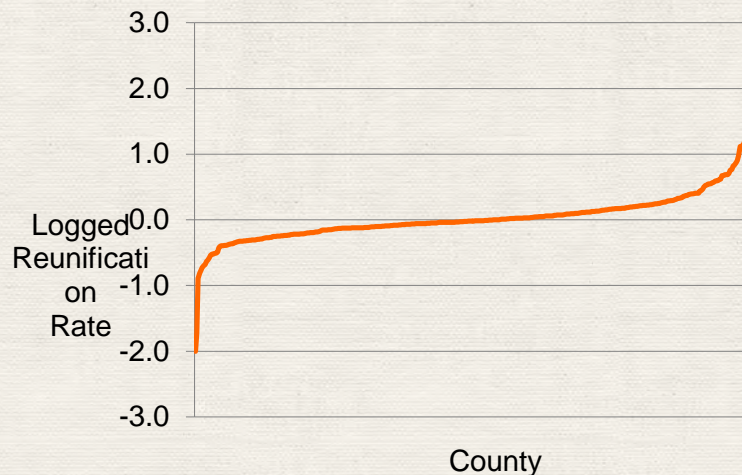
Basic Findings

- REUNIFICATION
 - Compared to white children, black children exit to reunification more slowly (.68 to 1).
- ADOPTION
 - Compared to white children, black children exit to adoption more slowly (.71 to 1).
- RELATIVES (e.g., guardianship)
 - Little difference when children are discharged to relatives.



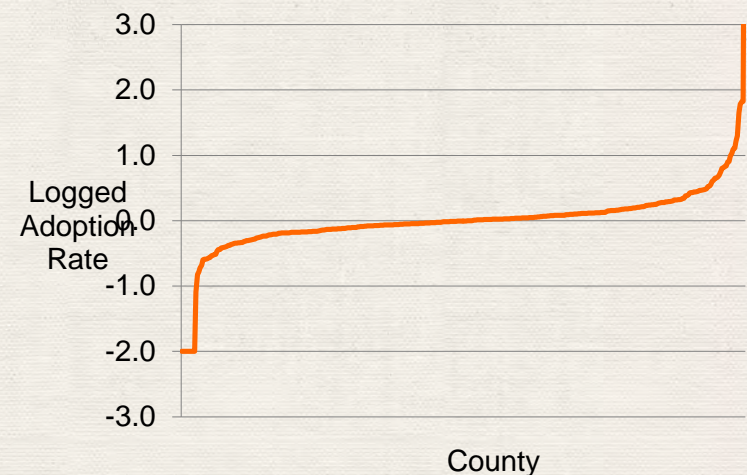
Relative rates of exit do vary

Rate of Reunification:
Black Children Relative to Other Children



Across 400 counties, black children are reunified as fast or faster in nearly 50% of the counties.

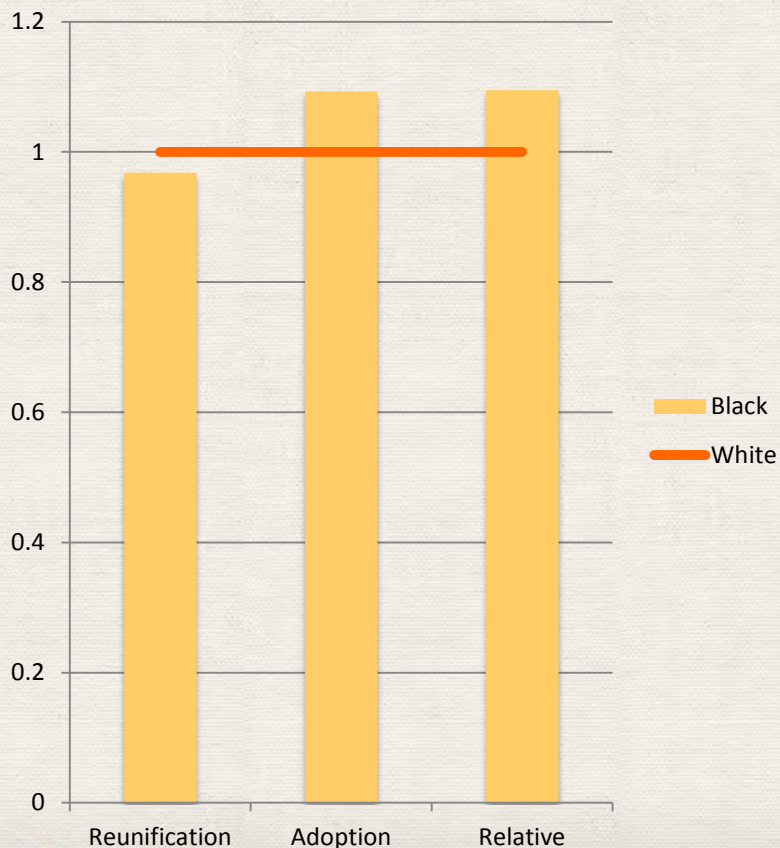
Rate of Adoption:
Black Children Relative to Other Children



Across 400 counties, black children are adopted as fast or faster in nearly 50% of the counties.

Full Model

Rate of Exit:
Black Children Relative to White Children



Child level characteristics:

- Babies are slower to be reunified; are adopted and discharged to relatives more quickly
- Children in foster homes reunify more slowly; are adopted more quickly; are discharged to guardianships more slowly
- In the first 6 months, likelihood of reunification and guardianship is high, adoption is low
- Race effect on reunification and adoption is diminished

County level characteristics:

- Percent black slows the average rate of reunification; no level one effect
- Higher placement rates tend to push exit rates up

Conclusion

- Prior research – Coulton, Drake, etc.
- Many more questions
 - System effects, policy effects
 - Geo-developmental hot spots – babies, teens
- What does “where” mean?
- Bring the narrative together
- Investing in equity

Disparities, Distressed Neighborhoods and Child Welfare System Participation: Sociological and Public Health Foundations

Dr. Lonnie Snowden

Disparities: A Multi-Level Problem

Disparities can occur at several levels of potential and realized child welfare involvement:

- Child abuse reporting: allegation, investigation, reporting, substantiation
- Foster care placement, placement disruption
- Parent and participation in services: referral, uptake, participation, effectiveness
- Foster care exit
- Permanency

Poverty: A Widely-Applicable, Partial Explanation

- Might explain disparities found at several levels of child welfare involvement
- Mediation analysis required: Disparities in one factor (e.g. SES) do not necessarily explain disparities in another factor (e.g. child welfare placement rates)
- Poverty: simple and powerful, but complex and subtle

Poverty and Place: Impoverished *People*

When people come together, we see the aggregate effect on behavior from their characteristics as *individual people*.

Poverty and Place: Impoverished *Places*

When people come together, we see the *social* effects on behavior of group characteristics: shared understandings, unspoken assumptions, expressed rules about how one can, and should or should not, behave.

When people come together, we see the effects on behavior of the shared physical, built and natural, environments.

Theoretical Perspectives on Social Disorganization

Social, not individual: Social Disorganization: A defining topic for sociology

William Julius Wilson: The Truly Disadvantaged

- “Deindustrialization” and concentrated poverty
- Social norms and physical deterioration, not individual people

Pro-social Norms in Impoverished Places and Elsewhere: Social Capital

Social engagement, social trust, reciprocity: A foundation for mutual assistance, collective action and social control

Prosocial networks and community based organizations

“Collective efficacy” reduces crime in impoverished neighborhoods and elsewhere and explains effects from neighborhood’s racial composition: Sampson, R J et al: *Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy*. Science (1997) pp. 918-924

A Historic Shift in Federal Housing Policy: Breaking Up Areas of Concentrated Poverty

On a “slender reeds of empirical support”: Disassembling poverty neighborhoods by encouraging poor people to move out and middle-class people to move in

The mixed results from research from “Moving to Opportunity” demonstration

Neglected: Maintaining old social networks and challenges encountered in creating new ones

Measuring Neighborhood Advantage and Disadvantage

Neighborhood level census indicators: family structure, education, unemployment

Increasing use of GIS and spatial mapping:
Characterizing the *physical environment* with increasing precision

Neighborhood Science and Public Health Programming and Policy

Clustering pathogens and other noxious agents (e.g. air pollution) and disease

Mapping the physical environment's constraints and opportunities: Outdoor space for exercise, grocers for healthy eating, fewer liquor stores

Community development and political action.

Toward Increased Use of Neighborhood Science for Child Welfare Programming and Policy

Better measuring and understanding key neighborhood indicators and *social* dynamics sensitive to African American placement rates

Monitoring African American placement rates and mapping high-risk areas

Longitudinal perspective: Changing social and economic conditions and changing placement rate disparities

Front-End Disproportionality in CA/N Past and Present

Dr. Brett Drake

The Question:

Is the nearly 2:1 overrepresentation of Black children among reported and substantiated child abuse victims* due to a racially biased child welfare system?

** This presentation is not about Foster Care – that is a far more complex issue which I will not address. These findings may be important, however, in considering who enters the system and thus, who may enter foster care later.*

How Do We Know Blacks are Reported More than Whites?

Child Maltreatment 2006

Because NCANDS (National Official Report Figures) show that African-Americans have more validated CPS reports than Whites (almost a 2:1 ratio).



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17th
YEAR OF REPORTING



So what are people thinking about the fact that Black kids, on a per child basis, are almost twice as likely to be in the child welfare system?

Two explanatory models have been suggested.

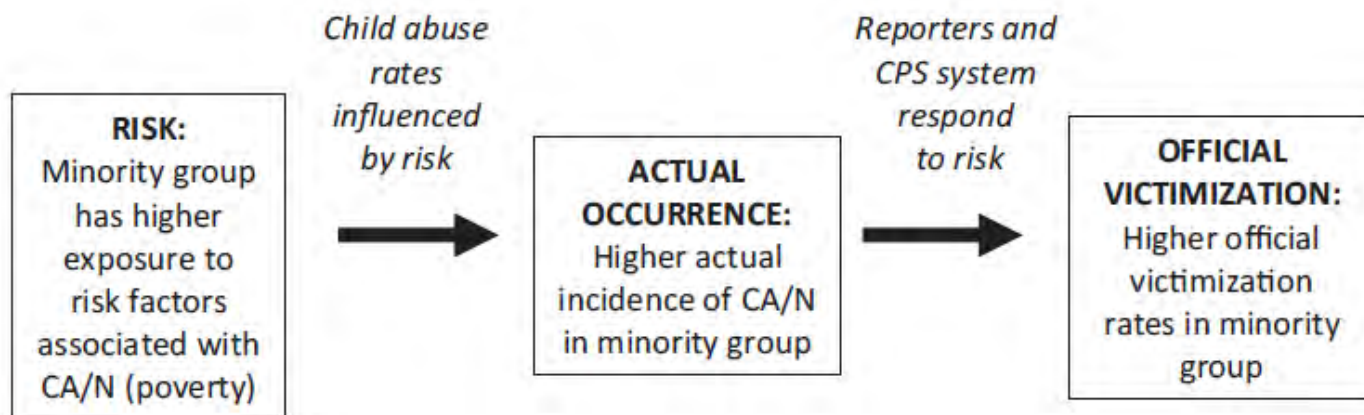


FIGURE 1
The risk model.

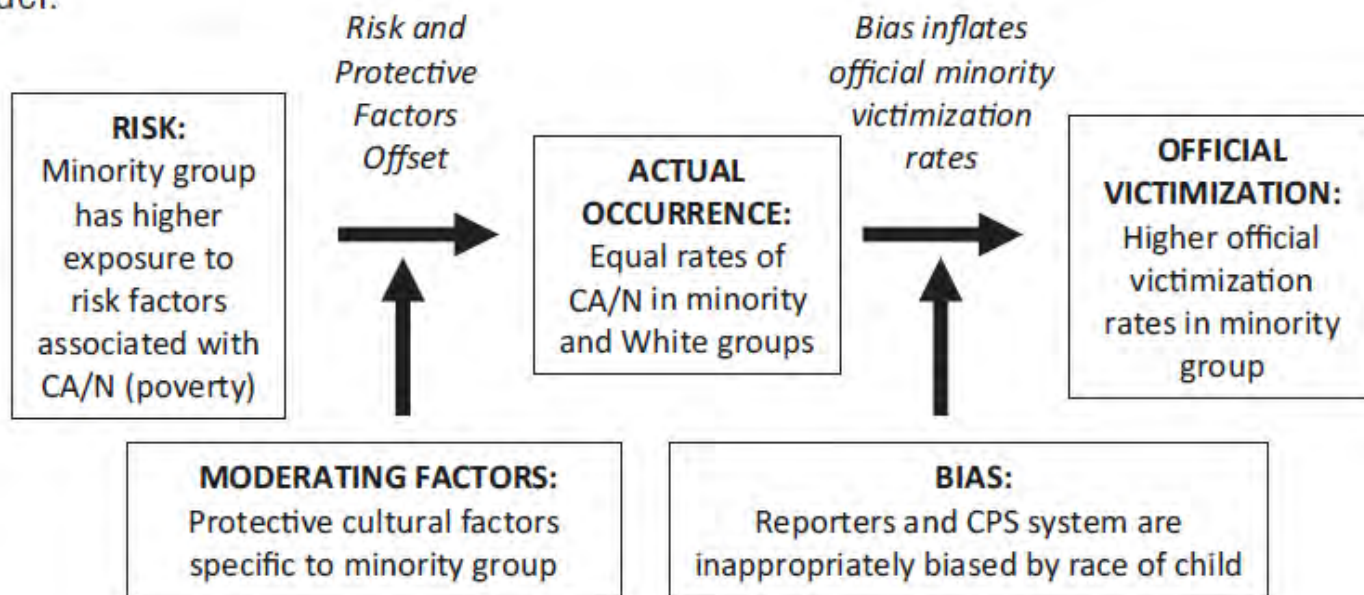


FIGURE 2
The bias model.

Which of those two diagrams is right?

It all depends on the match between risk and report rate.

We already know Blacks are reported almost twice as often as Whites (NCANDS).

If Blacks face about twice the risk, that is not evidence of bias – risk and service would match.

But, if Blacks face the same risk (same level of actual maltreatment) as Whites, that suggests the system is biased (either Blacks are overreported or Whites are underreported or both).

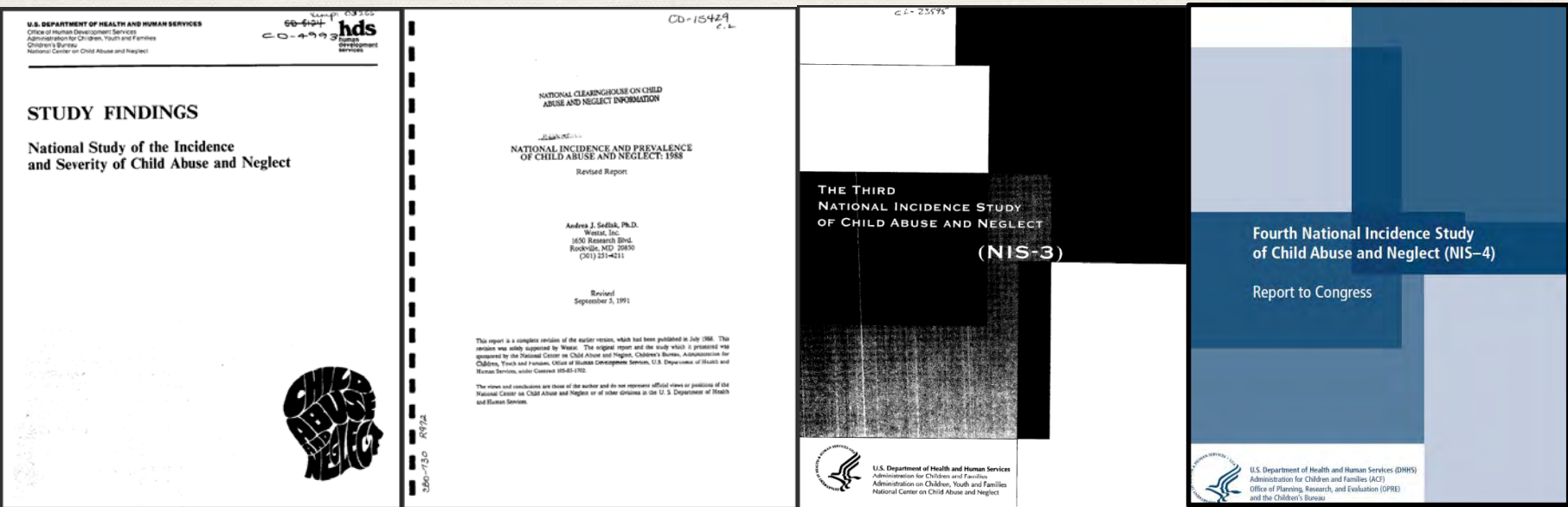
So – are Blacks and Whites actually maltreated at the same rate or not?

Most people have looked at the National Incidence Studies (mainly NIS-3) to answer this question.

So What Is a “NIS”?

“The National Incidence Study (NIS) is a congressionally mandated, periodic research effort to assess the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the United States.”

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/statistics/nis.cfm>



What Were the NIS-3 Findings (as reported) Regarding Racial Disproportionality?

“**Race:** The NIS-3 found no race differences in maltreatment incidence. The NIS-3 reiterates the findings of the earlier national incidence studies in this regard. That is, the NIS-1 and the NIS-2 also found no significant race differences in the incidence of maltreatment or maltreatment related injuries. Service providers may find these results somewhat surprising in the view of the disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare population... The NIS findings suggest that the different races receive differential attention somewhere during the process of referral, investigation, and service allocation, and that the differential representation of minorities in the child welfare population does not derive from inherent differences in the rates at which they are abused or neglected” (NIS-3 Final Report, Page 8-7).

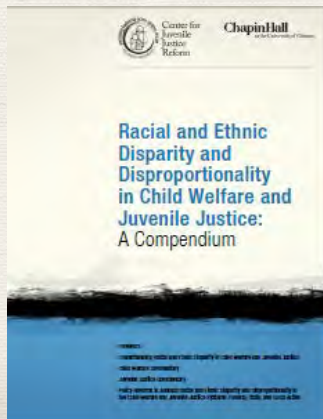
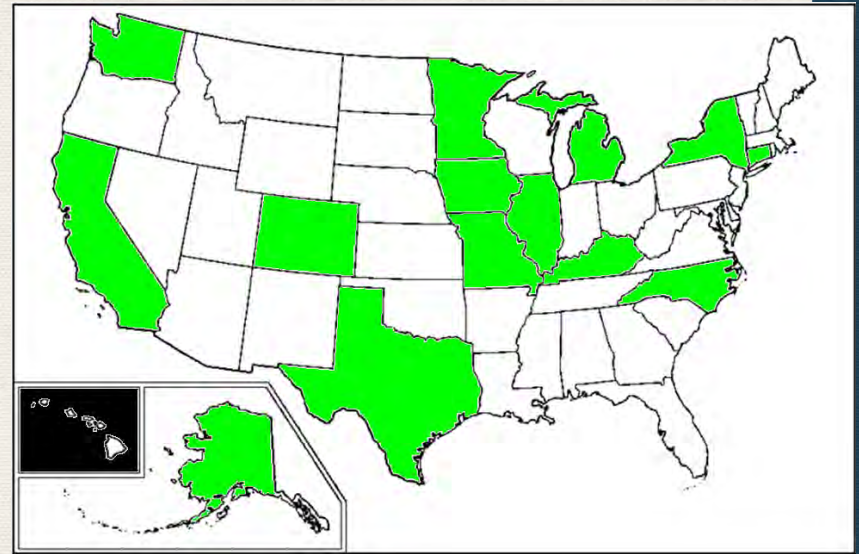
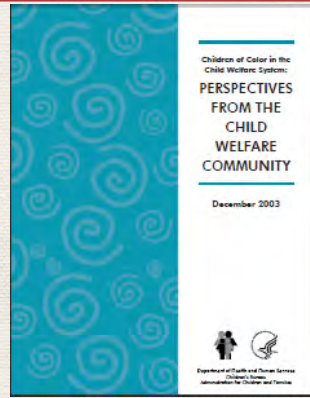
- The NIS-1 through NIS-3 were interpreted as showing that **African-Americans are actually maltreated at the same rate as Whites** (see prior slide).
- NCANDS (National Official Report Figures) **shows that African-Americans have more validated CPS reports** than Whites (almost a 2:1 rate).
- Therefore, if Blacks and Whites are abused at the same rate (NIS), but Blacks are reported and validated twice as often (NCANDS), **then it stands to reason that the system is biased and needs to be fixed.**

And that's what most people have thought for the last couple of decades.

Racial Disproportionality and Policy

The NIS findings have driven academic articles, think tank reports, government publications and, most importantly, the Casey/Alliance Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare (Robert Hill, 2006).

These sources, particularly the last, have been used as the rationale for new disproportionality policies in many states.



Summary of Where We Stand

Blacks are, person for person, reported almost twice as often as Whites.

We have also presented two models that might explain why Blacks are reported more - one based on risk and one based on bias.

NIS-3 has been *interpreted* as showing that Blacks and Whites are actually maltreated at the same rate – this supports the “bias” model over the “risk” model.

States are therefore implementing policies to reduce the presumed overreporting of Blacks.

End of History Lesson

I am now going to make the following points:

- 1) The NIS-2 and NIS-3 findings were *misinterpreted*. They *never* showed that Blacks and Whites were maltreated at the same rate. Correct interpretation would have supported the “risk” rather than the “bias” model.
- 2) The new NIS-4 findings (which do show a *statistically significant* difference in maltreatment rates) are, in reality, not so different from the NIS-2 and NIS-3 findings.
- 3) A range of other indicators which are not subject to bias (like death), suggest that Black children experience a range of key risk factors associated with maltreatment at a rate two or three times higher than Whites, supporting the “risk” model and putting the “bias” model into question.
- 4) This has serious and immediate policy implications.

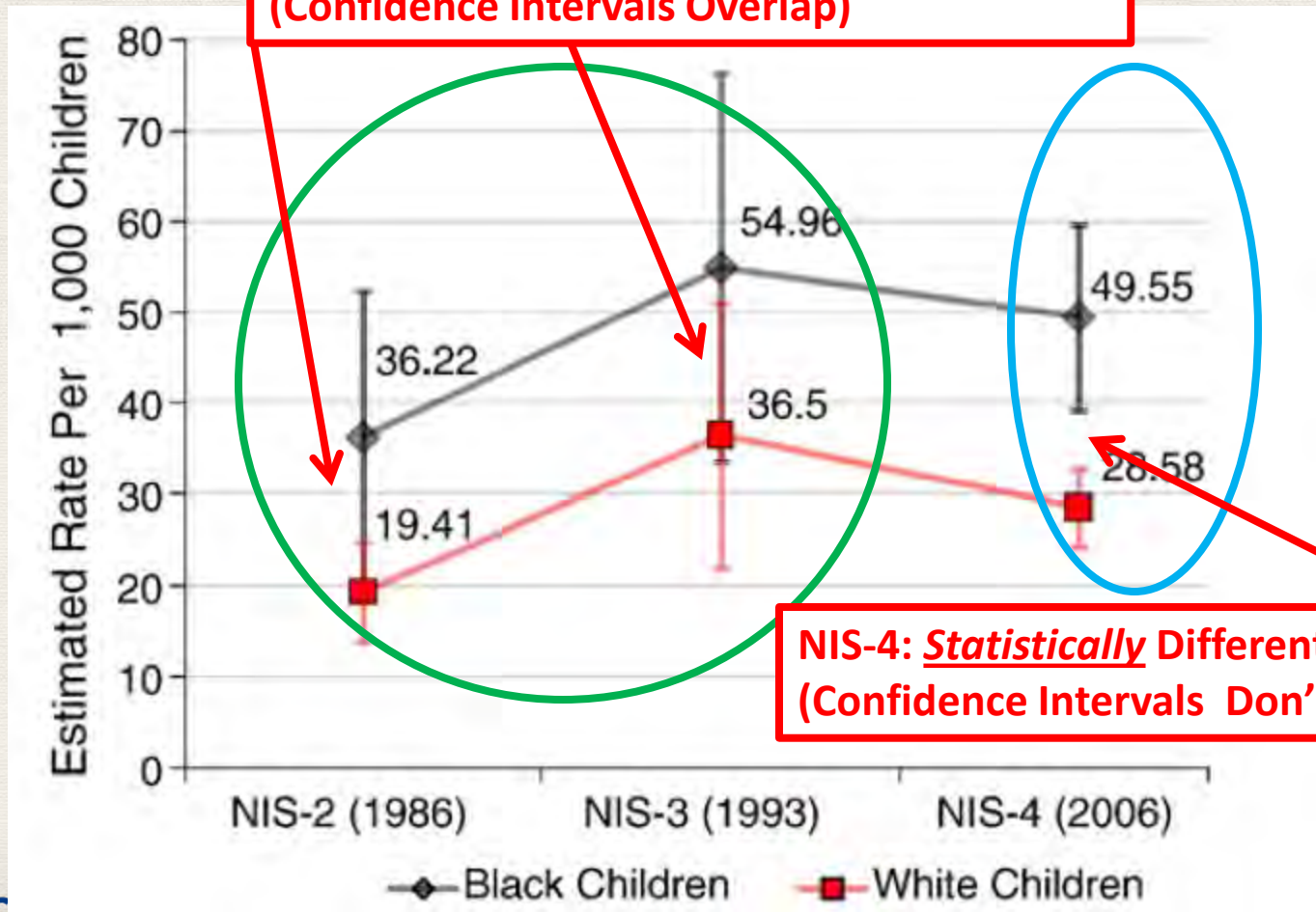
First Issue:

What did the NIS-2, NIS-3 and NIS-4 **really** find?

“the NIS-4 found statistically significant differences between Black and White rates of child maltreatment, contrary to the findings of the first three NIS cycles”

(Sedlak, McPherson & Das, 2010)

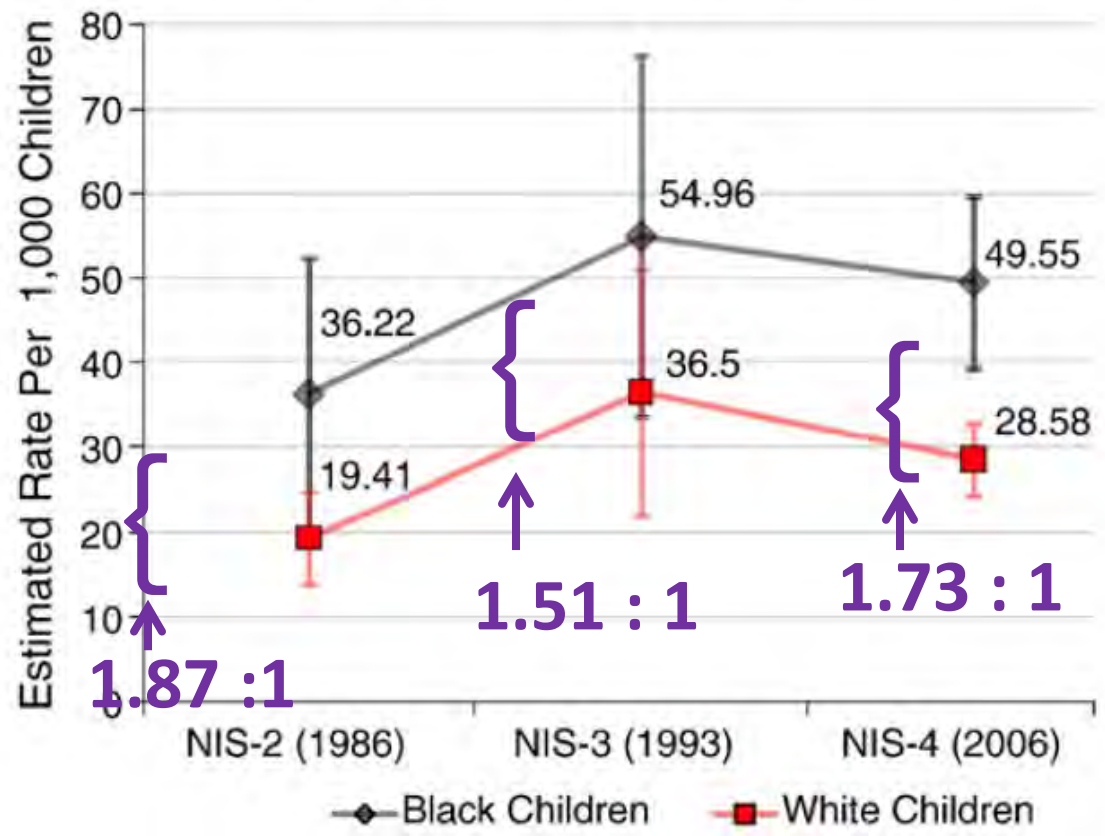
NIS-2 and NIS-3: Not Statistically Different
(Confidence Intervals Overlap)



NIS-4: Statistically Different
(Confidence Intervals Don't Overlap)

Statistical significance did change. But did the best estimate of actual disproportionality change? Not really.

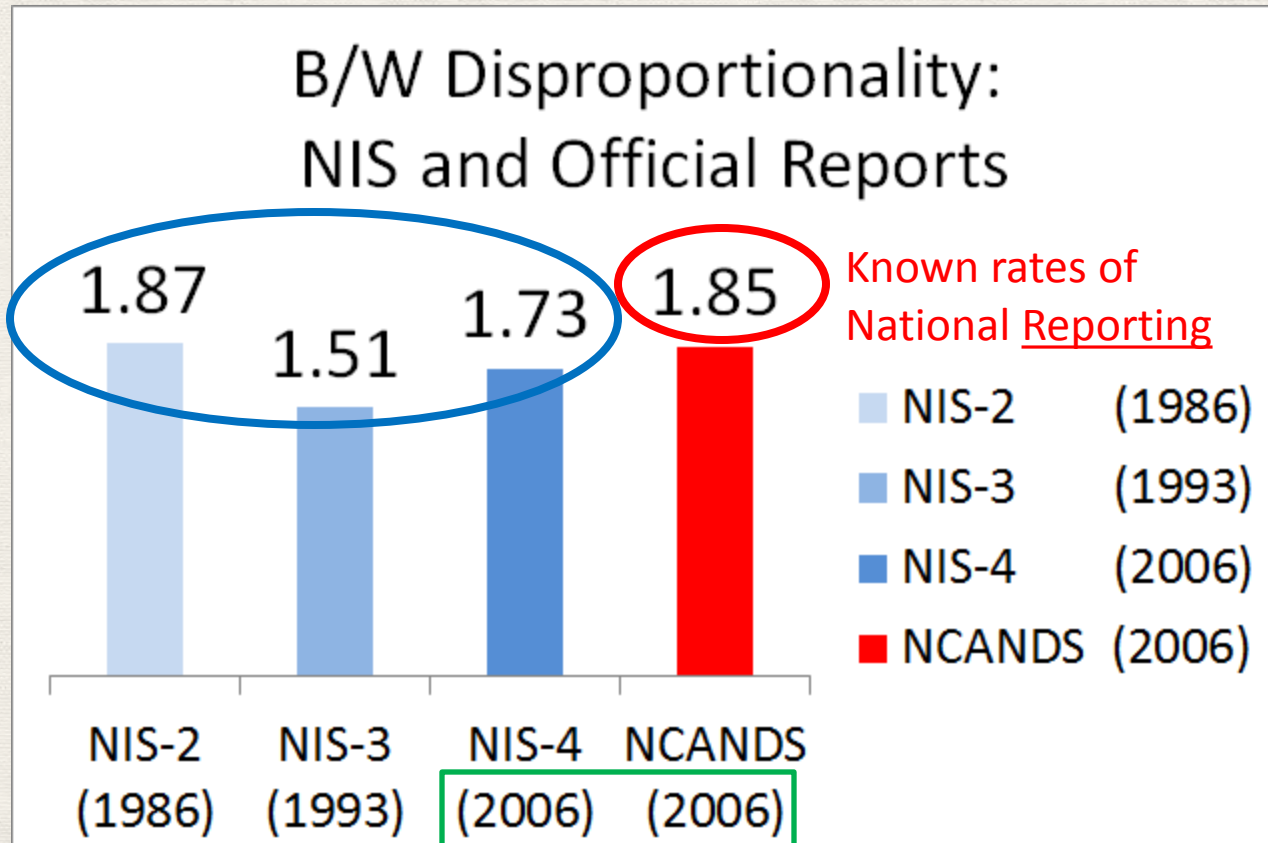
B. Drake, M. Jonson-Reid / Children and Youth Services Review 33 (2011) 16-20



Note: NIS-2 estimate from Sedlak, Hantman, & Schultz, 1997, p. D-27. NIS-2 Confidence Intervals from Sedlak, 2010. Other Estimates from Sedlak, McPherson & Das, 2010, p. A-2.

How do the NIS disproportionality rates (actual maltreatment) compare to NCANDS report disproportionalities?

NIS estimates of Actual Maltreatment



Summary of what we know about the NIS:

Unfortunately, what was reported was that there was no statistically significant difference in B/W actual maltreatment in the NIS-2 and NIS-3. **The large size of the (nonsignificant) differences was not reported in the NIS-3 final report.**

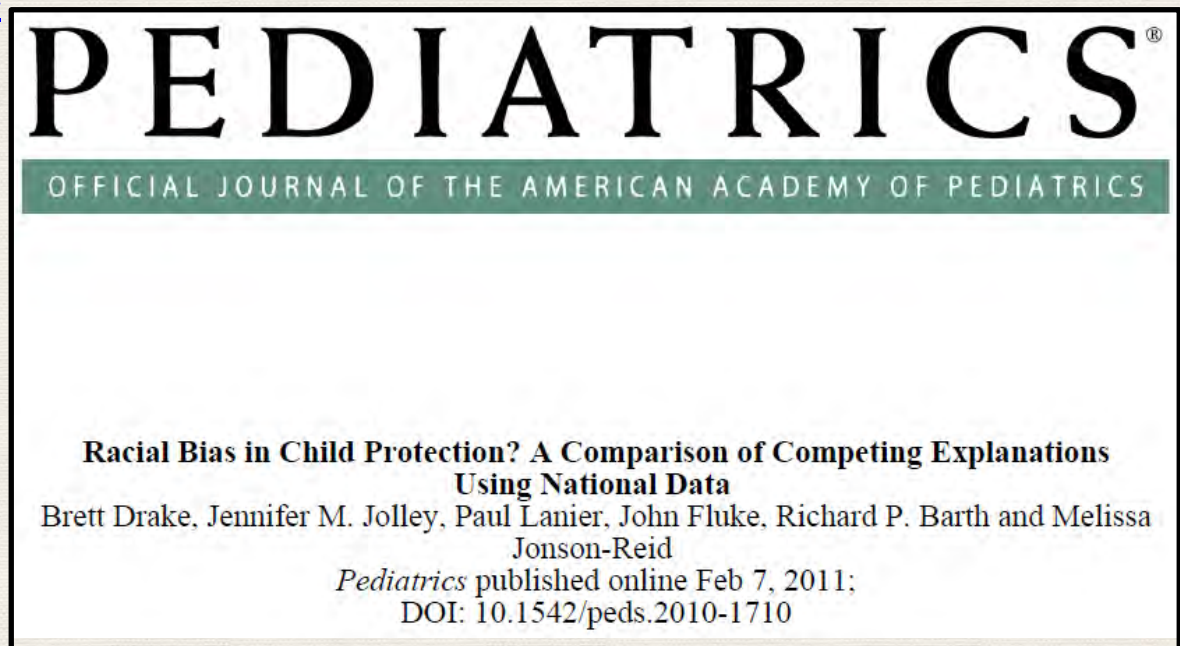
The impression that the NIS-2 and NIS-3 showed that Black and White actual maltreatment rates were the same spread unabated and is “common knowledge” for many to this day.

The “new” racial difference in the NIS-4 is not new at all. The estimate for the NIS-4 falls *between* the estimates of the NIS-2 and NIS-3. The only new thing is that statistical significance has finally been achieved due to a larger sample size.

To this point, we have been working with competing versions of reality – many people have claimed that NIS data show that front end racial bias is rampant. I am claiming that NIS actual maltreatment estimates are pretty much congruent with report estimates.

What About Other Kinds of Data? What Do They Say?

Several of us (Jennifer Jolley, Paul Lanier, Richard Barth, John Fluke and Melissa Jonson-Reid) thought it might be helpful to compare the rates of official maltreatment reports to other known indicators of child well-being. That study can be found online <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2010-1710v1?papetoc>



Disproportionality Ratios By Race

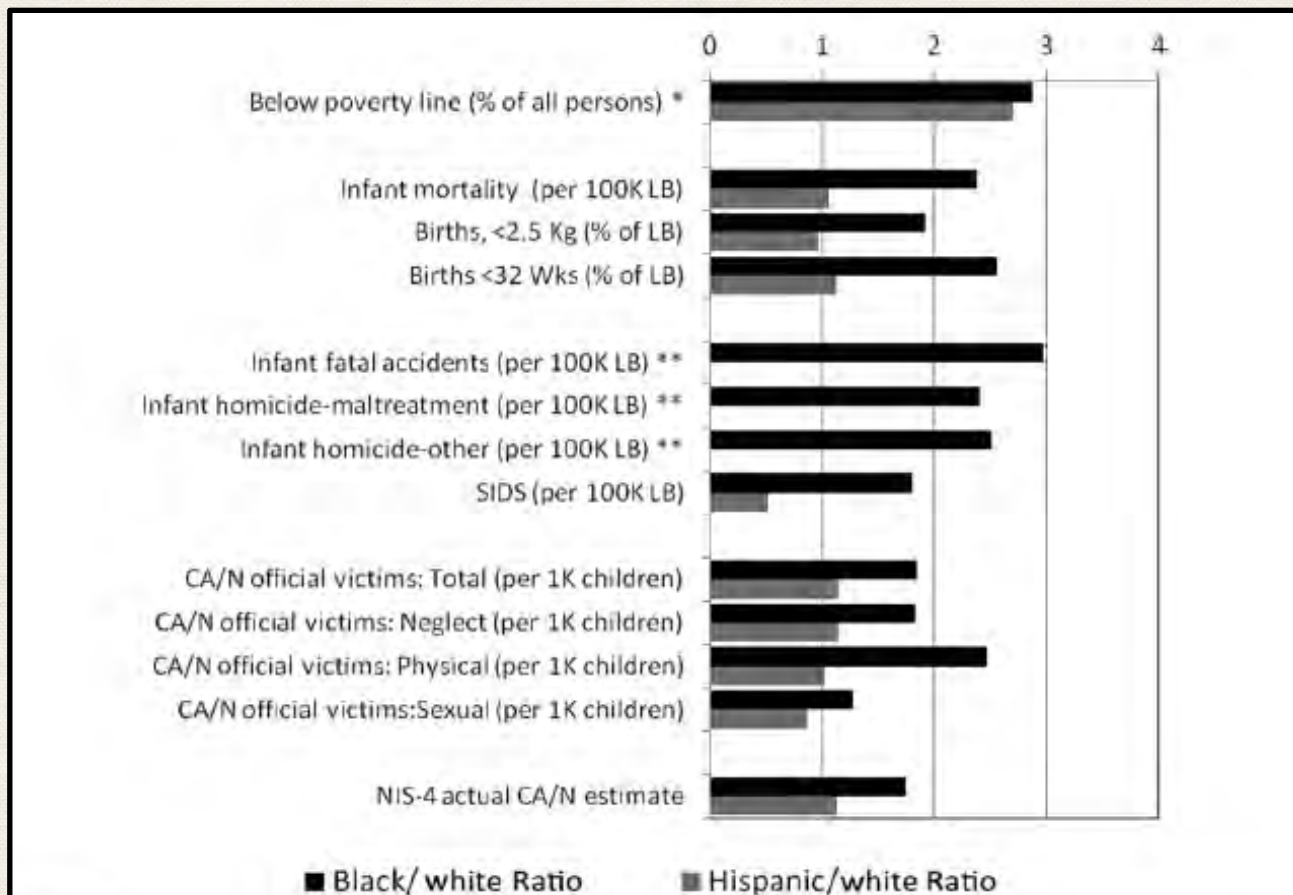


FIGURE 3

Black/white and Hispanic/white disproportionality ratios. *White (non-Hispanic), black (including Hispanic), and Hispanic categories. **White (including Hispanic) and black (including Hispanic) categories. All other data are white (non-Hispanic), black (non-Hispanic) and Hispanic categories.

What Did That Chart Say?

- Black Disproportionality in CPS is generally similar to other, nonbiased indicators of child well-being (about twice the rate of Whites).
- Hispanic Disproportionality in CPS is generally similar to other, nonbiased indicators of child well-being (about the same as Whites)
- The NIS, NCANDS and other sources are all in general agreement, both for Black/White disproportionality and for Hispanic/White disproportionality.

My state (Missouri) has a really nice statewide health database (MICA) which can give us even more detailed data.

Missouri Department of
Health & Senior Services

Jay Nixon, Governor
Margaret T. Donnelly, Director

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Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA)

Home » Data, Surveillance Systems & Statistical Reports » Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA)

- Definitions
- User Handbook
- Profiles
- Vital Statistics

MICA Contents An index of MICA Causes / Indicators

Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA) is an interactive system that allows the user to create and download tables, based on selected variables from the following data files:

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) - Data**
- Births 1990-2009 (updated 05/28/11)
- Cancer Registry 1996-2008 (updated 04/05/11)
- Chronic Disease (updated 11/03/11)
- Deaths 1990-2009 (updated 03/22/11)
- Emergency Room 1994-2009 (updated 09/28/11)
- Fertility Rate MICA 1990-2009 (updated 06/07/11)
- Hospital Discharges, Charges & Days of Care 1994-2009 (updated 11/03/11)
- Injury 1994-2009 (updated 08/09/11)
- Inpatient Hospitalization 1994-2009 (updated 11/03/11)
- Medicaid Records February 2002 through Mar 2012 (updated 5/15/12)
- Population 1990-2009 (updated 01/24/11)
- Pregnancies 1990-2009 (updated 2/09/11)

Data & Statistics

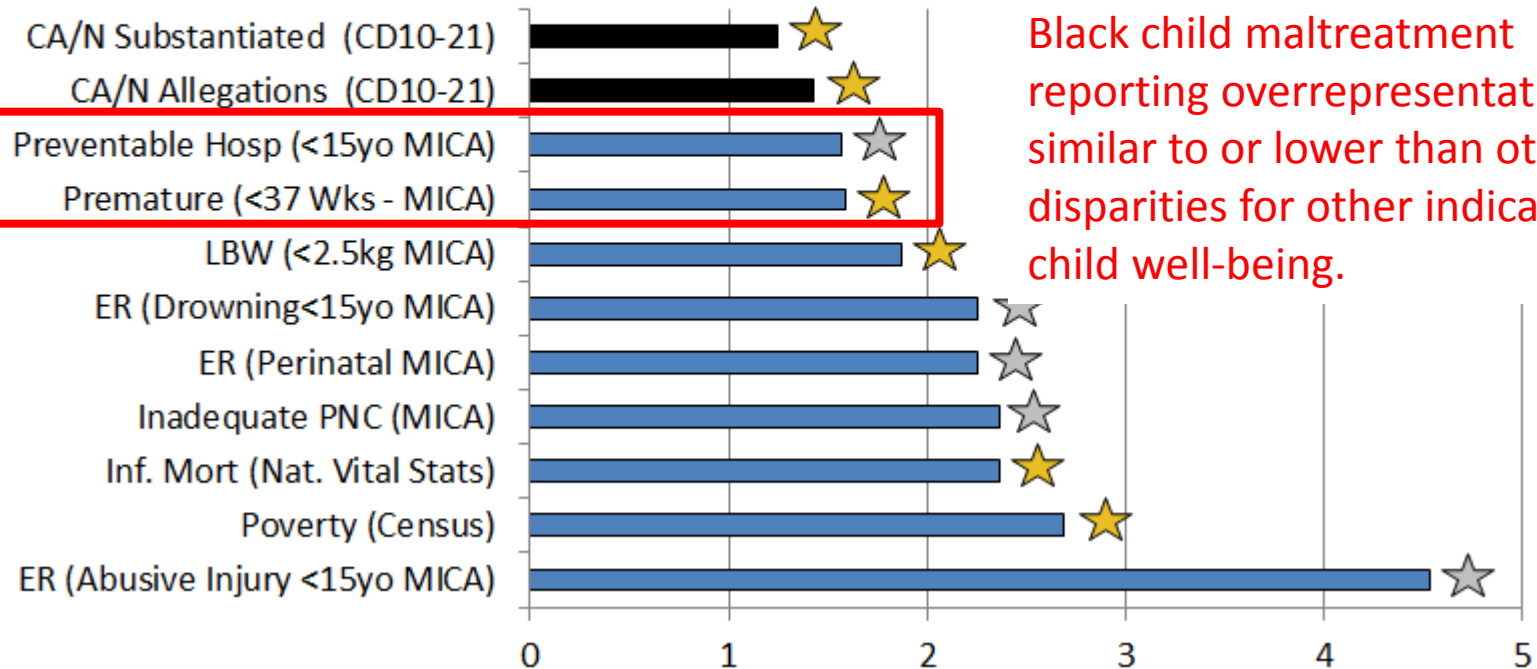
- Profiles
- MICA
- Priorities MICA
- Community Health Improvement Resources (CHIR)
- Intervention MICA
- Births
- Deaths
- Patient Abstract System (PAS)
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
- County-Level Study (CLS)
- Healthcare-Associated Infection Reporting (HAI)
- ESSENCE

Related Links

- Cancer Registry
- Communicable Disease Reporting

Black/White Disproportionality Ratios* (Missouri Data)

*(e.g. "2" means a ratio of "2:1" - Blacks reported twice as often as Whites)



Black child maltreatment reporting overrepresentation is similar to or lower than other disparities for other indicators of child well-being.

Census: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparecat.jsp?cat=9&rgn=27&rgn=1>

MICA: <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/mica>

CD10-21 <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/2010/index.htm>

NVS: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr58/nvsr58_17.pdf

Summary:

Do Need and Response Match?

While African Americans have disproportionate rates of validated CPS reports, this **disproportionality seems to be consistent with their need for CPS intervention**. The numbers seem to fit.

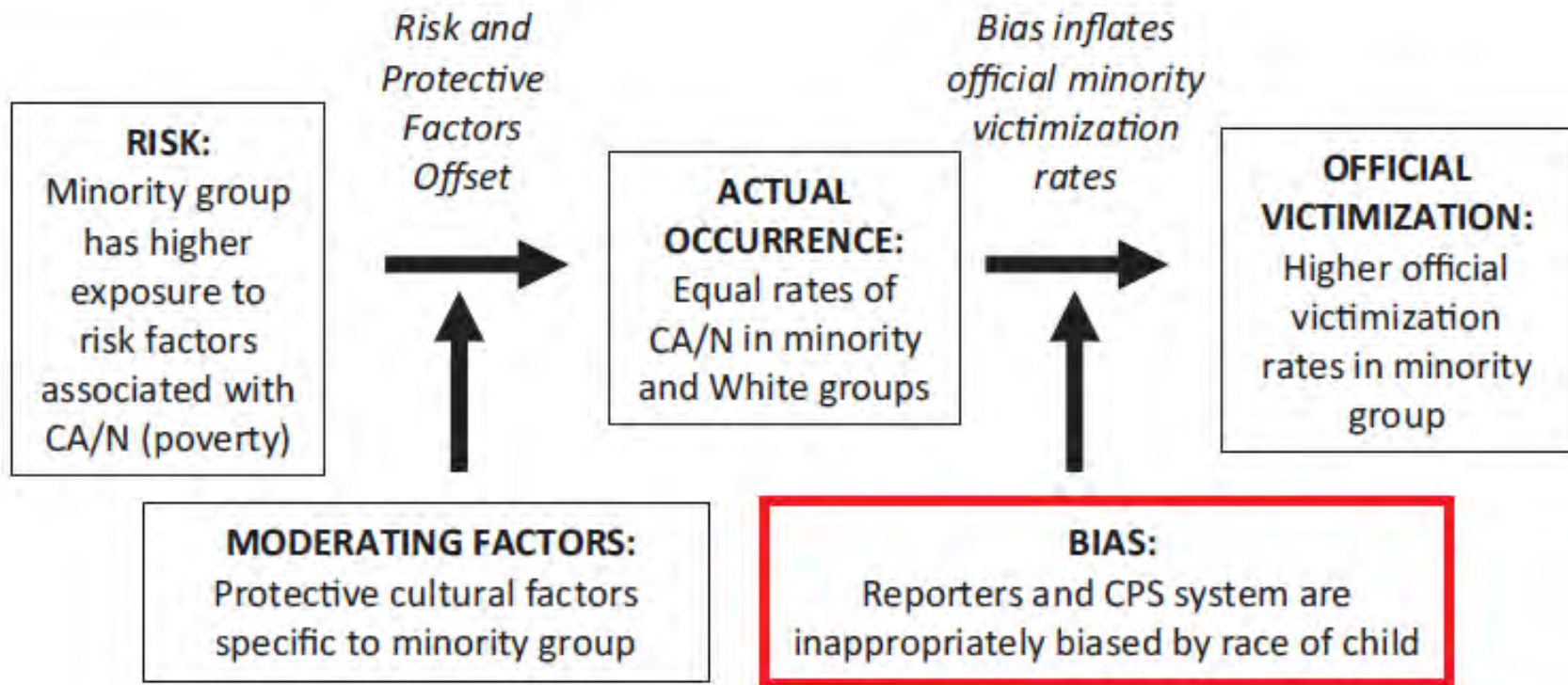
Need, not bias, appears to be the main driver of racial disproportionality. The NCANDS data are where we would expect them to be given the risks associated with being Black in the United States.

This does not mean that no bias exists. I am quite sure every system in the United States includes some instances of racial bias. These are abhorrent and must be addressed. *However, racial bias does not seem to be the factor driving disproportionality at the front end of the child welfare system.* **Fixing bias will not fix disproportionality.**

Policy Implications

Emerging policies are based on the commonly known “fact” that NIS shows equal rates of actual maltreatment by race, while reporting shows that Blacks are reported more than Whites.

Since we thought the “bias” model was right, we have been focusing our efforts on the “Bias” part of the model



But, since the “risk” model seems to fit the evidence better, we need to rethink our approach to reducing disproportionality.

Child abuse rates influenced by risk

Reporters and CPS system respond to risk

RISK:
Minority group has higher exposure to risk factors associated with CA/N (poverty)



ACTUAL OCCURRENCE:
Higher actual incidence of CA/N in minority group



OFFICIAL VICTIMIZATION:
Higher official victimization rates in minority group

There's no getting around it.

The only real solution to racial disproportionality in child welfare is to create a United States which is structurally just with regard to race and class. Absent this, the next best thing is to try to *buffer* that injustice.

Assuming CPS budgets will not increase soon, better linkage to community resources offers us good hope in moving forward. I would amend this slightly to suggest a particular emphasis on community resources useful to the poor, which might help buffer the effects of poverty and therefore reduce racial disproportionality. More direct support from child welfare agencies around issues of poverty (rental assistance, etc...) might be helpful.

Discussion

For more information

(including a copy of today's slides and a webinar recording)

<http://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/webinars>

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