

PPCD RESEARCH MEMO

Oregon State Disproportionality Profiles

April, 2012

Disproportionate representation of minorities in foster care has been a topic of much discussion and research in recent years.¹ In 2011, the Permanency Planning for Children Department (PPCD) of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) calculated disproportionality rates in each state.² These rates were reported with a detailed explanation of methods and maps showing national level disproportionality rates for African American, Native American and Hispanic/Latino children. The report, modeled after a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report,³ utilized 2010 census data and 2009 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) data. AFCARS is a federal reporting system maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that collects case level information on all children in foster care, including demographic information on the foster child, the number of removals a child has experienced, and the current placement setting.

The PPCD report showed no disproportionality in Oregon, despite Oregon's relatively high rates as reported by the GAO (2007). The PPCD report was also incongruent with dependency judges' and child welfare professionals' own reporting and understanding of disproportionality in Oregon. In fact, disproportionality was perceived to be such a problem that, in 2009, then Governor Ted Kulongoski issued an Executive Order establishing a Child Welfare Equity Task Force to study disproportionality. The Task Force found that African American and Native American children were more likely to be reported to Child Protective Services, removed from their parents, and placed in foster care, and remain in care longer (two years or more) than white children.⁴ Further research was conducted to better understand why these findings were not replicated in the PPCD report.

For the current analysis, disproportionality profiles for Oregon were compiled using 2010 census and 2010 AFCARS data. The profiles feature an index that was calculated by taking the proportion of children in foster care for a given race and dividing it by the proportion of the same racial group in the child population.⁵ This created a ratio where scores ranging from 0.00 to 0.99 were indicative of under-

¹ Hill, R. B. (2006). Synthesis of research on disproportionality in child welfare: An update. Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System. Retrieved 8/3/08: http://www.racemattersconsortium.org/docs/BobHillPaper_FINAL.pdf. Harris, M.S., & Hackett, W. (2007). Decision points in child welfare: An action research model to address disproportionality. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 199-215.

² National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (2011). Disproportionality rates for children of color in foster care. Reno, NV: Author.

³ United States Government Accountability Office (2007). African American children in foster care: Additional HHS assistance needed to help states reduce the proportion in care. Report to the Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives. Retrieved 2/1/12 from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf>

⁴ Governor's Task Force on Disproportionality in Child Welfare. (2011). Report to the 2011 Oregon Legislature. Retrieved 3/20/12 from <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/gov-tf-dispro-cw.shtml>.

⁵ For a full description of the methods used to calculate disproportionality please see NCJFCJ (2011).

representation, scores of 1.0 indicated no disproportionality, and scores of 1.1 and greater indicated over-representation.

The profile calculated from AFCARS data (Figure 1, below) did not show African American or Native American disproportionality; however, the profile revealed large over-representation of multi-racial children. These findings were inconsistent with Oregon's understanding of their child welfare racial composition. The Oregon Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reports in its annual Child Welfare Databook the percentage of multi-racial children served in foster care as "NA."⁶

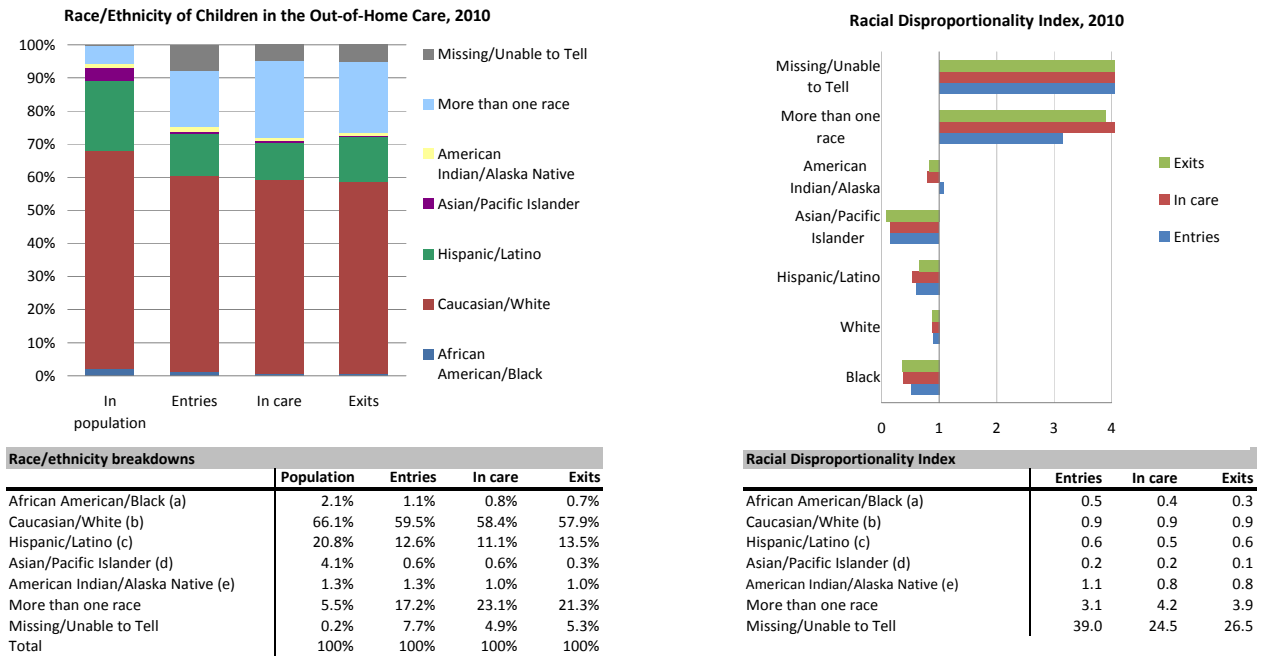
This highlights the fact that there is a fundamental difference between the ways in which AFCARS and the Oregon DHHS track and report race. DHHS collects data that allows for multiple races to be identified, but categorizes children based on "primary race." AFCARS does not allow a multi-racial child's "primary race" to be indicated, and children with more than one race are counted as such. In other words, Oregon's multi-racial children are counted by Oregon according to their "primary race" but by the federal (AFCARS) child welfare data reporting system as multi-racial. When the federal (AFCARS) data are used, the analysis does not find that Oregon has disproportionate representation of African Americans or Native Americans, but does have substantial over-representation of multi-racial children.

To better understand the over-representation of multi-racial children, a second disproportionality profile was created for the current analysis using 2010 Oregon DHHS data and 2010 census data. Because the census counts multi-racial children, and Oregon DHHS does not, the mixed race category had to be disaggregated. To do so, mixed race estimates were created for African Americans, Native Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders and added to the individual race categories. A full accounting of how the mixed race estimates were created can be found in Appendix I. Figure 2 (below) shows the results when multi-racial children were added to individual race categories: the rates of Native American and African American disproportionality were 2.5 and 2.3, respectively.

Perhaps most striking, both profiles (Figures 1 and 2) highlighted very high rates of disproportionate representation of children whose race was missing or unable to determine by the child welfare agency. With missing data ranging from 4.9% to 7.7% (or 224 to 437 children), the understanding of disproportionality in Oregon is incomplete. The magnitude of missing data highlights practice issues regarding how race data are being collected and tracked, and is a problem that must be resolved in order to effectively understand, much less address, the problem of disproportionality in child welfare in Oregon.

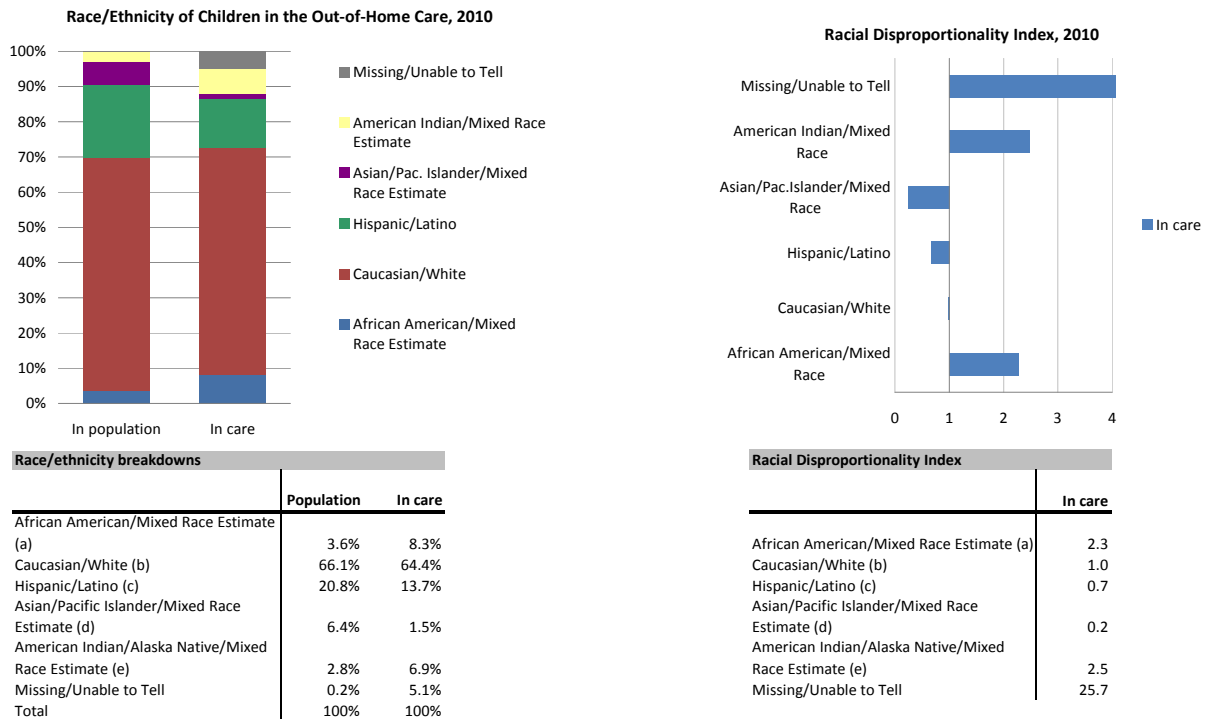
⁶ Oregon Department of Health and Human Services (1998-2010). Child Welfare Data Book. Retrieved February 1, 2012 from: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/abuse/publications/children/index.shtml>

Figure 1. Oregon State Disproportionality Profile 2010 AFCARS and 2010 Census Data



Source: Out-of-home care data from National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect Data, 2010. General population data from the 2010 Census.
 (a) Children identified as African American and non-Hispanic. (b) Children identified as White and non-Hispanic. (c) Children identified as having Hispanic origins; not a racial category. (d) Children identified as Asian, which includes Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and non-Hispanic. (e) Children identified as Native American, and non-Hispanic.

Figure 2. Oregon State Disproportionality Profile 2010 Oregon DHHS Child Welfare Databook and 2010 Census Data. Disaggregated Mixed Race



Source: Oregon DHHS 2010 Child Welfare Data Book. General population data from the 2010 Census.

(a) Children identified as African American, non-Hispanic. Includes African American mixed race estimate. (b) Children identified as White and non-Hispanic. (c) Children identified as having Hispanic origins; not a racial category. (d) Children identified as Asian, which includes Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Includes Asian/Pacific Islander mixed race estimate. (e) Children identified as Native American or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic. Includes Native American/Alaska Native mixed race estimate.

APPENDIX I

Calculating Mixed Race Estimates

The census enumerates up to six races for each child. To create the multi-racial estimates, all multi-racial children reporting African American heritage were aggregated. The same was done for Native Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders. This necessarily resulted in some children being counted in as many as three categories (which is accounted for in Step 3). The aggregations were:

Step 1.	Aggregated Number
Multi-racial African American Children	14,650
Multi-racial Native American Children	14,431
Multi-racial Asian/Native Hawaiian Children	22,415

According to the census, the total number of multi-racial children in 2010 was 47,430. This number was used to determine the percent of the total for each aggregated category:

Step 2.	% of Total
Multi-racial African American Children	28.45%
Multi-racial Native American Children	28.02%
Multi-racial Asian/Native Hawaiian Children	43.53%
Total	100%

The next step created proportional multi-race estimates by multiplying the total number of multi-racial children by each category's percentage of the total:

Step 3.	Total # * % of Total	Multi-Race Estimate
African American Mixed Race Estimate	$47,430 * 0.2845 =$	13,494
Native American Mixed Race Estimate	$47,430 * 0.2802 =$	13,290
Asian/Pacific Islander Mixed Race Estimate	$47,430 * 0.4353 =$	20,646

The mixed-race estimates were then added to the total child population individual race categories to determine estimates of the total population.

Step 4.	Multi-Race Estimate	Single Race	Total
African American	13,494	18,038	<i>31,532</i>
Native American	13,290	10,844	<i>24,134</i>
Asian/Pacific Islander	20,646	35,097	<i>55,743</i>

The total numbers of African American, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children (italicized) were then incorporated into the racial profile (Figure 2).