

WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

WORKING WITH FATHERS with Prof. Ron Mincey and Will Henry (OCFS)

POSTER HIGHLIGHTS

- BARRIERS
 - Social
 - Political
- GENDER STEREOTYPES
 - Impacts child welfare
- IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS IN FAMILIES
- CASEWORK CONTACT MUST BE DIFFERENT

SUMMARY

Disproportionality in Child Welfare: Working with Fathers

Eleonora Demetrio, MSW

On November 16, 2007 Columbia University School of Social Work (CUSSW) held a conference on the *Disproportionality in Child Welfare*. The afternoon panel that I was assigned to attend and assume the role of a scribe was *Working with Father*. This panel was moderated by Prof. R. Mincey and Mr. W. Henry.

During the first part of the panel, Prof. Mincey outlined the historical and policy development of the child welfare system and child support in the United States. This brief presentation specifically pinpointed state and federal policy changes and development through the years (i.e., the implementation of the Child Protective Services (CPS) and its disproportional growth) with particular attention to the failure to recognize and address the role of fatherhood in the life of a child. Our inability to track the fathers of children born out of wedlock and our prioritizing of welfare support for single mothers and their children are examples of policies that have, to a certain extent, created or exacerbated the social myth that fathers are not important in the pedagogical development of the child and prefer not to be involved. These beliefs are not supported by research; rather, fathers seem to very important in the development of a child. Studies show that three-year-old children whose fathers are present during their development are by generally less aggressive than three-year-old children whose fathers are absent. Furthermore, less aggressiveness during childhood translates to less aggressiveness in adulthood as well. It is important, then, to encourage paternal involvement in a child's development.

The second part of the panel was moderated by Mr. Henry, who suggested that our social construction of gender is at fault for our failure to recognize the importance of fathers in children's' lives. Males and females are brought up differently and have different ways of socializing. The way that males socialize might be represented with a ladder. During development, males struggle to climb this ladder and reach the top. Being on top means having power, which in turns creates the illusion of a male that is above emotional needs and of a man who does not want or need to be involved in his

child's care. Because they have to reach the top alone, they are often pressured not to talk to other males and to engage in a silent competition which alienates them from other males and other people, which dissuades them from reaching to others for help or admitting that they have not reached the top of the ladder. In contrast to males, female socialization might be represented with a circle. Throughout their childhood, they are surrounded by others and develop the "nurture" personality, caring for others and continuously engaging in communication and social exchange.

This discussion, even without clear research and apparently culturally bound, seemed to raise a level of awareness among the childcare and social services providers present at the panel. A caseworker admitted that she rarely inquired about the involvement of the father when interviewing and assessing child abuse cases because of preconceptions or misconceptions about absentee fathers.

The panel ended with a discussion of the need to Empower, Educate and Elevate social service, childcare and policy makers about the importance to consider fatherhood. This is something that has to occur at a macro and micro level. It has to start with the education of the mother about the importance of considering the father, and then continue with the caseworker and the policy maker. Questions such as "Where are these fathers, how we empower them and how do we educate child care providers and mothers to see them and consider their importance?" remain open and highly questionable, but the importance to consider a father as an important figure in the psycho-pedagogical development of a child remains tangible.

FAMILY VOICES WITH Prof. Marion Riedel and Dr. Julia François and the families of Center for Family Life

POSTERHIGHLIGHTS

- When asking the hard questions how would you feel
- Educate and challenge team to use resources/ keeping children in the home
- Listen to the people we work with
- Watch, observe those we work with – don't judge
- Importance of being available
- How does the system itself stop us from doing real work
- Being more aware of culture and diversity
- Addressing systemic change in order to create change for families and children
- Bringing everyone together/ valuing input
- Starting to think and speak about race
- The power of power
- How can workers be there for families and children
- Work would be much better if everyone worked together
- Treat families with respect and understand they are human and deserve respect
- Rejuvenated by the knowledge that we can make a difference
- Learn from families through collaboration
- Remember to check in with self
- Workers can no longer be mono-cultural

SUMMARY

Notes from Disproportionality in Foster Care Conference:

Segment: Experiences of Families in Foster Care

Written by: Angela Tucker, MSW

Two Representatives from SCO Family Services and Center for Family Life led the segment on the experiences of families in foster care and also reinforced the notion of how we in the field can use ourselves in our work and the child welfare system to bridge differences. We also had 2 women who had experienced life in foster care, one as a child, who now works in the system and another as a mother from China, who immigrated to the United States in 1999.

We started off with a few icebreaker exercises to get to know ourselves and each other. We learned about individuals, groups, who we are, what we value and how to get to know people as people. The icebreakers also gave us a chance to capture the essence of others as we explored similarities and differences within the group and learned how to collaborate and build from our experiences.

Next, questions were addressed to the representatives and the two women who had experienced life in foster care.

1. When did you have contact with ACS, a caseworker, etc? What was the most helpful thing a caseworker did?

Response #1: I have been in care since I was three and I had numerous caseworkers. They were always there for me, immediately, even if they weren't obligated to at the time. I felt that someone cared, especially since my parents weren't there. The caseworkers were on top of their game and befriended me, even though it still was a professional relationship. The time spent was valued and that was very useful to me

Response # 2: My caseworker did a lot of things; there were a lot of things I didn't know I could access and working with the agency helped provide that information (food stamps, housing, etc). Knowing someone is going to be there in any situation, and understood my struggle, was very reassuring. I came to the United States in 1999 with 5 of my children and there it is disproportional in that those who don't understand the system are most often left in the dark.

1b. How did you deal with the fact that your life is an open book? Were there any invasive situations? If so, how do you think one can approach clients in a better way that is less invasive?

Response # 1: Well nobody wants their personal information out there, you need to think of yourself, put yourself in that position and imagine how you would feel if you were in that position. You need to think of how you would want someone to ask you that question. It is helpful to say "I know this may be uncomfortable, but..." Now I work with teens and sometimes I ask and sometimes they tell. One technique I use is to ask them to write down their responses on a piece of paper and after I see it, we rip it up. That way they feel a bit more secure. Some people don't like to talk; some prefer writing so you need to give people options. Sometimes I take them outside and play basketball with them and start talking as we play. I used my own experience of my caseworker always being there. You need to show that you care. Don't make them feel that they have to do it, more like it's for their benefit and someone is interested.

2. Is it important to have a worker who understands your culture/speaks your language? How does it help?

Response #1: Well I think it is, because it is impossible for them to have a strong relationship with you if they don't understand you or didn't speak your language. It creates a closer connection in that relationship and the gap could be bridged if she understands your culture. I think it is very important to know someone you're working with.

2b: Are there any techniques used to create that understanding?

Response #1: If I don't speak a language or don't completely understand a culture, I use hand gestures, speak slowly, point, show presence

2c: Is there any difference in having a white worker?

Response #1: No, I mean, I love people, you can learn something from everyone. It's about a person's attitude and how they present themselves to you and how you approach that person. But I think it's important for both parties involved. If I can't connect, if there's a wall, then I can't be there. As a foster child, I did want to know if they were interested in me or the work and it was important for them to hear me.

3. Are you able to teach a worker about your identity?

Response #1: Yes, I respect elders and listen to what they have to say and all but they also learn from me too because a lot of young adults are mature too. They learned from me and hopefully used it to help others. It was a mutual learning experience

Response #2: Yes, I was able to teach about my food, family experiences, children and culture

4. Were there times when ACS/child welfare worker treated you differently because of your culture/identity?

Response #1: No, I don't remember that...they always treated me based on my attitude and every thing was based on my actions and attitude

Response #2: Yes, especially in my interaction with the police. I felt that they were unhelpful and felt because I was Chinese and couldn't speak English well, they wouldn't help me. I even think they Chinese police actually treated me worse

At this time, other group members joined in and shared a few experiences about culture and their "ah hah" moments. A member remembered working with a Mexican family who would put their babies toys in the crib and the baby would sleep in their bed. She thought that was very weird and judged how they were raising their children. She said she didn't realize until after she started children and she started doing something similar that she realized that rather than assuming that we are always the experts, we have to realize that there are many ways of doing things around the world and we need to be tolerant and open minded to that.

Another member stressed that there are different points of view and we always have expectations of "others" to act a certain way and adopt the American way of doing things. We always tend to look at the American way of assessing a case and we can't tell someone what to do or expect them to do it. We need to take the time out and appreciate other cultures

Textbook theory: How does it apply to others???

It is a mistake to think that you have a handle of what's going on in a family and that you can fix it. You have to work really hard and try to understand what is right for that family.

5. Why is it so complicated to learn about others? Why don't we tend to do that or accept it? Why do we think we know better?

Response #1: There is a given framework that has outcomes, the system is designed so that you stay in business based on outcomes and meeting requirements. Caseloads are strenuous and it doesn't give caseworkers the time or opportunity to go outside of these requirements and learn about other cultures. Caseloads need to be reduced

Response #2: Find your inner oppressor; ask are we getting good at a bad game? Are we skilled enough? Is this game flawed? If it is, we need to keep doing community organizing and stop doing things that are hurting us.

We ended the session with a wrap up of what each individual has learned or what stuck with us the most...Responses were...

1. How would you feel if you were asked a certain question?
2. Disparity of children of color in foster care
3. Listening to the children
4. Our own personal experiences and how that affects how we work
5. Really being available, when people need you, they need you right then
6. Community organizing. The impact of the system in how we work
7. Listening and providing options
8. Cultural diversity
9. Techniques of teen being a part of decision making process
10. Startling statistics
11. Appreciating the power "The Power" has; being there and available
12. Reminder about being present, things really matter
13. Reinforces the love for the work we do
14. Overwhelming statistics
15. Taking time to learn and listen, collaboration and teamwork
16. Need to learn another language
17. Can no longer be mono-cultural/monolingual

PLAYING IT STRAIGHT WITH FAMILIES IN FOSTER CARE with Dr. Jorge Colapinto and Dr Susan Oppenheim

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

- Keep parental bonds alive during child's placement
- Address issues of fragmentation of services in the separation of service tracks for parents and children
- "Family to Family" –based on the Minuchin concept of the "accordion family" , strengthen the bonds between foster parent and natural parent
- Advise parent of the realities of their decisions; re: interventions and services and the effects on reunification
- Dilution of family process vs. preserving family process
- Cancellation of parenting – shift from parent /child relationship focus to parent/agency relationship focus
- Dynamics of social service agencies can worsen families and induce that our involvement demonstrates that problem exists
- Pitfalls
- Triangularity of alliances with in relationships that form between Family and Children agencies/ natural parent(s)/ and foster parents.
- Family and Children workers/ supervisors should advocate for a relationship with the natural parent which slows down the realities of action
- Working on "concurrent planning" to create situations that normalize reunification

SUMMARY

Disproportionality Conference-

Summary of session - Marlene Wilson, MSW

Topic – "Playing it Straight with Families in Foster Care", Jorge Colapinto, PhD

Historically, foster care officials devise separate service tracks parents and their children who are placed in care. The utilization of independent service tracks often results in decreased emotional connectedness in the parent-child relationship. While child safety is important, the focus on separating the child has resulted in fragmentation of the family unit and dissolution of the parental bond. The historical premises regarding placement supports the return of children only when the family problem is fixed. This doesn't take into consideration the need for maintaining the family unit. The emphasis on framing services for families' shifts once a child enters placement. Parents are viewed as clients of the agency rather than individuals who are parents. After placement, the main focus is on the completion of varied tasks and counseling programs. The parent's role is diminished. The focus shifts from preserving the parental (and familial) relationship and the completion of process-driven interventions. Dr. Colapinto refers to this as 'Dilution of Family Process'. Essentially, foster care decision-making often ends parents' role in parenting their children. The inherent role dissolution is a result of the sole focus of child protection. However, the failure to use more inclusive services strains emotional bonds weakening the family unit. There is little or no discussion about the emotional impact of the placement on the parent. Moreover, less focus is spent on developing ways for parents

and children to maintain substantive emotional ties. Therefore, parents must have substantive interaction with their children while completing services. The practice of concurrent planning was also discussed. Time constraints leads to the improper development of multiple tracks. Therefore, concurrent planning is often ineffective at promoting change. Parental engagement is diminished when focusing on several possible outcome scenarios.

Foster care agencies must devise better ways to engage and empower parents. The formation of open relationships between foster care staff and parents is necessary. Foster care agencies must clarify and explain to parents the consequences of their choices. When parents are armed with information, they are more likely to take an active role in services. Therefore, case planning must involve components to build the parent-child relationship. The relationship building is part of the process Dr. Colapinto characterizes as 'Preserving Family Process'. In this, interventions must be outcome driven. The emphasis must be on supporting connectedness. Foster care workers must take efforts to allow parents to remain in the parental stage with substantive connections to their children. Workers must use 'straight-talk' in order to empower parents. Overall, early family engagement and team decision making allows for success in foster care.

***THE LATINO IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCY with Prof Vincent Guilamo Ramos and Vanessa Ramos, CHCF***

POSTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Cultural competence standards should be clarified and further defined in the multi-dimensional scope of:
 - Race
 - Human rights
 - Human development
- A stronger presence of Latino's in the policy making and decision process; needs strengthening at the city, state and federal levels
- More Latino, bilingual and/or bi-cultural social workers are needed to serve the Latino community
- Schools of social work should be recruiting and admitting proportional numbers of Latino students and faculty with the Latino faculty collaborating with Latino based agencies for practice
- Public and other governmental agencies should provide more scholarships and tuition assistance for staff members hoping to advance their social work education
- CHCF Recommendations
 - Strengthen the network of Latino community based organizations providing family support services
 - ACS must invest incapacity building to help frontline organizations expand services to Latino children and families
 - ACS must deliver culturally competent and linguistically accessible family support services
 - Continue to invest in Preventive Services while building a stronger, more comprehensive continuum of services
 - Strengthen community input in the design and delivery of Family Support Services and promote community education and prevention
 - Cultural competency must be integrated into all areas of the child welfare system

THE DECISION TREE: RACISM FROM REPORT TO REMOVAL
With Prof. Mike Mackenzie and Dr. Megan McLaughlin (PWA, ret.)

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Acknowledge and address role of race

- Impact of media
- Empowering workers
- Intersection of child welfare and other systems
- Prevention
- Multi-disciplinary approach
- Time pressure
- Consciousness raising
- Shifting organizational culture

SUMMARY

Session I – The Decision Tree: Racism from Report to Removal
Presenters: Megan McLaughlin, Protestant Welfare Agencies and Michael Mackenzie, Columbia University School of Social Work
Prepared by Astraea Augsberger. MSW

Michael Mackenzie, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Columbia University, began the session by describing results of a quantitative analysis he conducted utilizing the Canadian Incidences Survey (CIS). His analysis explored the role of race in the life of child protective cases. Similar to the findings described by Robert Hill in the morning session, Professor Mackenzie demonstrated that as you move through the various stages of the decision tree from the initial report, to filing the case, to substantiation, to removal, the effect of race increases. He proposed two theoretical explanations to examine this phenomenon including: 1) the ecological risk hypothesis and 2) professional bias / institutional racism hypothesis.

Dr. Megan McLaughlin, retired Executive Director of Protestant Welfare Agencies, reiterated the fact that there is a disproportional representation of African American and other children of color involved in the child welfare system across the United States. She noted that based on several national studies (discussed in Dr. Hill's speech) parents of color are no more likely to abuse or neglect their children. However, in 2002 African American children comprised 56 percent of the population of children in foster care and in 2006 they comprised 57 percent of the foster care population. Based on her extensive experience in the child welfare field she noted that disproportionality is not a new phenomenon. People have attempted to address it in the past, however people are uncomfortable discussing race and therefore it remains the "elephant in the room." Presently, the issue of race is receiving increased attention from professionals in the field. Dr. McLaughlin believes that in order to effectively address the issue it is important to look at the various inter-related internal and external factors that contribute to disproportionality. Dr. McLaughlin concluded by posing a few issues for group discussion: 1) Can you be culturally competent and still be racist? 2) Why have African American professionals not been able to influence policies in the child welfare field and

the larger human service field? 3) How do you deal with the influence of the media on child welfare decision making?

Group Discussion: Challenges in Addressing Race Issues in Child Welfare

Cultural Competence – Professor Mackenzie noted that cultural competence needs to be viewed as an on-going process as opposed to an end result. Another session participant concurred and further noted that “it is impossible to be culturally competent in all cultures.” Professor Brenda McGowan (CUSSW) noted that “sometimes cultural competence is used to avoid discussing racism.” Another participant noted that people often feel more comfortable attributing the differences to class rather than race. In order to effectively address the issue of racism in child welfare it is important to address both race and cultural competence.

Media - The media is extremely powerful in terms of influencing trends in the field. One session participant noted that when the media reports on the death of a child in foster care, the system experiences a dramatic increase of child abuse and neglect reports, filings and removals. One recent example of this phenomenon was the death of Nixmary Brown in Brooklyn, New York. As noted by a session participant, “no one wants to see their face on the front page of the New York Times.” Another participant stated, “It’s much safer to file a case and remove a child than it is to keep a child at home and risk potential injury.”

Funding for Preventive Services - Federal money is available to remove children however there is not sufficient funding for preventive services. The family support services that are provided are often time- limited, restricted in terms of services families are eligible to receive and often blame families for being “resistant” when they are not successful in keeping families together. There needs to be more emphasis placed on family support services -- such as providing parents with upfront services that prevent children from being removed in the first place. One social worker noted, “we have the skills to provide at risk families with support services to keep them together however the funding has not caught up with what we (workers) know is important.”

Kinship Foster Care- An important issue raised by Dr. McLaughlin pertained to placing children in kinship foster homes. New York City is below federal standards in terms of placing children with family members. Some professionals hold the view that “if one branch of the tree is broken, then the whole tree must be broken.” In many instances kinship care can be the least traumatic temporary and/or permanent placement for a child who must be removed from their caregiver. It is important that the child welfare system provide funding, resources and support for children to reside in kinship homes.

Organizational Culture- Session participants discussed the power differentials apparent in the field of child welfare. There are very few people of color holding positions of power in the child welfare system. For example, in Family Court the majority of the judges and attorneys (people who hold positions of power) are White however many of the case workers and clients are minorities. The caseworkers often have high caseloads, a great deal of paperwork, lack of training, poor salaries and limited authority to make important decisions on their cases. One session participant noted “the further you go down the line (from the Judge to the caseworker) the more and more power you lose to make important decisions on cases.” The result is that caseworkers feel disempowered and there are high rates of turnover.

Next Steps

Several next steps were discussed in order to raise consciousness of racial disparities in the child welfare system and begin shifting child welfare policy and practice. The next steps included: 1) training and education for all institutional players to raise awareness of racism and cultural issues, 2) changing the organizational culture - i.e. hiring more minorities in positions of power, empowering case workers to better advocate for themselves, 3) more funding for preventive and family support services, 4) additional funding for child protective workers - in order to provide adequate training and resources, lower caseloads, reduce amount of paperwork, and offer higher salaries, 5) lessening the impact of media reports on rates of subsequent filings and removals, 5) providing a more holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to assisting families and children.

THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN CHILD WELFARE
With Prof. Wen-jui Han and Vanessa Leong and Zeyen Wu, CACF

POSTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Diversity among Asian Pacific Americans (APA) population
 - National origin
 - Language
 - Education
 - Status
- Asian Pacific Americans makes up 12% of New York City's population so NYC should be in forefront of addressing APA issues Need for recruitment of staff to work with APA population
- Lack of resources for APA community
- Under-represented in policy, services consideration
- Fastest growing population in NYC

The Asian American Experience in Child Welfare

Prepared by Mari Levitt, MSW

Presented by Vanessa Leong and Zeyen Wu, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Facilitated by Wen-jui Han, Columbia University School of Social Work

This workshop, with approximately ten people in total, began with the sharing of introductions and expectations by all the attendees. The goals of the workshop, as outlined by the presenters, were for attendees to:

- Understand the diversity of the Asian American population
- Expand their knowledge of factors specific to the Asian American population
- Understand the risks and strengths of Asian American families
- Recognize the systemic challenges that Asian Americans face

The presentation, utilizing a power point, began with an overview of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CAACF). They are currently the only pan-Asian child advocacy organization in the nation and address issues such as child welfare, health, and education through advocating for policies, building coalitions, educating members of the community, and performing research.

The presenters went on to describe who Asian American are, emphasizing the diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, languages, socioeconomic statuses, and educational levels within this population. Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing minority group in New York City, making up 12% of the population and doubling every decade since 1970.

We then read a story of an Asian American family's experience with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to identify issues specific to this population. Asian American families are particularly at risk of being under-resourced as they often "fall under the radar" of the child welfare and other social service systems.

The factors that put Asian American families at particular risk are:

- Acculturation
- Language barriers

- Immigration status
- Unfamiliarity with the child welfare system (i.e. laws, parental rights)
- Underreporting of abuse and neglect caused by different cultural norms around disclosure, fear of government involvement, and unfamiliarity with laws
- Different child rearing practices, for example:
 - Excessive corporal punishment
 - Medical neglect
 - Lack of supervision
 - Educational neglect

It is important, therefore, to identify and utilize the strengths of Asian Americans which are:

- Willpower
- Motivation to improve life of self and family
- Perspective from having overcome struggle
- Ability to survive
- Cohesiveness within family and community

The presenters went further to explain that the child welfare system is not able to meet the needs of Asian American families. As reported by ACS child protective service workers, 82% of the visits made to Asian American households were impeded by a language barrier and 69% by a cultural barrier. Of the 70 community-based organizations contracted by ACS, only 5 serve the Asian American population, and these are primarily only for Chinese.

The presenters discussed best practices and successful models from other Asian American communities in the country, and followed this with recommendations to improve the child welfare system in New York City to better serve the needs of Asian American families. These recommendations, targeted toward ACS and policy makers, included:

- Improvement of child welfare services and outreach
- Culturally competent service
- Promotion of language access at all points in the process
- Education in the community about the child welfare system and laws
- Recruitment and retention of Asian American staff in child welfare
- Assessment of Asian American families in child welfare system
- Creation of Asian American unit in ACS

Following the presentation, the group went on to discuss in more depth several of the topics referenced in the presentation. These were:

- Language barriers
 - Child welfare system should adopt system similar to Department of Education which mandates translation into 9 languages which cover 95% of the population
 - Need to utilize phone interpretation services similar to those offered at hospitals and police departments
 - Need to train interpreters in the child welfare field because knowledge of only the language is not always sufficient to properly communicate
 - Difficult to recruit bilingual CPS and case workers

- Unfortunate that children often used as translators
- Preventive services
 - Severe lack of community-based, local, preventive services for Asian American families as services are usually concentrated in certain parts of city
- Foster care
 - Training for foster parents is not offered in any Asian languages, so it is difficult for Asian Americans to complete the training, thus making it difficult for Asian American foster children to be put in Asian homes

***DEVELOPING A MULTI-CULTURAL, ANTI- RACIST FRAMEWORK
with Dr. Cheryl Franks and Dr. Lisa Blitz, JBFCS***

HIGHLIGHTS

- Anti-racist work demands
 - Ability to develop authentic cross-racial relationship
 - Developing an understanding of white privilege and white racial identity
 - Understanding the impact of these relationships
 - Understanding organizational and institutional racism in this context
- Strategies and skills that can be developed to facilitate cross-racial conflict
 - Impact/intent
 - Thoughts/feelings
 - Acknowledge the two different realities
 - Consciousness between whites and people of color

SUMMARY, Anneliese Simons, MSW

Developing a Multi-Cultural, Anti- Racist Framework.

Lisa Blitz of Jewish Board of Family and Children Services and Cheryl Franks, CUSSW

In the minutes preceding the beginning of the workshop, participants were invited to bring into the room any ancestors or mentors with whom they wished to share the workshop experience. Some were identified out loud and some in participants' minds. Many such guests were brought into the room, such as Grandmothers who had passed on and particular colleagues who had provided support and guidance. A facilitator then prefaced the dialog of the workshop with a reminder that **“nothing in this Country has prepared individuals to have conversations about race and racism; in fact individuals may even be discouraged from having these conversations in many ways.”** In one last preparatory step individuals participated in a visualization activity in which all excess baggage, stress, and distractions were placed into a mental box which was put away until the close of the workshop.

Individuals were then asked to go around the room and introduce themselves as well as reflect on their reactions to the morning's program. Many individuals spoke of conflicting feelings that emerged during the morning presentation; anger at the reality of the situation combined with hope that people are gaining the courage to no longer be afraid to talk about race; frustration at the familiarity people already had with much of the material presented combined with an acknowledgement of the importance of hearing it again; excitement in response to talk of solutions combined with sadness over the little evidence of individuals willing to take the daunting steps needed to truly make progress. **“I get the anger, I get the discouragement, and I am also hopeful.”** The facilitator pointed out the importance of taking the wide variety of reactions to the morning's speakers as evidence of the multiple realities that exist within society.

Near the very beginning of the workshop one participant made a personal observation. She noted that during the morning session, specifically at the point when the speakers were strongly stressing the need for our entire society to confront racism, very few White audience members displayed body language expressing a positive response to this message. This was particularly apparent when viewed in combination with the many audience members of Color who were verbally and physically expressing their agreement with the speakers. Although we did not know it at the time, this observation ultimately became a rich opportunity to examine the components of an Anti-Racist Framework.

In response to this observation, another participant pointed out that a lack of outward expressions of agreement on the part of some White audience members did not necessarily translate into their disagreement with what the speakers were saying. She suggested that perhaps the way many White audience members had reacted that morning was simply a reflection of the fact that White people are traditionally more reserved than people of Color, and it did not necessarily mean that these White individuals disagreed with the speaker's statements suggesting the need to confront racism.

Another workshop member then responded by stating that she was offended by this comment, as she was a Black woman who did not behave in a "traditional Black way" as had been defined by the previous workshop member. She explained her need for the individual who made the original comment regarding the traditional differences between White people and people of Color to understand how her statement had been found offensive by some. The workshop facilitator then stepped in and highlighted how the current conversation could be turned into an intent/impact conversation which is a type of conversation format that is helpful in constructing an Anti-Racist Framework. She explained that to do so requires separating out feelings from thoughts. To construct the conversation in an intent/impact format, the participant who originally made the offensive statement was asked to articulate what her intent was in her statement. She was then asked to articulate how she felt her statement had actually impacted the participant who was offended. The participant who was offended was then asked to articulate to the opposite participant how and why she was offended by the statement. Through this exchange the two participants explained how this discourse had proved helpful in each one's understanding of the other and their statements, and near the end they spoke of their desire to learn more about one another in the future. **"To build real authentic relationships is to think about how our comments and behaviors impact others and how they react to us."**

An additional conversation topic emerged when the facilitator reminded the group that in all of our hypothesizing and debating regarding the meaning of the lack of outward displays of reception on the part of the White audience members, we had missed an opportunity to ask some of these White audience members what was going through their minds. Other participants raised the point that even if some White audience members were not comfortable with the message of the speakers, perhaps it was good for these individuals to be hearing the message despite this. Other participants pointed out that parts of the speakers' messages were getting through to these individuals on some level. The facilitator highlighted the usefulness of **"The White Racial Identity Model in**

providing a context within which to make sense of some of the White audience members' reactions.”

In addition to those highlighted above, further conversations and themes emerged from the workshop as well. One of the participants challenged the group to hold back our immediate responses to comments suggesting that White audience members may not have been positively receiving the comments from the morning's speakers, and instead first considerer **“What would it mean to you if it were true?”** Participants responded that it would mean something must be done. Participants also raised the point that often it is somewhat uncomfortable for White people to deal with race, but people of Color are forced to deal with race and racism in its entirety every day. Another participant reminded the group of the analogy of the bird struggling in the water, and provided examples of people of Color having to constantly struggle to prove themselves, whether as an academic facing suspicions and doubt regarding their credentials or as a young person being continually faced with racial profiling by the police.

As the conversation neared the end of the workshop, the focus centered on the struggle we will face in this work of building an Anti-Racist Framework. One participant pointed out that one of the biggest challenges facing us is that people of Color have been conditioned by society to deal with racism without confrontation. Yet another participant spoke of the struggle in moving away from seeing yourself as a victim and into a stage of constructively confronting racism. Another participant suggested that taking steps to learn about others' backgrounds is important as we can begin to see where other people are coming from, and what experiences we might have in common. Another participant spoke of the frustration she experiences when she is met with indifference in her attempts to start conversations about building an Anti-Racist Framework within her work place.

“It's going to be a bumpy road.”

Facilitator closed the workshop by highlighting characteristics of an Anti-Racist Framework:

- Intent/impact
- Need to have a dialog
- We are never going to leave thinking we are done
- Defenses always go up in Anti- Racist framework
- What are the strategies for pushing people away and pulling people into this dialog?

Themes that were presented at poster/networking session:

Anti-Racist work demands:

- Ability to develop authentic cross-racial relationships
- Developing an understanding of White privilege and White racial identity and its impact on these authentic relationships and organizational culture and institutional racism

Strategies and Skills that can be developed to facilitate cross-racial conflict

- Impact/intent.
- Thoughts/feelings.
- Acknowledge the different realities/consciousnesses between White people and people of Color.

CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST AGENCY ENVIRONMENT
With Dr. Alan Siskin, Paul Levine (JBFCS) and Prof. Mark Preston

Summary: prepared by Steven Grilli, MSW

As an initial framework for their discussion, the presenters began with the idea that the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (JBFCS) envisioned efforts to racially diversify the staff as necessary for both client service and staff morale. They acknowledged that such efforts are enormously challenging and that there is no "silver bullet" to achieve the intended changes in staff composition and understanding. Regardless of their race, current staff members immediately were challenged by the way in which the agency began to move towards change, and agency leaders needed to remain committed to change despite the difficulties they encountered. To establish additional context for their discussion, the presenters offered a brief overview of the background of their organization. With some humor, they admitted that before prolonged discussions of race, they tended to think of Jewish people as being "other than white" and more aligned with people of color and other marginalized populations in the United States. They learned, however, that people of color tended to view them as white, and they expressed their understanding that, in racial discussions, "Jewish" is understood to be grouped with "white."

At the same time, a historical sense of "otherness" among the Jewish people in part defined how JBFCS evolved. The primary mission of JBFCS has been to provide services to the Jewish community. The presenters referred to a "Jewish style" of creating parallel organizations to address the need of being the "other" in the United States; in other words, Jewish people historically did not attempt to utilize already-established organizations but formed their own both because they sensed that they were viewed by society as separate and because few other organizations would take responsibility for Jewish people.

Initially, JBFCS assisted Jewish families when husbands were imprisoned, often due to immigration problems. Over time, services expanded, and JBFCS demonstrated strength in finding its own niche in providing services (e.g., the psychoanalytic approach to clinical services, etc.). A strong mutual aid ethos developed both in and beyond the Jewish community, an occurrence driven by both religious and strategic influences and under girded by the Jewish belief that Jewish people fare better when participating in the larger society. As a result, JBFCS provided services beyond the Jewish community and eventually began to see a shift in demographics among their clients. Increasing numbers of non-Jewish people sought services from JBFCS. Public funding also brought the expectation that the agency would serve a broader population, and the Wilder case in New York City established that institutions had to serve clients of all races, regardless of the affiliation of the institution. Accordingly, people of color eventually comprised 50% of JBFCS' client population. Unfortunately, the staff demographic did not match that of the client population, and JBFCS recognized a need for change.

Several circumstances combined to facilitate JBFCS' re-evaluation of its mission and commitment to the idea of a more racially diverse staff. JBFCS merged with Jewish Family, Inc., as a response to the changing service environment that agency leadership detected. Leadership at JBFCS also had prior experience working with people of color and had a broader than usual exposure to working with people of color at higher levels of organizational power. The same agency leaders had previous experience working with people with disabilities and, from this, learned to be alert to patronizing behaviors, attitudes, and ideas. These prior experiences allowed executive leadership at JBFCS to be more open-minded about race and power, more understanding of the issues involved in achieving racial diversity and more comfortable with the idea of change. Leaders at JBFCS recognized that organizations are principal vehicles for interaction among unrelated people in the United States, and they sought common ground among diverse staff members. They employed psychoanalytic knowledge about resistance and counter transference. With regard to resistance, agency leadership embraced the idea that issues that people find difficult to discuss are typically the most important things going on in their lives. Interestingly, agency leaders noted that staff rarely, if ever, talked about race prior to efforts to change the staff composition. Related to counter transference, leaders at JBFCS made efforts to remain alert to how they were feeling working with people in the agency so that they may have some insight into how those people may be feeling, too. Basic social work techniques, such as starting where the client is, understanding the client's perspective, and employing empathy, also contributed to success in initiating change at JBFCS. The organization adopted a major focus on trauma based on Sandra Bloom's sanctuary model in order to influence staff perceptions and empower them.

Beginning in the early 1990s, JBFCS organized a task force to discuss diversity within the agency. Leaders quickly noticed that race was a "tinder box," while discussions of relationships and sexuality were less difficult. Agency leadership also noted how few staff of color were employed at the management level. The agency made the decision to focus initially on race exclusive of other issues of diversity (e.g., gender, sexuality, etc.) and established two primary goals: improving service to clients and creating opportunities for advancement for staff.

After drifting for a while and experiencing some uncertainty about how concretely to address issues of race and diversity, JBFCS engaged in very intentional and methodical efforts at change. The agency established a fund to provide financial incentives to M.S.W. students of color who chose to stay and work at the agency. The hope was that clients would eventually see their own racial composition reflected in the staff. Agency leadership also looked at staff positions, percentages of minority staff, and changes in staff demographics, as well as some organizational issues. For example, it was noted that minority staff often made more money at lower-level positions as members of the union and, thus, often chose not to pursue promotion. Accordingly, JBFCS leadership needed to look at issues such as pay structure. They initiated "affirmative action" for middle-level management positions and made conscious efforts to promote qualified staff of color (resulting in a shift to about 20% management staff of color and 40-45% interns of color). Additionally, agency leaders and supervisors encouraged talking about race among staff and among staff and clients. They pushed the issue hard and marshaled

resources to assist 80 managers in learning how to talk about race through workshops and other training opportunities. Managers were directed to think seriously about how staff of color would fit into the agency's future, and all management staff were required to attend the People's Institute training program. A task force with affinity groups (i.e., women of color, men of color, white allies, etc.) was developed, and race was identified as an issue of trauma in people's lives. A faculty chair helped infuse clinical practice with various themes, race among them.

The presenters reiterated that the task of addressing racial diversity at JBFCS presented a number of challenges, and they offered the following thoughts about the process of addressing diversity that might be useful to other agencies beginning the process:

- Agency management and staff need to be learners forever and should remain committed to the idea that improvement is always possible.
- Agency leadership must acknowledge participation in racism.
- Top leadership must commit in clear, consistent, energetic, and tireless ways to addressing racial diversity and should display focus, stubbornness, and an ability to stay on track with moving towards change.
- Agency leaders need to be willing to push for change despite resistance from staff or other problems that may arise. Leaders should be equipped to deal with push-back and resistance and tension in discussing race.
- Agency leadership should be prepared for staff to feel threatened by efforts to address racial diversity; for example, some may wonder if they have to give up their jobs, and most will feel uneasy with changes in the status quo. Organizational power translates into privilege, and staff are frequently unwilling to part with institutional power.
- A passion for achieving professional excellence, integrity, social justice, and issues of fairness is critical to achieving change.
- Agencies need to move beyond cultural competence to dealing actively with organizational racism.
- A language to discuss racism and a sense of self in relation to race is helpful in promoting staff interactions on the topic.
- In the case of JBFCS, leaders found it useful to limit how much they disclosed to the board of directors at first, as they believed that too much knowledge and involvement on the part of board members might derail the change effort. Instead, they made the conscious choice to "go around" certain levels of leadership until change efforts were firmly entrenched. They also decided that attempting to create too good a plan might sabotage their efforts to get change moving and chose instead to get involved immediately and plan as they progressed.

In response to questions from participants, the presenters offered the following observations:

- Commitment to change on the part of agency executive leadership is critical to the success of any effort to racially diversify agency staff. Otherwise, splitting among leaders may occur and threaten the success of change efforts.
- While evaluation of efforts to diversify the work place and tracking of outcomes related to this are both important, the first phase of addressing the issue of racial

diversity at JBFCS involved getting staff to talk to one another about race and relationships in the agency. Evaluation will follow.

- JBFCS did not primarily employ management theory to initiate change but, rather, proceeded from a clinical perspective.
- Executive directors have been able to discuss racial diversity among staff at inter-agency meetings (such as COFCCA and the Human Services Council). Some of the response to making changes has been weak, but it appears that white executives talking about race meets with a positive response from executives of black-led agencies.
- Establishing baseline measures when starting efforts to diversify staff allows an agency to later evaluate its efforts more easily and effectively.
- In the past, staff of color at JBFCS seemed to have some skepticism about whether changes would actually occur. Since initiating this change effort, however, staff of color appear to feel as if their questions and concerns are being addressed, are being included in symposia and presentations, etc. Dialogues about race occur presently, whereas they did not occur in the past.
- Racial diversification of staff involves a major culture change within an organization and needs to be framed as permanent change. There must be a forum in which employees can engage in frank discussion of their own resistance and that of others.
- It is difficult to move forward with the work of racial diversification when staff are waiting to be comfortable with it. Agency leaders should remain aware of the difference between comfort and safety. JBFCS provides safety through multiple opportunities to talk about race. Also, the agency has utilized outside help (trainers, consultants, etc.) and encourages other agencies to do the same.