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A MIXED METHOD EXAMINATION OF RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITIES AMONG
YOUTH WHO CROSS OVER FROM THE CHILD WELFARE TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE
SYSTEM: CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS'
PERSPECTIVES AND RACIAL ATTITUDES

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses a mixed method approach to examine why African-American youth are disproportionately represented in those who cross over from involvement in the child welfare to the juvenile justice system. During individual, semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews, 33 experienced child welfare, law enforcement and court professionals first described their perspectives on why youth cross over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system, in general, and then described reasons for racial disproportionalities in crossing over. Next, they communicated their racial sensitivity and awareness through assessments of racial colorblind ideologies (Neville et al., 2000) and racial identity (Worrell & Vandiver, 2010). Specific research questions are: 1) How do professionals understand and explain the disproportionate crossing over? 2) How racially sensitive and aware are these professionals? 3) Is there a relation between professionals' interpretations of disproportionate crossing over and their racial sensitivity and awareness?

Professionals described a variety of interrelated reason for crossing over at the youth, parent/family and larger social systems levels. These reasons included: poverty, education, and emotional and behavioral problems at the levels of youth, their parents and family, and larger social systems. Twenty-seven percent of the sample spontaneously discussed race as a contributor to crossing over. When asked about racial disproportionalities, professionals described the interaction of reasons youth generally cross over with race. They also described several unique risk factors for black youth: 1) distrust of authorities resulting, in part, from racial socialization practices beginning in the home, 2) communication breakdown between African Americans and authorities, and 3) structural racism in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Quantitative results on professionals' group differences on racial sensitivity and awareness suggest that black professionals and child welfare professionals are less colorblind and identify more as racialized Americans than as non-racialized Americans, compared to white professionals and law enforcement professionals, who are more colorblind and identify more as non-racialized Americans than as racialized Americans. Results also indicate an interaction between race and profession. Specifically, whites who worked in the child welfare system or the courts identified more as non-racialized American, while blacks who worked in the child welfare system or the courts identified more as racialized American. There were no differences in racial identity between black and white law enforcement professionals.

Results also suggest a relationship exists between professionals' perspectives of disproportionalities and their racial sensitivity and awareness. Specifically, professionals who were less colorblind and identified more as racialized Americans placed more weight on macro and system level factors that may contribute to disproportionalities among crossover youth and less weight on child and parent/family level contributors. Those who were more colorblind and saw themselves more as American, rather than a black or white American, placed greater emphasis on reasons for disproportionalities at the level of the child and parent/family.

Results are interpreted from the perspective of ecological systems and critical race theories. Professionals' perspectives on racial disproportionalities and their racial attitudes may serve as a reference point for how they might carry out their work with diverse youth and families. Patterns of results may be reflective of different lived experiences of black and white professionals, as well as professional socialization within (or self-selection into) particular occupations. Results raise issues for supporting relationships in youth's environment between youth, families, and authorities. Through professional training initiatives on culturally responsive

practices, enhanced community outreach by professionals, and dialogue among professionals from different disciplines as well as with civilians, relationships between authorities and families of color may be enhanced. Once these relationships are strengthened, racial disproportionalities may then diminish.

To my parents, Robert and Nancy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fruition of this project started out as a study on crossover youth. As I floundered to find the passion necessary to keep my interest in the involved task of carrying out a dissertation, I had many supportive mentors along the way who nudged me onto a path of racial justice. I could not have asked for a better dissertation experience.

First and foremost, I am indebted to the community members who participated in this project. Without their willingness to open up to me, none of this would have been possible. Their stories and experiences were truly inspirational, and provided extremely valuable insight. Thank you to the friends I made during the completion of this dissertation. Their interest in this project and encouragement is what kept me going.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Wendy Haight. I could not have asked for a more supportive Director of Research and Chair. I was continually amazed at her ability to make complex topics easily understood. Every time we spoke, I was rejuvenated and my passion for social justice grew stronger. Her scholarship and careful guidance has made me a better scholar in ways that I cannot even begin to list. Her unwavering guidance and interest in my doctoral career is beyond ~~thank~~ "thank you".

Dr. Helen Neville's mentorship has been vital to this project. Her teachings on African-American psychology and racial identity development lead to key components of this project. Her willingness to discuss critical race, racial attitudes instruments, and statistics helped me in developing this project's concept and methods.

This project would not be possible without Dr. Joseph Ryan's teachings on crossover youth and statistical designs. He introduced me to the study of dual systems youth, and

encouraged me to use qualitative methods as a springboard for my dissertation. The opportunities he provided for career development proved invaluable.

Thank you, also, to Dr. Jan Carter-Black, who provided mentorship when the seeds of this project had only just been planted. Her helpful comments on my proposal helped contribute to a stronger methodological framework.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Norm Denzin, who opened up my eyes to discrimination beyond gender and my contribution to it. Before his course I was a researcher. His teachings changed my worldview on what it means to be American. It is because of his teachings I am now a critical race researcher.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Doris Houston and Dr. Jeanne Howard. Their professional, emotional, and financial support got me through these last two years. They went above and beyond their roles as employers to encourage and support my dissertation work and beyond.

Also, thank you to Sam Smith, who introduced me to Dr. Houston. Many thanks to the School of Social Work at Illinois State University, PEP, SOFTT, Cultural Studio, Mass Incarceration, Dave P. for fact checks, Dr. Houston for inter-rater reliability, Ming Scheng Wang for data eyes, Cheryl Lehman, Jean Lee, Shikank Sharma, and Jaya Shoffner for transcription work, Joyclyn Landrum-Brown, Dr. Min Zhan and the UIUC School of Social Work Administrative and Business Offices.

Lastly, thank you to my friends and family for your continued support and interest in this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation uses a mixed methods design to examine racial disproportionalities among youth who move, or cross over, from involvement in the child welfare to the juvenile justice system from the perspectives of professionals who work in these systems. Understanding the perspectives and racial attitudes of these professionals may inform research, interventions, and policies involving crossover youth.

African-American youth are at a higher risk than European-American youth to cross over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system (Halemba et al., 2004; Herz & Ryan, 2008; Taylor et al., 2002). Involvement in the child welfare system can place youth at risk for mental health, educational and vocational problems, as well as involvement with the criminal justice system, as adults (Courtney et al., 2011; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Goerge et al., 2002; Myers, 2011). Involvement in the juvenile justice system can further compound these risks through exposure to negative peer influences and labeling (Chapin & Griffin, 2005; Redding, Lexcen, & Ryan, 2005). Yet relatively little research has explored possible explanations for racial disproportionalities in crossing over.

The perspectives of child welfare and criminal justice professionals, insiders who work on a regular basis with youth who do and do not cross over, may provide important insight into possible child, family, and macro structural characteristics that contribute to the crossover phenomenon. Such characteristics might include the interactions of youths' responses to trauma and racism, racial disproportionalities in family poverty, and systematic racism in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In addition, decision-makers from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems may contribute to which youth cross over. The racial beliefs of these

professionals may provide a frame of reference for decision-making. Yet research on crossover youth has not examined the racial perspectives and attitudes of these professionals.

Crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system places youth at additional risks for adverse developmental outcomes. As a group, children who enter the child welfare system have higher rates of mental health problems than children from the general population (Myers, 2011). For many children, involvement in the child welfare system appears to compound these problems, especially if they experience placement instability (James, Landsverk, Slymen & Leslie, 2004). Indeed, involvement in the child welfare system is associated with many negative outcomes including problems with school and educational achievement, social relationships, and mental health—including PTSD, depression, anxiety, and conduct disorder, and poverty (Myers, 2011). Youth who enter the juvenile justice system also have high rates of mental health and substance abuse problems relative to youth in the general population (Anderson & Farrow, 1998; Cauffman, 2004; Grisso, 2004; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, Mericle, 2002). Involvement in the juvenile justice system may compound these risks through stigmatization and involvement with delinquent peer groups (Chapin & Griffin, 2005; Redding et al., 2005)). Given multiple risk factors, it is not surprising that as many as 61-83% of crossover youth have some mental health or substance use problem (Cauffman, 2004; Grisso, 2004; Herz et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002).

African-American youth are disproportionately exposed to the developmental risks inherent in involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. In 2008, of youth ages 10-17 years old, 78% were white, and 16% were black (Puzzanchera, 2009). Yet black youth made up 22% of substantiated maltreatment reports (45% were white youth) (USDHHS, 2010), 32% of the foster care population (40% were white youth) (USDHHS, AFCARS, 2009), 52% of

youth arrested for a violent crime (47% were white youth), and 33% of juvenile property crimes (65% were white youth) (Puzzanchera, 2009). Estimates of the proportion of youth in the juvenile justice system who come from the child welfare system range from 7 to 29% (Morris, 2004; Ross, Conger, & Armstrong, 2002; Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007; Widom, 1989; Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Research on the risk for entry into the justice system suggests that youth coming from the child welfare system are at a 45% to 72% higher risk for becoming involved with the juvenile justice system than youth from the general population (Ryan & Testa, 2005; Widom, 1989), and are at a greater risk for reoffending (Herz et al., 2010). Compared to their white counterparts, black child welfare youth are twice as likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system (Ryan & Testa, 2005). Two studies comparing rates of crossing over for African-American and European-American youth in the child welfare system demonstrate that 12% to 63% of blacks cross over, while 8% to 53% of white youth cross over (Halemba, Siegal, Lord, & Zawacki, 2004; Herz & Ryan, 2008). This dissertation considers why African – American youth are at greater risk than European-American youth for crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system. This dissertation examines disproportionate crossing over from the perspectives of knowledgeable child welfare and juvenile justice professionals, as well as any relationships between these professionals’ perspectives on crossing over and their racial attitudes.

Definition of Terms

I refer to youth who are first involved with the child welfare system, and who later are arrested and become involved with the juvenile justice system as “crossover youth”. I also refer to Americans with African features as African American or black. I refer to Americans with

European features as European American or white. Lastly, I use the term race, as opposed to ethnicity, because race is a catchall term for ethnicity, racial identity, and phenotypic features.

Ecological Systems Theory

Factors associated with the youth, parent and family, and macro system each contribute to racial disproportionalities. Intersectionality attempts to capture the complexity of a person's experiences, as marked by social constructions of privilege and oppression. It also ~~minimizes~~ the risk of nuances or missing variations in experiences being discounted... to prevent the ~~insensitive~~ practice of homogenizing the experiences of others" (Murphy, Hunt, Zajicek, Norris & Hamilton, 2009, p. 8). Context matters. In some cases, race may be the more salient factor in families' outcomes; in others gender or class may be more salient.

Racial disproportionalities among crossover youth may be the result of a variety of intersecting factors that compound the risk for being arrested by black youth involved with the child welfare system. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979, 1995, and 1998) accounts for various factors that enhance or obstruct youth's development. The focal system is the ~~first~~ level of context", and is the ~~analytic~~ vantage point" (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 21). In this case, the unit of concern is crossover youth. The crossover youth is the perspective from which related systems (microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems) are viewed (Haight & Taylor, 2007).

The second level of context is the microsystem. It ~~encompasses~~ the immediate social environment, the day-to-day reality of the focal system [the child]" (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 21). It includes those settings in which the child has ~~face-to-face~~, sustained, and significant relationships with others" (p. 21, Haight & Taylor, 2007). Biological and foster parents, peers,

teachers, social workers, and probation officers, for example, are some individuals with whom crossover youth have relationships at the microsystem level.

The third level of context is the mesosystem, which encompass ~~the~~ the set of interrelationships between two or more of the [child's] microsystems" (Haight and Taylor, 2007, p. 22). Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995, and 1998) model is based presumably on adequately functioning families—~~normal~~ "normal" families. Interactions between youth and their parents are unbuffered within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. For children involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, however, their interactions are buffered. That is, the relationship between the parent and child becomes public domain once involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Public agencies (i.e., child welfare, law enforcement, and courts) assume the role of *parens patriae*, and the relationship no longer is just between the child and family. Once involved with the system, the parent-child relationship becomes a relationship involving third sociopolitical parties. For youth and families involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice system, many youth outcomes are beyond the control of the youth and parent.

In studying crossover youth using Bronfenbrenner's model, it is important to consider the major impact problematic mesosystemic relationships can have on youth's outcomes. For example, relationships between the caregiver and public agencies can impact the youth at the mesosystem level. A mesosystem between the home and court is ~~ereated~~ created when the parent [or caregiver] forms a relationship with a representative of the court, such as a judge" (W. L. Haight, personal correspondence, 7/2/12). ~~Individuals~~ Individuals whose mesosystems are comprised of diverse, even conflicting microsytems may experience more stress" during development (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 22). The mesosystem between the parent and judge may be contentious and stressful if parents' childrearing differs from the values of a judge. In such instances, the child

may be placed under the state's care and not reunified, which may ultimately impact the child's development, including education outcomes and risk for delinquency. Ecological systems theory would predict that child welfare-involved youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience healthy development if the parent, judge, and other stakeholders have similar values and goals. If these values and goals are dissimilar, and microsystems are in conflict with one another, problems can emerge that impact the development of crossover youth. If the child perceives that he/she is supported through enhanced social resources, such as continued contact with biological parents and/or a stable environment while in substitute care, she/he may be more likely to develop skillful coping strategies.

The fourth level of youth's ecological context is the exosystem, which is defined as "one or more settings that do not involve the [child] as an active participant, but in which events occur that do affect the [child]" (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 22) An example of a contributor to crossover at the level of the exosystem includes parents' involvement with illegal activities, such as domestic violence or drug sales. In this case, the child's relationship with his/her parents is compromised by the parent's involvement with illegal behaviors. Although the child in foster care may have no contact with parents' peers or partners, the child is indirectly affected by their parents' involvement with them. That is, youth may spend longer time in substitute care as parental involvement with the abuse and neglect court and the criminal justice system becomes prolonged. Additionally, in the latter example, slow court processing of parents' criminal cases may also prolong the time youth spend in care. Another example is the parents' place of employment, where the parent may be paid a minimum wage salary, creating stress for the whole family. Additionally, following instances of run-ins with the law, if the parent does not earn sufficient income, the parent may be less able to hire a private attorney, who may provide higher

quality legal representation (Hartley et al., 2010; Hoffman et al., 2005). Therefore, the likelihood of favorable court dispositions may be reduced. In this case, the parent may spend more time in prison and the child spends more time in care.

The fifth level of context is the macrosystem, which is defined as “cultural patterns of the larger society in which other systems are embedded. It includes “widespread societal values”, such as institutional and structural racism, education, criminality, childrearing practices, and economic structures (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 246). “They also include the diverse belief systems and practices of subcultures, which vary in terms of ethnicity, income, education, age...” (Haight & Taylor, 2007, p. 23). Social policies are macro level contributors that impact youth development. For example, the school’s decision to have a child arrested, as opposed to suspended or expelled, for fighting at school, known as zero tolerance policy, can impact youth’s involvement with the juvenile justice system.¹

As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, participants discussed various themes contributing to crossing over and disproportionalities among crossover youth. They spontaneously discussed contributors to crossing over at the levels of youth (focal and micro system levels), parents and families (micro-, meso- and eco- systems levels), and larger (macro) social systems. This mixed method dissertation aims to integrate etic and emic perspectives. In other words, I aim to present conceptual frameworks that emerge from the participants themselves (emic perspective), and to connect those frameworks with the existing empirical literature (etic perspective). In order to more adequately represent participants’ conceptual frameworks, I will discuss contributors to crossing over at the child, family and larger social system levels. Where relevant, I also will comment on the relations of these concepts in relation to the ecological systems theory.

¹ Bronfenbrenner also discusses the macro chrono system which considers historical changes in larger systems. Although this dissertation does not focus on this level of the ecological system, it is important to underscore that results do reflect conditions and policies during a particular point in history: the early 21st century.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, ecological levels interact in complex ways. For example, the ways in which parents interact with and socialize their children (microsystem level) may be profoundly shaped by macro system realities such as structural racism. As we also will see in chapters 3 and 4, participants' descriptions of contributors to crossing over suggest that they interact in complex and dynamic ways, cutting across ecological systems. That is, contributors, such as poverty, can be seen as playing out in more than one ecological system at a time. In order to consider such sub-system interactions, I draw upon classic sociological theories including social strain and social control theories. Themes participants described at the level of the child may be interpreted in light of the ecological system model as focal system contributors. Themes described at the parent and family level may be seen as microsystem and mesosystem contributors. Themes at the macro system level may be seen as exosystem and macrosystem contributors.

Child Level

Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse

There are a variety of possible contributing factors to racial disproportionalities among crossing over. Youth mental health and substance abuse problems of youth are seen as focal system contributors to disproportionate crossing over. That is, one possible explanation for why African Americans are at a greater risk for crossing over is that they have more substance abuse and other mental health problems, which are associated with delinquent behavior. Yet, African Americans have lower to equal rates of substance use and other mental health problems within the general, child welfare, and juvenile justice populations (Aarons, McCabe, Gearity & Hough, 2003; Abram, Teplin, McClelland & Dulcan, 2003; Cauffman, 2004; Domalanta, Risser, Roberts & Risser, 2003; Rawal, Romansky, Jenuwine & Lyons, 2004; SAMHSA, 2008). In an

examination of the prevalence of substance use disorders of youth in five public service sectors (i.e., the alcohol and drug, mental health, education, juvenile justice, and child welfare service sectors), African Americans cumulatively had less substance use disorders than other races both within youths' lifetime and within the past year even when controlling for age and gender (Aarons et al., 2003). Differences that were present within individual sectors, albeit statistically insignificant, point toward lower prevalence rates for African Americans. Specifically, within the alcohol/drug service sector 65% of black youth and 91% of white youth had a disorder within their lifetime. There were no significant differences between any racial groups within the child welfare sector. Within the juvenile justice sector, Aarons et al. found that 51% of black youth and 77% of white youth in juvenile justice system experienced problems with substance abuse at some point in their lives. These rates are somewhat similar to Abram et al. (2003), who found that among a sample of detained youth 43% of black females and 63% of white females had comorbid mental health and substance abuse disorders; 41% of black males and 53% of white males had comorbidity. Other research suggests that white and black detained youth share similar prevalence rates of mental health and substance use disorders (Domalanta et al., 2003; Rawal, Romansky, Jenuwine, & Lyons, 2004).

Social Strain

Another possible contributing factor to disproportionate crossing over is social strain associated with poverty and racism, which may lower African-American youth's threshold for crossing over. When individuals are prevented from achieving positively valued goals, strain can result in a disjunction between aspirations and expectations, expectations and actual achievements, and just or fair and actual outcomes (Agnew, 1992; Agnew et al., 2002; Merton,

1968). If individuals find that they cannot achieve their goals through legitimate channels, they may engage in delinquency after a particular threshold of stress is reached.

Compared to European Americans, African Americans are more likely to experience strains associated with poverty and racism. The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau showed that 13% of whites and 27% of blacks were below poverty in 2010. Black household income was \$32,068, while white household income was \$51,846. 40% of black families under age 18 years-old fell below poverty, and 23% of 18-64 years-old fell below poverty. For white families, it was 12% and 10%, respectively. From 2007 to 2010, white household income decreased by 5.4%, while black household decreased by 10% (Denava, Proctor & Smith, 2011).

In the general population African-American's life expectancy is 93% that of whites; diseases and infant mortality rates are much greater for blacks; 45% of prisoners are African Americans; and in Illinois 83% of African Americans attend segregated schools (Diller, 2007). Delinquent youth were more likely to be removed from their home and placed in detention if their family was poor and receiving welfare assistance, which is an indicator of poverty (Leonard & Sontheimer, 1995; Wu & Fuentes, 1998). In short, African-American children are more likely than others to encounter poverty, violence, crime, poor schools, racism, and other discriminatory experiences (Thomlison, 2004), which result in strain and may increase rates of delinquency.

Social strain may contribute to disproportionalities in crossing over at multiple, interacting levels of youth's ecology. At the focal system level, the youth commits some crime to achieve some form of wealth. Social strain may be a result of parents' or families' poverty, as well, thus seen as a microsystem contributor. Social strain may also be considered at the mesosystem level if authorities process maltreatment and criminal cases unfavorably based on parents' SES. Additionally, social strain may result from social policies that are not conducive to

upward mobility for disenfranchised persons, such as poor families who have limited access to quality education and job opportunities that pay more than minimum wage.

Social Bonds and Controls

Another potential contributing factor to disproportionate crossing over is relatively weak social bonds and social controls for African-American youth relative to European-American youth in the child welfare system. Social bonds are defined as feelings of obligation that arise out of social and cultural constraints, or control (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hirschi, 1969; Thornberry, 1987). When children are invested in positive relationships and mainstream institutions, they may feel bound by society's constraints and a moral obligation to those who support them. African American males in foster care, for example, are less likely to engage in delinquency if they have strong attachments with their foster family and participate in religious organizations (Ryan, Testa & Zhai, 2008). African Americans are at a greater risk for entering foster care, have more placement instability (i.e., more placements), and are more likely to be placed in congregate care placements (Huebner, 2007; Needle et al., 2003; Park & Ryan, 2009; DeCoursey, Goerge & Nourtney, 2006). Thus, their social bonds may be significantly weakened while in care relative to European Americans. Such weakened social bonds and social controls may lead to delinquent behavior and crossing over for child welfare-involved youth. Social bonds may be viewed as focal system contributor to disproportionate crossing over at the focal system level. It may also be viewed as a micro level contributor because biological and substitute caregivers may contribute to youth's weakened social bonds. It could also be viewed as a mesosystem contributor if the child becomes traumatized while in foster care.

Family Level

Family Structure and Instability

At the microsystem level, family structure and instability may contribute to crossing over. A disproportionate number of African-American youth grow up in single parent homes, often headed by females. Of African-American youth from the general population in 2010, 66% were living in single parent homes, whereas 24% of European-American youth were living in single parent homes. In Illinois 74% of black youth and 21% of white youth were living in single parent homes (Annie Casey Foundation, 2010). U.S. Census Bureau data demonstrates that African-American women are less likely to be married and more likely to experience marital separation than European-American women (Wilson, 1987). This may be due in part to fewer economically stable men within the African American community. African –American men have higher rates of unemployment and incarceration than white men (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011). Family instability and a weakened family structure may lead to less parental supervision and less attention paid to children’s development (Piquero, Moffitt, & Lawton, 2005). Moreover, Furstenberg (1993) suggest that parents from low income and dangerous neighborhoods may be less warm and more controlling with their children than parents from higher income and safer neighborhoods, which may be associated with delinquency. Little research supports the association between juvenile justice involvement and coming from a single, female-headed households (see Sheehan, 2010).

Family functioning and likelihood of parents’ ability to supervise and provide structure and consequences for their children are associated with court dispositions (Kempf, Decker & Bing, 1990; Sanborn, 1996). Several studies found that court records reported that parents of color were less willing to supervise their children, and even when willing they were less able to

do so (Austin, 1995; Corley et al., 1996; Frazier & Bishop, 1995; Kempf et al., 1990; Krisberg & Austin, 1993). Semistructured interviews with juvenile justice professionals in Florida indicated that a single-parent home is seen by professionals as more dysfunctional than a traditional home (Frazier & Bishop, 1995). Interviews also indicated that youth of color were perceived to be more negatively affected by single-parent homes. Furthermore, families of color were seen as less adequate than white families even when both families are broken. The broken family of color was seen as “more broken” (p. 35). Frazier and Bishop (1995) investigated the potential for racial bias and found that even amongst cases of youth residing in two-parent households, black families were perceived to be less capable of supervising their children than white families.

Racial Socialization

Distrust of authorities may also be considered as a micro and macro level contributor to disproportionate crossing over. African-American youth are socialized differently than European-American youth (Carter-Black, 2005; Courd et al., 2004; Hudley & Haight, & Miller, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). African-American parents teach their children racial pride by referencing positive cultural role models and patronizing black-owned businesses (Courd et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2006). Black parents also teach children to dress conservatively, for example by not wearing braids, to fit in with the mainstream white culture, so as to not be perceived as threatening (Courd et al., 2004). Many participants from Courd et al. (2004) expressed feeling conflicted when teaching their children optimism about the future and the importance of academic achievement because of the “harsh realities of racism” that serve as obstacles to the advancement of poor African-Americans (p. 283). Many black parents are concerned about future difficulties their children will face due to racism (Courd et al., 2004;

Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Since racial socialization is cultural, it is considered as also operating at the macro level.

Distrust of Authorities. One aspect of racial socialization that may contribute to disproportionate crossing over is a distrust of authorities. African American parents foster awareness of racism and discrimination, and teach them to be guarded against whites and exercise caution when trusting whites (Courd et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2006). As a result of socialization within their families, as well as personal experiences and observations, black and white youth may respond differently when approached by law enforcement. Depending on youth's response, their interaction with police can take on a more positive or negative outcome. Much research has found that whites are more trusting of police and have more positive views of and interactions with police than blacks (Noris, Fielding, Kemp & fielding, 1992; Wilson, 1996). 64% of blacks in New York City believed police brutality is a very serious problem, compared to only 21% of New York City whites (Quinnipiac University, 2001). In Toronto, black youth who were not involved with any delinquent activity were more likely to be stopped and searched by police than with youth who admitted involvement in illegal behavior. Patton (1998) found that black gang members viewed police as oppressors and not a force of protection.

Fine, Freudenberg, Payne, Perkins, Smith & Wanzer (2003) administered surveys to 911 youth, ages 16 to 21 years-old, in New York City about adverse interactions youth may have had with police, guards, and educators. Thirty percent of the sample was African-American, 23% were white, and 47% were Latino or Asian American. Forty-five percent of survey respondents said it was unlikely or very unlikely they would seek help from police if they or their friend were hurt. 70% said they would most likely seek help from a parent. Half of the interview respondents expressed criticism of police; 25% were ambivalent critics; and 25% were supporters. African-

Americans felt safe in fewer places than other racial groups. Also, self-reported arrest rates in the last 12 months were slightly higher for African-Americans than European-Americans. African Americans were also more than twice as likely to be worried about being arrested.

Fine et al. (2003) also conducted follow-up in-depth interviews with 36 youth. The racial composition of the follow-up subsample is unknown. 83% of this subsample reported instances of micro-aggressions. One African American female said, —“You get used to this, the pat downs, spread eagles” (p. 153). Most subsample participants who reported adverse incidents with authorities were persons of color. Each person who reported an incident reported feeling —“scared” or —“shocked” at the behavior of the police, and said it would be hard to trust them in the future. Some youth reported adverse incidents with teachers in which the teacher —“went off” or discriminated against the student (p. 153). Youth also believed that they were treated like a —“thug” or suspicious for dressing in baggy jeans or du rags. 74% felt that police relations with New York City had worsened due to the increased police presence in communities of color and poverty.

Cultural Communication. Patterns of communication initially learned within the family also may contribute to racial disproportionalities among cross over youth. Group identity and racial differences in communication may deepen divisions between blacks and whites (Dixon, Schell, & Giles, 2008). Cultural communication operates at the meso and macro system levels.

Interactions that result in conflict can often be traced to verbal and nonverbal cues that a participant interprets (or misinterprets) as distrust, disrespect, or anger (e.g., Mehrabian, 1968; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Each person sees his or her own behavior as a reasonable and justified reaction... Nevertheless, changes in interpersonal interaction may have prevented the conflict (Dixon et al., 2008, p. 531).

Communication accommodation theory posits that individuals either converge or diverge in their interactions. If they converge, they adapt to each other's behaviors and speech patterns. If they diverge, they differentiate their behaviors and speech patterns. "When a speaker feels the need to gain a target's approval, there is a higher chance for convergence to occur" (p. 532). People are more likely to evaluate police interactions as positive if they perceive the officers as accommodating, or converging (Giles et al., 2006, 2007). Perceptions of accommodation may lead to increased trust and compliance with officers (Hajek et al., 2006).

Research has found that blacks converge more than whites (Stanback & Pearch, 1981). However, when racial discrimination is expected, African-Americans may choose not to accommodate, as may be the case for black youth "who feel that their racial identities are, illegitimately, the direct cause of most [police] decisions to stop" them (Dixon et al., 2008, p. 532). Interactions between racial group members may lead to communication apprehension and divergence (Major, 2006).

"Traffic stops are known, by police officers, as being among the most dangerous situations they can encounter" (Dixon et al., 2008, p. 533; Pinizzotto, Davis & Miller, 1997).

"Officers are often 'on their guard'—even under the most mundane circumstances—and are trained to resist temptations toward complacency and vulnerability; officer accommodativeness... is therefore, not a 'natural' communicative strategy. Indeed, resistance to accommodativeness might be accentuated when encountering members of a social category that have more stigmatic associations with crime than others (Dixon et al., 2008, p. 533; Dixon, 2007; Giles, 2001).

Dixon et al. (2008) randomly sampled 313 video recordings from police cars in Cincinnati, Ohio. They found that more black drivers experienced extensive policing during the stop;

communication quality was more positive for white drivers; and officers' communication behavior was more positive when both driver and officer were of the same race.

It is possible that communication differences may influence disproportionate crossing over. While the literature reviewed on cultural communication differences between African- and European-Americans focus on law enforcement, these communication patterns may present themselves in interactions between child welfare authorities and parents, as well as court authorities and youth and parents. As many African Americans are socialized to distrust white Americans, especially those in positions of authority, they may become defensive or communicate more divergently, enhancing authorities' decision to use force. At the same time, white authorities may be responding to African-Americans in biased ways. These interactions may result in deeper entrenchment in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems for blacks more so than whites, which may be a macro level contributor.

Macro Social Systems

Neighborhood Context

The neighborhoods in which we live may provide social support and social capital, including role models for youth, social networks, and educational and economic opportunities. Social disorganization, a term coined by Shaw and McKay in 1942, suggests that rapid migration in and out of neighborhoods is associated with crime. As residents spend less time in their neighborhood, they are less likely to feel connected to the physical space and neighbors. Sampson and Groves (1989) expanded the social disorganization theory to include the inability of community residents to maintain effective social controls. Specifically, the absence of community support structures, such as recreational spaces for youth, community centers, and social support networks between neighbors, can decrease community's social support and capital

systems leading to the risk for youth criminality. The availability of educational, recreation, mental health and substance abuse, financial, and employment opportunities may reduce the risk for involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Within low-income and marginalized neighborhoods these resources may be limited. Thus, families living in neighborhoods that are “disorganized” and lack positive social structures may be at greater risk for involvement in the child welfare and criminal justice systems. Even the poorest of whites do not live in the same disadvantage communities that the poorest blacks do, potentially contributing to black youth’s risk for crossing over (Massey, 1995; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Wilson, 1987).

Law enforcement professionals often cite neighborhood contextual factors as reasons for patrolling certain neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that are racially and ethnically mixed or predominantly people of color, often labeled “African-American communities”, are more likely to be patrolled by law enforcement than primarily white or upper class neighborhoods, as demonstrated by numerous empirical studies (see Bishop, 2005). One study showed that in addition to more law enforcement presence in low income neighborhoods composed of predominantly persons of color, law enforcement were also more likely to use or threaten to use force in these neighborhoods (Smith, 1986). Research suggests that law enforcement deem their presence and the use of force as necessary since “race and class may provide a heuristic for identifying “dangerous areas,” “suspicious persons,” and “unusual activity”” (Bishop, 2005, p. 40). Thus, persons residing in “bad neighborhoods” are more scrutinized by authorities as being at a particular high risk for offending. The statistics on disproportionate minority confinement and poverty seem to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy for heavy policing and prosecution of individuals who come from low-income, African-American neighborhoods. Perhaps

professionals believe that if poor African-Americans are overrepresented in the statistics, then they must be more likely to commit crime than European-Americans (Bishop, 2005).

Neighborhood contributors may be seen as exosystem contributors to crossing over, since these contributors do not directly involve the child but may influence youth's development.

Education

The median annual income for individuals without a high school diploma was \$19,000 while it was \$27,000 for those with a high school diploma, and \$47,000 per year for individuals with a college degree (Crissey, 2009). Unemployment was highest for those without a high school diploma and lowest for those with advanced graduate degrees. In 2011, individuals with less than a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 14%, while high school graduates averaged a 9% unemployment rate, and those with a bachelor's degree had a 5% percent unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Youth from the child welfare and juvenile justice system, and in particular black youth, are less likely than youth from the general population and white youth to have access to adequate education. Therefore, black crossover youth are likely to experience a significant amount of problems associated with poverty and unemployment. Rosenberg, Smith, and Levinson (2007) studied over 1,100 youth ages 3 years old or younger who had a substantiated maltreatment report. They found that 47% of these youth were classified as having developmental delays. Although early education is essential for this population, as noted by Leone & Weinberg (2010), many child welfare agencies do not require substitute caregivers to send their foster children to preschool (Zetlin, Weinberg, and Shea, 2006). Only 6% of foster children under age six are estimated to attend Head Start (Vandivere, Chalk, and Moore, 2003). Studies show that children who have been abused or neglected and children who are placed in foster care generally have

lower scores on standardized tests, poorer grades, high rates of absenteeism, grade retention, and more behavior problems and suspensions from school than comparison groups (Aldgate et al., 1992; Courtney, Terao, and Bost, 2004; Crozier and Barth, 2005; Kendall-Tackett and Eckenrode, 1996; Kurtz et al., 1993; Leiter and Johnsen, 1997; Smithgall et al., 2004). School attendance and performance are used by juvenile justice personnel in the processing of delinquency cases (Leiber, 1995; Kempf-Leonard & Sontheimer, 1995; Wu, Cernkovich & Dunn, 1997). Youth coming from the child welfare system may have a higher risk for crossing over than youth from the general population since education problems are more present among youth involved in the child welfare system, particularly for black child welfare-involved youth.

Black youth who had been in the foster care system were less likely to graduate high school with a diploma (Harris et al., 2009). Other research, however, found that African American youth who had been in the foster care system experienced more favorable education outcomes than white foster care alumni (Dworskey et al., 2010). Education problems are also more present among delinquent youth of color than white delinquent youth (Bridges et al., 1993; Dryfoos, 1990; McCarter, 1997). Youth are more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system if they have been suspended from school, are not in school or working, and have a low GPA (Crutchfield, Rankin & Pitchford, 1993).

Contributors of disproportionate crossing over related to education may be considered at the focal system, the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem levels. A youth may lack educational aspirations, which may be due in part to upbringing or parents standards for educational achievement. At the mesosystem level, if parents are not involved with youth's school or attend meetings with teachers, the youth may be negatively impacted. Education policies, such as zero tolerance (seen in the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon), may

increase youth's risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system. Involvement in the juvenile justice system may lead to poor economic and legal outcomes by virtue of having a criminal record. Thus, macro level contributors, such as zero tolerance policies and minimum wage standards can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and crime.

Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems

Factors Associated with Arrest and Disposition Decisions. There is an overwhelming amount of research that evidences disproportionate minority contact in the criminal justice system (see Hawkins & Kempf-Leonard, 2005). Research using FBI data from the 1997 and 1998 National Incident-Based Reporting Systems compared crime characteristics of nonwhite and white youth arrested for violent crimes (Pope & Snyder, 2003). Compared to white offenders, nonwhite offenders were more likely to be arrested when the victim was white. The following is a comprehensive list of decisions at various ecological levels that are associated with the decision law enforcement use to arrest youth (Sanborn & Salerno, 2005, pp. 137-139).

- Offense (severity, type, time of day, gang related, use of weapons)
- Youth's record or status (prior police contact or arrest, school record, probation status)
- Offender (age, gender, race, social class, demeanor)
- Complainant (present at the scene, desire to prosecute, age, gender, race)
- Location of offense (type of neighborhood, low or high-crime area)
- Parents (attitude, present at scene or at home, concern, ability to supervise)
- Officer (training and experience, view of juvenile justice system and diversion, workload)

- Police department (enforcement policies, community policing, or problem solving emphasis)

In 1991, 100 court professionals from an urban, suburban, and rural county were interviewed on their perspectives of factors that influence juvenile court dispositions (Sanborn, 1996). Juvenile court dispositions were perceived as being discriminatory against youth who came from dysfunctional families, were black males, from the lower class, with bad school records and character, and from a bad neighborhood. Everyone who mentioned race or class in this context linked them with one of the other attributes that were identified as being subject to discriminatory sentencing in juvenile court. Conversely, youth who had opposing attributes were given “breaks from the court” (p. 108). The age of youth was also described as influencing court decisions. Additionally, 32% of the sample noted failed treatment, 30% of the sample noted bad character. 12% noted inarticulate/bad appearance as contributing to harsher dispositions. 81% of the sample said family’s ability “to control/supervise the child and was able/willing to assist in the rehabilitative effort” and 28% said parents’ character should be considered in delinquent dispositions (p. 102). Unfortunately, the attributes that were described as contributing to discriminatory court practices and harsher dispositions, and what should be involved in dispositions are all qualities possessed by a high proportion of youth in the child welfare system.

Empirical research suggests that representation by public defenders may lead to deeper entrenchment in the criminal justice system. This is problematic for low-income individuals, such as African-American crossover youth, since youth from the child welfare system and black youth in particular, are disproportionately poor and may be less likely to hire a private attorney. Hoffman, Rubin, and Shepard (2005) examined sentence outcomes of felony cases in Denver, Colorado in 2002. They found that cases represented by public defenders had worse outcomes.

They note, however, their findings may be confounded by cases that are somewhat less serious and less defensible, which may be more likely to be represented by public defenders. Hartley, Miller, and Spohn (2010) examined four court-processing points (i.e., bail, plea bargaining, incarceration, and length of sentence) of felony cases in Cook County. Ninety-two percent of their sample were represented by public defenders and 81% of defendants were black. Black defendants who retained a private attorney were twice as likely to have the primary charge reduced compared to black defendants who were represented by a public defender. Only white defendants benefited from having a private attorney at the release on bail decision point. Legal representation may be viewed as a macro level contributors since no policy exists to standardized legal representation across cases. The justice system may be considered to be a capitalist system, in that it takes money to stay out of jail or prison.

Professionals' Racial Attitudes. Parents and youth involved in the child welfare and criminal justice systems have direct contact with child welfare and juvenile justice professionals, as representatives of these systems. The racial attitudes of these professionals may affect the ways in which they interact with families, as well as their assessments, processing, and dispositions of crossover cases. Racism within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, operating at the macro level, may contribute to African-American youth's risk for crossing over. There is a long history of racism among social service sectors, as reflected in under- and later overrepresentation of African Americans. For example, in the early twentieth century social service agencies refused to accept into foster care Black American children with darker skin tone and other characteristics reflective of their African ancestry (Roberts, 2002). Over the last six decades black Americans have been overrepresented in the social welfare system (Smith & Devore, 2004). Contemporary research conducted on diverse samples throughout the nation has

found that African Americans experience deeper entrenchment in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems even after having controlled for confounding factors, such as age, gender, neighborhood poverty, types of maltreatment, and types of criminal offense (Needell, Brookhart, & Lee, 2003; Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007).

It is possible that professionals' attitudes toward race may inform their assessments of youth and family functioning and progression. Professionals' racial biases may contribute to racial disproportionalities. Oft times these biases are unconscious and individuals behave in ways they do not intend to be racist, but which reflect a lack of awareness of white privilege or the realities of racism in twenty-first century U.S. "Colorblindness", or not "seeing" a person's color, may be a component of modern day racism. In the past, giving thought to one's race, especially a person of color, often meant unequal treatment through segregation, outright discrimination, and acts of violence. After Civil Rights, many whites, including political leaders, believed that ignoring one's race or one's skin color, was necessary to achieve equality because before that acknowledging another person's skin color was equated with inequity. Yet the belief that race does not matter ignores the racial inequities, as reflected in the statistics of the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. Therefore, to be colorblind today is problematic.

Modern racial attitudes can be assessed by measuring levels of colorblindness and racial identity development, both of which are grounded in critical race theory, which addresses

...the ways in which legal colourblindness, in supplanting overt legal racial ordering, has not only allowed law to ignore the social and institutional structures of oppression created historically and recreated presently in law and practice but also has blunted efforts to dismantle the racial caste system, working instead to maintain it (Mutua, 2002, p. 277-278).

Thus, our legal system is comprised of aspects of colorblindness. Critical race theory is used to study social and political power structures, which are grounded in history and maintain racial ordering. These structures and processes of ordering continue today.

Colorblindness. Colorblindness is a subtle form of racism and is applicable to many racially and ethnically diverse groups (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). The notion of colorblindness is based on ~~the~~ belief that race should not and does not matter” in determining persons’ outcomes (Neville et al., 2000, p. 60). That is, a person who is considered colorblind believes that race should not and does not matter in effectuating particular outcomes. A person who is considered not colorblind believes that race should not but it does matter. Colorblindness in and of itself does not necessarily mean that one harbors negative views toward persons of color, as is the case for explicit racism. Racism refers to ~~the~~ belief in racial superiority and also the structures of society... [T]hus, racism consists of both ideological (belief) and structural (institutional) components” (Thompson & Neville, 1999, as cited in Neville et al., 2000, p. 61). On the other hand, colorblind racial attitudes have only an ideological component, which is ~~a~~ unawareness of the existence of racism” (Neville et al., 2000, p. 61), and an indicator of ~~attitudes~~ that serve to deny, distort, or minimize the existence of racism” (Oh et al., 2010, p. 166). Therefore, colorblindness is seen as a more subtle form of racism (Burkard & Knox, 2004). Colorblindness may vary across contexts depending on the degree and type of interracial exposure and interaction. For example, in contexts where individuals are homogenous (all black or all white) professionals may evidence higher levels of colorblindness. Measures of overt racism have been highly susceptible to social desirability attitudes (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986), but measures of more subtle forms of racism (e.g., color-blind racial attitudes) appear to be less susceptible (Burkard et al., 2001).

Although research has not investigated colorblind attitudes among crossover professionals, they may be relevant to the decisions these individuals make in relation to African American youth. Research conducted on colorblind racial attitudes has found that among psychology students and mental health workers, higher levels of colorblindness were associated with lower levels of multicultural knowledge and awareness even when controlling for multicultural training, social desirability, and participants' race (Chao, 2006; Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). Colorblindness is also associated with negative views on affirmative action, low levels of awareness of institutional and structural racism (Awad, Cokley & Ravitch, 2005; Oh, Choi, Neville, Anderson, & Landrum-Brown, 2010), and "less sophisticated" racial identity development (Helms, 1995, p.184).

Racial Identity Development. Racial attitudes are also reflected in racial identity development. Racial identity development refers to individuals' dynamic beliefs and emerging understanding of the sociopolitical construct of race and how race impacts their own and others' lives (Helms, 1990). One general trend of racial identity development, considered "healthy" by many, is for whites to abandon a sense of entitlement and privilege, and for blacks to abandon internalized racism (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Helms, 1995). There is no one universal racial identity development trajectory or sequence that all individuals follow, as racial identity development consists of numerous facets and possible trajectories and is dynamic, and may be non-linear (Cokley & Chapman, 2009; Helms, 1995). For example, racial identity issues encountered earlier in life may be revisited as new issues and ecologies are experienced (Cokley & Chapman, 2009). Racial identity development also may vary for individuals within racial groups.

Black Racial Identity Development. The Nigrescence model has received significant scholarly attention. The ‘ Expanded Nigrescence model (Vandiver et al., 2001, 2002) characterizes 12 possible phases of black racial identity development. During the *Pre-encounter* phase, African Americans internalize many of the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture including racist beliefs that devalue African Americans relative to European Americans. Individuals may be miseducated as a result of media and the American school system (Vandiver et al., 2001) and may seek to assimilate and be accepted by European Americans, while distancing themselves from other African Americans. There is a de-emphasis on racial-group membership and emphasis on the belief in meritocracy. For example, one young woman reported wanting to “be like and live like, and be accepted by” European Americans, even to the point of hating her own ethnic group. (Tatum, 1992, p.10). Events such as rejection by European Americans force individuals to acknowledge the impact of racism on their own lives. In the *Encounter* stage African Americans face the reality that they do not experience the same privileges as European Americans, and acknowledge their identity as a member of a group targeted by racism. The *Immersion/emersion* phase is characterized by intense involvement with blacks and anti-white sentiments. During this phase, there is a desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one’s racial identity, and actively avoid any symbols of whiteness. Feelings of rage toward whites may emerge during this stage, and feelings of guilt are experienced due to having downplayed or ignored race and racism in the past. Individuals may actively explore aspects of their own history and culture with peers from their own racial background. Towards the end of this phase, any anger at whites dissipates and an emerging security in a newly defined and affirmed sense of self emerges. The *Internalization* stage is characterized by *Afrocentric*

(e.g., a focus on black empowerment, and is non-racist) and/or multiculturalist attitudes (e.g., a focus on one or more identities).

Note that Cross' (1991) description of African American racial identity development is not universal. Many African Americans, for example, are raised in predominately black communities including churches and schools, and are socialized with positive messages about being black. Therefore, "it is possible for African Americans to never experience pre-encounter attitudes because negative messages about blacks were not a part of their reality" (Cokley & Chapman, 2009, p. 287). Nevertheless, the Nigrescence model has proven to be a useful framework for describing some common attitudes towards race held by many African Americans.

White Racial Identity Development. Helms' has described white racial identity development focusing on emerging recognition of institutional and cultural racism, awareness of white privilege and internalization of a realistically positive view of what it means to be white (Helms, 1993). Like black racial identity development, there is no one, universal developmental trajectory of white racial identity development. Helms proposes six phases of white racial identity development. The *Contact* phase is characterized by a lack of awareness of racial differences and/or discrimination. *Disintegration* occurs once an individual experiences some social event(s) of black/white differences and or discrimination, which trigger moral dilemmas. During this phase individuals may experience a conflict between being accepted by whites and contributing to oppression, and also experiencing feelings of guilt, shame, depression, and anxiety. They may enter the *Reintegration* phase, which is characterized by the development of a conscious white identity. During this phase the white person believes that whites are superior to blacks, and that institutional and cultural racism are the natural order of life due to earned "privileges and preferences" (Helms, 1990, p. 60). Furthermore, "cross-racial similarities are

minimized and/or denied”, and “[a]ny residual feelings of” cognitive dissonance are reduced and replaced with “~~far~~ or anger” toward blacks (p. 60). Alternatively, whites may redefine their white identity in a more positive and healthy one. In the *Pseudo-independent* phase, whites begin to actively question their position in society in relation to persons of color. The white person no longer feels comfortable with his/her identity and begins to redefine it, usually in the form of “~~intellectualization~~” and curiosity about blacks (p. 61). Their development is still naïve, as they look to reduce racism and better society through attempts to change blacks via white standards and definitions of acceptable behaviors. Changing black people is no longer the goal for whites in the *Immersion/emersion* phase, and they seek to positively redefine what it means to be white through replacing racially related stereotypes with accurate information about what it means to be white in U.S. society. White people achieve *Autonomy* when they no longer feel the need to categorize persons of color based on race, as race is no longer a threatening symbol. They also realize intersectionalities associated with race.

Although current models of racial identity development do not adequately capture the complex and dynamic process of racial identity development (see Spanierman & Soble, 2010), they have utility of predicting a variety of other individual attitudes and states that may be relevant to decisions made by crossover professionals in relation to African American youth. Prior research on African American racial identity development suggests that those with lower levels of black racial identity development (as measured by Helms’ Black Racial Identity Scale [1990] or the Cross Racial Identity Scale [Vandiver et al., 2002]) have depression, as well as lower levels of well-being, self-actualization, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and school achievement (for an overview see both Fischer, Tokar, & Serna, 1998 and Cokley & Chapman, 2009). Moreover, Internalization attitudes among African Americans are associated with a

stronger preference for black counselors (Helms & Carter, 1991). Among European Americans, lower levels of white racial identity development (as measured by Helms' White Racial Identity Scale [WRAIS]) are associated with higher levels of racism, colorblindness, a work ethic that emphasizes getting ahead, and preference for white counselors. Higher levels or more sophisticated white racial identity development (as measured by WRAIS) are associated with lower levels of colorblindness, higher levels of self-actualization, support for certain affirmative action policies, comfort interacting with African Americans at work, support interventions to promote racial equity at work, college students who are women, older individuals, and perceptions of forming a working alliance with an African American therapist (see Spanierman & Soble, 2010 for an overview).

Empirical research has not examined levels of colorblindness or racial identity development among child welfare or juvenile justice professionals. Assessing crossover professionals' attitudes toward race, as measured by levels of colorblindness and racial identity development, may shed light on professionals' racial ideologies. These ideologies presumably provide a frame of reference for professionals' decision-making and interactions with colleagues and clients. Professionals who work in the child welfare and juvenile justice system may be considered the "building blocks of structural racism" within these systems (D. Houston, personal communication, 5/1/12). How the professionals, under the systems' umbrella, respond to parents and youth, and continue to drive the system, may contribute to disproportionalities. Structural and institutional racism are considered to be macro level contributors.

Professionals' Views on Crossing Over

How professionals view social problems may differ according to their academic and professional training. Child welfare, law enforcement, and court professionals may have their

own professional cultures, as well as distinct set of tools and resources for responding to families. They may view the risk for crossing over differently, depending on who or what they view as responsible contributors for juvenile delinquency. For example, child welfare professionals spend the most intimate time with families. Making home visits and engaging with other family members, they may see obstacles (e.g., poverty, education and employment barriers) struggling families face. Additionally, in the state of Illinois, child welfare workers at the level of supervisor or above are required to have a master's degree in social work. Social workers are trained in human development, diversity issues, and ecological systems theory. Therefore, social workers may take special notice of systematic contributors to crossing over, contributors that are potentially beyond the control of the family. While child welfare, law enforcement, and court professionals typically deal with community members in crisis, child welfare professionals see families on a more intimate and varied level—making home visits on a regular basis and during the aftermath of some incident (which brought the family to the attention of the authorities). This is not necessarily the case for law enforcement and court professionals, although some lawyers, police and probation officers, and juvenile detention staff may make home visits and/or meet family members. Because child welfare workers may come to know families more intimately, they may empathize more with barriers these families experience.

Law enforcement and court professionals, on the other hand, are not trained in human or child development or ecological systems theory. Rather, they are trained to separate the offender from the alleged crime and to be as objective as possible—blind to the person but not the crime. Thus, law enforcement and court professionals may be less likely to take note of systematic contributors of crossing over.

Moreover, the career path a person chooses to help people and society is complex and related to that individual's worldview. An individual entering social work, for example, may believe the best way to correct behaviors is by providing intervention services targeted at reducing family's stress. An individual entering legal professions may believe that the best way to correct behaviors through the guiding principles of law, which incorporate a forced participation in services and a forced removal of the person from their dangerous environment. Once these individual enter their chosen professions, these beliefs are strengthened and elaborated.

The degree of racial sensitivity may vary by type of professional. Experiences of diversity training and personally held beliefs around acceptance of diverse individuals are likely more present among social workers than law enforcement and courts. Child welfare workers, most of whom come from a social work background, are trained in social justice for marginalized individuals. Their educational experiences likely emphasize critical thought with respect to disparate outcomes. Law enforcement and court professionals receive a much different training—one that focuses more on critical thought related to the usefulness of the law and type of sentencing in rehabilitating criminals, for example.

Social Policies Impacting Crossover Youth

Often times practice does not parallel social policy. Policies have recently been developed to address both crossing over and disparities in the juvenile justice system, such as through the reenactment of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) and the Disproportionate Minority Confinement mandate. These policies are only as good as they are implemented in practice, however, and unfortunately this is not always the case. Although

policy efforts have begun to address crossing over and disproportionate minority confinement, crossover racial disparities still exist.

A brief description of the history of policy development shaping the juvenile justice system and existing policies governing crossover youth is necessary to help identify how youth crossover and what their developmental trajectories look like once in the juvenile justice system. The JJDPa and the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act were both enacted in 1974 to systematically process and treat youth in each respective system. The JJDPa introduced more uniformity and fairness into the system by way of (1) deinstitutionalizing status offenders, except in cases of running away from home; (2) requiring complete separation through sight and sound from adult criminals, except in extreme acts of violent crime; and (3) addressing the overrepresentation of minority youth in confinement through the Disproportionate Minority Confinement mandate (Taylor et al., 2002). Already, upon the resurrection of the 1974 Act, disproportionate minority confinement was recognized as an issue, but it was not until 2002-2003, when Congress reauthorized and signed into law an amended version of the JJDPa, that the needs of youth coming from the child welfare system were addressed. These amendments aimed to enhance interagency collaboration. Specifically, these new policies sought the following:

1. States were to establish policies and systems that allow the sharing of child welfare records with juvenile justice in order to provide better treatment planning for young offenders.
2. States were required to provide protections incorporated by the foster care system, including juvenile justice case plans and reviews.
3. States were allowed use funds to help several child care systems (i.e., juvenile justice,

child welfare, and mental health) work in partnership to deliver services and treatment to delinquent youth and those who are at risk for delinquency.

4. In order for state agencies to receive funding for their involvement in reducing child maltreatment, the agencies were required to collect data on the number of youth under the care of the child welfare system who cross over into the juvenile justice system.

Except for Los Angeles County (Herz & Ryan, 2008) and Arizona (Halemba et al., 2004), which have both shown improvements in interagency collaboration, it is unknown exactly how states and counties are responding to the new policy efforts geared toward enhancing the services provided to crossover youth. Despite general agreement that improved communication, integration, and coordination between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are beneficial because of reduced duplication of services, enhanced appropriateness and effectiveness of services, and reduced costs, the implementation of crossover policies has been problematic (Tuell, 2008). To get both systems to coordinate is not an easy task, probably because they are rooted in somewhat different and conflicting philosophical approaches to treatment and interagency collaboration (Tuell, 2008). Although many agree that improved communication, integration, and coordination between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are beneficial, there is little evidence to indicate whether this would improve youth's outcomes (J. P. Ryan, personal communication, June 2, 2008).

Crossover youth have special needs, given the fact that most have suffered extreme trauma stemming from insecure parental attachments and placement instabilities, but often times these needs are not addressed once in the juvenile justice system. This is reflected in reports of foster youth who expressed dissatisfaction with their legal representation while in the juvenile justice system, as well as by foster parents who expressed concerns about perceived inequalities

of judicial dispositions for foster youth (Morris & Freundlich, 2004). Once arrested, youth may either be brought home without charges or detained. The more deeply involved youth are in the child welfare system, the harsher are their juvenile justice punishments (Conger & Ross, 2001; Ryan, Herz, et al., 2007). For example, foster youth who have had at least one group home placement (which is a strong indicator of entrenchment in the child welfare system) are two and one-half times more likely than foster youth who have never been placed in a group home to be sent to a correctional facility or in some sort of congregate care placement even when controlling for age, gender, race, and type of offense (Ryan, Marshall, et al., 2008). Additionally, crossover youth's placement outcomes may be mediated by whether youth were in foster care prior to their arrest, in that foster parents' may be unwilling to take the child back into their care (Conger & Ross, 2001; Ryan, Hernandez & Herz, 2007). Since African-American children are overrepresented in foster care and more entrenched in the child welfare system, their juvenile justice case processing outcomes may lead to deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Disproportionate Minority Confinement. Disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) can be viewed as a manifestation of long-standing social forces (Mooradian, 2003). Some states that have had a history of an expanding non-white population tended to adjudicate youth at a higher rate than other states, for example (McGarrell, 1993). Efforts to correct DMC occurred in 1988 when the JJDPa was amended to require that states recognize the extent to which DMC exists and create strategies to change it. In 1992 the act was again amended to make DMC a "core requirement" and that states demonstrate actions that reduce DMC (Butts, ND). A reauthorization of the JJDPa, which included further recognition of DMC, was passed in the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2008 but never voted on by the Senate. Despite the passing of

legislation over the past four decades to recognize DMC, African American youth are still disproportionately represented.

Once in the juvenile justice system the outcomes, such as re-arrest rates, of crossover youth by racial group are unknown. Evidence of juvenile justice outcomes by non-crossover youth suggest that race does in fact matter. In an examination of three populous locations, Huizinga and colleagues(2007) found that DMC could not be explained by differences in the offending behavior of different racial groups. Furthermore, their findings of a composite risk variable, composed of risk factors associated with both delinquency and race, such as poverty, were mixed. Specifically, for one study site (Seattle), the effect of race was reduced but not eliminated when the composite risk variable was added to the equation. For the Pittsburg site the effect of DMC reached zero to marginal significance. At the Rochester site the risk factors were either non-significant or only marginally significant predictors of arrest when race and delinquency were controlled, and the inclusion of risk had only a small effect on DMC. Huizinga et al. (2007) could not conclude the presence of racial bias in the juvenile justice system because other factors that may better explain the relationship between race and delinquency, such as crime rate and characteristics of the neighborhood in which the offense occurred (e.g., police patrol practices) as well as “the availability and capability of a parent or guardian to take custody of and provide supervision for the youth” (pp. 42), were not included in the examination. Future research should aim to corroborate Huizinga et al.'s (2007) findings in the crossover population.

Despite the realized issue of DMC and the risks associated with becoming involved in the juvenile justice system as a child welfare youth, and especially as a black child welfare-involved youth, intervention and prevention efforts are lagging. It may be that key decision makers, such

as policy makers, judges, state's attorneys, law enforcement, and child welfare workers, are not well-equipped to recognize the needs of African-American crossover youth. Current policies governing crossover youth only address macro level contributors of juvenile justice involvement. The JJDPa as it now stands addresses interagency collaboration, and the DMC mandate addresses disproportionality within the system. These policies do not address the micro-level needs of crossover youth, such as racial identity development. It may be that —lack of connectedness in the African-American community, and lack of a culturally specific and relevant world-view” may increase black youth's risk for crossing over (Mooradian, 2003, p. 15). Social policies may be interpreted as macro level contributors to disproportionalities among crossover youth.

Research Goals

The primary goal of the present study is to gain a clearer understanding of why African American youth are overrepresented among the crossover population. This issue is considered from the perspective of crossover professionals, and through examination of any relation between these professionals' perspectives and their racial attitudes. Three research questions will be addressed. First, how do knowledgeable professionals understand and explain the phenomenon of racial disproportionalities in crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system? I expect black professionals and child welfare professionals to offer more explanations for disproportionalities at the larger social system level than at the level of the child and parent/family due to personal experiences with racial injustices and professional training on ecological systems theory. This question was examined qualitatively. Second, how racially sensitive are these professionals? I expect black professionals and professionals who work in child welfare to have low to moderate levels of colorblindness and sophisticated levels of racial

identity development since these professionals may have more personal experience with discrimination or professional training on diversity and poverty issues. Due to such exposure they may be relatively more sensitive and aware of race and racism. This question was examined quantitatively. Third, is there a relation between professionals' interpretations of disproportionate crossing over and their racial attitudes? I expect those with lower levels of colorblindness and more sophisticated racial identity to offer more reasons for disproportionate crossing over at the system level. Those with higher colorblind scores and less sophisticated racial identity are expected to offer more reasons for disproportionalities at the child and parent/family level. This last research question examined the association between qualitative thematic data that had been quantified and quantitative racial attitudes data.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study addressed the research questions through a mixed method design (Green, 2005), including qualitative data describing child welfare system and juvenile justice system professionals' perspectives on racial disproportionalities in crossover youth, quantitative data on racial attitudes, and an integration of the qualitative and quantitative data to explore any relationships between professionals' perspectives on disproportionate crossing over and their racial attitudes. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data generated a rich and comprehensive portrait of participants' perspectives of the complex phenomenon of racial disproportionalities in crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system.

The research questions sought to triangulate professionals' views on the existence of racial disproportionalities through qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently through qualitative open-ended interviews and quantitative close-ended questionnaires. Priority was given to qualitative methods. The quantitative racial attitudes questionnaire data were intended to enrich the qualitative interview data. Qualitative and quantitative data were mixed at the data analysis and data reporting stages.

Site

Data collection occurred in 2011 and 2012 in a central Midwestern community that encompasses rural and urban areas. It covers a total of 996 square miles with a population of 201, 685 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In 2011, 75% of county residents were White, and 13% were Black. 22% of the youth population (ages 0-18 years-old) were Black and 72% were White.

The median household income in 2011 was \$39, 591; 21%, of residents lived below the poverty level in 2010; 41% had a Bachelors' degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Disproportionate crossing over data for the county under study was unavailable, but such data were available in a nearby county. Of all arrests in this county in 2010, 19% were of youth involved with the child welfare system. Within the child welfare system, 54% were black and 40% were white. Of the youth from the child welfare system who were arrested, 87% were black and 13% were white. Thus, black youth from the child welfare system had a higher risk for crossing over and were approximately seven times more likely to be arrested than white youth coming from the child welfare system youth ($\chi^2(1)=59.158, p<.001$).

In the community under study in 2011, blacks were overrepresented while whites were underrepresented at every point of contact within child welfare system and juvenile detention as shown in Table 1 (Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center, 2011; County Child Welfare System Quality Assurance Data for Fiscal Year 2011; detention data comes from personal communication with dissertation participant and official report she showed me, 7/13/11).

Table 1. Disproportionalities in the local child welfare system and detention

	Black %	White %
General population	20	61
Reported cases of maltreatment	50	41
Indicated reports (of reported cases)	32	24
Entered care (of indicated cases)	48	40
In care	62	35
Reunified (of achieved permanencies)	23	27
In detention in 2009	75	25
Entries into juvenile detention center in 2009	62 (male) 18 (female)	14 (male) 4 (female)

The same trend of disproportionalities extended into the juvenile justice system, except they were greater. Given enormous disproportionalities in this community, it made sense to conduct an investigation of disproportionate crossing over here.

The history of racial tension in this and surrounding communities is extensive. In particular, public planning has contributed to the marginalization of many blacks. For example, following the Reconstruction era, railroad tracks were being laid across the country. One railroad was rerouted around a nearby prosperous Black community, leaving the community without access to the railroad system (Cha-Jua, 2000). In the mid-twentieth century, mass public housing was erected in a nearby urban community. The enormous housing complex was left to deteriorate and decades later eventually torn down to make way for revitalization. The residents, most of whom were African American, were given vouchers to move. Many displaced families moved to the community under study, despite the lack of infrastructure to address an influx of families whose needs often included poverty and unemployment².

Recent local events and stances by key decision-makers, highlight continued racial tensions surrounding this community. During this study, several incidences of alleged racial profiling, police brutality, and skewed media coverage, have stirred racial tensions. Some community members surmised that the police and city tried to keep the names of officers accused of committing police brutality from the public eye. One local mayor was interviewed in 2010 about various community issues, including racial profiling.

We've done all we can for racial profiling. It's time to get over it and move on... We have other problems we need to address... We can't keep talking about this endlessly... There are flaws in the numbers... We've had our study.

-Mayor, white politician

Pilot Ethnographic Work

To build rapport and develop community contacts with professionals, as well as their perspectives, I spent time in a number of professional contexts. I completed two ride-alongs with

² To preserve confidentiality, this reference, from newspaper sources, will not be included.

two different officers, for a total of three hours. I attended multiple forums on disproportionalities in the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, and the education system. I also attended three city council meetings. Two focused on racial profiling and police brutality, and one focused on the hiring of a new police chief. Also, media coverage of local racial incidents concerning the juvenile justice system and community leader's responses to these incidents were reviewed.

Participants

Upon receipt of IRB approval, 33 participants were purposely recruited to reflect a range of professional roles and years of experience working in the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system. Criteria for recruitment included having professional contact with crossover youth and working at least one year in the field. Professionals were recruited through my professional contacts developed during participation at forums, which focused on racial disproportionalities and overrepresentation of African-American youth in the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, and the education system. 42% of the sample attended at least one of these forums. Snowball sampling was used to recruit additional participants to expand and diversify my sample.

39% of my participants were black and 61% were white. 58% were female. 36% worked in child welfare; 39% in law enforcement; and 24% in the courts. The total number of years of work experience in the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system ranged from 3.5 to 37 years, with an average of 16.38 years. Participants ranged in age from 29 to 72 and were on average 45 years-old. Table 2 summarizes participant characteristics

To ensure having an adequate number of blacks and whites from each profession to allow comparisons, I attempted to oversampled African-American professionals. However, this was

not possible for the court subsample, as only there were only two African Americans who worked in the child abuse and neglect or delinquency courts.

Table 2. Sample Demographics

	N (%)	Black (%)	White (%)
Total Sample	33	13 (39)	20 (61)
Gender			
Female	19 (58)	6 (46)	13 (65)
Male	14 (42)	7 (54)	7 (35)
Type of professional			
Child welfare	12 (36)	6 (50)	6 (50)
Law enforcement	13 (39)	5 (38)	8 (62)
Court	8 (24)	2 (25)	6 (75)
Type of work place			
Public agency	26 (79)	10 (77)	16 (80)
Private agency	7 (21)	4 (20)	3 (23)
Highest level of education			
High school to Associate's degree	2 (6)	1 (8)	1 (5)
Bachelor's	10 (30)	4 (31)	6 (30)
Some graduate to graduate degree	21 (64)	8 (62)	13 (65)
Neighborhood grew up			
Predominantly own racial group	19 (58)	9 (69)	14 (70)
Multiethnic/multiracial	9 (27)	2 (15)	5 (25)
Predominantly other racial group	5 (15)	2 (15)	1 (5)
Family's SES			
Poor/working class	3 (10)	3 (23)	0
Middle class	25 (76)	9 (69)	16 (80)
Upper middle class	5 (15)	1 (8)	4 (20)
		Mean	SD
Years of work experience		16.38	8.20
Age		45.18	10.75

Researcher

In keeping with a research tradition grounded in post-positivism, modernity, and critical race theory, the perspective from which I approached this study needs to be addressed. My own racial experiences, awareness, and sensitivity are likely to impact the way in which I conducted this study and interpreted the data. I am a white female academic from a New England, Catholic, working-class family, who experienced an overwhelmingly white upbringing (in family, neighborhood and school). This upbringing included a morality communicated through religious schooling and parents rooted in fairness and equality. Perhaps because of having grown up female in a working class household, in a town with its fair share of very affluent families, I could identify with oppression. Through racial experiences I had (and did not have) inside and outside of my home, including undergraduate and graduate courses and the media, I reached a point in my development that it is imperative for me to dedicate my time and energy to anti-racist efforts. I currently work for a state child welfare system initiative that seeks to reduce racial disproportionalities in the child welfare system. My philosophy—that clearer and more open lines of communication between racial groups will help more individuals reach their maximum potential for success, undergirds my work.

Instruments

Demographics

A demographics measure that includes professionals' race, gender, age, highest educational degree completed, current job title, other relevant work experience, type of agency (public/private), and years worked at each agency were included in data collection. Information related to professionals' work experience allowed for the comparison of how work experience relates to reasons given for disproportionate crossing over. Different institutions in which

participants have spent their professional lives embody various philosophies relevant to child welfare and juvenile justice. It may be that work experience is more strongly associated with participants' perspectives on disproportionate crossing over than individual color-blindness and racial identity status.

Beliefs about Disproportionate Crossing Over

Professionals were asked to participate in an open-ended, semi-structured, audiotaped interview that lasted approximately 60 minutes. I structured my interview into two parts—one that focused on the phenomenon of crossing over and one that focused on racial disproportionalities in crossing over. I did so for several reasons. First, racial disproportionality in crossing over is a complex concept that many people may not have previously articulated. Asking people to discuss why they think racial disproportionalities exist off the tops of their heads may yield some impoverished responses. Breaking it down may give people time to think. Second, discussing crossing over first will give me the opportunity to see if participants spontaneously discuss race before I introduce it. Third, discussing crossing over in general, and then racial disproportionalities in crossing over will allow me to consider the extent to which participants view disproportionalities as resulting from more risks versus qualitatively different/unique risks experienced by Black youth.

The interview began with an introductory statement including a definition of crossing over as and relevant statistics on the number of youth who cross over. Crossing over was defined as being arrested and having any prior involvement with the child welfare system, either by virtue of being reported for maltreatment or in foster care. Involvement with the juvenile justice system prior to involvement with the child welfare system was not defined as crossing over. Then I asked open-ended questions such as, "From your experience, what are some of the reasons youth

from the child welfare system become involved in the juvenile justice system?” The second part of the interview began with an introductory statement presenting statistics on racial disproportionalities among crossover youth. I first asked some fairly open-ended questions: “Have you noticed this phenomenon? From your experience, what are some of the reasons Black children are more at risk for crossing over than White children? Can you think of any case examples? In the context of participants’ responses, I systematically probed for contributors for both crossing over and disproportionate crossing over relating to the youth, the family, and macro and system factors. I closed the interview with some question about the extent to which the participants view disproportionate crossing over as a social problem we should be concerned with, and any recommendations they may have for reducing disproportionate crossing over. See Appendix A for the Interview Protocol.

Colorblindness

Colorblindness in this context refers to limited awareness of white privilege, institutional racial discrimination, and blatant racial discrimination (Neville et al., 2000). Color-blindness was measured by the Color-blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS, Neville et al., 2000), which took 5 -10 minutes to complete. The CoBRAS consists of 20 items rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with higher scores representing greater endorsement of color-blind racial beliefs. It contains three subscales: the Racial Privilege subscale (i.e., blindness to existence of white privileges), Institutional Discrimination (i.e., limited awareness of the implications of institutional discrimination and exclusion), and Blatant Racial Issues (e.g., limited awareness of general and pervasive racial discrimination). One can then choose to have scores ranging (a) from 1 to 6 by dividing the sum of the items by total number of items for a particular subscale, or (b) by summing the subscale and total scale items.

The total scale sum can range from 20 to 120. I used the former method. Several items are reverse-coded.

Cronbach's alphas among racially diverse samples have been acceptable and have ranged from .80 (Tynes & Markoe, 2010) to .91 (Neville et al., 2000). Construct validity has been supported by its correlations with a number of theoretically relevant constructs, including modern racism beliefs, racial and gender intolerance, belief in a just world, decreased support for affirmative action, increased fear of racial minorities, lower openness to diversity among Whites, lower levels of self-reported and observed multicultural counseling competence, and perceived racial/ethnic campus climate among racially diverse college students (See Oh et al., 2010). The CoBRAS is not strongly associated with social desirability. The three factors of CoBRAS were shown to have good discriminant validity, as evidenced by correlations with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982). Concurrent validity was tested using the Modern Racism Scale, a seven-item measure (McConahay, 1986). Correlations between CoBRAS and MRS ranged from .36 to .55. Criterion-related validity testing suggested that men have higher levels of Institutional Discrimination and Blatant Racial Issues than women. See Appendix B for the CoBRAS instrument.

Racial Identity Development

There are virtually no studies that measure racial identity development for both Blacks and Whites in a single empirical investigation, in part due to the lack of congruent racial identity development measures for both racial groups. Helms' model and scale of white racial identity development has problematic psychometrics and is for use only with whites (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003) and are for use only with whites. Cross' CRIS, which has very good psychometrics, is only for use with African Americans. A new scale exists that may be used

across racial groups, but is still under development by the CRIS research team (Worrell & Vandiver, 2010). The version of the scale, called the Cross Scale of Social Attitudes (CSSA), I used in the current study was developed in the Fall 2010. The scale measures ethnic and racial identity attitudes across *all* racial groups. Psychometric properties for the CSSA are unavailable, as the team is in the midst of collecting reliability and validity data on the scale. Small samples have been used to adjust scale items, but there is no psychometric evidence of the CSSA at the present time. There are two versions of the scale that the research team is testing (one with filler items [41 items] and one without fillers [31 items]). I employed the scale without filler items. It can be found in Appendix C. The scale takes 15-20 minutes to complete.

The CSSA is based on the Expanded Nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), and may be used on any American racial group. These attitudes, similar to the CRIS' attitudes, include Assimilation, Miseducation, Self-Hatred, Anti-Dominant, Ethnocentricity (e.g., sense of belonging to one's racial group), and Multiculturalist Inclusive. The Anti-Dominant and Ethnocentricity subscales are new and are not part of the CRIS. The items from the CSSA's Ethnocentricity subscale measures commitment to one's racial/ethnic group through triggering responses aimed at commitment to one's cultural heritage. Anti-Dominant attitudes are measured by anti-White items, since in the U.S. European Americans are the dominant race. For White Americans this attitude type may be akin to "self-hatred" (Frank Worrell, personal communication 3/14/11), or simply possessing anti-dominant/anti-white sentiments. Assimilation items assess the degree to which respondents place greater emphasis on their national identity than their ethnic or racial identity. Miseducation items assess the degree to which respondents endorse stereotypes about their ethnic/racial group. Self-hatred items assess the degree to which respondents dislike being members of the ethnic/racial group to which they

belong. Anti-Dominant items assess the degree to which respondents dislike the dominant or majority group in their cultural context. Ethnocentricity items assess the degree to which respondents feel that values from their ethnic/ racial group should inform their thinking and daily living. Multiculturalist Inclusive items assess the degree to which respondents have a strong connection to their own racial/ethnic group alongside a willingness to engage with other cultural groups and value those other groups' perspectives (Worrell & Vandiver, 2010). Due to the infinite possibilities of unique racial experiences that can trigger a reevaluation of one's racial identity the Encounter stage is considered immeasurable and is not part of the scale (Cross, 1991; Vandiver et al., 2001).

This measure does not allow for the calculation of a total score because the expanded Nigrescence model postulates that all individuals have different racial identity attitudes to some degree and one should look at the attitude profiles to decide how to classify an individual. Subscale scores are obtained by summing the items that makeup each of the six subscales. One can then choose to have scores ranging (a) from 1 to 7 by dividing the sum of the items by 5, or (b) from 5 to 35. I used the former method. No items are reverse-coded.

One participant from each of the three professional groups (3 participants total) were missing Self-hatred, Anti-dominance, and Miseducation data. Upon recommendation by one of the scale's creators (Worrel, personal communication 1/25/12), I imputed the participants' professional group's mode scores for the missing data. As presented in the Results section, Self-hatred, Anti-dominance, and Miseducation did not present any significant results.

Procedures

Following IRB approval, I initiated formal contact with agencies via the appropriate channels, such as agency directors or professionals themselves. I sent each agency contact person

an email explaining my study on the phenomenon of crossing over, ~~social~~ attitudes”, and race. The term ~~acial~~ attitudes” was not used in this letter or consent forms, so as to mask any effects of social desirability. The letter of introduction and consent form addressed issues around confidentiality and any other necessary safeguards.

I conducted one to two hour data collection meetings with professionals. Data were collected in a private location of participants’ choice, and interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ permission. All but two law enforcement participants allowed me to audio-record the interview. During these interviews, I took extensive notes which I filled in from memory immediately after the interviews. After receiving consent from participants, demographic data was collected first as a warm-up. Then, participants were interviewed. The order of the administration of the CSSA and CoBRAS were counterbalanced. Finally, participants were given a debriefing form that included a brief description of the study and my and Dr. Neville’s contact information. See Appendix D for the debriefing form.

Data Processing and Analytic Strategy

Interviews were conducted until saturation of themes described was reached. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. I read through transcribed interviews and identified all references to reasons for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over. Emic codes, describing reasons why crossing over and disproportionate crossing over exist, were identified using analytic induction techniques (Denzin, 1989).

Two types of codes were created. First, participants’ responses were coded by the content; that is, the actual reasons they provided for crossing over and racial disproportionalities in crossing over. For example, participants might discuss ~~poverty~~” as a reason youth cross over. Second, participants’ responses were coded to reflect the ecological level of the reason for

crossing over. For example, one participant might attribute poverty to the parents' poor work ethic/laziness (coded as ~~parent~~/family") while another participant attributes poverty to social system inequities (coded as ~~system~~").

The development of the coding system was further enhanced through member checks. This member check (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was used to enhance the validity or ~~credibility~~" of the qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35; Golafshani, 2003; Kvale, 2002). Specifically, I met with one professional from each professional group (one black child welfare participant; one black law enforcement participant; one white court participant), and asked them to review the list of codes for their particular professional group. They were asked to comment on whether this list was comprehensive and accurately reflected reasons for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over. They were also asked to identify any additional reasons not on the list. Each participant agreed with my coding system.

To enhance consistency of coding, a random subsample of interviews from each professional group (15% of interviews, or 5 interviews: 2 child welfare, 2 law enforcement, and 1 court) were independently coded by a social work professor, who is not involved with this research. She coded both content and ecological level. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. An overall rate of 85% inter-rater reliability was achieved.

The content and ecological codes were used to describe factors associated with crossing over and disproportionate crossing over. They were also used to distinguish any associations with colorblindness and racial identity. It was expected that unique characteristics corresponding with reasons offered for disproportionate crossing over would emerge in relation to professionals' colorblindness and racial identity. For example, a participant who talked only about contributors of disproportionalities as stemming from the parent/family, as opposed to

making no mention of larger system factors were assumed to have less critical awareness of racial issues. Therefore, I hypothesized that participants with a greater number of themes discussed at the child or parent/family level would have higher colorblindness scores and racial identity scores reflective of a less developed racial identity.

Research Question 1: How do professionals understand disproportionate crossing over?

To examine how professionals understand crossing over and disproportionate crossing over, the sample was examined as a whole, by racial group, and by professional group. Reasons for crossing over were analyzed dichotomously to yield the proportion of participants who discussed the different themes for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over. Thus, a dummy code of 1 indicated “yes, a child, parent/family, system level response was discussed”, and a dummy code of 0 indicated “no, a child, parent/family, system level response was not indicated”.

The three ecological levels were coded continuously. That is, in an attempt to assess the weight professionals gave to each ecological level in describing crossing over and disproportionate crossing over, I summed the number of themes for each ecological level by each participant. For example, a participant discussing reasons for disproportionate crossing over could talk about poverty at the parent level multiple times, distrust of authorities at the parent level once, and distrust at the child level multiple times. At the child level, this participant would receive a score of 1 theme discussed at the child level. This participant would receive a score of 1 for poverty at the parent level and 1 for distrust at the parent level for a total of 2 themes at the parent level. At the system level, the score would be 0. This participant would be considered placing the most weight for disproportionate crossing over at the parent/family level.

Given professional training and institutional cultures, certain types of professionals may place more weight on particular ecological systems in describing crossing over and disproportionate crossing over. For example, social workers may perceive child welfare system involvement and crime through the lens of professional training in social systems. Law enforcement and courts may favor child and family level contributors due to the emphasis on personal responsibility and accountability present in our legal system. Given their personal experiences, black professionals may offer more discussion related to macro system factors for racially disproportionate crossing over.

Research Question 2: How aware and sensitive to racial issues are participants?

Research question two was addressed through a series of two-way ANOVAs to examine main effects and interactions of race and profession on Total CoBRAS and CSSA scores. I expected black professionals and child welfare professionals to have lower colorblind scores and have scores indicative of more sophisticated racial identity development. I expected white professionals and juvenile justice professionals to have higher colorblind scores and have scores indicative of less sophisticated racial identity development.

Research Question 3: Are there any associations between professionals' perspectives of disproportionate crossing over and their racial attitudes?

Individuals' ecological level scores may vary by their levels of racial sensitivity and awareness, as measured by the CoBRAS and CSSA. To answer the third research question, "Are there any associations between professionals' perspectives of disproportionate crossing over and racial attitudes?" I used Pearson correlational analysis. Specifically, I tested for any associations between the sum of responses offered for disproportionate crossing over for each ecological level and racial attitude scores. I expected to find an association between less sophisticated racial attitudes and emphasis placed on child and parent/family contributors. I also expected to find an

association between more sophisticated racial attitudes and emphasis placed on macro system contributors.

Participants rank of colorblind and racial identity scores were used to describe participants' racial attitudes as low, middle, and high. Using the rank of participant scores allowed for the comparison of their scores relative to the rest of the sample. For example, if colorblind scores for six participants were as follows: 1.35, 1.40, 2.25, 2.25, 3.32, and 3.45, their ranks would be 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The ranks, 1 through 5 were then divided by 3 which equals 1.67 (3 represents the 3 categorical possibilities of low, mid, and high attitude scores). Therefore, ranks 1 and 2 (1.67 was rounded to 2) were categorized as Low. Ranks of 3 (1.67 x 2 = 3.34, rounded to 3) were categorized as Mid. Ranks 4 and 5 were categorized as High (1.67 x 3 = 5.01, rounded to 5). See Table 3 for a visual representation of this example.

Table 3. Example of ranking racial attitude scores

Racial Attitude Score	Rank	Categorical Tier
1.35	1	Low
1.40	2	Low
2.25	3	Mid
2.25	3	Mid
3.32	4	High
3.45	5	High

Presenting participants' qualitative descriptions of disproportionalities alongside their racial attitudes scores relative to the rest of the sample, which was most concisely achievable via categorical descriptors (low, mid, high) of attitudes, enabled me to more fully describe the results on professionals' perspectives of disproportionate crossing over.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS: CONTRIBUTORS OF CROSSING OVER

This chapter focuses on perceptions professionals have concerning why youth from the child welfare system have a higher risk for crossing over than youth from the general population. Understanding, first, how professionals' perceive risks for crossing over will help determine how disproportionalities may present themselves among crossover youth. Specifically, comparing perceptions of crossing over versus disproportionate crossing over will help determine whether there is an additional set of risk factors experienced by black youth in crossing over, and whether these are unique risk factors that intersect with youth's race.

Participants described a cascade of interrelated risks that contribute to crossing over. These risks are based on participants' perceptions of why certain youth are at a particularly high risk for entering into the juvenile justice system. These perceptions surely reflect communication problems across social service systems, individual biases, as well as social realities. Nonetheless, it is important to understand professionals' perceptions of crossing over for three reasons. First, they have a great deal of practice experience and can offer insight into how youth cross over. Second, even if their perspectives are not completely accurate, their beliefs provide a frame of reference for the ways they may be carrying out their practice. Third, differences in perspectives, especially if they are related to one's context of professional practice may be representative of conflict as professionals work across systems in serving youth.

Participants identified reasons why youth from the child welfare system are at greater risk for being arrested than youth from the general population. In response to the question, ~~In~~ "In your professional experience, what are the reasons why youth involved with the child welfare system are at a higher risk for being arrested than youth not involved with the child welfare system?"

participants described contributors relating to the child, the child's parents and family, and the system. While participants attributed crossing over to themes related to the child, parent, and/or system, some saw these ecological systems as being dynamically interrelated—a confluence of child behavior, family upbringing, and systemic problems that leads to an increased risk for crossing over. The themes presented in this chapter emerged from content analysis of the interviews, and many of these themes cut across ecological systems.

Poverty

Participants described that while poverty poses various risks for families, youth in the child welfare system may be more at risk for crossing over than youth in the general population due to the fact that families involved with the child welfare system are poorer than the general population. Participants acknowledged that children who grow up in impoverished households face greater obstacles that set child welfare system-involved youth at a higher risk for being arrested. Therefore, poverty contributes to crossing over. Participants focused on different levels of crossover youth's ecological system when discussing poverty. Some focused on the child level, the parent/family level, and/or the system level.

Child Level Contributors

21% of the sample discussed themes related to child welfare system-involved youth engaging in crime instrumentally as a means to survival. Responses reflective of this theme echoed tenets of the social strain theory, in that individuals commit crime out of economic necessity.

[Since they've been in system for a long time they find it] easier to go out in the community and... take some kind of control over their own life...by trying to...care for themselves...by illegal activities... and...not wanting to be part of the system anymore.

-Interview 9, white, child welfare

While it is youth who ultimately make the decision to commit a crime, they may do so because they feel they are faced with no other option, and resort to any means necessary to sustain themselves economically. Due to neglectful parents and other barriers while in foster care, some child welfare system-involved youth resort to crime to feed and clothe themselves. Moreover, as reflected by the excerpt above, youth may feel stymied by the child welfare system, and decide to take matters (i.e., their life) into their own hands.

Others discussed how youth commit crime because they want to fit in socioeconomically with peers. They steal sneakers and other material goods to maintain a certain image, perhaps one associated with wealth. That is, they want to have material items, such as stylish clothes or shoes, out of a desire to fit in and belong, and they achieve this by committing theft.

Parent/family Level Contributors

21% of participants talked about the role of the parents and families in the perpetuation of poverty as a mechanism for crossing over. These participants talked about poverty as being something that parents have chosen for themselves and their children. 9% discussed parents'/families' poor work ethic and dependence on welfare as perpetuating families' poverty. They discussed themes relating to poverty and SES. Coming from a lower SES class "breeds a certain mentality", and with poverty comes a certain attitude that breeds poor mentors, as illustrated by one black juvenile justice professional.

I'm not a proponent that poverty creates criminals, but I think there's an aspect of it that if you don't... grow up with the right mentors... it's easier... to have the mentality of a poor person, and that sometimes includes crime unfortunately... [I]t's the mentality of I don't need to work. I can have kids. And I don't care about what the kids are doing as far

as, as long as I'm getting paid for my kids. I don't have any desire to use the resources of this country to get myself out of poverty because I'm comfortable... [K]ids who grow up in those situations, there's confusion because they see other kids who have stuff or whose parents work, and they go home or foster care... [and see a] group of people that... don't have anything and don't want anything... I think it crosses racial barriers. It's just the mentality people have.

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement

Many saw poverty as a contributor to crossing over because parents of child welfare system-involved youth —~~lak~~ a good work ethic” and settle for less, passing these values onto their children. This notion echoes tenants of role modeling/social learning theory. Additionally, many youth in foster care feel left out of mainstream society because they are different (e.g., they are very poor and living away from their parents), which may affect their sense of belonging.

System Level Contributors

Other participants saw poverty as something beyond the control of the parents/family. 27% saw institutional barriers, such as social policies and the legal system, as contributing to poverty, and thus youth's risk for crossing over. Some participants referred to minimum wage earnings as perpetuating poverty, and thus one reason why child welfare system-involved youth cross over. Due to systemic barriers, families are kept impoverished. This is the case for hardworking parents who cannot make ends meet because of minimum wage salaries, and costs associated with child care, bills, and transportation as described by some participants.

So you have a working mom who's making minimum wage or maybe a little bit better, who's also getting some type of aid, and still can't make ends meet. That's causing stress in the family...due to her responsibility keeping the roof over the head and food in the

kid's mouths. That creates separation from the children where they are watched by a family member or someone else. That can branch out even further if she has daycare. There is an additional huge expense there.

-Interview 14, white, law enforcement

Interview 14 also notes policies that do not support poor families can pose additional risks by "creating separation" between the child and parent, which may increase a youth's risk for crossing over.

Another systematic contributor of poverty that may impact crossing over is legal representation, as indicated by 15% of the sample (n=5). Most families involved with child abuse and neglect court are extremely poor and cannot afford private attorneys. Instead, they are typically appointed a public defender. Quality legal representation is less likely for families and youth who typically have public defenders. Private attorneys have more time and resources to dedicate to each client's case compared to public defenders. Some participants noted that just having a private, versus a public, attorney could make or break a case. Therefore, without quality representation, youth are more likely to experience deeper entrenchment in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Some discussed how the both of these systems lack advocacy for crossover youth. As a result of substandard representation and advocacy, youth coming from the child welfare system end up being at greater risk for crossing over compared to youth from the general population.

When you're paying for an attorney directly they are billing you for their time. So if they're going to bill you for an hour, they're going to spend one hour on your case. A public defender has no limit as to how many families he's going to get, so he's going to be serving 30 families in that same hour and try to come up with a case. So wealthy

families are given an out when they come in [to the child welfare system] but you're going to invest more time in someone's case and it's easier to plea things out for everybody.

-Interview 2, white, child welfare

Those who have financial resources at their disposal are more likely to avoid time in the criminal justice system.

Another contributor of crossing over may be local employment opportunities. They are lacking and do not support families' economic needs, as described by some participants. For example, one participant discussed the hiring practice of local corporations, such as Kraft and Plastipac, who hire temporary workers. Temporary workers do not receive benefits, such as health, sick leave, and vacation time, and are not covered under union laws. As a result of these employment practices and lack of employment opportunities for poor, working class families, children may be at a higher risk for involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Fifteen percent of the sample discussed the shortage of resources for youth and families, especially a lack of mental health resources. Also, participants believed many families do not know about available resources. Lack of funding for housing, food, and other services to meet basic needs is also a problem. If policies do not support the incorporation of prevention and intervention resources into the community's budget, the needs of all community members are not met, and poor families become further marginalized.

Education

Education was seen as another contributor to crossing over. 21% of the sample discussed the link between lack of educational aspirations, problems with the educational system, and delinquency, either at the level of the child (6%), parent/family (9%), and/or system (6%).

Child Level Contributors

Participants saw youth involved with the child welfare system as being more at risk for juvenile justice involvement because of trauma experienced within the youth's home and the child welfare system, which in turn leads to low aspirations and school failure. Although none of the participants talked about it, research indicates an association between maltreatment and disabilities, especially subtle cognitive and behavioral disabilities relevant to school functioning (Haight, Kayama, Kincaid, & Evans, in progress).

Parent/family Level Contributors

Participants described how problems associated with youth's educational achievement may be compounded by having role models who do not value educational achievement by the sheer fact that they themselves did not succeed in school, which may increase a youth's risk for crossing over. They do not want to see their child set up for disappointment (as was the case for they themselves), and so they avoid instilling educational values in their children. Additionally, parents without high school diplomas are at a disadvantage economically, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. The following child welfare professional argued that low-income parents do not value education, not because they value employment that will immediately provide financial gain for the family, but because they fear disappointment.

I also ran an afterschool... anti-poverty program. And what I've seen is that the parents were...not successful in school. They don't think their kids will be successful. We had a child in the program who was very good. We wanted to give her... a computer... and her mom said no... [S]he was afraid that her daughter's expectations would rise, and she would fail, and that would devastate her... All these women lived in public housing, and they want their kids to do well so they can brag about them, but they don't believe they

will. When you haven't had any experience with success, you're going to try and guide your child through it as best you can, and protect them. Because you can't imagine them being successful, either... [They] want them to learn ways to survive the way they learned to survive.

-Interview 23, black, child welfare

This participants' views are echoed in the documentary, *Born Into Brothels* (2004), in which a European-American photographer develops relationships with extremely poor children and their families from Kolkata, India. She offers free photography training, equipment, and travel support to the children, but the parents do not let their children participate.

System Level Contributors

At the systemic level, the local education system does not well-support marginalized youth. For example, schools located in poorer neighborhoods do not have the same educational standards and resources as schools in neighborhoods with higher revenue from property taxes. The following professional argues that it is not just youth failing in school, but the schools are failing the youth.

[E]ducation to me is key. So we know that if schools don't support kids and their parents, they become overrepresented in systems. That's a huge predictor of kids' success and pregnancy and all those other things. Poverty is kind of, not just economic poverty, but cultural things that happen when you isolate and don't support marginalized folks systemically, because you can be economically poor, but not really fit the definition of being low SES. There's a difference.... You track kids and so kids have different experiences even in the schools. There's the good track and the not-so good track... So if you're always on the non-college kid track, only with kids they [the school] believe

aren't really gonna make it or are vocationally oriented. You don't even get the good books. They even read crappy books. They don't even read the same stuff.

-Interview 6, black, child welfare

By not offering the same resources to all youth, risks for crime become magnified in poorer communities.

Additionally, school fights today are mitigated by zero tolerance policies that can land a child in the juvenile justice system. In the past, fights were brought to the principal's office. Perhaps youth were suspended or expelled. Today, law enforcement officers are brought in. One participant discusses how zero tolerance at school further jeopardizes the chance for academic success for youth with histories of trauma.

[I]f you have a kid that has emotional and behavioral issues, clearly, if they have genuine issues, they're not in control of it. They can't just turn it off in school, which is why I think zero-tolerance policies are a bad idea.

-Interview 8, black, child welfare

Furthermore, zero tolerance policies can decrease youth's chances for success because once a person has a criminal record, their chances for acceptance into college, scholarships, employment, and social service benefits drop dramatically (Alexander, 2010).

Although unknown at the time of data collection, there may be a positive association among the prevalence of implementation of School Resource Officers, or SROs, zero tolerance policies, and school fights. SROs are described by one law enforcement professional as being in middle and high schools for security, as well as to be more familiar with youth. There are a total of six SROs in this community.

[They] deal with pretty much criminal issues while at the school and are a sounding board for the deans, for social workers. The goal is to try to keep the juveniles out of the juvenile justice system by crime prevention. That includes giving presentations on bullying, character, and many other subjects. It's not only education. It's also to personalize a police officer. Everyone equates their experience with a police officer as many times scary, intimidating or they'll... broadly categorize every police officer like that. It's relationship building. Try to just make it more personable, more officer-friendly, approachable. And then there is a national curriculum that is taught and we have it in the middle schools as well as high schools. They are getting this education on why this is bad and how to be a good citizen from middle school through high school in the hopes that this will prevent a lot of future [problems].

-Interview 14, white, law enforcement

Emotion/behavioral Problems

Many participants saw emotional and behavior problems, including substance abuse of the child (49%, n=16) and/or parent (27%, n=9), as contributing to crossing over. One white law enforcement professional speculated that at least 90% of families she sees are either using drugs, mentally ill, or both. 15% (n=5) of the sample saw the development of mental health problems, is a result of problems at the macro level—specifically, a shortage of mental health resources in the community.

Child Level Contributors

Child welfare system-involved youth experienced trauma within their families of origin and in foster care. As a result, these youth lack of a sense of self-worth, feeling like no one else cares about them, and so “why should they care about themselves?” It is due to poor self-esteem

that these youth fail in school and depend on crime, as opposed to hard work, to rise above harsh circumstances.

Many discussed how the risk for crossing over relates to youth's lack of healthy attachments and bonds, and unhealthy attention seeking behaviors. child welfare system-involved youth lack attention from adults so they do anything, even if negative, to get attention. Several law enforcement participants discussed how youth brag about their unlawful exploits. It is possible that underneath the bragging is a need for attention. Tied into the idea of attention seeking, is a lack of self-preservation behaviors. Youth who have been in foster care were described by one child welfare participant as having few "self-preservation" skills due to their lack of autonomy by being told what to do their entire lives. This lack of self-preservation skills is illustrated when youth brag about their crimes to correctional authorities.

Participants also described how a lack of a sense of belonging within youth's substitute placement may provoke them to run away.

From what I've seen, it's like they [foster youth] don't ever feel that they fit in most of the time... [U]nless they tie in, have some emotional tie to that [substitute] family, they don't care whether they behave or not.

-Interview 10, white, law enforcement

[T]hey're looking for a sense of belonging with parents and caregivers, which [who, by virtue of role modeling illegal behaviors] typically get _em in trouble later in life.

-Interview 11, white, child welfare

Participants described youth's rage and feelings of frustration by the way they have been treated by the system. Several discussed how in all their years of their work—and for some professionals this includes 15 to 37 years, they have never seen such angry youth as they do

today. Some professionals discussed the connection between trauma and risk for delinquency. As humans, we tend to choose the path of least resistance, as noted by the following child welfare professional who works at a congregate care facility.

These kids have been severely, severely abused ... I can't even believe how some of these kids even get out of a bed every day... [U]nconsciously, they make a decision. It's a lot easier for me to go down this road, the road of my family of origin, and not have to deal with working on these treatment issues anymore. If I didn't have to work on the trauma then it didn't happen... [T]hey see psychiatrists here. They go to therapy. They have psychotropic medication. And if they choose that path of the legal system unintentionally, they don't have to deal with that stuff [the work of therapy and sorting out their issues] anymore.

-Interview 9, white, child welfare

This same participant talked about how reconnecting with parents they have not seen in years through social media, such as Facebook, can have a negative impact on the child, thus putting them at risk for crossing over.

Parent and Family Level Contributors

Some discussed the contribution parents' mental health and substance abuse problems has on the risk for crossing over.

System Level of Contributors

Some discussed the community's shortage of mental health resources for youth and families. There is also little funding for shelter, food, and other services that aim to meet families' basic needs. In addition, many families are unaware of available local resources, which might help prevent crossing over.

Role Modeling and Social Learning

Amongst all of these risk factors enumerated above (poverty, education, and emotional/behavioral problems), there is the common element of role modeling by parents and other family members, which may contribute to the risk for crossing over. Many crossover youth seem to lack positive male role models in their lives, as suggested by 21% of the sample. Role modeling—affected by intergenerational parenting dysfunction (18%), domestic violence (9%), and mental health and substance abuse (27%)—each impact youth's development through social learning. With unique life experiences, such as parental incarceration or lack of cohesive family structure, child welfare -involved youth may lack role models of what a traditional family looks like.

There are intergenerational problems seen among child welfare -involved families that include drug abuse, maltreatment, delinquent/criminal behavior, and trauma, as indicated by 18% of the sample. Behaviors are modeled by parents and in time learned by children, which can ultimately lead to engagement in juvenile delinquency.

In order to be successful, there's gonna be some sort of discomfort ... And it's easy to be comfortable at the house watching TV, getting pissed off about how the Man's keeping you down, how your husband's keeping you down, or how your kids are keeping you down... Whereas, it's difficult to actually get out there and do something about it... [The youth] see [their biological caregivers] kicking it at the house, getting drunk all the time. It's a lot easier for them to emulate that.

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement

Domestic violence can be learned, resulting in youth violent behavior. [A]s discussed by one participant, some youth grow up with multiple men in and out of their lives. As they get older, some rebel and get into physical altercations with their mother's boyfriend.

Other Child Level Contributors

Participants discussed a variety of other contributors concerning characteristics of child welfare -involved youth.

Age

Twenty-four percent of the sample offered age-related themes. As youth in the child welfare system age, they bear more scars of trauma that lead to them making bad decisions for themselves, landing them in trouble with the law. Younger children who get into trouble do not experience law enforcement intervention like older children do. Youngsters are scolded by other adults, but not by legal authorities. Eventually, as they grow up and get into trouble, it is more socially acceptable to involve the juvenile justice system as a means to intervention.

[The juvenile detention facility] is teens, and can take kids up until 21 years-old if they're on a probation violation from a juvenile conviction, with the caveat that they don't have any new criminal charges, such as theft. Since 2010, a 17 year-old felon can now be tried as adults... At 17 there are consequences and they may end up being emancipated [from foster care] if they're going to be detained for a long time. A misdemeanor is not likely to end up in emancipation. If they're on probation, they may end up in DOC [Department of Corrections] if they continually violate that probation.

-Interview 8, white law enforcement

Policies like there may be insensitive to child welfare -involved youth, who face many more obstacles than youth from the general population.

Gender

12% of the sample brought up the issue of gender. One child welfare professional noted that girls are more likely to engage in substance use than boys. Girls' violent offenses land them

in court and/or juvenile detention because violence is socially unacceptable by women. Also girls who get involved with crime end up doing so because of the attention they seek from men, as noted by one child welfare participant.

Other Parent and Family Level Contributors

The following themes reflect characteristics of the parent, which impact youth's risk for crossing over. These themes were discussed as being rooted in the parent/family, as opposed to something beyond the control of the parent/family.

Family Instability and Absent Fathers

It is family instability (30%), disjointed family structure, and absent fathers (36%) that many participants viewed as leading to juvenile justice involvement. Specifically, these themes include: multiple men in and out of the child's life, absent father, a lack of positive male role models, single mothers, young and underprepared parents, multiple siblings, broken family network, lack of a solid family support system, and unstable home life. In sum, it is the "absence of a strong and positive family structure" that may lead to crossing over.

Tremendous instability in the family. It seems almost inevitable that the children are going to be greatly affected by this. You looked for some strong source of stability, and you couldn't find it in the family.

-Interview 24, white, court

[Of a]ll the delinquency cases that I presided over as a judge it was so rare when I had a parent in the courtroom. Two parents was almost unthinkable. And even having, consistently, a parent show up with that kid for every hearing: extremely, extremely rare....basically a parent that's not terribly involved in the process. I mean it was remarkable and disturbing the number of times... either [law enforcement] can't contact

the parent or the parent doesn't even come to the police station... [T]he first requisite in the house of adjustment is to get a parent present and they can't do it... because the parent doesn't care, isn't available, or isn't emotionally available, not willing to do it.... [T]here is also a common pattern... [of] a single parent family, unemployed parents, the absent parent is not providing financial or emotional support on a meaningful basis to this family either. Minimal contact, particularly to the males, with an inappropriate male role model, and basically a parent that's not terribly involved in the process.

-Interview 13, white, court

The weaker family structure of child welfare -involved families poses a major risk for these youth to become involved in the juvenile justice system, and experience deeper entrenchment in the juvenile justice system.

Problems with Parenting

42% of the sample discussed themes relating to problems with parenting including lacking expectations and investment in their children, being irresponsible, and unaccountable for their children. These are very dysfunctional families —~~that~~ should be broken up [but] are intact". These parents are described as not providing guidance, support, supervision, or consequences for their children's actions. In sum, they do not teach children healthy decision making.

[W]hat I have found [is unstable families] have tried to displace the responsibility, meaning instead of raising your child, foster child, adopted child, let's put more responsibility on the school system, where they can raise my kid. Let's put more responsibility on the police department.

-Interview 14, white, law enforcement

One lady comes to mind who had double-digit kids. [the child welfare system] would come in, and they were all born drug-exposed, and they'd scoop the next one up. And she just continued to go out and have more children. And she just really didn't seem to care. That's an extreme case... [I]f someone's not going to necessarily take responsibility and parent their children, and they take off, and there's no parental involvement when they get out of school at three o'clock, that's free time to run around and roam the streets until ten. Kids will find ways to entertain themselves.

-Interview 19, white, law enforcement

Peer Influence

Because many youth who come from the child welfare system are not guided by their parents, they are influenced by other misguided youth as suggested by one participant. Some are bullied into committing crimes and misdemeanors. child welfare system-involved youth may be more at risk for peer pressure than youth from the general population. Peer contributors were discussed by 18% of the sample.

Macro Level Contributors

Themes that were described as being beyond the control of the child or parent/family were coded as macro system contributors. Some of these contributors (e.g., prior police contacts) do not directly involve the youth, but impact their risk for crossing over. Interactions between parents, policies, and the professionals who make up the system interact to form what are known as mesosystem contributors. Youth coming from the child welfare system experience more negative mesosystem influences in their ecological environment than youth from the general population.

Child Welfare System

18% of the sample discussed crossing over in light of the failure of [the child welfare system] to meet needs of the child and family due to structural barriers. Various themes about child welfare system emerged including: lack of advocacy for wards; ineffective policies; juvenile detention is used as respite; legal representation must be present before police can talk to a foster care ward; and there are too many service utilization requirements imposed on child welfare system-involved families.

[T]he failure of the child welfare system to address the needs that are presented with children and families coming into the system leaves that family at a higher risk of coming into continued contact... [A] disruption [i.e., removal from one foster placement to another placement] within the child welfare system, would create a higher incident of children going into the juvenile justice system because their issues would fail to be addressed. Therefore, antisocial behavior... essentially has... a record with the formal system...either by misdiagnosis or failed service to that child/family...[T]hen we [expect families to progress] at a higher level than they were [at] when they come into the system.... [I]f you misread the need for even being in the family, or you don't provide the level or kind of services needed, we're in fact increasing the risk of the child [to become involved] in the juvenile justice system.

-Interview 15, black, child welfare

Foster Care. One-third of the sample discussed issues around being in foster care as a reason why youth from the child welfare system crossover, including lengthier amounts of time spent in foster care and placement instability. Substitute placement experiences can compound

problems associated with abuse and neglect, setting child welfare -involved youth at greater risk for delinquency.

Kids are frustrated with way they're treated by system. These kids want to be with their families. They do not understand why they are not with their parents.... [child welfare] follows a cookie-cutter model...It does not work for every child...

-Interview 4, black, court

Placements. Many foster youth experience multiple placements, congregate care placements, broken social bonds, and attachment problems, as discussed by 15% of the sample. These youth lack healthy bonds with others, increasing their risk for delinquency.

A lot of [congregate care] placements have zero-tolerance policies. So, if there's a fight they call the police...[I]f you were in a foster home, I think your chances would be better, cause I'm guessing, the foster parents, unless it was serious, would just handle the situation. So, that's one thing that can cause more [juvenile justice system] involvement... If there's injury, it's definitely a felony... I've also seen them charge ~~domestic battery~~" instead of just ~~simple battery~~".

-Interview 4, black, court

A charge of ~~domestic battery~~" bears severer punishment and deeper entrenchment in the juvenile justice system than ~~simple battery~~".

Two participants brought up the idea that child welfare -involved youth actually prefer juvenile detention over foster care due to the structure they get at the detention center. There, they know what to expect. They will eat, for example—something that may not happen to them on a regular basis while in care of their parents and/or substitute placement(s).

Substitute Parents. 24% of the sample discussed issues relating to substitute parents, who include non-kin, kin, and adoptive parents. Participants discussed how, although most substitute parents are very good, some are not fit to parent, and youth are forced to stay in unhealthy placements. Many substitute parents do not support youth very well, especially after arrest, when they refuse to assume responsibility for the child's illegal behavior. Many participants also said some substitute parents are in it just for the paycheck that comes with foster care subsidies.

Are they foster parents because they really care or are they foster and adoptive parents because the check will always come?... I see foster parents, and I'm like there is no way I would let this person raise my child... [B]ut we don't have enough foster parents... because we take [away] so many children....and... they don't have any support... Who's gonna address those [trauma] issues? We've got a lot of [biological] parents who struggle on their own, but they're better equipped to handle their children because they know their children.

-Interview 4, black court

As a parent, I'm going to be up in the school trying to figure out what's going on and dealing with it. But a ward [who is] not doing well in school, who's going to deal with that?... -Hey, how are you doing in school?" -I'm doing good." -Okay. Define good"... And it's Ds, Fs... -Define how that's good for me." And you have to break it down. But if you ask a kid the basic stuff, -How are you doing?" they're always going to say, -I'm doing good." But when you say, -Define it." Then they're, -Well, I'm not really doing good." But they puzzle when you ask that question, because no one asked it [before].

-Interview 20, black law enforcement

In addition to discussing the lack of advocacy for youth involved in the juvenile justice system who come from the child welfare system, this law enforcement professional discussed the importance of relationship building. This is a prime example of effective and positive community policing. This professional's attention to the youth in his/her environment demonstrates the positive impact advocacy has on outcomes of at-risk youth.

Aspects of youth's involvement with the child welfare system—multiple placements, time spent in congregate care, substitute caregivers who are unwilling to go the extra mile, and advocacy may each contribute to foster youth's risk for crossing over.

Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system may not be helpful or remedial, and this is especially so for children coming from the child welfare system, as described by 33% of the sample. Assessments used by the juvenile justice system of youth's crimes are biased against youth who come from the child welfare system due to policies of the juvenile justice system. For example, one white, law enforcement professional described how youth involved in the child welfare system are more likely to miss a court hearing than a youth in the general population because of potential chaotic and miscommunication circumstances among caseworkers, biological parents, and substitute caregivers. If a youth misses a court hearing twice, the youth will automatically be placed in detention. Another policy that may contribute to deeper involvement with the juvenile justice system for child welfare -involved youth, is that youth who commit a violent offence automatically spend time in juvenile detention. It may be that youth coming from the child welfare system may be more likely to commit violent offenses given possible exposure to trauma and violence.

Court Ordered/Running Away. Sometimes foster youth run away from their placement repeatedly, which is viewed as a safety risk. Since the youth is not following the court's orders (to stay in particular placement), running away falls under the statute of contempt of court. In consequence, repetitive runaways are often ordered by the court to be held in a locked, secure facility—the local juvenile detention center, as indicated by 27% of the sample.

Occasionally, we see kids who are living at their home run away, but it's significantly less than kids that are involved with [the child welfare system]... [W]hen I see it, cause they're involved with the courts because they're a victim, cut em some slack cause they're a victim.

-Interview 8, white law enforcement

[A] child may run, disrupt from a foster home... It is not uncommon. Then who looks for the child? Law enforcement. What happens to the child in the interim? There are the streets... [They] find themselves in situations when they are without supervision. Stealing. Burglarizing.

-Interview 15, black CW

Prior Police Contacts. Youth from the child welfare system have much more exposure to police than youth in the general population, as discussed by one participant. Interactions that take place between parents and other caregivers and police while the youth is young can later influence the treatment of the youth as the youth gets older and faces run-ins with the law. There are no policies to safeguard children from police profiling resulting from these prior contacts.

Reverse Crossing Over. Coming into contact with the juvenile justice system before the child welfare system results in what participants referred to as “reverse crossing over”. The court orders the child welfare system to open cases on families who are not currently involved with the

child welfare system. These are youth in the general population, who are out of control, but are not abused or neglected. Reverse crossover youth are forced into the care of the state because the court feels parents are not doing a good enough job raising their child and feel the child is better off in the care of the state. Involvement in the juvenile justice system can also be caused by domestic violence by youth against their caregiver. When this happens, the juvenile justice system may require the child welfare system to open a case, because it involves a child and domestic violence. 12% of participants discussed the issue of reverse crossing over.

I've seen reports where kids have been returned home to a parent who was found to be fit and to have resolved his or her issues. And then there ends up being domestic violence between the kid and the parent, and by that, I mean the kid is the one who's violent towards the parent. And that might be frustration at years of having been in foster care... I see a lot of delinquency cases... where the child is the aggressor. The parent says, "Help clean up the living room." And the child says, "No." And the parent says, "I'm taking your phone away." And the child stands up and punches the parent in the face.

-Interview 21, white, court

Crossing Over in an Ecological Systems Context

A variety of themes emerged explaining why youth involved in the child welfare system are at a higher risk for being arrested than youth from the general population. Crossing over does not happen in a vacuum. Contributions relating to poverty, education, emotional/ behavioral problems, education, family structure and role modeling, and the child welfare and the juvenile justice system interact with one another, setting the stage for arrest to occur.

The following example highlights how different ecological systems—child, parent/family, and system contributors, are dynamic and interrelated. The following professional

worked in multiple systems that serve crossover youth: child welfare , juvenile justice system, mental health system, and community advocacy.

I don't know if there's a simple answer. Every kid is different with a different narrative and a different story. However, there's some common variables... [T]he research says the youth who have six or more trauma experiences are significantly more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system. And mostly likely, if you've had six or more trauma experiences, you've probably had child welfare involvement... And being involved in child welfare...significantly increases your risk of going into the juvenile justice system... I saw sometimes girls who were perpetrated against when they were kids who the court systems weren't responsive to for whatever reason, sort of dismissed, discredited, ignored, just didn't follow through with the charges. Those girls ended up—I was able follow because I started off at rape crisis services, so I was able to see them later on in the juvenile justice system—same girls who came through our door. A lot of time, engaged in pretty aggressive behavior, which would make sense if you felt like you didn't get heard. These were girls who were runners, fighters, or engaged in some version of the commercial sex trade, posting ads on Craigslist and prostituting themselves. So folks who didn't get followed through on one end, showed up on the other.

-Interview 6, black, child welfare

This professional highlights the intersection among gender, trauma, and the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Trauma sets all youth at risk, but a girl's trauma history and reaction to it may differ from a boy's. Key adults directly (e.g., teachers) and indirectly (e.g., the child welfare, law enforcement, and court) involved in the youth's life act upon the child's development, setting into motion a particular developmental trajectory. While many

professionals see the child and family as uniquely responsible for crossing over, other professionals, such as Interview 6 highlight the role macro factors, such as societal views of gender, have on youth's risk for crossing over.

The following child welfare professional also illustrates how crossing over is a complex phenomenon and is the result of the interaction between youth's ecological systems.

[A] lot of times we're getting these kids because their birth family is...not consistent or stable, and.. children are being abused or neglected. So then, especially if we're getting an older youth in care, they don't want to be there. Their placements tend to be a lot more unstable. Because they're at the adolescent/teenager age anyway, so that's hard anyway at home, but then when you throw foster care or child welfare into the mix...with that whole puberty thing—they just run amok... You may have one foster parent that can really—that's their niche, is teenagers, and they really understand all that, or you get somebody that maybe has never had any kids and are a foster parent, and they take a kid on that's got some behavior issues—puberty's setting in—and... they can't control their behavior. We have many of the older kids that come in that need residential treatment, so sometimes they'll get in to a residential facility and maybe hook up with some other kids that have some delinquency issues. So then they end of running or doing things out in the community that they get tagged for and end up in the juvenile justice [system]... I think also, maybe the kids are just maybe looking... for some validation as well... [T]hey're running to what they know, especially if they're placed in the same community. If they had a relationship with...delinquent types of children before they kind of run back to that... If that's been generations of coming in contact with the police and the courts, that's all they may know... I'm seeing this a lot—is our adopted kids are... coming back

to us...a lot, and some of them are being jailed, because they're having behavior problems and/or mental health problems. And so they're sitting in jail, because the adoptive parents won't take them back, and then they call us... [S]ometimes these kids are being jailed or involved with the courts because they get to a certain age and the adoptive parents don't want to deal with them... And some of these kids really have some significant mental health issues, and they're not being addressed appropriately in the home, and they're getting tagged and thrown in jail.

-Interview 22, white, child welfare

This professional discussed many contributors of crossing over. At the level of the child: (1) child's age, which involve (a) mood fluctuations due to hormonal changes, (b) being arrested for status offenses (i.e., running away) and contempt of court; (2) mental health problems. At the level of the parent/family are: (1) family instability and (2) poor role models; (3) prior police contact. At the level of the system are: (1) the child welfare system, including (a) placement instability, (b) residential placements, (c) lack of advocacy by substitute parents; (2) juvenile justice system, including (a) policies around status offense and contempt of court; and peer influence.

The end result of the interaction of these contributors is a youth from the child welfare system who gets arrested. What happens after the arrest is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is likely that youth who have had prior involvement with the child welfare system experience deeper entrenchment in the juvenile justice system and the adult criminal justice system.

Professional and Racial Group Comparisons

The majority of professionals described factors at the level of the system (82%) and/or parent/family (79%) as contributing to disproportionate crossing over. Contributors at the level

of the child were reported least by professionals (68%). Table 4 shows the proportion of participants who indicated at least one contributor at the child level, parent/family level, and/or system level for crossing over, as well as disproportionate crossing over.

Table 4. Proportion of professionals who discussed themes by ecological level for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over.

Ecological Level	Crossing Over (%)	Disproportionate Crossing Over (%)
Child	22 (68)	19 (58)
Parent/family	26 (79)	26 (79)
System	27 (82)	30 (91)

To explore any thematic patterns amongst participants, group comparison analyses were conducted. Three two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests comparing the sum of themes for crossing over at the level of the child, parent/family, and system by type of professional and race of professional did not reveal any significant main effects or interactions. Refer to Table 5 in the next chapter for results.

Conclusion

There may be a tendency for systems to decontextualize certain behaviors of crossover youth. In doing so, interventions may not be culturally responsive. While mainstream society is likely to see engaging in delinquency, such as running away and theft, as a weakness, an alternative stance would be to view this behavior as a strength. While risky, child welfare-involved youth have empowered themselves by taking matters into their own hands. Some crossover youth may choose to be active, as opposed to passive agents in meeting their most basic needs, such as food, clothing, and emotional support. Youth may feel that they can take better care of themselves than what the state provides.

Some participants noted that in all the years of working in the field, they have never seen such angry youth. Anger is typically seen as a maladaptive response or behavior by the child

welfare and juvenile justice systems. However, when considering youth who may have experienced severe neglect and physical and sexual abuse, as well as a sense of frustration by the way they're treated by the system", responding out of anger makes sense. Placing youth's behavior in the context of their life history, anger may be a coping mechanism these youth have adapted to survive. Responding angrily in their home may have worked for them if they have tried to fight back against possible injustices they endured. While I am not advocating for inattention to youth anger, I am advocating for attention to their context and for culturally responsive interventions.

Professionals who have worked in multiple systems that serve crossover youth (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental health, and policy) may be better equipped to understand the true experiences of crossover youth. While I attempted to systematically examine professionals' detailed child welfare and juvenile justice work history, I failed to examine their work experiences in the mental health and education systems, as well as other social service systems. It is possible that there is an association exists between professionals' multi-system work experience and perspectives on crossing over.

One law enforcement professional noted that within the local detention facility in 2009, 75% of youth were black. Out of unduplicated entries in 2009, 62% were black male, 18% were black female, 14% were white male, and 4% were white female. Given the high risk males have for entry in the juvenile justice system, it is surprising that the rate for black females in detention is higher than the rate for white males'. What accounts for disproportionate outcomes?

Nine (27%) participants spontaneously discussed themes relating to race as a risk factor for crossing over. It was impossible to decipher what participants specifically meant by "race". Did they really mean "race", or did they mean "racism"? Perhaps their opinions of race having to

do with crossing over were based on having more experiences with crossover families who are black. Perhaps they were based on a critical awareness of race in America. The next chapter reports on professionals' perceptions of why black child welfare-involved youth are at a higher risk for crossing over than white child welfare-involved youth.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: CONTRIBUTORS OF DISPROPORTIONATE CROSSING OVER

In chapter 3, I answered my first research question, “How do knowledgeable professionals understand and explain the phenomenon of racial disproportionalities in crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system?” This chapter focuses on why black youth from the child welfare system have a higher risk for crossing over than white child welfare-involved youth. Nine participants (27%) spontaneously discussed racial themes during our conversation on risk factors for crossing over. Some alluded to a white dominated child welfare system and juvenile justice system. Some discussed how the risk for crossing over begins even before the child enters the child welfare system, as the culmination of racial disproportionalities in other social domains, such as education and poverty, may lead up to the development of the risk for crossing over for African American youth.

In response to the interview question, “In your professional experience, what are the reasons for why black youth involved with the child welfare system are at a higher risk for crossing over than white child welfare system-involved youth?” participants continued to discuss themes relating to poverty, parenting problems, and neighborhoods. They discussed these risk factors as they interact with race. They also discussed issues they had not described in the general discussion of cross over: distrust of authorities, communication breakdown and institutional racism.

Poverty

Many participants (39%) saw intergenerational poverty as it interacts with the experiences of African Americans as contributing to disproportionate crossing over. These participants believed that because poverty is associated with the risk for involvement in the child welfare

system and juvenile justice system, and since African Americans are disproportionately poor, African Americans are therefore more likely to crossover. The following white, law enforcement professional describes this.

If you looked at it from a socioeconomic standpoint, not a race standpoint, you would find that I have white kids that come from low socioeconomic status that get in just as much trouble as black kids from low socioeconomic status. But the reality of it in this town in particular is that probably there are many more black kids who are socioeconomically deprived than there are white. Now that's not to say I don't have problems with wealthy kids or middle class kids or with all races, because we do. But we tend to not have as much from the higher socioeconomic levels... than the lower ones.

-Interview 26, white, law enforcement

This participant seems to weigh SES relatively more heavily than race in contributing to disproportionate crossing over. He goes on to say that fighting, a behavior that can lead to juvenile justice system involvement, is more acceptable in the black community, but states this value changes with class. He describes whites as more fearful and respectful toward law enforcement.

In the black community, fighting seems to be extremely acceptable, okay?... I think the higher up you get socioeconomically, the less acceptable it is. But in the lower socioeconomic classes, it's almost... expected. Now, I've also had that with white families, too. But I don't think at near the proportion as with black families. You'll see black kids out here all the time, "I don't care. Take me to jail," and they'll use a lot of foul language. "I'm going to fight no matter what." Now I will occasionally get a white kid saying that, but that's not very often... [I]t is a strange phenomenon. Even the low

socioeconomic white kids tend to at least demonstrate some level of apprehension or fear from law enforcement, and I don't see that so much in the black community. It's more of a confrontational thing with the most socioeconomically oppressed black kids. But I think when you get to middle class and above, I think there's a level of respect [that]... is taught in the home... [A] lot of things in this town seem to revolve around race. Whether it's a race issue or not, it gets made into a race issue, from both sides [black and white], sometimes. And that gets frustrating.

-Interview 26, white, law enforcement

Some participants seemed to place greater emphasis on the role race may play in contributing to crossing over, explicitly describing the intersection of race and class on youth's outcomes.

The following participant emphasizes the impact race has on crossing over by alluding to historical experiences of oppression in describing different paths racial group members take.

I think it's both [race and class]. I think being black it's gonna be important. The reality is it's harder being black than white. If you're gonna be blunt about it, it is. That's not necessarily because we don't have as many opportunities as white people do. I think the opportunities are there. It's just that the way that the path that the black people have been handed in this country have been a lot different from the path that white people have in this country. There's been a lot of difficulties that have affected the community as a whole, in such a way, that there's all of this mentality of ~~Well~~, it's harder for me, so why try?" And I think that mentality has been handed, broadly, not only toward raising children, becoming successful. I think it's more difficult for a black family...

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement

One black, court professional describes another racial difference that may contribute to disproportionate crossing over. This professional emphasizes code switching of African Americans as necessary for fitting into white, middle class institutions. Blacks who do not code switch may have greater odds of involvement with authorities than those who do code switch. This participant explains how some black parents living in poverty have a higher risk for child welfare system involvement because they do not communicate or behave like white, middle class Americans, and they become entrenched in the system because they do not know how to straddle both worlds. Poor blacks must straddle two worlds: a black and a white world, and a poor and a middle class world. Participant 4 also alludes to the need for people in a “position of influence” to be able to straddle, or understand, race and class lines.

You’ve got to understand, [child welfare system is]... not taking middle class black kids. They’re taking lower class black kids... [M]iddle class black families may still believe in corporal punishment. We may still do things in the vernacular, maybe the more getofied way. Our brains operate differently. We understand how to traverse both worlds. We call it code switching. I can talk to my people on the corner and they would never know I was an attorney. And I can go into the courtroom and you’d never know I grew up in the ghetto. That’s the code that we switch. And many black families switch like that all the time. We say to each other, I can come from around the desk. I can sit back here and we can be professional or I can come to this side and do whatever it is that you want to do. Don’t let the suit and tie fool you. That’s where we come from....[T]he people on this side of the desk need me to be able to be in both worlds... [T]he code-switchers are able to move within the system. We know that until we get into a position of influence, we can’t do anything about that, but we have to be able to meld in in such a way... A lot of

African Americans that I see that have problems is that they can't meld in. They can't move that way. Their mind state is not there....

-Interview 4, black, court

Although the following participant does not want to make involvement with the criminal justice system into a race issue, she cannot make sense of racial disproportionalities otherwise. She insists, ~~“We~~ “We should look at things more along socioeconomic lines”. Yet, disproportionalities do not make sense to her if only SES is considered.

I tend to believe that... a lot of [people], if they live in a city, black and white will act the same way... The only reason [for disproportionate crossing over] I can think of right now is race. And I always hate to use that... I have seen many times where white mothers, to me, will act ~~—blaker~~ “blacker” than black mothers... I mean, they have learned the same survival skills... I had a case with a woman that was white. Her children were mixed... Her attorney was trying to explain some things to her... and she said... ~~“That [judge] can kiss my black ass.”~~ “That [judge] can kiss my black ass.” And she was white!... [She] had that same feeling about the judge, same mentality [as a black woman]... I tend to think that we should look at things more along socioeconomic levels... [P]eople act certain ways depending on their socioeconomic level... whether they're black or white... [O]n the other hand, there's a disproportionate number of African Americans who end up in jail. When I see all of them [black and white people] acting the same, what accounts for [more blacks in jail besides] race?

-Interview 23, black, child welfare

Welfare and Work Ethic

21% of participants suggested that African-American families may be more dependent on welfare than European-American families in the child welfare system. Participants believed

reasons for this dependence relate to single, female-headed households trying to make ends meet with low paying jobs, lack of college diploma, several children, and absent fathers. Some saw families who are dependent on welfare as passing on a poor work ethic to their children, leading to attenuated academic and employment aspirations. The following white, court professional sees poverty as a main contributor to disproportionate crossing over, and specifically, poverty as an amalgamation of a poor work ethic, dependence on welfare, and poor social assistance policies.

[I]t used to be...a given that... the father and the family went out and worked. It was just unacceptable not to... And even if you didn't like school, your motivation was, 'Well I've got to take care of my family.'... [A]s a society, the assault on the African-American family has probably been worse because of misguided policies like work fair... [I]f you do the math... a poor family is better off without the male wage earner in the home.

-Interview 13, white, court

The following white, law enforcement professional states that approximately 80% of families she works with are African American. She emphasized welfare abuse and misguided priorities by the families she sees in describing why there are disproportionalities among crossover youth.

It's almost like learned behavior... A lot of the families that we deal with are used to Section 8 housing, so they're never paid for anything... They all have LINK [food stamp] cards. Multiple children are diagnosed with mental health disorders, or ADHD, and other things, and they live off of Social Security checks... [T]hey fight over that Social Security check if they live with their Mom or... Dad... [A]lot of the families, none of them work. That's how they're making their way through life with the Link Cards, with medical cards, Section 8... [Y]es, they don't have a whole lot, but... the parents and the kids will have their fake nails... [and] their hair done. They'll tell you it cost \$150 for

[their hair], \$50 for their nails... [I]t wasn't uncommon for me, when I did a home visit, like at Christmas time and there'd be presents, you'd ask them, —~~W~~atddya get?" They'd get big-screen TVs... And, they didn't have hardly clothes... And, it's not uncommon for kids... to be sleepin' on the floor or couches. So, the priorities are not exactly right.... But, it's a trend that we see. And, the social security is a new trend... [T]hey do away with one program, so they have to find another way to make a living and that was just one way. You know, as their kids gets diagnosed, they figure out that they can get Social Security checks for em... Until that goes away... there'll be some other abuse of some program.

-Interview 10, white, law enforcement

The following black, law enforcement professional expressed that criteria for welfare benefits are not stringent enough, and suggests that some African-American women have children for the purpose of receiving welfare benefits.

If you continue giving a person a check for doing nothing, you're not gonna encourage the person from doing anything... and your kids are suffering for it. I'm seeing you jacking your life and their kids' life because I'm paying you! If you stop a person's flow of money coming in, they're gonna either resort to crime or get a job. I think 98% of people are gonna get a job... Unless you're proving to me that you're trying to get a job and you ain't on drugs... It's too comfortable for me if I get \$400 a month, as opposed to me working at McDonald's I'm making \$500. I'd rather just be comfortable, chill. Why do I have to work? That's for suckers. So unless you start doing some really out of the box, non-politically correct stuff, you're gonna have this continuation of this cycle of no money except if I have kids.

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement

[M]any families... have three kids from three different fathers and none of them are taking any responsibility for their child, let alone the other two. That happens daily.

Where is the accountability for him to pay child support? You know that's a system that needs to be looked at too. You know, if we held this person accountable to pay, it may give mom a break and maybe more opportunities.

-Interview 14, white, law enforcement

Neighborhood Characteristics

21% of the sample discussed themes relating to crossover youth's neighborhood. Five participants (15%) said that there is a higher prevalence of crime among the African American community than the European American community since most calls for law enforcement come from neighborhoods that are predominantly African American and poor. It is racial disproportionality in crimes committed that lead to disproportionate rates of crossing over, as some participants suggest.

...[I]t goes back to... [the] African-American culture being unfortunately in lower SES and all of those kind of criminalized activities that they can get involved with, and it's the same with Caucasian. It just seems unfortunately that it happens more in the African-American community.

-Interview 9, white, child welfare

Given where I work in the city, it is disproportionate African American neighborhoods... it's reflective, though, of the neighborhoods I'm in... higher calls for service come in those areas... [W]e have a lot of mental health patients that live there... [who] have caseworkers, social security checks, and... the ability to maintain a reasonable existence

for themselves. But when they're put in dirty apartments... they don't rise to the level of 'I'm going to get up and take a shower today.'... [W]hen you have kids growing up in that environment, it can be reflected in the way that their behaviors develop.

-Interview 25, white, law enforcement

This participant also described other neighborhood contributors, including neighborhood poverty, lack of local recreation opportunities for youth, and neighborhoods that act as socializing agents in which children learn to distrust authorities (as discussed further on).

In rural communities, where next to no families of color reside, there are not the same rates of youth incarceration or entrenchment in the child welfare system. Things are handled differently in these communities as described by the following participants.

The rural communities have developed really, really responsive relationships with their police department. So same behavior, mom beats the hell out of kids. Police in a rural community come in... [and] work it out, talk to people. There's not an immediate call to a caseworker... [N]ow as a rule, if you're in [this community], except for those rare police officers, you've beaten the hell out of your kid, caseworker's called immediately.

-Interview 6, black, child welfare

I think to some degree [class] plays [a role] but it doesn't mitigate out [race]. When you look at research on impoverished rural communities, you would think if that were true [i.e., if poverty is the main contributor to child welfare system involvement], then you would have lots of poor white families in the child welfare system and foster care, [but] those numbers don't increase when compared with urban communities.

-Interview 2, white, child welfare

Things may be handled differently in rural communities compared to urban communities, but not always. Sometimes the sense of community in urban areas is nurtured by professionals who make an effort to understand community members in their socioecological context, as described by the following black, law enforcement professional who has volunteered with at-risk youth. The following excerpt highlights the importance of relationship building in effecting positive community policing. Unlike rural areas, where relationships are easier to build and maintain, law enforcement in urban areas face a greater challenge in establishing bonds with community members. Once that happens, however, outcomes may be better for everyone.

I ha[d] a young man... And he knows I'm on the police department... [but] I was his Wrap crisis manager. It blew his mind that I would advocate for him when he wrote about a criminal experience [for a homework assignment]... [T]he teacher told him, —Hy, write about your weekend and tell what happened.” And what this young man did was wrote about a criminal binge that he went on. Basically, it was a time when we had a rash of vehicle burglaries... Teacher gave him an F, [and said], _This is a lie. This is not true. Because she couldn't believe something like that would happen [here]. And... he used a lot of... profanity....So I went to the teacher and explained to her..., _This happened. This is true. He wrote about his weekend. I understand it's not your typical weekend. Welcome to his world... He followed the assignment. He shouldn't have to redo [it] because you don't like the content of it'... [T]his young man never had anyone advocate for him... and he was ready to give up on school... [H]e was very happy. I mean, he got his first B on something he wrote... I don't advocate what he did... But I'm going to advocate for him, and that really got us a bond going...

Even after this, I ended up having to take him to jail. It wasn't that I found him doing anything. He had got in trouble and... a warrant was issued for his arrest... He says, "I'll go. I want you to pick me up"... I get to his house... [and] he was like, "My budd[ies]... got a warrant. Can you go pick them up, too?" So I... ended up going to jail with four kids.... I mean, it's about relationships.

-Interview 20, black, law enforcement

Adult Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

15% of participants felt that due to disproportionate involvement with the criminal justice system by African-American adults, as well as prior contact with law enforcement and courts for abuse and neglect, black child welfare -involved youth may be at a greater risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system than white child welfare -involved youth.

[As police departments] deal with their kids and the same family over and over...[they] tend to get fed-up.

-Interview 10, white, law enforcement

Some participants discussed how black youth from the child welfare system may perceive unemployment, criminal behavior, and incarceration as normal, because they grow up seeing their parents and other relatives in these circumstances.

If going to visit your father, uncle, and your cousin in the jail every Saturday is what's the norm, then how are you going to break out of that?...It goes back to the chicken and the egg question about single parent households and poverty and segregated community. So where you grow up, that's what you think is the norm. If men hanging out on a street corner unemployed, who survive by relying on their mothers and have six babies by five

different women is what you grow up seeing, then what are you going to think is the norm?

-Interview 21, white, court

Instability and Absent Fathers

39% of the participants felt that relatively more African-American youth experience family instability and absent fathers and that this contributes to disproportionate crossing over.

—Almost 90% [of youth I see] are from single parent homes”

-Interview 10, white, law enforcement

The interaction of a weak family structure and child support policies may induce the risk for crossing over by African-American youth, as discussed by the following participant. Some also described how the African-American family takes an economic hit in families with multiple children and absent fathers, especially if fathers are in prison.

18% of the sample indicated that a lack of positive role models contribute to disproportionate crossing over. Role modeling, irresponsible parenting, and sexual practices can increase the propensity for intergenerational involvement in the child welfare system, as described by several professionals. Many believed that African-American families have many more children than European American families. The difference, however, is only one quarter of a child (0.26 to be exact). In 2011, white families had an average of 0.89 children younger than age 18, and black families had 1.16 children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Growing up in a stable, two-parent household may reduce the risk for crossing over, as expressed by one white, court professional.

If you have the two people that contributed to making that child in the house, and they both stick around, it shows the kid that they’re valued. It shows them how to... create and

build their own family. It just contributes to their feelings of stability. They're going to be better provided for, better encouraged, better self-esteem.

-Interview 17, white, court

Family stability may contribute to healthy child development, including greater self-esteem, education achievement aspirations, and avoidance of risky behaviors.

Parenting Problems

39% of the participants felt that disproportionate crossing over exists, in part, because of insufficient parental guidance by black families compared to white families.

They just lack the ability to parent sometimes... That's when we have effective black-parenting groups... There's a lack of supervision amongst their kids. They throw up their hands and say, "Do whatever you want!" And the kids stay out all night, runnin' around... and stealing and gettin' in trouble....

-Interview 11, white, child welfare

With the exception of reference to education system disparities, Interview 11 does not discuss macro contributors of disproportionate crossing over. Instead, she focuses her discourse on the parent/family level contributors. The following participant compares his upbringing to youth who enter the juvenile justice system.

[T]here were rules that were answerable and someone to remind me, you know, this is whatcha do, this is whatcha don't do. I didn't need a judge to tell me.

-Interview 13, white, court

Interviewee 13 described how courts must resort to guiding youth when parents do not.

Attitude

18% of the sample believed that the attitude of African American parents contributes to deeper entrenchment in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. Role modeling a victim mentality by African-American parents can lead to youth's sense of hopelessness and a propensity to become involved with delinquency, as the following white, court professional describes.

It seems like they're teaching their children kind of a victim mentality... I don't think it's warranted... [B]ut I think... teaching them that no matter what you do, you're never going to get out of this neighborhood...you're never going to be any more than what we are right now. So I think that feeds into the hopelessness mentality, which I think feeds into...a propensity to commit crimes.

-Interview 17, white, court

A sense of hopelessness may be associated with the development of feelings of a lack of control over one's life, increasing the risk for crossing over.

The theme of black parents being afraid to be outdone by their children emerged during my interview with one black, law enforcement professional, who said she sees this frequently in her line of work.

[T]hey're not going to uplift you, because they don't want you to outdo them. They want you to stay on the same playing field... I see it all the time. Let's see now, I've been in this business for eleven years, and it's day in and day out... [I]t's so much negativity around you that you just don't know anything else. [A] lot of the parents from those communities... are not doing good themselves... [They] abuse drugs, they're alcoholics, so they don't have any aspirations. Normally you would think you'd want your kid to do

better than you, but as we know, in today's society, things have changed... [N]ow everything is such a struggle, and the economy is so hard... so a lot of people are not uplifting those kids to do any better than them, because they... don't want you out of the hood"... They don't want to see you successful, because it's a lot of jealousy...

-Interview 12, black, law enforcement

Interview 12 states she frequently sees parents holding their children back from potential success, which may lead to the development of a sense of hopelessness, low self-esteem, and an increased propensity to delinquency. Another participant described that because of African-American women's pride, they refuse help from friends or neighbors because they do not want to be seen struggling. Their attitude is seen as crippling them and their children, instead of helping them. One white, court professional felt that more black than white parents have a sense of entitlement."

I hate to see this attitude of entitlement [by my black]... clients' parents, who gets in my face and says "You better do this for my boy"

-Interview 3, white, court

Distrust of Authorities and Communication Breakdown

Participants also attributed disproportionate crossing over to distrust of authorities by African American families. 24% (n=8) of participants discussed this theme at the child level and 24% at the parent level. Several professionals saw African American as being uncooperative with child welfare system and juvenile justice system authorities, which may escalate tensions at the scene of a crime, resulting in deeper involvement with the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. Distrust and communication breakdown between African Americans and authorities may increase black youth's risk for crossing over.

Child Level Contributors

Among responses at the child level, the most frequent theme professionals offered related to distrust of authority figures by black child welfare system-involved youth. One white, court professional describes her perspectives on noncompliance by African Americans.

... I have definitely heard and seen in police reports people saying, ‘This is how I am,’ or ‘This is my culture.’ I think you have to sit back and say, ‘If that is your culture, is that a part of your culture that you really want to perpetuate?’ Running from police, lying about your name, yelling and screaming and getting in the middle of a situation that’s not your situation, causing more drama. Is that really a cultural thing that the rest of us are supposed to step back and respect, or is that an excuse for poor behavior?... [U]ltimately they’re interviewed, and [asked] ‘Why did you run?’ [And they say] ‘Well, I don’t trust the police’... [T]hey did commit a crime by running and lying, so they’ve escalated the situation... I’ve certainly seen police reports where they’ve stopped people and figured out that that’s not the person and say, ‘Thanks very much. See you later.’ But equally as many, if not more, reports where the offender is resisting a police officer or obstructing a police officer, by running and by lying and by escalating, or worse, fighting when you get caught.

-Interview 21, white, court

Interview 21 focused on black youth’s behavior defined as illegal, and seen as “**poor** behavior”. Other participants (e.g., Interview 2 and 8, discussed next) focused on distrust in discussing African-Americans’ non-compliant behavior. Interview 8, a white, law enforcement professional described how distrust across ecological systems affects interactions between youth and authorities, and ultimately contributes to disproportionate crossing over. He takes into account

the historical context and racial socialization differences between black and white families in describing why African Americans may be less cooperative with authorities.

[I]n general, if you're raised in a non-minority family, you're raised in a family that trusts the system because in general, the system... is [not] trying to get one over on them. It's not like I grew up hearing stories about my grandpa getting pulled over and beaten. So, if you're raised in a non-minority household, you're raised in a household that trusts the system, works with the system. And, if the system says, that you need to do A, B, and C. Even if you don't agree with it, you've been raised to go, ~~it~~ doesn't make sense to me, but I'll do A, B, and C"... It's not that far back that there have been significant problems with the system. So, why would you trust the system? It's a system that looked [on] while people were being lynched... So then you have that system coming in and saying, ~~O~~h, your parenting isn't up to par. Your child is at-risk". And, even if it's for a valid reason, it's like, ~~W~~ho are you telling me my child is at-risk?" And then the system says, ~~T~~o get your child back, you need to do A, B, or C". ~~W~~ell, I don't trust you! Why do I need to do A, B, or C? Why can't I do A and C, because B wasn't really a problem?"...And, it's more confrontational between the family and the system. And the system doesn't like confrontation. Anytime there's confrontation, the system's like, ~~W~~hat can I do to squash it?...I'll take your kid... I'll lock you up!"... Good-hearted people will be like, ~~T~~hat was the sixties, people need to get over it." No. They really don't! The system really hasn't done anything in general to say,... "We made some awful mistakes... And so, we understand that you're not so willing to cooperate, so let's work together. Let's try to come up with a solution"... It just perpetuates the lack of trust.

-Interview 8, white, law enforcement

The following white, court professional discusses African American's distrust in a somewhat different light, believing that African-Americans' perception of unequal treatment may perpetuate tensions between them and authorities, ultimately leading to deeper involvement in the system. In addition to describing the interaction between the criminal justice system and African-American's distrust of it, he references how African Americans may be less law abiding because they feel they do not have a say in the system.

[T]hey certainly did express an attitude of being more distrustful of the police... [I]t seemed like half of my... African American [adult] clients would say that the only reason that the cops arrested them was because they were black. They might have gotten a notice to appear if they'd been white, but they were handcuffed because they were black—that kind of thing... [B]ecause they're less trustful of this power structure, they are more willing to... act against its rules... And the power structure defines those as crimes... They don't feel a part of that system, and so why should they go by its rules?... I think the distrust has built up over generations... I think it is perception that psychologically prepares them to be less law-abiding... and everything that goes into their self-perception as a black person and their perception of a non-black controlled society, indeed, a society that they seem to perceive marginalizes them.

-Interview 16, white, court

The following black law enforcement professional says African Americans distrust authorities because authorities are predominantly white, and African Americans are more receptive to and compliant with law enforcement who are black.

[W]hat they see is mostly whites in the position. The detention center [is]... mostly white... more black people are willing to share with black people what they're going

through... [b]ecause they feel that you're able to identify with [them]... Or we're not going to judge them as much, and they can tell us the truth about their situation, whereas a white person might come in, and they might say, 'I'm not telling them nothing', because they don't know what you're [White people]... going to do with this information. As opposed to where a black-on-black might feel like you're going to go a little further to help them... More likely than not, they won't talk to a poor, white person... [T]hey'll tell you, 'If you was white, as far as a home visit, I wouldn't even open my door.' But seeing that I'm black, they just welcome me right in... I get phone calls from mothers asking if they can talk to me, because they can't trust anyone... So it's like, they don't even have that outlet to help themselves. And it's unfortunate, but you see it a lot.

-Interview 12, black, law enforcement

Parent Level Contributors

24% of the sample described how African-American children experience deeper entrenchment in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system because their parents may socialize them to distrust authorities, as expressed by the following participant.

I think the way they raise their kids is... colored by their perception of being treated unfairly. Part of it is raising the kids not to trust the existing power structure.

-Interview 16, white, court

Participant 6 describes how, motivated by distrust for authorities, parents may respond angrily to authorities, unwittingly impacting their child's outcomes for the worse.

[It's] something that happens over and over again... It affects whether kids get detained or station adjusted. So kids that get involved with an open case, or not. Same behavior [of a white and black child]. Sometimes it's just the parents that make the difference.

-Interview 6, black, child welfare

The following participant suggests that there are historical reasons why African-American parents raise their children to distrust the system related to their experiences of police brutality.

They're very guarded when they have to deal with assistance and there's reasons for that...[T]hat's going all the way back to the discrimination that we've had in this country... [W]hether they committed the crime, or [not], the hangings, all the lynchings... [T]he systems didn't treat them fairly, so they're guarded for various reasons. And that still applies to this day.

-Interview 7, black, child welfare

Communication, culture, and distrust of the authorities are intimately related, as described by the following white, child welfare participant. Participant 2 explains that one needs to look below the surface when assessing families involved in the child welfare system. While many would see the mother described above as not caring about the death of her child, Interview 2 sees her peculiar behavior as motivated by distrust. This participant also discussed how she tries not to use her clients' distrust against her or the child welfare system in assessing their progress.

You had a child who died and you're not crying in front of me. We need to start looking at that as part of the institutional bias. Because it's so much deeper than why isn't that mother crying when her child passed away because I would. But if we look so many layers down and the deep-rooted racism and trauma, there's reasons she's not crying in front of *me*. It doesn't mean she's not grieving her child. I think we look at people and

how they respond to things. If [the child welfare system] knocks on *your* door, you might invite them in and talk with your children. Whereas someone else who does not trust systems is not going to let them interview their children, and is going to be mad if you interview them at school and then it's used against you...

-Interview 2, white, child welfare

System Level Contributors

As demonstrated above, uncooperative behavior by African Americans may be fueled by a sense of distrust, and interpreted by professionals as noncompliance and hostility. It is this communication breakdown between families and authorities that can escalate tensions and lead to deeper involvement in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. If these behaviors are interpreted by professionals as problematic and written off as hostile, non-compliant, and not progressing, the result can lead to racially biased case assessments that get entered into court proceedings. The following two white professionals describe how distrust of law enforcement can produce negative consequences.

In several instances, I've seen parents simply coaching their kids, Don't talk to the police, or If you'd just run off, we wouldn't be here right now. '... There was one other case I had of taking protective custody... I found an eight-year-old hiding under the bed. And it turns out [over the course of] the last several months of Grandma and Uncle being arrested, she had been home and was instructed to hide when the police come. And so there were days on end when she was left at home alone, because we would go in and arrest people...

The eight-year-old was eventually reunited with her grandmother, who was alleged to have been an alcoholic and neglectful. Eight years later, when the girl was 16 years-old, the police were called again to the house.

Granddaughter won't tell us anything. ... [W]e finally get her to explain what's going on, and she says, "Last time I talked to you, you took me away." And basically, she would rather stay in that environment than run the risk of being pulled out again, even if that meant that what she said would get Grandma in trouble... [S]he wouldn't give us anything specific as to tell us whether it was a dangerous environment for her... But that is one of those cases where she was trained at an early age, "Don't trust the police. When the police come, hide. I don't care what's going on." Even if it meant she was home alone several days while people were locked up. That was preferable to talking to the police, and then when she did finally have interaction with the police, it almost cemented what they had told her... I can't change her overall perception of us. All I can do is deal with that particular incident.

-Interview 25, white, law enforcement

Interview 25 describes how distrust can negatively impact youth's development. Distrust by community members can also impede criminal justice investigations, potentially compromising the safety of the rest of the community, as described by the following white, court participant. Participant 17 points out that trust is a value that can also be learned at the neighborhood level. Distrust of authorities seems to permeate the African American community and continues today, as discussed by several professionals.

[A] lot of the black communities and neighborhoods, from a very young age, teach their children a distrust of police officers...the state's attorney's..., anyone perceived to be

associated with the system or “The Man”... Occasionally, I think it probably is warranted, because... a small percentage of officers do treat blacks differently, treat them, perhaps, more aggressively... I remember reading a [police] report, going, “What in the world were you doing?” You know, a guy won’t get into the back of a squad car the first time you tell him, so the officer punches him... But that’s one officer... And then it spreads... [P]eople in the community, maybe, are not going to be very willing to seek them out for help. They’re not going to be willing to give them their names as a witness when they see something. We see that over and over again...

-Interview 17, white, court

Institutional Racism

Twenty-four percent of the sample expressly discussed disproportionate crossing over rates as a manifestation of institutional racism. Defined as laws and policies, a top-down approach used by society’s decision makers to adjust and mold society to a specific set of behavioral and economic practices, around parenting expectations and legal behavior. Communication differences between a white-dominated child welfare and juvenile justice system and black families may lead to biased assessments as expressed by several professionals. The following black, child welfare professional offers a definition of institutional racism. The issue of institutional racism permeates his entire interview.

[Institutional racism is] stakeholders in the system sharing a propensity to devalue families of color. I think the basis for the disparities in general have to do with institutional racism. There is a system structure bias that has African American families and/or youth much more vulnerable to being identified as problematic and in need of some adjustment... [T]he system does not seem to be conscious of... that inherent bias...

I'm talkin about bias about race, a sense that non-whites are viewed as lesser beings than whites by whites, and that creates impediments and negative actions and consequences to families of color...

-Interview 15, black, child welfare

The gate-keepers to the child welfare system and juvenile justice system could be the building blocks of institutional and structural racism.

Child Welfare System

In 2011, 65% of youth who entered care in Champaign County were black, while 32% were white (UIC, unpublished). 27% of the sample described how the risk for disproportionate crossing over begins with entry into the child welfare system.

I know the [child welfare] system as we currently have it is not working well and... it is not a system that is conducive for minorities. Both African American and Latino, I don't think they perform well in the system. And the system does more to hurt families than it does to help families.

-Interview 20, black, law enforcement

Many believed that disproportionalities present themselves because of biased assessments by the child welfare system, which is caused by communication differences between professionals and poor, African-American clients. These differences in communication may impact how parent's and youth's behavior are assessed.

I can totally misread, misinterpret all of what this individuals is sayin' to me. What I even saw—You know, maybe I'm not even askin' the questions of them, I'm just kinda approachin' them in a different way. And then, I come back and present to you what I *think* happened. It's all in how I present it to you. And if I *think* these kids need to come

in foster care, then I'm going to present it to you in a way where I think you will end up with making that decision.

-Interview 7, black, child welfare

The following black law enforcement describes an unfortunate case in which child welfare professionals' biases may have negatively impacted one youth's development. In the following case example, Participant 20 described a child who was removed from his mother's care because the child welfare system assumed the child contracted a sexually transmitted disease through sexual abuse.

...Mom was defensive and upset because other people were... tearing up her family.

She's not having a high school diploma, not educated...[A]ll these people coming at her.

So she was a little hostile. She was not cooperative. The sad thing about it was, that [after] they snatched her kids out of her household, they found out the cause why the kid got it. It was because the family was poor and they were sharing a towel. Mom had it.

And the kid got it from sharing the same bath towel with Mom... [W]hile her children were in the system...the son was molested by the foster parents' older child... So he got snatched out because he supposedly got raped—

I: So what they were worried about.

Happened while he was under [the child welfare system]... [A] lot of times, when you start to hear those hostilities... you take it on as a personal attack, as opposed to deflecting it, and saying, "Okay, let's look at the root. Why is this person this way?"...

Yes, she may be hostile, but let's continue to work with her...[W]hen a white person gets upset, they're not nearly as animated as a black person. Granted, neither party is any more dangerous than the other... Whereas this [white] person, they may get upset, they

may run around, they may break something, but they'll give themselves enough space. With black people, proximity is brought much closer. And they'll get loud, and as they're getting loud, you say, "They're about ready to fight." They're not ready to fight. They're expressing themselves [sic] as their culture will allow... [A] lot of times services could be better administered, because we understand each other...

-Interview 20, black, law enforcement

Participant 20 expresses the idea that to better serve families, professionals need to consider families in their context, while keeping personal biases in check. Interview 2 echoes Interview 20's and 7's sentiments about the necessity of keeping one's biases in check to ensure the best possible outcomes for families.

[I]t's human nature if you're gonna call me a [bitch] or [a mother fucker]... How can me as a human say, "You're so nice! You're doing a great job parenting!" You never write it up as such. When I first started I had an African American case of a young mom, 17, who had been a ward [herself] and didn't like her caseworker. Imagine that! And we were trying to determine if she was a fit parent and she was calling her caseworker racially biased names, like cracker and all that stuff. Well that information went into the court report. Well yeah, that is disrespecting your caseworker and thumbing your nose at authority... but what is the purpose of putting that in a court report except to outline this as an angry evil person? I know because of how I was raised I'm not going to talk about a person of authority to their face... I'm a better backstabber than others. But this girl who was raised in the system... didn't learn that same social grace that somebody was using to judge her... What difference does it make that she thinks you're a cracker in regards to her parenting?... [T]hat has nothing to do with how she's raising her daughter... I work

hard to sort out what is personal and what is parenting. I get that she's angry, but does that impact how she's running the house?... And when caseloads are high you don't take the time to have thought because you're writing and you're covering things. Things happen that maybe shouldn't... There's so much stuff that's deeper than what we see on the surface.

-Interview 2, white, child welfare

Interview 2 also discusses how institutional racism is difficult to prove.

Within the Department [child welfare system] we're looking at institutional racism and how to go about changing that, but it's a long process because you're looking at a system... that has been around for decades. So you can't just change [it]... You have laws and policies that establish certain criteria and who gets reported... Are African American parents worse parents than European-American parents? No. But how come the numbers are so different? Are the expectations [for parenting] different? Are the communication styles different?... You hear an example of a parent braiding her daughter's hair during a supervised visit and the worker reported there wasn't any eye contact. Yeah there wasn't any eye contact, but when you look beyond that the physical contact, the love, the nurturing. And some of those things with cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity training, professionals know that [braiding hair] is bonding, but do they really believe it? I just think all of those things go into play and it's hard to say that's racism... because it's so deep and it's so hidden now. Racism 40 years ago was more overt. I think racism now is as destructive if not more destructive, but it's so hidden because it's so veiled under so many layers.

-Interview 2, white, child welfare

Braiding another person's hair is an intimate exchange. The mother may have been focused on that intimate contact with her child. Under the microscope of the child welfare system, some behaviors may become magnified (e.g., eye contact), while other behaviors go unnoticed (e.g., braiding hair). From the latter portion of this excerpt, racism is described as “more destructive” today because it is “~~vid~~ed”. This sentiment is echoed by Michelle Alexander (2010), who purports that racism today is very difficult to prove, since it is not overt. In a court of law, it is very difficult to prove that a Black family received unequal treatment by the child welfare system or juvenile justice system, because there are so many confounding factors at play, such as domestic violence, non-compliance, and/or poverty.

The following black, court participant describes how policies of the child welfare system and legal system make it difficult for reunification to occur. He believes racial biases regarding corporal punishment in the court may contribute to disproportionate outcomes.

I had an opportunity to observe one case one time and I'll never forget it because it helped me to really start paying attention to what really goes on here because I had this magical view of what happens in the courtroom... There was a father who had been convicted of domestic battery to his child because he whooped his child and he was ordered to go to class... He said I was in classes, but they didn't fit me... I whooped my son because my son committed a crime. He stole money from me. I disciplined him and I was convicted... I wasn't trying to hurt him or anything. I was disciplining my son. Then they send me to these classes where they want me to admit that I was wrong for the things that I did, and you put me in class with people who beat their wives. I never hit my wife, nor after that did I have to whoop my son again. That wasn't my issue.' He argued very eloquently and the judge said I respect that', but he locked him up anyway after that

because you don't get to change it even though the system doesn't fit you. We have a one size fits all [system]... [I]t's an artificial standard that's set by people who don't live in the same household. I got plenty of belt whippings across my butt and my legs. They were whippings to me. They were not beatings. We have that particular part of it....

[M]iddle class black families may still believe in corporal punishment.

-Interview 4, black, court

The "one size" of the system may refer to the white, middle class standard on which the system is based.

This black, court professional also discussed how the child welfare system does not clearly communicate what is required of parents. White workers may be indirect in their communication, whereas black workers may be more direct. Services that the child welfare system or courts label as voluntary are actually required. Child welfare professionals leave it up to parents to choose whether or not to participate in services, a value of social work practice grounded in self-determination. Black parents are surprised when they are not reunified, since it was communicated to them that services are voluntary, as described by this professional.

[H]ey look they make a request of you. It is not a request!... We [African Americans] really don't do that [make a request]. It's not our culture... You don't have to be rude about it. You have to be direct about it... And so when we deal with the system, the caseworkers often come from that background of offering it as a choice, but it's not a choice... [Y]ou can't mollicoddle certain people. You need to tell people straightforward, look you need to do one, two, three, four. Otherwise your children will never come home. Don't say, "We'll think about it. We'll work on it..." I ask them, "Why didn't you take the classes?" They tell me "I didn't have to. She told me I could take it if I

wanted to. I didn't want to'. That's not what you tell someone, and then you write in the report that they refused to take classes... because you gave the parent the option.

-Interview 4, black, court

The excerpt above illustrates one professional's view of child welfare system being indirect with clients, putting them at risk for deeper involvement with the child welfare system. The following white, court professional discusses how she views this communication exchange.

FAC [a relatively Africentric agency, is] probably more direct than I would be in my position. I'm not able to say certain things to a parent, whereas they're allowed to say, _The boyfriend needs to go. You need to kick him out today.' And I'm all about, _You need to make your own decisions. Whatever decision you make, I'm gonna make a decision based on the decisions you make.' Well, that doesn't really help them.

I: Yeah. So, if you know that, why don't you implement that knowledge?

Cause that's not my role. That's FAC's role... [the child welfare system] allows parents to be self-directed, and allows them to make their own mistakes, and their own choices.

They make their own progress as well... I wanna stay out of people's lives as much as possible. So, we're not going to make decisions for them. They have to make their own decisions, but then, we'll come in and say, _This is the decision you made, so we have to make a decision based on the decision that you just made, about the child's safety.'

-Interview 11, white, child welfare

This participant implements her social work training of client self-determination. While child welfare professionals cannot tell a client they must follow the child welfare system's recommendations, they can communicate options and consequences for not following through with services, as described by Interview 4. Interview 11 may implement her social work training

in a way that another social worker, who may be more culturally responsive, may not. A social worker, who is familiar with cultural communication practices of the African American community, may exercise more directness in outlining the consequences of following or not following child welfare system's recommendations.

One black, child welfare participant offered a case example of racism in the child welfare system. There were two families with similar problems, but very different outcomes. One family was white and upper middle class. The other was black and from a poorer neighborhood. Both were two-parent families. The white family had a mother who was passed out on the floor and the father was not at home. The mother was an alcoholic and the children were left unsupervised. The family remained intact. The black family had a mother who was found to still be drunk from a party she went to the night before. The father was at home, sober, and supervising the children. These children were placed in care for 1.5 years.

...[T]he state's attorney called and asked my supervisor, "I've got two court files sitting on my desk. How come the kids were not removed from this one [the white family], but they were from this one [the black family]?" Well, my supervisor was calling the orders from her supervisor, who I know is racist...

-Interview 23, black, child welfare

When I asked this participant if the mix up was resolved she responded, "After...the [black] kids were there for a year and a half. And [the white] kids never went [into foster care]. So no, it wasn't." While many may have seen the issue as resolved since the state's attorney ordered the children to go home to the parents, this participant did not see ~~it~~ as resolved since the children spent 1.5 years of their childhood out of the home, likely inducing

unnecessary trauma and distrust of the system. Perhaps what this participant saw as unresolved was racism within the child welfare system.

Bi- and multiracial families with white mothers get treated better than bi- and multiracial families with black mothers, as described by the following black, child welfare professional.

One of the biggest indicators of disparities is, and gets magnified in families that are multi- or bi-racial... Particularly in families with white moms. So you could have two kids exhibiting. There are families in the community whose parents have been known to be physically and emotionally abusive, neglectful, not compliant with services, who have never ever gotten their kids access to care. Just documented case after case have allowed their kids [to be] in an environment where their kids have been exposed to sexual and domestic violence... [T]hey've had investigations, but never had an intake case... The school will work, come up with alternative solutions.... One kid is a kid of color, with a black mom who's then viewed as hostile and aggressive... The other mom exhibiting the same behavior is not viewed as hostile, mean, bullying, and so they work with her. Her kids are black. They're biracial, they look black, but the system responds to this one set of families very different... If you look at cases... that get referred to diversion (that's station adjustment) versus kids who get detained... it's really who their parents are that shapes how the system responds and views the behavior. So that's systemic.

-Interview 6, black, child welfare

Interview 6 views this differential treatment of cases with similar profiles as systematically biased. Interview 4 expresses his level of frustration with what he sees as biased treatment against African American families. He describes the example of a woman who has her children removed from her custody because of lack of supervision.

In a circumstance where the parent is already in the system because of domestic violence or some other issue, major problem. It's caused the parent to backslide because she's not learned her lesson. Put her in parenting classes. Take her to counseling. She's supposed to have these lessons learned and now she does this stupid thing. But it's a minor thing. If you look at them individually, they often are minor things. But once they're compounded, they pull the cycle back. Well, she's not making progress. She's not making reasonable efforts. And so we give her another amount of time. Another 30 days. Another 60 days. And we keep it going. Once you pass a certain amount of time, it's usually three 9-month cycles....

I. So you're saying the system and policies don't make it easy to reunite in foster cases.

I think it is systemically intentional... It happens way too damn much, especially in African-American communities. I'll tell you this much, I've stopped taking these types of cases because they aggravate me! I see what is happening. I'm constrained by the same system that everyone else operates in.

-Interview 4, black, court

This participant expresses frustration over what he describes as injustices in the system. Taking these cases drains him emotionally, because he sees cases like these as a no-win situation since many African-American parents do all that is required of them and they still are not reunified with their children. Over one year after data collection, he received yet another call to represent an African American woman who wanted to appeal the court's decision to not grant her reunification, despite all that she had done in following the child welfare system's recommendations. This time, he decided to take the case.

The following black, child welfare professional describes the need for culturally responsive working relationships in addressing disproportionalities.

[I]t's so big, and it's so complex that we often end up dwindling it down to black and white. We often end up dwindlin' it down to socio-economic status, and so we don't really deal with the whole idea of culture, with how I assess culture. How I process the information as it relates to various cultural traditions and values and things of that nature that come into play. How I then interact with other systems because other systems have *their own* culture as well, and expectations and values... So, I can come up with my view. But, what about the court? Cause I still have to work with the court. Or, what about the police? Cause I still have to work with the police. Or, what about the medical?

-Interview 7, black, child welfare

Interview 7 describes that although she herself may not have biases, other decision makers along the way may. She is only one cog in the system. Over one year after data collection, structural barriers weakened when the child welfare system instituted a new state level office that addresses issues relating to diversity awareness and responsiveness.

Law Enforcement

While many saw the child welfare system as contributing to disproportionate crossing over, many also saw law enforcement as the gatekeepers to the juvenile justice system, thereby impacting disproportionate crossover rates. 36% of the sample said law enforcement personnel and policies play a role in disproportionate crossing over.

The following black, law enforcement professional advises new officers how to behave in poor, African American neighborhoods.

There's ignorances [sic] that—or things that may happen in the black culture that a white person... doesn't understand. You can't get it from a book. You've got to spend some time in the culture... [W]hen you get on the street...if you're expecting [respect], you're on the wrong street because that's not going to happen in law enforcement. Respect is earned. And so I have to help my new rookies...understand... You're new to the streets. That kid... he may be thirteen years old, but reckon he may have been hustling [and] banging in the streets since he was seven. So that makes him now a six-year veteran of the same streets. ... Even though he may give us lip, I've got to work through that lip and earn that respect...

-Interview 20, black, law enforcement

This participant considers community members in their cultural environment, a quality that appears to shape his work in the community. Throughout his interview he described how law enforcement need to improve relationships with community members by doing more outreach work that is culturally responsive.

The following black, child welfare professional describes how a black youth responds to intervention services may be influenced by him not feeling respected or understood by the juvenile justice system.

[I]f you have a young man that [is] targeted and [has] been arrested unjustly, they're not going to be serious about any services that they have to do, because they feel they're doing them just because...the police are trying to keep them down.

-Interview 23, black, child welfare

Interview 23 describes the negative consequences of police intervention that is not culturally responsive.

42% of the sample felt that various qualities of the juvenile justice system contribute to disproportionate crossing over. The juvenile justice system is a white dominated system that favors European Americans, and is biased against African Americans, especially black males, resulting in differential treatment, as described by the following black, law enforcement professional.

[O]ver...time, we've seen blacks are more likely to be arrested for smaller [crimes]... Now, why they're getting arrested for it, I'm not sure, other than more likely than not, there are more white officers than black officers. Or even in the criminal justice field, most bosses and employees are white... [I]n the black communities, you're going to see a lot more [police]. They're expecting drama and problems in that area, so they're more likely to get arrested than... Richie Rich over here. _Well, we can talk to your [Richie Rich's] parents.'

-Interview 12, black, law enforcement

Interview 18, another black, law enforcement professional, echoes Interview 12's sentiments.

[T]he justice system is a little bit more slanted toward Europeans than blacks... [S]lanted can have degrees of racism in it, though. One kid might be looked at as easier to rehabilitate and therefore, easier for us to let go or put into programs that might help them. Whereas, the other... _I'd rather have him/her incarcerated for the good of the community'... [Black and whites] come in for the same crime, I think they will be looked at differently. I've seen it... There's very little to any white kids that went into the system and stay in the system. They get out because their parents could afford a good lawyer. Or they're white, if you're honest about it!

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement

While discussing biases within the juvenile justice system, he considers the intersection of race and class.

Other themes relating to law enforcement's contributions to disproportionate crossing over were discussed. Law enforcement assessments were described by some as biased in relation to environmental neglect or youth's last name. With respect to the latter, it may be that for youth who share the same last name as a family who has a history of criminal involvement, police may step in to deter youth from continuing on the same path of their family members.

Courts

Several participants described the contribution of the court in disproportionate crossing over, since courts have the ultimate authority over who stays in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. 18% described the culture of the court as influencing disparate outcomes, due to court professionals' unconscious biases around race and class. These participants described the socialization of legal professionals, who are taught to be colorblind, and white privilege of court professionals as manifesting themselves through biased action taken toward defendants. One black, court professional believes court professionals' unconscious biases factor into court decisions.

When you walk into a courthouse, look around at who is the defendant and who is on the other side of the bar. They ask me in court, why do I stand in the back of the courtroom? I said because this is where my clients are. They look like me. I'm at home. These are my people back here. There's somebody else's [people] across the line. We can't talk about those things because it's not right to bring up issues of race, but the truth is it is an issue of race. I represent a good chunk of people here. Most all of them are black. Black or poor white... And when you walk into the courtroom there's a swinging gate. On this

side is black. On this side is the judge, court recorder, court officers, attorneys, clerks.

They're not black.....

He described the inevitability of racial issues playing out in the legal system. I asked him if there are many other African American lawyers and judges in this community. He said,

Have you seen any?...You never have and you never will... We don't make up a large enough percentage to really be that significant... Then we don't have enough individuals who register to vote in the first dog-gone place.

Voting is relevant to this conversation because the state's attorney and sometimes judges are elected public officials.

I. Why aren't African American judges?

A. One because the position doesn't open up here that often, and two because we honestly believe that we could be more effective if we help people out here... since advocacy from the judge's bench is highly frowned upon... There was one [state's attorney] when I first started and they relegated her to child support and she eventually left.

-Interview 4, black, court

Upon further (off the record) conversation with Interview 4, he told me she left because she felt discriminated against.

While the following statement from a white court professional seems to refer to privilege and bias, he does not label the phenomenon as such.

When my daughter was 14, she and her friends snuck out of the house at 3 a.m. ... The sheriff's deputy brought her to my house... and said 'I'm sure you'll deal with this?' And I said, 'Of course I will.' If that had been a bunch of black guys do you think the outcome

may have been different?... [T]hey might have questioned whether the parents would adequately supervise them. They might have made a hotline call, which they *should* have... [T]hat could have been basis for wardship. Inadequate supervision. I'm sure guys like [one judge] would have said, 'Let's get to the bottom of this and find out what's wrong with this family and let's put her in a foster home for two years.' That didn't happen. A police report was made... I saw [the assistant state's attorney] in the hallway, and he said, 'Don't worry about that [the police report and record of his daughter]. I know you. I know where you're from. Just don't worry.' It would have been different if it was some kid from [a poor, black neighborhood]. So yeah, I do think law enforcement, the courts.

-Interview 3, white, court

This white, court professional was told not to worry about his daughter's involvement with the juvenile justice system, perhaps due to his and his daughter's race, class, and connections with other court professionals.

Several participants discussed the contribution of institutional racism within the court system on youth's outcomes, including the following case example. Despite testimony by the child welfare system in favor of the biological parents, reunification was near impossible, as described by Interview 15.

[T]he family [is] declared to be unfit, and their children to be placed with non-relatives, not of the same race, and subsequently adopted by those families. I am saying that racial bias plays heavily in that scenario in several ways. There is the removal of the children. Period... You would see [black] families are being removed at a disproportionately higher rate... I'm gonna bypass your relatives... [B]ecause they're not seeing any relative who's

fit... or worthy... to be the guardian... And feeling that in order for me to save you, little black girl...I need to put you someplace where you'll have an opportunity and better life than what you could have with your family... In too many cases [the child welfare system] has argued for relative placement. Courts have taken custody from [the child welfare system].

I. Despite [the child welfare system]' recommendations?

R. Right...I got two cases right now in [this community].

-Interview 15, black, child welfare

Other Contributors

Education

Themes related to education were discussed by some participants. Two discussed lack of education aspirations by youth, and five discussed problems within the education system, such as disparities, school fights and zero tolerance policies, as well as teachers' stereotypes of black males.

Emotional/Behavioral Problems

Seven participants (21%) also discussed emotional/behavioral problems crossover youth have, suggesting that black youth from the child welfare system are more likely to have these problems than white youth from the child welfare system. While this may in fact be the case for this community, research carried out elsewhere does not necessarily support this notion (Aarons et al., 2003; Abram et al., 2003; Cauffman, 2004; Domalanta et al., 2003; Rawal et al., 2004; SAMHSA, 2008). Empirical studies found that the rate of emotional and behavioral problems among African American youth are no greater than problems among European-American youth in the general, child welfare system, and juvenile justice system populations.

Community Interventions

12% of the sample felt that disproportionate crossing over exists, in part, due to a lack of appropriate interventions in the community. Services for African Americans, teens and preteens, substance abuse, mental health, and after-school programming in this community are extremely limited. Also, mental health service use is stigmatized amongst African Americans. Either families know about services and do not use them or they just do not know about them. Interventions that do exist are ineffective, especially if they are not culturally responsive to the needs of African Americans. Also, there is little understanding of disproportionate crossing over by professionals. Voucher programs that displaced African American families from Section 8 housing did not address the root of the problem, such as poverty and lack of local employment opportunities.

Disproportionalities in an Ecological Systems Context

The following black, court professional addresses the various factors that contribute to disproportionate crossing over. He touches on a variety of parent/family and macro level contributors. Similar to 42% of participants, he does not comment on youth level contributors.

[I]t's multifaceted. One of the facets has to do with how the system is set up. Another facet has to do with the way our community is not set up. The African American community has been disconnected from itself for a significant period of time...since the end of freakin slavery. Maybe even before... So then fast forward... now to post-emancipation, pre-civil rights era. Family units are trying to be strong again. We have something that happens during this flower-power times... Families disintegrating... Incarcerations. Deaths... [R]amped unemployment. You see in most communities, the men are able to be employed at a greater percentage than women, and earn more than

women. In African American communities, it's the reverse. Women earn more and are employed more... You have lots of fathers who are not there. They have multiple children and multiple relationships... [M]any fathers are dead or in jail... We used to celebrate when you turned 25... because you were more likely to be dead or in prison by the age of 25, than you were to graduate high school or college... You have poor role models, lack of supervision in households because of socioeconomic circumstances... You're gonna have to have more African-American males be teachers and mentors. We have to get more men present...

The system doesn't work... When I think about the way our justice system is set up, it doesn't really do a good job of advocating for people. When we're dealing with the [child welfare system] here... they err more on the side of keeping children apart from their families based on this artificial rubric they have in place... Our culture is different. The way you discipline your children is not the way we discipline our children. What you would say is not what we would say. The way you look at things is different from the way we look at things... You have educational differences. For example, people who are evaluating... A lot of African Americans that I see that have problems is that they can't meld in... They're not properly educated.

... [T]he young people from [a neighboring community] feel harassed by the police and system... Us have to take care of us... If we really want to change the face of the system we would put more in place to support families.

-Interview 4, black, court

Interview 4 attributes disproportionate crossing over to two main factors: the disintegration of the African American family and biased institutions. He describes the historical roots of the

disintegration of the African-American family—something that the family was born into and is beyond the control of the family. He describes many factors that perpetuate a weak family structure including: incarceration of family members; unemployment; absence of fathers, male role models, and mentors, including black male educators; low education achievement; not being able to assimilate into a white, middle class dominated society (i.e., “can’t meld in”); lack of supervision (“due to socioeconomic circumstances”, perhaps referring to working class parents who can not afford child care). While, these factors relate to parent/family contributors (e.g., parental incarceration, unemployment, and education achievement), they may be influenced by system level factors, such as biases within the criminal justice, labor, and education sectors.

He also comments on the role that African American’s play in disproportionate crossing over, focusing much of his discourse on the importance of positive male role models and the presence of men in the family unit. He believes, “Us have to take care of us”, perhaps because he does not trust that the systems, and/or he is advocating for African Americans, especially males, to take more familial responsibility and personal accountability.

He also alludes to the difficulty poor African Americans have in a white, middle class dominated society when he describes cultural differences in parenting and communication, which are both impacted by educational achievement. He comments on the role that the child welfare system and juvenile justice system play in impacting disproportionate outcomes. The assessment process of families involved in the child welfare system is described as an “artificial rubric”, perhaps meaning that it is a socially constructed one and therefore inherently contains biases of parenting expectations based on white, middle class standards. As a result of these potential biases, more black youth are taken away from their families and grow up in the system,

negatively impacting youth's development and increasing the risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The last statement, “If we really want to change the face of the system we would put more in place to support families”, is relevant in today's current fiscal atmosphere. The state child welfare system is slated to phase out one of its major operations due to budget cuts. Intact family services will no longer be part of [the child welfare system], as these services will be contracted out to private agencies. Thus, [the child welfare system] will now only provide investigative and foster care services. Many child welfare professionals I spoke to following data collection vehemently opposed this action offering various case examples of how discontinuing intact services may lead to an increase in the rate of youth who cross over.

Professional and Racial Group Comparisons

Participants' responses were presented thematically, but it is possible to analyze them ecologically, as in Chapter 3. Trends of the type of responses offered for disproportionate crossing over were similar to reasons for crossing over. The majority of the sample most frequently discussed reasons relating to the system. Themes of disproportionate crossing over relating to the child were not as frequently cited as was the case for crossing over. Most professionals reported reasons at the system level (91%). 79% reported contributors at the parent/family level. 58% of professionals discussed contributors at the child level. A complete list of themes disaggregated by child, parent/family, and system contributors can be seen in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

To explore any thematic patterns amongst participants, group comparison analyses were conducted. Three two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests compared the sum of themes for disproportionate crossing over at the level of the child, parent/family, and system by type of

professional and race of professional were conducted. The means of the number of themes described at each ecological level by type of professional and race of profession can be seen in Tables 5 and 6. The ANOVA comparing the sum of themes at the level of the child did not yield any significant results.

The ANOVA comparing the sum of themes at the level of the parent/family yielded a main effect for participants' profession, $F(2, 32) = 3.48$, $P=.045$, but not for race. On average, court professionals ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.77$) offered more themes at the parent/family level than law enforcement ($M=2.15$, $SD=1.63$) and child welfare ($M=1.17$, $SD=1.34$). Posthoc tests showed significant differences between child welfare and court professionals ($P=.007$). There was not a significant interaction effect between race and type of professional.

The ANOVA comparing the sum of themes at the level of the system yielded a main effect for participants' race, $F(1, 32) = 8.26$, $P=.008$, but not for profession. On average, black professionals ($M=5.69$, $SD=2.78$) offered more system level themes than white professionals ($M=3.00$, $SD=2.66$). There was not a significant interaction effect between race and type of professional. Refer to Tables 5 and 6 for means and standard deviations of the total number of themes discussed at each ecological level. Refer to Table 7 for the ANOVA results.

Table 5. Mean number of themes by ecological level for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over by race.

	Total		Race			
	M	SD	Black		White	
			M	SD	M	SD
Crossing Over						
Child	1.82	1.78	1.62	1.39	1.95	2.01
Parent/family	2.24	1.86	2.54	2.22	2.05	1.61
System	2.21	1.85	2.08	1.66	2.30	2.00
Disproportionate Crossing Over						
Child	0.79	0.89	0.62	0.77	0.90	0.97
Parent/family	2.12	1.76	1.69	1.65	2.40	1.82
System	4.06	2.98	5.69	2.78	3.00**	2.66

**p≤.01

Table 6. Mean number of themes by ecological level for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over by total sample.

	Profession					
	Child Welfare		Law Enforcement		Court	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Crossing Over						
Child	2.17	1.64	2.08	1.98	0.88	1.46
Parent/family	2.00	1.76	2.00	2.08	3.00	1.60
System	2.00	1.54	2.38	2.18	2.25	1.91
Disproportionate Crossing Over						
Child	0.67	0.89	0.77	0.60	1.00	1.31
Parent/family	1.17** ^a	1.34	2.15	1.63	3.50	1.77
System	4.76	3.39	3.46	2.26	4.00	3.51

**p≤.01, ^a Difference between child welfare and court

Table 7. Two-way ANOVAs for number of themes by ecological level for disproportionate crossing over.

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1. Level of youth	Race	1.23	1	1.23	1.52
	Profession	0.37	2	0.18	0.23
	Race x Profession	2.78	2	1.39	1.73
2. Level of parent/family	Race	1.833	1	1.83	0.79
	Profession	16.24	2	8.12	3.48*
	Race x Profession	9.27	2	4.64	1.98
3. Level of system	Race	61.70	1	61.70	8.26**
	Profession	13.55	2	6.78	0.91
	Race x Profession	17.96	2	8.98	1.20

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Conclusion

Black professionals offered more system level contributors than white professionals. There were significant differences among professional groups at the level of the parent/family. Specifically, courts were more likely to describe themes for disproportionate crossing over at the parent level than child welfare professionals.

The majority of themes discussed included intergenerational poverty, the intersection of race and class, parent and family factors, distrust of authorities, communication differences, and institutional barriers within the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. In discussing particular themes, such as distrust for authorities, some participants honed in on poor parenting practices by African-American families who teach their children to disobey authorities, while other participants focused on historical and other contextual reasons for distrust.

Responding defensively/angrily out of distrust makes sense given the history of African Americans. Running and lying is seen by some as “poor behavior”. While illegal, behaviors that are often categorized as defiant and non-compliant, such as running from police and lying about one’s name, were historically used by African Americans to survive. Professionals who view this

behavior as grounded in African-American's ecological context, given occasional police brutality and unjust removal from the home that continue today, may be more apt to provide more effective intervention work with at-risk African-American families. Culturally responsive approaches to intervention may, as indicated by some professionals (e.g., Interview 23) may be necessary to meet families where they are at in their own context. Professionals, who see African-American behavior as defiant, as opposed to coping, may respond in ways that ~~perpetrate~~ distrust".

Many social work programs do not require diversity courses to be taken. Only recently did the UIUC require it of their social work students and it is required of only undergraduate students and not masters or doctoral students (J. Carter-Black, personal communication 11/14/12). Many professionals expressed perspectives that are consistent with ideologies that are racially colorblind. Responding differently to clients may be seen as discriminatory behavior. However, sometimes responding differently may be the best practice approach (e.g., Interview 11 and 4). Perhaps Interview 11 did not receive this training. Had she received it, she may have responded to clients differently, by being more direct with them. What diversity means in relation to implementing cultural responsive social work may need to be clarified. The next chapter examines the relationship between participants' perspectives on disproportionate crossing over and racial attitudes, as operationally defined by levels of colorblindness and racial identity.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS: RACIAL ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES ON DISPROPORTIONALITIES: RELATIONS TO RACE AND PROFESSION

In chapter 5, I answered my first research question, “How do knowledgeable professionals understand and explain the phenomenon of racial disproportionalities in crossing over from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system?” There was considerable variation across individuals’ interpretations of racial disproportionalities amongst crossover youth. Specifically, perceptions of disproportionalities varied by participants’ race and type of profession. On average, black professionals offered more themes at the system level than white professionals. Additionally, court professionals offered more themes at the parent level than child welfare professionals.

One alternative explanation for variations in perceptions of disproportionate crossing over may be variation in professionals’ racial attitudes. For example, compared to white professionals, black professionals may be more aware of structural and systematic barriers that lead to poverty and juvenile justice involvement because of different life experiences. Child welfare workers are “expected to be knowledgeable about cultural competency practices and standards... that include knowledge of the role of culture, race, and ethnicity in the helping process. Supervisors should develop training for social workers on culturally competent practice” (National Association of Social Workers, 2001, p. 19). Because of these education and training requirements, child welfare professionals may be relatively more sensitive to structural barriers created by racism than professionals from other backgrounds, placing less emphasis on child and parent/family contributors and more emphasis on contributors relating to the macro level. If this were the case, one would expect analyses of the CoBRAS and CSSA scores to yield parallel results. That is, black participants and child welfare professionals should have statistically

significant different racial attitudes than white participants and non-child welfare professionals. It is possible that variations in perceptions of disproportionalities may be associated with participants' racial sensitivity and awareness to race. Quantitative analyses will examine the plausibility of how professionals' racial attitudes may be associated with perspectives on racially disproportionate crossing over.

Professionals Racial Attitudes

Colorblindness Scores

The mean Total CoBRAS score for the entire sample was 2.83 (SD=0.78). This average score is comparable to the Total CoBRAS scores found in research conducted elsewhere on mental health and law enforcement samples, which ranged from 2.66 to 3.12 (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Neville et al., 2006; Neville et al., 2000).

There were significant differences by racial group, professional group, as well as demographic groups. On average, black professionals and child welfare professionals were less colorblind than white professionals and law enforcement and court professionals. Blacks had lower Total CoBRAS scores than whites (black $M=2.34$, $SD=0.67$; white $M=3.14$, $SD=0.70$; $F[1, 32]=11.47$, $P=.002$). There was also a significant main effect for profession, $F(2, 32)=3.98$, $P=.030$. On average, child welfare professionals had significantly lower Total CoBRAS scores ($M=2.43$, $SD=0.64$) compared to law enforcement ($M=3.17$, $SD=0.71$, $P=.022$). These results suggest that black participants and child welfare professionals are less colorblind than white participants and law enforcement professionals. There were no significant interaction effects for race and type of profession on Total CoBRAS scores. Means and standard deviations can be seen in Tables 8 and 9, and ANOVA results in Table 10.

Younger professionals and those self-identifying as higher SES had higher levels of colorblindness. Age was negatively correlated with Total CoBRAS ($r=-.46$, $p=.006$), and SES was positively associated Total CoBRAS ($r=.39$, $p=.023$). These results can be seen in Table 11.

Racial Identity Scores

Analyses comparing differences by race and profession for each of CSSA's six subscales produced significant results for the Assimilation subscale only. Assimilation did not correlate with the other CSSA subscales except for Ethnocentricity ($r= -.35$, $p=.046$). Assimilation and Total CoBRAS were moderately to highly correlated ($r= .61$, $p=.000$).

The mean score for CSSA Assimilation for the entire sample was 4.62 ($SD=1.55$). The rest of the sample's mean scores for the other five CSSA subscales can be seen in Tables 8 and 9. Black professionals had lower Assimilation scores than whites (black $M=3.52$, $SD=$; white $M=5.34$, $SD=$; $F(1, 32)= 23.57$, $P=.000$). There was a significant main effect for profession, $F(2, 32)=6.69$, $P=.004$. On average, child welfare workers ($M=3.80$, $SD=1.61$) had lower Assimilation scores than law enforcement ($M=5.30$, $SD=1.00$; $P=.005$). Means and standard deviations can be seen in Tables 8 and 9, and ANOVA results in Table 10. Also, participants who self-identified as higher SES had higher Assimilation scores ($r= .41$, $p=.017$). These results can be seen in Table 11.

Racial identity results suggest that black professionals and professionals who work in child welfare placed greater emphasis on their racial identity than their national identity compared to white professionals and law enforcement. Two-way ANOVAs tested any possible interaction effects between participants' race and type of profession on Assimilation scores. There was a significant interaction between the effects of race and type of profession on Assimilation scores, $F(2, 27)= 4.86$, $P=.016$, with an effect size of 0.108. Simple main effects

analysis showed that whites who worked in the child welfare system or the courts had significantly higher Assimilation scores than blacks who worked in the child welfare system or the courts. There were no differences in Assimilation scores between blacks and whites who worked in law enforcement. Interaction results can be seen in Table 10.

Table 8. Racial attitudes scores by total sample and race.

	Total Sample		Race			
	M	SD	Black		White	
			M	SD	M	SD
Total CoBRAS (Range 1-6)	2.83	0.78	2.34**	0.67	3.14	0.70
CSSA (Range 1-7)						
Assimilation	4.62	1.55	3.52***	1.71	5.34	0.91
Miseducation	3.88	1.29	3.52	0.95	4.11	1.45
Self-hatred	2.20	1.34	2.26	1.16	2.16	1.48
Anti-dominant	1.81	0.84	1.71	0.53	1.88	1.00
Ethnocentricity	3.50	1.23	3.75	1.19	3.33	1.26
Multiculturalist	5.81	0.97	5.77	1.16	5.83	0.86

p≤.01, *p≤.001

Table 9. Racial attitudes scores by type of professional.

	Profession					
	Child Welfare		Law Enforcement		Court	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total CoBRAS (Range 1-6)	2.43* ^a	0.64	3.17	0.71	2.86	0.91
CSSA (Range 1-7)						
Assimilation	3.80** ^a	1.61	5.30	1.00	4.75	1.78
Miseducation	4.08	1.18	3.82	1.40	3.67	1.40
Self-hatred	2.28	1.04	2.62	1.64	1.40	0.91
Anti-dominant	1.85	0.69	2.00	1.12	1.45	0.33
Ethnocentricity	3.75	1.16	3.28	1.27	3.48	1.36
Multiculturalist	6.17	0.99	5.52	0.81	5.73	1.13

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ^a Difference between child welfare and law enforcement

Table 10. Two-way ANOVAs for racial attitudes.

	Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	ω^2	F
1. Colorblindness	Race	4.65	1	4.65	0.37	11.47**
	Profession	3.23	2	1.62	0.21	3.98*
	Race x Profession	0.99	2	0.50	0.12	1.22
2. Assimilation	Race	25.73	1	25.73	0.32	23.57***
	Profession	14.61	2	7.03	0.16	6.69**
	Race x Profession	10.60	2	5.30	0.11	4.86*

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Relationships between Racial Attitudes and Types of Responses

To answer my third research question, “Is there a relationship between professionals’ perspectives on disproportionate crossing over and racial attitudes?” I quantitatively examined, via Pearson correlational analysis, associations between racial attitude scores and the total number of themes of disproportionalities offered within each ecological level. In an attempt to assess the weight professionals gave to each ecological level in describing disproportionalities, I summed the number of themes for each ecological level by each participant. For example, a participant could talk about poverty at the parent level multiple times, distrust at the parent level once, and distrust at the child level multiple times. This participant would receive a score of 1 for poverty at the parent level and 1 for distrust at the parent level for a total of 2 at the parent level. At the child level, this participant would receive a score of 1. At the system level, the score would be 0. This participant would be considered placing the most weight for disproportionate crossing over at the parent/family level. There were no significant relationships between racial attitudes and the total number of themes at the child level and the parent/family level.

Results demonstrate a significant negative relationship between participants’ Total CoBRAS and the number of system level themes offered for why disproportionalities among crossover youth exists ($r = -.47$, $p = .005$). Assimilation was also negatively correlated with the number of system level themes offered ($r = -.54$, $p = .001$). Therefore, lower colorblind scores and

lower assimilation scores were both associated with a greater number of system level themes offered by participants. See Table 11.

Table 11. Pearson correlations: Associations between perspectives of crossing over, disproportionate crossing over, racial attitudes and demographics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Racial Attitudes																
1. Assimilation	-															
2. Miseducation	.14	-														
3. Self-hatred	.14	.46 ^b	-													
4. Anti-dominant	-.04	.51 ^b	.62 ^c	-												
5. Ethnocentricity	-.35 ^a	-.20	.06	.21	-											
6. Multiculturalist	-.15	.18	.09	.10	.28	-										
7. CoBRAS Total	.61 ^c	.00	.16	-.10	-.29	-.37 ^a	-									
Perspectives of CO/DCO																
8. CO_Child	-.80	.14	.27	.31	.18	.07	.01	-								
9. CO_Parent	.13	.11	.04	-.02	-.04	.09	-.17	-.43 ^b	-							
10. CO_System	-.30	-.01	.31	.19	.20	.05	-.35 ^a	.21	-.12	-						
11. DCO_Child	.06	.23	-.11	.04	.03	-.27	.25	-.06	.24	-.05	-					
12. DCO_Parent	.12	-.07	-.21	-.31	-.08	.01	.27	.09	.05	.24	.14	-				
13. DCO_System	-.54 ^c	-.08	-.05	.02	.21	-.16	-.47 ^b	-.06	-.12	.29	.03	-.09	-			
Demographics																
14. Age	-.03	.02	.09	-.01	-.01	.21	-.46 ^b	-.31	.38 ^a	.19	.08	.15	.19	-		
15. Yrs. work experience	.14	.28	.32	.24	.03	.15	-.29	-.25	.29	.19	.11	.10	.05	.71 ^c	-	
16. Education	-.31	.19	-.22	-.15	-.09	.05	-.23	-.13	-.01	-.10	.12	-.01	.15	.38 ^a	.11	-
17. SES	.41 ^a	.16	.24	.23	-.03	-.35 ^a	.39 ^a	-.17	.12	.11	.20	-.09	-.05	.08	.38 ^a	-.25

^a $p \leq .05$, ^b $p \leq .01$, ^c $p \leq .001$

The proceeding qualitative excerpts and racial attitudes scores illustrate how racial attitudes may triangulate perceptions of disproportionalities. The following black, child welfare professional, who scored low on colorblindness and assimilation describes in detail how the various components of institutional racism may manifest themselves in contributing to disproportionalities. This participant's interview on disproportionalities focuses primarily on system level contributors, and believes the courts are racist.

No wonder there are disparities, because if you don't understand race in America and understand that there is a differential response to that black family... then you are in a piss poor position to help that black family deal with whatever the issue is because you're acting as if they have the same opportunity or privilege that this white family has. So don't tell me you're colorblind because I'm afraid of you, because I don't want to be

colorblind. We're telling the judge, the symbol--the court and scale, and blindfold.'

We're saying to the judges, we want you to lift the blindfold up. Just peek up under there and just see what color the person is. And then you start meeting out justice.

...So we put these [black] kids in any family that's not related to them... place them with some nice white family... I'm telling you about things that happen every day. Clinical folks say, it is in the interest of these two kids to either be moved to a relative or back home. But the foster parents... don't agree with it... So they appeal to... a judge. Most of _an white. _You, judge. You look at this situation.' ... [The judge says] _Well, I agree. I think these kids should stay with this family here'... Contrary to the [recommendations to reunify the family by the]... master's level social worker [and]... master's level certified counselor... it finds its way to the court and the judge says, _Well hell, I agree... We're removing custody from you, [the child welfare system]. We're gonna give guardianship to this family here.' By the way, this family has and can afford, you don't even need a competent lawyer. You just need a white lawyer. But if you have a very competent, high power lawyer, your odds are even greater that these kids will not come back into the care of his mother... You don't have to be [a] very competent [lawyer] when the judge agrees with you... and the white state's attorney..., the white GAL..., and white CASA agrees with you. Well hell, you don't even need to make an argument! You just say, _Yeah, what they said. That's what I think, your honor. On behalf of my client'... Racism...I've been in there. I've seen the judges operate. And I've done all I can do to not stand up in the middle of court and say, _Does anybody but me see what the hell's going on in here? You know, I'm there!... I know damn well I have more practical experience than the judge. I didn't study law. But I know social work... And they apparently don't understand race,

and race in America. So I'm sitting there with, I can do what my flesh is telling me to do, and I'll be held in contempt, but I won't do this kid a damn bit of good. Not to mention, I have to live the fight another day. I have to find a way to break this thing down from a systemic standpoint because I can't put out individual fires... I mean, we've talked to our attorney general and said, 'How do we wrestle this away from the courts having ruled this way?' We've gone to the top and we can't get that broke...

-Interview 15, black, child welfare, low colorblindness, low assimilation

Interview 15 appears to believe disproportionalities exist due to primarily system level contributors, as demonstrated by his qualitative responses, his quantitative racial attitudes scores, and his practice. With regard to the latter, he described his efforts toward instituting mandatory antiracism training for judges residing over child welfare and juvenile delinquency cases.

One white, law enforcement participant, who scored high on both colorblindness and assimilation, believed that crossing over should be examined without consideration to disproportionalities. He did not reference any system level contributors to disproportionate crossing over.

I'm more along the lines of thinking that—the crossover is interesting, irrespective of race. I mean, there's been people studying racial issues for a long time, and I don't know if they've come to any specific answers as to why... There are politicians who run on and use these issues to their advantage or not, depending on what side of the fence someone is on... [I]s... family breakdown... more likely to happen because it's a white family or black family or red family?... I think crossing over is a problem that needs to be addressed... I don't care what color they are.

-Interview 19, white law enforcement, high colorblindness, high assimilation

This participant expressed sentiments consistent with his high colorblind and assimilation scores. He explains that we should not pay attention to the race of the family or other stakeholders in addressing crossing over. Race should not matter, as described by this and other professionals who have high colorblind scores, yet it does seem to matter in the case of crossing over since there are indeed disproportionalities. The discourse of participants with low colorblindness scores reflects the need to pay attention to race.

Assimilation is more difficult to comment on since I did not qualitatively ask participants about their own racial identity. Assimilation and colorblindness are correlated. How one self-identifies as American seems to be associated with one's racial ideologies. A person can have mid-level assimilation scores, and have colorblind beliefs, such as Interview 21. The following two excerpts describe two opposing stances on criminal prosecution and racial disproportionalities. Disproportionate crossing over exists, as Interview 21, a white, court professional says, because both criminals and victims typically come from African-American neighborhoods, from where many calls for law enforcement intervention come.

When I read a police report, I don't look at black, white, purple, orange, green, whatever. I look at the conduct and the past conduct. I think it's easy to say that those making the decisions at this end, here, or out on the street, as far as the police are concerned... are racially motivated... But that's a cop-out, in my opinion, because that doesn't address the fact that the vast majority of victims of crime are African American, that the vast majority of people who make the calls asking the police to come are African American.

-Interview 21, white, court, high colorblindness, mid assimilation

This participant does not reference any system level contributors. This participant prefers to consider only a person's crime and not their race in conducting her work. Her sentiments are consistent with her high colorblindness score, but not necessarily her assimilation score.

The following participant offers a different perspective on disproportionate rates of service calls simply being reflective of higher crime rates amongst African Americans.

[I]f there are studies that say if you take kids of equal standing, and the only difference is skin-color, then, we need to be havin' some hard conversations... [S]ome of it is going to be because there are racist people who work in the system... [B]ecause of the disparity, they use that to reinforce [that crime happens more among African-American communities]. Like, I've heard people that I work with, —Why do we lock up more black kids? Well, because more black kids get brought in"... [A]nd it's always like, —Well, we can't do anything about it because we arrest the people we get calls about. It's not our fault! Our hands are clean."... It's like every step along the way, people have an out to say, —We don't have to look at what we're doing. We don't have to modify the way that we score kids [on the assessment form], or the way we make decisions. We don't have to have any uncomfortable conversations about personal biases that we're bringing to it"... [T]he blatant racism is easy to get. It's the insidious, unconscious, don't know you're doing it that's a lot harder to correct.

-Interview 8, white, law enforcement, low colorblindness, low assimilation

Throughout my interview with Interviewee 8, she expressed ideas demonstrative of critical awareness of racial disproportionalities, offering much discussion on American history, cultural communication, and racial socialization. Her perspectives were outliers compared to the rest of the law enforcement subsample.

Contradictions/Qualification Statements

While discussing why disproportionalities exist among crossover youth, several participants expressed contradictory sentiments. The first professional to contact me to schedule an interview was a white, court professional. Within minutes of our phone conversation, he spontaneously said, —Race has a lot to do with it.” He said it in a way that seemed to funnel all aspects of the risk for crossing over down to race. Within minutes of conducting the interview, he indicated that he viewed crossing over as a Black American phenomenon. At times, he vacillated back and forth between describing the crossover phenomenon as a Black American phenomenon, but then would follow up with contradictory statements, such as, —Well, I see this in White families too”. This participant scored high on colorblindness and mid on assimilation.

Another white, court professional seems to display contradictory views on disproportionate reactions to breaking the law. The more he thinks about differential behavior between blacks and whites, perhaps self reflecting, he changes his stance on the existence of differential behavior.

I: What did you see that has given you that impression [of being unconcerned with consequences of breaking the law]? Was it some things they said or some things they did?

A: Things that they s—um...things that they said to police in the police reports would be what gave me that impression... To a lesser extent, things they said to me... A specific example would be hard to say, but a general idea is I’ve been told that, ah...[pause]...ah, something to the effect, you know, it doesn’t matter what the law is, I—you know...[pause]...um...I was—I thought what I was doing was all right, or...um...let’s see... Either that they thought that what they were doing shouldn’t be against the law or

they thought it was justified... Um. Yeah. You know what? I'm not really sure I can say that blacks felt that way more than the whites, the more I think about it... [W]ell, they are overrepresented in the criminal population... [I]f they're actually committing more crimes, then they belong overrepresented. I don't know.

-Interview 16, white, court, mid colorblindness, high assimilation

Another participant, a white, child welfare worker, also expressed contradictory sentiments on differential racial outcomes.

[T]here's the prison systems where we have Dads and Moms going to jail and that's a very African-American thing.

I: Could you estimate how many of families that you see have a parent in jail?

S: I think....most of my cases are sex offenders... But, most of them are also white...

[W]hat I see is maybe different than what the average caseworker sees... Because I see the white families where the Dads are going to jail for... drug trafficking. And that's a white family. I have one black family, where the mom went to... prison... I think [sexual abuse] is a family thing as opposed to a racial thing.

-Interview 11, high colorblindness, high assimilation

Disproportionate crossing over is in itself a contradictory phenomenon. We know we that race should not matter, but whether we really believe this and practice this likely varies. We have racialized outcomes in a non-racialized child welfare and justice system. That is a contradiction. The notion that race should not matter, but it does matter is in itself a contradiction.

Professionals' Critical Racial Awareness

Professionals who attempt to understand families' ecological context, including their historical context and institutional biases, may be more willing to work with families, rather than

write them off as hostile, non-compliant, and not progressing. Critical awareness may help professionals provide culturally responsive interventions.

Critical awareness to racial disproportionalities entails an understanding of power structures are far reaching in shaping our perceptions and interactions with others. The following professional seems to be critically aware in her following statement on why disproportionalities exist among crossover youth.

Race is a part of everything that our country was ever founded on, dealt with, everything. We do ourselves a disservice when we don't consider race... Because it's real and it impacts so many... things that we do.

-Interview 7, black, child welfare, low colorblindness, low assimilation

Some may believe that putting more minorities on cases might help. Professionals who expressed critical awareness of disproportionalities did not agree with this sentiment, however. The following statements by three black professionals address the idea that putting a black worker on more cases will not necessarily reduce disproportionate outcomes. How a person views him/herself influences how he/she views others, which may impact stereotypes.

I'm thinking how I view you, is a function of, in part what I think about myself. And if I view white people as evil, you're gonna have a tough time trying to convince me otherwise. So the things you do, I'm gonna attribute to the fact that she's evil. So I'm never able to see you as, as safe, as productive...

-Interview 15, black child welfare, low colorblindness, low assimilation

Because whites are typically the ones in positions of power, they are the ultimate decision makers. What matters is where in the hierarchy of power the decision-maker resides.

The question comes down to who is in the decision-making positions... [I]t all boils down to institutional racism. That did not go away. It's still there. So, if you want to look at black and white and who's where, you may find that you have African-Americans in the juvenile justice system, but *where are they at* in the juvenile justice system?... You might have African-Americans in the child welfare system, but *where are they at* in the child welfare system? ..[P]ower, authority.

-Interview 7, black child welfare, low colorblindness, low assimilation

It is because of the intersection of race and class that it does not matter if the professional is black or white in reducing disproportionate crossing over because in the end everyone has biases.

Putting a black person on it is not going to resolve the issue. It will start to deal with some of the cultural issues to some degree. I'm not advocating that you need to get black people just to work with black people... and the reason why I say that is because a white person can be just as effective in a black person's household as a black person. And to some degree can probably even be more effective. But the thing is, it boils down to relationships, understanding and getting through it... I got my biases, but look at the family. [T]hey're biased against [the child welfare system], law enforcement, and the educational system a lot of time.

-Interview 20, black law enforcement, high colorblindness, mid assimilation

Additionally, Black Americans have been socialized to the white standard.

If a black worker doesn't understand institutional racism and its genesis, its methods, its impact, they may not understand self-hate. They may not understand why they too, as a black worker, sees a black child with his pants sagging and think that, that's a bad kid. He's headed for trouble. And they see him as trouble. And they begin to react based on

their image of this child. And it may be just as negative and have the same consequences as somebody who's white, who is not aware that... they've been programmed to respond to race in a very negative way. But because it's so universally accepted, they don't see themselves as operating outside of social norms... What being a person of color does for you gives you some basis to have a different level of understanding for bias because you've been a subject of institutional bias. It's a quicker learning curve, but you don't get a pass [laughs] because you're a person of color.

-Interview 15, black child welfare, low colorblindness, low Assimilation

Interview 18 may be the type of professional Participant 15 refers to when he describes a black worker who does not understand racism. This black law enforcement professional evidences possible racial miseducation and potential self-hate, commenting on the stereotype that African-American women have children for the purpose of receiving welfare assistance. This professionals' miseducation and self-hate scores were unavailable, however.

The more kids I have the more money I make. I don't have to work. I don't have to be responsible... Since we're in these four walls, I'm gonna let you in on a little secret... I'm not supposed to tell you none of this stuff because I'm black. I can't tell a white person how jacked up black people are. I may not say that black people as a whole. I love my black people. But there are a certain aspect of the black community that's jacked up...

I. ...Do... black women talk about having kids and getting welfare checks amongst themselves?

D. Yes. They do. [laughs]. And they have them, and it's obvious why. It's jacked up.

When you hear somebody say, 'I need more money.' Or you have the kid comes in [to

the JJS] and they [say] that their parents are like that. Or kids that know that at 15 that if you have three or four kids they're gonna get more money. Kids ain't supposed to know that.

-Interview 18, black, law enforcement, high colorblindness, high assimilation

You need to have people like me who understand both sides...

I. Does it have to be somebody who is African American?

No, but it has to be somebody who they will connect with... Someone who understands how the system operates to our disadvantage.

-Interview 4, black, court, mid colorblindness, low assimilation

Although Participant 18 expressed that the ~~re~~ality is it's harder being black than it is white", he still views African-American crossover families as lacking poor work ethic and attributes crossing over to problems with the family. He does discuss the system's role in contributing to disproportionalities, as in prior police contact, but he does not describe unfair or biased assessments as some of the professionals who scored low on colorblindness and assimilation did. He does talk about noncompliance by youth with law enforcement, and frames noncompliance as being due to the bad mood the youth is in because he is ~~—pissed~~ off about a fight with his girlfriend". He does not describe distrust of authorities at all. Table 10 provides demographic and racial attitudes information for all participants.

Table 12: Demographic and racial attitude characteristics

Participant	Profession	Race	Colorblindness	Assimilation
1	Child welfare	B	Low	Low
2	Child welfare	W	Low	Mid
3	Court	W	High	Mid
4	Court	B	Mid	Low
5	Law enforcement	W	Low	Mid
6	Child welfare	B	Low	Low
7	Child welfare	B	Low	Low
8	Law enforcement	W	Low	Low
9	Child welfare	W	Mid	High
10	Law enforcement	W	High	High
11	Child welfare	W	High	High
12	Law enforcement	B	Mid	High
13	Court	W	Low	High
14	Law enforcement	W	Mid	Mid
15	Child welfare	B	Low	Low
16	Court	W	Mid	High
17	Court	W	High	High
18	Law enforcement	B	High	High
19	Law enforcement	W	High	High
20	Law enforcement	B	High	Mid
21	Court	W	High	Mid
22	Child welfare	W	Mid	Low
23	Child welfare	B	Low	Low
24	Court	W	Mid	High
25	Law enforcement	W	High	High
26	Law enforcement	W	High	High
27	Law enforcement	W	High	Mid
28	Child welfare	B	Mid	Low
29	Law enforcement	B	Mid	Mid
30	Law enforcement	B	Mid	Low
31	Child welfare	W	Mid	Mid
32	Court	B	Low	Mid
33	Child welfare	W	Mid	High

Conclusion

Language is a reflection of our thought processes. That is, we communicate our values through language. Many participants said we, as researchers, professionals, and society in general, should be seen as equal. These attitudes may be residuals from the Civil Rights era,

when segregation and separateness was squashed. In addition to making public institutions available to all, the Civil Rights era also produced a new social attitude: everyone is equal and should be treated equally. Some argue that this is when colorblindness began to take shape as the “new Jim Crow” (Alexander, 2010).

After Civil Rights, it was seen as favorable to not see color, because seeing color in previous decades meant segregation and Jim Crow. Not seeing color lead to seeing everyone as the same, even though everyone is not the same. There are major historical, economic, social, and behavioral differences, including starting out on an unequal playing field with significant lack of resources for one team, including team moral, and abundant resources for another team, including having the home advantage and umpires who side with you.

Reasons for crossing over and disproportionate crossing over differed. There were commonalities seen, such as intergenerational poverty and family instability. What impacts disproportionalities, however, may be distrust of authorities, disintegration of the African American family, and biased assessments by the child welfare system, law enforcement, and the courts.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

This mixed methods research examined professionals' beliefs about racial disproportionalities among crossover youth and how these beliefs relate to their racial attitudes and professional affiliations. The perspectives of these professionals are important to understand for a number of reasons. First, relatively little research has explored characteristics of cross over youth and their families, or the reasons for racial disproportionalities in crossing over. These professionals have direct experience with cross over youth including racial disproportionalities in cross over youth. Second, even if professionals' beliefs contain inaccuracies, they do provide a frame of reference for their practice and thus can help us to better understand why they respond as they do to cross over youth. Professionals suggested a number of complex, interacting reasons for disproportionate crossing over including youth, parent/family, and larger social system influences. Professionals' beliefs also were related to their racial attitudes and professional socialization.

Professionals first discussed why youth in the child welfare system are at greater risk for being arrested than youth from the general population. They described poverty, education, and emotional and behavioral problems at the levels of youth, their parents/family, and larger social systems. Youth's social strain, education and emotional/behavioral problems contribute to child welfare youth's risk for becoming involved with delinquency. Intergenerational poverty may result from families' poor work ethic, parents' lack of educational aspirations for their children, as well as parents' own mental health problems. Poverty, along with these problems mentioned may interact to contribute to family dysfunction and negative role modeling, propelling child welfare youth into the juvenile justice system. At the macro level, a lack of resources for

struggling families dealing with issues related to poverty, education, and mental health problems also contribute to youth's risk for delinquency. These problems cut across ecological systems. At the macro level, many participants also discussed how the child welfare system may not be as prepared to prevent and intervene with delinquent wards, while the juvenile justice system was seen as not prepared to tend to problems youth coming from the child welfare system may have. For example, many noted a lack of advocacy for wards who are arrested.

During the discussion of why child welfare-involved youth are more likely to cross over to the juvenile justice system, 27% of the sample spontaneously discussed race as a contributing factor to crossing over. When they were asked to describe why black youth from the child welfare system are at greater risk than white child welfare-involved youth, professionals discussed many of the same issues described in the first part of the interview, e.g., issues of poverty, education, mental health, parenting problems, family instability, the child welfare system, law enforcement, and courts. In addition, they described several unique reasons why youth who are black cross over: distrust of authorities, communication problems and structural racism.

Black youth may feel distrust for authorities, in part, due to racial socialization within their family. Given historical and present-day injustices against African-Americans by whites, black parents socialize their children differently than white parents. Black youth may flee or become obstinate when approached by authorities out of fear, escalating the number of charges against them and resulting in deeper entrenchment in the juvenile justice system.

Miscommunication was identified as a factor in racial disproportionalities in crossing over. The potential lack of cultural understanding of families of color and white privilege by authorities may also contribute to distrust by African-Americans. Each person sees his or her

own behavior as... reasonable and justified” (Dixon et al., 2008, p. 531). The communication accommodation theory suggests that people are more likely to evaluate police interactions as positive if they perceive officers as accommodating (Giles et al., 2006, 2007), or understanding of their fear and noncompliance. Perceptions of accommodation, or empathy to particular racial socialization and cultural contexts may lead to increased trust and compliance with officers (Hajek et al., 2006).

Participants described structural racism as contributing to racial disproportionalities in crossing over. For example, communication breakdown between authorities and African-American families, as well as authorities’ biased assessments, were cited as a pervasive problem that negatively impacts disproportionate involvement of African Americans in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Unconscious biases were reported as perpetuating systemic barriers that affect only African-American families. Additionally, several cases were reported by professionals as examples of how institutional racism manifests itself in interactions with families. For instance, (1) when approached by authorities, communication breaks down and distrust by both families and authorities; (2) when assessments are made of African-American families and youth, which are filtered through the cultural lens of the assessors; (3) and in the courtroom. Many professionals also discussed how racially differential life experiences rooted in history, education, social class, and positions of power can contribute to events leading up to involvement with the child welfare system and eventual involvement with the juvenile justice system.

In addition to themes unique to disproportionate crossing over, participants described the impact of factors mentioned in explaining crossing over, as operating differently for black and white youth and families. For crossing over, in general, participants discussed youth issues

consistent with the social strain theory, i.e., poor youth may commit theft in an effort to fit in with their wealthier peers. Many also discussed intergenerational poverty as contributing to crossing over. For disproportionate crossing over, more participants focused on the contribution of poor role modeling of work ethic through welfare abuse. While nearly 40% of professionals expressed poverty as a primary factor of disproportionate crossing over, 21% of these professionals believed welfare dependence and a poor work ethic contributed to poverty. For professionals who attributed welfare dependence and poor work ethic to families' entrenchment in poverty, they had higher colorblindness and assimilation scores, suggesting that they are less sensitive and aware of race in America, including unawareness of discrimination, institutional racism, and white privilege. None of the professionals who attributed welfare abuse and work ethic to poverty worked in child welfare.

One black, law enforcement participant, who saw poor role modeling of work ethic by parents who use welfare, suggested that —out of the box” solutions to deter welfare abuse should be considered. Some states have indeed enacted —out of the box” measures to prevent the abuse of the welfare system, including mandatory drug testing and/or finger printing for those applying for welfare (Gustafson, 2011; Kohler-Haussman, 2007; Magnet, 2009). Policies like these are problematic, however, because poor families are then automatically placed under the purview of the criminal justice system. Wealthier families do not necessarily need welfare benefits, but may be just as likely to commit crimes. Measures like these may further propel the poor into the criminal justice system (Gustafson, 2011; Kohler-Haussman, 2007; Magnet, 2009).

Responses for why disproportionate crossing over exists did not fit neatly into individual ecological categories. It is not just about being a family involved in the system. It is about being a black family in a white dominated child welfare and juvenile justice system. It is about being less

educated, poor, and having different communication styles than the professionals who handle your case. Ecological systems theory posits that child welfare-involved youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience favorable outcomes if the parent, law enforcement, judge, and other stakeholders have similar values and goals. If these values and goals are dissimilar, and microsystems conflict with one another, problems can emerge that impact the development of crossover youth. Thus, based on information garnered from this study, there appears to be a breakdown at the ecological level of the mesosystem.

Crossover youth's mesosystem, which involves interactions between youth's microsystems, appear to be the key determinant in the existence of racial disproportionalities. A weakened relationship between crossover youth's microsystems can have significant consequences. For example, a key stakeholder in the juvenile justice system was noted in the media as saying, "[base my] decision on whether to prosecute a case on behavior, not race...Quite frankly I don't think it's a race issue. I think it's a behavioral issue... If you can't fix the family as a whole, you're not going to fix the problem." This stakeholder sees racial disproportionalities as resulting from the behavior of African-Americans and not the behavior of authorities or social policies. That is, macro level factors that may contribute to the "problem" are not even considered by key stakeholders. Black and white child-welfare involved youth may be differentially affected as two culturally different microsystems interact, the parent and authority figure in this case, at the mesosystem level. If the relationship between these two microsystems is positive, the mesosystem is likely to have a more positive effect on the developing youth. If the mesosystem relationship is more negative or non-existent as is the case for many black communities and authorities, then the outcome for black youth will be less favorable. Because cultural values and socialization processes are different for blacks and whites, with white values

and socialization processes seen by many professionals in my sample as the gold standard, black youth will never stand a chance.

Qualitative analyses assessed professionals' perspectives on racial disproportionalities. The qualitative codes were quantified and statistical analyses used as a tool to identify patterns of themes reported by different groups (professional and racial groups) within this sample. These analyses were not intended to describe characteristics of the population of child welfare and juvenile justice professionals, but rather to identify patterns of responses within this sample. While there were no differences between racial and professional groups for themes reported at different ecological levels for *crossing over*, there were differences for *disproportionate crossing over*. Specifically, compared to child welfare professionals, court professionals reported an average higher rate of themes at the level of parents/families (1.17 and 3.50 themes, respectively), and black professionals reported a higher average rate of themes at the system level compared to white professionals (5.69 and 3.00 themes, respectively). By reporting a higher number of parent/family level themes, court professionals appeared to place greater emphasis on differences between black and white parents/families as contributors to disproportionalities than did child welfare professionals. Black professionals seemed to place much more emphasis on factors beyond the control of children and families compared to white professionals, suggesting a greater awareness of macro level contributors to racial disproportionalities in cross over.

Quantitative analyses also were conducted to describe professionals' levels of awareness and sensitivity to race, as measured by their colorblind racial ideologies and racial identity. On average, blacks and whites differed on their racial attitudes, and so did professional groups—particularly the child welfare and law enforcement professionals. Results from the colorblind ideologies measure suggest that black professionals and child welfare professionals were more

aware of institutional discrimination, white privilege, and blatant racism than white professionals and law enforcement. Professionals' racial identity results suggest that on average, black professionals identified more as an ethnic or racial American, whereas white professionals identified more as non-racialized American. Child welfare professionals were more likely to identify as an ethnic or racial American, compared to law enforcement professionals, who were more likely to identify as non-racialized American. There was no interaction effect between participants' race and type of profession on colorblindness, but there was an interaction on assimilation. Specifically, blacks who worked in child welfare or the courts had lower assimilation scores than whites who worked in child welfare or the courts. Black and white professionals who worked in law enforcement did not differ on assimilation. These patterns were reflective of different lived experiences of black and white professionals, as well as professional socialization within or self- selection into particular occupations.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were mixed to determine whether professionals' racial attitudes, were associated with different ecological perspectives concerning disproportionalities. These mixed methods results suggest that racial perspectives and attitudes are associated. Specifically, the number of system-level themes professionals offered for disproportionate crossing over was negatively related with their racial sensitivity and awareness. Those who were more colorblind and saw themselves more as an American, rather than as a black or white American, were less likely to offer reasons for disproportionalities at the systemic macro level.

Strengths and Limitations

This study offers several contributions to the knowledge base on crossing over and racial disproportionalities. One strength of this study is the range of methods used in studying the

disproportionality phenomenon in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. Methods were triangulated to determine the degree of professionals' critical awareness to racial disproportionalities among crossover youth. In doing so, rich data were garnered that provide evidence of racial insensitivity and unawareness, especially among white and law enforcement professionals. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and measures of racial attitudes each obtained unique information illustrating the ecological complexity amongst youth, family, and macro system factors that contribute to disproportionalities among cross over youth. These complexities likely could not have been attained with just qualitative or just quantitative methods alone.

Another strength is that this was the first examination of racial colorblind ideologies and racial identity among child welfare and juvenile justice professionals. Prior research on colorblindness has examined mental health professionals (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Neville et al., 2006; Neville et al., 2000) and law enforcement trainees (Schloser, 2011; Zimmy, 2012). My child welfare subsample's colorblind scores (2.43) were somewhat lower than mental health professionals examined elsewhere, which ranged from 2.66 to 3.12 (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Neville et al., 2006; Neville et al., 2000). My law enforcement sample scored lower (3.17) than law enforcement studied elsewhere, whose scores were 3.84 for both Schlosser (2011) and Zimmy (2012), but higher than mental health professionals' colorblind scores. My court subsample's score (2.86) fell between mental health and law enforcements' scores from the prior investigations.

This study also has limitations. For the quantitative component, a non-random and small sample limits generalizability and statistical testing. These results are not intended to be generalized beyond the sample. Moreover, these results reflect only a snapshot of this

community's professionals. This sample was not randomly selected. The child welfare sample is not representative of this community's professional child welfare population. Many of the child welfare participants I interviewed were involved in local and state anti-racism efforts. Due to the qualitative component of conducting interviews, a limited number of professionals were contacted. In addition to studying random samples of professionals, future research using similar mixed methods designs should enlist many more professionals to complete the racial attitudes questionnaires, as well as follow-up interviews with a subsample of outliers who score high and low on racial attitudes.

My race and gender may have served as both strengths and limitations. Prior to entering the field, I assumed blacks and whites would receive me differently. Specifically, I expected black professionals to be less open with me, but that did not seem to be the case. Most professionals, including blacks, appeared to be very open with me about their views on racial disproportionalities. The most seemingly distrustful professionals I interviewed tended to be white, male law enforcement. Moreover, my being female may have lent itself to the openness I seemed to have witnessed for many of the professionals.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

This research contributes to the knowledgebase on crossing over, racial disproportionalities, and child welfare and juvenile justice practice. Crossover youth in general are an understudied group and disproportionalities amongst this group are even less understood. Limitations of the present work suggest areas of future research. Professionals' multiple system work experience was not properly assessed. Some professionals had worked in education and mental health, and offered insight into other potential ecological contexts (e.g., schools, mental health, adult criminal justice). The professionals who worked in these other contexts

demonstrated broader perspectives of factors impacting disproportionalities. It is possible that multiple social service systems work experience may impact racial perspectives and attitudes.

Many professionals talked about the intersection of poverty and race as influencing disproportionalities. Future research should focus efforts on more in-depth interviewing on poverty and race, by asking professionals what they see as contributing to poverty.

Additionally, families and youth who have been involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice should be interviewed. Interviewing families and youth directly will offer more insight through another ecological perspective into the disproportionate crossover phenomenon.

The present research may inform the development of racial identity measures. Unlike the CoBRAS, which has significant reliability and validity and generated rich results for the current study, the CSSA is a new instrument that is still under development. Out of the six CSSA subscales, Assimilation was the only subscale that was significantly different between participant groups. My findings suggest there may be some construct problems with the CSSA. Perhaps, the racial identity development model needs to be adjusted. Racial attitudes have different constructs, but are likely related. Although my sample is too small to make any definitive statements about the construction and psychometrics of the CSSA, it is important to address these issues. Racial identity subscales should hang together if it is an appropriate model of cross-racial group racial identity development, but this does not seem to be the case. Only Assimilation and Ethnocentricity were correlated, and they were only mildly correlated ($r = -0.35$, $p = .046$). CoBRAS subscales are highly correlated with one another (range = .61 to .89, $p = .000$). Assimilation was correlated with Total CoBRAS, SES, and the number of system-level themes offered for disproportionate crossing over.

Future research should consider broader sampling and complex statistical designs.

Research using larger samples to allow for more complex analyses, such as regression, MANOVA, structural equation modeling, hierarchical linear modeling, and propensity score matching would allow for the simultaneous analysis of variables for better representation of the ecological context of multiple and competing variables.

This research also has implications for practice, particularly at the mesosystem level. The current research has demonstrated that colorblindness is associated with themes of disproportionate crossing over at particular ecological levels. The current research demonstrated that low colorblindness and assimilation are associated with more mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem themes, examined in this research as “macro themes”, such as the themes of cultural communication, distrust, and biased assessments. Having a sense of awareness of contributors to disproportionalities at these levels may demonstrate critical awareness of race and less biased attitudes.

Empirical research suggests that African-American youth and adults experience biased treatment by authorities (Dixon et al., 2008; Fine et al., 2005). Professionals’ work may be influenced by how they see they can help the person. If they believe the problems the person experiences lie within the person him/herself, they may only work with a person if they feel the person can do something to change his/her situation. However, if professionals believe that part of the problem the person experiences is beyond the control of that person, the professional may be more empathic and likely meet the person where they are at and work with the person in his/her ecological context. If the professional does not fully understand the person in his/her context, then the professional may not be able to adequately help. However, the professional is part of the system, and the system may be set up in such a way that does not allow for the best outcomes of the family to happen, even if the professional knows what the best route of action

should be. This was demonstrated by several professionals who expressed concern about system level barriers (e.g., ~~“We’re trying to wrestle this away from the courts”~~ [Interview 15] and ~~“I still~~ have to work with law enforcement, courts, and medical” [Interview 7]).

Currently, local child welfare professionals meet to discuss racial issues affecting families and youth involved with community social service systems. It is my hope that this research serves as a springboard for other professionals, such as law enforcement and courts to hold similar meetings, and that all professionals come together to have a dialogue about these findings and disproportionalities in their systems. Also, given certain patterns in the data collected (e.g., low colorblind scores of child welfare, high colorblind scores for law enforcement), these meetings could be used to discuss what these results mean. For example, questions, such as ~~“Do~~ these results mean anything? If so, what? For whom? And how?” could be addressed.

Implications of findings from this dissertation suggest a need to repair broken mesosystem relationships. One way to achieve this is through cultural responsiveness training. Prior research conducted on colorblind racial attitudes has found that among psychology students and mental health workers, higher levels of colorblindness was associated with lower levels of multicultural knowledge and awareness even when controlling for multicultural training, social desirability, and participants’ race (Chao, 2006; Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). All participants I spoke to about the usefulness of multicultural training said it is only as good as professionals want it to be. Therefore, diversity and multicultural awareness trainings are challenging, since many trainees are at different point in their racial identity development. A local expert on racial diversity training spoke to me about effective techniques for instituting positive training experiences (Personal communication 4/2/12).

- Ask peers to talk about race amongst themselves.

- Get professionals to ask questions. Mix up professionals from different disciplines to talk amongst themselves and have intergroup dialogues.
- Ask trainees to think about what aspects of colorblindness may be useful? Problematic?
- What ways if any does race play a role in people's lived experiences?
- Use current events.
- Many are unlikely to understand white privilege, colorblindness, and modern day racism.

Use gender as an example of how biased interactions can take place, resulting in discriminatory treatment. Send a male and female separately to car dealerships. See how each get treated (differently). Most people, both men and women, agree that it is a male-dominated world, and therefore can use gender as a springboard for understanding modern racism.

Another way to achieve improved mesosystem functioning is by community outreach efforts initiated by authorities in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. African-American community outreach efforts by child welfare, law enforcement, and court professionals may help enhance mesosystemic relationships. These efforts may entail pairing law enforcement and social workers who may be sensitive to ecological contexts in which families live.

Police social work can be viewed as a hybrid between community policing and social work. Community policing allows law enforcement officers to build relationships, establish communication, and develop partnerships with the communities they serve. Similarly, police social work provides an avenue for community linkage and partnership through the use of an "in house" social worker *and* law enforcement expert who is known to the community and who has established partnerships with community stakeholders and service providers. A police social worker generally takes on the role of a problem solver,

conflict manager, information gatherer, resource locator, and community liaison when individuals and families face a crisis that involves safety issues (Illinois Permanency Enhancement Project, 2012, p. 3).

Thus, a police social worker could serve as a liaison to bridge any gaps in the mesosystemic relationships involving at-risk African-American youth.

An additional way to repair weak mesosystem relationships is through action at the policy level. Implications for policy involve having mandates for diversity awareness and cultural responsiveness training. It is possible that educational experiences concerning racial history and critical racial thought may reduce racial disproportionalities via professionals' altered handling of crossover cases involving black youth. Approximately 10 judges from around the state had attended a two and one-half day anti-racism training. I had the opportunity to hear two of these judges speak—one white and one black. The white judge described how she thought she was already aware of diversity, given her own experiences with discrimination. The training shook her worldview of America and its institutions because it taught her to rethink American history since 1492. All of the popular historical events she and the other judges had once learned as students were re-presented with a critical race lens. She said that when she went back to work, she could never again look at any case the way she did before.

Another implication of these results in improving mesosystem relations is through formal



education. Lady Justice is blind. Criminal justice and law students are formally socialized to be colorblind. Her sword is at her side. Her femininity represents the justice

system's nurturing and maternal side. The central element of this icon is the scale and her



blindfold. This is another way to look at Lady Justice. Being blindfolded, we are fearful because we do not see what is in front of us. Blinded, we put up our guard.

Colorblindness is equated with silence (Rose, 2012). We have racialized outcomes in a non-racialized child welfare and justice system. How does this happen? Many blame it on black families who have problems and their culture for perpetuating disproportionalities. Colorblind racial ideologies seek to address disproportionate outcomes as ~~un~~untethered from context... Systemic inequalities gets normalized. Colorblindness is often seen as cultural racism in certain cultural groups who analyze and frame African-American practices” (Rose, 2012).

This dissertation focused on the professionals who work in the system. By examining their perspectives on disproportionalities, I have attempted to study the degree of critical awareness of race professionals have in an effort to understand how services might be delivered. If professionals view parents and families as the main contributors to disproportionalities without considering the impact that macro level factors may have on youth outcomes, African-American youth may not be receiving the most effective prevention and intervention services given that a major part of their ecological context (i.e., the macro context) may not be considered. Professionals who are sensitive to and aware of issues affecting differential racial outcomes may be better equipped to provide culturally responsive community services.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

1. ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. How old are you? _____

3. Please indicate your racial background by choosing the answer that applies to you. Choose only one category and indicate your ethnic or national subgroup if applicable.

- ☐ African American/Black _____
- ☐ European American/White _____
- ☐ American Indian _____
- ☐ Middle Eastern _____
- ☐ Asian American _____
- ☐ Multi-Ethnic _____
- ☐ Chicano/Latino/Hispanic _____
- ☐ Other _____

4. What is your job title? _____

5. Please list the role or tasks of your job (e.g., intact case work, probation officer, [the child welfare system] legal counsel, legal processing)?

6. Do you work in Champaign County?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other. If other, name of city/town: _____

7. Which type of agency do you currently work for?

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private

8. For each of the following agencies, please indicate whether you currently work for the agency and for how long. Please also indicate if you have worked for the following agencies in the past and for how long.

	Currently	Number of	Employed in	Number of
--	-----------	-----------	-------------	-----------

	employed	years	the past	years
DCFS				
Juvenile Detention F				
Police Department				
Court House				
Law Office				
Residential/group home				

9. What is the highest level of education you have completed, and what did you specialize or major in?

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school diploma/equivalent
- ☐ Some college _____
- ☐ Associate or two-year degree _____
- ☐ Bachelor's or four-year degree _____
- ☐ Some graduate/professional school _____
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree _____

10. Did you attend the October 2010 SOFTT Forum, Beyond Obstacles I?

- ☐ Yes, and it was mandatory.
- ☐ Yes, and it was not mandatory.
- ☐ No

11. Did you attend the April 2011 SOFTT Forum, Beyond Obstacles II?

- ☐ Yes, and it was mandatory.
- ☐ Yes, and it was not mandatory.
- ☐ No

12. What is the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood where you currently live?

- ☐ Predominantly My Racial/Ethnic Group
- ☐ Multi-ethnic/Multi-racial
- ☐ Predominantly Other Racial/Ethnic Group

13. What is the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood where you grew up?

- ☐ Predominantly My Racial/Ethnic Group
- ☐ Multi-ethnic/Multi-racial
- ☐ Predominantly Other Racial/Ethnic Group

14. How would you describe your family's socioeconomic status?

- ☐ Poor Working Class
- ☐ Middle Class
- ☐ Upper Middle
- ☐ Wealthy

15. How would you describe your current physical health?

- ☐ Very Poor
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very Good

16. How would you describe your current mental health?

- ☐ Very Poor
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very Good

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Depending on the specific types of professionals I interview, the interview questions were contextualized by distinguishing between the CW and JJ staff. During the first part of the interview I asked about potential reasons why youth from the child welfare system are at risk for entering into the JJS. I first explained the study and what the implications of it could have in terms of publication. Confidentiality assurances were also discussed.

The goal of this study is to better understand why youth in the child welfare system are at risk for entry into the juvenile justice system. Thank you for being willing to share your direct experience working with these families and children.

Crossing over

Youth who are maltreated or in foster care are 45-72% more likely to be arrested than non-child welfare youth. First, have you noticed this phenomenon? Are there additional risks to children who crossover from the CWS to the JJS? From your experience, what are some of the reasons [the child welfare system] children are more at risk for entering into the JJS than non-[the child welfare system] youth? What in the chain of events might explain [the child welfare system] youth's risk for being arrested?

Possible probes include: Do you think child welfare youth are at risk for being arrested due to characteristics of the child? The family? Poverty? Attachments the child may or may not have? Characteristics about the child welfare or juvenile justice agencies? The laws/policies governing case processing? What about any other social factors?

Disproportionate crossing over

African-American youth who are maltreated or in foster care are 29 to 45% more likely to be arrested than European-American or White youth. Have you noticed this phenomenon? From your experience, what are some of the reasons Black children are more at risk for crossing over? Can you think of any case examples? What in the chain of events of the children or families, or the child welfare or juvenile justice system might explain these crossover disproportionalities? Possible probes include: Characteristics of the child, family, agency characteristics (including job training), larger social forces, including society and policies? Education? Family dysfunction (e.g., attachment, social bonds)? Poverty (stressors associated with poverty)? Advocacy (parents speaking up or not for their children or knowing their rights and options)? Biases? What kind of Biases? Role models (bonds)? What about role models might lead to crossing over? Agency trainings? Agency management? Other DCFS or JJS (co)workers? In your opinion, is DCO a social problem that needs to be addressed?

Recommendations

Lastly, I would like to find out from you what recommendations you can offer for reducing racial disproportionalities among youth who crossover from the child welfare to the juvenile justice system? Possible probes include: Diversity trainings--are diversity trainings useful? Does the information you learn at these training have any effect on your work? Why or why not? Are the people you work with aware of diversity? If yes, how so?

APPENDIX C

COLORBLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES SCALE

Directions. Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States (U.S.). Using the 6-point scale, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly					Strongly
Disagree					Agree

1. _____ Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.

2. _____ **Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.**

3. _____ It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.

4. _____ **Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.**

5. _____ **Racism is a major problem in the U.S.**

6. _____ **Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.**

7. _____ Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.

8. _____ **Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.**

9. _____ White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color their skin.

10. _____ Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.

11. _____ **It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.**

12. _____ **White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.**

13. _____ Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.

14. _____ English should be the only official language in the U.S.

15. _____ **White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.**

16. _____ Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.

17. _____ **It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.**

18. _____ Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.

19. _____ Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.

20. _____ **Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.**

The following items (which are bolded above) are reversed score (such that 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6): item #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20. Higher scores should greater levels of “blindness”, denial, or unawareness.

Factor 1: Unawareness of Racial Privilege consists of the following 7 items: 1, **2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 20**

Factor 2: Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination consists of the following 7 items: 3, **4**, 9, 13, 14, 16, 18

Factor 3: Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues consists of the following 6 items: 5, 7, 10, **11, 17, 19**

Results from Neville et al. (2000) suggest that higher scores on each of the CoBRAS factors and the total score are related to greater: (a) global belief in a just world; (b) sociopolitical dimensions of a belief in a just world, (c) racial and gender intolerance, and (d) racial prejudice. For information on the scale, please contact Helen Neville (hneville@uiuc.edu).

APPENDIX D

CROSS SCALE OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings with regard to the ethnic/racial group that you identify with, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and indicate your response by bubbling in the circle under your choice.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. Life in America is good for me.
2. I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of an ethnic or racial group.
3. I think many of the stereotypes about my ethnic/racial group are true.
4. I go through periods when I am down on myself because of my ethnic group membership.
5. It is important for multiculturalists to be connected to people from many different groups, such as Latino/as, Asian-Americans, European Americans, Jews, gays & lesbians, Blacks, multi-ethnic, etc.).
6. I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for the majority culture.
7. I think about things from the perspective of my ethnic/racial group.
8. When I walk into a room, I always take note of the ethnic make-up of the people around me.
9. I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.
10. I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about my ethnic/racial group.
11. My relationship with God plays an important role in my life.
12. Stereotypes about my group do have a grain of truth to them.
13. I believe that only people who accept a perspective from their ethnic/racial group can truly solve the race problem in America.
14. I dislike many of the things that the dominant culture represents.
15. When I have a chance to make a new friend, issues of race and ethnicity seldom play a role in who that person might be.
16. I believe it is important to have a multicultural perspective which is inclusive of everyone.
17. When I look in the mirror, sometimes I do not feel good about the ethnic/racial group I belong to.
18. If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be –American,” and not a specific ethnic/racial group.
19. When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.
20. When people say things about my group that sound stereotypical I find myself agreeing with them.
21. As far as I am concerned, affirmative action will be needed for a long time.

22. We cannot truly be free as a people until our daily lives are guided by values and principles grounded in our ethnic/racial heritage.
23. Members of the dominant group should be destroyed.
24. I embrace my own ethnic/racial heritage, but I also respect the cultural backgrounds of other groups (e.g., Native Americans, Whites, Blacks multi-ethnic individuals, Asian Americans, gays & lesbians, etc.).
25. Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my ethnic/racial group.
26. If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial or ethnic group.
27. My feelings and thoughts about God are very important to me.
28. People should relax about being too politically correct because some stereotypes about our group are true.
29. When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong ethnic-cultural themes.
30. I hate people from the dominant racial/ethnic group.
31. I respect the ideas that other people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think from an ethnic/racial point of view.
32. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues.
33. I believe it is important to have both an ethnic identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, American Indians, etc.).
34. I have developed an identity that stresses my experiences as an American more than my experiences as a member of an ethnic group.
35. During a typical week in my life, I think about ethnic and cultural issues many, many times.
36. Secretly, many members of my ethnic/racial group believe some of the stereotypes about us.
37. We will never be whole until we embrace our ethnic/racial heritage.
38. My negative feelings toward the majority culture are very intense.
39. I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my group.
40. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (gays & lesbians, African Americans, Jews, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, etc.).
41. My ethnic/racial group shares characteristics that are reflected in the stereotypes about us.

CSSA SUBSCALES

Assimilation (AM) 2, 9, 18, 26, 34
Miseducation (MD) 3, 12, 20, 28, 36 (41)
Self-Hatred (SH) 4, 10, 17, 25, 39
Anti-Dominant (AD) 6, 14, 23, 30, 38
Ethnocentricity (ET) 7, 13, 22, 31, 37
Multiculturalist Inclusive (MI) 5, 16, 24, 33, 40
Not used in scoring 1, 8, 11, 15, 19, 21, 27, 29, 32, 35

- Subscale scores are obtained by summing the five items that makeup each of the six subscales. One can then choose to have scores ranging (a) from 1 to 7 by dividing the sum of the items by 5, or (b) from 5 to 35.
- No items are reverse-coded.

APPENDIX E

DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for participating as a research participant in my study concerning professionals' views of crossing over and social attitudes. This study also examines whether perspectives of crossing over is associated with social attitudes, specifically attitudes about race/ethnicity.

Again, thank you for your participation. If you know of any others who are eligible to participate in my study, I request that you not discuss it with them until after they have had the opportunity to participate. Prior knowledge of questions asked during the study can invalidate the results. I greatly appreciate your cooperation.

If you have questions about this study, or if you would like to receive a summary report of this research when it is completed, please contact me, Jane Marshall at jmarsha3@illinois.edu or 217-898-1586 or my advising professor, Dr. Helen Neville, at 217-244-6291.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu, or access their website at <http://www.irb.illinois.edu>.

If you feel that you are experiencing adverse consequences from this study, please contact the Community Elements (217) 373-2430.

Thank you again for your participation.

Jane Marshall and Dr. Helen Neville