

**Racial Disproportionalities Among Dual System Youth:
Perspectives from the Field**

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June 21, 2012

Crossover Youth

- Also known as Dual System youth
- Definition
 - Any prior involvement with Child Welfare System (CWS) who gets arrested (Herz et al., 2009)
- Example

Disproportionate Crossing Over

- As youth move through the CWS and into JJS, black youth become more entrenched.
- In some regions, Black CWS youth are twice as likely to crossover as white CWS youth. In other regions, they are seven times more likely.

Prior Research

- Focuses on child and family factors
- Research has controlled for confounding factors (i.e., poverty, age, gender, maltreatment, crime), and race still matters

Current Research

- To understand why African-American youth are overrepresented among the crossover (CO) population.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

RQ2: How racially sensitive are these professionals?

RQ3: Is there any association between professionals' interpretations of DCO and their awareness/sensitivity, as measured by CB?

Colorblindness

- Race should not and does not matter.
- 3 types of colorblindness:
 - Unawareness of institutional racism
 - Unawareness of blatant racism
 - Unawareness of racial privilege
- Prior research
 - Mental health professionals
 - Police officers in training

Participants

	N (%)	Black (%)	White (%)
Type of professional	33	13 (39)	20 (61)
Child welfare	12 (36)	6 (50)	6 (50)
Law enforcement	13 (39)	5 (39)	8 (61)
Court	8 (24)	2 (38)	6 (62)

Methodology

- Design
 - Mixed methods (qualitative & quantitative)
- Participants
 - 33 child welfare, law enforcement & court
 - 39% black
 - 61% white
- Data sources
 - Interview
 - Demographics form
 - Colorblindness assessment

Data Source:

Colorblindness Assessment

- Colorblindness Racial Attitudes Scale (**CoBRAS**, Neville et al., 2000)
- 5 – 10 minutes
- 20 items
- 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree), with higher scores representing greater endorsement of color-blind racial beliefs
- Very good psychometric rigor

Data Source 3:

CoBRAS Subscales

- Unawareness of Racial Privilege
 - Blindness to existence of White privileges
 - “Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.”
- Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination
 - Limited awareness of the implications of institutional discrimination and exclusion
 - “Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.”
- Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues
 - Limited awareness of general and pervasive racial discrimination
 - “Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.”

Results

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

RQ2: How racially sensitive are these professionals?

RQ3: Is there any association between professionals' interpretations of DCO and their awareness/sensitivity, as measured by CB?

Results: Child factors

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

- 24% Distrust of authorities
- 21% Emotional/behavioral problems
- 15% More black youth commit crimes

Results: Parent/family factors

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

- 39% Family structure/absent father
- 39% Parenting problems
- 24% Socialize children to distrust authorities
- 21% Welfare abuse/dependence & work ethic

Results: System/other factors

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

- 42% JJS
- 39% Poverty
- 36% Race/class
- 36% Police

Interview Results

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

	Total N (%)	Total N-First (%)	Black (%)	White (%)	Black-First (%)	White-First (%)
DCO						
Child	19 (58)	5 (15)	6 (46)	13 (65)	1 (8)	4 (20)
Parent/ family	26 (79)	10 (30)	10 (77)	16 (80)	2 (15)	8 (40)
System	30 (91)	21 (64)	13 (100)	17 (85)	11 (85)*	10 (50)

Interview Results

RQ1: How do CWS & JJS professionals understand & explain the phenomenon of disproportionate crossing over (DCO)?

	CWS	LE	Court	CW First	LE First	Court First
DCO						
Child	6 (50)	9 (69)	4 (50)	1 (8)	3 (25)	1 (13)
Parent/family	7 (58)*	11 (92)	7 (88)	2 (17)	3 (25)	5 (62)*
System	10 (83)	11 (92)	8 (100)	8 (67)	8 (67)	4 (50)

Results

RQ2: How racially sensitive are professionals?

	Total	Black	White	CWS	LE	Court
CB (Range 1-6)						
Racial privilege	3.23	2.83*	3.56	2.92*	3.67	2.98
Institutional discrimination	3.05	2.46*	3.49	2.43*	3.34	3.48
Blatant Racism	2.07	1.81*	2.30	1.80	2.33	2.00
Total CoBRAS	2.81	2.39**	3.16	2.41**	3.15	2.86

Results

RQ3: Is there any association between professionals' interpretations of DCO and their racial awareness/sensitivity, as measured by colorblindness?

- Racial awareness/sensitivity
 - System is the responsible contributor
 - Older
 - Higher education
 - More work experience
 - Lower SES
- Racial unawareness/insensitivity
 - Child is the responsible contributor
 - Younger
 - Less education
 - Less work experience
 - Higher SES

Summary

- More black professionals view the system as responsible for DCO.
- Courts & LE view the parent/family as responsible for DCO, and are more likely to have racial unawareness/insensitivity.
- Professionals who are wealthier, younger, and/or less experienced are less likely to have racial unawareness/insensitivity.

Low Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- Parent: Parenting problems

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 [AA] kids. They throw up their hands and say, "Do whatever you want!" And the kids stay out all night, runnin' around.So, they're out stealing and gettin' in trouble....

-White, Child welfare

High Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- System: Cultural communication

I had a case of a young AA mom who didn't like her caseworker. We were trying to determine if she was a fit parent and she was calling her CWER racially biased names, like cracker and all that stuff. That information went into the court report. Well yeah, that is disrespecting your CWER and thumbing your nose at authority and if you said something about the judge, but what is the purpose of putting that in a court report except to outline this as an angry evil person?

-White, Child Welfare

High Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- Child: Distrust of 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 hasn't you know, there's not the concern that the system is trying to get one over on them. Or, you know? It's not like I grew up hearing stories about my grandpa getting pulled over and um, 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.

-White, Law enforcement

Low Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- Parent: Welfare abuse/work ethic

It's almost like learned behavior...because...[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 cards. Multiple children are diagnosed with mental health disorders, or ADHD, and other things, and they live off of the Social Security checks.

-White, Law enforcement

Low Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- Child: Black youth are the ones who commit more crimes

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.

-White, Court

High Racial Sensitivity/Awareness

- System: JJS

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.

-Black, Court

Limitations

- Does not measure behavior, just attitudes toward race in America
- Racial attitudes are not necessarily stable across time and context
- Small sample
- Does not measure youth's outcomes, only professionals' attitudes

Implications & Contributions

- First study to examine racial attitudes of child welfare, law enforcement, and court professionals.
- Ethics of practice
- Interventions that are culturally responsive

Recommendations

- Training
 - Culturally responsive professionals
- Supervision
 - Continual incorporation of critical race
- Positions of power & privilege
 - Oversight/accountability
 - Built-in, race-informed performance measures
- Culturally responsive intervention & prevention
 - Adjusting practice to meet the needs & reality of diverse community members

“Personal attitudes are the building blocks of structural racism”

“[W]e 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.”



Thank you!

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