Phase I

An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of
Children of Color in Santa Clara County's Child Welfare System:
Exploratory Phase

Final Report

Submitted to the County of Santa Clara
Social Services Agency
Department of Family and Children's Services

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Executive Summary

Introduction

An analysis of trends in data at the national, state and local levels reveals that there is a disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system (CWS). On the national level, statistics show that African Americans and Native Americans are over-represented in the CWS. Statistics on the ethnicity of children in California's CWS and Santa Clara County in particular, differ from those at the national level, largely due to the presence of growing Hispanic/Latino and Asian American/Pacific Islander populations within the state. At the state level, African American and Native American children are over-represented in the CWS. At the county level, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and Native Americans are over-represented, while at both the state and county levels, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders and Whites are under-represented in the system.

Although the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS has long been of concern to community groups and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, no systematic research study has been conducted on this topic to date. In an effort to understand better the factors related to the disproportionate number of children of color in the CWS in Santa Clara County, the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) contracted with the Child Welfare Research Team (CWRT) in the College of Social Work at San José State University to conduct a three-year study on this topic. An advisory group, consisting of administrators and representatives from various racial/ethnic groups was convened to help guide the development of the project.

The primary overall question posed by DCFS was: What are the primary reasons why children of color are disproportionately represented in Santa Clara County's CWS? In order to address the complexity of this question, the CWRT elected to employ a multiphase/multimethod approach, beginning with an initial exploratory phase.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this exploratory phase of the study were:
- to put the problem in context by gaining an understanding of the relevant research literature and child welfare policies;
- to identify the extent and scope of the problem at the national, state and county level;
- to gain an understanding of how the problem is viewed from different perspectives within the system; and
- to identify key questions to be examined during subsequent phases of the study.

Multimethod Approach

In order to address the complexity of the overall research question, the CWRT used a three-pronged multimethod approach. First, we *reviewed the research literature and pertinent documents* at the national, state, and county levels, including federal and state child welfare statues and regulations, and other county related reports.

Second, in addition to the literature and document review, we conducted *descriptive analyses using national, state, county databases focusing on the child welfare system.* Three primary databases were used in this portion of the study. The Child Welfare League of America's [CWLA] National Data Analysis System [NDAS] was used to gain an understanding of child welfare caseloads at a national level. NDAS provides access to a comprehensive database on state and national level child welfare statistics. The Center for Social Services Research's [CSSR] Performance Indicators database was utilized to analyze the CWS/CMS data at the California state and county level. Finally, an extract of Santa Clara's active caseload from December 2000 was obtained from Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency and their CWS/CMS database.

The third method, *focus groups and interviews* with administrators and key staff in the CWS, as well as parents/caregivers and youth who were current or former clients of the CWS, was a major source of information for this phase of the study. We conducted a total of 31 structured focus group interviews during the course of the study. The CWRT with the help of the Advisory Group selected the target populations for the focus groups in order to represent the primary perspectives within the CWS. The CWRT conducted the focus groups beginning with those key child welfare staff from the Coalition for Effective Services, the managers/administrators and supervisors. These groups were followed by those comprised of lineworkers and Family Resource Centers (FRC) staff, the staff of the two South County centers in Gilroy and San Martin, youth and parents/caregivers of youth currently or formerly in the CWS.

In this report, the CWRT *presents the results of the exploratory phase of the study* – a phase that ran from the signing of the contract in June 2000 through March 2001. This report presents *preliminary findings.* It describes themes that emerge from the research literature, and provides the policy context in which child welfare services are currently being delivered. It also presents descriptive statistics from the county's management information system (CWS/CMS) and most importantly, the report summarizes themes which emerged during group discussions with those who provide the child welfare services (administrators, managers, supervisors and line workers), as well as those who are the recipients of the services – the parents/caregivers and youth involved in the system.

Overarching Themes

When we combine findings from each of the sections contained in this report, **four overarching themes emerge** – themes that provide a context for the next phase of the

study and point to important areas for further investigation that will be carried out over the next two years.

1. Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the CWS are Multiple and Complex

There is no clear consensus in the research literature on precisely which factors are related to involvement with the CWS. Substance abuse has frequently been associated with the likelihood of entry into the CWS. While the occurrence of substance abuse in the child welfare caseload is well documented with statistics indicating that at least half of all child maltreatment cases involve substance abuse of some kind, our review of the literature indicated that strong empirical evidence concerning the relationship between substance abuse and child maltreatment is extremely limited. Perhaps the most significant finding in the research on substance abuse and child maltreatment was that parental substance abuse, as it relates to child maltreatment, is most likely linked with a number of other social problems that may lead to abusive or neglectful behavior. Some of those problems may include, but are not limited to: poverty, serious mental illness, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS.

Differential treatment based on ethnicity and/or SES, is clearly a factor that may likely contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Although families of color were not found to abuse substances at rates any higher than white families, several studies showed that families of color and poor families were more often reported to child welfare institutions than white middle-class families both for child maltreatment, as well as substance abuse. Research also suggests that the racial/ethnic distribution of the child's community of residence may have some influence on the likelihood of being placed in the CWS. Studies that tested the "visibility hypothesis" suggested that there was a higher probability for African American children to be placed in foster care from a geographic area of residence where they were less represented and thus, more visible. However, research in the area of bias in reporting remains scant and inconclusive.

Research findings consistently point to a relationship between poverty and child maltreatment. However, like substance abuse, poverty cannot be examined in isolation. Indeed, characteristics associated with communities and neighborhoods including; living in a high crime area, living in public housing, having larger numbers of dependent children, and receiving welfare benefits might place children of color at an increased risk of entering and staying in the CWS. While the available research in the area of poverty and factors related to communities of poverty was helpful in illuminating some of the complex interacting social conditions that may contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS, serious limitations of the studies precluded any definitive findings. Perhaps the most serious limitation for the purposes of our research endeavor, centered on the fact that none of the current available research examined the processes by which individual level characteristics such as substance abuse, mental illness and domestic violence interact with poverty and other neighborhood factors to impact families of color and their subsequent entry into the CWS.

In addition, since characteristics of other ethnic communities such as Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders or Native Americans have not been investigated adequately in previous research, little is known about the interactions between characteristics of these communities and their contact with the CWS. The under-representation of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in the CWS at national, state and county levels may reveal interesting community characteristics that serve to buffer this community from contact with the CWS. Alternatively, research might reveal the underreporting of child maltreatment in these communities – yet another issue that merits attention if these communities are to be effectively and equitably served. For example, descriptive statistics using County level CWS/CMS data, presented in Section 4 of this report, indicate that caretaker absence/incapacity was the most common reason for removal for African American children, whereas physical abuse was the most common reason for removal for Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders. While Asian American/Pacific Islander children continue to be under-represented, reasons for this discrepancy in removal merit further examination. Also, since Vietnamese children constitute the largest representation among Asian American/Pacific Islander children in the County's CWS, further analysis regarding their presence in the system is warranted.

Studies have yet to be designed which examine the multiple and complex ways these individual, family and community level factors interact simultaneously with a clear focus on ethnicity – a necessity if we are to truly understand and disentangle the numerous interrelated factors associated with the disproportionate rates of children of color in the CWS. More research on the variables related to neighborhoods and communities as well as the mechanisms through which they interrelate and impact children and families of color is needed. Finally, most analysis of macro social variables used in research to date has been derived from 1990 Census data which is now outdated and consequently unreliable. The imminent availability of data from the 2000 Census lends promise to developing a clearer and more current understanding of ways in which community and neighborhood factors affect children and families of color.

In the next phase of this research project, investigation will extend to individual, family and community level factors related to entry of children into the CWS to gain a better understanding of how the factors interact and differ across various racial/ethnic groups.

2. System Level Changes Recently Initiated at the Federal, State and Local Level will Undoubtedly have an Impact on Children of Color in the CWS

With the passage of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act-Interethnic Adoption Provision (MEPA-IEP, 1996) and the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA, 1997), safety, permanency and expedited placements have taken precedence in the CWS. Child welfare practice now reflects a decreased tolerance for risks children face in their homes and represents a shift from the 1970s and 1980s when Family Preservation was the goal of the child welfare system. The shift toward expedited placement and an emphasis on permanency has certainly influenced the culture and ways in which social services are being delivered in California in general, and in Santa Clara in particular and consequently

raises several major concerns for children of color in the County's CWS. Shortened timelines, early termination of parental rights, bypass criteria, as well as changes in adoption regulations and incentives will all clearly have an impact on all families in the system, and in particular, on children and families of color. In combination with the new regulations, the characteristics of families, children and communities of color including chronic poverty, substance abuse, lack of community social organization or racial segregation that increase chances of entering the CWS may create overwhelming barriers to successful reunification for children of color in the CWS and keep them in the system longer.

In addition, it is not clear what the impact of the increased support for kinship supportive services will be. According to preliminary findings from CWS/CMS, in Santa Clara County the greatest percentage of youth across all ethnic/racial groups is placed in a relative home. It remains unclear whether placements with kin are actually permanent or whether these children reenter the system; outcomes for children placed with kin have not been rigorously examined. For African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth in the County, the second most frequent placement was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). The majority of children in the County's CWS are in the Permanent Planning service component and the minority in Family Maintenance. This findings holds true across all racial/ethnic groups, as well with the overwhelming majority of children of color in Permanent Planning, and very small percentages within each group in Family Maintenance. Will these new regulations and their renewed emphasis on permanency and safety rather than family reunification contribute to a continually growing population of children, particularly children of color, in out of home placement?

Neither the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act-Interethnic Adoption Provision (MEPA-IEP, 1996) nor the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA, 1997) modified the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA, 1978). The new regulations continue to recognize the unique political relationship that Indian children have as members of sovereign tribal governments. While this should ensure the rights of Native American children in the CWS, if a child's American Indian heritage is not discovered by the County child welfare agency, American Indian children in Santa Clara County will not receive the protections afforded them under ICWA. Also, if child welfare workers are not trained about ICWA regulations and how they interact with other regulations such as ASFA, they might make inappropriate decisions for American Indian children and their families.

Although most of the focus group respondents stated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented and Asian American/Pacific Islander children were under-represented in the CWS, American Indian children were frequently not mentioned in the discussion of over/under-representation. Given the policies and procedures defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) that apply specifically to American Indian children, early and accurate identification of such children is essential. The American Indian Parent focus group participants discussed in detail their concern about staff not knowing about ICWA and knowing little about their American Indian

culture. Both the American Indian Employees Committee focus group and the American Indian parent focus group discussed the need for American Indian staff to be assigned to American Indian cases. According to our preliminary CWS/CMS analyses, for each racial/ethnic group 45% or more of children were in a facility in which the provider was of the same racial/ethnic background. The exception was the Native American group, with only 11% in a facility with a racially/ethnically matched provider.

Finally, while it is too early to make definitive conclusions, preliminary findings from research based on national estimates suggest that welfare reform and related public policies may be working better for White families and children than for children and families of color. It is possible that these disparities will carry over and affect children and families of color in the CWS, who may already be at a disadvantage due to the new ASFA regulations.

Focus groups with staff and parents discussed over and over the importance of prevention and providing services to keep children out of the CWS. Multiple suggestions were made about prevention programs including the following: more resources for children and families of color, more outreach and education, more substance abuse programs for families and more training in substance abuse for staff, and more education programs for recent immigrants. According to County administrators, Santa Clara County is making concerted efforts to improve the system for all children, including children of color, by implementing new and innovative prevention programs such as Family to Family, Wraparound Services and Parent Education for new immigrant families, to help children and their families stay out of the system. Due to the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino and African American children in the system, any efforts to reduce the number of children entering the system will positively impact children of color.

During the next phase of our research we plan to look at these system changes utilizing a longitudinal database constructed from the county's CWS/CMS database beginning in 1996 and we will analyze trends in placements and outcomes for children in light of the recent system-related changes.

3. Various Racial/Ethnic Groups may Receive Different Treatment at Key Decision Making Points in the System

It is possible that children from different racial/ethnic groups are treated differently at specific decision-making or key choice points in the system. The differential treatment of children of color within the system was corroborated by focus group participants who expressed a concern for ways in which individual workers, depending on which department they worked in, and possibly which supervisor they had, might treat children differently. Cultural competency, ethnic and linguistic matching, and hiring more people of color were themes that were emphasized by supervisors, the Coalition member groups, Family Resource Center staff and lineworkers. Three of the five parent groups discussed the need for staff to be culturally competent. While youth focus group participants did

not discuss cultural competence, in particular, both parent and youth focus groups said that staff needed to listen, to help, to take time, to be respectful to them.

This concern about possible differential treatment of children of color is also substantiated by CWS/CMS data that indicate that there are significant differences in the number of months in placements by race/ethnicity. African American children spent significantly more time in placement than their White, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Vietnamese, and Filipino peers. Also, according to preliminary findings from CWS/CMS, in Santa Clara County, following placements in a relative home, the second most frequent placement for African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth, was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). Almost 14% of Native American and 18% of Asian American/Pacific Islander youth in OHP were placed in the Shelter in December, 2000, a percentage that is higher than any of the other ethnic/racial groups.

The next phase of this study will examine in greater detail ways in which decisions are made within the system. Information from case record reviews and interviews with key informants will be utilized to provide a richer understanding of issues related to this theme.

4. Little is Known about Specific Pathways through the CWS and Ways in which these Pathways Differ for Various Racial/Ethnic Groups

Much of the research on children in the CWS has focused on factors related to movement in and out of the system. While measures such as performance indicators are helpful in providing information about outcomes, most tell us only about numbers of children who exit, who remain in placement, the length of time in placement, and the number of spells a child has in the system. This kind of information tells us little about the actual experiences of children in care and the individual and family-related characteristics that are associated with these experiences. Focus group participants frequently stated that once a child of color is brought into the system, it is very hard for that child to exit. Yet, little is known about what happens once that child is in the system. The second phase of this study will investigate further movement within the system and the multiple pathways that individual children, particularly children of color follow as they wend their way through the system.

Directions for Further Development – Implications for Santa Clara County

In addition to the overarching themes that emerged from this first phase of the research, several important suggestions for the County's CWS were drawn from comments and discussion that transpired during interviews with the focus group participants. The following highlights those points:

1) Focus group results indicated that there was great variability in response to which groups were disproportionately represented in the system as well as where in the

system children of color were disproportionately represented. Although some groups stated that over/under-representation occurred across all units, other groups identified specific program areas in the system where disproportion existed. The limited dissemination of information about the disproportionate representation of children of color suggests that communication of other needs and concerns across all levels in the agency may also be problematic. *Clear information about children of color and their presence in all parts of the CWS would give workers accurate knowledge about this important topic and could provide an opportunity for creating new programs and services to address the serious disproportion that does exist. Creating goals and measurable objectives, coupled with programmatic initiatives for reducing the number of children of color in the CWS would put the agency in a local, state and national leadership role.*

2) *The American Indian Parent focus group participants discussed in detail their concern about staff not knowing about ICWA and knowing little about their American Indian culture. Both the American Indian Employees Committee focus group and the American Indian parent focus group discussed the need for American Indian staff to be assigned to American Indian cases.*

3) *Focus groups with staff and parents discussed the importance of prevention and providing services to keep children out of the CWS.* Multiple suggestions were made about prevention programs including the following: more resources for children and families of color, more outreach and education, more substance abuse programs for families and more training in substance abuse for staff, and more education programs for recent immigrants.

4) *Cultural competency, ethnic and linguistic matching, and hiring more people of color were themes that were emphasized by supervisors, the Coalition member groups, Family Resource Center staff and line workers.*

5) Coding ethnicity is particularly critical for examining the disproportionate representation of children of color. Nearly all staff focus groups indicated that there was no training provided on coding ethnicity. Some focus groups discussed the difficulty of changing codes after initial codes were assigned in the screening process. In addition, no codes exist for bi-racial children, a growing population group in the region and state, for GLBT and disabled children. *Training on ways to code ethnicity in CWS/CMS would improve data collection efforts and provide more reliable information for the Agency.*

6) Our preliminary analyses of CWS/CMS data indicated that details about subgroups within race/ethnicity are unavailable. Some other characteristics regarding children in out of home placement were also unavailable or not recorded. Specifically in Santa Clara County, information regarding out of home placement provider characteristics was relatively sparse. *We realize that improving the collection and condition of child welfare data is no easy task given*

the issues of limitations of the data system, compatibility among systems of data recording and storage, and training needs. However, concerted efforts in this area are necessary if accurate and useful information is to be obtained and used to provide feedback on the effectiveness of programs and services in the County.

This report and the findings presented in each of the sections have established the background and context for the next phase of the project. We have surveyed the research literature, described the historical landscape of the CWS and how it has been influenced by recent policies and legislation, become familiar with the strengths of available databases at the national, state and county level, as well as their limitations, and most importantly, have been enlightened and educated through numerous discussions with administrators, staff, parents and youth – all of whom have provided unique and important perspectives on the issue of the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. All of this information has contributed to the development of four overarching themes described in this report.

Work over the next two years will broaden and further develop the work we have completed so far. We will conduct more extensive analyses utilizing the County's CWS/CMS database and will look at trends in the data over time. In addition, we will conduct in-depth case record reviews on approximately 400 cases in the County's CWS to examine experiences and pathways of children from different racial/ethnic group as they advance through the system. We will also link community and neighborhood level factors through the use of geo-coding and the 2000 census data. During the second phase we will continue to conduct ongoing interviews with selected key informants within the system to gain an even richer understanding of our work as we progress. We look forward to meeting regularly with members of the advisory group, as well as the Coalition for Effective Services to obtain feedback and guidance as we move into the next phase of our study on the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS.

Santa Clara County Policies that Impact Children of Color in the CWS
An Interview with Leroy Martin and Jorge Gonzalez
March 19, 2001

Summary

An interview with Leroy Martin, Director of the Department of Family and Children's Services, and Jorge Gonzalez, Social Services Program Manager, discussing the impact of policies, both Federal and County, on children of color in Santa Clara County's (SCC) CWS revealed the following. First, the *Adoption and Safe Families Act* (ASFA) significantly impacted children and families in the CWS by shortening timelines for reunification efforts, creating bypass criteria to expedite permanency planning efforts, and encouraging adoption through monetary incentives for States. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez indicated that as a result of shortened timelines imposed on child welfare agencies by the ASFA, reunification and permanency planning decisions were made earlier and parental rights were terminated earlier in the process than before ASFA was enacted. They felt that termination of parental rights was especially likely if it was perceived by workers or the Courts that a family was not progressing toward reunification in a timely manner.

Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez also indicated that children were being referred for bypass too quickly. They stated that bypass was not mandatory under the ASFA if there was still the possibility that reunification could occur. However, they reported that, in some cases, workers referred children for bypass before all reunification efforts had been exhausted.

They also reported that ASFA rewarded States, with additional monies, for increasing the number of children they adopted out each year. They felt that reunification should be the most important goal of the agency. However, they indicated that with the enactment of ASFA, the focus of the agency and the Courts has shifted away from reunification in favor of adoption. In addition, they reported that States only received financial benefits for adopting children out of the system, not for reunifying families.

Considering that 70% of all the cases in SCC's CWS are children of color, the shortened timelines, increased emphasis on bypass, and financial incentives States received for adopting children out, the provisions of ASFA will inevitably have a negative impact on children and families of color as a result of their disproportionately high numbers in the system. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez also felt that the provisions of the ASFA would disproportionately impact poor families due to their lack of financial resources. They indicated that middle-class and upper-class families were able to hire lawyers to advocate for them in Court, something that poor families were unable to afford.

Next, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez discussed the impact of the *Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and the Interethnic Adoption Provisions* (MEPA-IEP) on children of color in the CWS. They felt that as a result of MEPA-IEP, children of color were generally placed with and adopted by white families or families that were not ethnically similar to the child. They felt that these placements were not necessarily in the best interest of the child

and indicated that children of color could experience identity confusion if they were not placed with ethnically similar families.

Then, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez discussed the *Indian Child Welfare Act* (ICWA) and it's impact on children of color. The ICWA applies only to American Indian children and is not modified by the ASFA or the MEPA-IEP. They reported that there were few American Indian children in SCC's CWS, only about .4%, and that there were one or two workers assigned to handle Indian cases.

Next, they discussed *Structured Decision-Making* (SDM) and indicated that SCC does not have a specific SDM process in place. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez stated that individual units and their supervisors had the power to determine when to remove a child. They reported that some units removed 70-80% of the referrals, while others only removed 30-40% of the referrals. They felt that the discretion workers and their supervisors had over removal decisions could positively or negatively impact the outcome of a family's case and indicated that more specific SDM guidelines needed to be developed within the agency. In addition, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez reported that the State's SDM process recommends no services for low and medium risk families and recommends that all services be targeted at high-risk families. They reported that this policy was in conflict with SCC's philosophy of providing preventative services for all families and were not adopted by the County.

Finally, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez discussed *County protocols, policies, and programs that impact children of color in SCC's CWS.* They indicated that prior county practice was to remove of all of the children from the home, not just the child that was maltreated. They reported that the County was currently working to change this practice to remove only the maltreated child. The County was also asking workers to conduct individual assessments of the other children in the home and evaluate if their removal was warranted. If the assessment determined that the other children were not at risk for maltreatment, they would not be removed from the family home. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez stated that the County was attempting to change the philosophy of the agency from "removing a child" to "removing the risk."

In an effort to remove the risk of child maltreatment from a family, the County has created an *Early Intervention Program.* This program evaluates children early in the process to determine if they should be returned to their families. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez reported that 60% of children evaluated by this program were returned to their families and formal cases were not opened on these families. They felt that once families got involved with the system it was difficult to get out. Another prevention program that is being developed is an education program for immigrant parents to inform them about the child maltreatment laws of the United States and help them develop parenting behaviors that will not put them at risk of entering the CWS. The goal of the Early Intervention program and the education program for immigrant parents is to prevent families from becoming involved in the system and could positively impact children and families of color by keeping them out of the system.

In addition, the County is adopting a new philosophical approach known as *Family to Family*. This program involves a team of people who would conduct an assessment of the risks of child maltreatment in a family and determine if those risks warrant the removal of the children from the home. The decision to remove a child would be taken away from the individual worker and given to the team. This program could positively impact children of color because the biases of individual workers would not determine if a child were removed. Instead, the team would decide if a child was to be removed and individual biases of team members would be checked by other members of the team.

Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez also spoke about *wraparound services* for high level SED adolescents and their families. The County contracts with Eastfield Ming Quang (EMQ) to provide these services in the home and has received funding to expand these services to lower level SED adolescents and their families. Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez reported that a majority of families receiving wraparound services were families of color. They emphasized that providing preventative services to these families before the problems became so severe would reduce the number of SED adolescents of color in the system.

In conclusion, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez felt that Federal policies, like the ASFA and MEPA-IEP, significantly impacted children of color in the CWS. They indicated that with shortened timelines, bypass criteria, and financial incentives for adoption, the ASFA could negatively affect children of color by reducing the time parents have to successfully complete the reunification process, bypassing children too quickly, and providing little incentive for child welfare agencies to reunify families. They also felt that MEPA-IEP could negatively impact children of color by placing them in homes that were ethnically different from the child. In addition, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gonzalez stated that the County was making a concerted effort to improve the system for all children, including children of color, by implementing an Early Intervention program to help children and their families stay out of the system. Due to the over-representation of Latino and African American children in the system, any efforts to reduce the number of children entering the system will positively impact children of color.

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Final Report

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Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

An analysis of trends in data at the national, state and local levels reveals that there is a disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system (CWS). On the national level, statistics show that African Americans and Native Americans are over-represented in the CWS. Recent national statistics indicate that African American children represent close to 13 percent of the general population, yet comprise approximately 47 percent of children in the CWS. Native Americans constitute approximately 1 percent of the population and represent approximately 2 percent of the CWS. Nationally, the Hispanic/Latino, White and Asian American/Pacific Islander populations tend to be under-represented in the CWS. Though not all states provide data on Hispanic/Latino children in the CWS, statistics from those that do reveal that while Hispanic/Latinos make up approximately 13 percent of the national population, they comprise 7 percent of the CWS. Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders comprise approximately 4 percent of the general population and 1 percent of the CWS. Whites who are approximately 69 percent of the general population, constitute 36 percent of children in the CWS (Child Welfare League of America, 1998; Department of Health and Human Services, 1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Statistics on the ethnicity of children in California's CWS and Santa Clara County in particular, differ from those at the national level. In California, African Americans constitute 6 percent of the general population (32 percent of whom are below the age of 18), but represent approximately 36 percent of children in the CWS. Latinos comprise approximately 32 percent of the general population in California with 43 percent being below the age of 18, and constitute 32 percent of children in the state CWS. Native Americans represent .5 percent of California's population and constitute approximately one and a half percent of the children in the CWS. Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders are under-represented in California's CWS, as they constitute approximately 11 percent of California's general population, with approximately 30 percent being younger than 18, but represent just 2 percent of the children in the CWS. While Whites comprise approximately 47 percent of the population in the state, with only 20 percent being below the age of 18, they constitute 30 percent of the children in the CWS (California Public Policy Institute, 2001; Needell & Webster, 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Santa Clara County, also referred to as "Silicon Valley", is the largest county in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the fifth largest county in California, populated by almost 1.7 million residents in fifteen cities, including San Jose, now the largest city in the Bay Area and Northern California with a population of approximately 895,000. Santa Clara County has the highest median family income in California and has experienced tremendous population growth over the last ten years. While a significant portion of the land area (1,312 square miles) is unincorporated ranch and forest land, 92% of the population lives in cities (Santa Clara County Profile, 1995; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

The population of Santa Clara County is ethnically diverse, consisting of approximately 44% White, 24% Hispanic/Latino, 3% African American, 26% Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, .5% American Indian, and 3% Other and multiracial (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Twenty-five percent of the County's residents are under 18 years of age and 10.4% of those children and youth are living below the poverty level (Children Now, 1996; Hall & Richards, 1994). Ninety-eight percent of the children and youth in the county live in urban areas and of those, 4% are African American, 45% are White, 30% are Hispanic/Latino and 21% are Asian American/Pacific Islander and other.

Santa Clara County has the 10th largest child welfare caseload in California and ranks 11th in the State in child abuse reports, involving approximately 19,000 children annually (Children Now, 1996; Hall & Richards, 1994; Santa Clara County Profile, 1995). Children and youth of color are disproportionately represented in the County's child welfare system. In Santa Clara County, African Americans despite being only 4 percent of the general child population in the county, represent 14.7 percent of children in the CWS. Hispanic/Latino children represent 30 percent of the general child population in Santa Clara County and constitute 52.2 percent of the child welfare cases. Native Americans are approximately 0.5 percent of Santa Clara County's population and represent 1.1 percent of children in the CWS. Similar to findings at the national and state levels, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders and Whites are under-represented in the County CWS. Asian American/Pacific Islander children represent 21 percent of the general county child population and 4.4 percent of children in the CWS; Whites constitute 45 percent of the general child population and 28 percent of the child welfare population (CWS/CMS, Dec. 2000; L. Martin, Presentation at the Dorothy Miller Symposium, May, 2000).

There is much debate in the research literature about whether racial and ethnic differences in the child welfare system reflect real differences in the rate of maltreatment, are a matter of reporting bias, or are related to the poverty which affects many minority families (Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg, 1996). Some researchers argue that the variation in reporting rates among different racial and ethnic groups may be attributed to reporting bias (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). However, the research in this area is scant and remains inconclusive.

Although the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS has long been of concern to community groups and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, no systematic research study has been conducted on this topic to date. In an effort to understand better the factors related to the disproportionate number of children of color in the CWS in Santa Clara County, the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) contracted with the Child Welfare Research Team (CWRT) in the College of Social Work at San José State University to conduct a three-year study on this topic. An advisory group, consisting of administrators and representatives from various racial/ethnic groups was convened to help guide the development of the project.

The primary overall question posed by DCFS was: What are the primary reasons why children of color are disproportionately represented in Santa Clara County's Child

Welfare System? In order to address the complexity of this question, the CWRT elected to employ a multiphase/multimethod approach, beginning with an initial exploratory phase.

Objectives

In this report, the CWRT *presents the results of the exploratory phase of the study* – a phase that ran from the signing of the contract in June 2000 through March 2001. This report presents *preliminary findings*. It describes themes that emerge from the research literature, and provides the policy context in which child welfare services are currently being delivered. It also presents descriptive statistics from the county's management information system (CWS/CMS) and most importantly, the report summarizes themes which emerged during group discussions with those who provide the child welfare services (administrators, managers, supervisors and line workers), as well as those who are the recipients of the services – the parents/caregivers and youth involved in the system.

The primary objectives of this exploratory phase of the study were:
- to put the problem in context by gaining an understanding of the relevant research literature and child welfare policies;
- to identify the extent and scope of the problem at the national, state and county level;
- to gain an understanding of how the problem is viewed from different perspectives within the system; and
- to identify key questions to be examined during subsequent phases of the study.

What the Exploratory Phase Must Capture

While members of the CWRT have expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, we have adopted a primarily qualitative approach for this exploratory phase. A fundamental tenant of qualitative research is that reality is best understood by studying the ways in which people perceive, experience and make sense of events in their lives. Qualitative research does not begin with questionnaires or surveys developed from the point of view of the researcher, as researchers guided by a qualitative tradition recognize that there may be many aspects of a situation that would be missed if we restrict people to forced-choice answers. Instead qualitative methods, including focus groups and interviews, promote the researcher's ability to capture the unique perspective of the research participant. Although no definitive conclusions can be reached given the methodology utilized in this study, the ability to capture and understand the points of view and opinions of different research participants adds new and critical perspectives to our understanding of various situations. Given the particular objectives of this phase of the research, we felt that qualitative methods best suited our purpose. The information gathered during this first phase of the study will be used to identify key questions and hypotheses to be examined using a more quantitative approach in the next phase of the research, scheduled to begin in July 2001.

This exploratory phase must also take into account what we can learn from existing research and ways in which current policy and legislation may have an impact on children of color in the CWS; it must also examine current statistics and available data at national, state and county levels. Thus, while this phase was largely driven by qualitative methods of research, we also used descriptive statistics to explore existing data sources.

The Exploratory Phase - Primary Research Questions

The following research questions guided our work during this phase of the study:

1. What can we learn from the research and other pertinent literature surrounding this problem on a national, state, county level? What are the most important/significant themes that emerge? What questions remain unanswered?

2. What is the scope of the problem nationally, in the state and in Santa Clara county? Is the problem greater at different points of the system (initial entry, continuing care or placement)?

3. According to key informants, what are the most significant issues/questions to be addressed?

4. Combining information gathered for each of the preceding questions, what are the primary questions to be addressed in the next phase of the project?

An Overview of Methods Used

In order to address the complexity of the research questions, the CWRT used a three-pronged multimethod approach. First, we *reviewed the research literature and pertinent documents* at the national, state, and county levels, including federal and state child welfare statues and regulations, and other county related reports.

In addition to the literature and document review, we conducted *descriptive analyses using national, state, county databases focusing on the child welfare system.* Three primary databases were used in this portion of the study. The Child Welfare League of America's [CWLA] National Data Analysis System [NDAS] was used to gain an understanding of child welfare caseloads at a national level (CWLA, 1998). NDAS provides access to a comprehensive database on state and national level child welfare statistics. The Center for Social Services Research's [CSSR] Performance Indicators database was utilized to analyze the CWS/CMS data at the California state and county level (Needell, Webster, Cuccaro-Alamin, Armijo, Lee, Brookhart, & Lery, 2001). Finally, an extract of Santa Clara's active caseload from December 2000 was obtained from Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency and their CWS/CMS database.

The third method, *focus groups and interviews* with administrators and key staff in the CWS, as well as parents/caregivers and youth who were current or former clients of the CWS, was a major source of information for this phase of the study. We conducted a

total of 31 structured focus group interviews during the course of the study. Table 1 (p. 59) provides a list of the focus groups conducted. The CWRT with the help of the Advisory Group selected the target populations for the focus groups in order to represent the primary perspectives within the CWS. The CWRT conducted the focus groups beginning with those key child welfare staff from the Coalition for Effective Services, the managers/administrators and supervisors. These groups were followed by those comprised of lineworkers and Family Resource Centers (FRC) staff, the staff of the two South County centers in Gilroy and San Martin, youth and parents/caregivers of youth currently or formerly in the CWS.

Each focus group was comprised of approximately 5-10 members, though some were considerably smaller. In particular, the line worker groups were very small; some had only one participant. Altogether, 169 individuals participated in the focus group interviews. The focus group section of this report provides a detailed description of characteristics of those who participated. It is important to understand that the focus group participants do not represent *all* of the child welfare staff, parents/caregivers and youth in the system, and that their opinions may be not necessarily represent *all* viewpoints of those working or participating in the CWS. However, their opinions represent varying perspectives from important groups. It is precisely these varying perspectives that we wished to capture during this first phase of the study.

How the Focus Groups Were Conducted

This initial round of focus groups with Administrators/Managers, Supervisors and with the six committees that make up the Coalition for Effective Services was held between July and December 2000.

One focus group was conducted with all *managers/administrators* as part of a regularly scheduled meeting held in a conference room at Santa Clara County Social Services Agency.

Supervisors were randomly selected for participation in one of two focus groups that were held in conference rooms at Santa Clara County Social Services Agency.

An initial meeting was held with each of the six committees within the *Coalition for Effective Services* to explain the study and to enlist assistance in recruiting focus group participants. The Coalition for Effective Services is made up of the following committees: *African American Employees Committee; American Indian Employee Committee; Asian/Pacific Islander Committee; El Comité; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered (GLBT) Concerns Committee; and Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities.*

Participants were randomly selected to attend one of the two focus groups scheduled for each of the following committees: the African American Employees Committee, the Asian/Pacific Islander Committee and El Comité. One focus group was conducted with each of the following committees: American Indian Employee Committee; Gay,

Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered (GLBT) Concerns Committee; and Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities. Seven of the focus groups were held in conference rooms at the Santa Clara County Department of Social Services and two were held at Nuestra Casa, a Family Resource Center in San Jose. All of the focus groups were held during the lunch hour.

The second round of focus groups was conducted between September and December 2000 with *Family Resource Center staff, the staff at the two South County sites in Gilroy and San Martin, and lineworkers.* Family Resource Center staff at the Asian Pacific Family Resource Center, Nuestra Casa, Ujirani and South County staff in Gilroy and San Martin participated in focus groups in their own centers during the lunch hour.

Lineworkers were randomly selected from a list of all staff and were invited to participate in one of four focus groups that were scheduled in conference rooms at Santa Clara County Social Services Agency during the lunch hour.

Focus group preparation for all of the staff groups, with the exception of the Administrators/Managers, included obtaining a list of the particular group members, calling the participant with a verbal invitation to the focus group 10 days in advance, and calling the participant again, 24 hours in advance of the focus group as a reminder. The duration of the focus groups was approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

The third round of focus groups was conducted between January and March 2001 with *parents/caregivers* and *youth.*

Three groups of *parents/caregivers* were recruited through parent education classes: Vietnamese parents, Hispanic/Latino parents, and South County parents. One focus group was conducted in Vietnamese at the Asian/Pacific Family Resource Center, the second focus group was conducted in Spanish at Nuestra Casa and the third focus group was conducted in English at a school site in Gilroy. A support group for African American caregivers participated in a focus group that was conducted at Ujirani. American Indian parents of children in the CWS were contacted and invited to a focus group at the Indian Health Center in San Jose. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Parents/caregivers were each given a $20 gift certificate to Target stores for their participation.

Participants for the *youth* focus groups were recruited at the Santa Clara Children's Shelter. A member of the research team met with shelter staff to explain the study and enlist the assistance of staff in recruiting youth between the ages of 13-18. Each of the five focus groups was held during the day at the shelter, each focus group lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes, and each youth was given a $20 gift certificate to Tower Records in appreciation for his/her participation.

Two members of the CWRT – a trained focus group leader and a research assistant were present during each of the focus groups. The discussion for each of the groups was guided by a semi-structured questionnaire. Three separate questionnaires were prepared:

one for key child welfare staff, one for parents/caregivers and a slightly different version for youth. In addition, each participant was given a brief questionnaire asking about demographic characteristics. A research assistant was also present to take notes on both verbal and non-verbal exchanges. All sessions were tape recorded with permission of the participants. Participants were informed at the outset that the information they shared during the focus groups would be confidential and would contribute to the identification of key research questions to be examined in subsequent phases of the study.

Following each group, the notes taken during the session were carefully transcribed by the research assistant who used the tape recording as backup and to clarify points, if necessary. Data for the focus group portion of the study consist of the transcribed notes taken during each session of each of the focus groups. Qualitative methods of data analysis were employed to analyze the focus group data. First, major themes were summarized separately for each of the primary groups: Administrators/Managers; Supervisors; the six committees that make up the Coalition for Effective Services; staff of the three Family Resource Centers and the two South County sites; lineworkers; parents/caregivers; and youth. Next, common themes across the groups were identified and summaries were prepared highlighting those themes for the Administrators/Managers and Supervisors groups; for the six committees within the Coalition for Effective Services; for the Family Resource Centers, the South County centers and the lineworkers; and the parent/caregivers and youth.

Responses were analyzed within and across groups. Prior to finalizing the results of the focus groups for the Coalition for Effective Services, we presented individual reports to each of the six groups and to the Coalition for Effective Services for feedback and comments. The comments from each group were included in the concluding summary and can be found in Appendix B. The results of the focus group interviews are presented in Section 5 of this report.

Scope and Timelines for the Study

Our work on this phase of the study took place over nine months (from July, 2000 through March, 2001). Two interim reports were submitted to the Advisory group: the first on August 30, 2000 which consisted of the literature review and a progress report; the second submitted on January 15, 2001 included results of the first 12 focus groups and a progress report.

Initially, we planned to hold 16 focus groups, however, with the input from the advisory group we agreed that it was necessary to conduct focus groups with parents/caregivers in order to include their perspectives. In addition, in a few instances, more than one focus group per interest group was held to insure adequate participation.

The next phase of the study is scheduled to begin in July 2001 and will continue for 2 years. Planning for the next phase will begin with the completion of this report.

Overview of the Report

This report presents the findings from our initial exploratory phase. In the next section, we provide a review of the relevant research literature on children of color in the child welfare system. We end that section with a summary of emerging themes and identify gaps in the current body of literature. The literature review is followed by Section 3 - a review of child welfare policies during the last 20 years with particular emphasis on current policies and legislation and their possible impact on children of color in the CWS. Section 4 provides further context by describing child welfare caseloads at the national, state and county levels. Particular emphasis is paid to the county level data analysis. Findings from the focus group interviews are summarized and presented in Section 5. The actual focus group responses by question for each group are contained in Appendix B. Section 6 presents the conclusions and overarching themes from this initial exploratory phase and outlines key research questions for the next phase of the study.

Definition of Terms Used in this Report

Racial/ethnic group refers to cultural heritage and country of origin. Racial/ethnic group is used interchangeably with the terms, children of color and ethnic minority group.

Disproportionate representation of children of a particular racial/ethnic group refers to the difference between the proportion of children of a particular racial or ethnic group in the CWS and the proportion of children of a particular racial or ethnic group in the general population.

Over-representation of children of a particular racial/ethnic group exists when the proportion of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the CWS exceeds its proportion in the general population.

Under-representation of children of a particular racial/ethnic group exists when the proportion of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the CWS is less than its proportion in the general population.

African American refers to children of African American heritage. The term Black is included in this category.

Asian American/Pacific Islander refers to children of Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage. The following population groups are included: Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Other Asian American/Pacific Islander, Polynesian and Samoan. Filipino and Vietnamese are reported separately in the CWS/CMS data analysis used for California and Santa Clara County reports.

Hispanic/Latino/a refers to children of Mexican American and Latin American heritage. The terms Hispanic and Latino/a are included in this category.

Native American refers to children of Native American heritage and includes those designated as Alaska Natives. The term American Indian is included in this category.

White refers to children of European heritage. The term Caucasian is included in this category.

Chapter 2: Empirical Background and Context: A Review of the Research Literature Relevant to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Child Welfare System

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of previous research on factors related to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Despite awareness of this problem, research on the topic has yet to produce definitive results. Rather than one primary cause, there appear to be numerous interrelated factors associated with the disproportionate rates of children of color in the CWS. Most notably, research has focused on four broad areas: 1) parental substance use and child maltreatment, 2) race and class biases in initial reporting and subsequent processing of children in the CWS, 3) poverty, neighborhood effects and other macro predictors of children of color entering the CWS and 4) characteristics of communities of color that place children at an increased risk of entering and staying in the CWS. Each of these four areas of research will be discussed separately, although in all likelihood they are related to one another in multiple and reciprocal ways. Limitations of the current body of literature on children of color in the CWS will also be presented, as well as areas for further inquiry.

Substance Abuse and Child Maltreatment

It is estimated that 8.3 to 10 million children live with a parent that abuses substances (Bays, 1990; Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Of those children, approximately 4 million have parents that use alcohol primarily, 2.1 million have parents that use illicit drugs primarily, and 2.4 million have parents that use both alcohol and illicit drugs (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Substance-abusing parents have been found to be slightly more likely to have less education, less likely to have full-time employment, more likely to be unmarried, and more likely to be involved with public welfare programs. Of parents who abuse substances, there are equal numbers of fathers as mothers, but as primary caregivers, mothers are more likely to become involved with child welfare agencies than are fathers (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

The impact of substance abuse on the child welfare caseload is well documented. Findings from a 1993 Health and Human Services study found that children living in families with an alcohol-abusing parent were three times more likely to be abused or neglected than other children (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Another Health and Human Services study found that 78% of children placed in foster care in 1994 had substance-abusing parents and 80% of those children suffered from severe neglect. It is estimated that one-third to two-thirds of substantiated child maltreatment reports involve parents that abuse substances (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Part of this estimation may be attributed to the 200,000 to 750,000 infants born each year who have been exposed to one or more illicit drugs before birth (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1994; Vega et al., 1993).

Research on families in the CWS indicates that substance-abusing families are more likely to be White (47%) or African American (47%) than Hispanic/Latino (6%) and that they had more overall problems than other families in the system (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). When substance abusing parents were compared to non-substance abusing parents, the former were less effective disciplinarians, had more difficulty interpreting their child's emotional needs and responding appropriately to those needs, and had more difficulty resolving conflict appropriately. Substance-abusing parents were also found to be less effective role models for appropriate behavior and were more likely to lack the skills necessary to effectively manage their families, especially family finances (Bays, 1990; Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Children with substance-abusing parents were more likely to have poor developmental outcomes compared to other children and they were more at-risk of abusing substances themselves. Substance-abusing families were also more likely to neglect their children than abuse them, more likely to have their children enter the child welfare system at a younger age, be placed in foster care, and stay in foster placements longer than other children (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

Parental substance abuse as a predictor of child maltreatment

Several studies have attempted to demonstrate a causal relationship between substance abuse and child maltreatment. A review of the literature suggests that a significant percentage of the children in foster care placements had been removed from homes with a substance-abusing parent (Bays, 1990). Although the findings of the studies included in the review point to a correlation between substance abuse and child maltreatment, they do not provide sufficient empirical evidence to support a causal connection. The findings from the studies are further weakened due to a lack of consistency in the definition and scope of variables studied, inconsistencies in methods of data collection and the absence of adequate control groups.

A recent study examining the link between substance abuse and child maltreatment sought to determine if substance abuse, depression, and other mental health disorders were risk factors for child maltreatment (Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg 1996). Using data from the National Institute for Mental Health's Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) survey of 7,103 parents, results indicated that of the demographic variables included, only household size remained significant for physical abuse and that only age and socioeconomic status remained significant for neglect. Of the mental health disorders examined in the study, substance abuse disorders emerged as those most highly associated with both physical abuse and neglect. A child whose parent had a substance abuse disorder was nearly three times more likely to suffer from maltreatment than a child without a substance-abusing parent. Depression was found to be more predictive of physical abuse than neglect. Other mental health disorders were not indicated as producing an increased risk for child maltreatment unless substance abuse or depression were also indicated. The findings suggest a relationship between some mental health disorders, specifically depression substance abuse disorders, and child maltreatment. They also contradict findings of earlier studies that claim a causal link between lower socioeconomic status and child maltreatment. While informative, certain limitations of

the study including the possible inability of the instruments to accurately measure the extent of child maltreatment in the study population and the likelihood of bias in the self-report data, mitigate the strength of the findings. In spite of the fact that the study only used two categories: White and Other, to classify the ethnicity of study participants, it presents some of the most convincing findings in support of a relationship between substance abuse and child maltreatment to date.

The only large-scale study on children of color, substance abuse, and child maltreatment to date utilized data from case records of African American foster children in five major cities across the United States to determine how African American children entering care due to parental substance abuse differed from African American children entering care for other reasons (Walker, Zangrillo, & Smith, 1991). The findings which are relatively consistent with the other studies discussed above indicate that among families with children in care, substance-abusing families were twice as likely as non-substance abusing families with children in foster care to suffer from other social problems including: poverty, dependence on welfare/AFDC (85%), single parent status (53%), having a mother that did not graduate from high school (67%), and living in substandard housing or having housing difficulties (44%). Findings also indicated that the primary reason for placement of children into foster care from a substance-abusing family was neglect. When comparing the two groups, approximately one quarter of foster children with a substance-abusing parent were discharged compared to half of the group with a non-substance abusing parent. Reunification was less common for children with a substance-abusing parent and these children were more likely to be placed with a relative than were the other foster children. Children with a substance-abusing parent were more likely than those with a non-substance abusing parent to be placed in foster care at a younger age and spend more time in care.

Prenatal substance abuse and child maltreatment

Another area of emphasis in research on substance abuse and child maltreatment focuses on prenatal substance abuse as a predictor of child maltreatment. The 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse found that more White women than African American women or Hispanics/Latinas used illicit drugs during pregnancy, but that African American women were more likely to use cocaine during pregnancy than were White women or Hispanics/Latinas (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). In general, there is a lack of reliable empirical evidence linking prenatal substance abuse with subsequent child abuse and neglect. Findings from a study conducted to determine if mothers who used drugs during pregnancy were more likely to maltreat their children than pregnant mothers who did not use drugs indicated that 30.2% of children exposed to drugs in-utero were reported as abused or neglected and 19.9% of those cases were substantiated (Jaudes, Ekwo & Voorhis, 1995). Prenatally exposed children suffered maltreatment at rates two to three times that of other children living in the same geographic location. Of the substantiated cases, neglect was the most prevalent at 72.6% and physical abuse was indicated in 15.7% of the cases. Toddlers were found to be the most vulnerable to child maltreatment and in these cases, biological parents were found to be the perpetrators. Although a majority of the children in the study group were

classified as African American, risk of abuse was not significantly associated with race. Several weaknesses of the study render its findings unreliable, however. First, the sampling process was highly susceptible to bias. Only those women with risk factors for substance abuse and only those infants that exhibited symptoms of withdrawal were tested. Regional census tract data, used to comprise the control condition was not necessarily equivalent to the study group. Finally, as the authors point out, the findings of the study may be flawed due to the over-reporting of child maltreatment in low-income, substance-abusing families inflating the percentage of child maltreatment among prenatally exposed children.

Other research on prenatal exposure to substances and child maltreatment has sought to examine the effects exposure has on the physical, emotional, and mental outcomes of drug-exposed children. One hypothesis driving this line of research is that prenatally exposed children may suffer from physical, mental, or emotional problems that may predispose them to maltreatment because they may be especially difficult to parent (Jaudes, Ekwo & Voorhis, 1995). In a review that examined studies on prenatal, perinatal, and long-term exposure to substances, findings indicate that prenatal exposure to alcohol and illicit drugs can negatively affect developmental outcomes for children (Bays, 1990). These prenatally exposed children may exhibit behaviors that may make them more vulnerable to maltreatment and they may be more likely than non-exposed children to abuse substances during adolescence or adulthood.

In the only study to date that has examined the prevalence of prenatal substance abuse and child maltreatment and included findings on people of color, Vega, Kolody, Hwang & Noble (1993) estimated the prevalence of perinatal exposure to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco and examined the demographic characteristics of women that exposed their child to substances during pregnancy. Using a multistage probability sampling design, urine samples were collected from 29,494 women delivering at 202 maternity hospitals across California. The findings indicated that in 1992, 11% of California women in the sample tested positive for any substance use during pregnancy. The results also indicated that women that did not receive prenatal care were estimated to have a higher prevalence of substance use during pregnancy than women that did receive care. The study also examined the prevalence of perinatal exposure to substances among women from different ethnicities. African American women were found to have the highest prevalence of total substance use, including alcohol (12%), tobacco (21%) and cocaine (8%). White women had the second highest prevalence of one or more drugs and Hispanics/Latinas yielded the second highest prevalence for alcohol use. Hispanics/Latinas accounted for 45% of all women that tested positive for alcohol in the study. Asian women generally had a lower prevalence for substance use than any other group.

Reporting and Processing of Children in the CWS: Reporting Biases and Structural Characteristics

Research suggests that the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS may be related to race and class bias in the initial reporting and subsequent processing of children through the various phases of child welfare proceedings. This

possible differential treatment may be associated with many factors including bias on the part of individual workers and/or structural aspects of the child welfare system itself.

The presence of some form of bias in the reporting and processing of children of color in the CWS is reflected in findings from the Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-3) (Sedlack & Broadhurst, 1996). Using data from reported cases of child maltreatment, as well as unreported cases obtained from a community sample, the NIS-3 findings corroborated results of the NIS-1 and NIS-2 (conducted in 1980 and 1986 respectively), in finding no race differences in child maltreatment incidence. The NIS-3 methodology is thought to identify a much broader range of maltreated children than those that are identified by social service agencies. Consequently, the authors conclude that the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS is not due to corresponding disproportionate rates of child maltreatment among differing ethnic groups. Instead, it is suggested that different ethnic groups receive differential attention sometime during the various phases of reporting, investigation and service delivery. These findings parallel Ard's (1992) secondary analysis of NIS-1 and NIS-2 data in which African American communities were found to have lower rates of maltreatment than White communities once variables such as income level, unemployment rates and the extent to which an area is urban or rural were statistically controlled.

Research on ethnic discrepancies in the initial report of child maltreatment to Child Protective Services (CPS) has yielded provocative findings that suggest the initial point of entry into the CWS may be affected by racial and class biases. In an effort to distinguish the kinds of cases that are underreported, over-reported or not reported at all to CPS, Ards & Harrel (1993) conducted a secondary analysis of NIS-1 and NIS-2 data and found that 51 percent of cases known to CPS were reported by community professionals while the other 49 percent were reported by the child, parents, neighbors and anonymous parties. Results indicated that CPS was more likely to be aware of maltreatment involving younger children than maltreatment involving older children; more likely to be aware of sexually abused children than victims of physical or emotional abuse and less likely to be aware of children who were physically or emotionally neglected than children who were physically or emotionally abused. Analyses from both 1980 and 1986 data indicated that race was not significantly related to CPS knowledge of a case when all reporting agencies were considered as an aggregate. However, separate analyses of the types of agencies reporting child maltreatment revealed that in 1986 CPS was more likely to be aware of hospital cases involving African American children, than White children, controlling for type of abuse.

Additionally, Hampton and Newberger's (1985) secondary analysis of NIS-1 data collected in 1980 indicated that compared to other agencies, hospitals were more likely to report low SES African American and Hispanic/Latino families than White families. Families with annual incomes below $14,900 had the highest reporting rates, while in families with annual incomes of $25,000 or more, recognized child abuse was reported in only 36 percent of the cases. Unreported cases tended to be White victims of emotional abuse that came from families with higher incomes. In the hospital sample, ethnicity and

SES emerged as the most significant perpetrator characteristics that distinguished reported from unreported cases of child maltreatment.

Research also suggests that the racial/ethnic distribution of the child's community of residence may have some influence on the likelihood of being placed in the CWS (Jenkins & Diamond, 1985; Garland, et al., 1998). Jenkins & Diamond (1985) developed and tested the "visibility hypothesis" which suggested that there was a higher probability for African American children to be placed in foster care from a geographic area of residence where they were less represented and thus, more visible. The researchers concluded that the visibility either prompted reporting of African American children or that an under-represented minority group lacked sufficient social support within the community to prevent placement. Findings from a more recent study in San Diego support the "visibility hypothesis" for African American children, but not for Hispanic/Latino or Asian American within the county (Garland, et al., 1998).

In an effort to explain ethnic discrepancies in the initial reporting of child maltreatment, research has focused on the decision-making processes of mandated child maltreatment reporters. Zellman (1990a, 1990b), conducted a national survey on the child abuse reporting behavior of 1,196 mandated reporters each of whom rated five varying case vignettes of possible child maltreatment. The respondents also provided background information as well as reporting behaviors and concerns. The majority of mandated reporters indicated a high level of compliance with child maltreatment reporting laws. Self-reported reasons for not reporting a suspected incident of child maltreatment included a lack of sufficient evidence, as well as perceived problems resulting from the quality of CPS. Results indicated that mandated reporters tend to consider two broad areas in their decision-making process including: case characteristics of the incident including seriousness, whether the reporter defines it as abuse or neglect, and what the law is believed to require in a particular incident; and the perceived efficacy of a report, namely whether the reporter believes that a report would benefit a child or a child's family.

In a separate analysis of the impact of case characteristics on child abuse reporting decisions, Zellman (1992) identified three variables that consistently predicted vignette outcomes: previous abuse, severity of abuse and recantation. Child age was a significant, although less consistent predictor to case outcomes, with younger children more likely to precipitate a report. Race and SES also emerged as inconsistent, although at times, significant variables in report decision-making. Physical and sexual abuse vignettes depicting lower SES and African American families were typically determined to be more serious; more likely to be defined as abuse and more likely to be perceived as requiring a report under the law. Outcomes were generally judged to be better for lower status African American families, and although not consistently reaching significance across all vignette categories, respondents were more likely to report African Americans. Interestingly, when race was varied in the neglect category, the benefit of the report was perceived as higher if the child was White and of a higher SES, rather than African American. Zellman (1992) attributes this result to the possibility that child neglect may be perceived as more violative of cultural expectations of middle-class parents and thus,

is considered more serious. Yet despite rating child neglect as more serious in vignettes involving White families, respondents were no more likely to report higher SES and White parents for child neglect.

The first section of this review on substance abuse and child maltreatment noted that while 8.3 to 10 million children live with a substance-abusing parent, only a small number of those families actually interact with the child welfare system (Bays, 1990, Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). However, statistics indicate that among those families that do come in contact with the child welfare system, a disproportionate number are families of color and poor families (Goerge, 1994). Although families of color do not abuse substances at any higher rates than White families, several studies indicate that families of color and poor families are more often reported to child welfare institutions than White middle-class families for child maltreatment, as well as substance abuse (Bays, 1990; Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg, 1996; Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). The over-reporting of poor families and families of color may more accurately explain the disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system than the assertion that families of color have higher rates of substance abuse and child maltreatment.

Among the various categories of child maltreatment that are reportable under the law, substance-abusing mothers giving birth to drug exposed infants has emerged as a significant source of children entering the child welfare system in California. Chasnoff, Landress and Barrett (1990) investigated the prevalence of substance use during pregnancy and racial discrepancies in mandatory reporting of child maltreatment in Florida. Using a sample of mothers from both public and private health facilities, analyses revealed little significant difference in the overall prevalence of substance use during pregnancy between White and African American women. However, despite nearly equal rates of substance use, African American women were reported for child maltreatment upon delivery at approximately ten times the rate for White women and poor women were more likely than others to be reported. Moreover, results from a study by Neuspiel et al., (1993) on the determinants of custody decisions for cocaine-exposed newborns suggest that racial bias continues to negatively affect African Americans even beyond their initial entry into the CWS. Being of African American ethnicity emerged as a significant predictor of removal from the mother in this hospital sample. Further, when the mother did not live in her own home, she was more likely to be denied custody of her newborn, a finding that implicates SES in custody decisions of drug-exposed infants.

Differential treatment of substance using mothers based on ethnicity also negatively affects mothers of color at subsequent phases in the CWS. Sagatun-Edwards, Saylor and Shifflett (1994) traced the processing of drug exposed infants through the social services and juvenile court system in California and found African American and Hispanics/Latinos to be over-represented and Whites to be under-represented at every stage in their processing in the CWS. For instance, at the detention hearing, African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos were more likely than other groups to have their child detained and were also significantly more likely to have court petitions filed, while Whites were more likely to be referred for informal supervision. As cases progressed, the

rate of under-representation for Whites steadily increased at subsequent phases of the child welfare proceedings, with the largest rate of White under-representation at the permanency planning stage, while both African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos were over-represented at permanency proceedings.

This over-representation of Hispanic/Latino children at every stage in their child welfare proceedings mirrors the perceptions of Hispanic/Latino child welfare service providers and Hispanic/Latino community members who responded to an in-depth survey conducted by members of the National Latino Child Welfare Advocacy Group (NLCWAG) (Oretga, Guillean & Gutierrez-Najera, 1996). In order to assess perceptions of service providers about Hispanics/Latinos in the CWS, NLCWAG members identified Hispanic/Latino service providers with direct knowledge about Hispanic/Latino children's experiences in the CWS. According to these respondents, 36 percent of the Hispanic/Latino child population are believed to live in unsafe conditions, and of these children, respondents believed that 35 percent will be reported for protective services and only 50 percent of these children will receive appropriate services. Over 90 percent of respondents reported that Hispanic/Latino families face certain barriers or obstacles that negatively impact their experiences with the CWS. These obstacles included fears of the child being removed or that citizenship status would be questioned; appropriate services that were either unavailable, inaccessible or unacceptable; lack of Spanish-speaking workers; the use of family supports to buffer the need for services and a lack of trust in the service system. Moreover, many Hispanic/Latino service providers pointed out that not enough effort is made within child welfare services to preserve Hispanic/Latino families. Respondents expressed concern that most of the reasons for termination of parental rights could be addressed adequately if the trust between Hispanics/Latinos and the CWS was improved and if culturally relevant services were available and accessible.

Many of these concerns regarding inadequacies in the CWS for Hispanic/Latino children were reflected in the comments of Hispanic/Latino community members who participated in focus groups conducted by the NLCWAG (Ortega et al., 1996). Community members were selected on the basis of their ability to speak to issues around raising Hispanic/Latino children in their communities. Focus group members felt that Hispanics/Latinos frequently faced linguistic and cultural barriers to receiving needed help and many participants described intimidating experiences and other problems on the part of service providers when they did try to access services. Hispanic/Latino community members also reported that many Hispanic/Latino immigrants encounter problems with the CWS because of their lack of knowledge regarding what constitutes acceptable discipline in the United States. Focus group members across all of the focus groups felt there was a need to provide more education to Hispanic/Latino parents in order to bridge this cultural gap. These barriers and the lack of information facing Hispanic/Latino families in the CWS may contribute to their over-representation at later stages in child welfare proceedings.

Research suggests that the rate at which children are reunited with their families; foster care placement decisions, and outcomes for children that cannot be reunified with their families are all impacted in some way by ethnicity and SES (see Courtney et al., 1996 for

a review). Lindsey (1991) used national survey data of 9,597 children in the CWS to analyze factors affecting foster care placement decisions. Across all age groups, the most important and significant factor predicting removal of the child from the home was adequacy of income. Families with no adequate source of income had their children removed at a significantly higher rate than other families. Moreover, data analysis revealed that once the child was removed from the home the biological parent was less likely to receive needed services than if the child remained in the home. In fact, a large number of families received no services once their child was removed, indicating that low SES parents are not only more likely to have their children removed, but are also less likely to receive services in order to reunify with their children.

Barth (1997) conducted a six year longitudinal study of children in California in an effort to isolate predictors of three possible outcomes for children in the CWS: reunification, remaining in long-term out-of-home care and adoption. After controlling for age, results indicated that African American children were far less likely than White or Hispanic/Latino children to be reunited with their families. African American children were also more than twice as likely to remain in care than to be adopted and White children were approximately twice as likely to be adopted as to remain in care. Hispanic/Latino children were also found to be more likely than White children to remain in care than to be adopted. The increased likelihood of African American and Hispanic/Latino children remaining in long-term out-of-home care indicates these children are staying in the CWS longer than their White counterparts. An increased length of time in the CWS may also contribute to African American and Hispanic/Latino over-representation in the CWS.

Poverty and Child Maltreatment

The following section contains a review of the pertinent literature linking poverty and child maltreatment. Findings from two national studies will be reviewed first, followed by findings from two regional studies, and finally, findings from a California study.

Gelles (1992) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between poverty and violence against children using data from two national probability surveys on family violence conducted in 1976 and 1985. Results based on self-report data gathered during face-to-face interviews, indicated that violence against children occurred at all socioeconomic levels and in all types of families. Although the percentages of violence against children were different between surveys, the trends in the findings were similar: families living in poverty had higher rates of child maltreatment. The rates of severe and very severe violence toward children were higher among women living below the poverty line. In addition, both poor parents that were 25 years old or younger and single parents had increased rates of severe and very severe violence against children. Gelles (1992) asserts that poverty explains the relationship between violence against children and being a single parent for women and that it is poverty, not other characteristics of single-parent families, that causes higher rates of abuse against children in these families. Although this study did not examine ethnicity and, therefore, does not illuminate the issue of the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system, it does

provide relatively reliable results supporting the assertion that poverty is a significant causal factor in child maltreatment in the United States. Other significant factors that were found to put children at risk for maltreatment included having young parents, having single-parents, and living in a female-headed household.

Ards (1992) conducted a secondary analysis of the National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect database collected in 1980 and 1986 (NIS-1 and NIS-2) to determine if the increase in child maltreatment reports was related both to better public awareness of child abuse and neglect and to the specific economic conditions of the maltreating families. Findings indicated that greater public awareness resulted in increased numbers of child maltreatment reports. In addition, the findings showed that certain economic and community characteristics were more highly predictive of child maltreatment than others. The macro-correlates of the analysis that put children at higher risk for maltreatment included: living in a crowded community, living in an urban area, living in an area with lower arrest rates for assault, and having a lower per capita income. Being African American tended to decrease the rate of child abuse and neglect after other factors were controlled for. This finding is interesting and contradicts the findings of other studies (Kotch, Browne, Ringwalt, Stewart, Ruina, Holt, Lowman, & Jung,1995; Spearly, & Lauderdale, 1983). However, this result was based on data that categorized race as "White", "Black", and "Other". This narrow categorization of race leads to an incomplete understanding regarding the dynamics between race/ethnicity and child maltreatment because entire populations are excluded or mislabeled. The findings from this study are fairly reliable due to the relative rigor of the NIS-1 and NIS-2 study designs. In addition, these findings, with the exception of the findings related to race, are consistent with those from other studies linking poverty and child maltreatment, reviewed in the following sections.

One regional study examined the relationship between certain community characteristics among different ethnic groups and rates of child maltreatment reports in 246 counties in Texas (Spearly & Lauderdale, 1983). The findings indicated that female-headed households were at higher risk for child maltreatment than were other households. The results also indicated that the greater the economic resources of a family, the lower the neglect rates. Abuse rates were related to higher percentages of single mothers. Results indicated that social factors, rather than economic factors, appear to affect abuse rates while economic factors, rather than social factors, appear to affect neglect rates. The study also examined child abuse and neglect rates among different ethnic groups. Results indicated that Whites had the lowest rates of maltreatment while African Americans had the highest rates of maltreatment. The authors suggest that the relative affluence of Whites may account for the lower rates of maltreatment among that population, while African American families were more likely to live in poverty, contributing to the higher rates of maltreatment among that population. African American families also had higher rates of working mothers and female-headed households which may also have contributed to higher rates of maltreatment among that population.

Mexican-Americans had maltreatment rates between those of Whites and African Americans. The authors suggest that higher maltreatment rates among this population

may be linked to high mobility rates that, in turn, disrupt their social support networks. In addition, the findings indicated that the more urban the county, the higher the rates of child maltreatment for African Americans and Mexican-Americans. However, the greater the percentage of Mexican-Americans in a given county, urban or rural, the lower the child maltreatment rates for that population. The authors speculate that this result may be related to lower cultural discord and fewer language barriers resulting in less stress on children and their families. It may also be the result of more Mexican-American employees in public agencies promoting more culturally competent services and fewer instances of the inappropriate labeling of Mexican-American families. The findings were not the same for African Americans. A higher percentage of African Americans in a county's population significantly predicted increased rates of maltreatment, even after controlling for other factors including an urban environment, the socioeconomic status of the family, and the mother's marital status. The authors suggest that an additional factor not included in their findings may explain the disproportionate rates of child maltreatment reports when there were high percentages of African American families in a county. In addition to the findings being dated, the authors made two assumptions that render their findings less reliable. First, they assumed officially registered (child maltreatment) reports to be a valid index of actual child maltreatment. Since 1983, other studies have found that official child maltreatment reports underestimate the actual incidence of child abuse and neglect. Second, the authors did not take systematic reporting bias across counties into account even though research has indicated there are biases against poor families and families of color resulting in higher rates of reporting for these families.

Drake and Pandey (1996) conducted a study in Missouri that examined the relationship between neighborhood poverty and rates of both reported and substantiated incidents of child physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Data were collected from the 1990 Census and state Child Protective Services records from 1992 on 185 zip codes across Missouri. The zip codes were classified as high, moderate, or low poverty zones and the rates of the three types of child maltreatment included in the study were compared across zip codes. The findings indicated that concentrated poverty was a risk factor for child health and development and was associated with child maltreatment. The highest rate of reported and substantiated incidents of child maltreatment were found in high poverty zones. The study found that as income increased, rates of child maltreatment decreased. Child maltreatment in the form of neglect was the most highly associated with poverty while sexual abuse was only moderately associated. The study also examined neighborhood characteristics across high, moderate, and low poverty zones. Results indicated that high poverty zones had the highest percentages of adults who did not complete high school, the lowest family incomes, and the highest percentages of families living in poverty. High poverty zones were also less likely to have two parents in the home. Low poverty zones had the lowest rates of adults that did not complete high school, the highest family incomes, and higher percentages of two-parent homes. Physical abuse rates also increased as the percentage of families living in poverty increased. While findings indicate that high poverty zones had the lowest numbers of White residents, instruments utilized in the study failed to measure the percentages of other ethnic groups.

A study was conducted in California to examine ways in which different demographic, economic, and social factors affected child maltreatment reports in three types of counties between 1985 and 1991 (Albert & Barth, 1996). Among the eighteen counties selected, five were urban, six were suburban, and seven were rural. The population total for these counties accounted for 80% of children in California. In urban and suburban counties, female drug-related arrests were the best predictor of child abuse and neglect reports. Also predictive of higher child maltreatment reports in urban and suburban counties were higher numbers of single-mother families on welfare. The best predictor of child maltreatment reports in rural and suburban counties was high birthrates. As the numbers of births rose, so did the numbers of child abuse and neglect reports. This was not true in urban counties, but the numbers of overall children in urban counties did result in higher numbers of child maltreatment reports in those counties. Across the three types of counties was an inverse relationship between unemployment level and child maltreatment reports. In addition, nearly all study counties reported a substantial increase in the numbers of child abuse and neglect reports after the 1988 policy changes in child maltreatment reporting rules. The findings of this study did not, however, examine the impact of race or ethnicity on child maltreatment reports in these California counties.

Characteristics of Communities of Color that Increase the Risk of Children Entering and Staying in the CWS

Research on the factors related to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS suggests that neighborhood context may significantly affect the likelihood of child maltreatment (Garbarino & Ebata, 1983; Coulton, Korbin, Su & Chow, 1995; Coulton, Korbin & Su, 1999). In an effort to link macro-level community correlates of child maltreatment, such as poverty, to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS, recent research has focused on characteristics of communities of color and mediating processes that appear to increase the risk of children of color coming into contact with the CWS.

In an effort to explain the mechanisms through which concentrated poverty may affect child maltreatment rates, Coulton et al. (1995, 1999) investigated the mediating role of a community's level of social organization. The authors isolated certain structural determinants of community social organization including: a community's economic status, residential mobility, family structure and ethnicity. Using census and child welfare agency data for 177 urban census tracts, Coulton et al. (1995) found child maltreatment rates to be related to a number of structural determinants of community social organization including: poverty; excessive numbers of children per adult resident; household and age structure; geographic proximity of neighborhoods to concentrated poverty; population turnover and a concentration of female-headed households. In a subsequent study, Coulton et al. (1999) sought to address the possible unreliability and bias of officially reported rates of child maltreatment by analyzing structural determinants of community social organization as they relate to individual community members' potential for child maltreatment. Results indicated weaker neighborhood effects on child maltreatment potential than official child maltreatment rates; a finding

consistent with previous research (see section on biases in reporting and processing of children in the CWS, p. 13ff). Nonetheless, analysis revealed the neighborhood factors of impoverishment and childcare burden to be significantly related to child maltreatment potential after controlling for individual risk factors.

Perhaps the most significant risk factor for African American and Hispanic/Latino children and families is their increased likelihood of living in neighborhoods experiencing concentrated poverty (e.g. neighborhoods where the poverty rate exceeds 40 percent) and the detrimental social, emotional and economic circumstances associated with concentrated poverty (Echautegui, 1997; Massey, 1993, Massey & Denton, 1989; Miranda, 1991; Zambrana & Dorrington, 1998). The U.S. Census Bureau's (1998) most recent figures indicate that approximately 19 percent of all American children under age 18 live in families struggling to survive below the official poverty line, of this 19 percent, approximately 26 percent are Hispanic/Latino and approximately 26 percent are African American children. Thus, over 50 percent of all American children living in poverty are Hispanic/Latino or African American.

The over-representation of African American and Hispanic/Latino children living in economically deprived households not only increases their risk of coming into contact with the CWS, but they are also at an increased risk for poor outcomes on assessments of health, cognitive development, school achievement and emotional well-being, as well as for peer conflict, depression and low self-confidence (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Maritato, 1997; Huston, 1991). Additionally, in an investigation of the cumulative psychosocial stress of living in poverty, McLoyd and Wilson (1991) found that mothers' mental health worsened as a function of her worsening economic situation. As this process occurred, mothers in the sample became less likely to behave supportively and positively towards their children and were less satisfied with their parenting role; the resulting outcome for children of these mothers was higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Coulton and Pandey (1992) examined the concentration of poverty in and around Cleveland, Ohio, to determine its impact on child health and development. Findings indicated that while children in high poverty areas were at greater risk for negative developmental outcomes than children living in non-poverty zones, economic deprivation was not the sole factor producing negative outcomes for children. The findings of their study show that the strongest predictor of child risk was birth to an unwed mother. Other factors that were found to pose extreme risk to children and adolescents were high concentrations of female-headed households, high crime rates, and high concentrations of families living in public housing. The authors speculate that these conditions may affect parenting behaviors that, in turn, produce poorer health and developmental outcomes for children in concentrated poverty areas.

The links between poverty and outcomes related to child well-being, such as child maltreatment rates and entrance into the CWS are difficult to isolate because a number of family and neighborhood conditions often occur simultaneously with poverty. Poor families are more likely to be headed by young females with low levels of educational attainment who are unemployed or in the low-wage market (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997).

Moreover, neighborhoods experiencing concentrated poverty often possess accompanying negative characteristics such as high crime rates, neighborhood violence, poor public schools and dilapidated housing conditions (Brooks-Gunn, et al., 1997). Additionally, compared to Whites, U.S. Census data from 1990 indicate that there are four times as many African Americans and three times as many Hispanics/Latinos living in neighborhoods experiencing concentrated poverty (Lamison-White, 1995). In fact, of the 11.2 million persons living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, more than 50 percent are African American, nearly 33 percent are Hispanic/Latino and only 11.8 percent are White (Gephart, 1997).

Research supports the association between concentrated poverty, neighborhood context, the mediating role of a community's level of social organization and the occurrence of child maltreatment and subsequent contact with the CWS. The increased likelihood of communities of color to experience poverty and the accompanying low levels of community social organization may be a contributing factor to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Current research on these associations has focused almost exclusively on African American and Hispanic/Latino communities, both of which are at an increased risk of living in poverty. Yet although these communities may share an increased likelihood of experiencing poverty and the detrimental effects of poor community social organization, the mechanisms through which African American and Hispanic/Latino families become impoverished and the characteristics of their respective communities may differentially impact their entrance into and experiences with the CWS. In an effort to underscore these unique experiences, current research on characteristics of African American and Hispanic/Latino communities will be discussed separately.

Statistics reveal a stark picture of concentrated poverty in African American families and communities. The official poverty rate for African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998) is 26 percent, however this static figure fails to accurately reflect the chronicity of poverty for African Americans. In a striking analysis of longitudinal data collected by the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) from a nationally representative sample, African American ethnicity emerged as the most significant distinction between families who live in chronic poverty and those who experience transitory poverty. The average African American child in the PSID sample spent 5.5 years living in poverty; the average non-African American child spent 0.9 years living in poverty (Duncan, 1991). Moreover, the dynamics and fluctuations of poverty patterns detailed in the U.S. Census' Survey of Income and Program Participation, reveal that African Americans have the lowest exit rate from poverty and the longest median poverty spell of any other ethnic group (Naifeh, 1998).

Research suggests that impoverishing processes affecting African American communities may contribute to their over-representation in the CWS (Coulton et al. 1995). Numerous theories have emerged regarding the social and economic processes through which African American communities may become impoverished. Although numerous factors contribute to the concentration of poverty in African American communities, one factor that appears to cut across the majority of theories on the etiology of African American

poverty is the concept of racial segregation and its deleterious consequences. In a comprehensive national analysis of 1990 Census data, Massey (1993) identified five characteristics of segregated communities that he used to calculate segregation figures for African American neighborhoods. Intense segregation occurs when African Americans are over-represented in some areas and under-represented in other areas, a term defined as unevenness; thus segregated African American communities also experience racial isolation since they rarely share neighborhoods with Whites. Segregated African American communities are clustered to form one large contiguous neighborhood and they may be concentrated in a relatively small amount of physical space. Lastly, segregated African American neighborhoods tend to be centralized around the center of an urban area. Massey's (1993) analysis revealed that one third of African Americans live under conditions of intense racial segregation in which all five dimensions of segregation are present.

The combined effect of racial segregation and concentrated poverty on African American communities impacts structural determinants of community social organization, such as economic resources and opportunities, family structure, residential mobility and deviant behaviors. As Coulton et al. (1995, 1999) demonstrated, disruptions in a community's level of social organization are significantly related to official child maltreatment rates and to a lesser extent, child maltreatment potential. Thus, the presence of highly segregated African American communities living in concentrated poverty may be a significant factor influencing the over-representation of African Americans in the CWS.

The net effects of racial segregation, concentrated poverty, and low levels of community social organization increase the risk of African American families entering the CWS and they present numerous challenges to African American families who do enter the CWS. These challenges were reflected in results from a study by Saunders, Nelson and Landsman (1993) comparing 182 African American and White families referred to CPS for child neglect. Saunders et al. found that although both African American and Whites families had low per capita incomes, more children and were more likely to live in impoverished neighborhoods than those with higher incomes, African Americans in the study faced worse economic and social conditions than their White counterparts. For instance, although both Whites and African Americans in the study were of low SES, African Americans had significantly lower median incomes than Whites. Moreover, African Americans in the sample were more than twice as likely as Whites to live in unsafe housing; four times as likely to have rats in their homes; twice as likely to live in neighborhoods with frequent drug use and almost four times as likely to live in neighborhoods with a great deal of criminal activity. Moreover, African American families were also significantly more likely than White families to be headed by single females. Additionally, the chronicity of poverty for the African American families was reflected in the finding that 72 percent of African American caregivers reported that their families were on welfare most of the time while they were growing up, compared to 28 percent for White caregivers. These differences between African American and White families in the CWS support the connections between racial segregation, concentrated poverty and an increased risk for African Americans of entering the CWS.

Many of the economic and social forces impacting African American communities also affect Hispanic/Latino communities, although these processes and their impact on Hispanics/Latinos in the CWS may manifest in somewhat different ways. At 25 percent, Hispanics/Latinos experience a disproportionately high rate of poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). Hispanics/Latinos also have the highest entry rate into poverty and the highest episodic poverty rate of any other ethic group (Naifeh, 1998). In a review of available data on the economic and social vulnerability of Hispanics/Latinos and their implications for child welfare, Zambrana and Dorrington (1998) described the current national conditions for Hispanics/Latinos. Most notably, the Hispanic/Latino population has a higher percentage of children and youth compared to Whites. Twenty-two percent of Hispanic/Latino families with children under 18 live in female-headed households compared with 11 percent of White families; Hispanic/Latino households tend to be larger than White households (3.65 members vs. 2.56 members). Additionally, only 49.8 percent of Hispanics/Latinos age 25 or over have a high school diploma or higher education compared to 77.2 percent of non-Hispanics/Latinos. Hispanics/Latinos also have the lowest rate of college graduation than any other ethnic group and they are only half as likely as non-Hispanics/Latinos to hold a managerial or professional position in the labor market. Moreover, Hispanic/Latino families with children under 18 are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic/Latino families and 55 percent of all Hispanic/Latino female-headed families with children live in poverty, compared with 40.6 percent of non-Hispanics/Latinos. These statistics reveal a number of connections between the nature of Hispanic/Latino communities in the United States and various structural determinants of community social organization that have been correlated with child maltreatment rates including; the presence of female-headed households, large family size, low educational attainment and concentrated poverty.

The mechanisms through which Hispanics/Latinos become impoverished are numerous and varied; Massey and Denton (1989) note that low to moderate levels of racial segregation (as measured by the aforementioned five dimensions) are found in Hispanic/Latino communities across the nation. Indeed, a sense of isolation was a major theme that emerged from focus groups conducted with Hispanic/Latino community members (Ortega et al., 1996). Focus group members consistently expressed their concern regarding a prevalent sense of isolation in their communities, as well as a lack of mutual support amongst community members. Hispanic/Latino focus group participants also felt that violence was rampant in their communities and that their neighborhoods were unsafe; many feared letting their children play outside. Participants also felt that their children were negatively impacted by the prevalence of drugs and alcohol in their communities.

The sentiments expressed by Hispanic/Latino community members may reflect some of the negative consequences of racial segregation, concentrated poverty and low levels of community social organization. In a review of Census tract data, Enchautegui (1997) found that Hispanics/Latinos living in neighborhoods that were comprised of predominately other Hispanics/Latinos had poverty rates over seven percent higher than Hispanics/Latinos in the national population, and had significantly higher unemployment rates than Hispanics/Latinos in the general population. Thus, Hispanics/Latinos living in

racially segregated communities may be at an even higher risk of entering the CWS. Hispanics/Latinos living in racially segregated communities were also 11 percent more likely to live in female-headed households than Hispanics/Latinos in the general population and four percent more likely to not have a high school diploma. These data suggest that the negative effects of racial segregation do impact Hispanic/Latino communities, although the magnitude of the effects appear to be less for Hispanics/Latinos than for African American communities.

Unlike most African American communities, Hispanic/Latino communities are also impacted by immigration patterns that may affect community social organization and the over-representation of Hispanics/Latinos in the CWS, yet the extent to which immigration patterns affect poverty and entrance into the CWS is unclear. In her assessment of Hispanic/Latino child poverty in the United States, Miranda (1991) concluded that immigration was not the major cause of Hispanic/Latino child poverty. She concluded that even without the increases in immigration in the past two decades Hispanic/Latino poverty would still be extremely high. Yet in her statistical analysis of 1990 Census data, Enchautegui (1997) found the presence of recent immigrants in a community to be a significant predictor of an increase in Hispanic/Latino poverty for that community. However long-term immigrants were found to reduce poverty, although these effects were smaller than for recent immigrants.

Although the impact of immigration on poverty rates for Hispanics/Latinos is debatable, the impact of immigration on children in the CWS appears to be significant. Ortega et al. (1996) reported that Hispanic/Latino child welfare service providers feel that recent immigrants tend to be fearful of the CWS because of concerns that their citizenship status will be questioned. Respondents also mentioned that recent immigrants might be monolingual and have underdeveloped social supports-- factors that may interact with the effects of concentrated poverty, racial segregation and low levels of community social organization to create overwhelming barriers to effective service delivery for Hispanic/Latinos in the CWS.

Overall Summary and Emerging Themes

The purpose of this literature review was to gain a comprehensive overview of previous research on factors related to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS, in order to put the current study in context. Some of the findings will also provide helpful information and background that will be used to formulate questions for the next phase of our study. Because of the exploratory nature of this first phase of the research project, we began by examining four broad conceptual areas that have previously been linked with entry of children and youth into the CWS. Several of the major themes that emerged from this literature review are summarized below.

In the area of *parental substance abuse and child maltreatment,* our review of the available research revealed that strong empirical evidence concerning the relationship between substance abuse and child maltreatment is extremely limited. Although numerous studies have sought to link parental substance abuse causally with child

maltreatment, few, if any, have produced reliable findings (Bays, 1990; Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg, 1996; Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Jaudes, Ekwo, & Voorhis, 1995; Vega, Kolody, Hwang, & Noble, 1993). Not surprising, an examination of the scant literature on substance abuse, child maltreatment and ethnicity indicated that definitive findings in this area are likewise absent from the literature. Another serious limitation in this area of inquiry was that the few studies, which included race or ethnicity, often failed to measure the concept accurately and most neglected to include groups other than Whites and African Americans.

Perhaps the most significant finding in the research on substance abuse and child maltreatment was that parental substance abuse, as it relates to child maltreatment, ought not to be assessed in isolation as it is most likely linked with a number of other social problems that may lead to abusive or neglectful behavior. Some of those problems may include, but are not limited to: poverty, serious mental illness, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). All of these are factors may affect children and families of color.

In addition, it may be important to further explore the relationship between substance abuse, domestic violence and child maltreatment. However, research in this area is not well developed. The limited available research suggests that children in households with domestic violence may be at increased risk for child maltreatment (Appel & Holden, 1998; Hughes, 1988; Strauss & Gelles, 1986; Strauss, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), though these studies do not take substance abuse into account. While researchers estimate that approximately 6% of children in the U.S. are likely to be physically maltreated in any given year in families in which marital violence occurs, substantial evidence of the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse is lacking.

In addition, issues related to the over-reporting of substance abuse among families and parents of color cannot be neglected. Although families of color were not found to abuse substances at rates any higher than White families, several studies showed that families of color and poor families were more often reported to child welfare institutions than White middle-class families both for child maltreatment, as well as substance abuse (Bays, 1990; Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hollenberg, 1996; Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). This issue of bias and over-reporting as it relates to children and families is clearly an important issue and was explored in greater detail in the second section of our review.

Results of our examination of the research literature related to *the initial reporting and subsequent processing of children through the CWS* indicated that differential treatment based on ethnicity and/or SES, is indeed a factor that may likely contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Reasons for this differential treatment at various phases in the processing of a child welfare case were found to be numerous and varied. Reasons included a belief that persons of color may be more likely to come in contact with social service agencies by virtue of their likelihood to be of a lower SES and to be concentrated in urban inner-city areas. Research also suggests that the racial/ethnic distribution of the child's community of residence may

have some influence on the likelihood of being placed in the CWS (Jenkins & Diamond, 1985; Garland, et al., 1998). Studies that tested the "visibility hypothesis" suggested that there was a higher probability for African American children to be placed in foster care from a geographic area of residence where they were less represented and thus, more visible. These findings apply to African American children, but not to Hispanic/Latino or Asian American (Garland, et al., 1998). Other speculations included the possible negative impact of the lack of ethnically competent services provided by child welfare workers, judges and other professionals presiding over child welfare outcomes—the majority of whom are White (Barth, 1997). Finally, racial and class bias in the form of negative stereotypes and discrimination against persons of color were also found to be likely contributors in racial discrepancies in reporting and processing through the CWS.

Limitations in this area of research center around the miscoding and under classification of ethnic groups in the literature. For instance, ethnicity in much of the available data was most often be coded as Black, White or other—a classification system that obscures reporting and processing information on other ethnic groups such as Hispanics/Latinos, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders or Native Americans. Moreover, when these ethnicities were coded and included in the data, they tended to be eliminated from statistical analyses due to the lack of a large enough sample size. Consequently, reasons for the under-representation of certain ethnicities in the CWS have virtually been ignored in most studies.

The third area of exploration centered on *poverty and other factors associated with child maltreatment*. Although the research reviewed in this section varied widely in design, sampling method, study population, and geographic region, the findings were strikingly similar. Research findings indicated that there is a relationship between poverty and child maltreatment. The macro-correlates that were found repeatedly in the studies of poverty and child maltreatment were: single parent families, female-headed households, young parents, and low levels of parental education. Other contributing factors included: living in a high crime area, living in public housing, having larger numbers of dependent children, and receiving welfare benefits.

Finally, the fourth area covered in this literature review focused on *characteristics of communities and neighborhoods that might place children of color at an increased risk of entering and staying in the CWS*. While the available research in this area was helpful in illuminating some of the complex interacting social conditions that may contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS, serious limitations of the studies precluded any definitive findings. Perhaps the most serious limitation for the purposes of our research endeavor, centered on the fact that the current research did not examine the processes by which poverty and other neighborhood factors impact families of color and their subsequent entry into the CWS. More research on the variables related to neighborhoods and communities as well as, the mechanisms through which they interrelate and impact children and families of color is needed. In addition, since characteristics of other ethnic communities such as Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders or Native Americans have not been investigated adequately, little is known about the interactions between characteristics of these communities and their contact with the

CWS. The under-representation of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans in the CWS at the national level and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders at the state and county levels may reveal interesting community characteristics that serve to buffer these communities from contact with the CWS. Alternatively, research might reveal the underreporting of child maltreatment in these communities – yet another issue which merits attention if these communities are to be effectively and equitably served. Finally, most analysis of macro social variables was derived from 1990 Census data which is now outdated and consequently unreliable. The imminent availability of data from the 2000 Census lends promise to developing a clearer and more current understanding of ways in which community and neighbor factors affect children and families of color.

In summary, it appears that all of the four areas covered in this literature review areas are connected in multiple and complex ways. Studies have yet to be designed which examine these areas simultaneously with a clear focus on ethnicity – a necessity if we are to truly understand and disentangle the numerous interrelated factors associated with the disproportionate rates of children of color in the CWS.

Chapter 3: Historical Background and Context: A Review of Recent Child Welfare Policy and its Impact on Children of Color

Since the establishment of child welfare services with the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, policies affecting children of color in the CWS have fluctuated widely. A review of current and previous policies suggests that the shifting nature of child welfare policies and the often unclear mission of the CWS has an impact on all children and families, and particularly those of color. Indeed, the overall mission of child welfare services is still a subject of debate among child welfare workers and policy makers. At times, child welfare policies have emphasized permanency through family preservation and reunification with the provision of support services. At other times, policies have prioritized permanency through expedited adoptions; still other child welfare policies have emphasized preventative services as their goal.

These conflicting objectives have also had an impact on ways in which child welfare policies are implemented. In recent years, state and county child welfare agencies have had to respond to increasingly complex social problems together with the curtailment of social programs, as well as constantly fluctuating policies designed to address these problems. In one study by the United States General Accounting Office (1997, USGAO) child welfare workers reported that they lack knowledge of policies and procedures because policies change frequently, procedure manuals do not exist and there is inconsistent distribution of information to staff.

Yet despite the various philosophies guiding child welfare policies and the ways they are implemented, no policies have managed to reduce the number of children of color in the CWS, or the amount of time children of color stay in the CWS. The following section will provide an overview of major federal child welfare policies of the past 20 years and their impact or potential impact on children of color in the CWS. Procedural guidelines for implementation of policies in California, as well as within Santa Clara County will also be described.

Indian Child Welfare Act 1978

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 was enacted to preserve the "existence and integrity of Indian tribes" (ICWA, p. 2) and their resources by protecting Indian children. ICWA was established in response to the increasing numbers of Indian families who were being disrupted by non-tribal agencies and children who were being placed with non-Indian families and institutions; the failure of States to "recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people,"(ICWA, p. 2); and, the failure of States to acknowledge the social and cultural norms of Indian communities and families.

ICWA established Federal standards governing the removal of Indian children from their families and the placement of these children in homes that would reflect their unique values and culture. These regulations required that when considering an out-of-home placement or adoption for an Indian child, preference be given to extended family members, other members of the tribe, or other Indian families. The regulations also

stipulated that the child be placed in the least restrictive environment with accommodations for his/her special needs, that licensed foster placements be approved by the tribe prior to placement, and that the social and cultural standards of the family be maintained while the child is in out-of-home placement. ICWA also established the right of tribes to refuse State approved foster placements for Indian children unless there is "clear and convincing evidence" (ICWA, p. 5) that remaining with an Indian parent or custodian will result in "serious emotional or physical damage to the child" (ICWA, p. 5) and the right to refuse termination of parental rights unless there is evidence "beyond a reasonable doubt" (ICWA, p. 5) that remaining with the Indian parent or custodian will result in "serious emotional or physical damage to the child." (ICWA, p. 5)

In addition, ICWA required States to notify tribes about Indian children involved with the CWS, provided tribes and their tribal courts with the right to review reports and documents related to the case of an Indian child, and with the right to intervene in cases involving an Indian child not living on a reservation. ICWA also gave Indian tribal courts jurisdiction over all Indian child welfare cases on reservations and stipulated that States "give full faith and credit to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings" (ICWA, p. 4) of Indian tribal courts. Finally, ICWA established the right of tribes to request and provide services to Indian families to prevent the removal of their children and to apply for federal funds for the establishment and operation of those services.

Impact of ICWA on American Indian Children

Circumstances exist that may prevent Indian children and their families from accessing their rights and protections under ICWA. First, if a child's American Indian heritage is not discovered by State child welfare agencies, American Indian children will not receive the protections afforded them under ICWA. Second, if workers in State child welfare agencies are not trained about ICWA regulations and how they interact with other regulations, like ASFA (explained later in this section), they might make inappropriate decisions for American Indian children and their families. Finally, if agencies fail to comply with ICWA and Indian children are placed with or adopted by non-Indian families, these children could suffer the disruption of stable placements in an attempt to rectify an earlier failure to comply with ICWA. Non-compliance with ICWA could result in negative outcomes for Indian children, their families, and their tribal communities as a result of the loss of their culture and values, the deterioration of the Indian family and tribal connections, and the loss of rights and protections afforded Indian children and their families under the law.

Neither the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (1994) amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (MEPA-IEP) (1996) nor the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (1997), explained in a later part of this section, modified ICWA (Hollinger, 1998; Simmons & Trope, 1999). Following the adoption of these new policies, tribes, tribal courts, and Indian children and their families continue to maintain the rights and protections afforded them in ICWA.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act 1980

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA) of 1980 represented a major federal statute that prioritized family preservation and permanency as the main goals of child welfare services. The passage of AACWA was prompted by a growing awareness that many children in the CWS were spending unnecessarily long periods of time in out-of-home care with no permanency plans for reunification or adoption (Knitzer, Allen, & McGowan, 1978; Pecora, Whittaker, & Maluccio, 1992). While the act was intended to prevent child abuse and neglect, the overall goal was to promote permanency in the lives of troubled children by strengthening families in order to prevent the unnecessary out-of-home placement of children, reunifying children with their natural parents as soon as possible, and facilitating the adoption of children in cases in which parental rights have been terminated (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980). In order to ensure that children and families were given sufficient opportunity for reunification, AACWA mandated that all states make "reasonable efforts" to preserve and reunify families. Additionally, funding mechanisms were altered. Prior to AACWA states could be reimbursed for foster care costs without similar reimbursement for preventative and support services, a practice that encouraged the growth of the foster care system, as states actually saved money by keeping children in foster care. AACWA attempted to change this trend, by stipulating that family preservation and permanency be the main goals of child welfare services and creating funding mechanisms to support these goals (Humphries, 1999; Pecora, Whittaker, & Maluccio, 1992).

To meet the mandates of AACWA, states passed their own enabling legislation. California authorized a restructuring and expansion of existing child welfare services that resulted in a CWS divided into four service programs: Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification and Permanency Planning. The four major goals of these services included: 1) prevention of unnecessary foster care placements, 2) when possible, reunification of foster care children with their parents, 3) finding adoptive homes or guardianship placements for children in long-term foster care placements, and 4) assurance of stable and family-like placements for those that stay in long-term foster care (Barth, Courtney, Berrick, & Alpert, 1994).

Although AACWA created several important policy changes in the CWS, the stated goals of family preservation and permanency for children in the CWS were not met. Beginning in 1983, the number of children in the CWS steadily increased, as did the length of stay in out-of-home-care (National Commission on Children, 1991). Child abuse and neglect reports rose 259 percent between 1976 and 1989 (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1990). Failure to meet the aims of AACWA might in part have been due to the fact that despite the CWS's renewed emphasis on family preservation, federal funds were still heavily concentrated on foster care and adoption services. For instance, in FY1987, $697 million was appropriated for Title IV-E and went primarily to funding foster care and adoption services, while only $222.5 million went to Title-IV-B to fund preventive and reunification services, research, demonstration and training grants (McGowan, 1990). Federal funding for adoption assistance increased more than 21 times from $5 million in FY1984 to $108 million in FY 1988, without commensurate increases in family

preservation funding (Pelton, 1989). Thus, although the CWS itself may have had the goal of making reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families, the federal fiscal and budgetary realities did not support these goals.

In addition, AACWA failed to include any definition of or any guidelines for states to establish a consistent standard for "reasonable efforts." Consequently, wide variation in the interpretation of this provision of the act led some states and localities to determine that families should be preserved at all costs and allowed an indefinite amount of time to meet preservation or reunification requirements. Alternatively, other child welfare systems defined reasonable efforts more conservatively and disallowed preservation or reunification services (Green & Tumlin, 1999).

Impact of AACWA on Children of Color

AACWA intended that states make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families by increasing preventive services that would ostensibly assist all children, including children of color, by shortening their length of stay in the CWS and by providing services to enable them to remain at home. In practice however, largely due to the inherent conflicts and ambiguities within AACWA, federal funding continued to be skewed towards out-of-home placement and the number of children of color in the CWS steadily increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Family Preservation and Support Services 1993

The policy known as "family preservation" - aimed at providing services at the front end of the system to keep children with parents and guardians - became the key strategy for achieving the goals of AACWA. Family Preservation grew to dominate child welfare services throughout the 1980's leading in 1993, to the passage of The Family Preservation and Support Services Act (FP/SS). The FP/SS authorized federal funds with state matches, to create and implement services to prevent children from entering out-of-home placement. Thus, thirteen years after the AACWS, the FP/SS re-established permanency through family preservation as the primary goal of the CWS. Under Title IV-B, the FP/SS Act authorized $930 million over a five-year period for states to create new family preservation and support programs, as well as expand existing supportive services through locally established programs (USGAO 1997).

New funds allocated by the FP/SS Act were directed towards two broad categories of services: family preservation programs and family support programs. Family preservation programs were designed to serve families with reported child abuse or neglect or where children pose a danger to themselves or others. These families were at risk of having their children placed in temporary or permanent out-of-home placements. Family Preservation services were to include family counseling and training in parenting skills (USGAO, 1997). Family support programs were intended to serve families where child abuse or neglect is a risk, but has not yet occurred. Support services were to be provided in community centers or schools and included health care, education and employment (USGAO, 1997). Although the FP/SS Act distinguished between preservation vs. support services, in practice these services were almost identical (USGAO, 1997).

Passage of the FP/SS Act was partly prompted by research and cost-benefit analyses suggesting that family preservation and support services were an effective and cost-saving means of serving families in the CWS and keeping children out of foster care (Fraser, Pecora, & Haapala, 1988; Fuqua & Thieman, 1989; Nelson, 1991). However, these claims were largely based on studies with flawed designs (Moynihan, 1996; Rossi, 1991). To date, there continues to be no compelling scientific evidence that family preservation programs result in substantial reductions in out-of-home placements or that they are any more effective than traditional approaches used by child welfare agencies Littell, Schuerman, & Rzepnicki, 1991; Pecora et al., 1995; Rossi, 1992; Schuerman et al., 1992). There is also no compelling scientific evidence that family preservation services prevent future incidents of abuse or neglect (Gelles, 1996; Schuerman, Rzepnicki, & Littell, 1994; Littell, 1997). In addition, there is no satisfactory and reliable method for identifying those families who might be amenable to family preservation interventions.

In addition to a lack of credible scientific evidence supporting continuation of Family Preservation programs, there were other problems with the policy. Although the FP/SS Act created new funding mechanisms for states to implement family preservation and support services, it did not mandate any major changes in child welfare policy. In addition, the overemphasis on family preservation indirectly contributed to another problem. It diverted the attention of child welfare administrators and policymakers away from the need to improve the infrastructure of child welfare systems. The training and supervision of social workers, efforts to recruit, screen, train, supervise and assist foster parents and the need to increase the level and quality of services to children in foster care were put aside (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999).

Impact of Family Preservation Services on Children of Color

As discussed earlier, children of color in the CWS have an increased likelihood of coming from families living in poverty, and from segregated communities with low levels of community social organization. Given these circumstances in the external environment, children of color in the CWS may be the most likely to benefit from prevention efforts designed to preserve and support families, but may be the most difficult to reunify. The limited information on the effectiveness of family preservation services for families and children of color suggests that these services may be of limited use to such families who come into contact with the system (Courtney et al., 1996). Statistics indicate that during the height of Family Preservation services, many children, including children of color who were removed from their families and placed in foster care were kept for years in the system because of the undying hope that they would be reunified (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999).

Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996

The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 was enacted to prevent placement delays and discrimination in the placement of children on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the child or the prospective foster or adoptive parent and was intended to increase the number of children who were adopted. MEPA was drafted in response to the alarming number of children waiting for permanent foster and adoptive placements in the CWS and was intended to help children that were difficult to place. Many of the children waiting for permanent placements were children of color, specifically African American children, and were at-risk of never obtaining a permanent placement (Hollinger, 1998). Evidence presented to Congress in support of MEPA suggested that African American children, and other children of color, languished in the CWS as a result of drawn-out searches for same race foster and adoptive homes while other qualified adoptive homes were available for these children that were not of the same ethnicity (Hollinger, 1998). Proponents of MEPA also suggested that families of color were discouraged from becoming foster or adoptive parents and were discriminated against by child welfare and adoption agencies (Hollinger, 1998).

While MEPA prevented States and agencies receiving Federal funds from delaying or denying placement of a child solely on the basis of race, color, or national origin, it permitted agencies to consider a child's cultural, racial, and ethnic background and the ability of the foster or adoptive parent to meet those specific needs in placement decisions. MEPA also required that child welfare and adoption agencies work aggressively to recruit and retain culturally and ethnically diverse foster and adoptive parents. Finally, MEPA outlined penalties for non-compliance with provisions of the law.

In 1996, MEPA was amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP) included in the Small Business Job Protection Act. The aim of the amendment, entitled Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption, was to clarify the intent of MEPA, to emphasize that discrimination would not be tolerated, and to strengthen the compliance and enforcement provisions of the law. IEP repealed the section of MEPA permitting the consideration of a child's cultural, racial, and ethnic background and the ability of the foster or adoptive parent to meet those specific needs to be considered in placement decisions. IEP retained section 554 of MEPA requiring child welfare agencies to recruit and retain culturally and ethnically diverse foster and adoptive parents and established specific financial penalties for non-compliance with MEPA-IEP.

In summary, the intent of MEPA-IEP was to decrease the time children wait to be adopted; to promote recruitment and retention of diverse foster and adoptive parents; and, to eliminate discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in placement decisions.

Impact of MEPA-IEP on Children of Color

The enactment of MEPA-IEP has several implications for children of color. MEPA-IEP could have a positive impact on the large numbers of children of color in the CWS who are eligible and waiting for permanent placement or adoption. If MEPA-IEP were implemented as it was intended, children would spend less time in the system waiting for permanent placements, thereby preventing the adverse effects of long-term institutional care. In addition, achieving permanency more quickly and reducing the number of placements a child experiences while in the CWS may be particularly helpful for children of color, specifically African American children, who are severely over-represented in the population of children waiting for a permanent home (Hollinger, 1998).

MEPA-IEP's requirement, that States and agencies receiving Federal funds actively recruit foster and adoptive parents to reflect the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children in their agencies, could also expedite the process of achieving permanency for children in the system. Although MEPA-IEP prohibits agencies to consider culture or ethnicity in placement decisions, more foster and adoptive families of color would be available to take in children of color without delaying the permanency placement process. MEPA-IEP also prohibits the removal of a child from a safe and stable transracial placement in order to place a child with a family of similar ethnic background. Fewer disruptions in a child's life have been found to contribute to more positive outcomes.

However, several obstacles to the implementation of MEPA-IEP, such as confusion about the law, lack of resources for recruitment of foster and adoptive parents, resistance from workers, and fear of litigation, could result in the inappropriate and unsuccessful implementation of MEPA-IEP. This could negatively impact children in the system by delaying permanent placement, as well as jeopardizing an agency's funding if it is determined that it is out of compliance with the provisions of MEPA-IEP. Also, as mentioned earlier, MEPA-IEP does not modify the ICWS. For American Indian children, ICWA supercedes any stipulation of MEPA-IEP.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act 1997

By 1997, 40 percent of children in out-of-home care were found to have been in care for two or more years, and nearly 30 percent had at least three different placements while in care (USGAO, Feb. 1997). These data are particularly relevant for children of color who are disproportionately represented in the CWS and often experience longer stays and poorer outcomes in the CWS (Barth, Courtney, Berrick & Alpert, 1994; Berrick, Needell, Barth & Jonson-Reid, 1998; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). This growing awareness that children in the CWS were spending several years in placements that were designed to be temporary, led to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997. AFSA, the most comprehensive and sweeping set of reforms enacted by congress since AACWA, represented a key shift in public policy by emphasizing the primacy of protection of children over preservation and reunification

(USDHHS, 1999). ASFA created provisions that were intended to expedite permanent placements for children in out-of-home care by making it easier to remove children from dangerous home environments.

The legislation called for placing more of the burden on abusive and neglectful parents to demonstrate that they could properly care for their children before they would be returned to them. At the same time, the act included provisions for continued funding of family preservation services. Under ASFA, child welfare agencies are still mandated to make "reasonable efforts" for preservation and reunification, yet now they are also required to make and document "reasonable efforts" to secure a new permanent family, when reunification is not possible. New provisions created by ASFA include: 1) shorter timelines for reunification and termination of parental rights proceedings, 2), the use of "bypass criteria" under which "reasonable efforts" for reunification are not required, 3) concurrent planning, and 4) incentives for states to encourage adoption. States have ultimate responsibility for implementing ASFA and have much discretion in determining how they will meet the provisions of the act, substantively and in spirit.

Shortened Time Frames

ASFA mandated new shortened time lines for the provision of reunification services for children in out-of-home care and established guidelines that require states to set their own reduced timelines for the provision of reunification services. In California, children in out-of-home care who are three years or older are allowed 12 months of reunification services before a permanency hearing is required, and children under three years are given six months of reunification services (Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC), 2000). At the time of the permanency hearing, a permanent placement is to be determined. Reduced timelines for reunification services also apply to the termination of parental rights (TPR) process. Once a child has been in foster care for 15 out of the last 22 months, states are now required to file a petition for TPR.

Time-limited reunification services authorized by ASFA are designed to prevent long stays in out-of-home care by providing necessary services to families within a shortened time frame. The re-authorized funding for family maintenance and family preservation programs formerly under the FP/SS act of 1993, was renamed "Promoting Safe and Stable families." Additionally, the "Kinship Support Services Programs" provides community-based family support to relative caregivers and the dependent children placed in their home. These programs are designed to strengthen families so that children can stay with or return to their families. Services offered can include counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, childcare, and other related services (USDHHS, 1999). In California, eight counties received funding for KSSP programs in an effort to continue support services to relative care givers. Currently state law limits the eligibility for state funds to start a KSSP to those counties that have 40 percent of more of their dependent children living with relatives (CDSS, 2000).

Research cited in the second section of this report suggests that families in the CWS often face increasingly complex problems that can require a wide range of social services. The

most frequently cited problems and circumstances impacting families in the CWS include: substance abuse, homelessness, lack of a stable residence, poverty, HIV/AIDS, parental mental illness, at least one parent absent or incarcerated, domestic violence and having additional children in foster care (USGAO, Oct. 1997; USDHSS, 1999). Social services to address these myriad concerns are necessary for families in the CWS who may be trying to meet reunification requirements. Under ASFA, reunification and related support services need to address many of these co-existing problems within six and 12-month time limits. Yet, data suggest that frequently needed services are simply not available or are inadequate in meeting the multifaceted needs of families in the CWS. For instance, research indicates that 65 percent of open foster care cases in California involve a family where one or both parents have a substance abuse problem for which treatment is required (USGAO, 1998). The USDHHS 1997 national study on parental substance abuse in the CWS found that 50 percent of open child welfare cases with parental substance were offered and provided treatment services, 23 percent were offered treatment services, but not provided them, 23 percent were not offered any treatment services and four percent were classified as "don't know." Thus, on a national level, nearly 50 percent of open child welfare cases with an identified parental substance abuse problem are not provided necessary treatment services.

The complicated needs of families in the CWS combined with the steadily increasing number of children in the CWS may also have an impact on the delivery and quality of time-limited reunification services coordinated or offered by individual social workers. A recent report on the child welfare services workload in California indicates that high workloads are leaving many child welfare cases not served or underserved (American Human Association, 2000). The report found workloads for Family Maintenance programs are nearly three times the optimum recommended workloads for providing adequate family maintenance services. Similarly, workloads for family reunification programs are nearly twice the recommended optimum caseload for effective delivery of family reunification services.

The same report found that within Permanent Placement programs in California, workloads for individual social workers are nearly 3 times the optimum workload and nearly 30 cases per month were being carried, but not worked. This figure is of particular concern in light of ASFA's reduction in the time frames for the TPR proceedings. The TPR is intended to free up children in out-of-home placements for whom reunification is not possible so that they may be adopted or placed in an alternative permanent placement. With such a high number of open cases in Permanent Placement programs in California not being served, ASFA's goal of timely permanence through expedited TPR proceeding may, in fact, be leaving many children without the option of reunification and without a permanent placement.

Impact of Shortened Timelines on Children of Color

Without comprehensive social services, arbitrary 12 and six-month time limits for reunification may be not sufficient for parents to meet all of the conditions for reunification. These circumstances may have an even more profound impact on children

of color in the CWS. The characteristics of families, children and communities of color, explicated in the first section of this report to increase their chances of entering the CWS, will also likely impact the effectiveness of reunification and other support services once they are in the CWS. These circumstances in combination with a lack of necessary social services for reunification, the enormous workloads of individual social workers and shorted time frames may create overwhelming barriers to successful reunification for children of color in the CWS.

In addition, it is not clear what the impact of the increased support for kinship supportive services will be. The increasing number and proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives is one of the most striking trends in child welfare in the last ten years, one that disproportionately impacts children of color. To date there has been no rigorous assessment of the benefits and/or costs of kincare to families and children of color.

Bypass Criteria

 In addition to shortened time frames, ASFA introduced new provisions that describe "bypass criteria" - circumstances under which a state is relieved of the requirement to make "reasonable efforts" for reunification. Bypass criteria are intended to ensure child safety and to expedite permanency planning efforts by quickly identifying families for whom reunification is unlikely (USDHHS, 1999). Ostensibly, the early identification of such families will free up more children for adoption or alternative permanent placement and shorten their length of time in the CWS. Once the court verifies the presence of a bypass criterion, the state must begin within 30 days to find the child an alternative permanent home (USGAO, 1999).

California had already been using certain bypass criteria prior to the passage of the ASFA, and under the new regulations was permitted to add additional criteria. In California, any one of 13 bypass criteria is sufficient for the denial of reunification services, and the pursuit of an alternative permanent placement. These criteria include the following:
1. Parents' whereabouts are unknown for six months.
2. Parental mental disability that prevents the utilization of services.
3. A sibling has been removed from the home, returned and then removed from parental custody again.
4. Parent has caused the death of a child.
5. Parent caused severe emotional damage.
6. Parent committed severe physical or sexual abuse to the child, sibling or half-sibling.
7. Reunification has been terminated on a sibling or half-sibling due to indicators # 3, 5 or 6.
8. Parent has been found guilty of rape that conceived the child.
9. Willful abandonment constituting serious danger to the child.
10. Parent failed to reunify with a sibling or half-sibling.
11. Parent convicted of a violent felony.

12. Parent has extensive history of substance abuse and resisted treatment for three years prior, or failed to benefit twice.

13. Parent does not want family maintenance or family reunification services, or does not want the child removed.

Although data are limited, the presence of bypass criteria within child welfare cases appears to be relatively common. In the Bay Area Social Services Consortium's (BASSC, 2000) report on the use of bypass criteria within San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, half of the cases reviewed had bypass criteria present. Twenty six percent of these bypass cases were due to parental substance abuse, 18 percent were due to a sibling with parental rights terminated or with a permanent plan, and 13 percent had a parental mental disability that prevented the utilization of services (BASSC, 2000). BASSC (2000) also reported that not all cases with a bypass criterion present are actually bypassed. Seventy three percent of cases that qualified for the bypass criterion of parental mental disability were actually bypassed; 38 percent of cases with a sibling that has had parental rights terminated or has a permanent plan were actually bypassed and 13 percent of cases with parental substance abuse were bypassed. Overall analysis indicated that 25 percent of the entire sample were bypassed and denied reunification services.

Although the use of bypass criteria appears to be relatively common, the BASSC (2000) report suggests that their use is not empirically or clinically valid. The report found that bypass criteria are not predictive of a lowered likelihood for reunification:

> Using them [bypass criteria] to deny family reunification services may be premature particularly when some bypass indicators are relatively common characteristics for families in the child welfare system (p. 33).

The BASSC (2000) report recommended further research to determine the validity of bypass criteria, as well as the creation of empirically based means of assessing the presence of bypass criteria.

Impact of Bypass Criteria on Children of Color

Research on the impact of bypass criteria on children of color in the CWS is not available. Yet given certain characteristics of communities of color that increase the risk of children of color entering and staying in the CWS, the use of bypass criteria may have numerous potential implications for children of color in the CWS. For instance, as is the case with time-limited reunification services, macro-level correlates of child maltreatment such as chronic poverty, lack of community social organization or racial segregation may all increase the likelihood that a child of color entering the CWS will possess a bypass criterion. Additionally, the lack of an empirically validated method for assessing the presence of a bypass criterion could result in more children of color being assessed as possessing a bypass criterion. More extensive empirical evidence on the impact of bypass criteria on families and children of color is sorely needed.

Concurrent Planning

ASFA's goal of timely permanency is reflected in the practice of concurrent planning—a service strategy that calls for the creation of two service plans for every child entering the CWS: a reunification plan and an alternative permanency placement plan. ASFA explicates the use of concurrent planning to achieve permanency for children in the CWS, yet many states, including California had already legislated the use of concurrent planning measures prior to the implementation of ASFA guidelines. Practice guidelines for the implementation of concurrent planning in California, call for an assessment of the family within 30 days of a child's placement in out-of-home care in which the family's "central problem" is identified and a prognosis for reunification is made. This assessment and prognosis determines the nature of the two concurrent plans (Katz, 1998). Concurrent planning practices also indicate that parents are to be fully informed of their reunification prognosis, the potentially detrimental effects of foster care and the option of voluntary relinquishment (BASSC, 2000).

In order to assist social workers in the difficult task of assessing reunification prognosis, California and several other states have adopted the Structured Decision-Making system (SDM). The SDM system is a risk assessment tool that was developed by testing a wide range of factors to determine which factors were statistically related to subsequent child maltreatment. (California Department of Social Services, 2001). Although the SDM system provides a guide for concurrent planning, the system provides no weighted criteria for indicators and suggests no formula for decision-making. Thus, as in the case of bypass criteria, assessments are ultimately determined by individual social workers and are thus subject to error and bias.

Impact of Concurrent Planning on Children of Color

Concurrent planning practices could have numerous effects on children of color in the CWS. Concurrent planning creates dual roles for social workers who are expected to simultaneously reunify families while also seeking an alternative permanent placement. This dual role may make it more challenging for social workers to provide reasonable efforts to reunify. As such, alternative permanent placements may be given priority over reunification. These factors have raised concern that children of color will be "removed even more precipitously from their families and communities for permanent placement elsewhere" (Katz, 1998, p.6).

Moreover, although the intent of concurrent planning is timely permanent placements the BASSC (2000) report on the use of concurrent planning found the practice did not result in more permanent placements after one year of implementation. In fact, the proportion of children in permanent placements actually decreased from 25 percent in the first year to 15 percent in the second year. Moreover, the proportion of children remaining in foster care was the same before and after the implementation of concurrent planning, and the average number of placements in one year was comparable in both years. These findings suggest the goal of expedited permanency is not being achieved with concurrent planning practices. Given that children of color were disproportionately represented in the BASSC

(2000) study, as they are in the overall CWS, the deficiencies of concurrent planning suggest that once children of color enter the system, they may have difficulties exiting.

Adoption Incentives

ASFA created a new category within Title IV-B entitled the "Adoption Promotion and Support Services Program." This new program provides states with cash incentives for each child in foster care who is placed in a permanent home. Under ASFA, a state receives $4,000 in federal funds for each foster child adoption that exceeds the previous years foster child adoption rate. States also receive an additional $2,000 for each special needs adoption. The Adoption Promotion and Support Services Program stipulates that states are to use these federal funds to provide post-adoption services to children and families (USDHHS, 1999). Additionally, ASFA authorized funds for technical assistance to states to assist them in reaching their targets for increased adoptions or alternative permanent placements. At least 50 percent of the funds available for technical assistance are targeted towards court processes in order to expedite the TPR process. Technical assistance for adoption is also used for the implementation of programs that place children in pre-adoptive homes and encourage the use of concurrent planning (USDHHS, 1999).

These adoption incentives combined with the three other significant changes brought about through ASFA including shortened time frames, bypass criteria, and concurrent planning are intended to encourage adoption and alternative permanent placements in cases where reunification is not possible. Given the problems associated with these new provisions, alternative permanent placements could be pursued more vigorously than family reunification or preservation. Yet, the actual placement of children in alternative permanent placements may be more difficult. Data suggesting a shortage of foster homes, excessive workloads for individual social workers, and a CWS that is backlogged with thousands of cases could be undermining efforts to achieve both permanency and reunification for children in the CWS.

In conclusion, while ASFA encourages states to give more priority to insuring health and safety of children and restricts the time children can be held in foster care until permanent plans are made for them, it may not go far enough. The act does not contain time limits within which states must comply with its provisions. Also, with its continued emphasis on family preservation programs, the act sends a mixed message that could become problematic as legislation is implemented.

Welfare Reform – The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act 1996

PRWORA fundamentally changed America's welfare system, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. PRWORA ended low-income families' entitlement to receive cash assistance from the federal government by creating a block-grant program to the states. TANF imposed several new requirements on individuals and states. Under

TANF, most recipients are required to work while receiving benefits and are limited in the amount of time they may receive assistance. The legislation also makes persons convicted of a drug-related felony permanently ineligible for both TANF and food stamp assistance, requires minor parents to live at home to receive assistance (unless the state agency determines that the minor parent has been subjected to abuse or exploitation), and makes immigrants arriving after the passage of PRWORA ineligible for federal means-tested benefits for a period of five years. In addition, PRWORA deliberately and decisively shifted the authority to shape welfare programs from the federal government to the individual states. California's response to PRWORA was the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program – a "work first" program that provides support services to help aid recipients move from welfare to work and toward self-sufficiency. As required by PRWORA, CalWORKs also imposes lifetime limits. Finally, CalWORKs devolves much of the responsibility and authority for implementation to California's 58 counties, increasing counties' flexibility and financial accountability in designing their welfare programs (Green & Tumlin, 1999; Zellman et al., 1998).

Impact of Welfare Reform on Children and Families of Color in the CWS.

Although PRWORA made few changes to federal child protection programs specifically, a number of the changes it instituted are likely to affect states' child welfare systems due to an overlap in the child welfare and welfare populations, as well as changes in funding streams used by child welfare agencies. While only a small percentage of the welfare caseload is involved with the CWS, a relatively large population of the CWS is on welfare. Nationally, more than half of children in foster care come from homes that are eligible for welfare - a figure that represents an increase in welfare-eligible families in the CWS from 11 percent in 1970 to 53 percent in 1996 (U.S. House of Representatives, 1998). While proponents of welfare reform suggest that the new requirements will help low-income families achieve self-sufficiency more quickly, it is not clear what will happen to families who cannot meet the new requirements and will either lose benefits or have them reduced. As mentioned in Section 2 of this report, the likelihood of being referred to the CWS is correlated with low-income status and factors related to poverty. Consequently, if the economic well being of families decreases, reports of abuse and neglect may increase (DHHS, 1998). In addition, the lifetime ban on TANF and food stamp benefits for persons convicted of a drug felony may have a direct impact on families in the CWS. Section 2 of this report also documents the strong relationship between substance abuse and entry into the CWS. While it is not known how many caretakers of children in the CWS are actually drug felons, it is possible that such cases represent a significant portion of the child welfare caseload (Green & Tumlin, 1999). PRWORA also requires an increased scrutiny of families, which may lead to more referrals of welfare families to child protective services. For example, the requirement that minor parents live at home or in an adult-supervised home may lead to more frequent identification of abusive caretakers (Hardin, 1996). Researchers have also suggested that the stress related to meeting work requirements and timelines, and the lack of appropriate child care when parents have to go to work may tax already overburdened families and lead to higher rates of child maltreatment (Knitzer & Bernard, 1997).

In addition to the impact of welfare reform on child welfare caseloads, federal funding changes included in PRWORA may affect the resources available to child welfare agencies. Under PRWORA the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) was cut by 15% and the Title IV-A Emergency Assistance (EA) program was eliminated. In addition, the Individualized Functional Assessment (IFA), a method used previously to establish eligibility for SSI benefits, was eliminated resulting in much more restrictive medical criteria for children. This change will likely result in states having to provide more of the supportive assistance for foster children who previously qualified for SSI. While these changes may ultimately reduce funds available to state child welfare agencies, other changes may increase resources. Because states' TANF block grant allotments were based on 1994 caseload levels, most of which have declined significantly since then, most states received a "windfall" of TANF funds in the last few years (Green & Tumlin, 1999). Many states, including California, were able to use these funds to pay for child welfare services. However, it is not clear that caseloads will continue to decline and whether the block grant allotments will be sufficient to meet the demands of the CWS in the future.

It is still unclear how welfare reform has affected the CWS and in particular, children and families of color involved in the system. Preliminary findings on the impact of welfare reform on American families indicate that between 1997 and 1999, poverty rates declined, food hardship for low-income families decreased, and the rate of two-parent families increased (Moore & Vandivere, 2000; Zedlewski, 2000). These national gains, however, do not hold true for either African American or Hispanic/Latino families. National estimates indicate that while employment rates of African American parents rose, African American families experienced no decrease in rates of poverty, food hardship or the incidence of single-parent families, and their housing hardship worsened (Staveteig & Wigton, 2001). Between 1997 and 1999, Hispanic/Latino families saw decreases in poverty and the rate of single-parent families, but experienced declines in health status and health insurance. These increasing racial and ethnic disparities could imply that welfare reform and related public policies are working better for Whites than for children and families of color. It is possible that the disparities seen as a result of welfare reform will carry over and affect children and families of color in the CWS, who as we have described earlier in this section of the report may already be at a disadvantage due to the new ASFA regulations. However, further research on the impact of welfare reform on American families is required before definitive conclusions in this area can be reached.

County-Level Initiatives

Information on county level initiatives was obtained during an interview with Leroy Martin and Jorge Gonzalez, on March 19, 2001. **Appendix C** contains a summary of issues and topics discussed during that interview. The interviewees agreed that Federal policies, such as ASFA and MEPA-IEP could have a significant impact on children of color in the CWS in Santa Clara County. Shortened timelines, bypass criteria, and financial incentives for adoption, could negatively affect children of color by reducing

the time parents have to successfully complete the reunification process, bypassing children too quickly, and providing little incentive for child welfare agencies to reunify families. MEPA-IEP could also negatively impact children of color by placing them in homes that were ethnically different from the child.

Certain protocols, policies, and programs that impact children of color in SCC's CWS at the County level were also discussed. Prior County practice was to remove all of the children from the home, not just the child who was maltreated. The County is currently working to change this practice to removing only the maltreated child and asking workers to conduct individual assessments of the other children in the home to evaluate if their removal is warranted. The County is attempting to change the philosophy of the agency from "removing a child" to "removing the risk."

In an effort to remove the risk of child maltreatment from a family, the County is focusing on prevention efforts with two new programs: the *Early Intervention Program*; and an *education program for immigrant parents*. The Early Intervention Program evaluates children early in the process to determine if they should be returned to their families. It was reported that 60% of children evaluated by this program were returned to their families and formal cases were not opened on these families. The education program for immigrant parents is designed to inform this population about the child maltreatment laws of the United States and help them develop parenting behaviors that will not put them at risk of entering the CWS. It is believed that once families get involved with the system it was difficult to get out. The goal of the Early Intervention Program and the education program for immigrant parents is to prevent families from becoming involved in the system and could positively impact children and families of color by keeping them out of the system.

In addition, the County is adopting a new philosophical approach known as *Family to Family* – an intervention that involves a team of people who conduct an assessment of risks for child maltreatment and determine if those risks warrant the removal of the children from the home. This program could positively impact children of color as it is team consensus, rather than biases of individual workers that determine whether a child is removed or not.

The County is currently providing *Wraparound services* to high level SED adolescents and their families, through contracts with Eastfield Ming Quang (EMQ) and has received funding to expand these services to lower level SED adolescents and their families. It was reported that a majority of families receiving wraparound services were families of color and that by providing preventive services to these families before the problems became so severe would reduce the number of SED adolescents of color in the system.

In conclusion, it appears that the County is making a concerted effort to improve the system for all children, including children of color, by implementing new and innovative prevention programs to help children and their families stay out of the system. Due to the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino and African American children in the system, any

efforts to reduce the number of children entering the system will positively impact children of color.

Summary and Emerging Themes

With the implementation of AFSA, child welfare practice now reflects a decreased tolerance for risks children face in their homes, representing a shift from the 1970s and 1980s when Family Preservation was the goal of the child welfare system. The shift away from Family Preservation was motivated largely by the lack of scientific evidence supporting its effectiveness, as well as a growing consensus that many children were remaining in foster care too long and that reunification in some cases, especially where parents failed within a year to make substantial progress toward regaining custody of their children, is unlikely. With the passage of MEPA-IEP and ASFA, safety, permanency and expedited placements have taken precedence in the CWS.

The shift toward expedited placement and an emphasis on permanency raises several major concerns for children of color in the CWS:

1) Without comprehensive social services, arbitrary 12 and six-month time limits for reunification may be not sufficient for parents to meet all of the conditions for reunification. The characteristics of families, children and communities of color that increase their chances of entering the CWS may create overwhelming barriers to successful reunification for children of color in the CWS.

2) In addition, it is not clear what the impact of the increased support for kinship supportive services will be. The increasing number and proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives is one of the most striking trends in child welfare in the last ten years, one that disproportionately impacts children of color, however, there is no empirical outcome data reflecting the impact of kincare on children of color in the CWS.

3) Early termination of parental rights, while motivated by the desire to find permanent homes for children, makes a child available for adoption, but does not ensure that the child actually will be placed in a permanent setting. While efforts are underway to improve adoption practices, the system already contains more children than it can place each year. As states terminate parental rights, the demand for adoptive placements will increase.

4) While the provisions of MEPA-IEP are intended to expedite adoptive placements for children of color, several obstacles to the implementation of MEPA-IEP, such as confusion about the law, lack of resources for recruitment of foster and adoptive parents, resistance from workers, and fear of litigation, could result in the inappropriate and unsuccessful implementation of MEPA-IEP. This could negatively impact children of color by delaying permanent placement.

5) As is the case with time-limited reunification services, macro-level correlates of child maltreatment such as chronic poverty; lack of community social organization or racial segregation may all increase the likelihood that a child of color entering the CWS will possess a bypass criterion. Additionally, the lack of an empirically validated method for assessing the presence of a bypass criterion could result in more children of color being assessed as possessing a bypass criterion.

6) This dual role required by concurrent planning may make it more challenging for social workers to provide reasonable efforts to reunify. As such, alternative permanent placements may be given priority over reunification. Children of color may be removed even more precipitously from their families and communities for permanent placement elsewhere.

7) Neither the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (1994) amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (MEPA-IEP) (1996) nor the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (1997), modified ICWA. All three of these acts recognized the unique political relationship that Indian children have as members of sovereign tribal governments that other children do not have. Following the adoption of these acts, tribes, tribal courts, and Indian children and their families maintain the rights and protections afforded them in ICWA. While this should ensure the rights of American Indian children in the CWS, if a child's American Indian heritage is not discovered by State child welfare agencies, American Indian children will not receive the protections afforded them under ICWA. Also, if workers in State child welfare agencies are not trained about ICWA regulations and how they interact with other regulations, like ASFA they might make inappropriate decisions for American Indian children and their families.

8) While it is too early to make definitive conclusions, preliminary findings based on national estimates suggest that welfare reform and related public policies may be working better for Whites than for children and families of color. It is possible that these disparities will carry over and affect children and families of color in the CWS, who as we have described earlier in this section of the report may already be at a disadvantage due to the new ASFA regulations. However, further research on the impact of welfare reform on American families is required before definitive conclusions in this area can be reached.

9) It appears that Santa Clara County is making concerted efforts to improve the system for all children, including children of color, by implementing new and innovative prevention programs to help children and their families stay out of the system. However, no outcome evaluations have been conducted with long standing programs or those programs that have been recently developed. Due to the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino and African American children in the system, it appears that any efforts to reduce the number of children entering the system will positively impact children of color.

Chapter 4: Snapshots of Children of Color in the Child Welfare System

To elaborate on the comparison of Census 2000 data with child welfare statistics mentioned in the first section (see p. 1), information on children in out of home placement [OHP] at the national, state, and county levels was gathered and reviewed. This section presents these findings and provides the context for our descriptive analysis of open child welfare cases in Santa Clara County. Accompanying tables and figures can be found at the end of this section.

National Statistics (see Tables 1a and 1b, and Figure 1)

The Child Welfare League of America [CWLA] houses a comprehensive child welfare database, the National Data Analysis System [NDAS]. Many, but not all, states in the US contribute demographic and system information regarding children in out of home placement. Relevant to this exploratory phase, we focused on race/ethnicity, gender, age, number of OHP placements, and the number of months spent in OHP.

Based on CWLA's analysis of 1996 data, the most recent available (CWLA, 1998), African Americans compose the largest racial/ethnic group of children (48.5%) in OHP and almost half of all OHPs. Among the remaining major categories, Whites (36.1%) were the next largest group, and in descending order Hispanics/Latinos (7.2%), Native Americans (1.1%), and then Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (0.7%). Some children had designations of Other (1.6%), Bi-Racial (0.5%), or Unknown (3.8%).

Approximately an equal proportion of OHP children were female (51.2%) or male (48.8%). Many of the children were between 6 and 12 years old (36.2%), and then by age: 3.8% were less than 1 year old, 28.4% between 1 and 5, 27.2% between 13 and 17, 4.2% 18 years old or older, and ages were unknown for 0.2%. An average age was uncalculable from the CWLA data. No data were available for the number of placements for children. The average number of months in placement was also unavailable, but available data indicate that 50% of children in the CWS were in placement 20 months or longer.

Although one of the more comprehensive, the CWLA database is unfortunately incomplete. For example, the 1996 national data reflect the participation of only those states that collected information on race/ethnicity of children in OHP and that contributed to the CWLA database. Specifically, 40 states collected and contributed specific information identifying Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics; 39 states Native Americans; 36 states Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders; 18 states Bi-Racials; 37 states Other and Unknown. Statistics from California regarding race/ethnicity were not available in this national database, but are presented in detail below.

California Statistics (see Tables 1a and 1b, and Figure 2)

The Center for Social Services Research [CSSR], housed in the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley, currently provides the most comprehensive

analysis of California's child welfare management information system data (CWS/CMS). A comparison of their California analysis (Needell, Webster, Cuccaro-Alamin, Armijo, Lee, Brookhart, & Lery, 2001), with CWLA's national analysis reveals a greater representation of racial/ethnic minority children in OHP in our state, especially in regards to Hispanics/Latinos and Asian American/Pacific Islanders.

Based on CSSR's Performance Indicators for July 2000 (Needell et al, 2001), in California, African Americans again compose the largest racial/ethnic group of children (35.7%) in OHP. Hispanics/Latinos (31.1%) are the second largest group in OHP and this is a percentage four times that of the country's proportion of Hispanic/Latino children in OHP. Whites (29.7%) are still a heavily represented group in OHP. The Asian American/Pacific Islander OHP population (2.1%) are represented three times greater in California than in the country. A higher proportion of Native Americans in OHP (1.4%) are also represented in this state than in the country.

Information on gender of OHP children in California was not available. Many of the children were between 6 and 10 years old (29.8%) and between 11 and 15 (30.3%). Then by age: 3.5% were less than 1-year-old, 24.6% between 1 and 5, and 11.8% between 16 and 18 years old. An average age was incalculable from the CSSR data. No data were available for the number of placements or number of months in placement.

California County Statistics (see Table 2 and Figure 3)

Given the differences found in comparing California data with national data and the racial/ethnic diversity in our state, the CWRT thought it informative to compare various counties within the state. To illustrate the wide variation of racial/ethnic group representation in OHP, 8 large California counties, based on geographical size and location, were selected: Santa Clara, San Francisco, and Alameda (Bay Area region), Sacramento (Mountain region), Butte (Northern region), Los Angeles and San Diego (Southern region), and Fresno (Valley region).

Although in a few of these counties the OHP proportions may be in balance with actual racial/ethnic group census proportions, the disparity within and among counties regarding the representation of children of color in OHP is noteworthy. The proportion of African American children in OHPs was highest in San Francisco (74%) and Alameda (70%) Counties, and lowest in Butte (8%) and Santa Clara (16%). The proportion of Hispanics/Latinos was highest in Santa Clara (49%) and Fresno (43%) and lowest in Butte (7%) and Alameda (9%). The proportion of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders was highest in Santa Clara (5%) and San Francisco (4%) and lowest in Los Angeles (1%). The proportion of Native Americans was highest in Butte (9%) and lowest in Santa Clara, San Francisco, Alameda, Sacramento, and Los Angeles, each at 1%. The proportion of Whites was highest in Butte (75%) and Sacramento (44%), and lowest in San Francisco (10%) and Los Angeles (16%).

Preliminary Analyses of Santa Clara County Open Cases: CWS/CMS Data

With state and national data as background, the status of children of color in the child welfare system of Santa Clara County can now be put into perspective. Generally, the theme of the large proportions of racial/ethnic minority children in OHP continues to emerge.

An exhaustive sample consisting of 4399 active child welfare cases in Santa Clara County was collected from the CWS/CMS database in December 2000. A series of analyses were conducted to 1) become familiar with the available data, 2) report basic findings for the exploratory phase, and 3) determine where significant differences within, and relationships between, major demographic and child welfare system characteristics exist (statistical tests of significance).

Among the variables requested from Santa Clara County's CWS/CMS data were child client demographics (ethnicity, gender, primary language, age, and whether he/she was born in California), system-related characteristics (service component, number of placements, number of months in placement, and reason for removal), and provider characteristics (ethnicity, gender, and level of education). Of these 12 variables, 7 have some form of missing data among all open cases. The information is more complete when describing specifically the OHP cases among all open cases. It should be noted that all information is not available at the time of intake.

Preliminary analyses on each variable (univariates) and the relationship between race/ethnicity and other major individual characteristics (bivariates) were conducted. In order to provide more useful findings, many individual subcategories within variables were collapsed into more general categories. For example, individual subcategories of Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian American/Pacific Islander groups were condensed into one Asian American/Pacific Islander category within the ethnicity variable. Some groups (i.e., Vietnamese and Filipinos) were retained as unique groups given their relative prominence in Santa Clara County. **See Appendix A** for a list of these collapsed variables (along with CWS/CMS codes and accompanying recodes). Final analyses were conducted on these collapsed variables providing descriptive statistics, information on missing data, and some significant findings.

Findings: All Open Cases (see Tables 3a and 3b)

Descriptive statistics on the variables listed above were calculated.

Child Client Demographic Characteristics (See Tables 3a and 3b)

Race/Ethnicity. Hispanics/Latinos composed the largest racial/ethnic group (52.2% or 2288 cases). Then in descending order: Whites (26.9% or 1178 cases), African Americans (12.1% or 531 cases), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (2.7% or 118 cases), Vietnamese (2.6% or 116 cases), Filipinos (1.9% or 84 cases), Native Americans (1.1%

or 50 cases), and Other (0.5% or 20 cases). Of the 4399 cases, 14 had no recorded ethnicity.

There were significant differences among the proportions of race/ethnic categories. There were significantly more Hispanics/Latinos than any other ethnic group. There were more Whites than any other ethnic group except Hispanics/Latinos. There were more African Americans than Native Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Vietnamese, Filipinos, or Others. There were more Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders than Native Americans or Others. There were significantly more Vietnamese than Native Americans or Others. Finally, Filipinos and Native Americans both significantly outnumbered Others.

Gender. Seven cases had no recorded gender. Of the remaining sample, 2237 were female (51.0%) and 2155 were male (49.0%).

There was no significant difference between the number of boys and girls in this sample.

Primary Language. There was no recorded primary language for 13 cases. Of the remaining, 3786 (86.3%) reported English, 465 (10.6%) Spanish, 101 (2.3%) Vietnamese, 15 (0.3%) Other, 10 (0.2%) an Asian Language, and 9 (0.2%) Tagalog.

There were significant differences among the proportions of languages spoken. Those who reported speaking primarily English significantly outnumbered all the individual language categories. There were significantly more reported Spanish speakers than Asian language, Vietnamese, Tagalog, or Other speakers. There were more Vietnamese speakers than Asian, Tagalog or Other language speakers.

Born in California. *3031 cases, almost three-quarters of the sample, had no recorded state location of birth.*

Of the remaining, more children, 1299 or 94.7%, were born in California than outside the state, 72 or 5.3%.

Age. All 4399 cases had a recorded birth date from which to calculate age.

Children's age ranged from 0 to 19 years with an average of 9.22 (sd = 5.16) years.

System-Related Characteristics   (See Tables 3a and 3b)

Service Component. All cases had a recorded service component. 1951 (44.4%) were in Permanent Placement, 1328 (30.2%) in Family Maintenance, 868 (19.7%) in Family Reunification, and 250 (5.7%) were opened to service in Emergency Response.

There was an overall significant difference among the number of children in each service component. Significantly more clients were in Permanent Placement than in any other service component. More clients were in Family Maintenance than Family

Reunification or Emergency Response. Those in Family Reunification outnumbered those in Emergency Response.

Findings: Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP]
(see Tables 4a through 6d, and Figures 4 through 8)

Descriptive statistics on the variables listed above were then calculated specifically on the 2721 OHP cases.

Child Client Demographic Characteristics   (See Tables 4a through 4c)

Race/Ethnicity. In the OHP subsample, the order of the racial/ethnic groups, based on their proportions of children in OHP, is the same in the county as in the state. In OHP, Hispanics/Latinos still composed the largest racial/ethnic group (50.8% or 1381 cases). Then in descending order: Whites (27.2% or 739 cases), African Americans (14.7% or 399 cases), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (2.0% or 55 cases), Vietnamese (1.9% or 52 cases), Filipinos (1.9% or 52 cases), Native Americans (1.4% or 37 cases), and Other (0.1% or 4 cases). See also Figure 4.

Again, there were significant differences among the proportions of racial/ethnic categories. There were significantly more Hispanics/Latinos than any other ethnic group. There were more Whites than any other ethnic group except Hispanics/Latinos. There were more African Americans than Native Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Vietnamese, Filipinos, or Others. Finally, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Vietnamese, Filipinos and Native Americans each significantly outnumbered Others.

Gender. *In OHP, there was no significant difference between the proportion of boys (50.2% or 1365 cases) and girls(49.2% or 1356 cases) in this sample.*

Primary Language. In OHP 2443 (89.8%) reported English, 213 (7.8%) Spanish, 45 (1.7%) Vietnamese, 11 (0.4%) Other, 5 (0.2%) an Asian Language, and 4 (0.1%) Tagalog. See also Figure 5.

There were significant differences among the proportions of languages spoken. Those who reported speaking primarily English significantly outnumbered all the individual language categories. There were significantly more reported Spanish speakers than Asian language, Vietnamese, Tagalog, or Other speakers. There were more Vietnamese speakers than Asian, Tagalog or Other language speakers.

Born in California. *In OHP, 1622 cases (more than half of the OHP cases) had no recorded state location of birth.*

Of the remaining, significantly more children, 1040 or 94.6%, were born in California than outside the state, 59 or 5.4%.

<u>Age</u>. *In OHP, children's age ranged from 0 to 19 years with an average of 9.27 (sd = 5.18) years.*

System-Related Characteristics and OHP   (See Tables 4a through 4c)

<u>Service Component</u>. In OHP, 1763 (64.8%) were in Permanent Placement, 700 (25.7%) in Family Reunification, 146 (5.4%) in Emergency Response, and 112 (4.1%) in Family Maintenance. See also Figure 6.

There was an overall significant difference among the number of children in each service component. Significantly more OHP clients were in Permanent Placement than in any other service component. More clients were in Family Reunification than Family Maintenance or Emergency Response.

<u>Reason for Removal</u>. In the OHP group, 1025 (37.7%) children were removed because of the caretaker's absence or incapacity, 501 (18.4%) due to severe neglect, 472 (17.3%) for general neglect, 444 (16.3%) physical abuse, 143 (5.3%) sexual abuse, 91 (3.3%) emotional abuse, 18 (0.7%) were voluntarily placed, and 28 (1.0%) for other reasons. See also Figure 7.

An overall significant difference among the reasons for removal was found. Caretaker absence/incapacity was significantly more likely to be the reason for child removal than the rest of the specific reasons. General neglect, physical abuse, or severe neglect each were significantly more likely the reason for removal than emotional abuse, sexual abuse, voluntary placement, or other reasons. Sexual abuse was the reason more so than emotional abuse, voluntary placement, or other. Finally, emotional abuse was more likely to be the reason for removal than either voluntary placement or other reasons.

<u>Placement Home Facility Type</u>. Of children in OHP, 1050 (38.6%) were placed in a relative's home, 627 (23.0%) in a foster family agency, 456 (16.8%) in a foster family home, 290 (10.7%) in a county shelter, 189 (6.9%) in a group home, and 109 (4.0%) in a small family/court specified/tribe specified/guardian home. See also Figure 8.

An overall significant difference among the types of facilities was found. Placement in a relative's home occurred most often, more than in any other facility type. In the above list of facilities ordered by frequency of placement type, each frequency was significantly different from the other.

<u>Number of Placements</u>. *The range in the number of placements was from 1 to 37 with an average of 3.83 (sd = 3.25) placements per child.*

<u>Number of Months in Placement</u>. *The range in the number of months in placement was from 0.5 to 207.18 months with an average of 39.97 (sd = 39.57) months.*

Provider Characteristics   (See Table 5)

Race/Ethnicity. Of the OHP subtotal, only 583 of 2721 cases recorded the provider's race/ethnicity. Whites were the largest group of providers (42.5% or 248 cases). Then in descending order: Hispanics/Latinos (33.8% or 197 cases), African Americans (16.1% or 94 cases), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (2.6% or 15 cases), Vietnamese (2.2% or 13 cases), Filipinos (2.2% or 13 cases), and Native Americans (0.5% or 3 cases).

Again, there were significant differences among the proportions of race/ethnic categories. The number of White and Hispanic/Latino providers were statistically similar. There were significantly more White or Hispanic/Latino providers than those from any other race/ethnicity. African American providers outnumbered all the other categories except White and Hispanic/Latino.

Gender. In the OHP subgroup, 2128 cases recorded provider gender.

Of these, the 1819 (85.5%) female providers significantly outnumbered the 309 (14.5%) male providers.

Level of Education. Education level of providers was recorded for only 398 cases. Of these, 19 (4.8%) had an eighth-grade education or less, 40 (10.1%) had some high school, 106 (26.6%) achieved a high school or equivalent education, 24 (6.0%) received technical training beyond high school, 121 (30.4%) some college, 60 (15.1%) graduated from college, and 28 (7.0%) post-graduate education.

An overall significant difference among the provider's level of education was found. The two largest categories, those with some college and those with at least a high school education, were not significantly different. Providers with either some college or at least a high school level education outnumbered those from all other categories of education. There were significantly more college graduates than those with eighth-grade or less education, who were technically trained, or with post-graduate education.

Findings: Comparison of Major Demographic and System Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP]
(See Tables 6a through 6d)

A comparison of OHP children's race/ethnicity with other individual major characteristics was conducted.

Age Difference by Race/Ethnicity   **(See Table 6a)**

There was no significant difference in age by race/ethnicity.

<u>Service Component, Number of Placements, and Months in Placement</u>
<u>by Race/Ethnicity</u>   **(See Table 6a)**

There was a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and service component. The majority of children in the County's CWS are in the Permanent Planning service component and the minority in Family Maintenance. This finding holds true across all racial/ethnic groups, as well with the overwhelming majority of children of color in Permanent Planning, and very small percentages within each group in Family Maintenance.

There was no significant difference in the number of placements by race/ethnicity.

There were significant differences the number of months in placements by race/ethnicity. African American children (average 55.32, sd = 45.26 months) spent significantly more time in placement than their White (average of 38.15, sd = 35.59 months), Hispanic/Latino (average 37.87, sd = 39.98 months), Asian American/Pacific Islander (average 36.22, sd = 32.27 months), Vietnamese (average 30.82, sd = 31.00), and Filipino (average 21.46, sd = 20.75 months) peers.

<u>Placement facility Type by Race/Ethnicity</u>   **(See Table 6b)**

There was a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and placement facility type. The greatest percentage of youth across all ethnic/racial groups was placed in a relative home. For African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth, the second most frequent placement was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). Finally, almost 14% of Native American and 18% of Asian American/Pacific Islander youth in OHP were placed in the Shelter in December 2000, percentages that are higher than those of the other ethnic/racial groups.

<u>Reason for Removal by Race/Ethnicity</u>   **(See Table 6c)**

There was a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and the reason for removal. Caretaker absence/incapacity was significantly more likely to be the reason for child removal than the rest of the specific reasons for all racial/ethnic groups with the exception of Asian American/Pacific Islanders for whom physical abuse was the most common reason for removal. It is interesting to note that Voluntary Placements constituted reason for removal for a very small percentage within each racial/ethnic group.

<u>Provider Race/Ethnicity by Child Race/Ethnicity</u>   **(See Table 6d)**

There was a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and placement facility type. For each racial/ethnic group 45% or more of children were in a facility in which the

provider was of the same racial/ethnic background. The exception was Native Americans of whom only 11% were in facilities with racially/ethnically matched providers. Forty four percent of Native American children were in facilities with White providers.

Summary and Emerging Themes

(1) This preliminary phase revealed how available and comprehensive the child welfare data was for analysis purposes. The NDAS at the national level and CWS/CMS at the California state level provide important data. However, for more complete description and analyses regarding race/ethnicity, more comprehensive and complete information is needed. Details about subgroups within race/ethnicity, especially at the national and state levels, are unavailable. Some other characteristics regarding OHP children were also unavailable or not recorded. Specifically in Santa Clara County, information regarding OHP provider characteristics was relatively sparse. Improving the collection and condition of child welfare data is no easy task given the issues of limitations of the data system, compatibility among systems of data recording and storage, and training needs.

(2) The representation of certain racial/ethnic minority groups in OHP is greater in California than at the national level. Hispanics/Latinos are the second largest group in California OHP and their percentage is four times that of the nation's proportion of Hispanic/Latino children in OHP. In California the Asian American/Pacific Islander OHP population is three times greater than the national OHP population. A higher proportion of Native Americans in OHP is also represented in this state than nationwide.

(3) There is a disparity within California regarding the representation of children of color in OHP, based on information from 8 large counties. The proportion of African American children in OHPs was highest in San Francisco (74%) and Alameda (70%) Counties, and lowest in Butte (8%) and Santa Clara (16%). The proportion of Hispanics/Latinos was highest in Santa Clara (49%) and Fresno (43%) and lowest in Butte (7%) and Alameda (9%). The proportion of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders was highest in Santa Clara (5%) and San Francisco (4%) and lowest in Los Angeles (1%). The proportion of Native Americans was highest in Butte (9%) and lowest in Santa Clara, San Francisco, Alameda, Sacramento, and Los Angeles, each at 1%. The proportion of Whites was highest in Butte (75%) and Sacramento (44%), and lowest in San Francisco (10%) and Los Angeles (16%).

(4) In Santa Clara County, Hispanics/Latinos compose the largest group of children in OHP. However, English was the primary language recorded for most of the children.

(5) Caretaker absence/incapacity was significantly more likely to be the reason for child removal than the rest of the specific reasons. When comparing reason for removal by racial/ethnic groups, significant trends were found. For example, caretaker absence/incapacity was the most common reason for removal for African Americans, whereas physical abuse was the most common reason for removal for Asian American/Pacific Islanders.

(6) There were significant differences the number of months in placements by race/ethnicity. African American children spent significantly more time in placement than their White, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Vietnamese, and Filipino peers.

(7) The majority of children in the County's CWS are in the Permanent Planning service component and the minority in Family Maintenance. This finding holds true across all racial/ethnic groups, as well with the overwhelming majority of children of color in Permanent Planning, and very small percentages within each group in Family Maintenance.

(8) The greatest percentage youth across all ethnic/racial groups was placed in a relative home. For African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth, the second most frequent placement was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). Almost 14% of Native American and 18% of Asian American/Pacific Islander youth in OHP were placed in the Shelter in December 2000, percentages that are higher than those of the other ethnic/racial groups.

(9) For each racial/ethnic group 45% or more of children were in a facility in which the provider was of the same racial/ethnic background. The exception was Native Americans of whom only 11% were placed in a facility with a racially/ethnically matched provider.

Chapter 5. Participant Perspectives

In this section, we summarize the findings for the 31 focus groups that we conducted with the following groups: managers/administrators, supervisors, the six committees that make up the Coalition for Effective Services, staff of the Family Resource Centers and the two South County centers in Gilroy and San Martin, parents/caregivers of youth currently or formerly in the CWS, and youth from 13-18 who were in placement at the Shelter. See Table 7 for information regarding focus group composition for the study. For a complete explanation of the methods employed in this study, please see the Introduction (p. 5).

Group discussions with child welfare providers, from administrators to lineworkers, as well as with parents/caregivers and youth who are recipients of service, provided us with important perspectives and assisted us in the development of overall themes. Although the findings from the focus groups cannot be considered conclusive or generalizable, the opinions of the focus group participants, coupled with our literature and policy reviews, provided the CWRT an opportunity to develop key questions that will guide the next phase of our research project with Santa Clara County Social Services Agency.

For the full description of each of the focus groups, please refer to Appendix B.

Table 7: Focus Group Composition

Focus Group	Number of Groups	Number of Participants
Administrators/Managers	1 total	12 total
Supervisors	2 total	9 total
Coalition for Effective Services	9 total	48 total
African American Employees Committee	(2)	(14)
American Indian Employee Committee	(1)	(3)
Asian/Pacific Islander Committee	(2)	(8)
El Comité	(2)	(13)
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Concerns Committee	(1)	(4)
Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities	(1)	(6)
Family Resource Centers and South County Offices	5 total	39 total
Asian Pacific Family Resource Center	(1)	(8)
Nuestra Casa	(1)	(9)
Ujirani	(1)	(10)
South County Offices	(2)	(12)
Line Workers	4 total	7 total
Parents	5 total	41 total
African American	(1)	(12)
Native American	(1)	(4)
Hispanic/Latino	(1)	(11)
Vietnamese	(1)	(8)
South County	(1)	(6)
Youth	5 total	13 total
African American	(1)	(2)
Native American	(1)	(2)
Hispanic/Latino	(1)	(3)
Asian American/Pacific Islander	(1)	(3)
White	(1)	(3)
Grand Total	**31 Groups**	**169 Participants**

Administrator/Manager Focus Group

Table 8: Focus Group Demographics – Administrators/Managers

Focus Group	Gender Males [M] Females [F]	Ethnicity African Am [AF] Native Am [NA] Hispan/Latino [H] Asian Am/PI [AS] Filipino [F] White [W] Other [O]	Position Admin/Mangr [A] Supervisor [S] Soc Wrker 3 [S3] Soc Wrker 2 [S2] Soc Wrker 1 [S1] Other [O]	Years in Position mean and std. dev.	Years in County mean and std. dev.
Administrators/Managers	[F] = 8 (66.7%) [M] = 4 (33.3%)	[AF] = 1 (8.3%) [H] = 3 (25.0%) [W] = 8 (66.7%)	[A] = 11 (91.7%) [O] = 1 (8.3%)	3.46 (3.15)	19.01 (10.53)

Table 8 indicates that of the 12 participants in the Administrator/Manager focus group, 4 (33.3%) were males and 8 (66.7%) were females. One participant (8.3%) was African American, 3 (25%) participants were Hispanic/Latino, and 8 (66.7%) were White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 3.46, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 19.01.

Respondents in the administrator focus group agreed that there was an over-representation of Hispanic/Latino and African American children in the Child Welfare System (CWS). Participants stated that fewer white children actually entered the system than children of color. Participants also indicated that the number of Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) children in the system had doubled in recent years. When asked about the distribution of cases across units, administrators felt that the proportion of cases that involved children of color was consistent across units. Administrators indicated that low socioeconomic status; extremely high housing prices; domestic violence; and a lack of linguistically appropriate services were factors that might be related to the over/under-representation of children of color in the CWS.

When asked about coding ethnicity, administrators indicated that the worker, during the screening process, recorded the ethnicity and language spoken by the child. They stated that ethnicity was determined by: the subjective judgment of the worker; the identification by the family; the self-identification by the child; the physical features of the child; the surname; the language spoken by the child or the family; or any combination of the above. For mixed race children, they indicated that there was no code for biracial or multiracial children and that generally, only one ethnicity was coded. Finally, they reported that no training was provided to workers on how to code ethnicity.

Regarding suggestions for addressing the issue of over/under-representation of children of color in the system, administrators focused on improvements for existing programs and recommended that the system: 1) give Section 8 housing certificates to families involved in the Family Preservation Program; 2) educate parents about their options and the programs available to them; 3) assign by-pass cases to experienced staff and assess them on a case-by-case basis; 4) initiate greater coordination and collaboration between

DFCS and other agencies, especially community-based organizations; and 5) develop new resources for children of color and their families. In general, administrators felt that the agency was doing an adequate job of recruiting culturally and linguistically diverse staff members, but spoke about the difficulty of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to such a diverse client population as Santa Clara county's.

Supervisor Focus Groups

Table 9: Focus Group Demographics – Supervisors

Focus Group		Gender Males [M] Females [F]	Ethnicity African Am [AF] Native Am [NA] Hispan/Latino [H] Asian Am/PI [AS] Filipino [F] White [W] Other [O]	Position Admin/Mangr [A] Supervisor [S] Soc Wrker 3 [S3] Soc Wrker 2 [S2] Soc Wrker 1 [S1] Other [O]	Years in Position mean and std. dev.	Years in County mean and std. dev.
Supervisors	[F] = 7 (77.8%) [M] = 2 (22.2%)	[AF] = 1 (11.1%) [H] = 3 (33.3%) [AS] = 2 (22.2%) [W] = 3 (33.3%)	[S] = 7 (77.8%) [O] = 2 (22.2%)	4.78 (3.64)	19.94 (11.31)	

Table 9 indicates that of the nine participants in the two focus groups with Supervisors, 2 (22.2%)were males and 7 (77.8%) were females. One participant (11.1%) was African American, 3 (33.3%) participants were Hispanic/Latino, 2 (22.2%) were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 3 (33.3%) were White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 3.46 years, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 19.01.

Focus group results with supervisors indicated a general agreement about the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino and African American children in the Child Welfare System (CWS) and that fewer white children entered the system than children of color. Members of both supervisor focus groups stated that API, American Indian, disabled, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans-gendered (GLBT) children were under-represented in the system. When asked about the distribution of cases across units, one group of supervisors felt that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in Permanency Planning, Reunification, Adoptions, and long-term foster care. The other group suggested that the disproportionate representation of children of color occurred at similar rates in all units. Supervisors indicated that although they observed over and under-representation of some groups of children, they did not have access to statistical data to confirm their observations. An illustrative comment was, "We used to get a printout of all the kids in the system, and the ratio of kids...but we don't get that anymore so we don't know the numbers." Regarding factors related to the over/under-representation of children of color in the CWS, comments from supervisors in both groups included: poverty; racism; lack of team work between the courts and DFCS on behalf of families; lack of agency support for Informal Family Service (IFS) and Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM); lack of continuity in the management of the agency; and overworked staff.

Regarding coding of ethnicity, responses of supervisors coincided with those of the administrator focus group. They too indicated that the ethnicity and language spoken by the child was recorded by the worker during the screening process and that ethnicity was determined by multiple factors including: the subjective judgment of the worker; the identification by the family; the self-identification by the child; the physical features of the child; the surname; the language spoken by the child or the family; or any combination of the above. Likewise, for mixed race children, they reported that only one ethnicity was coded. They also stated workers received no training on how to code ethnicity.

Supervisors referred to the alienation and intimidation of families of color in the CWS and they felt that people of color generally, were not valued by the agency. When asked about suggestions for addressing the situation, supervisors spoke about prevention and early intervention efforts and recommended that the system: 1) create more prevention and early intervention programs to keep children out of the system; 2) restructure ER to provide more referrals for services; 3) establish more Family Resource Centers; 4) establish the routine use of family conferencing and reward units with successful outcomes using family conferencing; 5) provide more outreach and education in the community about DFCS; 6) listen to the workers; 7) ensure the cultural competency of applicants and contract agencies; 8) include a cultural competency plan in the general case plan; 7) cross-train attorneys and social workers to encourage collaboration; and 9) train workers about the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Table 10: Focus Group Demographics – Coalition for Effective Services

Focus Group	Gender Males [M] Females [F]	Ethnicity African Am [AF] Native Am [NA] Hispan/Latino [H] Asian Am/PI [AS] Filipino [F] White [W] Other [O]	Position Admin/Mangr [A] Supervisor [S] Soc Wrker 3 [S3] Soc Wrker 2 [S2] Soc Wrker 1 [S1] Other [O]	Years in Position mean and std. dev.	Years in County mean and std. dev.
Coalition for Effective Services	[F] = 29 (63.0%) [M] = 17 (37.0%)	[AF] = 16 (33.3%) [NA] = 1 (2.1%) [H] = 14 (29.2%) [AS] = 8 (16.7%) [W] = 5 (10.4%) [O] = 2 (4.2%) missing = 2 (4.2%)	[A] = 1 (2.2%) [S3] = 24 (52.2%) [S2] = 10 (21.7%) [S1] = 3 (6.5%) [O] = 8 (17.4%)	4.66 (6.06)	8.43 (8.20)
African American Employees Committee	[F] = 10 (71.4%) [M] = 4 (28.6%)	[AF] = 13 (92.9%) [O] = 1 (7.1%)	[S3] = 6 (42.9%) [S2] = 4 (28.6%) [S1] = 1 (7.1%) [O] = 3 (21.4%)	5.33 (8.97)	7.83 (9.29)
American Indian Employee Committee	[F] = 3 (100.0%) [M] = 0 (0.0%)	[AF] = 1 (33.3%) [NA] = 1 (33.3%) [O] = 1 (33.3%)	[S3] = 1 (33.3%) [S2] = 1 (33.3%) [O] = 1 (33.3%)	4.14 (6.03)	7.75 (5.70)
Asian/Pacific Islander Committee	[F] = 4 (66.7%) [M] = 2 (33.3%)	[AS] = 6 (75.0%) missing = 2 (25.5%)	[S3] = 5 (83.3%) [S2] = 1 (16.7%)	4.56 (4.44)	7.69 (4.17)
El Comité	[F] = 7 (53.8%) [M] = 6 (46.2%)	[H] = 12 (92.3%) [W] = 1 (7.7%)	[S3] = 7 (53.8%) [S2] = 3 (23.1%) [S1] = 2 (15.4%) [O] = 1 (21.4%)	3.69 (4.00)	6.29 (6.69)
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Concerns Committee	[F] = 2 (50.0%) [M] = 2 (50.0%)	[AF] = 1 (25.5%) [W] = 3 (75.0%)	[S3] = 3 (75.0%) [A] = 1 (25.0%)	8.25 (5.57)	20.33 (9.79)
Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities	[F] = 3 (50.0%) [M] = 3 (50.0%)	[AF] = 1 (16.7%) [H] = 2 (33.3%) [AS] = 2 (33.3%) [W] = 1 (16.7%)	[S3] = 2 (16.7%) [S2] = 1 (33.3%) [O] = 3 (50.0%)	3.18 (3.59)	7.67 (7.61)

Coalition for Effective Services

African American Employee Committee Focus Groups

Table 10 indicates that of the 14 participants in the two focus groups with members of the African American Employee Committee, 4 were males (28.6%) and 10 were females (71.4%). Thirteen participants were African American (92.9%), and one participant (7.1%) was Other. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 5.33 years, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 7.83.

Respondents in both groups agreed that African American children were over-represented in the CWS. They also reported that these children were not exiting the system which created an over-representation of African American children in Adoptions. Respondents stated that Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) and white children were under-represented in the system. It was suggested that the under-representation of API children in the system was the result of under-reporting of child maltreatment and domestic violence in those communities. They reported that the over-representation of African American children was the result of: over-reporting by mandated reporters; institutional racism; lack of cultural understanding between therapist and their clients; lack of appropriate placements for African American children; poverty; and the general lack of respect among workers in the agency. In addition, they felt that DI workers were more likely to detain children of color than white children and that more African American and Hispanic/Latino cases were by-passed than those from other ethnic groups. An illustrative comment was, "Children of color have a much harder time getting out of the system once they are in it."

When asked about the coding of ethnicity, participants indicated that workers in the screening unit coded the ethnicity of the child and that a majority of biracial children were coded as African American. They also stated that no training was provided to workers about coding ethnicity.

Regarding suggestions for addressing the issue of over/under-representation of children of color in the system, participants in both groups recommended that the agency: 1) improve the cultural competency training in the agency; 2) encourage colleges and universities to expose their students to diverse populations during their education; 3) provide wrap-around services; 4) provide more resources; 5) establish more Family Resource Centers; 6) change the laws to allow more time to investigate allegations of child maltreatment; and 7) institute a quality control mechanism.

American Indian Employee Committee Focus Group

Table 10 indicates that of the 3 participants in the one focus group with members of the American Indian Employee Committee, all (100%) were females. One participant (33.3%) was African American, one (33.3%) was American Indian, and one (33.3%) was Other. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 4.14 years, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 7.75.

Members of the American Indian focus group reported that Hispanics/Latinos were over-represented in the system, especially at the shelter and in the ER unit. They also stated that it was difficult to determine if there was an over/under-representation of American Indian children due to inaccurate coding; however, they suspected that American Indian children were over-represented in the CWS. An illustrative comment was, "My perspective is, who knows how many American Indian children are in the system? Who knows if the records are accurate or if the workers are really finding out if the children have American Indian heritage and are complying with ICWA because it's not really

known." Participants suggested that the over-representation of Hispanics/Latinos in the CWS might be partially explained by the large number of Hispanic/Latinos in the general population. They also suggested that this over-representation was the result of: non-English speaking clients being assigned English-only workers; bias on the part of ER workers regarding which cases should be removed; and, culturally condoned corporal punishment.

Regarding the coding of ethnicity, participants stated that a child's ethnicity was coded by DI workers or shelter staff and that a child's surname or information received from the parent was used to determine their ethnicity. They also suggested that one of the most important issues faced by American Indian children was the correct coding of their ethnicity. In addition, participants indicated that there was no code for biracial children.

In order to respond to the over/under-representation of children of color in the system the group recommended that the agency: 1) provide more prevention services; 2) remove children only after all other avenues have been exhausted; 3) match workers with clients ethnically and linguistically; 4) match American Indian children with American Indian workers; 5) make every effort to code correctly the ethnicity of American Indian children; 6) provide more in-home services for families with children who have special needs; 7) recruit more foster placements for children with special needs; and 8) make the state regulations less rigid for relatives who are willing to assume care of a child.

Asian/Pacific Islander (API) Employee Committee Focus Groups

Table 10 indicates that of the 6 participants in the two focus groups with members of the Asian/Pacific Islander Employee Committee, 2 (33.3%) were males and 4 (66.7%) were females. Six participants were Asian American/Pacific Islander (75%), and two participants (25%) did not complete the item. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 4.56 years, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 7.69.

Members in both groups stated that API children were under-represented in the system, and that the majority of API cases in the system were Vietnamese. When asked about reasons for this under-representation, participants spoke of the possible under-reporting of child maltreatment and domestic violence within API communities. They also indicated that this under-representation might be the result of: lack of education and outreach to the API communities; lack of services for API clients; and the lack of linguistically appropriate workers in the Screening unit. They also reported that few API children, especially Chinese and Vietnamese children, ended up in long-term care. Participants suggested that Hispanics/Latinos were over-represented in the system and that African American and white families had the same number of cases in the CWS. API participants reported that children with substance-abusing parents were more likely to remain in the system longer, to have their parents fail family reunification, and to be placed in long-term foster care than other children in the system. Participants indicated that African American and Hispanic/Latino families with a substance-abusing parent remained in the system longer and were over-represented in the Permanency Planning

unit. Participants also reported that the over-representation of Hispanics/Latinos might be the result of mandated reporters at the Valley Medical facility.

When asked about the coding of ethnicity, participants indicated that workers coded ethnicity according to the self-identification of the child. They also stated that English-speaking children and their parents were coded as English-speaking even if English was not their native language. For mixed race children, both ethnicities could be coded, however, participants indicated that this did not usually occur. Participants reported that workers received no training on how to code ethnicity.

Regarding ways to address the over/under-representation of children of color in the system, members in both groups recommended that the agency: 1) provide more education and outreach to API communities; 2) recruit and hire more API workers to meet the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of the API client population; 3) create more services for API clients; 4) utilize the cultural and linguistic strengths of workers by placing them in appropriate units; and 5) encourage more young people to enter the social work field.

El Comité Focus Groups

Table 10 indicates that of the 13 participants in the two focus groups with members of El Comité, 6 were males (46.2%) and 7 were females (53.8%). Twelve (92.3%) were Hispanic/Latino, and 1 was White (7.7%). The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 3.69 years, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 6.29.

Members of both groups reported that Hispanics/Latinos were over-represented at the shelter, in Adoptions, and in by-pass cases. They also felt that African American and Filipino children, and children with disabilities were over-represented in the system while API and white children were under-represented in the system. Participants also indicated that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered children were not formally identified.

They felt that poor families had more difficulties navigating the system than other families and indicated that fewer services were available for them. An illustrative comment was, "To return a child home, the family must live alone and the child has to have a bed. But the family can't afford to get an apartment and the family is set up for failure. It's impossible." Participants in the El Comité groups also indicated that there were not enough workers of color, that many workers were not culturally competent, and that there was opposition from the Administration to develop culturally a competent staff within the agency. When asked about factors related to the over-representation of Hispanics/Latinos in the CWS participants cited: the lack of bilingual workers and units to handle the large volume of bilingual clients; a lack of cultural competency among workers; the lack of preventative services; the scarcity of resources and in-home services for families; the high cost of housing in the county; increased poverty rates in the county; and the strict timelines imposed on families by the courts.

When asked about the coding of ethnicity, participants indicated that a child's ethnicity was coded when they entered the system by the CAN center, police officers, shelter staff, or DI workers. They further stated that a child's ethnicity was often determined by their surname and stated that there was not a way to code mixed race children in the CWS/CMS system. They also indicated that no training was provided to workers on how to code a child's ethnicity.

El Comité recommended that in order to respond to the over/under-representation of children of color in the system, the agency: 1) provide prevention services; 2) educate mandated reporters about appropriate/inappropriate referrals; 3) provide more in-home services; 4) encourage collaboration with other agencies and systems involved in families' lives; 5) educate policy makers about child welfare; 6) hire more people of color; 7) provide outreach to immigrant communities; and 8) provide more support for lineworkers.

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered (GLBT) Concerns Committee Focus Group

Table 10 indicates that of the four participants in the one focus group with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Concerns Committee, 2 (50%) were males and 2 (50%) were females. One participant (25%) was African American and 3 (75%) participants were White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 8.25, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 20.33.

Participants agreed that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the system. They indicated that a large number of African American children were in the Placement unit.

Participants felt that GLBT children were invisible in the system and, as a result, their needs were not being adequately met by the system. They reported that these children needed to be tracked and accurate statistics needed to be collected. An illustrative comment was, "The agency makes no effort to identify and track GLBT children. Therefore, the agency is inadequate in responding to the needs of these children when they come into the system." The GLBT group was also concerned about the amount of homophobia among workers in the agency. Participants felt that GLBT children entered the system as a result of conflicts with their families over their sexual orientation and that these children experienced difficulties with foster placements while they were in the system.

When asked about coding of GLBT children, participants stated that there was no existing code for GLBT children and that no training on how to code a child's ethnicity was provided to workers.

The GLBT group recommended that the agency: 1) train workers to talk to children about sexual orientation; 2) identify a child's sexual orientation at intake; 3) provide more cultural competency training for workers; 4) educate workers about GLBT issues; 5)

develop a resource guide for GLBT clients; 6) conduct a survey of worker attitudes and perceptions about sexual orientation; and 7) inform policy makers about the needs of GLBT children in the system.

Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities Focus Group

Table 10 indicates that of the 6 participants in the one focus group with the Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, 3 (50%) were males and 3 (50%) were females. One participant (16.7%) was African American, 2 (33.3%) participants were Hispanic/Latino, 2 (33.3%) were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 1 (16.7%) was White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 3.18, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 7.67.

Participants agreed that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented and API children were under-represented in the CWS. Participants further indicated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in Adoptions while API children were under-represented in Adoptions and long-term care. They also reported that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented at the shelter and Cambodian children were under-represented at the shelter. Participants suggested that the over-representation of some client groups was the result of the following: lack of bilingual workers and workers of color; lack of linguistically appropriate services; migration patterns of some immigrant families; lack of foster and adoptive families in the county; and the cumbersome bureaucracy of the CWS. In addition, participants felt that a large percentage of children in the system suffered from undiagnosed disabilities and indicated that the assessments for learning disabilities offered by the system were only available in English. An illustrative comment was, "The county does not provide assessments for Spanish-speaking or Asian languages; only the English speaking clients get a learning disability assessment."

When asked about the coding of ethnicity, participants reported that both a child's ethnicity and language were coded at the shelter. They also reported that there was no formal coding structure or procedure for recording or tracking children with disabilities was part of the CWS/CMS system.

In order to address the over/under-representation of children of color in the system, participants recommended that the agency: 1) provide more education and outreach into diverse communities; 2) encourage workers to get involved in community events; 3) recruit more people of color to become social workers; 4) recruit more families of color to become foster parents; 5) begin to track disabled children; 6) develop individualized plans for disabled children; and 7) make the child abuse reporting laws less rigid.

Summary - Coalition for Effective Services Focus Groups

Responses across the nine Coalition focus groups varied widely, however, a majority of the Coalition groups indicated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in

the CWS. Half of the Coalition groups indicated that African American children were over-represented and Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) children were under-represented in the CWS. Two Coalition groups reported that White children were under-represented in the system. Several participants indicated that it was difficult to determine the number of American Indian children in the system due to inaccurate coding, but participants suspected that these children were over-represented in the CWS. Participants also reported the difficulty in determining the number of GLBT children in the system due to lack of formal identification and tracking of these children. One Coalition group felt that children with disabilities were over-represented in the system.

In response to what part of the system children of color were disproportionately represented, half of the Coalition groups reported that African American and/or Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented at the front and back ends of the system including the shelter, ER, Adoptions, Permanency Planning, and long-term foster care. Two Coalition groups also indicated that these children were over-represented in the population of by-pass cases. Several groups indicated that API and White children did not remain in the system very long resulting in few API and White children in the Adoptions or Permanency Planning units. Several participants indicated that children with disabilities and GLBT children were often more difficult to place and as a result these children remained in the system for longer periods of time.

Coalition members indicated that the under-reporting of child maltreatment and domestic violence in the API communities contributed significantly to the under-representation of these clients in the CWS. Participants indicated that other client groups, like African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos, were over-represented in the system as the result of: poverty; over-reporting by mandated reporters; the use of corporal punishment; the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate workers; the lack of appropriate services; the lack of cultural competence and cultural understanding among workers; a lack of education and outreach to different client communities; strict timelines dictated by state law and the courts; and the cumbersome bureaucracy of the CWS.

Coalition members indicated that the ethnicity and language spoken by the child were recorded by the worker during the screening process at the CAN center, the shelter staff, by DI workers, and by police officers. They stated that ethnicity was determined by: the surname of the child; information received from the parents; the self-identification of the child; or any combination of the above. For mixed race children, Coalition members indicated that there was no code for biracial children and that many biracial children were coded as only one ethnicity. Over half of the groups reported that no training was provided on how to code ethnicity.

Overall, members of the Coalition members recommended that in order to address the over/under-representation of children of color in the system, the agency needed to: *1) provide education and outreach into the diverse client communities; 2) hire more people of color and more bilingual workers; 3) provide more prevention services to keep children out of the system; 4) provide more cultural competency training for workers; 5) provide more services for families, especially in-home services; 6) educate policy makers*

about child welfare and the needs of specific client populations; 7) match workers with clients ethnically and linguistically; 8) institute quality control measures; and 8) encourage more people of color and young people to enter the field of social work.

Table 11: Focus Group Demographics – Family Resource Centers and South County Offices

Focus Group	Gender Males [M] Females [F]	Ethnicity African Am [AF] Native Am [NA] Hispan/Latino [H] Asian Am/PI [AS] Filipino [F] White [W] Other [O]	Position Admin/Mangr [A] Supervisor [S] Soc Wrker 3 [S3] Soc Wrker 2 [S2] Soc Wrker 1 [S1] Other [O]	Years in Position mean and std. dev.	Years in County mean and std. dev
Family Resource Centers and South County Offices	[F] = 33 (84.6%) [M] = 6 (15.4%)	[AF] = 9 (23.1%) [H] = 14 (35.9%) [AS] = 6 (15.4%) [F] = 2 (5.1%) [W] = 8 (20.5%)	[A] = 2 (5.1%) [S3] = 9 (23.1%) [S2] = 9 (23.1%) [S1] = 8 (20.5%) [O] = 10 (25.6%) [S] = 1 (2.6%)	2.24 (1.66)	5.82 (6.65)
Asian Pacific Family Resource Center	[F] = 6 (75.0%) [M] = 2 (25.0%)	[AF] = 6 (75.0%) [F] = 2 (25.0%)	[S3] = 3 (37.5%) [S2] = 1 (12.5%) [S1] = 1 (12.5%) [O] = 3 (37.5%)	3.03 (2.35)	5.93 (7.15)
Nuestra Casa	[F] = 7 (77.8%) [M] = 2 (22.2%)	[H] = 9 (100.0%)	[A] = 1 (11.1%) [S3] = 2 (22.2%) [S2] = 1 (11.1%) [S1] = 4 (44.4%) [O] = 1 (11.1%)	2.65 (1.72)	9.47 (7.91)
Ujirani	[F] = 8 (80.0%) [M] = 2 (20.0%)	[AF] = 8 (80.0%) [H] = 1 (10.0%) [W] = 1 (10.0%)	[A] = 1 (10.0%) [S3] = 1 (10.0%) [S2] = 2 (20.0%) [S1] = 1 (10.0%) [O] = 5 (50.0%)	2.01 (1.36)	3.68 (3.82)
South County Offices	[F] = 12 (100.0%) [M] = 0 (0.0%)	[AF] = 1 (8.3%) [H] = 4 (33.3%) [W] = 7 (58.3%)	[S] = 1 (8.3%) [S3] = 3 (25.0%) [S2] = 5 (41.7%) [S1] = 2 (16.7%) [O] = 1 (8.3%)	1.60 (1.15)	4.80 (6.81)

Family Resource Centers and South County Offices

Asian/Pacific Family Resource Center (APFRC) Staff

Table 11 indicates that of the 8 participants in the one focus group with the Asian/Pacific Family Resource Center staff, 2 (25%) were males and 6 (75%) were females. Six (75%) participants were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 2 (25%) were Filipino. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 3.03, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 5.93.

Members of the focus group indicated that Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) clients were under-represented in the system. Within this under-represented group, participants indicated that most of the CWS API cases were made up of Vietnamese and Filipino

clients who were over-represented while Asian Indians, Chinese, Fijians, Japanese, Koreans, Laotians, Hmong, and Samoans were under-represented. Participants also indicated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the CWS.

They felt that API clients were under-represented in all parts of the system as a result of the following: a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate workers to investigate and work with API clients; a lack of services for API clients; under-reporting of abuse and neglect in API communities; a lack of prevention services for API clients; and lack of API workers in Administration and Management. Participants felt that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented as a result of poverty issues.

Participants reported that workers in the CAN Center and ER unit coded the ethnicity of a child when they entered the system. They stated that APFRC staff did not code ethnicity.

APFRC staff recommended that the agency respond to the under-representation of API clients by: 1) recruiting, hiring, and retaining more API workers; 2) conducting outreach into API communities to recruit workers, informing community members about the services offered by the agency, and improving the image of the agency in these communities; 3) collaborating with other agencies that work with families; 4) providing services through the schools; 5) providing prevention services; 6) providing equitable services for API clients; 7) opening Management meetings to Line staff; and 8) encouraging Management to attend Line staff meetings. They also recommended that workers with API clients focus on the needs of the family, as well as the needs of the child; communicate regularly with clients about the status of their case; inform parents about what they need to do to regain the custody of their children; and advocate for their clients.

Nuestra Casa Staff

Table 11 indicates that of the 9 participants in the one focus group with Nuestra Casa staff, 2 (22.2%) were males and 7 (77.8%) were females. All 9 (100%) participants were Hispanic/Latino. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 2.65, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 9.47.

Participants reported that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented, while Asian American/Pacific Islanders (API) and Whites were under-represented in the CWS. They indicated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented at the shelter and in long-term foster care. Participants felt that the under-representation of API children in the system was the result of under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in API communities. They also felt that the over-representation of African American children in the CWS was due to poverty issues faced by African American families. Regarding the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino children in the CWS, participants felt this over-representation was the result of: domestic violence; poverty; housing difficulties; lack of knowledge about the child abuse and neglect laws in the United States; lack of education in the Hispanic/Latino community about the services

available to them; lack of prevention and intervention services for Hispanic/Latino clients; unrealistic timelines; lack of cultural competency among workers; lack of bi-lingual/bi-cultural workers; and the middle-class values of social workers and the CWS.

Participants indicated that the staff members at Nuestra Casa were not responsible for coding a child's ethnicity.

The staff at Nuestra Casa recommended that the agency respond to the over-representation of Hispanic/Latino children in the system by: 1) educating parents about the child abuse and neglect law; 2) educating families, using the media, about available services; 3) providing prevention services; 4) focusing services to teach parents the skills they need to be responsible for their families; 5) providing more cultural competency training for workers; 6) recruiting more bi-lingual/bi-cultural workers; 7) collaborating with other agencies; 8) educating mandated reporters about appropriate and inappropriate referrals; 9) empowering the Hispanic/Latino community; and 10) creating a program at local hospitals to provide parents with information and resources before they are discharged from the hospital.

Ujirani Family Resource Center Staff

Table 10 indicates that of the 10 participants in the one focus group with Ujirani Family Resource Center staff, 2 (20%) were males and 8 (80%) were females. Eight participants (80%) were African American, 1 (10%) participant was Hispanic/Latino, 1 (10%) was White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 2.01, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 3.68.

Ujirani staff members indicated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the system, while Asian American/Pacific Islander (API), bi-racial children, GLBT children, and children with disabilities were under-represented in the system. They stated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-reported to the CWS and were over-represented in the Continuing unit. They also stated that African American children were over-represented at the shelter and lingered in the system longer than other children did. In addition, participants reported that White children were under-represented at the shelter, but that they were over-represented in the Adoption unit. Hispanic/Latino children were also reported to be over-represented in the Adoption unit.

Members of the focus group felt that African American children were over-represented due to: poverty; substance abuse issues; lack of adequate services for African Americans; inappropriate referrals by mandated reporters; lack of ethnic specific workers; lack of cultural competency among workers; unrealistic timelines to resolve complicated issues; lack of African Americans in positions of power; inadequate preparation of social workers by social work education programs; lack of African American adoptive families; and the middle-class values of social workers and District Attorneys (DAs). They also indicated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the system due to their

large numbers in the general population and overcrowded housing conditions. Participants felt that API children were under-represented due to the under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in API communities and the lack of API workers to handle API cases. In addition, they indicated that bi-racial children, GLBT children, and children with disabilities were under-represented due to the lack of services available for these clients.

Regarding the coding of a child's ethnicity, members of the focus group indicated that there was not a code for bi-racial children and most of these children were only coded one ethnicity. They reported that no training was provided on coding.

They recommended that the agency respond to this over/under-representation by: 1) providing prevention and diversion programs; 2) establishing programs for new immigrants to help them adjust to living in the United States; 3) establishing support programs to help parents remain clean and sober; 4) establishing programs to provide long-term support to families; 5) allowing parents to practice the skills they learn with their children before termination of the parenting classes; 6) providing more cultural competency training for workers; 7) providing adequate supervision for workers; 8) evaluating worker performance and reward workers for good performance; 9) utilizing family conferencing for all families; and 10) publicizing the services available at Ujirani.

South County Staff

Table 10 indicates that of the 12 participants in the two focus groups with South County office staff in Gilroy and San Martin, 12 (100%) were females. One participant (8.3%) was African American, 4 (33.3%) participants were Hispanic/Latino, 7 (58.3%) participants were White. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 1.6, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 4.8.

Members of the focus groups indicated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the system, while African American, American Indian, API, and White children were under-represented in the system. They indicated that the poor, as well as families with multiple problems, were over-represented in the system. They also indicated that affluent families were under-represented in the system.

Staff from South County reported that children from substance-abusing families and families with domestic violence issues experienced longer stays in the system than other children. Participants felt that the over/under-representation of specific groups of children were related to: substance abuse issues; domestic violence; poverty; lack of affordable housing; low educational attainment; unrealistic timelines imposed by the system; lack of acknowledgement of relapse as a part of recovery; lack of quality substance abuse treatment programs in South County; lack of access to transportation; and no established checks and balance system to reduce the over/under-representation of specific groups of children in the CWS.

Staff indicated that workers in the Screening unit were responsible for coding a child's ethnicity. They also indicated that there was not a code for bi-racial children and that no training was provided on coding.

Staff at South County recommended that the agency respond to the over/under-representation by: 1) establishing more prevention services such as voluntary services and programs like School-Linked Services; 2) providing more services for sexually abused clients; 3) providing more education and outreach into the community about services that are available to them; 4) dedicating resources to develop housing for low-income clients; 5) partnering with private corporations to create new substance abuse treatment programs; 6) training workers about addiction; 7) requiring workers to visit children while they are at the shelter; 8) expanding communication between social workers and attorneys; and 9) boosting foster parent involvement with biological parents to improve parenting skills among biological parents.

Lineworkers Focus Group

Table 12: Focus Group Demographics – Lineworkers

Focus Group	Gender Males [M] Females [F]	Ethnicity African Am [AF] Native Am [NA] Hispan/Latino [H] Asian Am/PI [AS] Filipino [F] White [W] Other [O]	Position Admin/Mangr [A] Supervisor [S] Soc Wrker 3 [S3] Soc Wrker 2 [S2] Soc Wrker 1 [S1] Other [O]	Years in Position mean and std. dev.	Years in County mean and std. dev.
Line Workers	[F] = 4 (57.1%) [M] = 3 (42.9%)	[AF] = 1 (14.3%) [H] = 1 (14.3%) [AS] = 1 (14.3%) [W] = 3 (42.9%) [O] = 1 (14.3%)	[S3] = 4 (57.1%) [S2] = 2 (28.6%) [O] = 1 (14.3%)	4.73 (4.56)	10.82 (9.56)

Table 11 indicates that of the 7 participants in the four focus groups with lineworkers, 3 (42.9%) were males and 4 (57.1%) were females. One participant (14.3%) was African American, 1 (14.3%) participants was Hispanic/Latino, 1 (14.3%) participant was Asian American/Pacific Islander, 3 (42.9%) were White, and 1 (14.3%) participant was Other. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current positions was 4.73, while the mean number of years that they had been employed at Santa Clara Social Services Agency was 10.82.

Members of the focus group indicated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the system while White and Asian American/Pacific Islander children were under-represented. They also reported that children from affluent families were under-represented in the system. In response to which parts of the system children of color were disproportionately represented, lineworkers reported that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented throughout the system, from ER to long-term foster care. They also reported that African American children were over-represented in long-term care while White children were under-represented in long-term care.

Lineworkers reported that multiple factors contributed to the over-representation of African American and Hispanic/Latino children in the CWS. Their reasons included: poverty; the middle-class values of social workers and the system; racism; a lack of advocacy for poor families; difficulties poor families had navigating the system; the over-reporting of children of color by mandated reporters; and the cultural insensitivity of workers and the system. They also indicated that the legal system was cumbersome and placed unrealistic expectations and timelines on families in the system, contributing to longer stays for children. In addition, lineworkers felt that there was an over-emphasis on technology that was drawing resources away from children and families, that caseloads were too high, turnover was high, and decision-makers were too far removed from the clients and communities the agency served.

Regarding coding of ethnicity, lineworkers stated that workers at the shelter, ER workers, DI workers, and workers in the Screening unit coded ethnicity. They reported that many

children were coded incorrectly, but indicated that a child's ethnicity could be corrected in the computer system. Finally, a majority of lineworkers reported that no training was provided on coding a child's ethnicity. Only one lineworker reported that he/she received training on coding from his/her supervisor.

Lineworkers recommended that the system could respond to the over/under-representation by: 1) providing cultural competency training for new social workers; 2) paying lineworkers better; 3) recruiting and hiring more bi-lingual workers; 4) promoting workers of color to Administration and Management; 5) educating mandated reporters about appropriate and inappropriate referrals; 6) instituting quality control measures to ensure appropriate and sensitive services; 7) providing prevention services; 8) providing education and outreach to the Asian American/Pacific Islander communities about domestic violence and child abuse; 9) collaborating with other agencies; and 10) encouraging more families to become care providers.

Summary - Family Resource Centers and Lineworkers Focus Groups

Responses across the three Family Resource Centers, the two South County sites in San Martin and Gilroy, and the four groups of lineworkers varied, however, all stated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented in the CWS. Seven of the nine groups also stated that African American children were over-represented. All groups reported that API children were under-represented. Two groups stated that affluent children were under-represented. One group reported that in addition to API children, biracial, GLBT and children with disabilities were also under-represented.

In response to in what part of the system were children of color disproportionately represented, there was a great deal of variation. Of the five Family Resource Center and South County focus groups, one group stated that Hispanic/Latino children were more likely to be in the Shelter and long term foster care; one group stated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were more likely to be in Continuing, and that Hispanic/Latino children were more likely to be in Adoptions; and one group stated that API children were under-represented across all units. Lineworkers stated that Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented across all units and that African American children were over-represented in long term care.

Many factors were cited by all the focus groups for the over-representation of African American and Hispanic/Latino children, among them were: poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, lack of affordable housing, unrealistic timelines imposed by the system, lack of knowledge on the part of families about services, a lack of cultural competency in social workers, and a lack of prevention services. Two focus groups indicated that the under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in API communities contributed significantly to the under-representation of these clients in the CWS. In addition, it was noted that there are no established checks and balances in the system to reduce the numbers of particular groups of children.

Overall, members of the focus groups consisting of the Family Resource Centers, South County staff and the groups of lineworkers recommended that in order to address the over/under-representation of children of color in the system, the agency should: 1) provide education, additional services and outreach; 2) recruit more bi-lingual, bi-cultural workers and provide cultural competency training; 3) provide prevention services; and 4) provide more substance abuse programs for parents coupled with more training for workers on substance abuse.

Parent Focus Groups- African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, South County, and Vietnamese

A total of 41 parents participated in one of 5 focus groups.

A majority of the parent focus groups indicated that children of color were over-represented in the system, specifically African American and Hispanic/Latino children. One group indicated that Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) children were also over-represented in the system, while one group reported that there were few American Indian children in the system. One group reported that African American children and their families received fewer services and resources than any other group in the CWS. In addition, one group did not report any groups of children that were over/under-represented in the system.

Regarding the number of staff available to meet the needs of children and families in the system, three groups reported that there were not enough workers to adequately meet their needs. Two groups were split. Some participants reported that there were adequate numbers of staff while other participants reported that there were not adequate numbers of staff to meet their needs. Participants spoke extensively about their frustrations with the workers in the system and the CWS in general. Members of the focus groups reported feeling powerless when dealing with the system. They also reported that workers were judgmental, ignorant about different cultures, and lacked sensitivity when working with children and their families. In addition, participants felt that workers did not listen to their clients and did not thoroughly investigate maltreatment allegations prior to removing a child.

Regarding suggestions about how the system could better meet the needs of its clients, four of the five groups indicated that workers needed to thoroughly investigate maltreatment allegations prior to the removal and suggested that the system provide preventative services to keep families intact. Three groups indicated that workers needed to be culturally competent and that the services provided be culturally relevant for children and their families. Two groups suggested providing counseling services for clients and extending the timelines for the reunification process. In addition, participants suggested that workers be more sensitive, listen to their clients, assess family strengths, and provide education for recent immigrants on the laws in the United States. They also recommended that family members be involved in the decision-making process; that the system provide low or no cost recreation programs for children; that the abuser, not the

child, be punished for their actions; and that families have stable workers and not be forced to work with multiple social workers while their children were in the system.

Finally, participants spoke extensively about their experiences in the CWS. A majority of focus group participants felt that the system had no knowledge of their cultural beliefs and practices. Several participants shared personal stories about how their cultural practices and beliefs were ignored by the system. For example, Vietnamese parents spoke about the word "so", which means scared or afraid, in the Vietnamese language. Participants felt that it was necessary for children to feel "anxious or afraid" if they violated family rules, but that this was an issue of respecting family rules rather than feeling threatened by their parents. They felt that workers did not understand the difference between a child feeling threatened at home and feeling a sense of respect, or fear, when family rules were violated. One American Indian parent shared the following story about an experience he/she had with a non-Indian worker. "We had a worker and she was asking us very probing and personal questions. It is the role of the grandmother, as the elder of the family, to assess the worker's background before we continued the interview. The worker refused to answer our grandmother's questions and that was very disrespectful behavior. If she is going to know about us, we need to know about her."

Youth Focus Groups - African American, American Indian, Asian American/Pacific Islander, White, and Hispanic/Latino

A total of 13 youth participated in one of five focus groups.

Respondents from all five focus groups agreed that Hispanic/Latino children were the largest cultural/ethnic group in the shelter. A majority of the groups reported that African American children were the second largest group, White children were the third largest group, Asian American/Pacific Islander children were the fourth largest group, and American Indian children were the smallest group in the shelter. Regarding racial tension between kids at the shelter, all five focus groups reported that children from different cultural/ethnic groups mixed and interacted with each other. They stated that the tension between kids at the shelter was based on relationship issues, jealousy, and cottage rivalry, and that it was not racially based. Three of the five focus groups reported that there was some labeling of kids and that racial comments were made, but respondents believed that a majority of the comments were jokes not to be taken seriously.

When asked about the staff, two groups indicated that a majority of the staff were White, one group indicated that a majority of the staff were African American, one group reported that a majority of the staff were Hispanic/Latino and Asian American/Pacific Islander, and one group indicated that a majority of the staff were Hispanic/Latino and African American. Respondents felt that the ethnicity of the staff was not as important as their individual characteristics. They felt that it was important for staff to be open, easy to talk to, good listeners, and respectful of youth. With the exception of the African American focus group participants, respondents felt that the staff were responsive to their needs and adequately met their needs.

Regarding suggestions for how the system could better meet the needs of children from different cultural/ethnic groups, most of the recommendations were general suggestions on how to improve the shelter. However, one focus group suggested that the system allow children from different cultural/ethnic groups to attend traditional cultural celebrations and activities while in the CWS. The most common general recommendations were: 1) improve the school; 2) give youth more freedom; 3) have more outings and include all youth in the outings; 4) allow more phone time; 5) improve the food; 6) keep track of personal belongings; 7) do not house younger children in the same cottages as older children; and 8) encourage social workers to work more quickly to get children out of the shelter and to return phone calls in a timely manner.

Several groups also discussed the run away policy at the shelter. They reported that children were not discouraged from running away and that there were established rules about who could and could not run away. They also indicated that the shelter would not look for children that ran away. Respondents felt that if the shelter provided more outings for all children, regardless of their levels, that the numbers of children that ran away would be significantly reduced.

Finally, every group discussed concerns about the Shelter school. Comments related to the quality of teaching, the material taught and the interactions of the youth with the Shelter school personnel.

Summary - Parents and Youth Focus Groups

Parents discussed their observation that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were more likely to be in the CWS. One group of parents thought that Asian American/Pacific Islander children were also over-represented. One parent focus group reported that there were very few American Indian children in the CWS, one other parent focus group reported that African American children and families received fewer services and resources than any other group in the CWS. All of the youth focus group participants reported on their experiences in the Shelter. *Youth reported that children and youth are found in the following order, from most to least, at the Shelter: Hispanics/Latinos, African Americans, Whites, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders and American Indians.*

Three of five parent groups reported that there were not enough workers to meet their needs. Youth focus groups, with the exception of the African American focus group participants, reported that the staff met their needs. Youth felt that staff needed to have the following characteristics: to be open, to be easy to talk to, to be good listeners, and to be respectful of youth. These traits were more important to youth than ethnicity.

Parents and youth differed in their suggestions for meeting the needs of families and children. Parents focused on prevention, cultural competence, counseling, and extending timelines. Parents also suggested that staff needed to assess the strengths of the families and provide education for recent immigrants. Youth focus group participants reported on their concerns about the Shelter, recommending several changes. They recommended improving the Shelter school, giving youth more freedom, providing inclusive outings,

giving additional phone time, providing better food, separating older and younger children, creating a system for tracking children's belongings, and moving children out of the Shelter more quickly.

Summary and Emerging Themes

The focus groups elicited a variety of opinions and ideas. At times, providers and recipients agreed, at other times, their opinions diverged. The following themes summarize some of the most consistently stated perspectives.

(1)   Although most of the focus group respondents stated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented and Asian American/Pacific Islander children were under-represented in the CWS, there was great diversity between and among focus group respondents in their answers to this question. American Indian children were frequently not mentioned in the discussion of over/under-representation. In four of the focus groups additional children were mentioned as either over or under-represented and uncoded: bi-racial, GLBT and disabled children.

There was also great variability in response to where in the system children of color were disproportionately represented. Although some groups stated that over/under-representation occurred across all units, other groups identified specific program areas in the system where disproportion existed.

The limited dissemination of information about the disproportionate representation of children of color suggests that communication of other needs and concerns across all levels in the agency may also be problematic. Clear information about children of color and their presence in all parts of the CWS would give workers accurate knowledge about this important topic and could provide an opportunity for creating new programs and services to address the serious disproportion that does exist. Creating goals and measurable objectives, coupled with programmatic initiatives for reducing the number of children of color in the CWS would put the agency in a local, state and national leadership role.

(2)   Coding ethnicity is particularly critical for examining the disproportionate representation of children of color. Nearly all staff focus groups indicated that there was no training provided on coding ethnicity. Some focus groups discussed the difficulty of changing codes after initial codes were assigned in the screening process. In addition, no codes exist for bi-racial children, a growing population group in the region and state, for GLBT and disabled children.

(3)   There are policies and procedures defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) that apply specifically to American Indian children, therefore, early and accurate identification of such children is essential. The American Indian Parent focus group participants discussed in detail their concern about staff not knowing about ICWA and knowing little about their American Indian culture. Both the American Indian Employees

Committee focus group and the American Indian parent focus group discussed the need for American Indian staff to be assigned to American Indian cases.

(4)   Focus groups with staff and parents discussed the importance of prevention and providing services to keep children out of the CWS. Multiple suggestions were made about prevention programs including the following: more resources for children and families of color, more outreach and education, more substance abuse programs for families and more training in substance abuse for staff, and more education programs for recent immigrants.

(5)   Every staff focus group, from the focus group with administrators, to the focus groups with lineworkers stressed the importance of poverty in the disproportionate representation of children of color in the county.

(6)   Cultural competency, ethnic and linguistic matching, and hiring more people of color were themes that were emphasized by supervisors, the Coalition member groups, Family Resource Center staff and lineworkers. Three of the five parent groups discussed the need for staff to be culturally competent. Youth focus group participants did not discuss cultural competence. Both parent and youth focus groups said that staff needed to listen, to help, to take time, to be respectful.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Overarching Themes

As this report has emphasized throughout, the findings from this exploratory phase – the first year of a three year study on children of color in Santa Clara's CWS - are preliminary given the research methodology used. Nevertheless, this exploratory phase has been revealing. When we combine findings from each of the preceding sections, four overarching themes emerged – themes that provide a context for the next phase and point to important areas for further investigation. The remainder of this section discusses each of these four themes, and outlines the research questions and activities for the next phase. In addition, we have provided several suggestions derived largely from our discussions with focus group participants that may serve as directions for further development aimed at meeting the needs of children of color in the County's CWS.

Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the CWS are Multiple and Complex

There is no clear consensus in the research literature on precisely which factors are related to involvement with the CWS. Substance abuse has frequently been associated with the likelihood of entry into the CWS. While the occurrence of substance abuse in the child welfare caseload is well documented with statistics indicating that at least half of all child maltreatment cases involve substance abuse of some kind, our review of the literature indicated that strong empirical evidence concerning the relationship between substance abuse and child maltreatment is extremely limited. Perhaps the most significant finding in the research on substance abuse and child maltreatment was that parental substance abuse, as it relates to child maltreatment, is most likely linked with a number of other social problems that may lead to abusive or neglectful behavior. Some of those problems may include, but are not limited to: poverty, serious mental illness, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS.

Differential treatment based on ethnicity and/or SES, is clearly a factor that may likely contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Although families of color were not found to abuse substances at rates any higher than white families, several studies showed that families of color and poor families were more often reported to child welfare institutions than white middle-class families both for child maltreatment, as well as substance abuse. Research also suggests that the racial/ethnic distribution of the child's community of residence may have some influence on the likelihood of being placed in the CWS. Studies that tested the "visibility hypothesis" suggested that there was a higher probability for African American children to be placed in foster care from a geographic area of residence where they were less represented and thus, more visible. However, research in the area of bias in reporting remains scant and inconclusive.

Research findings consistently point to a relationship between poverty and child maltreatment. However, like substance abuse, poverty cannot be examined in isolation. Indeed, characteristics associated with communities and neighborhoods including living

in a high crime area, living in public housing, having larger numbers of dependent children, and receiving welfare benefits might place children of color at an increased risk of entering and staying in the CWS. While the available research in the area of poverty and factors related to communities of poverty was helpful in illuminating some of the complex interacting social conditions that may contribute to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS, serious limitations of the studies precluded any definitive findings. Perhaps the most serious limitation for the purposes of our research endeavor centered on the fact that none of the current available research examined the processes by which individual level characteristics such as substance abuse, mental illness and domestic violence interact with poverty and other neighborhood factors to impact families of color and their subsequent entry into the CWS.

In addition, since characteristics of other ethnic communities such as Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders or Native Americans have not been investigated adequately in previous research, little is known about the interactions between characteristics of these communities and their contact with the CWS. The under-representation of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in the CWS at national, state and county levels may reveal interesting community characteristics that serve to buffer this community from contact with the CWS. Alternatively, research might reveal the underreporting of child maltreatment in these communities – yet another issue that merits attention if these communities are to be effectively and equitably served. For example, descriptive statistics using County level CWS/CMS data, presented in Section 4 of this report, indicate that caretaker absence/incapacity was the most common reason for removal for African American children, whereas physical abuse was the most common reason for removal for Asian American/Pacific Islanders. While Asian American/Pacific Islander children continue to be under-represented, reasons for this discrepancy in removal reason merit further examination. Also, since Vietnamese children constitute the largest representation among Asian American/Pacific Islander children in the County's CWS, further analysis regarding their presence in the system is warranted.

Studies have yet to be designed which examine the multiple and complex ways these individual, family and community level factors interact simultaneously with a clear focus on ethnicity – a necessity if we are to truly understand and disentangle the numerous interrelated factors associated with the disproportionate rates of children of color in the CWS. More research on the variables related to neighborhoods and communities as well as the mechanisms through which they interrelate and impact children and families of color is needed. Finally, most analyses of macro social variables used in research to date have been derived from 1990 Census data, which is now outdated and consequently unreliable. The imminent availability of data from the 2000 Census lends promise to developing a clearer and more current understanding of ways in which community and neighbor factors affect children and families of color.

In the next phase of this research project, investigation will extend to individual, family and community level factors related to entry of children into the CWS to gain a better understanding of how the factors interact and differ across various racial/ethnic groups. The specific research questions related to this first theme are:

- What factors are related to movement in and out of the CWS for children of color?
- Do factors differ for different racial/ethnic and cultural groups of children?

Our preliminary work this phase with the CWS/CMS database, as well as our discussions with focus group participants revealed that the available administrative data will not furnish all the information necessary to address these questions, especially at the family and community level. The next phase will utilize extensive case record reviews, as well as geo-coding to incorporate community level characteristics. Important information from the 2000 census will also be utilized.

System Level Changes Recently Initiated at the Federal, State and Local Level will Undoubtedly have an Impact on Children of Color in the CWS

With the passage of MEPA-IEP and ASFA, safety, permanency and expedited placements have taken precedence in the CWS. Child welfare practice now reflects a decreased tolerance for risks children face in their homes and represents a shift from the 1970s and 1980s when Family Preservation was the goal of the child welfare system. The shift toward expedited placement and an emphasis on permanency has certainly influenced the culture and ways in which social services are being delivered in California in general, and in Santa Clara County in particular and consequently raises several major concerns for children of color in the County's CWS. Shortened timelines, early termination of parental rights, bypass criteria, as well as changes in adoption regulations and incentives will all clearly have an impact on children and families of color. In combination with the new regulations, the characteristics of families, children and communities of color including chronic poverty, substance abuse, lack of community social organization or racial segregation that increase chances of entering the CWS may create overwhelming barriers to successful reunification for children of color in the CWS and keep them in the system longer.

In addition, it is not clear what the impact of the increased support for kinship supportive services will be. According to preliminary findings from CWS/CMS, in Santa Clara County the greatest percentage of youth across all ethnic/racial groups is placed in a relative home. It remains unclear whether placements with kin are actually permanent or whether these children reenter the system; outcomes for children placed with kin have not been rigorously examined. For African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth in the County, the second most frequent placement was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). The majority of children in the County's CWS are in the Permanent Planning service component and the minority in Family Maintenance. This findings holds true across all racial/ethnic groups, as well with the overwhelming majority of children of color in Permanent Planning; very small percentages within each group are in Family Maintenance. Will these new regulations and their renewed emphasis on permanency and safety rather than family reunification contribute to a

continually growing population of all children, and particularly children of color, in out of home placement?

Neither MEPA-IEP nor AFSA modified the ICWA. The new regulations continue to recognize the unique political relationship that Indian children have as members of sovereign tribal governments. While this should ensure the rights of American Indian children in the CWS, if a child's American Indian heritage is not discovered by the County child welfare agency, American Indian children in Santa Clara County will not receive the protections afforded them under ICWA. Also, if child welfare workers are not trained about ICWA regulations and how they interact with other regulations, such as ASFA they might make inappropriate decisions for American Indian children and their families.

Although most of the focus group respondents stated that African American and Hispanic/Latino children were over-represented and Asian American/Pacific Islander children were under-represented in the CWS, American Indian children were frequently not mentioned in the discussion of over/under-representation. Given the policies and procedures defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) that apply specifically to American Indian children, early and accurate identification of such children is essential. The American Indian Parent focus group participants discussed in detail their concern about staff not knowing about ICWA and knowing little about their American Indian culture. Both the American Indian Employees Committee focus group and the American Indian parent focus group discussed the need for American Indian staff to be assigned to American Indian cases. According to our preliminary CWS/CMS analyses, for each racial/ethnic group 45% or more of children were in a facility in which the provider was of the same racial/ethnic background. The exception being the Native American group, with only 11% in a facility with a racially/ethnically matched provider.

Finally, while it is too early to make definitive conclusions, preliminary findings from research based on national estimates suggest that welfare reform and related public policies may be working better for White families and children than for children and families of color. It is possible that these disparities will carry over and affect children and families of color in the CWS, who may already be at a disadvantage due to the new ASFA regulations.

Focus groups with staff and parents discussed over and over the importance of prevention and providing services to keep children out of the CWS. Multiple suggestions were made about prevention programs including the following: more resources for children and families of color, more outreach and education, more substance abuse programs for families and more training in substance abuse for staff, and more education programs for recent immigrants. According to County administrators, Santa Clara County is making concerted efforts to improve the system for all children, including children of color, by implementing new and innovative prevention programs such as Family to Family, Wraparound Services and Parent Education for new immigrant families, to help children and their families stay out of the system. Due to the over-representation of Latino and

African American children in the system, any efforts to reduce the number of children entering the system will positively impact children of color.

For the next phase we plan to look at these system changes utilizing a longitudinal database constructed from the county's CWS/CMS database beginning in 1996 and we will analyze trends in placements and outcomes for children in light of the recent system-related changes. The primary research question derived from this theme is:

- What is the impact of recent legislated system-related changes on outcomes for children in the County's CWS?

Various Racial/Ethnic Groups may Receive Different Treatment at Key Decision Making Points in the System

It is possible that children from different racial/ethnic groups are treated differently at specific decision-making or key choice points in the system. The differential treatment of children of color within the system was corroborated by focus group participants who expressed a concern for ways in which individual workers, depending on which department they worked in, and possibly which supervisor they had, might treat children differently. Cultural competency, ethnic and linguistic matching, and hiring more people of color were themes that were emphasized by supervisors, the Coalition member groups, Family Resource Center staff and lineworkers. Three of the five parent groups discussed the need for staff to be culturally competent. While youth focus group participants did not discuss cultural competence, in particular, both parent and youth focus groups said that staff needed to listen, to help, to take time, to be respectful to them.

This concern about possible differential treatment of children of color is also substantiated by CWS/CMS data that indicate that there are significant differences the number of months in placements by race/ethnicity. African American children spent significantly more time in placement than their White, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Vietnamese, and Filipino peers. Also, according to preliminary findings from CWS/CMS, in Santa Clara County, following placements in a relative home, the second most frequent placement for African American, Native American, White and Hispanic/Latino youth, was a Foster Family Agency (FFA); for Asian American/Pacific Islander and Vietnamese youth it was a Foster Family Home (FFH). Almost 14% of Native American and 18% of Asian American/Pacific Islander youth in OHP were placed in the Shelter in December 2000, percentages that are higher than any of the other ethnic/racial groups including African American youth at 6.8% and Hispanic/Latino youth at 11.5%.

The next phase of this study will examine in greater detail ways in which decisions are made within the system. The primary research questions related to this theme include:

- What are the critical transition (choice points)/decision making points in the CWS?

- What is the extent of over/under-representation of children of color at major decision (choice points) in the system?

These questions will be addressed primarily through the use of administrative data. However, given the limitations of the CWS/CMS database mentioned above, we will also use information from case record reviews and interviews with key informants to provide a richer understanding of issues related to this theme.

Little is Known about Specific Pathways through the CWS and Ways in which these Pathways Differ for Various Racial/Ethnic Groups

Much of the research on children in the CWS has focused on factors related to movement in and out of the system. While measures such as performance indicators are helpful in providing information about outcomes, most tell us only about numbers of children who exit, who remain in placement, the length of time in placement, and the number of spells a child has in the system. This kind of information tells us little about the actual experiences of children in care and the individual and family-related characteristics that are associated with these experiences. Focus group participants frequently stated that once a child of color is brought into the system, it is very hard for that child to exit. Yet, little is known about what happens once that child is in the system. The second phase of this study will further investigate movement within the system and the multiple pathways that individual children, particularly children of color follow as they wend their way through the system.

The following research questions will provide guidance for further inquiry related to this theme:
- What are the current pathways/trajectories through the system?
- Do pathways though the system differ for different cultural/ethnic groups of children?
- What factors put children on certain pathways?
- Are there key decision points that along these pathways that determine subsequent care trajectories?
- Do outcomes differ for children following particular pathways?

Data to address these questions will be derived largely from extensive case record reviews of children in the County's CWS.

Directions for Further Development – Implications for Santa Clara County

The following are suggestions derived from discussions with focus group participants that may provide a starting point for ways in which children of color can be better served within the system.

1) Focus group results indicated that there was great variability in response to which groups were disproportionately represented in the system as well as where in the system children of color were disproportionately represented. Although some

groups stated that over/under-representation occurred across all units, other groups identified specific program areas in the system where disproportion existed. The limited dissemination of information about the disproportionate representation of children of color suggests that communication of other needs and concerns across all levels in the agency may also be problematic. *Clear information about children of color and their presence in all parts of the CWS would give workers accurate knowledge about this important topic and could provide an opportunity for creating new programs and services to address the serious disproportion that does exist. Creating goals and measurable objectives, coupled with programmatic initiatives for reducing the number of children of color in the CWS would put the agency in a local, state and national leadership role.*

2) *The American Indian Parent focus group participants discussed in detail their concern about staff not knowing about ICWA and knowing little about their American Indian culture. Both the American Indian Employees Committee focus group and the American Indian parent focus group discussed the need for American Indian staff to be assigned to American Indian cases.*

3) *Focus groups with staff and parents discussed the importance of prevention and providing services to keep children out of the CWS.* Multiple suggestions were made about prevention programs including the following: more resources for children and families of color, more outreach and education, more substance abuse programs for families and more training in substance abuse for staff, and more education programs for recent immigrants.

4) *Cultural competency, ethnic and linguistic matching, and hiring more people of color were themes that were emphasized by supervisors, the Coalition member groups, Family Resource Center staff and line workers.*

5) Coding ethnicity is particularly critical for examining the disproportionate representation of children of color. Nearly all staff focus groups indicated that there was no training provided on coding ethnicity. Some focus groups discussed the difficulty of changing codes after initial codes were assigned in the screening process. In addition, no codes exist for bi-racial children, a growing population group in the region and state, for GLBT and disabled children. *Training on ways to code ethnicity in CWS/CMS would improve data collection efforts and provide more reliable information for the Agency.*

6) Our preliminary analyses of CWS/CMS data indicated that details about subgroups within race/ethnicity are unavailable. Some other characteristics regarding OHP children were also unavailable or not recorded. Specifically in Santa Clara County, information regarding OHP provider characteristics was relatively sparse. *We realize that improving the collection and condition of child welfare data is no easy task given the issues of limited resources, training needs, and compatibility among systems of data recording and storage. However,*

concerted efforts in this area are necessary if accurate and useful information is to be obtained and used to provide feedback on the effectiveness of programs and services in the County.

Looking Ahead

In closing this report we feel that we have successfully fulfilled the objectives we set out to accomplish during this exploratory phase of the research. Those objectives were: to put the problem in context by gaining an understanding of the relevant research literature and child welfare policies; to identify the extent and scope of the problem at the national, state and county level; to gain an understanding of how the problem is viewed from different perspectives within the system; and to identify key questions to be examined during subsequent phases of the study.

This report and the findings presented in each of the sections have established the background and context for the next phase of the project. We have surveyed the research literature, described the historical landscape of the CWS and how it has been influenced by recent policies and legislation, become familiar with the strengths of available databases at the national, state and county level, as well as their limitations, and most importantly, have been enlightened and educated through numerous discussions with administrators, staff, parents and youth – all of whom have provided unique and important perspectives on the issue of the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. All of this information has contributed to the development of four overarching themes described in this report.

Work over the next two years will broaden and further develop the work we have completed to date. We will conduct more extensive analyses utilizing the County's CWS/CMS database and will look at trends in the data overtime. In addition, we will conduct in-depth case record reviews on approximately 400 cases in the County's CWS to examine experiences and pathways of children from different racial/ethnic group as they advance through the system. We will also link community and neighborhood level factors through the use of geo-coding and the 2000 census data. During this second phase we will continue to conduct ongoing interviews with selected key informants within the system to gain an even richer understanding of our work as we progress. We look forward to meeting regularly with members of the advisory group, as well as the Coalition for Effective Services to obtain feedback and guidance as we move into the next phase of our study on the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS.

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Table 1a: Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], County, State, and National Level Demographic Comparison

Characteristic	Santa Clara County N = 2721[a]		California N = 99,380[b]		USA N = 377,150[c]	
Ethnicity						
African American	399	14.7%	35,468	35.7%	182,792	48.5%
Native American	37	1.4%	1,433	1.4%	6,388	1.1%
White	739	27.2%	29,481	29.7%	136,197	36.1%
Hispanic / Latino	1381	50.8%	30,919	31.1%	27,229	7.2%
Asian American / Pacific Islander	55	2.0%	2,079	2.1%	2,508	0.7%
Vietnamese	52	1.9%	d	---	d	---
Filipino	52	1.9%	d	---	d	---
Other	4	0.1%	d	---	5,906	1.6%
Bi-Racial	d	---	d	---	1,886	0.5%
Missing / Not Reported / Unknown	2	0.1%	d	---	14,244	3.8%
Gender						
Females	1356	49.8%	not available	not available	183,080	51.2%
Males	1365	50.2%			192,186	48.8%
Missing/Not Reported					935	---
Age (in years)	$\overline{X}$ = 9.27 sd = 5.18 Range: 0 to 19		$\overline{X}$ = not available sd = not available Range: 0 to 18		$\overline{X}$ = not available sd = not available Range: not specified	
Less than 1 year old	102	3.7%	3,426	3.5%	11,949	3.8%
1 to 5 years old	650	23.9%	24,234	24.6%	88,478	28.4%
6 to 12 years old [6 to 10 in CA][e]	1113	40.9%	[29,408]	[29.8%]	112,674	36.2%
13 to 17 years old [11 to 15 in CA][e]	790	29.0%	[29,867]	[30.3%]	84,637	27.2%
18 years old or older [16 to 18 in CA][e]	66	2.4%	[11,643]	[11.8%]	13,130	4.2%
Unknown	---	---	---	---	658	0.2%

a: Based on open cases in Santa Clara County's CWS-CMS data system December 2000
b: Based on California data July 2000. Source - Needell, B., Webster, D., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Brookhart, A., & Lery, B. (2001). Performance Indicators for Child Welfare in California. http://cssr.berkeley.edu/performance.html.
c: Source - Child Welfare League of America (1998), 1996 data composed only of information from contributing States
d: Unclassified or merged with another category in the data set
e: California data on age was categorized differently from national data

Table 1b: Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], County, State, and National Level Demographic Comparison (continued)

Characteristic	Santa Clara County N = 2721[a]	California N = 99,380[b]	USA N = 377,150[c]
Number of Placements	$\overline{X}$ = 3.83 sd = 3.25 Range: 1 to 37	not available	not available
Number of Months in Placement	$\overline{X}$ = 39.97 sd = 39.57 Median = 25.86 Range: 0.50 to 207.18	not available	$\overline{X}$ = not available sd = not available Median = 20 Range 4.8 to 82.0 29 State reporting

a: Based on open cases in Santa Clara County's CWS-CMS data system December 2000
b: Based on California data July 2000. Source - Needell, B., Webster, D., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Brookhart, A., & Lery, B. (2001). Performance Indicators for Child Welfare in California. http://cssr.berkeley.edu/performance.html.
c: Source - Child Welfare League of America (1998), 1996 data composed only of information from contributing States

Table 2: Racial/Ethnic Proportions of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP] Comparison of Selected Large California Counties - July 2000 Data

Race / Ethnicity	California County								
	All Counties (N = 99,380)	Santa Clara (n = 3,181)	San Francisco (n = 2,323)	Alameda (n = 4,798)	Sacramento (n = 5,984)	Butte (n = 600)	Los Angeles (n = 41,164)	San Diego (n = 7,144)	Fresno (n = 3,398)
African American	36% (35,468)	16% (507)	74% (1,727)	70% (3,374)	36% (2,164)	8% (46)	46% (19,118)	28% (1,991)	24% (831)
White	30% (29,481)	29% (908)	10% (239)	17% (821)	44% (2,624)	75% (451)	16% (6,535)	37% (2,610)	28% (939)
Hispanic / Latino	31% (30,919)	49% (1,560)	10% (228)	9% (453)	16% (962)	7% (39)	36% (14,682)	30% (2,125)	43% (1,468)
Asian / Pacific Is.	2% (2,079)	5% (167)	4% (98)	2% (117)	3% (151)	2% (9)	1% (609)	3% (214)	2% (82)
Native American	1% (1,433)	1% (39)	1% (31)	1% (33)	1% (83)	9% (55)	1% (220)	3% (204)	2% (78)

Notes:

1. Based on California data July 2000. Source - Needell, B., Webster, D., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Brookhart, A., & Lery, B. (2001). Performance Indicators for Child Welfare in California. http://cssr.berkeley.edu/performance.html.

2. The counties were selected to illustrate the wide variation in the representation of racial/ethnic groups by geographical location.

Table 3a: Demographic and System Characteristics of Children, Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000

Characteristic	N = 4399	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Race/Ethnicity			
[AF] African American	531	12.1%	H > W, AF, N, AS, V, F, O
[N] Native American	50	1.1%	W > AF, N, AS, V, F, O
[W] White	1178	26.9%	AF > N, AS, V, F, O
[H] Hispanic / Latino	2288	52.2%	AS > N, O
[AS] Asian American / Pacific Islander	118	2.7%	F > O
[V] Vietnamese	116	2.6%	N > O
[F] Filipino	84	1.9%	V > N, O
[O] Other	20	0.5%	(missing not included)
Missing / Not Recorded	14	not included	α = .001
Gender			
Females	2237	50.9	No Significant Difference
Males	2155	49.1	
Missing/Not Recorded	7	not included	
Primary Language			
[E] English	3786	86.3%	E > A, V, S, T, O
[A] Asian Language	10	0.2%	S > A, V, T, O
[V] Vietnamese	101	2.3%	V > A, T, O
[S] Spanish	465	10.6%	(missing not included)
[T] Tagolog	9	0.2%	
[O] Other	15	0.3%	α = .003
Missing/Not Recorded	13	not included	

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 3b: Demographic and System Characteristics of Children, Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

Characteristic	N = 4399	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Born in California			
In State	1296	94.7%	In State > Out of State
Out of State	72	5.3%	(missing not included)
Missing/Not Recorded	3031	not included	α = .05
Age (in years)	$\overline{X}$ = 9.22 sd = 5.16 Range: 0 to 19	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Service Component			
[ER] Emergency Response	250	5.7%	PP > FM, FR, ER
[FM] Family Maintenance	1328	30.2%	FM > FR, ER
[FR] Family Reunification	868	19.7%	FR > ER
[PP] Permanent Placement	1953	44.4%	
			α = .008

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 4a: Demographic Characteristics for Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000

Characteristic	N = 2721	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Race/Ethnicity			
[AF] African American	399	14.7%	H > W, AF, N, AS, V, F, O
[N] Native American	37	1.4%	W > AF, N, AS, V, F, O
[W] White	739	27.2%	AF > N, AS, V, F, O
[H] Hispanic / Latino	1381	50.8%	AS > O
[AS] Asian American / Pacific Islander	55	2.0%	F > O
[V] Vietnamese	52	1.9%	N > O
[F] Filipino	52	1.9%	V > O
[O] Other	4	0.1%	(missing not included
Missing / Not Recorded	2	0.1%	in significance tests)
			$\alpha = .001$
Gender			
Females	1356	49.8%	No Significant Difference
Males	1365	50.2%	
Primary Language			
[E] English	2443	89.8%	E > A, V, S, T, O
[A] Asian Language	5	0.2%	S > A, V, T, O
[V] Vietnamese	45	1.7%	V > A, T, O
[S] Spanish	213	7.8%	
[T] Tagolog	4	0.1%	$\alpha = .003$
[O] Other	11	0.4%	

a.   Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 4b: Demographic Characteristics for Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

Characteristic	N = 2721	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Born in California			
In State	1040	94.6%	In State > Out of State
Out of State	59	5.4%	(missing not included)
Missing/Not Recorded	1622	not included	α = .05
Age (in years)	$\overline{X}$ = 9.27 sd = 5.18 Range: 0 to 19	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Service Component			
[ER] Emergency Response	146	5.4%	PP > FM, FR, ER
[FM] Family Maintenance	112	4.1%	FR > ER, FM
[FR] Family Reunification	700	25.7%	
[PP] Permanent Placement	1763	64.8%	α = .008
Reason for Removal			
[C] Caretaker Absence / Incapacity	1025	37.7%	C > All Categories
[EA] Emotional Abuse	91	3.3%	GN > EA, SA, V, O
[GN] General Neglect	472	17.3%	PA > EA, SA, V, O
[PA] Physical Abuse	444	16.3%	SN > EA, SA, V, O
[SN] Severe Neglect	501	18.4%	SA > EA, V, O
[SA] Sexual Abuse	143	5.3%	EA > V, O
[V] Voluntary Placement	17	0.6%	
[O] Other	28	1.0%	α = .001

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 4c: Demographic Characteristics for Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

Characteristic	N = 2721	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Placement Home Facility Type			
[S] Small Family/Court Specified/Tribe Specified/ Guardian Home	109	4.0%	R > S, F, G, C, FFA
[F] Foster Family Home	456	16.8%	FFA > S, F, G, C
[G] Group Home	189	6.9%	F > S, G, C
[C] County Shelter	290	10.7%	C > S, G
[R] Relative Home	1050	38.6%	G > S
[FFA] Foster Family Agency	627	23.0%	
			α = .003
Number of Placements	$\overline{X}$ = 3.83 sd = 3.25 Range: 1 to 37	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Number of Months in Placement	$\overline{X}$ = 39.97 sd = 39.57 Range: 0.50 to 207.18	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

a.   Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 5: Provider Characteristics for Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000

Characteristic	N = 2721	Valid % (% based on available data)	Significant Differences[a]
Race/Ethnicity	583 reported		
[AF] African American	94	16.1%	W > AF, N, AS, V, F
[N] Native American	3	0.5%	H > AF, N, AS V, F
[W] White	248	42.5%	AF > N, AS, V, F
[H] Hispanic / Latino	197	33.8%	(Other and missing
[AS] Asian American/Pacific Islander	15	2.6%	not included in
[V] Vietnamese	13	2.2%	significance test)
[F] Filipino	13	2.2%	
[O] Other	0	not included	α = .001
Missing/Not Recorded	2,138	not included	
Gender	2128 reported		
Females	1819	85.5%	Females > Males
Males	309	14.5%	
Missing/Not Recorded	593	not included	α = .05
Education	398 reported		
[E] Eighth Grade or Less	19	4.8%	SC > E, SHS, T, CG, PG
[SHS] Some High School	40	10.1%	HS > E, SHS, T, CG, PG
[HS] High School or Equivalent	106	26.6%	CG > E, T, PG
[T] Technical Training beyond High School	24	6.0%	
[SC] Some College or College-Level courses	121	30.4%	(missing not included
[CG] College Graduate	60	15.1%	in significance test)
[PG] Post-Graduate Education	28	7.0%	
Missing/Not Recorded	2,323	not included	α = .002

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical comparisons

Table 6a: Demographic and System Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000

	African American [AF] n = 399	Native American [N] n = 37	White [W] n = 739	Hispanic/ Latino [H] n = 1381	Asian Am/ Pacific Is. [AS] n = 55	Vietnamese [V] n = 52	Filipino [F] n = 52	Other [O] n = 4	Significance Tests[a] p < .05
Age in years, mean (sd)	9.86 (4.84)	8.97 (5.18)	9.73 (5.16)	8.93 (5.24)	9.56 (4.97)	8.79 (5.62)	7.63 (5.38)	10.00 (5.83)	No Significant Differences
Service Component									
Emergency Response	13 (3.3%)	5 (13.5%)	52 (7.0%)	67 (4.9%)	3 (5.5%)	3 (5.8%)	3 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	Significant Relationship Between Race / Ethnicity and Service Component
Family Maintenance	7 (1.8%)	1 (2.7%)	24 (3.2%)	69 (5.0%)	6 (10.9%)	3 (5.8%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	
Family Reunification	68 (17.0%)	11 (29.7%)	196 (26.5%)	383 (27.7%)	14 (25.5%)	8 (15.4%)	16 (30.8%)	2 (50.0%)	
Permanent Placement	311 (77.9%)	20 (54.1%)	467 (63.2%)	862 (62.4%)	32 (58.2%)	38 (73.1%)	31 (59.6%)	2 (50.0%)	
Number of Placements, mean (sd)	3.93 (3.66)	4.92 (4.68)	4.11 (3.55)	3.74 (3.02)	3.15 (2.04)	3.19 (1.90)	2.40 (1.43)	3.25 (1.50)	No Significant Differences
Months in Placement, mean (sd)	55.32 (45.26)	37.91 (34.80)	38.15 (35.59)	37.87 (39.98)	36.22 (32.27)	30.82 (31.00)	21.46 (20.75)	13.79 (17.38)	AF > W, H, V, F

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical by categorical variable comparisons and ANOVA for continuous by categorical variable comparisons

Table 6b: Demographic and System Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

	African American [AF] n = 399	Native American [N] n = 37	White [W] n = 739	Hispanic/ Latino [H] n = 1381	Asian Am/ Pacific Is. [AS] n = 55	Vietnamese [V] n = 52	Filipino [F] n = 52	Other [O] n = 4	Significance Tests[a] p < .05
Placement Facility Type									
Small Family/ Court Spec./ Tribe Spec./ Guardian Home	19 (4.8%)	4 (10.8%)	31 (4.2%)	47 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (7.7%)	3 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	Significant Relationship Between Race / Ethnicity and Placement Facility Type
Foster Family Home	66 (16.5%)	7 (18.9%)	134 (18.1%)	213 (15.4%)	15 (27.3%)	15 (28.8%)	4 (7.7%)	2 (50.0%)	
Group Home	25 (6.3%)	2 (5.4%)	92 (12.4%)	65 (4.7%)	2 (3.6%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	
County Shelter	27 (6.8%)	5 (13.5%)	84 (11.4%)	159 (11.5%)	10 (18.2%)	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	
Relative Home	172 (43.1%)	12 (32.4%)	222 (30.0%)	583 (42.2%)	18 (32.7%)	21 (40.4%)	21 (40.4%)	1 (25.0%)	
Foster Family Agency	90 (22.6%)	7 (18.9%)	176 (23.8%)	314 (22.7%)	10 (18.2%)	9 (17.3%)	19 (36.5%)	1 (25.0%)	

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical by categorical variable comparisons and ANOVA for continuous by categorical variable comparisons

Table 6c: Demographic and System Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

	African American [AF] n = 399	Native American [N] n = 37	White [W] n = 739	Hispanic/ Latino [H] n = 1381	Asian Am/ Pacific Is. [AS] n = 55	Vietnamese [V] n = 52	Filipino [F] n = 52	Other [O] n = 4	Significance Tests[a] p < .05
Reason for Removal									
Caretaker Absence/ Incapacity	177 (44.4%)	10 (27.0%)	276 (37.3%)	511 (37.0%)	11 (20.0%)	19 (36.5%)	20 (38.5%)	1 (25.0%)	Significant Relationship Between Race / Ethnicity and Reason for Removal
Emotional Abuse	12 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	27 (3.6%)	42 (3.0%)	3 (5.5%)	1 (1.9%)	5 (9.6%)	0 (0.0%)	
General Neglect	63 (15.8%)	5 (13.5%)	143 (19.3%)	235 (17.0%)	13 (23.6%)	4 (7.7%)	7 (13.5%)	2 (50.0%)	
Physical Abuse	56 (14.0%)	8 (21.6%)	124 (16.8%)	218 (15.8%)	18 (32.7%)	14 (26.9%)	5 (9.6%)	1 (25.0%)	
Severe Neglect	68 (17.0%)	9 (24.3%)	110 (14.9%)	286 (20.7%)	7 (12.7%)	8 (15.4%)	12 (23.1%)	0 (0.0%)	
Sexual Abuse	19 (4.8%)	5 (13.5%)	40 (5.4%)	68 (4.9%)	2 (3.6%)	6 (11.5%)	3 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	
Voluntary Placement	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (1.1%)	8 (0.3%)	1 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Other	3 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (1.6%)	13 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical by categorical variable comparisons and ANOVA for continuous by categorical variable comparisons

Table 6d: Demographic and System Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity of Children in Out of Home Placement [OHP], Santa Clara County Open Cases, December 2000 (continued)

	African American [AF] n = 92	Native American [N] n = 9	White [W] n = 145	Hispanic/ Latino [H] n = 290	Asian Am/ Pacific Is. [AS] n = 20	Vietnamese [V] n = 15	Filipino [F] n = 10	Other [O] n = 2	Significance Tests[a] p < .05
Provider Race/ Ethnicity[b]									
African American	67 (72.8%)	2 (22.2%)	11 (7.6%)	12 (4.1%)	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	Significant Relationship Between Race / Ethnicity and Provider Ethnicity
Native American	0 (0.0%)	1 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
White	11 (12.0%)	4 (44.4%)	106 (73.1%)	113 (39.0%)	6 (30.0%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (20.0%)	1 (50.0%)	
Hispanic/ Latino	12 (13.0%)	2 (22.2%)	23 (15.9%)	157 (54.1%)	3 (15.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Asian American/ Pacific Is.	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.3%)	9 (45.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Vietnamese	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)	10 (66.7%)	1 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Filipino	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.1%)	5 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	

a. Tests of significance: Chi-square for categorical by categorical variable comparisons and ANOVA for continuous by categorical variable comparisons

b. 585 out of 2129 cases in OHP reported provider race/ethnicity

Administrators/Managers

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants stated that 59% of the children in the Child Welfare System (CWS) were Latino, a figure that they stated has increased since 1994 and 1995 when 40%-45% of the children in the CWS were Latino. Although administrators felt that DFCS was doing an adequate job in recruiting culturally and linguistically diverse staff members, they also spoke about the difficulties of recruiting appropriate staff to meet the needs of their diverse client population. In addition, they felt that the recruitment and equitable distribution of culturally and linguistically diverse staff members throughout the agency was an ongoing issue that needed to be continually addressed.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Statistics from 1994 and 1995 showed that the majority of youth in the system were Hispanic.
> -It's over 59% right now.
> -In general, (we're) doing a good job in recruiting a diverse workforce.
> -Having linguistic and cultural staff across the agency as much as possible is the agency's major task.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants reported that children in Santa Clara County's (SCC) CWS were very diverse, encompassing multiple languages and cultures. Despite this enormous diversity, administrators felt that Latino and African American children were over-represented in the system relative to their representation in the general population. They also reported that although they have disproportionately high percentages of Latino and African American children in the system, they do not have enough homes in which to place them.

Participants indicated that the population of Asian children in the CWS has doubled and that very few children in the CWS were from European countries. Members of the focus groups indicated that within the Asian client population, the number of Vietnamese children in the system had declined over the past ten years while the number of Samoan children had increased. They also felt that there was a lack of knowledge throughout the agency about the representation of disabled children and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) children in the CWS. They reported that due to the difficulty in placing a disabled child, these children come to the attention of staff, but are not over-represented in the system. They also indicated that emotionally disturbed children were disproportionately over-represented in the CWS compared to the numbers of emotionally disturbed children in the general population. In addition, administrators felt that mixed race/ethnicity children were overlooked because no data are collected on them. They also

spoke about the difficulty of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to such a diverse client population.

Finally, administrators suggested that there might be a link between substance-abusing families and children with drug and alcohol issues.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

>-We have any group of youth we can imagine; every language and every culture.
>-Besides Latino children, African American children are also over-represented in the system.
>-(The system is) high in Latinos and African Americans, but we don't have enough homes for them.
>-We might overlook mixed children; there is no data collected on them.
>-(The) Asian group in the system is doubled now.
>-(I) do not know if there is over-representation of disabled or gay/lesbian kids in the system, but it's very hard to find placements for disabled kids.
>-But we have a number of kids who are emotionally disturbed compared to the larger population.
>-There is now a mix of youth in the system and the agency is trying to provide linguistic and cultural services, but sometimes it's hard to find a match between services and language.
>-(We need to) pay attention to youth with drug and alcohol because most of the youth who come to the system are from families with drug and alcohol problems.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants felt that the proportion of cases involving children of color was fairly consistent across units. However, administrators indicated that, in by-pass cases, the District Attorneys and courts place more emphasis on a family's past involvement with the CWS than consideration of a parent's situation in their decision to by-pass a child. They also suggested including South County in the study and comparing the findings from South County with results from the rest of the county. They felt that South County's community-oriented structure and approach might have resulted in a decrease in the number of children removed from their homes.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

>-(The) portion of cases is pretty consistent across the programs.
>-In by-pass situations, case history influences the evaluation process of a child.
>-The Court now looks at past history rather than parent's situation.
>-(You) should study the South County to compare to the whole agency.
>-South County, a community-oriented agency, has a different structure and takes more risks leaving the kids at home.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Participants stated that although child maltreatment occurs in all segments of society, low-income families have higher rates of reported abuse and neglect than families with more financial resources. They also indicated that more affluent communities like Los Altos, Los Gatos, and Cupertino were less likely to report child maltreatment and domestic violence than working class communities resulting in more working class and low-income families with their children in the CWS. Participants also spoke about housing as an issue facing many families in SCC. Due to the astronomical price of housing in the Silicon Valley many families are unable to afford housing to accommodate their family's needs. Administrators stated that inadequate housing was not an issue of irresponsible parenting, but rather of affordability.

Among the diverse Asian communities involved with the CWS, administrators reported that domestic violence in the Filipino community contributed to the entry of Filipino children into the CWS. They also felt that Pacific Islander families, like Laotians and Samoans, stayed in the system longer because the agency does not offer linguistically appropriate services to respond to their needs. Participants also reported that although many Vietnamese families were poor and participated in programs through the Department of Employment Services, the number of Vietnamese cases has remained stable or slightly declined recently. They observed that this phenomenon was the opposite of other poor families that had higher numbers of children in the CWS.

Participants felt that the CWS was guided by middle and upper class values while a majority of the clients involved with the system were members of the lower class. They also indicated that service plans developed for families to regain the custody of their children were developed for middle class families, not poor families. They felt that this resulted in a high number of minority and poor parents that lose their children to the system. Administrators also felt that a lack of legal resources has had a negative impact on families' ability to regain the custody of their children. They indicated that some legal options, like placement with a relative, were either limited or inaccessible to many parents due to poverty and/or the lack of extended family support. In addition, they reported that substance abuse issues were considered in by-pass cases.

Administrators also reported that worker subjectivity had an impact on the outcome of many families' cases. Participants felt that if a client presented himself or herself well, they would gain the trust and confidence of the worker resulting in a better outcome. They also spoke about the differences in practices and procedures between agencies like DFCS and law enforcement. They reported that the San Jose Police Department was more aggressive in removing children and placing them in the Children's Shelter than agencies involved in South County's program or police officers in Palo Alto. Participants indicated that national policies and the political climate might have an impact on the disposition of cases in the CWS. Finally, participants reported that there was a correlation between being low income and drug and alcohol use.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Abuse and neglect happens in all levels of society, but low-income people have a much higher rate.
>
> -Socioeconomic status is another factor. A lot of Laotians and Samoans do work in the low paying jobs with others in high tech jobs. The latter groups centers in Los Altos, Los Gatos, and Cupertino which traditionally do not have the culture to report child abuse and neglect very much. While other working class communities have the culture to report.
>
> -Pacific Islander cases, such as Laotians and Samoans, are not over-represented in the system, but since we don't have appropriate services for them or we don't have the proper staff to respond to their needs, the cases stay with us and become obvious.
>
> -Housing is another issue. Some happy families have to let their children share the same bedroom because they can't afford to have a large house in the Silicon Valley. This is the issue of affordability not responsibility.
>
> -The system is run and valued by the middle class and upper class, but our clients are mostly in the low class.
>
> -Limited services or lack of services related to legal options do make a difference in a kid's case.
>
> -We work in the system, but the people who bring the kids in the system are law enforcement. The mission is clear, but the practices are different. Few police from Palo Alto are bringing kids to the Children's Shelter.
>
> -National policies also effect child welfare.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants suggested issuing Section 8 housing certificates for clients involved in the Family Preservation Program. They also suggested that DFCS commit to Family Preservation while also creating concurrent plans. In addition, DFCS needs to inform parents about both Family Preservation efforts and concurrent planning guidelines.

Participants recommended providing parents with information and resources on their legal options while they are trying to regain the custody of their children. They also suggested that by-pass cases be assessed on a case-by-case basis -rather than dictated by policy. Participants indicated that by-pass cases are assigned to experienced staff that is familiar with the laws and the resources available for families.

Administrators felt that greater coordination and collaboration was needed with other agencies working with the families. They suggested informing other agencies about the over-representation of children of color in the CWS and coordinating with them to help parents achieve their service plans. In addition, they suggested working more frequently with community-based organizations to develop trust and to generate awareness about DFCS's commitment to strengthening families in diverse communities.

Finally, participants indicated that policies be changed to accommodate the needs of children of color in the CWS. They recommended developing new resources for these children and their families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Since housing is one of the problems, DFCS should issue Section 8 certificates for clients in the Family Preservation Program.
> -By-pass is focused on case-by-case rather than policy. By-pass cases are assigned to experienced staff only.
> -DFCS commits to Family Preservation but also plans for Concurrent Planning.
> -(We) need a great coordination with partners. DFCS doesn't work in a vacuum, but in partnership with other agencies.
> -(We) have to work with community resource agencies more.
> -(We need) more dialogue in the agency about our philosophy of strengthening families in the community.
> -(We) should look at change in social policy addressing issues of minority youth in the system.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants indicated that workers record the ethnicity and language spoken by their clients in the CWS/CMS database. They reported that a child's ethnicity could be determined by a variety of factors including the subjective judgment of the worker, the identification by the family, the self-identification by the child, and by the physical features of the child.

With mixed race/ethnicity children, participants indicated that correctly determining the ethnicity of a child could be difficult. They reported that not all ethnicities can be recorded, workers label mixed children differently than children label themselves, and workers tend to focus on one ethnicity rather than incorporating all ethnicities of the child. They also indicated that the perception of the worker and the parents about the needs of the child determine the proper placement for a child.

Finally, administrators reported that social workers do not receive training on how to code the ethnicity of their clients, but that the agency relies on staff members of color to be a resource for other workers to help them determine the ethnicity of a child.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -The social worker is required by the database (CWS/CMS) to record the ethnicity and language spoken by the child.
> -Social workers play a major role in coding a kid's ethnicity based on the worker's subjective judgment and ethnicity.

-(We) have to work with the family to decide which code is appropriate for the child.
-Social workers can choose the ethnic identification for younger kids, but let the older kids choose and identify their own ethnicity.
-When working with biracial kids, social workers tend to favor one of the ethnic groups.
-Social workers do not receive training about coding (ethnicity/race).
-(The) perception of the worker and the parents about need and the child's needs will decide which placement would be proper for a child.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants spoke about the importance of educating parents about their rights and how to work with the system. They felt that knowledgeable parents had the ability to have a positive impact on their cases. They also reported that DFCS provides orientations and pamphlets in three languages for parents to help them understand what has happened and what to do to regain the custody of their children, but that more supports for the families should be implemented. Administrators felt that DFCS was only one part of a larger system that must coordinate and work together to address the issues facing the families in the system. They also suggested to the research team to interview community leaders and members of the San Jose Police Department in the next phase of the study.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-(We need to) educate parents to know and advocate for their rights. Parents who have knowledge about the system can impact the case.
-DFCS has orientations for parents at Family Resource Centers and have pamphlets entitled "When Your Child is Removed" in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
-(We need to) provide supports for the family.
-DFCS is only a part of the system that also includes law enforcement and the Foster Parent Association. The whole system has to work together to address the issue.

Supervisors

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Results from the two focus groups indicated that supervisors felt that children of color were disproportionately represented in the CWS. They spoke about the over-representation of Latino and African American children and the under-representation of Asian/Pacific Islander (API) children in the system. Participants reported that the over-representation of some ethnic groups was due to poverty, racism, lack of education, unemployment, and undocumented status. They also indicated that in many cases, police determined which children entered the system and that families that spoke different languages might have their children removed unnecessarily because of a lack of understanding about the problem due to the language barrier. In addition, participants spoke about the difficulties undocumented parents faced in completing the tasks required to regain the custody of their children due to a lack of resources. They also indicated that children in the CWS were not receiving an adequate education and that this placed them at risk of living in poverty with little ability to support themselves after leaving the system. Participants felt that people of color were not valued by the agency and that this resulted in fewer efforts by the agency to create services for families of color.

Participants attributed the under-representation of API children to the under-reporting of abuse and neglect in Asian communities. Under-reporting might be due to the emphasis API families place on privacy and keeping problems within the family. In addition, participants indicated that very few Asian professionals report child maltreatment due to a lack of knowledge about child abuse reporting laws in the United States. Participants also indicated that the under-representation of API clients in the system might reflect lower rates of child maltreatment in Asian communities and stated that the number of API children in the CWS has decreased since the establishment of the Asian Pacific Family Resource Center (APFRC).

Supervisors felt that the agency needed to do more outreach into the community and educate community members about the services available to them. Participants reported that the African American community was not aware of the over-representation of African American children in the system. They felt that as a result of this lack of knowledge, there was little activism in the African American community to help solve the problem. They also felt that the agency needed to make more of an effort to include people of color in higher management levels, as well as place more of an emphasis on the issues faced by different ethnic groups in the community and the agency. Finally, one member stated that Santa Clara County (SCC) was making an effort to address the issue of the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS and felt that the agency needed to continue to focus on how to solve the problem.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-This disproportion reflects what happens in our community in terms of people of color having low income, low education, unemployment, and undocumented people.

-It's disproportionate because of racism and poverty.

-People of color are not valued; therefore, efforts for services are not made.

-Asian children (are represented in) lower numbers. Culture is the reason. Asians don't report abuse and neglect. Very few Asian professionals report.

-Due to Vietnamese family values and culture, what happens in the family is kept within the family.

-Since the Asian Pacific Family Resource Center opened, the numbers of Asians in the CWS are lower.

-The community is not well educated to know the available services for them.

-In 1990 there were only two Latino social worker supervisors and there are very few Latinos at the upper levels of this organization.

-There's not enough emphasis on ethnic issues coming from the overall agency.

-We're hard on ourselves in SCC. Other counties are worse. We should focus more on what works.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Supervisors felt that Latino and African American children were over-represented in the CWS while API and Native American children were under-represented. They also felt that disabled children and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) children were under-represented in the system. Participants indicated that of the different Asian populations involved with the CWS, the majority was Vietnamese. They also felt that fewer white children entered the system due to their increased access to services. In addition, one participant indicated that due to the diversity of the client population, the agency did not actually know if one group or another was over or under-represented.

Participants reported that Vietnamese doctors in private practice were reluctant to report child maltreatment for fear of losing business. They felt that this might partially explain the under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in the Vietnamese community. Finally, supervisors indicated that medical professionals at Valley Medical screen for child maltreatment and report any abuse or neglect they encounter. Participants felt that this might have an impact on the numbers of children entering the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-My experience with Native Americans is that they're our orphan population.

-These (GLBT and disabled) children are under-represented.

-Vietnamese children are the majority of kids in the system compared to other Asian groups, but the Vietnamese are not over-represented.

-There are (fewer) Caucasian children in the system because they are able to access services.

-Valley Medical now screens for abuse and neglect, so the medical profession is part of the question too.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Results from one focus group indicated that African American and Latino children did not enter the system in higher numbers, but that due to lack of services or the inability to complete case plan requirements, these children stayed longer and were not returned to their parents. Therefore, African American and Latino children were over-represented in Permanent Planning, Reunification, Adoptions, and long-term foster care. Participants also reported that Vietnamese children that entered the system were generally returned to their families or were placed with relatives very early in the process. This resulted in a small number of Vietnamese children that remained in the system. They suggested that Vietnamese clients utilize family as a resource to keep their children out of the CWS. Participants felt that due to acculturation, Latinos have lost their sense of family and do not utilize family as a resource to prevent their children from entering the CWS. Participants did state that Vietnamese children that arrived in the United States as unaccompanied minors generally ended up in long-term foster care, but indicated that these types of cases were more common in the past.

Participants from the other focus group indicated that the disproportionate representation of children of color occurred in all units and occurred at similar rates across the system. Several participants indicated that there was an over-representation of certain groups in the Adoption and Permanency Planning units. They also felt that people of color were alienated and/or intimidated by the system during all stages of the process. They felt that the alienation and/or intimidation was the result of the complexity of the courts and the child welfare system, language barriers between clients and the system, distrust of the CWS, and the lack of power felt by clients when interacting with the system. Supervisors also indicated that although they observed over and under-representations of some client groups, they did not have access to statistical data to confirm their observations. They reported that in the past the agency had provided this data to unit supervisors, but the practice had been discontinued. Finally, one participant indicated that in the Permanency Planning unit, many of the children are placed with relatives.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-African Americans do not come in with the high number, but because they can't get the services up front or something happens with the case plan, they can't come out. Therefore, the number gets bigger at the end and they stay longer in the system and can't get home.
-The same happens with the Latino group.
-The end does not mean adoption. It can mean long-term foster care or guardianship. At the end means not returning home. They stay from six to eighteen months and then go into Permanent Planning.
-Vietnamese children came in at the DI and mostly (exit). The number that stay is very small. They go back to families or relatives. Adoption is very (low).

-Family is the primary resource for the Vietnamese children. That used to be the same for the Latino family, but because of acculturation they have lost that sense of family.

-Vietnamese children who came to the USA without parents tended to stay in long-term foster care, but that happened a long time ago.

-The alienation is across the board. We're seen as "the man, the system".

-In adoptions, minority families tend not to participate. They see the court system as complex and the CWS as difficult to trust. There's a lack of social power and how they perceive the agency is important. There's also a language issue. Why go to a court hearing if you can't understand? If they're not participating in the reunification plan, it will be a failure and then they (the children) go to adoptions.

-We use to get a printout of all the kids in the system and the ratio of kids in Permanent Placement, but we don't get that anymore so we don't know the numbers.

-In Permanency Planning, over 40% go into guardianship with relatives. There are the same number not reunified, but more are with family members in a permanent placement.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Both groups indicated that poverty and racism were factors that might be related to the over-representation of African Americans and Latinos in the CWS. They felt that this racism occurred at an institutional level within the agency and the courts, as well as on an individual level with workers in the agency. One participant spoke about higher rates of imprisonment for African Americans as a result of institutional racism. They believed this contributed to the over-representation of African American children in the CWS because there was a lack of eligible African American family members to care for the children. They also felt that there was an overall lack of cultural competency among agency staff and a resistance to train new workers to be culturally competent that contributed to the over-representation of some groups in the system.

In addition, participants felt that District Attorneys (DA) and judges do not trust the input and recommendations made by social workers and they criticize workers, especially workers of color. They also spoke about feeling that social workers and the courts do not work as a team to help families regain the custody of their children. Instead they reported experiencing an adversarial relationship with DA's and judges and indicated that the culture and ethnicity of DA's and judges did not reflect the diversity of the client populations they work with. They also reported that the expectation held by DA's that each child sleep in his or her own bed extended the length of time children spent in the system. Participants also indicated that there was no outcry, within the agency or the community, about the over-representation of African American and Latino children in the CWS.

Supervisors reported that another factor that might contribute to the over-representation of some groups in the CWS was the unwillingness of the agency to support worker

recommendations for Informal Family Services (IFS) and the problems Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) program had in the past. They felt that the agency was not willing to take risks to support preventative services that would prevent children from entering the system. They also spoke about feeling that the Board of Supervisors viewed DFSC negatively as a result of a lack of contact between the agency and the Board of Supervisors. Participants indicated that there was no continuity in the management of the agency due to the frequent change of administrators and directors. They also reported that administrators were hired from other parts of the country that did not understand the demographics of the community or how the system in Santa Clara County (SCC) worked. They also indicated that there was a lack of representation of women on the management team. Finally, they reported that workers across the agency were overworked and that many were taking on responsibilities above and beyond their expected duties to help families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-(The) factors are either poverty or racism.

-Values and racism - African Americans who are not poor still go into the system. So if poverty is not the factor, it must be racism. These kids can economically access anything that white kids can, but they still go into the system. It is racism.

-There is larger institutional racism that put many African Americans in jail. Therefore, we don't have enough family to take care of the children.

-New social workers are easily impacted by their supervisors that have worked here for a long time and are not culturally competent.

-It's scary to see the people with a mind of racism decide whether the child will stay in the system or go home with the family.

-We had to argue to keep a four-hour cultural competency training for new workers. There is a thinking that we don't need that training.

-Racism, poverty, and an adversarial attitude in the court. Attorneys are young, simplistic, and uneducated bout the CWS.

-Another issue is the court is racist. The judges don't believe the Vietnamese workers.

-It could be universal, but I have the perception that workers of color are not believed by the court. They have less faith in workers of color and they question our judgment and reports.

-The DA always think that each child must have his or her own bed which is beautifully decorated. The legal system supports that kind of thinking that makes many kids stay in the system while they don't have to.

-There is no outcry to the over-representation of Latino and African American youth in the system. Social workers just agree with the fact.

-There used to be voluntary programs, then after Proposition 13 there are only involuntary programs. There's no opportunity for prevention in there.

-The agency is not willing to take risks to refer to IFS or support their workers recommendations.

-Our department is reluctant to take risks because of term limits for the Board of Supervisors. We use to have aides from the Board of Supervisors who were in

constant contact with Social Services. Now the county supervisors are not familiar or close to social services and they have a negative opinion about the child welfare system.
-The management team changes frequently. By the time we know their faces they're gone. And women are not represented at all at the upper levels of management. The managers don't know they system. They always come from elsewhere.
-They (administrators from out-of-state) don't understand the community, the demographics. It takes a year to know the system.
-Everyone in the department is overworked. A lot of people do more than their jobs.
-GLBT parents are afraid that social workers can take their children away.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants from both groups spoke extensively about prevention efforts. They felt that early intervention and prevention programs needed to be created and maintained to prevent children from entering the system. Supervisors suggested restructuring ER to provide more referrals for services instead of closing cases that need services but are not severe enough to warrant removal. One participant stated that in the past CPS placed an emphasis on keeping children out of the system, but felt that that concept had been forgotten. Another participant suggested that prevention efforts begin in the schools. Participants also suggested the establishment of more Family Resource Centers (FRC) and appropriate placement of the centers in the community. They also recommended that an accurate history of each child be constructed, possibly through the establishment of a routine family conference for each family, to empower families and to ensure a thorough understanding of the problems facing each family. They also proposed that rewards be given to units with successful outcomes that utilize family conferencing.

Supervisors suggested that the agency make efforts to improve the perception of the CWS in the community and educate the community about the services DFCS provides to help families. They recommended creating a unified message about the agency and it's services and conducting outreach and education in the community. They stressed the need to generate more community involvement and recommended being more flexible when scheduling meetings to accommodate community participants. In addition, members of the focus groups indicated that they would like the agency to listen to the suggestions of workers, to support workers, to conduct more discussions within the agency about the issues faced by children of color, and to promote more people of color to the Administration.

Participants also recommended that the agency develop a way to measure the cultural competency of applicants, ensure that contract agencies provide culturally competent services, and develop a means of recording and tracking families of color in Family Conferencing and Informal Supervision units. They also suggested developing a system that would help workers and supervisors provide culturally competent service by

including a cultural competency plan in the general case plan. One participant indicated that they would like to see the courts order parents to receive services from the Family Resource Centers (FRC).

In order to improve the relationship between attorneys and social workers and to encourage teamwork, participants suggested cross-training each group. They felt that the brown bag legal workshops were token efforts and suggested offering more substantial training. They also expressed concern that the legal system was inherently adversarial and focused on producing winners and losers. Participants stated that judges expressed disapproval when workers explained all of the available options to a parent with children in the system. Finally, participants indicated that training needed to be provided for workers about the Adoption and Safe Families Act that was recently passed. They stated that no training was offered and the workers were not receiving the support they needed to implement the new legislation.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -We need more early intervention. CPS used to keep kids safe and out of the system, but that concept has been lost. We need more voluntary family maintenance.
> -How much effort is given to the family to keep them out of the system? If we have enough prevention like family conferencing and informal supervision, there will be fewer kids in the system.
> -The FRC locations are not that great, but we need more FRC to prevent families from coming into the system.
> -That's true. When the FRC concept was introduced Ujirani was put in the wrong place and since that time the ethnic people have moved. It's in the wrong part of the community now.
> -Family conferencing should be routine. Some states have laws on this. It's a way to empower families and trust them to make the right choices. It's also trusting social workers.
> -We know families only after they come into the system. Family conferencing should be routine. It's a good way to know families well right when they come in.
> -The family conferencing is excellent. It is time-consuming and the departments need rewards when they are successful.
> -The community's perceptions of the CWS are important. They think we punish parents and that we don't help the kids. We need education to make people aware that there are services to help the children.
> -We need a unified message.
> -The agency should listen and carry out what the workers believe.
> -There should be more dialogues about the issues of minority kids.
> -We have to get people of color to the Administration level to speak for children of color.
> -Make sure that service contractors are also culturally competent.
> -Social workers and supervisors must be accountable for addressing cultural needs. It must be in the case plan and court report.

-In other parts of the country they cross-train the social workers and the attorneys. We need to work as a team with the attorneys.
-The agency organized lunchtime workshops for social workers that are legal trainings, but our administration does not have trainings for the attorneys given by social workers.
-There are degrading token efforts like the brown bad legal trainings with pizza and ice cream. These are tokens, where's the substance?
-The new legislation needs to be disseminated, the Adoptions and Safe Families Act. There is no clinical training on talking to parents about legal rights. There's a concurrent planning handbook, but no clinical training books.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants indicated that race and ethnicity are recorded by the worker during the screening process. If a worker discovered that the ethnicity was coded incorrectly, they could change it at a later time. Supervisors stated that the race/ethnicity of a child was determined by asking the child, by surname, by physical features, or by the language a child or their parents speak. For mixed race/ethnicity children, supervisors from one group indicated that both ethnicities were recorded while participants from the other group indicated that recording dual ethnicities was problematic because there was not a code for biracial or multiracial children. One group felt that due to the importance of identity for adolescents, coding only one ethnicity could make it more difficult for children to incorporate aspects of all of their ethnicities into their lives. They also stated that the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) only allowed workers to code one ethnicity.

One group of participants spoke about the Multiethnic Placement Act and indicated that this should be expanded to include country of origin and culture. They also indicated that ethnicity could not be a primary consideration in adoptions, but felt that they needed to have information about a child's ethnicity and that this should be considered in foster placements. Finally, participants reported that no training was provided about coding race/ethnicity.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Children are asked for ethnicity on the phone during the screening process.
-But after the home visit the worker can change the ethnicity code. I don't know how often this happened.
-Vietnamese children are easily identified by the names and physical features.
-It depends on the worker who relies on the language of the child or parents.
-For mixed children we code both.
-Dual ethnicity is a big problem. There's no category for that.
-The Multiethnic Placement Act was very specific about ethnicity, but there ought to be distinctions that explain country of origin and culture. Ethnicity in adoption

can't be a primary consideration, but we must know the ethnicity of the kid and the foster family.
-I saw a memo when the coding was changed, but not a real training. People don't consider it a big issue.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt the agency needed to provide more community outreach, more services for families, more support for families like home visits, and training for relatives that provide care. They also felt that the agency needed to secure permanent funding for the Relative Resource Center. One participant expressed concern about the agency contracting too many services out to community-based organizations that might not provide culturally competent services. They felt that the agency might lose the ability to control the competency of the services provided to the clients. Another participant stated that the agency must consider who reports child maltreatment including teachers and the police, when considering factors related to the disproportionate representation of children of color in the CWS. Finally, participants acknowledged the effort the administration has made to create a venue for workers to discuss ideas and concerns and emphasized that the agency should continue those efforts.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The agency needs to create a safety net for families, more services. If we can ensure family participation, that helps.
-We need more training for our relative placements. There needs to be more training in parenting skills, education, more visits, and more support.
-The Relative Resource Center has to contract for funds. They should be funded by the county as a permanent program.
-The agency has gotten more contract services lately. The agency might lose control. They have to check the level of cultural competency of contract agencies. Key managers have to look at this issue.
-In the ER, one must look at who reports, the schools and the police. Once the call is made it becomes a statistic and statistics can be interpreted in different ways.
-DFCS has supported group meetings and created an environment for workers to present their ideas and concerns. The department should continue that effort.

Coalition for Effective Services

African American Employee Committee

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants felt that children of color were over-represented in the CWS, especially African Americans. They reported, however, that due to the efforts of the African American Advocacy group, the over-representation had shrunk since 1991. They indicated that the over-representation might be the result of more children of color, specifically African Americans, being referred and subsequently removed from their homes than other client populations. They also indicated that African American children and other children of color were not exiting the system. Participants felt that once an African American child entered the system it was very difficult to get them out resulting in an over-representation of African American children in the Adoptions unit. They indicated that Court Services were not diverting African American cases.

Members of both focus groups stated that police and Emergency Response (ER) workers determined which children entered the system and suggested that the ethnicity of ER workers should more accurately reflect the ethnicity of the client population entering the system. They also felt that workers in the Dependency Investigations (DI) unit were more likely to detain children of color than white children. Participants indicated that the agency hired staff to reflect the ethnicity of the general population, not the ethnicity of the children that entered the system. They also reported that cases were not assigned to match a worker's ethnicity with the ethnicity of the child. In addition, participants articulated concerns that the needs of families of color were not being met by the system. They indicated that there were no quality control measures in place to ensure the quality of the services provided to families of color by the system. They also indicated that there were no African American communities in San Jose that resulted in a lack of support and resources for African American families in the community. Members of both focus groups also reported a lack of resources in the county for poor families. Finally, participants felt that African American foster homes were under-utilized due to bias against these homes in the placement process and indicated that there was not a support group for African American foster families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -The African American group has been successful in bringing attention to many issues, and although they are still over-represented in the system, the percentage of African American children in the system seems to be lower than in 1991.
> -There are more African Americans referred.
> -African American children have a higher risk of removal than any other group.
> -African American children are over-represented in Adoptions.
> -Children of color have a much harder time getting out of the system once they are in it.

-Gatekeepers, like ER, determine who comes into the system.
-The police are also gatekeepers in this county and SSA does not have control over their removals.
-The gatekeepers should be representative of the clients who are coming through the door.
-If a minority child is temporarily removed for a bruise by ER, DI is more likely to file a petition to detain the child than if that child were white.
-The agency hires staff based to reflect the ethnicity of the general population of the county, not the percentage actually in foster care.
-Case assignments are not made on the ethnic match of the client and the worker.
-There is a grave concern that their (African Americans) needs are not met by the system. -There is no quality control of services provided.
-There are no black communities in the San Jose area, so these families lack the support.
-It is very expensive in this county and there are limited resources for families, especially those in poverty.
-There seems to be a bias in placement and the African American foster homes are often under-utilized. Also, African American foster homes still do not have their own support group.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Members of both focus groups stated that there was an over-representation of African American children and an under-representation of Asian American and white children in the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Asian Americans seem to be under-represented.
-The majority group, Euro-Americans, is under-represented.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants indicated that there were more children of color in the Adoptions unit. They felt that white children were exiting the system more quickly while children of color remained in the system longer resulting in more children of color in the Adoptions unit. In addition, members of the two focus groups stated that there was an over-representation of African American children at the shelter.

Participants also reported that children of color, specifically Latinos and African Americans, were over-represented in by-pass cases. They felt that families of color were over-reported thus resulting in longer track records with the CWS. When considering a case for by-pass, workers take into account the family's past history with Child Protective Services (CPS). The more often a family was reported to CPS, the more likely they were to be recommended for by-pass.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Yes, especially at the back end in Adoptions.
> -White kids are taken in, but they exit more quickly than children of color.
> -There appears to be a definite over-representation of African American children at the shelter.
> Bypass laws seem to be impacting Hispanic groups the most.
> Bypass also affects children of color more deeply. They are aver-reported and that track record is often what leads to a by-pass recommendation.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Members of both focus groups felt that Asian American children might be under-represented due to cultural factors like stigma and family shame if child maltreatment is reported. They also indicated that Asian Americans have access to resources through the Asian Pacific Family Resource Center that might explain the under-representation of Asians in the CWS.

Participants felt that mandated reporters tended to over-report children of color, specifically African Americans, and made fewer efforts to contact parents of color to resolve problems and prevent children of color from entering the CWS. They indicated that mandated reporters and ER workers that were ethnically matched with their clients would be more likely to resolve problems and prevent children of color from entering the system than workers from the majority group. They also indicated that a majority of the referrals made to CPS were from public schools and stated that more children of color attended public schools putting them at higher risk of being reported than if they attended a private school. In addition, participants felt that institutional racism was present at all levels of the system from workers in the CWS, to mandated reporters, to lawyers and judges, to law enforcement officers. They stated that the prejudice against people of color throughout the system contributed to the over-representation of some client populations. Participants also felt that white therapists sometimes misunderstand the cultural issues of African Americans resulting in negative reports to the court and, thus, delays in the reunification of parents with their children.

Members of both focus groups reported that families of color required more time to resolve issues that resulted in the removal of their children. They felt that these families were overwhelmed and required more time and attention from workers. They also indicated that a lack of appropriate foster placements for children of color resulted in the placement of these children in other counties hindering reunification efforts. In addition, participants felt that the requirement that relatives be fingerprinted in cases of emergency placements impeded the ability of family members to take in a child. They stated that it was slow and resulted in more shelter placements. Members of the two focus groups felt that shelter placements traumatized children and exposed them to undesirable experiences. Participants also felt that the Licensing unit needed to provide African

American foster families with extra support, encouragement, and contact to fill the need for appropriate placements for African American children. They also reported that the "placement available" board was often inaccurate or outdated contributing to the under-utilization of African American foster homes.

Other factors that were related to the over-representation of certain client groups that participants identified were poverty, lack of parental resources, the general lack of respect among workers in the agency, concurrent planning, the overmedication of children of color, lack of African American workers in the Licensing, Recruitment, and Placement units, and a loss of community cultural values that believe in raising children in their own "village".

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Cultural reasons may be involved in the under-representation of Asian Americans like stigma and shame to the family.

-The family resource center for Asian Americans is a very nice facility and has many different groups to serve.

-Mandated reporters, who are often members of the majority group, seem to focus more on kids of color and are less likely to contact parents of color in an effort to resolve the problems.

-Mandated reporters and up-front social workers are more likely to make efforts to resolve problems if there is an ethnic match.

-More referrals come from public schools, where there are more groups of color than in private schools.

-Institutional racism at all levels.

-Prejudice by those in power and the Euro-centric perspective of mandated reporters, lawyers, judges, and law enforcement that goes beyond the agency.

-Cultural issues are sometimes misunderstood by therapists from the majority groups that can lead to negative reports to the court.

-It takes more time to resolve the issues and difficulties for families of color because the families are so overwhelmed and they need more attention.

-Lack of appropriate foster homes often results in kids of color being placed out of the county more quickly, thus impacting reunification efforts.

-Relatives must now be fingerprinted prior to even an emergency placement of a child, which greatly impedes and slows down the ability to place children with their relatives. This results in shelter placements, which traumatize the child and expose the child to undesirable experiences.

-In Licensing, African American families need extra support, encouragement, and contact.

-The "placement available" board is often not up to date or accurate which contributes to the African American homes being under-utilized.

-The economic situation in this county will continue to worsen and impact those of color who have far fewer resources.

-General lack of respect among workers in the agency which affects how clients are treated.

-The sensitivity level of the Administration in increasing the numbers of staff of color in all units, especially in Licensing, Recruitment, and Placement.
-We have lost the philosophy and practice of raising children in their own "village".

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants from both focus groups felt that cultural diversity and cultural competency training offered by the agency needed to be improved. They recommended that the agency provide training more frequently, reduce the size of the training sessions to facilitate interaction, and require attendees to participate in the exercises provided during the training. They also felt that students in graduate programs and workers in the agency needed to have more exposure to diverse populations in order to become more culturally competent. Participants also suggested that the agency provide wrap-around services in the DI unit, like Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM), to prevent filing a petition for court action that could result in the long-term removal of a child. Members of both of the focus groups also indicated that there was a need for more resources for African American families and administered through the Family Resource Centers (FRC). They suggested drawing from the African community. Participants felt that changes in the laws needed to be made to allow more time for the investigation of child maltreatment allegations prior to the filing of a petition. They suggested 78 hours instead of 48 hours and recommended that the following comment be included in the language of the law: "to explore alternative plans for safety". Finally, participants advised that the agency institute a quality control mechanism like an Administrative Review Board. They suggested that this review board periodically review issues brought forward by workers or clients to improve the delivery of service and ensure that power is not concentrated in one area of the agency.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Improvements are necessary in the cultural diversity training offered by the agency. We recommend that the trainings be more frequent, that the size of the training groups be smaller to facilitate interaction, and that participation by attendees be required.
-The agency and graduate schools need to improve training and exposure to ensure cultural competency.
-Provide true wrap-around services in DI to prevent filing and court action. VFM is not used nearly enough.
-More resources need to be focused on the African American FRC. Perhaps tapping into the African community or highlighting the country of origin of various groups.
-Change the laws so that time for further investigation prior to filing a petition is increased from 48 hours to 78 hours. The language should include the intent "to explore alternative plans for safety" besides just filing a petition.

-Create a review committee to consider issues brought forward by clients or workers that could help to improve service delivery and practice issues and also prevent excessive power and decision-making in any one area.
-The agency really needs a quality control mechanism to review cases periodically such as an internal Administrative Review Board.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants reported that no training on coding ethnicity was provided by the agency. They indicated that the workers in the Screening unit were generally responsible for coding the ethnicity of a child. They also stated that a majority of workers coded biracial clients as African American instead of recording both ethnicities. There were no responses to this question from one group.
The following are representative comments from respondents:

-No training is provided on ethnic coding of clients.
-The screeners typically make the call on how to this is coded.
-It seems that workers will generally code clients as African American even if the client is biracial.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt that it was essential to evaluate culture and ethnicity at all levels of the system. They felt that the agency should consider assigning cases to workers that reflect the ethnicity of the clients they serve. They stated that the number of workers of color would need to be increased to accommodate the over-representation of certain client groups in the CWS and to ensure that workers of color were not overloaded with cases. Members of the two focus groups felt that in order for workers to become culturally competent, they needed to have experience working with other cultural and ethnic groups than their own.

Participants indicated that workers in the agency were under-utilizing foster homes of color that results in fewer applications by families of color to become foster parents. This, in turn, means less foster homes of color are available to the enormous numbers of children of color in the CWS. Respondents also stated that the Foster Parent Association was strong in the county, but that a majority of foster parents participating in the association are not people of color. Finally, members of the two focus groups articulated that a general lack of respect among workers was apparent throughout the agency.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-(It is) essential to look at culture and ethnicity at all levels of the system.

-(There is a need to) consider assigning cases in all units, but especially Continuing, based on an ethnic match. This would mean a need to increase the hiring of ethnic staff so they are not bombarded with huge caseloads.
-Staff needs experience with ethnic groups other than their own to be culturally competent.
-Staff is not fully utilizing foster homes of color. The homes then lose interest, which results in fewer applications.
-The Foster Parent Association is very strong here, but the majority are not people of color.
-There is a general lack of respect among social workers in this agency.

When the focus group results were presented to the African American Employees Committee, the following comments were made:

-Although there are no African American neighborhoods, there is an African American community.
-African American children do not get wrap-around services; they are removed.
-In order to license more African American families they need respect, support, encouragement and contact.
-The agency should invite SJPD to the trainings on cultural competency in order to learn about how social workers work with clients.

American Indian Employee Committee

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Members of the focus group stated that over 50% of the children in the CWS were Latino. They indicated that the high number of Latinos in the general population in Santa Clara County (SCC) could partially explain this over-representation. Participants reported that it was difficult to determine if American Indian children were over/under-represented in the system due to the inaccurate coding of their ethnicity. They stated that as a result of inaccurate coding, many American Indian cases in the system might not be in compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Participants indicated that if a child has American Indian heritage, the ICWA takes precedence over existing child welfare laws. They also stated that the inaccurate coding resulted in skewed statistics about American Indian families and children, obscuring their actual numbers in the CWS. Two participants reported that they did not know about the numbers of children from other cultural or ethnic groups in the system and, therefore, could not comment on the over/under-representation these children. Participants also indicated that the agency needed to provide more services up-front to families to prevent children from entering the system. They felt that once a child entered the system, it was very difficult to get them out of the system. Lastly, one member of the focus group indicated that he/she was discouraged and frustrated when he/she thought about how many Latino children were in the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

>-We have a real large Latino population so as a result we have a really high Latino population in the shelter and in the system.
>-As far as all the other groups, I don't know the exact percentage and if it fits their population in the county.
>-I know American Indian children, but because of coding I can't really say how many of those children are in the system as compared to how many we have in the overall population.
>-I wish I knew more about the amount of American Indian children and families in the county because we don't have the correct statistics.
>-My perspective is who knows how many American Indian children are in the system? Who knows if the records are accurate or if the workers are really finding out if the children have American Indian heritage and are complying with the ICWA because it's not really known.
>-If we know that a child or their parents have American Indian heritage or are eligible to be enrolled in a tribe, then the ICWA would take precedence in court.
>-I just think if the county could continue to focus on providing services to keep them (children) out of the system rather than easily putting them into the system. Because once they're in sometimes it's really hard to get out.
>-It bothers me (the high numbers of Latino children in the CWS), but it's not something I'm always focusing on. But I know we as a county need to keep providing services for them to keep them out of the system.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants indicated that Latino children were over-represented in the system. All three participants felt that there were more American Indian children in the system than the statistics indicated and that American Indian children might even be over-represented in the system in comparison to their numbers in the general population. They also indicated that they could not comment on other groups of children due to their lack of information regarding other groups.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

>-I would be curious to know how many American Indian children are in the system, but I don't really know.
>-I think we'd be surprised to hear how many are here because you hear so many workers saying well I have an American Indian case and I don't know what to do. Although people say there aren't that many American Indian clients, there may actually be a larger percentage of American Indian children in the system compared to their percentage in the general population.
>-Not sure about other groups of children.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants indicated that Latino children were over-represented at the front-end of the system like in the shelter and in the Emergency Response (ER) unit. They stated that within the ER unit, more referrals for Immediate Response (IR) were requested for Latino families than other families. Participants felt that the fact that Spanish-speaking ER workers were always carrying a full caseload while other ER workers did not was an indication of the over-representation of Latino children and families at the front-end of the system. One participant felt that they did not have enough information to comment on this question.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There are large numbers of Latinos at the entry point of the system.
-In the ER Spanish-speaking unit there are a lot of IR calls for Latino children in that unit. In comparison to the other units in ER, the Spanish-speaking unit always has the most IR cases.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus group indicated that the over-representation of Latino children in the system might be partially explained by the large number of Latinos in the general population in SCC. They also suggested that many of the cases in the Spanish-speaking ER unit were the result of the use of corporal punishment by immigrant parents. They stated that they thought many of the Latino parents came from countries where corporal punishment was an accepted form of discipline and that the parents were not aware of the child abuse laws of this country. Participants also reported that English-only workers were assigned cases with non-English speaking clients. They felt that this practice made it difficult for both the client and the worker. They stated that even when workers have an interpreter, something is" lost in the translation". They felt that this was unfair to the client and could delay the return of the children to their families. As a result, some children with non-English speaking parents remained in the system longer than English-speaking clients or clients assigned to a worker that spoke their language.

Participants indicated that when clerks assigned cases to workers, they do not consider the cultural and linguistic needs of the clients. The clerks assigned cases based on the number of points a worker had, even if the worker did not speak the language of the client. They also reported that many of the Spanish-speaking units were overwhelmed with cases and that as a result, the overflow cases were assigned to English-only workers. Participants also felt that a worker's lack of cultural understanding could result in the over-representation of children of color in the CWS. In addition, they reported that the ER worker had the discretion to decide which children were removed from their homes and taken into the system and which children were not. They felt that a worker's biases could impact these decisions and result in the over-representation of children of color in the system. They also felt that the worker has a responsibility to provide the necessary services to the family to prevent their child from entering the system. Participants

indicated that some workers might not provide these services and as a result, more children would enter the system. Members of the focus group felt that mandated reporters also contributed to the over/under-representation of children of color in the CWS.

Participants indicated that the new state regulations, requiring relatives to be fingerprinted in order to take in a child, delayed the placement of children with their relatives resulting in more of them remaining out of a home for longer periods of time. They also indicated that many relatives were not permitted to take in a relative child due to old criminal convictions or inadequate housing. Participants reported that children with kin outside of SCC experienced long delays in their placement with relatives. In addition, members of the focus group stated that the child dependency laws outline strict timelines for reunification and the court processes are time consuming resulting in many parents running out of time to complete the tasks for reunification. They felt that the cumbersome bureaucracy and large volumes of paperwork required by the courts and the CWS hindered their ability to do their jobs effectively. They also indicated that due to the fact that the agency does not have an American Indian worker that is assigned American Indian cases exclusively, workers with American Indian clients seek out American Indian workers for help. They felt that the process could be more efficient if American Indian cases were assigned to American Indian workers.

Participants indicated that many families could benefit from wrap-around services, but they indicated that these services were only available to families with SED-identified children coming out of residential treatment centers. Lastly, participants indicated that children with special needs were more difficult to place and might remain in the system longer for that reason. They stated that the court was more reluctant to return a child with special needs, than other children, to a home where they were abused or neglected. Uncertain about the ability of the parent to properly care for children with special needs, participants felt that the courts were more likely to terminate parental rights for these parents than parents with children that did not have special needs.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Many of those cases in the Spanish ER unit were calls for corporal punishment like spanking.
-English-speaking workers get non-English speaking clients and we have to figure out how we are going to work with people that we can't communicate with.
-Even with an interpreter, things get lost in the translation.
-That's a real disservice to the families because they can't just call up their worker and talk about difficulties or ask questions because they can't communicate.
-Clerks give us cases according to what our points are, not according to anything else. Each case counts for a certain number of points and if your caseload isn't full they will give you any case that comes their way even if you don't speak the language or understand the culture.
-They do have a Spanish-speaking unit, but when they are overwhelmed the case go out to whoever has an opening.
-There's a lack of cultural understanding between workers and their clients.

-It depends on the value system of the ER worker if a child is brought into the system or not.

-It depends on who the worker is and if they are providing the services to the families to keep them out of the system or if they are just sending them into the system.

-Mandated reporting. Some people will feel obligated to report everything. The mandated reporters may be more likely to report certain events while they will under-report other events.

-State regulations of who you can place a child with in protective custody. Licensing regulations are changing all the time. A new regulation with fingerprinting delays the process of placing children with their relatives. If the relatives have a 30-year-old D.U.I., that still prevents them from taking in a relative's child. The regulations seem to make it more and more difficult for relatives to have the kids.

-There's a law that dictates what happens in the court as far as timelines, so the court can drag the process out and use up the whole six months of the parent's reunification time.

-There's not an American Indian worker that is assigned only American Indian cases. Other workers will come to us and ask us what do I do to send notice to this tribe.

-Wrap-around services are only available for children that have been in residential treatment or are already SED. But these services are not available for other families.

-Children with special needs are more difficult to place.

-For children with special needs, the court may be hesitant to return that child back to the family home if there was abuse or neglect before because they don't know if the child will be properly cared for so they terminate parental rights.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus group felt strongly that the agency and the workers needed to provide prevention services to keep children out of the CWS. They suggested providing family conferencing, wrap-around services, and educational services to immigrant parents about appropriate discipline techniques and parenting styles in this country. They also felt that workers needed to spend time helping clients to prevent them from entering the system, but that the courts required so much of the worker's time that they could not provide the needed services to families. Participants stated that taking a child into protective custody should be the done only after every other avenue has been exhausted. They stated that by simply keeping children out of the system the over-representation of certain groups of children would be substantially reduced.

Participants stated that the worker population should reflect the culture and ethnicity of the client population. They felt that the agency needed to make a concerted effort to match workers and clients based on the language needs of the client, not on the number of points workers had on their caseload. They suggested training the clerks on how to

assign cases based on the cultural, linguistic, and case-specific needs of the client. Participants also indicated that a good cultural match between the worker and the client could be beneficial for some clients. They felt that cultural understanding and culturally competent interactions were essential in helping families of color regain the custody of their children. Members of the focus group indicated that it was especially important for American Indian clients to have their ethnicity coded correctly. They also felt that is was very important for American Indian clients to be matched with American Indian workers.

Due to the difficulty the agency had placing children with special needs, participants suggested providing more support services in the home for families with special needs children to prevent these children from entering the system. They also suggested recruiting and training more foster parents to accept children with special needs. Finally, participants recommended relaxing the regulations imposed on relatives that want to take in a family member's child.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Services need to be more with the focus of keeping kids out of the system.
> -Workers need to keep in mind family conferencing before they put the kids in the system.
> -We need wrap-around services at the beginning of the process to prevent the kids from coming into the system.
> -Immigrant parents that use corporal punishment as a means of disciplining their children need services and education, not to be taken into the system.
> -We could focus more on the front end and not having involvement with the court. The court takes up so much of our time that if there was any way we could work with the families and not have to go to court all the time when we could work with the family more on the service end and provide it in a way that the family actually feels like they are getting a service.
> -Wouldn't it be great if the workers could respond to crises and work with families in the home and work in family instead of taking the kid out of the family.
> -If you can do whatever else possible to not put them in the system, then that's being helpful.
> -If you have a certain percentage of children of color, you should have an equal percentage of that ethnicity of staff to work on those cases.
> -Cultural competency. Cultural understanding is a big factor.
> -The clerks that are assigning cases should assign cases in a more culturally relevant way, in their native language, and not just throw the case to the worker with available points.
> -(We) need an American Indian worker that is assigned the American Indian cases.
> -The system should provide services for people that want to become foster parents for children with special needs.
> -Relax the regulations for relatives that are trying to take in children because that will reduce the numbers that are in the system.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Members of the focus group indicated that one of the most important issues that faced American Indian children in the system was the correct coding of their ethnicity. They reported that cases involving American Indian children were subject to different laws and regulations under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), but if a child is not identified as American Indian their case would not follow the guidelines for an ICWA case. Participants indicated that many American Indian children were not coded correctly in the CWS/CMS system. They indicated that a majority of children were coded by dependency intake workers and workers at the shelter and that families were supposed to be screened for American Indian heritage. They stated that they did not know if this was occurring at intake because some children need to be re-coded later due to incorrect coding at intake. In addition, participants stated that if a child was incorrectly coded, it was difficult to change the code in the CWS/CMS system. They indicated that if a child was coded in the CWS/CMS system and their name was state I.D., the change could not be made at the Santa Clara County office. It had to be sent to Boulder, CO, and that could take a week. They also indicated that there have been many unanticipated problems with the CWS/CMS system. One participant indicated that he/she was unable to change anything under the ICWA sections in his/her computer.

Participants reported that workers coded a child's ethnicity based on their last name and/or information given to the worker by the parent. They indicated that many times the parent the child lived with would indicate the child's ethnicity based on their own ethnicity, even if the child was biracial. In addition, they reported that only one ethnicity could be coded and that there was not a code for biracial ethnicity. For American Indian children, unless a parent indicated that a child had American Indian heritage, the child would not be identified as American Indian in the system. Participants stated that many American Indian children and their parents were not enrolled in a tribe. They felt that many parents did not think it was important to state that they had American Indian heritage or to enroll in a tribe. They stated that many American Indian grandparents were enrolled with tribes, but that the parents of the children were not. As a result, the children were not identified or enrolled in a tribe. Participants also indicated that one worker in the CWS tracked American Indian children, but only those children identified in the CWS/CMS system as American Indian. . Participants reported that in the past, the committee was interested in figuring out how the county coded eligibility cases. They indicated that eligibility workers were incorrectly coding American Indian clients as Hispanic or something else because the workers were not asking clients about American Indian heritage.

Members of the focus group reported that children with special needs were identified at the shelter and tracked through the system. They also reported that no training was offered by the agency regarding coding. One participant indicated that he/she was not involved in the coding of children. Finally, one participant felt that correct coding was

not a high priority to most workers because they were so focused on meeting their deadlines and complying with regulations.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Coding is one of the biggest issues for American Indians.

-When they come into the system, as far as Child Welfare is concerned, the dependency intake workers and now even people at the shelter interview the families to find out if there is any American Indian heritage.

-At the beginning it is the worker's responsibility to ask that question and we assume that's being done, but sometimes it doesn't get caught until it's already been passed onto another worker.

-There were difficulties with the CWS system. They threw the CWS system in and they failed to recognize the specific needs of each unit, like in Licensing they needed extra stuff that CWS didn't accommodate.

-My computer won't let you change anything under ICWA. So if you have a Hispanic case and you find out they have American Indian heritage, the computer won't let you change that.

-If they have a Hispanic name all of a sudden they have a Hispanic code.

-It would depend on the parent who has the child that identifies with which culture they identify with is the culture that they're going to say their child is.

-I don't know if there is a code for biracial children.

-Unless the parent identifies that their child has American Indian heritage, they would not be identified by the system as American Indian.

-What we found with American Indian children, many of the grandparents are enrolled in a tribe, but the parents of the child never bothered to register with a tribe. Therefore, the child is not enrolled in a tribe.

-The parents won't even say that they have American Indian heritage because it's not important to them.

-One worker keeps track of known American Indian cases, but anything that goes into CWS is assumed to be correct.

-Children with special needs are identified at the shelter and tracked.

-Who has time to focus on the coding when you are trying to meet the regulations and deadlines.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Members of the focus group felt that the agency was making great efforts to understand and meet the needs of the clients it serves. They felt that the agency was doing a good job of educating workers to become more culturally competent. They also felt that the new mandatory training that the agency provided for new workers was a good idea and felt that this training would prevent worker burnout. Participants felt that the agency needed to reduce the caseloads. They stated that most workers carry more than 100 points, which is a full caseload. One participant indicated that even with 100 points, the caseloads were too high. He/she indicated that he/she worked overtime every week and it was still difficult to keep up. They indicated that they felt frustrated because they could not

provide the services their clients needed and deserved due to the large caseloads they carried. They reported that many workers at SSA leave after they gain the experience they need to move on to another job.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -In general, I think this county is making great strides in considering the needs of their clients and trying to meet those needs.
> -The County is doing a good job on focusing on everybody's culture and helping workers become more culturally competent.
> -Mandatory six-week training for new workers is good and will prevent burnout.
> -(There is a) need to reduce the caseloads.
> -A full caseload is 100 points, but the majority of workers here have 115-140 points.
> -The caseloads, even at 100 points, it's too much. I work overtime every week and I'm still not keeping up.
> -As a worker you can't provide the services you know your clients need and deserve. That's frustrating.
> -Many of the workers get their experience here and then they leave.

When the focus group results were presented to the American Indian Employee Committee, the following comments were made:

> -Correct coding is a very import issue for American Indian children. If clients identify as American Indian, they need to be coded that way.
> -We need workers trained in ICWA.
> -We need social workers specializing in ICWA.
> -Services that specialize in American Indian clients need to be available.

Asian/Pacific Islander Committee

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Asian/Pacific Islander (API) participants felt that Asians were under-represented in general in the CWS. Although API clients only make up 2% of the child welfare population, participants reported that this population of clients was enormously diverse and that a majority of the API in the system was Vietnamese. They felt that more Vietnamese were in the system due to their larger numbers in the general population.

Although the Asian population of clients in the system is low, participants felt that child maltreatment and domestic violence were occurring in these communities to a greater extent than was being reported. They also indicated that in other departments like welfare and benefits, the API population was much higher. Participants spoke about the need for more API workers in the agency, specifically Laotian and Cambodian, and the need for more culturally and linguistically appropriate services to meet the needs of this very

diverse client population. In addition, they felt that there was not enough culturally sensitive outreach into the community with information about the agency, the services offered through the agency, and the laws against domestic violence and child maltreatment.

Participants from one focus group felt that Latino families were over-represented and constituted a large proportion of the cases in the CWS. They felt that this might partly be attributed to the large numbers of Latinos in Santa Clara County (SCC). Participants from one focus group also felt that geographical areas within San Jose should be considered since many of the clients in the CWS appeared to be from East San Jose. Finally, API participants stated that they thought African American families and white families had the same number of cases in the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Asian has a small portion (of clients in the CWS), but Asians are so diversified and Vietnamese has the biggest portion.
> -There are only 2% of API cases in the department, but that doesn't mean that we have no child abuse problem in our community.
> -(We need) more culturally sensitive outreach and services.
> -The services to the clients are under-represented.
> -(We need to) recruit more API staff, especially Laotian and Cambodian.
> -There are a lot of Hispanic families in the system. They are the major portion in child welfare.
> -Geographical areas should be considered since we have more clients from the eastside of San Jose which has a lot of Hispanics and some Vietnamese. A lot of population from the eastside.
> -(I think) the African American and white families have the same number of cases.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants felt that API clients were under-represented in general in the CWS. They indicated that this under-representation was the result of under-reporting, not a result of the less frequent child maltreatment. Participants also felt that specific subgroups within the API population, specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese, were under-represented and were not receiving the education or the services they needed. In addition, they indicated that outreach, services, and resources for API clients, especially professional services, were limited.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -The Asian population is under-represented in the system. We need more ethnic staff since under-reports do not mean there is not a problem out these.

-We have the concept that Chinese and Japanese are model minorities. They do have problems, but they try to resolve them within their family and with their resources. We should give the services to whoever needs them.
-We don't pay attention to the Chinese because of the number is low.
-Services and resources are getting better, but are still limited. I found it hard to find services for my clients, especially professional services for Vietnamese speaking clients.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants felt that children with substance-abusing parents were more likely to remain in the system longer, to have their parents fail family reunification, and to be placed in long-term foster care than were other clients. They indicated that African American and Latino families with substance abuse problems stayed in the system longer and were disproportionately over-represented in permanency planning. They also stated that few API parents had substance abuse issues resulting in fewer API clients in long-term care. However, they mentioned that API children were beginning to develop substance abuse problems.

Participants felt that 50%-60% of Chinese cases were settled at Intake and that very few Chinese cases make it to permanency planning. They also reported Chinese children do not report abuse and that Chinese parents often send their children back to China to live with relatives as a solution to child maltreatment issues. Participants indicated that although there had been an increase in the number of Vietnamese cases in the past three years, a majority of Vietnamese children were returned to their parents. They felt that this was the result of education about the domestic violence and child maltreatment laws, their willingness to complete the provisions of the reunification plan, and their willingness to change. They also indicated that a majority of the Vietnamese cases were for physical abuse and domestic violence and felt that these cases were less complicated than substance abuse cases resulting in fewer Vietnamese children in the system. Finally, participants spoke about a lack of services, resources, and foster homes for API families. They reported that Asian clients sometimes had been placed on a waiting list to receive the necessary services delaying the reunification of their families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Drug related cases tend to stay longer in the system and that is true for all ethnicities.
-Many Hispanic cases are in permanent planning because these cases are drug related where parents cannot make it through the family reunification plan and end up in permanent planning.
-50%-60% of Chinese cases settle in Intake. Most of the parents do not know the law so they need education and advice.

-Besides limited resources, the Chinese children don't report. For example, a boy refused to show me the bruise and he said that this could be taken care of in his family.
-Chinese parents can send the kids to their relatives in the main land to take care of the problem because they don't trust the system and lack resources.
-The number of Vietnamese cases has grown quickly in the last three years.
-Most Vietnamese children are returned to their parents. The parents are willing to change and they take parenting classes.
-Most of the Vietnamese cases are due to domestic violence or physical abuse. They are straightforward so the parents have to take parenting class, domestic violence group, and counseling. If they complete the classes, they get their kids back. Their cases are not complicated like drug related cases.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Participants felt that the under-representation of API clients in the CWS was due to the under-reporting of child maltreatment and domestic violence in these communities. They felt that there had been an increase in child maltreatment, but that the abuse had gone unreported. Participants indicated that API families try to keep problems within the family, rely on extended family support to resolve family problems, and do not want to lose face by having their children involved with the CWS. Therefore, the abuse goes unreported. They also indicated that Asian communities are closely connected and that neighbors, friends, doctors, and schools do not report abuse. Participants also suggested that many Asians might not believe that child maltreatment and domestic violence are problems so they do not report. Participants also spoke about a lack of education, outreach, and services for API clients resulting in lower numbers of reports. They indicated that many API have a suspicion of the agency and the government and, therefore, do not report.

The API population has grown very fast, but the numbers of Asian children in the CWS does not reflect that growth. Participants suggest that as these populations acculturate, there might be an increase in the number of reports and API children in the system. They also indicated that API clients were under-represented due to the lack of linguistically appropriate workers in the Screening unit. With few workers to receive these calls, many reports may not be processed.

They also indicated that children with behavioral problems called Child Protective Services (CPS) and reported their parents for abuse. They suggested that this might result in increased numbers of children of color in the CWS. Participants also indicated that Latinos might be over-represented due to their use of medical services through Valley Medical where doctors are trained as mandated reporters. This is not true of Vietnamese doctors in the private sector.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There is an increase of problems, but not numbers because of the under-reporting issue.

-Children do not report.

-Vietnamese doctors do not report child abuse when they come to their clinics. Doctors are not trained to examine child abuse indicators. More education is needed.

- Doctors in private business do not want to report for fear that they might lose clients and income.

-Chinese language schools don't understand the law and don't report child abuse cases even though they know and hear about them.

-Vietnamese tend to live close together and if they don't think physical abuse is a problem and if they all believe the same thing, there will be no report because it is just a way of disciplining your child.

-There are many ways of explaining the under-reporting: family privacy, community closeness, private doctors and schools, lack of parenting education, and the services are not available.

-API families try to use the support from extended families to solve their problems. The extended family support will be weaker or disappear when this group stays longer in this country. Families will spread out and their kids will stay longer in the system like other groups.

-Currently they have Chinese and Vietnamese workers in the Screening unit, but only during working hours.

-More outreach in the community because there is no social worker in the community to help people.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants strongly felt that more outreach and education in the API communities was needed. They also felt that although the API population in the system was low, there were not enough API workers to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the clients. They suggested that the agency recruit more API staff, create more services for API clients, educate community members about the laws, create more Family Resource Centers, encourage more schools to hire school-based social workers, work more closely with school boards, and staff more hot lines with workers with diverse linguistic capabilities.

Participants also felt that the agency made it difficult to hire bilingual staff and that many bilingual workers worked for non-profits instead of the CWS. They suggested placing staff in units that would most appropriately utilize their cultural and linguistic capabilities and increase the agency's ability to recruit more Vietnamese foster parents. They also suggested that the agency encourage more young people to go into the field, pay workers higher salaries, and provide emotional support to new staff members.

API participants felt that the agency does not understand or acknowledge the needs of the Chinese community and therefore, does not hire enough Chinese staff to meet the needs of Chinese clients. Finally, participants spoke about the difficulties Vietnamese clients'

experience living here in the United States. They felt that many Vietnamese parents were unable to learn new parenting skills and provide adequate supervision for their children due to the stress of living in America. They felt this resulted in the development of problems among Vietnamese youth like substance abuse, sexual activity, and difficulties in school. Participants suggested hiring more staff to provide the necessary support and services for these youth, as well as their parents.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -More outreach and services to the API communities and better recruitment of staff.
>
> -Hire more bilingual staff, especially Laotian and Cambodian. Many minority staff was hired as English speaking staff, but were counted as bilingual staff because they can speak both languages. People think that there are too many Vietnamese staff, but most of them were hired in English speaking codes. They provide English speaking services, not Vietnamese.
>
> -(We) need more human power to increase more API foster parents and more ethnic staff in the foster care unit.
>
> -To encourage younger students, go to the programs and support them financially and emotionally.
>
> -The agency doesn't see the needs of the Chinese community.
>
> -The first generation of Vietnamese have to struggle to survive in America, therefore, they don't have the time to learn new parenting skills or time to supervise their children. As a result, many Vietnamese youth are having problems in school now. They face acculturation issues so they use drugs and sex to release pressure. The system must have staff out there to provide these youth with appropriate support and services.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

API participants reported that they asked youth about their ethnic identification and entered that into the CWSCMS database. However, English speaking children and parents are coded as English speaking even if their native language is not English. They indicated that this could cause problems if the child is placed with a non-English speaking relative and the caseworker is English speaking.

Participants indicated that mixed race children could have both ethnicities coded by using primary and secondary coding. However, they felt that many mixed race children were coded one or the other and suggested that this might contribute to the under-representation of API children in agency statistics. They also stated that Dependency Investigation (DI) workers could change the ethnicity code, but that the original code remains in the system from the Screening unit.

Some participants reported that workers did receive training on coding ethnicity when they were first trained on the CWSCMS system, while others indicated that there was not any training provided on coding ethnicity.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -If the youth speaks English; he is then coded as English speaking.
> -Even if the parents speak English the system cannot code the family as English speaking since the worker might place the kid with relatives who might not speak English. It should be coded by ethnicity. The same happens to Spanish speaking clients.
> -Coding mixed kids can by done by recording primary and secondary coding.
> -An English speaking youth having a Cambodian mother and a Caucasian father will be coded as Caucasian. This might cause the issue of under-representation.
> -DI workers can change the coding but the system still has the original coding from the Screening unit.
> -(There is) no training in coding.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt that the shortage of housing impacts the ability of the parents to regain custody of their children. They also spoke about the shortage of Vietnamese and Chinese foster parents due to the fact that they receive public assistance. They suggested allowing these families to become foster parents and providing a special training program to help them become foster parents.

Participants also felt that the agency needed more ethnically diverse workers to provide information, support, and services to parents and communities. They spoke about the need to work with clients to achieve family reunification and bring a more positive image of the agency to all communities. Finally, they suggested hiring a coordinator for each ethnic group to coordinate culturally and linguistically appropriate services for clients because workers do not have adequate time to locate and connect their clients with the necessary services.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Shortage of housing can impact the returning of the children since the parents do not have a place for the family to live.
> -(There are) very few Chinese and Vietnamese foster parents. Have a special program to train and educate people about becoming foster parents. Some Vietnamese cannot become foster parents because of the public assistance they have like Section 8 or welfare. The county should consider letting those people become foster parents while receiving public assistance.
> -We need more ethnic workers.
> -More information, support, and services for the birth parents.

-If parents lose their child they will tell everyone that the system takes children and this will create a bad image to our system that is established to bring the family together.

-Need a coordinator for every ethnic group who knows child welfare law and community resources. This person will help workers connect services for the minority clients since social workers have very limited time to search for their clients.

When the focus group results were presented to the Asian/Pacific Islander Employee Committee, the following comment was made:

-As long as a family has sufficient income to meet their own needs, they meet the definition of adequate income in the foster care program. Cash aid, food stamps and housing are income. I wanted to clarify the statement that indicates that people who are on welfare cannot become foster parents. Besides income, space and criminal records are equally important.

El Comité

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Responses from the two focus groups varied widely. Both groups reported that poor families had more difficulties with the Child Welfare System (CWS) than families with resources. Participants stated that poor families were isolated, lacked resources, lacked contact with extended family members, had more needs, faced more stressors, and were inappropriately reported to CPS more frequently. They also felt that home-visits were stressful for families. Participants indicated that there were fewer services available for poor families than families with means; specifically services that accepted MediCal. In addition, members of one focus group felt that the agency needed to use a different approach when working with poor families. They felt that workers ought to know what the families wanted and work with those needs instead of telling families what to do.

While one participant reported having a balanced caseload with a large number of Caucasian clients, a majority of participants that worked in Spanish-speaking units indicated that their caseloads consisted almost entirely of families of color; specifically Latinos. One participant indicated that a majority of children at the shelter were Latino. Another participant indicated that a majority of the referrals to ER were made from several zip codes that were primarily areas where Latinos lived. He/she felt that the people making the referrals, like teachers and nurses, were reporting children based on clothing they deemed inappropriate. They also indicated that a majority of workers in the CWS were not people of color, did not understand the culture of their clients, and were biased against families of color. In addition to the lack of cultural competency among workers, respondents reported that there was institutional discrimination against families of color in the CWS and the Dependency Court system, and reported that minority families received harsher treatment than Caucasian families at every level of the system.

They felt that state law worked against people of color because it was difficult for families of color to comply with the court requirements to regain the custody of their children. Participants from one focus group also stated that families of color lacked knowledge about the CWS and did not know how to work with the system.

Members of one focus group indicated that by-pass cases were more common for Latinos than other ethnic groups. They reported that 60% by-pass cases were Latino. They felt that some workers "enjoyed" by-passing cases. Participants from this focus group also indicated that recruitment of Latino foster placements was difficult due to the economic status of Latinos in the County and the number of children in Latino families. They reported that El Comite had developed a kinship placement program for Latinos, but the Sheriff would not place children with relatives who were undocumented. They also reported that children in the system were often placed with families with different ethnic and cultural values than the child. They felt that the system expected the child to acculturate to the foster family and that they system did not expect foster families to be culturally sensitive to children from diverse backgrounds. Finally, participants from this focus group indicated that there was an opposition from the Administration to develop a culturally competent staff in the agency.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Poor people get "fingered" more than rich people.

-(Poor) families have poor social networks, resources, are isolated because many relatives live in Mexico and can't provide support.

-These families have more stressors; single parents with more children. More needs.

-We need to try different approaches. We need to know what the families want, not tell clients what to do.

-(I've) been working here a few months, maybe it's a skewed view, but I work in the Spanish-speaking unit and all the cases are Spanish-speaking and all the families are people of color.

-Work in a Spanish-speaking unit and all the clients are of color. I don't see anyone else. We don't have a chance to see anyone else. When we do see other clients, like at the Clover House, these are also children of color.

-Overwhelmingly I see children of color. Almost all my caseload is Latino. Is that everyone's perspective? Before I worked in the Children's Shelter and most of the children are Latino.

-Most workers are non-minorities and don't understand the culture. They have biases.

-The court system does not reflect minorities. State law works against minorities. It is difficult for families to meet the court requirements.

-Minority families aren't as savvy. They don't' know how to work the system.

-Laws of By-pass have created a tremendous obstacle in placement. The total number of bypass cases is 60% for Latinos.

-Some workers even enjoy by-passing families.

-Foster care recruitment for Latinos is difficult due to their economic status. You can't place children in a certain home due to the number of children in the home.

-Foster families have different cultural values than the children being placed with them. The system expects kids to acculturate to families versus families being culturally sensitive.

-There seems to be opposition from "up above" (to have a culturally competent staff).

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants from one group indicated that Latinos, African Americans, Filipinos, and children with disabilities were over-represented in the system. They indicated that Asian/Pacific Islanders, Caucasians, and Vietnamese children were under-represented in the system. They reported that GLBT children were not formally identified in the system, but if their sexual orientation was known, these children were removed from the shelter and placed sooner than other children. They also indicated that there was no integration between GLBT children and straight children in the system. Finally, members from this focus group reported that workers do not ask children about their sexual orientation and that sexual orientation was not included in the assessment process. They felt that many workers had difficulties with GLBT issues and that within the agency GLBT issues were "always personalized."

Participants from the other focus group did not discuss the over/under-representation of any groups of children in the system. Instead they spoke about the number of cases they carried, the number of points workers in the Spanish-speaking units had, the difference in the amount of time a worker needed to spend with rich and poor families, and the type of referrals workers get from schools. One participant indicated that his/her caseload was well balanced with many Caucasian families. He/she indicated that all of the cases he/she has worked on have never been with an intact parent couple.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-In the Spanish-speaking units they have up to 110 points which is about 26 kids.
-It takes less time with a family with resources. A lot of families we see in the Spanish-speaking unit are poor, single parent moms, many kids. I see physical abuse, neglect, domestic violence, alcoholism, depression, need for counseling, fears about services due to immigration issues. We need to build trust. This doesn't take one visit. In ER we might make several visits. We need to see all the kids and that may take several visits because the kids are in different schools. Families are dealing with basic needs.
-If the family has fewer resources; the social worker has more work to do helping to hook them up to resources. If families are monolingual we need to make more visits to deal with their fears. They are so afraid of the system. They are overly cautious.
-School referrals often are about parents who don't seem to care about their kids. When in reality the parent is overwhelmed with many kids and is doing the best she can to provide for her family to prevent them from being homeless.

-Monolingual families have few resources and the kids are used as translators, which is inappropriate.

-I have a well-balanced unit. I understand that is the Spanish-speaking units that workers are overwhelmed because there are too many families to work with. I hear that they have so many cases workers with they weren't Spanish Certified. I am surprised at the large number of Caucasian families in my own caseload. All the families have in common single parents, raising kids, low income. I have never worked with a family, which is an intact couple/married.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants from one focus group indicated that there were a very large number of Spanish-speaking children in the Children's Shelter and a lack of Spanish-speaking workers to work with these children. Participants from the other group indicated that there was an over-representation of children of color throughout the system, but they indicated that the over-representation was more apparent at the front end, in ER and Dependency Investigations, and at the back end, in Adoptions. They indicated that Latinos were over-represented in Adoptions, remained in Adoptions longer than other children do, and were subject to By-pass more often than other children were.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The Children's Shelter has a very large number of Spanish-speaking children and a lack of Spanish-speaking workers. We have only one Spanish-speaking ER unit, one Spanish-speaking Continuing Unity, and one Family Resource Center.

-There is an over-representation of minorities throughout the system, but especially in the front end which would include ER and DI. The back end, Adoptions, is also definitely over-represented with Latinos. Latinos get over-referred, get more by-passes, and then linger in Adoptions. Once they are freed for adoption, no one wants them and they continue drifting. It seems that placement failures relate to kids not getting places.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Participants felt that the lack of Spanish-speaking workers and units in the CWS might contribute to the over-representation of Latino children in the system. They indicated that there were no education or prevention services for Spanish-speaking clients. Members of the focus groups stated that there were not enough resources and in-home services being provided like Family Preservation. They reported that with high housing costs and increasing poverty rates in the County, many families were doubling up in homes or apartments to be able to pay their bills. They also reported that some families rent out rooms in their homes to single men causing problems for families trying to reunify with their children. They felt that there was an increase in physical and sexual abuse when too

many people were living in a small space. Participants indicated that many children whose parents cannot afford their own house or apartment ended up as by-pass cases.

Members of the focus groups reported that due to the strict timelines placed on workers and families by the laws and the court system, many workers were closing cases too early and these families would end up being referred again. They stated that 30 days was not long enough to fix a problem and when families were re-referred, it reflected poorly on them. Participants felt that they had too many cases and not enough resources to help their clients. They also reported that the law leaves little leeway for social workers to advocate for their clients or make decisions about what would best meet the needs of the client so they could regain custody of their children. In addition, they reported that children receive many benefits from the system that they may not receive at home. Participants felt that children did not want to leave the shelter and return home and that the children would learn very quickly what they needed to do to get placed back into the shelter.

Participants indicated that immigration was a factor in the over-representation of certain populations in the system. They felt that immigrant families were very needy, had difficulties obtaining employment and housing, and did not qualify for CalWORKS or MediCal programs. One participant stated that families that use folk healing for an injury because they don't have medical insurance might be reported for neglect. They also indicated that many of their clients were very young single mothers from Mexico.

One participant reported that social workers were not looking beyond the number of referrals to see if a parent had changed. They felt that the agency needed to provide training on how to identify if a parent has changed. Another participant disagreed and felt that many workers did not look at history and as a result, the worker might overlook the issues that the family needs to address to regain the custody of their children. Participants also indicated that police officers were making decisions about the removal of children from the home. They felt that many times the worker did not have control over that decision. In addition, they reported that families were being separated. Siblings were not placed together, children were placed with families that did not speak their language, and they could not be placed with their relatives. They reported that placement workers did not make extra efforts to find culturally and linguistically appropriate placements for children. Participants also stated that working with families of color, especially monolingual families, was difficult. They indicated that workers had to translate for the client and also had to educate teachers and police officers in the community. Finally, members of the focus group reported that a majority of the workers in the CWS were good people, but that there were a few that were racist, homophobic and sexist and the agency never confronted these workers about their biases.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -A fundamental problem is the need for more Spanish-speaking social workers.
> -We need Spanish-speaking prevention services. We hear lip service, but I document that they agency says that we don't have the services. That's sad.

-There are not enough resources at the Diversion phase. Family preservation is not being done.

-Housing is astronomical. Poverty is increasing due to basic cost of living here. We are phasing out people. These people are doubling up in homes and go into low, low income housing places where there are fewer services, the streets are cleaned less often, and there is not recreation department services for the kids.

-To return a child home, the family must live alone and the child has to have a bed. But the family can't afford to get an apartment and the family is set up for failure. It's impossible.

-Families live together to make the rent. I see more families living together and there is an increase in abuse and sexual abuse. Single guys renting in a house and there is a 14-16 year old girl. Any house you go into now there is more than one family living there.

-Because of the new law, these kids are going straight to adoptions. If the kids are three years of age and under, after six months of services they are going straight to adoptions.

-Lots of factors, economics, cultural insensitivity on the part of the judges and lawyers and not enough in-home services.

-The number of cases and crises (is too large). We can't respond to every single one. We can't do the work to get the issues resolved and there are no resources for prevention.

-When we go to court, social workers lose control and the lawyers are in charge. You lose the ability to advocate for your families.

-Kids get a lot of benefits from the system so sometimes they don't want to go home. They don't have restrictions and limits like they do at home.

-Kids don't want to leave the shelter where they have their own clothes and a washing machine.

-Kids know what they need to do to get back to the shelter.

-A huge factor is immigration. Families would not have been a part of the system if they were not immigrants. They are very needy, they don't have documentation, and they can't get a job. They do what they need to keep a roof over their heads, but they get caught and lose their kids.

-They (immigrants) only qualify for emergency MediCal so the kids don't qualify to get counseling. There are so many more barriers when immigration is an issue. How are they ever going to have an apartment if they can't work?

-If the family uses some kind of folk healing for a child's injury; the family is reported for neglect. This is how I heal this burn because I don't have medical insurance.

-I have a lot of very young, single mothers from Mexico. My caseload is increasing with these very young, single mothers.

- A lot of social workers will not look at the history. Not looking at the history meant that all the issues that need to be addressed have been overlooked. You need to give services to address the family issues.

-Sometimes this is out of our control and the Police Department (PD) says we take all the kids because the father hit the teen. If the PD decides to take them all in, then it depends on the DI worker. We are separating children from the family.

Say the aunt had a drug problem in the past, then we separate them from their families, putting them with strangers and with people that don't speak their language. They are lost.

-Placement workers would rather deal with easier placements.

-It takes a toll on the worker who is working with minority families because all along the way workers have to educate cops and teachers. Workers have to do double work due to language translations.

-The majority of workers are good people. However, there is a core of people in the system that is racist, homophobic, and sexist. Unfortunately these workers are not confronted.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Responses from the two focus groups varied widely. Members of one focus group indicated that more prevention services were needed. They reported that more education was needed for schools, teachers, and mental health workers about what was appropriate for a referral. They felt that some teachers made too many inappropriate referrals while others waited until the abuse was severe before making a referral. Participants indicated that there needed to be more communication between workers and teachers to help them understand the needs of the family. One participant felt that school social workers could provide prevention services, but indicated that there were no jobs in schools for social workers. They also recommended that social workers be educated about looking at a family's history when making decisions about the case and about providing more in-home services for families to meet their needs.

Members of this focus group felt that the timelines for parents to complete the required tasks to regain the custody of their children needed to be relaxed to allow families to stabilize before the case was closed. They stated that cultural sensitivity was very important when working with families of color in the CWS. They recommended providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services for all families in the system. They also felt that workers needed to be sensitive to the parent's needs, as well as the child's needs. One participant indicated that families express affection differently and workers need to be sensitive to these differences so they do not inappropriately judge interactions between parents and their children as negative. Participants from this group felt that all the systems working with families and children needed to collaborate including the legal system, the dependency system, and the education system. Finally, members from this focus group felt that there racial profiling was occurring, and that children of color were targeted by schools, social workers, and police officers.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Educate the people who are making the referrals. The teacher looks at a child who has clothes that are second hand. This is economics, not child abuse.

-Schools are poor at making appropriate referrals.

-I prevented a mental health worker from making a referral by educating the person about culture.

-Teachers are afraid to make referrals. They wait until it is so severe that their conscience makes them refer.

-Teachers keep making the same referral on the same child. The social worker needs to communicate with the teacher about what is really going on with the family to help them understand the needs of the family. The social worker should give information back to the teacher who made the referral.

-If there were a social worker in the school so much could be prevented. There are no jobs for social workers in schools.

-Education of social workers about looking at history and to provide more in-home services.

-Timelines. Let the families stabilize before we close the case.

-Cultural sensitivity is so important. Not just for language and culture, but families need to be worked with sensitively. It's important to be sensitive to parents.

-Families express affection differently, yet we evaluate based on a single expectation of affection when there is a family visitation.

-I think all the system needs to collaborate: dependency, legal and education.

-There is profiling. If a child is brown and has a bruise on his shoulder, he/she might have been playing around, but they call CPS. This is stereotyping. If the child isn't groomed, well it's general neglect. It comes from the person making the referral, the social worker, and the cop.

Members of the other focus group felt that changes needed to be made in child welfare policies made at the state and local levels. They felt that policy makers needed to be educated about child welfare. Participants from this focus group suggested hiring more people of color at all levels in the system. They also recommended providing more outreach to immigrant communities to educate them about the services available to them. They also suggested creating more programs to assist new immigrants adjust to their life in the United States and educate them about the CWS. In addition, they felt that attitudes in the CWS needed to change. They indicated that Administrators and Line workers appeared to have similar ideas about how to approach the problem of the over-representation of children of color in the CWS, but that Supervisors blocked new and innovative ideas. They felt that the Administration needed to support Line workers and "push down" ideas from the top. They also felt that Administrators needed to push policy makers in Sacramento to institute policy changes that would help families in the CWS. Participants indicated that a system of checks and balances be instituted at all levels of the CWS. Finally, one participant from this focus group indicated that bilingual workers do not necessarily support their own people.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Changes need to occur at the policy level. Rules and regulations come from the state. We need to educate and change attitudes at the state, county, and local levels.

-We need more minorities at all levels.

-More outreach is needed to make immigrants aware of programs available to them as well and increase the number of programs to assist new immigrants.

-We need to help new immigrants to survive here and support them in becoming independent.

-Attitudes in the system need to change as well. This needs to be addressed at the top. Administrators and Line workers appear to be on the same page, however, middle management seems to block new and innovative ideas. If Administrators support Line worker, then they need to "push down" our ideas and Administration needs to push Sacramento as well.

-We need checks and balances for needs assessments at all levels.

-Even though people may be bilingual, there are a few who don't support our own people.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Members of the focus groups stated that a child's ethnicity was coded when they entered the system. This was done at the CAN center, by the police, by shelter staff or by Dependency Investigators. However, participants indicated that there were no standards for coding ethnicity, that ethnicity was not assessed, that there was no training provided on coding, that there was not a way to code for mixed race/ethnicity children, and that there was no support from Administration on coding correctly or monitoring the coding. They indicated that many times the ethnicity is coded incorrectly. One participant stated that he/she ask clients about their ethnicity while several other participants indicated that ethnicity was coded based on the last name of the child. Several participants indicated that if the child's ethnicity was incorrectly coded, this information could be changed in the computer, but that the case would not be reassigned. In addition, participants reported that the computer system was supposed to be helpful, but none of the workers know how to use it. They also reported that the computer system only gathers data and creates more work for the workers.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Referent calls and it is coded before the ER person gets it. The CAN center codes it there, but it's wrong.

-Coding happens at the front and middle end.

-Most kids are brought into the system by the cops and they are pretty good about coding correctly. Shelter staff also codes, but we don't know if there is a criterion being followed.

-There is not standard way of coding. Cases are coded at the time the family is screened. We have not been formally trained on how to code.

-No criteria are given to DI on how to code. Families need to be coded correctly "at the door", but most cases are not coded adequately. Workers are not educated on how to code.

-There isn't a way to code for mixed race and we don't know how mixed race is being coded. It could be based on the way the child looks or based on what the caretaker says.
-There is not Administrative support on coding correctly and monitoring for it.
-I always look, but gather my own information. I don't ask more details like are you Mexican American or Hispanic.
-I had a family, Martinez, but the wife with an Anglo name, so you don't always know from names or codes.
-You can change information in the computer in any unit, but the case isn't reassigned.
-We have a new computer system, but no one knows how to use it. Workers don't know where to find certain items.
-We don't have a good system. The computers should help, but they don't.
-Computers are only gathering data and creating more work for us.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants stated that the Spanish-speaking units handle 53% of the cases in the CWS, but that they have a limited number of workers. They also stated that Latino families are family-oriented so workers should push to get Latino children placed with relatives. They indicated that workers in the CWS needed to change the way they view families and look for strengths. They also stated that the workers are not supposed to judge people, but they are supposed to address their needs. One participant stated that police officers were more likely to put people of color in jail and leave them in jail longer than whites. Another participant felt that the CWS had failed children. They stated that there are multiple generations of children being raised by the system. They also stated that community workers needed to encourage children to stay in school.

Participants reported that people from Michoacan were different from people from Mexico City and Peru. They felt that people might see things differently based on where they were from. They also felt that the system viewed people from Michoacan as hostile, but indicated that this was a misperception. Participants stated that it was difficult to change the system. They felt that the system needed to be more family-oriented. They also felt that ethnicity was a "dirty word", that cultural competency training was scarce, and that it was not viewed favorably by the agency to request more cultural competency training.

Members of both focus groups felt that the caseloads were too high to respond to the needs of the client appropriately. They indicated that they do not have the time to visit the children. In addition, participants reported that the standard to weight cases was outdated and did not consider the complexity of substance abuse cases and HIV/AIDS cases. They felt that many cases were more difficult to handle, but the worker was not given more time to deal with the issues facing these families. Participants suggested conducting focus groups with South County workers because they carried cases from beginning to end and see how their experiences differ from other workers in the County. One participant suggested teaching a computer class on the CWS/CMS system at SJSU's College of

Social Work. Finally, participants felt that it would be helpful to conduct focus groups with teachers and police officers because social workers interact with them at many levels of the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Spanish-speaking units have to take care of 53% of the population, but there are a limited number of workers.
-Because these families (Latino families) are family-oriented; there is a push to get these kids to relatives.
-We have to change the way we see things. We need to look at the strengths.
-Police are more likely to put minority parents in jail and for longer periods of time than white parents.
-The system has failed our kids. We find generations of kids being raised in the system. Records go back to fathers and grandparents who have been in the system.
-Community work that encourages kids to go and stay in school needs to occur.
-People from Michoacan or Mexico City, they are different. Peruvian people may see things differently.
-People from Michoacan are seen as hostile, but this is a misinterpretation.
-It's hard to change this system. Before this system was to protect the child, but we need to be more family-oriented. I think that 80% of social workers want to save the child, but we need to be save the family.
-Unfortunately ethnicity is a "dirty word". Training is non-existent and suddenly it's politically incorrect to request training in this area.
-It comes down to caseloads. If I had time to thoroughly read the histories, I could respond better.
-Social workers get a bad rap like we didn't do enough for this family. But we don't have the resources, the time, and the caseloads are too high.
-I am working on writing a case report. I with I could go out and see the kid, but I have the least amount of activity with them.
-Standard to weigh the cases is so out-dated. The unit of measure was devised in the '60's and '70's before AIDS and increased substance abuse.
-Each kid is worth a certain amount of points depending on the unit, but families are so different if they are medically fragile, have mental health issues, there are custody battles, immigration, etc.
-The standard is that you should be is 100%, but it's more like 150%.
-There are extra problems and barriers with monolingual clients or recent immigrants.

When the focus group results were presented to El Comité, the following comments were made:

-It is very important to look at by-pass cases.
-Careful attention needs to be given to policy issues.

-There are correlates with SES, extreme poverty, high density housing, dilapidated schools, immigration.
-The police are gatekeepers.
-The sheriff looks at legal status. An undocumented family member cannot be a foster parent.
-Once the child is removed what happens to his/her education?
-Language is not enough; social workers need to be both bilingual and bicultural.
-We don't want a report (from the researchers) that tells us what we already know.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Concerns Committee

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Members of the focus group felt that GLBT children were invisible in the CWS. They felt that the agency did not make efforts to identify or track these children and, as a result the agency could not adequately meet the needs of these children. Participants stated that it was difficult to know how many GLBT children were in the system. They reported that there was no statistical data collected on these children and that data collected about these children would not necessarily be accurate due to the fact that many GLBT children hide their sexual orientation and may not report it when asked. One participant stated that studies of the general population indicated that 5% to 10% of the general population was GLBT. He/she predicted that the percentage of GLBT children in the system was probably similar. Another participant indicated that an estimated 70% of foster families, with an adolescent placed in their homes, were caring for a GLBT or questioning adolescent. He/she indicated that although administrators and workers might not believe that there were GLBT children in the system, due to the percentages presented above, more workers had GLBT children on their caseloads than they realized.

Participants stressed that not all GLBT children were white. These children were ethnically and culturally diverse and came from diverse family backgrounds. They felt that the agency needed to accurately assess the needs of each child and provide appropriate services to meet the specific needs of that child. Participants also reported that GLBT children were labeled as "dysfunctional" by the system and sent to therapy to "cure" their sexual orientation. Participants felt that, instead, the system should provide appropriate and sensitive services to GLBT children and their families. In addition, members of the focus group stated that many foster parents felt uncomfortable with issues of sexual orientation and did not know how to handle these issues with GLBT children in their care. As a result, foster parents would seek the advice of the worker that would not necessarily respond appropriately to meet the needs of the child. Participants were also concerned about the amount of homophobia among workers in the CWS.

Finally, participants indicated that families of color were over-represented in the CWS. They felt that there was a lack of resources and services available to meet the needs of

these families and recommended that the agency make the needs of families of color a priority in all units across the system. They also reported that although the Placement unit placed large numbers of African American children, there were no African American workers in that unit.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-GLBT children are invisible in most parts of the system.

-GLBT youth are the minority group in the system.

-The agency makes no effort to identify and track (GLBT children). Therefore, the agency is inadequate in responding to the needs of these children when they come into the system.

-There is no statistical information about GLBT youth. There are a number of GLBT youth that we are not aware of because they are hiding their sexual orientation. Therefore, I feel that the number of GLBT youth is high.

-Since we don't have any statistical numbers on GLBT youth in the system we have to rely on general studies which indicate that 10% of the population are gay. But these studies are for white males. Other (studies) show from 5% to 7% in the general population (are GLBT).

-In 70% of foster homes who had adolescents in their households, there was at least one GLBT or questioning child in their household. Virtually every social worker has a GLBT youth on their caseload.

-The administration tends to minimize the issues of GLBT children in the system because they think that GLBT children are insignificant in numbers or that social workers don't often encounter these children.

-I hope that the agency will look at what the child needs as opposed to who they are, where they come from, what gender they are, what cultural identification they are. Looking at the need of the child is very important in providing appropriate services for them.

-The system knows that the child is GLBT and assumes that he/she is dysfunctional. The child needs to be fixed rather than resolving the conflict (over their sexual orientation) in the family.

-Foster parents don't know what to do or feel uncomfortable with the issues (of GLBT children). They turn to the social worker for guidance who refer the GLBT youth to counseling for adjustment issues instead of working on sexual orientation issues.

-I am most concerned about the homophobia that staff have here. Seven years ago an in-house survey on GLBT issues was conducted and only 14% of workers returned the survey. The result was negative--hate.

-I think the agency should pay attention to the number of minority families in the system. I hear about the high number of minority families in the system, but I don't know the exact statistics. This lack of information can impact the resources and services for these families, especially the youth. The agency should set priorities across the departments.

-There are no African American staff in the Placement unit when the agency does a lot of placements for African American kids.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants reported that African American and Latino children were over-represented in the CWS. They also indicated that these children came into the system in larger numbers than other groups and that they remained in the system longer than other groups. They felt that this was not true for white children. Members of the focus group reported that GLBT-identified children that came into the system stayed in the system longer than non-identified GLBT children did due to difficulties in finding placements for GLBT-identified children. Finally, participants indicated that many GLBT children came into the system as a result of conflicts with their family of origin regarding their sexual orientation. They indicated that these conflicts prevented many GLBT children from returning to their family of origin.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -African American and Latino youth (are over-represented). The statistics in the power-point presentation reflect the consistency of the numbers over the years.
> -These minority youth come in and stay in the system in a large number. This is less true for white children.
> -The identified GLBT youth that come into the system and stay in the system because it is hard to find a placement for them. Their families don't want them back because it's the reason they came in.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants indicated that due to the lack of identification and tracking of GLBT children it was difficult to estimate how many were in the any particular part of the system. As mentioned above, participants felt that GLBT-identified children remained in the system longer than non-identified GLBT children due to difficulties in finding them placements. They also indicated that many children do not reunify with their family of origin as a result of the conflicts surrounding their sexual orientation. This may result in more GLBT-identified children at the back of the system like Permanency Planning and long-term foster care. Finally, as mentioned above, African American children were over-represented in the Placement unit.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Focus group members did not directly address this question. However, participants discussed, in detail, the reasons GLBT children entered the CWS. Participants felt that GLBT children entered the system as a result of conflicts over their sexual orientation with their family of origin. They indicated that nearly half of the GLBT children that entered the system were the result of these types of conflicts. Participants also indicated that GLBT children entered the system as the result of physical and sexual abuse. They

also stated that the families of GLBT children often failed the reunification process resulting in more GLBT children that remained in the system for longer periods of time. In addition, participants indicated that issues faced by GLBT youth were not adequately addressed by the services provided by the CWS. They felt that this resulted in GLBT children being passed from one worker to another undermining their ability to build trusting relationships with their caseworkers.

Members of the focus group also reported that GLBT youth experienced difficulties with foster placements as a result of issues surrounding their sexual orientation. They felt that this resulted in many GLBT children running away from their foster placements. Participants also felt that they system does not address issues that GLBT children, their families, or their foster families experience. They stated that the CWS focused on behavior issues like engaging in risky behaviors and exhibiting acting out behaviors, but did not address the underlying issues that might be contributing to the negative behaviors.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-50% of GLBT youth were brought into the system due to the conflict with their family of origin about their sexual orientation or their questioning.
-They were physically and/or sexually abused and thrown out and finally ended up in the system.
-Frequent changes of social workers can negatively impact the trust between social workers and the kids. The lack of consistency made the kids feel it was hard to build trust and come out.
-GLBT youth have negative outcomes in their placements because the sexual orientation has not been resolved with the foster parents, the social worker, or the family of origin. As a result, the youth run away or age out of the system, and most do not return to their family.
-The GLBT youth get into the system, which only pays attention to their behavior problems such as acting out and cutting school. The system does not recognize the sexual orientation issues they have. As a result, these kids go from place to place with their conflicts.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants felt that the system needed to make an effort to understand a family's culture and then to provide children and their families with services that were culturally appropriate. They also felt that workers should be trained to talk with children about their sexual orientation In addition, they felt that identifying a child's sexual orientation should be part of the assessment process at intake. They stated that this would help workers identify the issues facing each client and

Participants recommended that the system provide more cultural competency training to all workers, but especially new workers. They also suggested educating staff members about GLBT issues in general and across cultures to raise awareness about the GLBT

client population. In addition they suggested providing more training for workers on how to work with GLBT children and parents.

Members of the focus group also recommended developing a resource guide for GLBT clients that included culturally relevant services. They also suggested collaborating with community-based organizations that focus on GLBT issues to connect GLBT clients with these community resources. Participants also proposed conducting a survey about worker attitudes and perceptions about sexual orientation and GLBT foster families. In addition, they suggested creating a position within the agency to consult with workers about GLBT clients on their caseloads. Finally, participants advised that the agency inform policy makers, like the County Board of Supervisors, about the existence and needs of the GLBT client population.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Social workers should talk to the child about their sexual orientation, but the agency so far has made no effort to have this training for workers.
> -We have to develop an assessment tool in the intake; ER and the shelter. It must be a part of the assessment process. Not to label them, but to understand and recognize issues. This process should be implemented across the agency.
> -Cultural competency training should be given to staff, especially new social workers.
> -We have to educate staff since people think that GLBT youth are invisible or don't exist.
> -Education is the key point. GLBT issues should come from a cultural perspective because each ethnic group deals with GLBT issues differently.
> -Social workers have to have the skills to work with that group in that particular setting.
> -There is already a social worker position to deal directly with GLBT clients for the county, but not for the agency. We must have a similar position right at the agency. There will be more social workers that will come to that worker to consult about their cases.
> -More advocacy in politics like the Board of Supervisors. Have more input from SSA to the Board. People in local and state levels will give us more support if they are well informed of the GLBT issues. Let the people in power know that GLBT issues do exist.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants indicated that there was no code for GLBT children. They also reported that there was no training provided on coding by the agency. Finally, they stated that GLBT children were generally identified based on the perception of the worker or the foster parents

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants indicated that GLBT children had poorer outcomes in the system than other children. They indicated that workers needed to understand human sexuality and how it was viewed across cultures in order to provide appropriate and sensitive services to their clients. They also reported that the agency labels children and families in order to make the job of the worker easier. However, they felt that this practice did not serve the needs of the child and might contribute to intergenerational patterns of child maltreatment. Participants felt that MSW programs, like the program at San Jose State University, should train students and build their skills in working with GLBT clients in a variety of cultural contexts.

Members of the focus group also indicated that there were few positive role models and community supports available for GLBT children resulting in feelings of isolation. They stated that agency needed to focus not only on the child, but the needs of the entire family. They also suggested recruiting positive role models for these children from their families and communities. Participants felt that there were also few resources for GLBT parents. They felt that if these parents did not receive appropriate services, their children would suffer.

Participants indicated that overall; Social Services Agency was a friendly and inclusive environment for GLBT workers. They suggested that the agency encourage GLBT workers to become more visible to provide support to the children and their families. They also felt that GLBT workers could be valuable sources of information for workers with GLBT clients on their caseloads. Members of the focus group felt that if GLBT workers became more visible throughout the agency, that homophobia would be reduced. Finally, participants indicated that the findings from this study will help identify the issues facing GLBT children in the system and providing recommendations to the agency on how to meet the needs of this invisible, but vulnerable population.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -The agency tends to put children in a box in order to deal easier with them. This does make our jobs easier, but it is not good for the children. Since we do not serve the kids now, we then will deal with the children of the present kids in the future.
> -Lack of training to provide skills. I had only two hours of discussion about building skills to work with GLBT clients in the whole MSW program at SJSU. SJSU has to be a training ground for these cultural issues and their impact on practice.
> -There are no supports for these youth during this developmental process and they become isolated.
> -We all focus on GLBT kids, but focusing on the individual is not enough. We have to focus on the whole family. We can find role models in that family or the community.

-The GLBT parents can be causes of conflict in the family. Since there are no resources for these parents, there are no resources for their children. The children will be brought into the system which does not have an appropriate way to deal with same sex parents. If the social worker does not address the family dynamic, the situation will not be beneficial for the child.

-Overall, SSA is a very friendly and inclusive environment. I don't see any problems. I think if we spread the word to our co-workers, clients, and community members that the issues of GLBT will be better.

-Encourage staff to be visible. Be comfortable working with a wide range of people. This will make the difference. The agency has come a long way. There is still homophobia, but things are getting better.

-SJSU research is important. The researcher will find significant issues of GLBT youth in the system that the agency will need to address.

When the focus group results were presented to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Committee, the following comments were made:

-One parent is legal, the other is not. We cannot use the unrecognized parent's family for placement because they are not considered kin, they are considered strangers.

-There is homophobia across the board at the agency.

-We have concerns about how licensing supervisors work with all parents.

-Social workers need to look at the family, not just at the issue of kids who may be in the closet. Parents are terrified that they will lose custody of their kids if they come out to social workers.

-Before being able to ask for children's sexual identity, workers need sensitivity training on GLBT issues.

-There is a lack of knowledge about GLBT children at the Shelter; this goes back to training.

-Labeling a child as GLBT could be a problem, particularly for a child's safety at the Shelter.

-If a child is labeled GLBT, this makes it harder to place the child.

Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants indicated that children of color were over-represented in the Adoptions unit and were adopted by parents from different ethnic and cultural groups than that of the child. They felt that this was largely due to the shortage of ethnic homes available for placement and adoption. One participant indicated that in the general population of people of color in the county, Asians had the largest population and Latinos had the second largest population. This participant felt that although there were services available to Latinos, these services were inadequate.

Members of the focus group articulated that a large percentage of the clients in the CWS had undiagnosed disabilities, specifically learning and emotional disabilities. They estimated that 25% of all children in the system suffered from an undiagnosed disability. Participants indicated that due to the fact that many disabilities were inherited, many of the parents of children in the CWS also suffered from an undiagnosed disability. They reported that if a caseworker suspected that a child had an undiagnosed disability, the caseworker could refer the child for assessment. However, participants stated that the assessments for learning disabilities provided by the county were only available in English. This hindered the ability of non-English speaking clients to receive an assessment and thus the necessary services to meet the specific needs of the client. In addition, participants indicated that many clients became suspicious of the system once they were diagnosed with a learning disability. One participant felt that some clients were not learning disabled, but lacked life skills that manifested in similar ways to learning disabilities. Finally, one participant reported that there was a program within the CWS that worked exclusively with children with learning disabilities.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Minority children are the ones up for adoption. More than Caucasians, it seems that way. At the far end of the system the majority of those kids are minorities.
-They're adopted out to parents that aren't of their ethnic group. In Continuing there's a shortage of minority homes for kids in the system.
-In this county Asians are predominant and Hispanics are a second majority population, but they seem to fall through the cracks.
-Hispanics may be offered some services like ESL classes, but above a certain skill level services are not advocated for the Hispanic population.
-There's a huge number of people with undiagnosed disabilities, emotional and learning, across the system.
-Certain disabilities are hereditary and many parents that have a learning disability do not know that they have a problem.
-The county does not provide assessments for Spanish-speaking or Asian languages, only the English-speaking clients get a learning disability assessment.
-Quite often a client does not know they are learning disabled and then when it is caught the client is suspicious of the system.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants indicated that African American and Latino children were over-represented and that API children were under-represented in the CWS. They reported that API children came into the system, but they did not stay as long as Latino children did. They felt Latinos did not stay in the system longer as a result of language barriers, but because of an inability of the system to motivate parents. Participants also felt that the CWS did not encourage Latinos to improve their skills resulting in low skill levels among Latino parents. One participant reported that the vocational training provided by the system to Latinos was focused on low wage jobs. The participant felt that due to the large numbers

of Latino children in the CWS, the agency needed to provide more services for this population and improve the services to encourage these parents to pursue more skilled, higher paying jobs.

Members of the focus group indicated that some monolingual workers, specifically Vietnamese workers, did not carry an exclusively monolingual caseload. They indicated that sometimes 50% of a monolingual worker's cases were English-speaking. Participants reported that in the Adoptions unit, there was only one Vietnamese worker. Although there had been a slight increase in the number of Vietnamese children in Adoptions, there were not enough monolingual Vietnamese clients for the worker to carry an exclusively monolingual Vietnamese-speaking caseload. Participants also indicated that few, if any, Chinese or Japanese clients ended up in the Adoptions unit.

Finally, several participants stated that of the API clients in the CWS, Vietnamese had the largest numbers followed by Cambodians with the second highest number. However, participants reported that there were few services, resources, or interpreters available for this population. In contrast, two participants felt that the numbers of Cambodians in the system, particularly in the shelter, were small.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Asians may come into the system, but they don't stay as long as Hispanics. It's no the language barrier that keeps Hispanics in the system longer, but social service employees do not motivate them. The system keeps Hispanics at a low skill level.
> -The vocational training Hispanics receive focuses only on service training so that they cannot make a lot of money with the training they receive. I feel that the system makes an assumption about what the Hispanic population can do. The Hispanic population is the majority and the system should do more.
> -In the Vietnamese units, some monolingual workers only have about 50% of their cases that are Vietnamese-speaking.
> -There is only one Vietnamese bilingual worker in Adoptions. Recently there has been a slight increase in the Vietnamese caseload. Yet, still the Vietnamese bilingual worker does not carry a full adoption load because there is not enough work in Adoptions with Vietnamese. There have been one or two Cambodians, a couple Filipino children, but not any Chinese of Japanese children in Adoptions.
> -In the (API) population, Cambodian is the second largest group after Vietnamese. But there are not many resources and only a few services targeted towards Cambodians.
> -It's difficult to find Cambodian interpreters.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants stated that children of color were over-represented in Adoptions, particularly African Americans and Latinos. They indicated that Latinos were over-represented in the shelter population and that Cambodians were under-represented in the shelter population.

Finally, members of the focus group felt that Asian Pacific Islanders (API) had high rates of regaining the custody of their children evidenced by their small numbers in Adoptions and long-term foster care.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -If Asians are in the system they must have a high reunification success rate because at the final stages there are more Latinos and African Americans.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Participants of the focus group indicated that a large percentage of the families involved in the CWS were immigrants. They felt that the migratory patterns of these immigrant groups might have an impact on the over/under-representation of some groups in the system. They felt that due to a lack of county services for some groups, some families might migrate out of the county in search of appropriate services. Members of the focus group also reported that the over/under-representation of children of color in the CWS might be the result of a lack of bilingual workers, a lack of linguistically appropriate services for non English-speaking clients, and a lack of workers of color. In addition, they stated that there was an overall lack of education about the CWS in the community and a lack of trust of the CWS among community members. Participants felt that once a child entered the system, it was very difficult to get them back out. They also felt that children of color might not get along with white foster families resulting in the child returning to the shelter. They discussed the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and indicated that children were placed with a family as quickly as possible without regard to ethnicity. They indicated that there was a severe deficit of foster and adoptive families of color in the county.

For African American families, participants reported that little education was provided to these families about how the CWS works, how to navigate the system, and how to effectively and efficiently meet the requirements to regain the custody of their children. Members of the focus group felt that the county was not investing in educational services like this for African Americans due to their low numbers in the general population. Participants spoke about other factors that might be related to the over-representation of African American children in the system, one possibility being that African Americans regard themselves as individuals and don't like to ask for help.

For Latino families, participants indicated that reunification efforts fail resulting in more Latino children in the system for longer periods of time. They also reported that many Latino children experience difficulties when placed with white families resulting in a higher number of children returning to the shelter. Participants also indicated that there were not enough Spanish-speaking workers to help Latino families at all levels of the system. They also felt that ethnically matched workers would be more aware of the cultural nuances of their clients that could result in a more complete understanding of the needs of their clients.

For Vietnamese families, members of the focus group indicated that many of the cases, particularly those in long-term foster care, involved conflicts between adolescents and their parents. They reported that many Vietnamese parents wanted their children to maintain the culture and traditions of their heritage, but the children were becoming Americanized. Participants also suggested that perhaps some Vietnamese parents did not understand why they could not use spanking to discipline their children, an action that resulted in a referral to the CWS. In addition, participants stated that Vietnamese children learned to use the threat of a report to CPS against their parents or as a way to get out of their strict houses and into the more permissive shelter.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The migratory habits of different cultures may impact the client population and without services in Santa Clara County they may migrate out.
-Another reason for the over/under-representation of children of color is because of language barriers and there are not enough bilingual workers.
-There is a lack of education about the system and a distrust of the system.
-Once a kid is in the system it is hard to get them out.
-It also helps to see a worker that looks like you.
-They don't get along with their Caucasian foster families.
-The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act was supposed to make a specific attempt to find cultural matches, but a discrimination case outlawed the eligibility for us to so that. Now we have to look at what is best suited for the child. It's a question of how you place a child. You have to look at foster families you have available and as soon as there is a slot open you stick the kid in the slot, regardless of the ethnic breakdown. The purpose is to move kids out of the system more quickly. We can't say that we can't place a Hispanic kid because we don't have any Hispanic families.
-We have a hard time attracting minority families to be foster parents of adoptive families.
-Blacks don't have a news network on how to get out of the system.
-There's not a high enough population of African Americans in the county for the system to justify that kind of service.
-Often times Hispanic children are placed with Caucasian families and there is a clash in this arrangement and the Hispanic children go back to the shelter.
-When there are Hispanic workers they can catch the cultural nuances that are important.
-In the case of Vietnamese children, a large percentage of older Vietnamese children are coming into the system because they are having cultural conflicts with their parents who want them to maintain their cultural traditions while the children are more Americanized.
-There can be conflicts between the way the parents were brought up and the way they can bring their children up in the United States.
-Often the kids don't want to go home so they get to stay in the shelter.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus group recommended that the agency conduct more outreach in the diverse communities within the county and that the outreach be culturally appropriate for each group. They advised that outreach efforts in the African American community should begin in African American churches. They also suggested having a community liaison to provide a link between the African American community and the CWS. Focus group participants indicated that the agency should encourage workers to get involved in events, activities, and organizations in the communities that they serve.

Participants recommended that more education be conducted in the diverse communities within the community. They felt that schools and neighborhood centers should provide preventative services like educating parents about the child abuse reporting laws and accepted parenting practices in the United States. They also felt that the agency needed to educate communities about how the CWS works and the services offered through the agency. Members of the focus group also suggested recruiting more people of color to become social workers and more families of color to become foster and adoptive parents. They suggested that for these recruitment efforts the agency could sponsor a booth at local community events or air radio advertisements on stations that target specific ethnic groups.

For children with disabilities, participants advised the agency to track disabled children, to develop an individualized plan to accommodate the needs of a disabled child, and to provide the necessary tools for the assessment of learning disabilities. They also felt that disabled parents were more likely to lose their children to the system and recommended that the system identify and track these parents to ensure their needs are met so they are able to regain the custody of their children.

One member of the focus group suggested that the agency make an effort to change the child abuse reporting laws to be less rigid. He/she proposed decriminalizing certain disciplinary methods used by parents such as spanking or sending a child to bed without dinner or dessert. Finally, participants indicated that some of the policies at the shelter were a "disgrace" like holding parents accountable for their child's actions if the child runs away from the shelter.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Different minorities have different communities so the outreach needs to fit the community.
> -Outreach for Black families should start in the churches.
> -We need a liaison between the Black community and the system.
> -There is a problem with social workers not getting involved in the communities they work with or their own ethnic communities. We need to demystify the role of social workers as government agents.

-Efforts should start in the school system because teachers and school employees are mandated reporters and parents should have information on what that means to them.

-Immigrant groups are over-represented in their use of corporal punishment and the county needs to educate new immigrants on what our laws are before they get into trouble.

-If SSA could get on the radio stations that particular ethnic communities listen to they could advertise and educate people about the various systems.

-There needs to be a lot done for people with disabilities. Like simply tracking people with disabilities, getting the assessment tools that we so desperately needs, and an individualized plan needs to be developed to accommodate their needs.

-All disabilities need to be addressed more in the county not just learning disabled clients like blindness, deafness, or people with emotional disabilities.

-A disabled person not being tracked properly might be more likely to lose their child in the CWS because they did not have the appropriate services or accommodations earlier.

-Another thing that requires legislative change is the way we look at corporal punishment. In the state legislation we need to look at corporal punishment again. If you spank does that mean you are a criminal? And other legal definitions of corporal punishment need to be addressed like going to bed without dinner or dessert.

-I think the shelter is a disgrace. To tell a 12-year-old kid "if you don't want to stay here then you can leave" is almost criminal. The kids learn deviant behaviors from other kids and then the problem gets much bigger.

-If a child in the shelter chooses to leave the shelter and then goes out and vandalizes, the parents are called to pay for it. It's a catch-22 for the parents.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants reported that there were codes for ethnicity and language and that these were recorded at the shelter. They indicated that there was not a formal coding structure or procedure for recording or tracking children with a disability in the CWS, even for disabilities like blindness and deafness. They stated that a footnote or comment might be included in the case notes or the comments section, but that no formal codes existed to record or track these children. One participant reported that there was no data available in his/her department on which children were learning disabled. Members of the focus group reported that there was a category for children with special needs, but it was focused on emotional and behavioral problems, not learning disabilities. Participants also indicated that records were kept on clients that were referred to state rehab. Finally, one participant felt that many clients in the CWS had undiagnosed disabilities, but due to the lack of resources for assessment, these children would not have anything in their case files to indicate a need for specialized services.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-(In response to a question from the moderator about the existence of a specific code for disabilities) No, that might be in their case notes, but there's no code.
-You yourself might make a little note in your case file. I don't recall any codes for learning disabilities.
-There are those that might be obvious, like if you have a child that is blind, that would be something that they would put up front.
-My department does not have data on who is learning disabled.
-We have a category of special needs. That category focuses on emotional or behavioral problems.
-There's a psychiatric evaluation category, but not one for learning disabilities.
-Even if a disability is mentioned in the narrative of a case file, it doesn't effect people who are undiagnosed and need to be assessed but that cannot be assessed because of a lack of services in the system.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Members of the focus group asked who would be participating in other focus groups and when the results of the study would be made available to participants. They suggested contacting the Asian Pacific Youth Conference to recruit youth to participate in future focus groups.

When the focus group results were presented to the Resource and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, the following comments were made:

-Disability is not coded.
-Disabled children and families are an invisible minority group.
-I am concerned that we need to have an emphasis on disabilities, those of both the children and the families; what is the disability that each one has?
-If there is a disabled parent, physically or mentally, children are taken out quickly. It's shoot and ask questions later.
-The overall report implies that we have not searched for tests for non-English speaking clients. There are no tests in other languages. We have made great efforts to find tests in other languages; they do not exist.

Family Resource Centers

Asian Pacific Family Resource Center

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants felt that there were many groups of children in the system. They indicated that groups that were under-represented in the system were also under-served by the CWS. They felt that SSA focused too much on groups that were over-represented in the system and felt that under-represented groups could begin to enter the system in larger numbers if services were not provided to meet their needs. They stated that although many groups were under-represented in the system, participants indicated that these under-represented groups still had significant needs.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -SSA focused on the numbers, but there are many groups that will never make the numbers, but they have needs that need to be met even if their numbers are not high.
> -Under-represented groups get very under-served and then we have a bigger problem later on.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants felt that Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) were under-represented in the system, but within this under-represented group participants indicated that Vietnamese and Filipino families had the highest numbers of children in the system. They also indicated that Asian Indians, Chinese, Fijians, Japanese, Koreans, Laotians, Hmong, and Samoans were all among this under-represented group. They stated that more Samoans entered the system this year than in the previous year. Finally, participants stated that Latinos were over-represented in the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Asian groups are under-represented, but Vietnamese and Filipinos have higher numbers in the system for this under-represented group.
> -Asian Indians, Fijians, Laotians, Hmong, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are severely under-represented.
> -More Samoans are coming into the system this year than last year. Samoans are under-represented as a whole.
> -Over-representation of Latinos.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Members of the focus group indicated that Asian/Pacific Islander (API) families were referred to the system, but their cases were closed due to language barriers between social workers and families. They felt that these clients continued to suffer because the agency did not have workers that spoke the family's language and, therefore, could not substantiate the abuse allegations.
The following are representative comments from respondents:

-API clients do get referred, but their cases are closed due to lack of workers to investigate allegations. The clients continue to suffer.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Regarding the under-representation of API clients in the system, participants felt that the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate workers contributed significantly to this under-representation. They stated that language barriers prevented ER and DI workers from conducting thorough investigations that resulted in the premature closure of cases. In addition to a lack of API workers in the ER and DI units, participants felt that there was an overall lack of API workers throughout the system, including Administration and Management. The added that API workers were over-whelmed and over-worked due to their relatively low numbers in the system. In addition, participants felt that there was little support or acknowledgement of workers in the system by Management. They also felt that there was a severe lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services for API clients, that workers lacked sensitivity, that families had to wait on waiting lists to receive needed services, and that the timelines imposed on workers and families by the system were too short.

Members of the focus group felt that the emphasis of the CWS was on closing cases, not on resolving the issues faced by families in the system. They also felt that the system only focused on the groups with the largest numbers of children in the system and ignored the smaller groups like the API. They stated that under-represented groups had needs, but that they were under-served due to their low numbers in the system.

Participants indicated that many API clients were family-oriented and did not report abuse or neglect and that this contributed to the under-representation of API children in the system. They also stated that many families did not trust the system and did not want to inflict shame on their family by becoming involved in the system. Participants indicated that API children entered the system as a result of domestic violence, corporal punishment, and gang problems among API children. They also stated that new immigrants had difficulty adjusting to life in the United States and that many families did not have any family support. They stated that many of the parents did not understand why they were involved in the system or how the system worked.

Participants stated that the CWS did not provide any prevention services and that there was no collaboration between SSA and other agencies working with families. Participants felt that this contributed to the over/under-representation of specific groups of children in

the system. Finally, participants stated that Latinos were over-represented in the system due to poverty issues and they felt that the CWS was not capable of solving the poverty issues faced by many families in the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Lack of ethnic specific workers creates an inability on the part of the agency to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect because the investigating worker cannot speak the language so the case is closed.
-Language barriers.
-Lack of professional Asian workers available to serve clients within the system.
-Lack of Asian workers to handle Family Maintenance cases at the APFRC.
-Lack of Asian workers at APFRC to handle cases and provide parenting and domestic violence classes.
-Lack API in management positions.
-Asian workers are over-whelmed and over-worked.
-Little support for workers in the system.
-Management does not acknowledge our work.
-No effective services provided for the Korean community.
-Lack of cultural sensitivity among workers.
-Too many families are on waiting lists for services.
-Time limits for investigating allegations are too short.
-County focuses on closing cases, not solving the problems for the families.
-System focuses on groups with larger numbers in the system and ignores smaller groups.
-Under-represented groups are under-served because their numbers are low.
-Asians are family-oriented and like to handle problems within the family so they do not report.
-Asians do not trust the system.
-Shame attached to being associated with the system prevents the reporting of abuse and neglect in Asian communities.
-Domestic violence.
-Immigrants are not aware of the laws in this country.
-Gang problems among Asian Indian children.
-New immigrants find it difficult to assimilate into the American culture.
-Clients don't understand what is happening when they enter the system even if there is a translator present.
-Asian Indians lack family support to help with family issues.
-No prevention services.
-No collaboration or communication between agencies to help families.
-Latinos are over-represented because of poverty issues not abuse.
-Our system is not capable of solving problems of poverty.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus group suggested that SSA recruit, hire, and retain more API workers. They suggested that the agency conduct outreach into under-represented communities to recruit workers. They also suggested increasing the salaries of workers. Participants felt that the agency should not base decisions about hiring ethnic specific workers on the numbers of ethnic children in the system. They felt that hiring decisions should be based on the needs of specific ethnic communities. They also suggested conducting outreach and education in API communities to inform community members about the services offered by the agency and to improve the image of the agency in those communities. In addition, participants felt that the agency needed to educate service providers about the services offered at Family Resource Centers (FRC), provide FRC with the resources they need to serve their clients, collaborate with other agencies that work with families, and offer services through the schools.

Participants stated that when working with Asian clients, workers should not only focus on the needs of the child, but also the needs of the family. They also suggested communicating with clients on a regular basis about the status of their case and what they needed to do to regain the custody of their children. In addition, participants recommended that workers advocate for their clients, that the system provide prevention services, and that the agency provide equitable services for all clients. They also suggested that the agency assign one worker to a case and have that worker follow the case from entry to exit, providing a continuity of care for families. Finally, participants recommended that Management invite Line staff to participate in their meetings and that Management attend meeting with Line staff.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Hire workers from under-represented groups even if the number of cases in the system is low because the statistics are not accurate and many cases are not opened because there is not a worker that speaks that language.
> -Don't base hiring on the statistics of children in the system, base it on the real needs of the community because these communities have tremendous needs, but they have low numbers in the system and are not getting the services they need.
> -Retain workers.
> -Outreach into Asian communities to recruit workers, especially smaller groups to recruit workers from those communities.
> -Salaries need to be competitive.
> -Outreach to community to educate them about services.
> -Improve the image of agency in the community.
> -Educate service providers in other agencies about our services.
> -The County needs to assess the needs of the FRC and provide resources to meet those needs so that the needs of their clients can be met.
> -Collaborate with other agencies that work with families.
> -Get services in the schools.
> -When working with Asian clients don't focus only on the children, but also on the family.
> -Communicate with the clients and explain to them what is happening and what

they need to do to get out.
-Advocate for clients.
-Prevention services are a priority.
-Equity in services, especially for under-represented groups.
-Consider re-instating program like what they have in Gilroy where one worker carries a case from beginning to end providing continuity of care.
-Invite line staff to participate in management meetings.
-Management should attend our meetings.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants reported that workers in the CAN Center and the ER unit were responsible for recording a child's ethnicity. They reported that workers at the APFRC did not record ethnicity.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Members of the focus group felt that prevention was one of the most important issues for children and families in Santa Clara County. They also felt that there was a lack of workers at APFRC to handle the high volume of cases. They indicated that many cases required two workers; one to handle the case management and one to provide the services. In addition, participants felt that SSA blamed workers when work was not completed, but participants felt that the caseloads were so high that it was difficult to complete the work in a timely manner. Finally, participants indicated that many of the referrals that the APFRC received were very severe and required more time to resolve. They stated that the timelines imposed by the system did not allow sufficient time to resolve many of the issues faced by families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Prevention.
-Takes two workers to handle one case because of lack of workers that speak the language.
-County blames workers if the work doesn't get done, but we are so over-worked and under-staffed that it is not possible to do it all.
-Referrals we get at APFRC are very severe and difficult to solve especially with few resources and short timelines.

Nuestra Casa Family Resource Center

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants indicated that Latino children were over-represented in the system. They stated that Latino children accounted for 50% of the child welfare population, but accounted for only 30% of the general population of Santa Clara County. They felt that there were not enough bi-lingual/bi-cultural workers in the agency to serve the needs of the large Latino population in the CWS. In addition, they indicated that the caseloads were too high for all workers in the system. Finally, participants felt that the services administered to families by the system were inconsistent and that there was a lack of services for Latino clients.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Fifty percent of the population in the CWS are Latino, but Latinos are only 30% in the general population.
> -For the number of Latino children in the department they don't have enough workers to respond to the community needs.
> -Lack of social workers increase the caseloads. Additional staff is needed in order to decrease caseloads.
> -The system is inconsistent in how they do interventions with families.
> -Lack of services for Latino clients.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Members of the focus group felt that African Americans and Latinos were over-represented in the system, while Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) and Caucasians were under-represented in the system. They indicated that African Americans were grossly over-represented in the system due to their relatively small numbers in the general population, but their very high numbers in the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Latino population is over-represented.
> -African Americans are over-represented.
> -Asian population is under-represented.
> -There aren't that many whites.
> -Increase in numbers of African Americans from 7% in the general population to 50% in the CWS.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants stated that Latino children were over-represented at the shelter, as well as in long-term foster care. They stated that API were under-represented, but did not comment on particular parts of the system where they were under-represented.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Over-representation of Latinos at the shelter.
-Over-representation of Latinos in long-term foster care.
-Asians are under-represented in the system.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Participants indicated that API children were under-represented in the system due to under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in Asian communities. They felt that Asian communities dealt with child abuse and neglect in their own way and did not involve people or agencies from outside their communities. They reported that African American children were over-represented in the system due to economic reasons. They felt that poverty was the main issue facing African American families and that it was poverty, not ethnicity that brought African American children into the CWS.

Regarding the over-representation of Latino children in the system, members of the focus group indicated that many Latino parents were not educated about the child abuse laws in the United States. They indicated that in their countries of origin, many of these families would be viewed as excellent parents. However, due to the child abuse laws in the United States, these families entered the CWS for doing things that were viewed as acceptable in their countries. Many parents did not understand why they are punished for being good parents. Participants also indicated that domestic violence and poverty were factors significantly related to the over-representation of Latino children in the system. They stated that many families had difficulty securing safe and adequate housing. They reported that due to the economic difficulties of many families, they were forced to live in overcrowded conditions with several families in one residence. Participants felt that these overcrowded living conditions put children and families at-risk for child abuse. They also indicated that many parents were forced to work multiple jobs and were unable to provide adequate supervision for their children.

Members of the focus group spoke extensively about the lack of cultural competency among workers at the agency. They felt that there was a lack of bi-cultural/bi-lingual workers, that there were language barriers between workers and their clients, and that there was a lack of sensitivity among workers toward their clients. Participants felt that workers were judgmental and that there was a lack of empathy among workers for their clients. They indicated that the cultural and class differences between workers and their clients contributed to this lack of sensitivity and empathy and stated that being bi-lingual did not necessarily indicate that workers were culturally competent. They felt that the middle-class values of the system and institutional racism within the system also contributed to the over-representation of Latino children in the CWS. In addition, participants reported that workers became de-sensitized from working in the system. They indicated that the agency did not support the workers, did not nurture the workers, and over-loaded workers with too many cases.

Participants also spoke extensively about the lack of education among Latino families about the services that were available to them. They indicated that the high illiteracy rate

among Latinos prevented them from gathering information about available services. They also reported that there was a lack of services for Latino clients, that services required by the system were not available, and that intervention efforts were fragmented. They felt that there was also a lack of prevention services to help children stay out of the system. In addition, participants reported that prevention was difficult to do with Latino families due to their help-seeking behaviors. They indicated that Latinos would typically seek help from friends and family, not outside agencies, limiting the ability of outside agencies to provide prevention services to Latino families.

Finally, members of the focus group felt that the timelines imposed by the system on families were too short, that there was a lack of money available for services, that undocumented families were fearful of seeking services, that there was a lack of Latino foster homes available to place children, and that there were not enough adoptive parents of color available to adopt children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Asians are under-represented because they do not report abuse and neglect. The community takes care of the families.
-African Americans are over-represented, but it is because of economics, not ethnicity.
-Ignorance of parents about the laws of this country.
-Families that get caught in the system get labeled. Not knowing the American culture, they think they are being good parents according to the norms in their country of origin. But here they are labeled as bad parents.
-Domestic violence.
-Economics. Financial factors like housing difficulties.
-Economic reality forces families to live together.
-Overcrowded housing arrangements.
-Parents are forced to work multiple jobs.
-Mother as primary caregiver is forced to stay home and starve or to work and leave her kids on their own.
-Lack of cultural competency among workers.
-Lack of bi-cultural/bi-lingual staff.
-Language barriers between workers and clients.
-Lack of sensitivity among workers that are working with families.
-Workers are judgmental of families.
-Worker lack empathy for families, especially if they have never experienced what it is like to be poor.
-Cultural differences between workers and families in the system.
-Bi-lingualism does not mean being culturally competent.
-Middle-class values of workers.
-Institutional racism.
-System de-sensitized workers and they become part of the problem instead of part of the solution.
-Lack of support and nurturing of workers by the agency. Heavy caseloads and

extreme demands of the system.
-Families are unaware of services.
-Illiteracy among Latinos prevents them from seeking support services.
-Lack of services for Latino clients.
-Lack of services for families that are required by the system to regain custody of their children.
-Intervention efforts need to be holistic.
-Lack of prevention services.
-Difficult to do prevention with Latino families because they don't necessarily seek help from people outside of their family.
-Timelines are too short.
-Lack of money for services.
-Undocumented families are fearful to seek help.
-Lack of foster homes for Latinos.
-Under-representation of adoptive parents of color.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Regarding ways that the system could respond to the over/under-representation of specific groups of children in the system, participants spoke extensively about educating parents about the laws regarding child abuse and neglect in the United States. They also suggested educating families about the services available to them in the community and felt that utilizing the media would be an effective means of reaching Latino families. In addition, they suggested providing more prevention services and improving existing services so that they are more equitable for all cultural/ethnic groups served by the agency. They felt that the services provided should focus on helping parents learn the skills they need to be responsible for their own families.

Participants also felt that social workers needed more cultural competency training, needed to be more sensitive toward their clients, and needed to emphasize the strengths of their clients. They also suggested that the agency recruit more bi-cultural workers and nurture their workers. In addition, they felt the agency needed to collaborate with other agencies that work with families, educate mandated reporters on appropriate and inappropriate referrals, empower the Latino community, and provide more funding for needed services. Finally, one participant suggested that the agency establish services at local hospitals that target parents that have just given birth. He/she felt that information and resources should be provided by the agency to all parents before they leave the hospital.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Provide education for parents about the laws in this country.
-Educate families about the services available to them in the community.
-Use the media to educate parents about the laws in this country.
-More prevention services and start early.

> -Equality in services for all populations in the system.
> -Help parents learn the skills they need to be responsible for their own families.
> -Train social workers to be culturally competent.
> -Workers need sensitivity.
> -Emphasize the strengths of the parents.
> -Hire more bi-cultural staff.
> -Nurture social workers.
> -Collaborate with other agencies that work with families.
> -Educate mandated reporters about appropriate and inappropriate referrals.
> -Empower the Latino community to help themselves.
> -Have services at hospitals that educate parents that have just given birth to a new child and give them information and resources before they leave the hospital.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants reported that no coding was done at Nuestra Casa.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt that SSA needed to collaborate with other agencies to help families throughout the county.

Ujirani Family Resource Center

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Members of the focus group reported that people of color were over-represented in the CWS and felt that this was "unfair." They reported that there was a lack of ethnic specific workers to meet the needs of the clients of color in the system. They felt that when clients and workers were not ethnically matched, the quality of services was not as high due to the lack of cultural understanding between workers and their clients.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Unfair because minorities are over-represented in the system.
> -Lack of ethnic specific staff.
> -Lack of understanding of the many cultures.
> When there is not an ethnic match between client and worker the services are not the same as when it's the same culture.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants stated that children of color were over-represented in the system, specifically African American and Latino children. They reported that Asian/Pacific Islander (API) children, bi-racial children, GLBT children, and children with disabilities were under-represented in the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Over-representation of children of color.
> -Over-representation of African American children and Latino children.
> -Under-representation of bi-racial kids.
> -Asians are under-represented, GLBT clients are under-represented, and disabled clients are under-represented.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants indicated that African American and Latino children were over-represented at the shelter, while Caucasians were under-represented at the shelter. They also indicated that African American and Latino children were over-reported to the system and were over-represented in the Continuing unit. In addition, participants stated that African American children lingered in the system longer than other children did and felt that they were over-represented at all levels within the system. Finally, participants stated that Latino and Caucasian children were over-represented in the Adoption unit.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Over-representation of African American and Latino children at the shelter.
> -Under-representation of Caucasians at the shelter.
> -African Americans and Latinos are over-reported.
> -In Continuing, African Americans and Latinos are over-represented.
> -African Americans linger in the system longer and are over-represented throughout the system.
> -Over-representation of Latinos and Caucasians in Adoptions.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Regarding factors related to the over-representation of African American children in the system, participants indicated that poverty, substance-abuse issues, and lack of adequate services for African American clients contributed to this over-representation. They felt that many African American families were inappropriately referred to the system for neglect due to poverty. They stated that the law does not clearly define what neglect is and that many middle-class workers were making inappropriate judgments about poor families. They also stated that the District Attorneys (DA) were middle-class Caucasians and felt that the DAs were inappropriately labeling poor families as neglectful families. Members of the focus group also spoke extensively about the lack ethnic specific workers

and the lack of culturally competent workers in the system. They felt that both of these issues contributed to the over-representation of African American children in the system.

Participants also spoke extensively about substance abuse and its impact on the over-representation of African Americans in the system. They indicated that 80-90% of their cases involved substance abuse issues. They felt that the system did not allow enough time for these clients to get clean and achieve stability before their kids were taken away. They also felt that the system did not acknowledge relapse as a part of recovery and did not provide adequate support services to help parents stay clean and sober. In addition, they indicated that there was a lack of substance abuse treatment programs for parents. They also indicated that there was an intergenerational problem with dependency among African Americans due to lack of appropriate services. They also felt that teaching parenting classes during the detoxification process was inappropriate.

Participants also felt that African Americans, as a community, lacked power due to their low numbers in the legislature and other policy-making institutions. They felt that there was little advocacy for their community as a result of so few African Americans in positions of power. They also indicated that there was a lack African American Administrators and Managers in the CWS to advocate for African American families.

Members of the focus group also felt that there was a lack African American families available to adopt children, that there was bias among mandated reporters, that African Americans "were under the shame of the majority culture," and that social workers at Technology were not referring African American clients to Ujirani for services. In addition, participants felt that CWS was a policing agency, not a helping agency and they felt that social work education programs did not adequately prepare students to be culturally competent workers.

Regarding the over-representation of Latino children in the system, participants felt they were over-represented due to their large numbers in the general population. they also indicated that Latino families lived in overcrowded conditions putting them more at-risk of becoming involved with the system. Participants felt that under-reporting of abuse and neglect in Asian/Pacific Islander (API) communities contributed significantly to the under-representation of API children in the system. They also indicated that there was a lack of API staff to investigate abuse and neglect reports resulting in fewer API cases being opened. Finally, participants indicated that there was a lack of services for bi-racial children, GLBT children, and children with disabilities.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Poverty.
> -Services are inadequate for African American families.
> -Lack of services for African American men.
> -Lack of understanding of families that are poor. There is a bias against the poor.
> -Laws about neglect do not clearly define what neglect is and it's a judgment call by the worker.

-DAs are white, middle-class.
-DAs view poverty as neglect.
-Lack of workers of color.
-Lack of cultural competency among workers.
-80-90% of our clients have drug issues, but the system doesn't allow enough time to resolve these problems.
-Relapse is not addressed by the system.
-Lack of support by the system for staying clean and sober.
-Lack of drug treatment programs.
-Intergenerational problems with dependency among African Americans due to lack of services, not genetics.
-Don't teach parenting classes during detox.
-Lack of African Americans in the legislature that make the laws.
-Lack of African American Administrators and Managers who make decisions about the system.
-Lack of African American adoptive families.
-We are under the shame of the majority culture.
-Bias among mandated reporters.
-African American families are not being referred to Ujirani.
-The systm is a policing agency, not a helping agency.
-Education system does not educate students about cultural competency adequately.
-Latinos are over-represented because they have larger numbers in the general population.
-Over-crowded housing for Latinos.
-Asians are under-represented because of under-reporting.
-Lack of Asian staff to investigate reports so the cases are not opened.
-Lack of services for bi-racial, GLBT, and disabled children.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Participants recommended that the CWS provide more prevention and diversion services to help families stay out of the system. They suggested establishing programs for new immigrants to help them adjust to living in the United States and prevent them from becoming involved with the system. They spoke about establishing support programs to help parents stay clean and sober and establishing programs that would provide services to families on a long-term basis, like 5 years. Participants also felt strongly that parents be given the opportunity to practice the skills they learn in parenting classes with their children. They felt that parents should have visits with their children to practice the new parenting skills prior to termination of the parenting class.

Participants also suggested that workers receive more cultural competency training, that workers receive adequate supervision from supervisors, that workers be evaluated on their performance, and that social workers be rewarded for good performance. They also suggested that the system be more flexible, that family conferencing by utilize for every

family, and that DI workers meet weekly as a group to discuss their cases and receive group feedback about their cases. In addition, participants suggested that workers from Technology refer clients to Ujirani, that the agency publicize the services offered by Ujirani, and that the system educate foster parents about how to care for the hair of African American children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Prevention and diversion services.
-Establish programs for new immigrants that help them adjust.
-Establish a maintenance program to help parents stay clean and sober.
-Establish a long-term program that follows a client for 5 years and provides them with the services they need.
-With parenting classes, five parents a chance to practice the skills they have learned and help them perfect those skills with their children instead of teaching them the skills and throwing them beck into the situation that got them in the system before.
-More cultural competency training for workers.
-Decisions about cases should be done in a group setting.
-Supervise workers regularly and adequately.
-Workers need to be evaluated on their performance.
-Reward good social workers.
-System needs to be more flexible.
-Utilize family conferencing for every family.
-In DI, should have a weekly meeting where workers discuss their cases and the group helps them decide what is best for the client.
-Refer clients to Ujirani.
-Publicize Ujirani and the services we offer.
-Train foster families how to care for the hair of African American children.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Regarding coding ethnicity, participants stated that they asked clients to self-identify their ethnicity. They stated that there was no code for bi-racial children and that most were coded one ethnicity of the other. They reported that there was no training provided by the system on coding a child's ethnicity.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Self-report by the client.
-No code for bi-racial kids.
-Bi-racial kids are labeled one race or the other, but not both.
-No training provided on coding.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt that there was a lack of supervision and structured activity for children living at the shelter. They reported witnessing roughhousing and inappropriate behavior among older children at the shelter. They also felt that African American children were not groomed properly when they were living at the shelter. Participants also felt that workers in the system were over-worked. Finally, they stated that culture included multiple aspects of a person's life, not just their ethnicity.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

    -Lack of supervision and structured activities for children at the shelter.
    -I saw roughhousing while I was at the shelter.
    -African American children were not properly groomed at the shelter.
    -Workers are over-worked.
    -Culture is everything, not just ethnicity.

South County Staff

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Members of the focus groups indicated that children of color were over-reported to the CWS and over-represented throughout the system. They stated that mandated reporters inappropriately reported poor children that were not abused or neglected to CPS. They felt that poverty was an issue that many families in the system faced, but that the agency did not address issues of poverty with families. They also felt that once a child was in the system, it was very difficult to get out of the system. In addition, participants felt that there were not enough workers of color to meet the demands of clients from diverse backgrounds. They also felt that many immigrants were involved in the system simply because they were unaware of the child abuse laws in the United States. Participants from one focus group indicated that it was difficult to determine if any specific groups of children were over/under-represented due to the unique demographics of the community South County Family Resource Center served.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

    -Minorities are over-reported and over-represented in the system.
    -Referral sources from the schools tend to report situations where there is poverty, perhaps more than child abuse/neglect present.
    -Issues of poverty are difficult and not addressed well by the child welfare system.
    -Once in the system, it is hard to get out.
    -Workers of color are still under-represented in relationship to client's ethnicity.
    -The population of Gilroy, and that of South County, is higher in Latino/a than that of the rest of the county. It is difficult to know what groups are over-

represented in the system in South County as compared to the general population.

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants reported that Latinos were over-represented in the system and that African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders (API), and Caucasians were under-represented in South County. They reported that the poor were over-represented in the system, while the affluent were under-represented in the system. They also indicated that clients with multiple problems were over-represented in the system. Finally, one focus group stated that the demographics of South County differed from other parts of the county. They stated that due to the fact that workers at South County were frequently assigned clients from the same ethnic background, it was difficult to determine an over/under-representation of any specific group within the system.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Latinos are definitely over-represented and whites are under-represented.
> -Pacific Islanders are under-represented.
> -There are few numbers of Asian Americans and African Americans in the south county area.
> -American Indian and Asian clients are almost non-existent in South County.
> -The poor are over-represented.
> -The upper classes are under-represented.
> -Clients with additional problems are over-represented.
> -South County demographics are different than that of San Jose. It is difficult to know what groups are over/under-represented because workers are often assigned clients that are of the same ethnic background as the worker.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Participants from one focus group felt that there were groups of children that were over-reported by mandated reporters and were over-represented at the front end of the system, but they did not specify which groups of children were over-reported and over-represented in the system. Participants from both focus groups felt that children from substance-abusing families and families with domestic violence issues experienced longer stays in the system than other children. They also felt that once a child entered the system, it was very difficult for them to exit the system. In addition, participants felt that the courts held families to a higher standard of care once they were in the system than before they were involved with the system. They also indicated that children were referred for by-pass much more quickly than in the past.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -At intake with referrals.
> -Referrals for domestic violence and substance abuse tend to stay longer in the

system as cases and there tend to be many referrals of this nature in the South County area.

-Timelines are also not in sync for families experiencing domestic violence. Research shows that women, on average need to leave their abuser seven times before this becomes permanent.

-Once in the system with court services and mandated, it appears much more difficult to exit the system.

-Tendency to hold clients to a higher standard in order for the child to be returned.

-Also seems to be more apparent with regard to by-pass. Kids are place for adoption much more rapidly than in the past.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus groups indicated that substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, lack of affordable housing, lack of economic resources for the poor, and low educational attainment were all factors that might be related to the over/under-representation of specific groups of children in the CWS. They felt that the timelines imposed by the system on families were unrealistic, specifically for parents dealing with issues of substance abuse and domestic violence. They stated that these issues required longer periods of time to resolve, but that the system did not allow a reasonable amount of time to resolve such complicated issues. They also felt that substance-abusing parents that participated in Family Reunification efforts were not likely to succeed due to the length of time these parents needed to achieve stability in their lives. They also felt that the system did not acknowledge relapse as a part of recovery and indicated that there was a lack of quality substance abuse treatment services in the South County.

In addition, participants reported that lack of access to transportation was an issue for many South County parents. They stated that all court hearings were held in San Jose and that it was difficult for many South County parents to get to San Jose. Participants felt that parents that were unable to attend court hearings due to transportation difficulties might be viewed by the court as uninterested in their children. They reported that bus tickets were available, but that the bus was an inefficient and time-consuming way for parents to get to San Jose. Participants also reported that the CWS was overwhelming for parents, specifically monolingual parents. Finally, members of the focus groups stated that there was no established system of checks and balances within the CWS to prevent an over/under-representation of any specific groups of children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Substance abuse.
-Domestic violence.
-Poverty.
-Lack of safe and affordable housing.
-The biggest issues related to poverty is that of housing. Many families live in substandard housing in the South County are and cannot afford anything better.

Families with higher incomes are moving into the area and are starting to snatch up the available housing, leaving little for those with limited incomes.
-Lack of economic resources for the poor.
-Lower educational attainment.
-Regulations are totally out-of-sync with the needs of families abusing substances. Six months is simply not long enough to treat these families.
-By-pass of FR tends to be a set-up for families with substance abuse (issues) because the timing is off. There is too little time to achieve stability with the recovery process. Relapse is well known to be part of recovery.
-Lack of drug treatment programs in the South County area.
-Transportation is also an issue in South County. All court hearing are held in San Jose creating barriers for clients to attend the hearings.
-Families that have difficulty with transportation and do not appear in court may be seen as not interested in their children.
-Bus tickets are available, but the bus system is very slow in Gilroy.
-The system totally overwhelms the families, especially monolingual clients.
-Lack of checks and balances creating imbalances in the system.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus groups reported that voluntary services were offered to many families in South County. They felt that these services helped families retain custody of their children and prevented the entry of many children into the system. They felt that more prevention services were needed and suggested that county programs like School-Linked Services be expanded. In addition, participants felt that more services were needed for victims of sexual abuse, family mediation services, in-home services to reinforce skills learned in parenting education classes, health care services for the undocumented, and detoxification services. Participants also felt that outreach and education in the community were essential. They suggested targeting clergy for support and schools for information about appropriate and inappropriate referrals. They also suggested using Public Service Announcements to raise community awareness about social problems faced by the South County community and the services provided at the Family Resource Center.

Participants spoke extensively about housing issues faced by South County residents. They felt that more resources needed to be developed for housing and targeted to low-income clients. They also stated that there was a lack of safe housing for victims of domestic violence, housing for homeless families, and housing for families with substance abuse issues. They suggested creating more programs like Community Solutions' Transitional Housing Program and that the agency should partner with the private sector to create new substance abuse treatment programs. They also recommended that workers receive training about addiction, that workers be required to visit children in the shelter, and that communication between workers and attorneys be expanded. They added that lineworkers be involved in the planning of needed services,

that foster parent involvement with biological parents be boosted to improve parenting skills among biological parents, and that the system be more sensitive toward women.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-South County tends to offer and provide more voluntary services for clients than in the main office which tend to have a higher success rate.

-More focus on prevention, not just intervention; especially community education. Wrap-around services need to be delivered at an earlier point before the child is out-of-control.

-Support for School-Linked Services which are often less threatening that CPS.

-Local treatment services for sexual abuse cases.

-Need for true family mediation services to help families resolve conflicts that interfere with functioning.

-More in-home services for application of new parenting skills.

-Basic needs services like health care for the undocumented.

-Provision of effective detoxification services.

-Educating the community about the system.

-Outreach to clergy.

-Outreach to private schools, rural schools, to educate them about reporting.

-Public Service Announcements to raise awareness of general public regarding social problems in the community.

-More media promotion of the community services available at Family Resource Centers.

-More low-income housing and supports around housing issues. More support for the family homeless shelter that has been proposed for South County. Housing vouchers are only effective for a very short period of time and do not pay local market rents.

-Real need for housing resources for families in South County. It's so very expensive and the shelter are often full. The Family Unification Program requires one year of sobriety so many families are not eligible.

-Creating safe housing for victims of domestic violence.

-More programs like Community Solutions' Transitional Housing Program.

-Explore corporate funding for substance abuse treatment. Public-private partnerships.

-Improved training for staff around the disease process in addiction. many staff still seem to have a real belief that if they loved their kids they would stop using.

-Require social workers to visit children while in the shelter to see the trauma caused.

-More open dialogue between attorneys and social workers.

-Involving the Lineworkers more in the planning process for needed services.

-More involvement of foster parents as part of the team working with cases. A "Family to Family" concept.

-More sensitivity to women.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Participants indicated that workers in the Screening unit coded the ethnicity of a child. They also indicated that was not a code for bi-racial children. They also indicated that if it was discovered that a child had American Indian heritage, that information would be entered into the CWS/CMS system. Participants from one focus group indicated that no training was provided on how to code a child's ethnicity.

The following are representative comment from respondents:

> -It is primarily the screeners who identify the ethnic background of clients.
> -No way to reflect clients with bi-racial background.
> -If the court workers determine there is Indian heritage this can be reflected in the CMS/CWS system.
> -No training on coding ethnicity.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants from one focus group reported that frequent visits from a social worker might make a child feel like they do not fit in. Participants from the other focus group suggested that more support be provided for "kin-gap" services.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Frequent social worker visits may tend to make that child stand out when they are trying to fit in.
> -More support for "kin-gap" services.

Lineworkers

1. What is your general perspective on the representation of different ethnic/cultural groups in the County's Child Welfare System?

Participants reported that within the CWS, many different groups of people were represented. However, they felt that there was an over-representation of children of color in the system, specifically African Americans and Latinos. They also felt that there were currently many immigrant families in the system and that there were more poor African American and Latino families than in previous years. They indicated that in the past, there were more African American and Latino families from the middle-class, but indicated that currently most of the middle-class clients were Caucasian. They also felt that middle-class Caucasian families were treated more favorably than other families in the system. Participants reported that the number of Vietnamese families with children in the system had been steadily increasing over the past several years. Participants indicated that in the Asian units, there were not enough staff to handle the increased number of Asian referrals and many of the workers did not speak the same language as the client. One participant indicated that he/she did not know if there was an over/under-representation of any group in the CWS. In addition, members of the focus group indicated that the issues families had to overcome to regain the custody of their children were diverse and numerous. They felt that the legal mandates used by police to determine if a child should be brought into the system were biased against families of color. They also felt that there were not enough workers of color in the agency to work with families of color. Finally, participants indicated that the current statistics on the numbers of children of color in the system were inaccurate due to the misidentification of children's ethnicity.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Different groups are all represented in the CWS.
> -There is an over-representation of people of color in the CWS, specifically African Americans and Latinos.
> -Another area is the immigrant population. They are very involved in our system.
> -There is also class stratification. There used to be more middle-class clients that were mostly white, African American, and Latino. Now the African American and Latino clients tend to be in the lower class while whites are still coming from the middle class.
> -The populations of African American, Latino, and Vietnamese have grown in the system.
> -I have no perspective on the make up of the population.
> -There are specialized units for specific cultural groups, but there are staff shortages and not all Asian groups are represented. There are no Filipino or Korean workers in the Asian ER unit.
> -There are socioeconomic issues, drug issues, neglect, and poverty that are prominent in some areas and children come in from those areas.
> -The legal mandates that the police follow bring in more minority children than

other groups.
-There is a lack of workers of color to be matched with children of color.
-There is a greater proportion of minority children in our system than is documented. There may be more minority families than the official statistics (indicate).

2. Would you say any specific groups are over/under-represented in the system?

Participants reported that African American and Latino children were over-represented in the system, while Caucasians and Asian Americans were under-represented in the system. They indicated that the Asian population had been increasing due to due to domestic violence in the Vietnamese and Filipino communities. One participant indicated that there was an under-representation of children from affluent families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There is an over-representation of African Americans and Latinos.
-There is an under-representation of whites.
-Asians are under-represented.
-The Asian population is increasing due to domestic violence in the Vietnamese and Filipino communities.
-This is my guess - I work in affluent areas, which have kids going to private schools. I suspect that there is under-reporting in these areas since child abuse happens anywhere.

3. In your opinion, is this over/under-representation more apparent in any particular part of the system?

Members of the focus group felt that Latino children were over-represented throughout the system, from ER to long-term foster care. They felt that African American children were over-represented in long-term foster care, while Caucasian children were under-represented in long-term foster care. Participants indicated that although children from all ethnicities come into the system, children of color remained in the system longer than Caucasian children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Throughout the system there are a lot more Latinos than other groups.
-In ER, most of the clients that come in are Latino.
-In Continuing, there are more Latinos.
-There is an over-representation of African American and Latino children in long-term foster care or long-term relative care.
-There are fewer whites in long-term foster care.
-We see all ethnicities coming in through ER.
-I only heard that minority youth stay longer in the system.

4. Do you have any ideas about factors that may be related to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus groups felt that poverty, the increasing economic stratification of the Silicon Valley, the middle-class values of the CWS, and racism were factors related to the over-representation of specific groups of children in the system. They indicated that there was little advocacy for poor families in the system and that many poor families also had difficulties securing and maintaining housing. They felt that families of color had difficulties navigating the system due to a lack of resources, as well as a lack of information about the system.

Participants also felt that mandated reporters over-reported children of color to the CWS and that workers and clients were not ethnically/culturally matched. They also remarked that workers were ignorant about families of color and their needs, that families of color were not referred for informal supervision, and that the services that families and children received through the system might not be culturally sensitive. In addition, they indicated that many families did not have extended family in the area to care for their children. They also indicated that many extended family members were reluctant to get involved with the system and that some family members feared undergoing a background check. Participants also stated that the system was prejudiced against families with previous referrals to the CWS. They also stated that if a parent had previously had his/her parental rights terminated, any other children of that parent would automatically be sent through the by-pass system leaving little opportunity for parents to demonstrate positive progress.

With regard to specific groups of children that were over/under-represented in the system, participants felt that although Asian clients were under-represented in the CWS, they indicated that the population of Asian children in the system had increased over the past several years. They stated that more Asian children were entering the system due to domestic violence, corporal punishment, and substance abuse issues. They indicated that more Asian women were reporting domestic violence than in previous years. Members of the focus groups felt that there was a lack of services for Asian families and that many of the services were not linguistically appropriate. They also felt that there was a lack of Asian workers for Asian clients and a lack of Asian Americans in administrative and management positions in the agency. Participants also indicated that African American and Latino parents had more problems with substance abuse than other groups resulting in longer stays for their children in the system.

Members of the focus groups spoke extensively about the difficulties parents with substance abuse issues faced in the system. They reported that there were no support services for substance-abusing parents to help them stay clean after exiting a treatment program. They also reported that treatment programs were not available in the communities where they were most needed. Participants felt that many parents failed to stay clean because they were removed from their communities for treatment, but returned to those same environments where they were using drugs and there were no services in those communities to help them stay clean. In addition, they felt that the system was ignorant about recovery and did not acknowledge relapse as a part of recovery making it

more difficult for substance-abusing parents to regain the custody of their children. They also felt that poor families did not have access to resources to help them stay clean and indicated that middle-class families did. Resources for middle-class families included: private insurance, secure housing, and secure employment.

Participants also spoke extensively about the court system and its impact on the over/under-representation of specific groups of children in the CWS. They felt that the legal system was cumbersome, that it placed unrealistic expectations and timelines on families. They added that court was intimidating for families, and that social workers received little respect from District Attorneys (DA) or the courts. They also reported that DAs made decisions about what was best for the children with little insight into the family and that DAs disregarded social workers' recommendations for families. Participants also felt that social workers spent too much time in court and not enough time working with families. In addition, they reported that supervisors were carrying cases and were not available to support workers in their units.

With regard to resources, participants felt that there was an over-emphasis on technology and that children and families should be receiving money that instead went to computer systems. They also reported that there was no money available for prevention services to help families stay out of the system. In addition, they reported that computer protocol dictated the assessment of a family rather than the workers' professional judgement. They also felt that the computer system added to their workload instead of reducing it.

Finally, members of the focus groups stated that caseloads were too high, workers were over-worked, turn-over was high among workers, there were no services for GLBT clients or people with disabilities in the system. They added that decision-makers in the system were too far removed from the clients and communities the agency served.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Poverty.
> -It's related to the middle-class values of social workers and the system.
> -Racism. Apartment managers call in kids of color, but not white kids.
> -There is a lack of advocacy for poor families.
> -The housing crisis for poor families causes children to stay longer in the system.
> -Minority families have difficulty navigating the system. They don't have money to hire an outside lawyer.
> -Mandated reporters over-report children of color.
> -Kids may not be appropriately placed with a worker from their same ethnicity.
> -Many workers are ignorant about people from different cultures.
> -Minority families are not given informal supervision. These kids are taken into the shelter and have more difficulty getting the authorization for informal supervision.
> -These kids are not necessarily getting the services that are sensitive to their needs.
> -Many families don't have extended family there that can care for the children.

These kids stay in foster care longer while relatives out-of-state are contacted and will take the kids.

-Families are afraid of the system because of the background checks. They don't want problems so they don't take in relative's children.

-Previous referrals effect future referral outcomes. Social workers are more lenient with families that have not had previous referrals.

-Once there is a removal and failure of services by parents in the past, we are mandated by law if another child of that parent or parents come in, then we have to pursue by-pass.

-More Asians are coming into the system than before because of domestic violence, corporal punishment, and drug abuse among Vietnamese parents.

-More Asian women are reporting domestic violence because they want the violence to stop, but they don't understand why the kids are taken away.

-There are not enough Asian workers and services provided by the agency to meet the needs of the clients and this may contribute to the under-representation of Asian American clients in the CWS.

-There is only one parenting class for Vietnamese parents and one for Filipinos. There are none for any of the other Asian groups.

-There is a lack of Asian Americans in the high level of the agency like Administration and Management.

-Latinos and African Americans have more problems than other groups, especially with substance abuse that leads to neglect.

-Parents with drug-related issues do not have access to follow-up care after rehab and then the parents relapse so they can't get their kids back.

-Treatment programs are not available in the communities that need them. The parents are removed for treatment and then dropped back into their original environment without any support to help them stay clean - especially in communities of color.

-The system doesn't acknowledge that relapse is a part of the recovery process.

-Poor families do not have access to as many resources to stay clean so they relapse more often. Middle-class families have more resources to stay clean and they don't have to worry about losing their housing or their jobs. They have medical insurance for ongoing treatment.

-The legal system and continuing laws don't allow enough time to complete the long list of tasks that the legal system assigns them to do. The laws make it really difficult.

-Minority families in many cases are intimidated by the court process.

-The DI worker is not primary. You can make recommendations, but the child says something to the DA and all of sudden what you recommend doesn't mean anything.

-The social worker immediately becomes so insignificant after an attorney has spent 5 minutes talking to a child.

-From DI, our primary function is to produce the court report for the court. We have made the assessment of the family and children and we have to create a huge document, meet deadlines, overcome hurdles, get a supervisor's signature and then we have to defend it or sell it to the DA, lawyers, and parents.

-It seems like in this county we are under the gun to be court clerks. I have never been in such a court-dominated agency as this one.

-Supervisors are covering uncovered cases so they cannot support their own staff because they are busy.

-The agency has given a lot of importance to information technology - computers. It seems that the priority of this agency is just on technology.

-There is never money for parenting classes or counseling, but there is always money for IBM and Microsoft.

-There's no money to keep kids out of the system.

-It has nothing to do with the value of human service, social work. Child welfare is now being run by computer experts. In ER, we go out on all kinds of calls and the social worker see the child and there is no abuse. But the computer head says that you need to see the parent because there is a box that needs to be checked off.

-The CWS/CMS system adds more work to our workloads.

-Child welfare workers in this county are overwhelmed with too many families and too many tasks and the children and families are the ones not receiving the services.

-There is a tremendous amount of turnover at this agency.

-There are no programs for GLBT in the system.

-People with disabilities don't have many resources in the system.

-People who make the decisions are completely removed from the community. They have no idea what things are going on.

5. Can you describe ways in which you think the system could respond to this over/under-representation?

Members of the focus groups felt that worker attitudes needed to be changed. They recommended that the agency expand the cultural competency training for new workers and that new workers participate in a mentoring program with more experienced workers from diverse backgrounds. They also suggested that the bias against the poor and families with previous referrals be reduced among workers in the agency. Participants also felt that the agency needed to increase the pay for Lineworkers, recruit and hire more bilingual workers, reduce caseloads, promote more workers of color to Administration and Management positions, and reduce court time for social workers. They also suggested educating mandated reporters about appropriate and inappropriate referrals and indicated that the Screening unit needed to be more diligent about screening out inappropriate referrals.

Regarding services provided by the CWS, participants recommended instituting a quality control system to ensure that children receive appropriate and sensitive services. They also felt that prevention services were very important, as well as mental health services, a program for batterers, and a shelter for battered women. In addition, they felt that ER needed more resources and referrals to prevent children from entering the system, that informal supervision needed to be recommended for more families, and that the services provided by the agency extend beyond crisis intervention to create lasting change. They also indicated that the services provided by the agency be more accessible to clients.

Participants felt that more classes on domestic violence and parenting needed to be provided in all Asian languages. They also suggested that more education and outreach on domestic violence and child abuse be conducted in Asian communities.

Finally, members of the focus group suggested that the agency collaborate with other agencies like the police and immigration, provide more advocacy for poor families in the system, establish a Family Resource Center for Caucasian families, expand the criteria for kin to become kinship care providers, and encourage more families to become care providers.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Train new workers about cultural competency.

-Social workers should learn about different cultures.

-When new workers are hired they should be matched with a more senior worker that will mentor them. They should be matched with someone from a different culture so they can learn from another's experiences.

-Reduce the bias against the poor in the agency.

-Don't judge families with previous referrals.

-Put more money into Lineworkers. Promotions aren't just for sitting behind a desk, but you can go on working as a lineworker and you can get more money and status.

-Recruit more worker that have the language skills needed - Asian languages especially.

-Reduce caseloads by hiring more workers.

-Promote minority workers to higher levels in the agency like Administration and Management.

-Social workers should not spend so much time in court because this is time away from their clients and they don't have enough time to make proper assessment of the family and the issues faced by the families.

-Educate mandated reporters about appropriate and inappropriate referrals.

-Screening center needs to investigate referrals to make sure they are appropriate especially for poor families that are referred because mandated reporters think they are neglected even if they are not.

-Set up a system that assesses whether a child is getting the appropriate services they need while they are in the system.

-Provide prevention services to keep kids out of the system.

-Many families need mental health services.

-The agency is developing a batterer's program and that is a positive step.

-Provide a shelter for battered women.

-In ER, we need up-front services. We need resources or referrals.

-Train worker about which cases are appropriate for informal supervision and utilize this.

-Develop programs that go beyond crisis intervention that make real change.

-Availability and easy access to services and resources are key things to help parents get their kids back.

-Offer more services for Asian clients especially domestic violence and parenting classes in different languages.
-Educate the Asian communities about the child abuse and domestic violence laws and how domestic violence affects the children.
-The agency should foster more collaboration with other agencies like the police and immigration.
-More advocacy for poor families is needed.
-There is no resource center to serve white clients. We need to refer these parents to centers where they might not feel as though they fit in.
-Expand acceptance of alternative caretakers, like kinship providers.
-Finance good people to come forward and take care of the kids even though they are not in our existing caretaker category.

6. How do you record ethnicity and race for the children in the system? How do you record ethnicity and race for children with mixed race/ethnicity? What kind of training have you had on how to code for ethnicity and race?

Regarding coding, participants indicated that a child's ethnicity was coded by workers at the shelter, ER workers, DI workers, or workers in the Screening unit. They reported that surnames were used to code the ethnicity of a child, that many kids were incorrectly coded, and that mixed race coding could be done by using primary and secondary coding. A majority of participants indicated that there was no training provided on coding ethnicity, but one participant stated that he/she received training on coding from his/her supervisor. Participants also indicated that if a child's ethnicity was incorrectly coded, it could be changed to reflect the correct ethnic identification.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The shelter codes ethnicity during the physical exam.
-ER codes ethnicity.
-DI codes ethnicity.
-The screener does it when the call comes in. They get the information from the caller or from prior information or if the parent is getting MediCal or TANF.
-Ethnicity is also determined by surname.
-Many kids are misidentified.
-Code mixed race by primary and secondary coding.
-No training is provided for coding.
-We were trained on coding ethnicity by supervisor.
-If the ethnicity is incorrect, the worker can update the ethnicity.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participants felt that families should be included in the decision-making process while their children were in the system. They suggested that family conferencing be utilized with every family in the system. They also stressed that workloads needed to be reduced

and that more staff needed to be hired, especially Asian and Spanish-speaking workers. They suggested that an adequate court report should be sufficient and social workers should not be required to appear in court. They also stated that morale among workers was low. Members of the focus groups felt that the system should make an effort to keep kids with their families because they stated that sometimes the system could do more harm than good.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

>-Include families in the decision-making process.
>-Family conferencing should be done with all families.
>-Workloads are too high.
>-Hire more staff.
>-We need more workers that speak other Asian languages and more Spanish-speaking staff.
>-An adequate court report should be accepted and social workers should not be required to attend the court sessions unless it is special circumstances.
>-Morale among workers is very low.
>-Borderline cases should not be taken into the system because there is damage done to kids at the shelter.
>-Keep kids out of the system.
>-Sometimes the system does more harm than good to children.

Parents

African American Grandparents

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants indicated that ethnicity was one's race and that culture was one's values, beliefs, and practices. Members of the focus group spoke extensively about their own cultural backgrounds and experiences. Many participants expressed that the culture in California was different than the culture of other States they had lived. They reported that there was little cohesiveness among African Americans in California, that there was prejudice among African Americans from different parts of the country, and that there were cultural differences between people raised in rural areas than people raised in urban areas.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Ethnicity is what race you are.
> -Culture and ethnicity are not the same thing.
> -I was taught my ethnicity and culture since I was a child, like the ancestors that we worship, healing with plants and fruits, and use of the body, mind, and spirit.
> -Culture in California is different than where I came from.
> -My culture from (another State) is Black and it is totally different than these Blacks in California.
> -I'm from (another State) and it was a cultural shock for me to come to California. There is no cohesiveness in the Black community.
> -Coming from (another State) to California, I was looked on as inferior.
> -I do not like the South. I still talk country and I act country and I love the country, but I can't live in the South.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants felt that African American children and families were the last to receive resources and services than any other group in the county. They felt that Caucasians received more services than African Americans and that the services provided to African American children and families were limited and rushed. They felt that workers wanted to get African American clients "out of the way" so that they would be able to spend more time serving Caucasian families. Participants also felt that Caucasian families were not blamed for their children being in the CWS, but felt that families of color were always found to be at fault when their children were in the system. In addition, they indicated that with so many bi-racial people, African American children and families were losing power and visibility in the community.

Members of the focus group reported that as kin providers, they were not given the same financial benefits as foster parents, but they were providing a higher level of care for their grandchildren. They indicated that as a kin provider they were only given $300.00 a month while foster parents were given $800.00 a month to meet the needs of the child. Some participants reported that they were retired and were on a fixed income making it difficult financially to survive. They also reported that it was very difficult to get the needed services for their grandchildren from the system and felt that the CWS was not interested in helping African American children. Several participants indicated that when they applied for benefits for their grandchildren, the system required extensive intimate information from grandparents.

Participants also reported that grandparents did not have the same rights and did not receive the same benefits as biological parents or foster parents did in the CWS. They stated until recently, grandparents and other kin were not allowed to go into the courtroom during hearing about their grandchildren. Although they reported that they were now allowed to enter the courtroom, they were not allowed to speak during the hearing. They also felt that many foster parents were taking in children for the financial benefit and did not care properly for the children. Finally, participants felt that it was traumatic for children to be removed from their homes and placed in the shelter.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -African Americans are the last one on the totem pole as far as money goes and services.
> -White children get more services than Black children do.
> -African American clients come secondary to white clients.
> -The services I've received are limited and hurried. Workers just want to hurry us through the system and get me out of the way.
> -You take a white boy and a white parent and it's not their fault. But people of color are always at fault.
> -Mixed groups over-ride what African Americans have in this community.
> -They don't give us enough money for our grandchildren. But whether I get one penny or not, I'm going to take care of my kids. I'm not going to let them take my kids.
> -As a kin provider, the system only gives me $300.00/month, but they give foster parents $800.00/month. It's not fair.
> -It's not fair. Some of us are retired and are on a fixed income and that little bit of money they give you is not enough.
> -The County does nothing for your kids and they don't take care of the kids.
> -I don't like the CWS. I can't get anything for my kids from the system. I can't get food stamps. If I get food stamps they want to know who I slept with last night.
> -It's hard to get anything from the system. If you ask for anything, they have to know everything about your life.
> -Grandparents can't get the same rights or benefits as foster parents or biological family members.
> -Only in the last 2 years grandparents and other kin have been allowed to go into

the courtroom, but you can't talk.
-Many of the foster parents are just doing it for the money. We are doing it for love. We don't have the authority to get benefits for the kids that we care for.
-One of my grandchildren was put in a garage for discipline when he/she was in foster care. Finally, I got my grandchild back.
-It is traumatic for the kids to be taken away and placed in the shelter.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups?

A majority of participants felt that there were not enough social workers to meet their needs. They stated, however, that it was possible that there were enough workers to meet the needs of clients in the system, but that many workers did not know how to meet their client's needs. They felt that workers made little effort to understand their client's needs and how to best serve those needs. Participants indicated that even if a worker was African American, there was the possibility that the worker would not be sensitive to a family's needs. They also indicated that many social workers were young, inexperienced, and not culturally competent.

Members of the focus group spoke extensively about their experiences with workers in the system. They reported that workers did not return phone calls, blamed clients for their difficulties, and did not have enough time to help their clients. They also reported that workers did not involve families in the decision-making process and stated that the workers did not make family members feel valued or appreciated. In addition, participants reported that workers did not inform clients about their rights. Finally, participants stated that the CWS was inefficient. They reported that cases were delayed on a regular basis wasting valuable time that families need for reunification efforts.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -No (there are not enough workers to meet our needs).
> -There may be enough workers to meet the needs, but they do not know how to meet our needs.
> -Workers don't try to find out what the needs are or how to meet the needs.
> -African American social workers do not necessarily help African American clients. They just try to hurry us through the system.
> -There are so many young social workers that don't understand how to work with people from different groups.
> -Don't hire young social workers that are not culturally competent.
> -Workers don't return calls.
> -I have to go over there and talk to them because they won't return my calls.
> -Workers blame clients for being in their current situations.
> -Workers blame clients if things don't get done even if the worker doesn't call you back.
> -Workers always tell us that they are so busy and do not have time to help us.
> -The social worker doesn't say we are going to do this together. They just make

decisions for us and tell us what to do.

-Social worker made me feel like nothing. They just try to push us kin aside.

-If the father is white and the mother is black, they treat the Black grandparents like trash and the white father like a king.

-Social workers don't inform you of your rights, like getting a lawyer. You have a right to a lawyer, but they don't tell you that.

-The system is so inefficient. Social workers won't do anything until you have the right paper wasting your time for the timelines.

-They have these timelines, but they keep delaying my case and pushing it back and wasting your time. The time will run out.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth and families from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Regarding suggestions about how the system could be improved to help African American families, participants recommended that workers take the time to listen to their clients and adequately assess, with the input of the family, what the needs of each family are and provide culturally sensitive services to meet those needs. Participants also stated that workers needed to be more sensitive to their clients, to understand that they were dealing with human lives, and to recognize and honor the strength of the family bond in African American families. They also felt that the system needed treat clients respectfully, not patronize them, and include family and community members in the decision-making process.

Members of the focus group recommended that the system provide services that unite families, counseling services for children and their families, and services for struggling parents. They also suggested that the system hire more African American therapists to provide counseling services to African American clients. In addition, they suggest that the system provide more training for foster parents, hire more culturally competent workers, and treat all clients equally. Finally, participants indicated that parents needed to be given permission to discipline their children without fear of becoming involved with the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Listen to what the needs are. Listen to me and study what needs to be done. They do all the talking.

-Stop letting other people that don't know anything about our culture dictate to us what our needs are.

-Social workers need to realize that they are dealing with human lives.

-There is a strong family bond in our families, but the system is trying to break that bond by taking our kids away.

-Give us the benefit of the doubt that we are intelligent.

-Work as a team with the family using the different strengths of the family.

-Include families in the solutions.

-Allow the African American community to make the decisions about what they

want to happen with their children.
-Unite families. Get them services to keep them together because it breaks the legacy if you teat them apart.
-Give kids and parents more help and counseling.
-There are not enough Black therapists.
-The parents of the children need help. They need to provide services for the parents.
-Give families the services they need to help themselves.
-There's not enough training for foster parents.
-Hire more workers that are competent.
-We all should be treated the same no matter how many of us are in the community.
-Give back to the parent the right to discipline the kids. I don't mean abused, but the ability to discipline them.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

One participant felt that the CWS liked to take African American children out of their family homes and place them in the system. Another participant felt uneasy knowing that Caucasian families were adopting African American children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-I think they like to keep our children in the shelter and the system.
-Who is adopting our kids? White people? I am sick in the head because of this.

American Indian Parents

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Members of the focus group indicated that ethnicity was one's race and culture was one's values, beliefs, and practices. They felt that it was important for American Indian children to learn about their history from their own people and that knowledge would give them a deeper understanding of self and a sense of belonging. They also felt that the more one understood about their own history and culture, the more they would understand other cultures. Participants also felt that American Indian children needed to learn how to interact the dominant culture without losing their own cultural identities.

The following are representative comment from respondents:

-Ethnicity means your race.
-Culture is your values, beliefs, and your way of doing things.
-Culture if the way you were raised, how you are.
-Learning about ones' history from their own people helps kids learn about

themselves and about other cultures.

-The more we know about our own culture, the more we will understand and have a sense of belonging. This knowledge will help us understand why things are the way they are in this society.

-We have to know about the dominant culture and teach kids how to deal with the dominant culture without losing who they are.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants reported that there were more children of color in the CWS. They stated that there were approximately 15,000 American Indian people in Santa Clara County (SCC) and that more than half were living below the poverty level. They reported that there were few American Indian children in the system in SCC and indicated that Indian people avoided contact with the CWS due to conflicts in cultural beliefs between their people and the CWS. They stated that "our people lose when they come in contact with the CWS." Participants indicated that many elders did not use Medicare because they felt that the bureaucracy was "uncaring and unfeeling." One system that participants felt American Indian people were over-represented was the criminal justice system.

Members of the focus group also spoke about their families. They indicated that the CWS did not recognize their families as legitimate families because they were different than the dominant cultural perspective about what constitutes a family. They explained that Indian families are large and included extended family members and the community. Participants felt that the system did not acknowledge extended family members as legitimate members of the family and excluded them from the lines of communication about the case. They also felt that Indian children suffered when the system did not consider their extended family members as a resource to help the children.

Participants also stated that they were "horrified" by the treatment of their children by the system. They felt that it was traumatic for children to be removed from their homes and that many children experienced PTSD as a result. They also felt that sibling groups should not be separated in the system. They reported that it was essential that Indian children remain together because they are stronger when they are together. Finally, members of the focus group indicated that their children were not the property of the CWS, they were members of their families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There are more children of color in the system.

-There are 15,000 Indian people in SCC. More than 50% of them live below the poverty level.

-You don't find that many Indian children in SSA here.

-Indian people won't go to SSA because they can't communicate with the agency. It's two conflicting cultures.

-Our people lose when they come in contact with the CWS.

-Many elders refuse to deal with Medicare because the bureaucracy comes across as uncaring and unfeeling.

-Indians are over-represented in the legal system.

-We have fought the system to recognize our families as legitimate families even though they look different than the system thinks they should.

-Indian families are different than dominant culture families. We have large families that include the community, but workers and the system do not recognize our families as true families because they don't look like white families with mom, dad, and kids.

-Extended family members are totally excluded from the process and the lines of communication.

-Children suffer when SSA does not recognize their family as legitimate just because it doesn't look like they think it should.

-I am horrified by the treatment of children in the CWS.

-It is traumatic for children to be removed from their homes. It is a form of PTSD that they may never recover from.

-SSA splits kids up. Indian children need to be together because togetherness is where their strength is. When you take everything away, they suffer.

-This is our child, but they talk like it's their child.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants indicated that there were few American Indian workers to help American Indian children and their families. They also reported that there were few workers in the system that were familiar with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and understood how to help Indian children. In addition, they reported that SCC was notorious for non-compliance with the ICWA and stated that workers did not want to abide by the regulations outlined in the ICWA because it required them to complete more paperwork. Participants also stated that workers did not understand the structure of Indian families and did not recognize their families as legitimate. They also felt that workers did not know about Indian culture and did not know how to work with Indian families. For example, one participant shared the following story about an experience he/she had with a non-Indian worker. "We had a worker and she was asking us very probing and personal questions. It is the role of the grandmother, as the elder of the family, to assess the worker's background before we continued the interview. The worker refused to answer our grandmother's questions and that was very disrespectful behavior. If she is going to know about us, we need to know about her."

Participants also felt that it was important for Indian children to maintain their cultural traditions while they are in the system, but reported that many children lose their cultural heritage as a result of being in the system. They also reported that extended family members were excluded from the case and had difficulty obtaining information about the case from workers. They felt that extended family members were not treated like family by the system. Participants also felt that workers did not conduct thorough investigations

before children were taken into the system. They also indicated that many children were illegally removed, but the system would not return those children for fear of litigation.

Members of the focus group also reported that the system was not responsive to families needs and were inconsistent in their treatment of families. They felt that the goals of the system were based on white, middle-class values, were unrealistic, and were not culturally relevant for many families. They also felt that the requirements placed on parents for reunification were not reasonable in the Silicon Valley. Participants indicated that housing was very expensive in SCC and felt it was nearly impossible for a single parent working in a minimum wage job to afford housing for a family of five. They also felt that the timelines for reunification and termination of parental rights were too short. In addition, participants indicated that the system denied reunification even after parents completed the required tasks to regain custody of their children.

Participants reported that it would be helpful to have American Indian workers for Indian clients. One participant reported that when he/she finally was assigned to an American Indian worker, he/she felt a sense of relief. Participants also reported that it was important for workers to tell Indian clients that they have rights and connect them with lawyers from their tribes to help with their cases. One participant stated that he/she almost lost two children to adoptive families until the lawyer from his/her tribe intervened and advocated for the children to be placed with extended family members. Finally, members of the focus group reported that SCC was the most difficult County to regain custody of your children after entry into the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -There are no Indians anywhere in the system.
> -No one in SCC knows how to deal with Indian children.
> -If workers don't know about ICWA, Indian clients don't get any help.
> -Workers don't abide by the ICWA or even know what has to be done for Indian children.
> -SCC is notorious for fighting against compliance with ICWA. Workers don't want to follow ICWA because there is more paperwork.
> -Workers don't understand our family structure or recognize it as legitimate.
> -Workers don't know the Indian culture.
> -It is essential that our Indian child go to pow-wow's and hear the beat of the drum. It is important to our family that these traditions be respected and honored by workers.
> -Many American Indian children lose their cultural heritage.
> -Extended family members are told by the worker that the worker will only speak to and deal with the biological parent of the child.
> -Extended family is not treated like family.
> -They don't conduct thorough investigations and kids are removed and parental tights are terminated too fast.
> -The system keep kids out of their homes even when they shouldn't have been removed in the fist place because SSA is covering their butts and doesn't want the

parents to sue.

-The goals of SSA are white, western goals and do not fit every family.

-In order to gain custody, we have to play by their rules, but they don't even play by their rules.

-The way they define if a parent is fit to care for their children is if they live independently of other family members. That is totally contrary to our belief system about family.

-They say they are looking for reunification, but with everything they require, it's not possible.

-Many parents have housing difficulties because they require you to have a house that is big enough for each child to have their own bedroom. That's not reality in the Silicon Valley for many parents.

-The timelines are totally unreasonable.

-SSA requires reunification, but they don't give kids back even if you comply with all the rules of reunification.

-It would have made a difference for me if I had an Indian worker.

-Our Indian worker heard me and I heard her. There was true communication.

-Eventually we got an Indian worker and we felt such a sense of relief. She knew what we needed and how we think.

-A lawyer from the parent's tribe got hold of the case and was angry with how SSA handled it. Without his advocacy, we wouldn't have gotten custody of our child.

-SSA was going to adopt out 2 of our 4 kids, but the lawyer stopped that.

-SCC is the hardest county to get your kids back. 50% that are taken away are adopted out.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth and families from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Regarding suggestions about how the system could better meet the needs of American Indian parents, participants felt that workers needed to conduct more thorough investigations into maltreatment allegations prior to removal of a child. They also felt that children and their parents needed counseling services and that they system should provide those services for every family. Participants recommended that the system recruit more American Indian workers, that American Indian clients be assigned an Indian worker, that workers become conversant with the ICWA, and that workers receive education about Indian culture. They also suggested modifying the requirements for reunification to be culturally relevant for each family. In addition, participants felt that the requirements for reunification needed to be modified to reflect the economic reality of poor families living in the Silicon Valley.

Members of the focus group felt that the CWS should focus on the best interest of each child and not on the best interest of the bureaucracy. They suggested that the system extend the timelines for reunification and termination of parental rights. They also recommended extended family members be included in the case, informed about

decisions made in the case, and allowed to visit children in the shelter. In addition, they suggested that the CWS broaden its definition of family and respect other cultural definitions of family. Participants also recommended that during supervised visits, parents and children be given some privacy. Finally, participants suggested removing parents from the family instead of punishing children for the actions of their parents.

The following are representative comment from respondents:

-CPS workers need to investigate allegations more closely and thoroughly.
-Provide counseling for children and their families together.
-Recruit more American Indian workers.
-Provide American Indian workers for American Indian clients.
-Train workers to be conversant with ICWA.
-Make the requirements for reunification culturally relevant.
-Make the requirements for reunification more realistic for the Silicon Valley.
-The regulations should be focused on the best interest of the child, not the best interest of the bureaucracy.
-Extend the time for reunification.
-Slow down the termination of parental rights process.
-Include extended family members in the process and give them information about the case to help the children.
-Allow extended family members to visit kids at the shelter, not just the biological parents.
-Broaden your definition of family and understand that not all families are nuclear families like white families.
-During supervised visits, give the children and their parents some privacy.
-Why don't they remove the parents because it's the parents that screwed up?
-Why are kids punished because their parents screwed up?

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants stated that some Indian people had tribal allotments that provided them with money. They reported that if children were not registered with a tribe or lost their connection with their tribe, they could lose their cultural heritage, as well as the financial benefits from their tribal allotments. They also stated that among Indian people, parental rights were never terminated. They stated that termination of parental rights was a "white law" and was not valid in their culture, but indicated that Indian people were forced to live by these laws that were not valid in their culture.

The following are representative comment from respondents:

-Some Indian people are entitled to money or land through tribal allotments. If children are not registered with a tribe or lose their connection with their tribe, they will not only lose their Indian heritage, they will also lose the financial benefits from their allotment.
-How do you ever terminate parental rights? These are Indian people. That doesn't

exist in our perspectives. It is white law that is not valid in our culture, but we have to live by it.

Latino Parents

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants stated that they did not necessarily distinguish race from culture. However, they indicated that ethnicity was one's race and culture was one's customs, beliefs, and practices.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -We don't necessarily distinguish race from culture.
> -If we had to separate one from the other ethnicity has to do more with race and culture has more to do with customs and way of life, what we eat, how we dress.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Members of the focus group reported that African American and Latino children were over-represented in the CWS.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -There are too many minorities in the system, especially Latinos and African Americans.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants indicated that there were adequate numbers of social workers at SSA, but they did not speak Spanish. They felt that workers were judgmental and did not adequately investigate child maltreatment allegations before removing a child. They also felt that workers did not make reasonable efforts to understand their families or assess the strengths of their families. Participants felt that workers were inconsistent in their treatment of families and indicated that they experienced discrimination while involved with the CWS. They also indicated that they felt powerless and stated that the tasks they were required to complete to regain custody of their children were unrealistic. One participant reported that he/she completed the required tasks for reunification, but he/she had not regained custody of his/her children. In addition, members of the focus group felt that taking a child out of the family home was traumatic for the children and indicated that their children were never the same after being removed. They stated that they did not think that this was a reasonable action for minor incidents. They felt that removal of a

child was appropriate in cases involving sexual abuse. They also stated that it was embarrassing for children to be questioned by social workers at school. Finally, participants felt oppressed by the majority Caucasian population, they indicated that they experienced discrimination at their children's schools, and felt that their children were not receiving an adequate education as a result of discrimination.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Sure, there's lost of staff, but they don't speak Spanish.
> -Social workers are quick to judge us.
> -Social workers never get to know our families. They have no problem finding what's wrong with our family, but they never look at what's right with our family.
> -There is a great amount of inconsistency with social workers.
> -There is discrimination in the department of social services, but not as much as with the police system.
> -Social workers take all the power away from us and make us jump through too many hoops.
> -We get set up because once we lose our kids, we have to jump through impossible hoops like going to classes, finding another place to live, and all at the same time.
> -I know some parents who have gotten their kids back and I haven't yet. I have done the same thing (as they have).
> -They say we've traumatized out kids, yet they traumatize our kids worse by taking them away. Our kids never come back the same.
> -We understand taking kids away for sexual abuse, but they take them away for anything.
> -Social workers shouldn't question our kids at school. This really embarrassed my child.
> -The whites want to keep us down.
> -We feel discrimination in the schools. Lots of white teachers don't pay attention to our kids.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth and families from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Regarding ways the system might be improved to better meet the needs of children and families, participants recommended that workers focus on keeping families together and spend more time investigating child maltreatment allegations before removing a child. They suggested providing no cost or low cost sports and recreation programs for their children and providing funding to create prosocial programs for their children in their communities. They also suggested providing reduced cost tickets to sporting events and other prosocial activities for low-income families. Finally, they suggested providing funding for programs that help families stay intact.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-We think they should spend more time keeping our families together instead of finding things to take our kids away.

-More time should be spent investigating and finding out more information before taking drastic measures to remove our kids.

-Our youth need activities such as sports or recreation clubs that are no or low cost to our families. It's too expensive to put my kids in sports because I don't just have one child. If my child was in some type of sport or recreation activity, he wouldn't be at risk in getting involved in things that aren't good from him.

-Democracy. The President needs to do something. There's all kinds of money being pumped into other things, but not into our communities.

-Put more money in the communities to build programs for our kids.

-Put more money in preserving our families instead of splitting them up.

-We need reduced tickets to attend sports events or other things that would expose our kids to things that are good.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Members of the focus group felt that there were too many laws protecting children, but few that protected the rights of parents. They also indicated that parents needed to be more involved in their children's lives, know their friends, and become positive role models for their children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There are too many laws to protect kids. There are none to protect parents.

-We need to be more engaged with our kids, know what they are doing, and get to know who they hang out with.

-Parents need to take the lead also by going to school and being role models for our kids.

South County Parents

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants indicated that ethnicity was one's race and culture was one's traditions and holidays.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Race.

-Holidays and traditions.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants did not discuss which cultural/ethnic groups were over-represented in the CWS. Instead, they spoke extensively about their frustrations with the system and their experiences in the system. Participants felt powerless. They stated that when they tried to advocate for themselves they were told to attend anger management classes and their complaints were ignored. They also stated that workers used their complaints against them in court resulting in negative consequences for parents. They indicated that they were forced to agree with everything the social worker wrote down or they would lose their children. In addition, they stated that they felt they were "guilty until proven innocent" and that social workers did not believe them when they explained situations. Participants felt that social workers only believed children, even when they were lying, and accused parents of threatening their children to change their story.

Members of the focus group reported that they were never asked for input into the case, they were simply told what to do. They also reported that the timelines to complete all of the tasks for reunification were too short and they had difficulties completing all the classes when they were working full-time. They also felt that workers judged parents if they did not attend all of the classes. They stated that workers told them that if they really loved their children, they would attend the classes. Many stated that due to lack of transportation and the need to work to support their families, they could not possibly attend all of the mandatory classes. They felt this was unrealistic and unfair. Participants also indicated that they were sent to classes that did not exist or were sent to facilities that did not offer the classes they were required to complete. In addition, they indicated that the housing standards the court required of parents was not realistic in the Silicon Valley.

Participants felt that they had little privacy in their lives when they were involved with the system. They reported that workers demanded information and parents had to tell them if they wanted to get their kids back. They also felt that they could not discipline their children and there was not enough money provided by the system to help families remain intact. They worried about how their children were being treated in foster families and felt that foster families were only interested in money, not their children. One participant stated that the foster parent told him/her to supply the foster parent with formula, diapers, and clothing for his/her infant child. He/she stated that the foster family was paid to provide those things for the child, but was demanding that the biological parent supply them instead. In addition, members of the focus group felt that foster parents were treated more favorably than biological parents and were not held to the same high standards that biological parents were. Participants also felt that 48 hours was not a sufficient amount of time to conduct an investigation, that there was little continuity of service as a result of multiple changes in social workers, and that children were traumatized when they were removed from their families. Finally, one participant reported that when her child was removed, the worker did not have a proper child seat for the car and that the parent had to supply the safety seat to the worker so the worker could take his/her child away.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-You have no control. You do what they say or you lose your kids, period.

-If we say something is wrong, we're told "you need anger management, you have a problem, and you have to go to another class."

-If you throw them out, they come back with the cops and it's used against you in court.

-You have to agree with everything they wrote in their little book or you could lose your kids.

-We feel like we are guilty until proven innocent.

-If the child is angry, the police and social worker ask questions, the child lies, and they believe the child. They think the parent is threatening the child to change their story, but the child lied. And the police and social worker believe the first story.

-They never bothered to ask us anything. They only tell us, "you have to do this, this, this, and this and come back to court." They tell you what to do all the time.

-There is too much to do in 6 months.

-Six months is too short. The new law is 6 months. It used to be one year or 18 months. It's not fair.

-Instead of helping you out, they send you to stuff, but you have to work and you can't make every single class. If you don't make the classes, you look bad.

-If I don't get to classes, I'm a "bad parent." If I don't get to work, how am I going to support my kids? I'll get fired.

-They say if you don't go to classes it's because you didn't want to go.

-They think that if your leg is broke and you really love your children, you'll get to that meeting.

-I have 2 children, no car, and no phone. One of my children is handicapped. How can I get everywhere? I have 3 classes to go to every week.

-We were supposed to go to a class on Lewis Street. There's no building there. There's only a park there and we've only got 6 months to get our kids back.

-They gave us bogus classes. We signed up and when we got there, there was no classes at all.

-You can't get your kids back until you get an apartment. The number of bedrooms required by the system don't fit the rents here.

-How can we afford a 4-bedroom house here, in this area? How can we put one kid in each bedroom? There needs to be a reality check.

-You don't have any privacy. They tell you what they want to know and you have to tell them.

-There is not enough money being pumped into the family.

-You can't discipline your own child in the store. People in the store will say they'll call the cops on you.

-I worry about how foster parents will treat my kids.

-Foster parents are doing it for the money. They don't want to work.

-My child was taken away when he/she was 6 months old. The foster mother told me to bring formula, clothes, and diapers. She was getting paid to take care of my child and she wanted me to bring these things.

-If foster parents mess up there's nothing wrong with that. But if we mess up, even once, they blame it all on us.

-Workers are supposed to write a petition in 48 hours. That's not enough time to

investigate your whole life.

-There are too many changes in social workers.

-Kids are traumatized when they take them away and when they come back they are scared of you. Like my child, he/she was fine. All of a sudden, he/she has his/her little moods when he/she gets mad at me. He/she never used to do that. The first time I seen him/her, he/she was crying. He/she sees the social worker now and runs to me. He/she cries when he/she sees the social worker. He/she thinks they're going to take him/her away.

-The social worker who took away my kid, she didn't even have a proper seat, car seat, she had an expired car seat from 1980. Even the sheriff told her it was expired. I had to give her mine. She still took away my kid.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Several members of the focus group indicated that there was an adequate number staff in South County, while others felt there were not enough staff to meet the needs of children and families in the system. All participants felt that workers had too many cases and did not adequately investigate child maltreatment allegations. They also felt that social workers were too quick to judge families and did not spend the necessary time to understand a family before removing a child. They also felt that social workers were racist, were not culturally competent, had too much power, and were not sensitive to the needs or situations of the families they served. Finally, participants felt that workers exaggerated the situations and problems of families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There's enough staff.

-They don't have enough staff because if they did, they would investigate first.

-They have too many cases.

-They don't ask questions.

-They pass judgment real quick.

-There is a lot of racism, people make judgments. Too much power in the social worker.

-Social workers are supposed to know about all kinds of people, not just judge a book by its cover.

-Social workers are not sensitive to our needs or situations.

-They catch you on a bad day, it was going to be a housecleaning day; people go there early and ask why is this a mess? You could have had a little party and they want to know why there are all those beer cans. You're old enough to drink, so what? They blow things out of proportion. They exaggerate.

-They really dramatize.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth and families from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Regarding ways the system might be improved to better meet the needs of children and families, participants suggested that workers thoroughly investigate maltreatment allegations before removing a child. They suggested that workers interview children at home rather than school, visit the house, interview neighbors, and involve a neutral party, like clergy, in the assessment of the family. They also suggested that workers assess family strengths and gain an understanding of the family before removing a child. In addition, they suggested extending the timeline from 48 hours to one week to complete an investigation and if workers can't substantiate the allegations within 48 hours, children should be returned to their families. They recommended that if an investigation warranted removal, that children be placed with relatives or close friends and not be taken to the shelter. They stated that the abuser should be punished, not the entire family. Participants felt that children should not be removed unless they were being sexually abused and suggested that standards be established to guide removal decisions.

Members of the focus group also recommended that families not be bounced from one worker to another. They felt that families should be assigned one worker that would remain with the family the entire time they were involved with the system. They also suggested that resources be allocated to help families remain intact. In addition, they suggested that workers be assessed for racism, receive counseling, treat parents respectfully, work more closely with families to help them complete the tasks for reunification, work more quickly, and make visitation easier for parents. They also felt that timelines needed to be extended to allow parents to complete the required tasks for reunification without putting their jobs in jeopardy and that class schedules be more flexible to accommodate the needs of working parents. Finally, participants recommended providing housing for struggling families, educating parents about their rights, providing more services so parents did not have to wait on lists to receive required services, provide more substance abuse treatment programs, specifically for under age parents, and provide counseling services for children and families.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Investigate before taking a child.
> -Interview kids at home, not school to give the child and family privacy.
> -Go to the house, go to the neighbors, investigate up front.
> -I think social workers should look for reasons to keep the children in the house and not to take them. There should be a neutral party, like a clergy person. They need to look for what is going well.
> -Get to know the family first. Don't over-exaggerate.
> -Take more time to write the report. Don't write it to get it over with.
> -They need at least 7 days (to complete a report).
> -If there is nothing concrete in 48 hours, give the kid back.
> -Leave the child with a family member. Don't take them to the Children's Shelter.
> -Use a relative or close friend instead of the shelter.
> -The abuser should be paying (for the abuse), not the whole family.
> -Only for sexual abuse should kids be taken out of their homes.
> -Set standards and guidelines for taking the kids.

-If you are assigned to a social worker you should be assigned to a social worker and not be bounced around. I've had 5 or 6 different social workers; none of them made home visits, they wrote things about me. The next social worker is evaluating me by what the last social worker wrote about me. I have a really nice social worker now. She makes home visits. She takes the time to call me and talk to me. She is really nice. She is also Black. The other ones were Mexican.

-Use the money to keep the families together instead of spending it on foster families.

-Interview every single social worker and find out if they are racist or not.

-Maybe social workers should go through counseling themselves after all they see.

-Treat us with respect.

-No one works with you. They just throw stuff at you.

-Everything takes too long. They have to come to your house, see if it's livable, do background checks, etc.

-Make visitation easier.

-Increase the time parents have to complete the tasks to reunify. Parents lose their jobs because they have to go to classes.

-I work swing shift and I can't meet the class schedules.

-Make a shelter for families that need help.

-More housing.

-The social workers should bring a paper that tells parents what their rights are.

-I had to wait 2 months for parenting classes and the clock was ticking for the 6 months.

-There need to be more programs.

-I'm under age, but there's no drug rehab for me.

-Counseling is good.

-Provide services to help kids deal with the trauma of removal.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants indicated that it was very difficult to get a child out once they entered the system.

The following is a representative comment:

-Once kids are in the system, it's so hard to get them out.

Vietnamese Parents

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants indicated that cultural group referred to a group of people that shared the same values, customs, traditions, and principles and that ethnicity referred to the physical characteristics of a person.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Cultural group refers to a group of people that share the same values, customs, and principles. For example, the Vietnamese have a different set of values, tradition than other groups.
> -Ethnicity signifies the physical characteristics of a certain group/nation such as the skin color, language.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Members of the focus group reported that children of color were over-represented in the CWS. They stated that there were more Latino children in the system than any other group of children. They also indicated that Asian/Pacific Islander (API) children, as well as immigrant children from Central and South America and Africa were over-represented in the system. They felt that recent immigrants were more at-risk of becoming involved with the CWS than immigrants who had lived in the United States for longer periods of time. Participants stated that refugees and immigrants were familiar with the laws and customs from their countries of origin and not familiar with the laws and the customs of the United States. They felt that this lack of knowledge about the laws and customs of this country contributed to the over-representation of immigrant children in the CWS. One participant felt that living in the United States for longer periods of time did not necessarily reduce the risk of immigrant families becoming involved with the system. He/she pointed out that as children acculturate, children might not adhere to the values and traditions of their families creating cultural clashes between the generations. He/she felt that the more Americanized a child became, the more difficulties families experienced putting them at risk for becoming involved with the CWS.

Participants spoke extensively about their own experiences with the system. They expressed frustration that they could not discipline their children and indicated that some children challenged their parent's authority by threatening to report them for child abuse. They also felt that workers asked children leading questions and that there were more protections for children in the system than for parents. They stated that sometimes children lie to workers, but workers do not believe parents when consulted about the problem. They felt that this undermined parental authority and left parents feeling powerless. Participants also stated that one of the most important functions a parent performed was that of educating and disciplining their children. However, one parent indicated that he/she discontinued disciplining and educating his/her child because he/she was afraid of becoming involved with the CWS.

In addition, members of the focus group indicated that many teachers and workers asked children if they felt "so", which means scared or afraid, when the child was at home. Parents felt that it was necessary for children to feel "anxious or afraid" if they violated family rules, but that this was an issue of respecting family rules rather than feeling threatened by their parents. They felt that workers did not understand the difference

between a child feeling threatened at home and feeling a sense of respect, or fear, when family rules were violated. Participants also felt that many workers judged parents when their children expressed that they enjoyed staying with grandparents more than living with their parents. They stated that children did not have to follow the same strict rules at their grandparent's homes as they did in their parent's homes. Participants stated that their children were not afraid to live with them, but that they had to follow rules that they did not like when they were with their parents. They also stated that many children did not want to return home after staying at the shelter because they would not have the same freedoms at home as they did while they were at the shelter. Finally, members of the focus group indicated that the term child abuse was not the correct term to use with Vietnamese parents that disciplined their children. They stated that child abuse referred to hatred and abandonment and members of the focus group indicated that they did not feel this way about their children.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Looking at the general population, I think that minority youth are over-represented in the CWS compared to the mainstream youth.
-I guess that the Mexicans have the highest percentage.
-I think that Asian youth are over-represented in the system.
-People from South America and Africa, such as El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, are highly present in the system.
-Minority people who are newcomers to this country are more likely to get in the system than mainstream people or minority persons who have been here longer.
-Differences in culture and law are the main reasons leading to my assumption. The mainstream people create the law and become familiar with their law. Their youth were born and raised in that culture and law and were helped by their parents to function accordingly to the cultural and legal principles. While the refugees and immigrants such as Vietnamese, Chinese and other minority groups still carry their own cultural values. In addition, these newcomers greatly lack the understanding of the mainstream law.
-It is not always right that the longer we stay here, the less problem we encounter. I see many recently arrived families who live happily when they come to USA because their family, especially the children, still function in the traditional Vietnamese values. On the contrary, the Americanized children have a lot of problems since they are granted many freedoms. The children think that their parents have no right to "touch" (meaning discipline) them. This is the cultural clash creating generational conflict between parents and children.
-Some parents are afraid to discipline their children due to the law. They are afraid to get into trouble. Some "bad" children take advantage of situation to challenge their parents' authority.
-Some workers ask repeatedly "guided questions" to get from the child the answer they want. For example, I used a chopstick to discipline my child 2 years ago. I stopped doing that while my child grew older. But after a series of guided questions, my child told the worker that I hit my child 2 week ago!!! I am very frustrated with that kind if investigation.

-The workers in the system tend to believe that the child always tell the truth, but that not always true. The children sometimes lie and they know that the whole system covers their back.

-I just encounter that problem with my worker who only questions and investigates my child without informing and guiding me how to communicate or deal with my child while I share with her all I know about my child. She only protects/covers for the child, making the parents powerless.

-If they work that way, the children no longer value parental authority.

-Asian parents consider educating and disciplining their children as one of the most important works. As a result, in Asian countries students more often excel in schools, especially math in comparison with European or American students. Asian parents are very responsible, and know how to reward and discipline their children. They monitor their children's education even in college. This is unlike some other non-Asian parents who tend to lessen their parental responsibilities when their children reach 18.

-I give up disciplining and educating my child to avoid having problems with the law. Because if I discipline my child in my way, I will be in trouble. In other words, the law here ties my hands in disciplining my own children.

-Some teachers/workers often ask students/children if they feel "so" (a Vietnamese words meaning scared/afraid) at home. If the child says yes, the teachers/workers will automatically assume that the child is threatened at home.

-There is a great difference between "respect" and "afraid." I feel very disappointed when responsible staff do not understand those 2 different concepts. The child has to feel "anxious and afraid" if he/she violates the curfew and does not come home as expected. This feeling indicates the "respecting" of family rules/guidelines, not a feeling of threat from parents.

-The worker seems to question why my 3-year-old child prefers staying with my grandparents to staying with me. That worker might think that my child feels "afraid" to stay with me but that worker does not know that the grandparents let my child do whatever he/she wants while he/she has to follow the eating and playing pattern while he/she stays with me.

-I have the same experience. At home the child has to follow family expectations/rules, he/she can not play games or watch TV whenever they want. But while the system keeps the child in the shelter, he/she can play games and watch TV whenever they want. As a result, they don't want to go home. The shelter has a lot of games and children with the same age to play with. But the worker thinks that the child does not want to go home because they are afraid. This is another important factor to consider.

-The term "child abuse" is wrongly used for Vietnamese parents in term of disciplining their children. The term "child abuse" might be right for adopted parents but never for biological parents. Child abuse means hate and abandonment, but the Vietnamese parents do not have that feeling towards their birth children.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth and families from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Three participants felt that there were adequate numbers of Vietnamese staff in the CWS to meet their needs, while three other participants felt that there were not enough Vietnamese staff to meet their needs. Participants indicated that there were Vietnamese interpreters available to them in court, but indicated that there were not enough Vietnamese staff at the shelter. They also indicated that it was difficult to communicate with staff that were not Vietnamese. They felt that staff needed to be culturally and linguistically matched with their clients and that other API workers from different cultural groups could not be substituted for a culturally and linguistically similar worker.

Participants also stated that many Vietnamese workers were not necessarily culturally competent. They reported that many Vietnamese workers did not understand the culture and traditions of their clients and approached their clients from the perspective of the dominant culture, not the Vietnamese culture. One participant reported that he/she offered to teach a police officer and social worker how he/she disciplined his/her child so they would understand that he/she was not abusing his/her child. In addition, members of the focus group felt that workers only protected children and did not make an effort to understand or protect the rights of parents. They also reported that workers interrogated them like police officers and asked their children culturally inappropriate questions.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -I think there are enough Vietnamese staff to help the parents when we got in the system, except in the Children Shelter. I came to the Shelter to pick up my child and I could not find any Vietnamese staff so that I can fully and clearly explained what happened in the case. There were only non-Vietnamese staff there. Even the social workers for 2 of my children are not Vietnamese, she is Chinese. Therefore, sometimes, I feel difficulty communicating with her even though I speak English pretty good.
> -I don't think there are enough Vietnamese staff to help us.
> -There is Vietnamese staff/interpreter to help me in court.
> -The counselor for my child is also Taiwanese. So I feel hard sharing with her about the case.
> -Even though the Vietnamese worker is assigned to work with the Vietnamese family, that worker tends to work in the American way. The worker sees and thinks in the way he/she is trained in American school. Speaking the Vietnamese language does not mean that worker can thoroughly understand the cultural values and traditions that the parents coming from.
> -The Vietnamese workers thinks and works almost similarly like the mainstream workers. They might do their work right but they not yet understand what the parents going through emotionally.
> -I often ask the police and worker to come to my house at anytime to see how my family functions. I want them to know this is how we live in our culture. I talk to my kids and ask them to lie down and hit them disciplinarily on buttock. I do not abuse my children.
> -Some workers only protect the kids and not helping and understanding the

parents. This makes the children think that they are right and become more disobedient.

-My workers investigates likes a policeman. That worker keeps asking: "Why, why, why?".

-My worker gives me a very uncomfortable look! That workers asks my child: "Are you afraid ofanyone in the house?" My child replies "no." When that worker leaves, I ask my child: "You really are not afraid on anyone in the house?" My child says that he/she, of course, is afraid his/her parents, but he/she has to say "no" to that worker because if he/she says "yes" his/her parents will be in trouble.

-I strongly disagree with the worker who asks the kids: " Are you afraid?" In the Vietnamese culture, if the children are not "afraid" (meaning respect) of their parents, they are considered not filial. But in America, if the children tell the worker that they are afraid of the parents, the parents might be accused of abusing their children. Therefore, the term "afraid" is incorrectly used. In the same sense, in the electronics factory, we might feel afraid of the supervisor who can fire us if we do not do right. This does not mean that we are abused by the supervisor.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth and families from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Regarding suggestions for ways that the system might be improved, participants recommended that Vietnamese workers have a strong background in traditional Vietnamese values and cultural practices. They felt that workers needed be sensitive to their clients needs, logical in their approach to family problems, and effective in their methods of intervention. They also felt that workers needed to educate children about appropriate behavior and encourage them to abide by their family rules. Participants felt that when children were removed from their homes, they felt that they did not have to abide by their family rules and became defiant and disobedient. They indicated that workers needed to intervene with families in a culturally appropriate way that supports the family's values and cultural norms. They felt that a culturally sensitive worker could have a positive effect on families.

Members of the focus group also recommended providing prevention services for families to help them stay out of the CWS. They felt that workers needed to work with children and their families to resolve problems prior to removing children from the home. They also suggested that workers do a thorough investigation of the allegations, family practices, and family strengths to assess whether a child is better off staying with their families than being removed from their families. Participants also felt that the system should educate parents and their children about the laws in the United States, as well as educate children about how to behave in school and at home. In addition, they felt that the CWS should warn parents about their parenting techniques before they punish parents. They felt that parents that abused their children while they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs should enter the system, but parents that were disciplining their children according to their cultural values should not necessarily enter the system. Finally, participants suggested that social work education programs teach students to be culturally competent.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-I request that when hiring a Vietnamese staff that we require that person to have a strong background in the traditional values. In order to master these values, that person has to grow up and stay in Vietnam until he/she is 20. But most of the workers came here when they were young and graduated in American schools. Their English is perfect, but their Vietnamese background is not that well.

-The worker's approach must be sensitive, logical, and effective.

-The workers also need to teach the children wrong from right and encourage them to follow the appropriate family guidelines.

-Once the kid is out of the family, he/she might think that they are protected by the system/law and their parents have no rights to discipline them. As a result, they become disobedient and end up having serious behavior problems.

-Do not let the children use the worker/system as a back up for their unacceptable behavior.

-A small problem at first can lead to severe trouble later if culturally appropriate intervention is not taken properly.

-A social worker who knows how to use the child welfare law and the cultural values appropriately will create great positive impacts on the families.

-I want social workers to work more effectively in helping a family stay away from the system.

-Worker works with parents and children to resolve the family conflict/misunderstanding rather than trying to remove the kid from home.

-We request that they system deeply look at family background to see whether this is a child abuse case or just a disciplinary behavior.

-A social worker must go farther than just asking how parents discipline or punish the children. He/she must ask to know how parents reward and encourage their children. Ask parents to see how much they care for their children. Don't ask for information to accuse the parents only.

-Always consider whether the children are better at home or in the system.

-Educate the parents about the new law, teach the children about their responsibility and boundary. Do not just simply follow the law and ignore the critical challenge that the parents endure before and now.

-The system must have similar groups for youth to come here to learn about the law and how to behave properly in family and school. Parents and children have to learn at the same time. This is the way to enrich understanding in order to bridge the family gaps together.

-The worker/system should only warn rather than punish parents if they do not understand the law.

-If the parents get drunk and physically abuse their children, those parents must be trailed by the law. But do not consider trailing the parents if they use the Asian values to discipline their children.

-Educational institutions must teach cultural competency for social work students.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants felt that this research project would help the system become more culturally aware and felt that lawmakers and staff in the CWS could learn about Vietnamese cultural values by reading the results of this study. They also felt that this report would help lawmakers expand existing laws to include minority perspectives that would enhance cultural understanding. Finally, one participant stated that it was difficult to educate their children in the United States and reported that their children were becoming disobedient and disrespectful.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -I am really glad that we have this research because it will help the system to look at their work in the cultural perspective.
> -This research is the way to educate the system and lawmakers about our cultural values.
> -I think that this research is very important in helping the lawmakers to understand the diverse differences in the country. The United States consists of too many different ethnicities and cultural values, but it uses a general "American" law to rule the nation. This does not make sense. The law should be compromising to limit and prevent the problems stemming from cultural differences.

Youth

African American Youth

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Members of the focus group reported that they understood the terms cultural group and ethnicity to mean a community of people from the same race coming together. Some examples of cultural/ethnic groups the participants identified were African American, Hawaiian, and Mexican American.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -One community coming together, like all one race.
> -A gathering of a particular race.
> -Mexican American, African American, Hawaiian.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants indicated that the demographics of the children in the CWS varied by county. They stated that in Sacramento there were more African Americans than other groups. Participants reported that in Oakland, there were more Latinos and African Americans.

They reported that in Santa Clara County's children's shelter, the largest group of children were Latino followed by African Americans. They stated that Caucasians were the third largest group, Asian Americans were the fourth largest group, and American Indians were the smallest group in the shelter. One participant reported that in a group home in Palo Alto, the majority of children were African American. He/she also reported that in the past two years more Asian Americans and Caucasians were coming into the system than in previous years.

Regarding tension between youth from different cultural/ethnic groups, participants stated that in general people get along and there is not a lot of racial tension. They reported that all the kids had something in common by being in the shelter and understood what the others were going through. However, they did indicate that kids label each other. For example, if a Caucasian girl listens to rap music and dresses like a rap singer, kids would say that she's trying to be Black.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -It's more of a mix. In certain counties, (like Sacramento) there are more Blacks in facilities than any other races.
> -In Oakland there are more Mexicans and Blacks.
> -(In Santa Clara County) Mexican American is the largest group. There's starting to be more Blacks here too.
> -There are not many Caucasian or Samoan people here.
> -Not many Samoans, Hawaiians, Tongans, Filipinos.
> -I would say that American Indians (are the smallest).
> -In Palo Alto at a group home there were mostly Blacks there.
> -Over the years it has changed a little because over the past tow year I have noticed that there have been more Asians coming in and more Caucasians coming in.
> -We mix and get along.
> -It's like everybody's pretty much in the same boat and understands what each other's going through.
> -They label people.
> -I'm different than all the ethnic groups in the shelter. I dress different, I talk different, but I can still understand other African Americans. I listen to rock and hang out with Caucasians mostly and people say "oh you're white-washed" or something like that.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants stated that there were more Caucasian staff than staff of color and that there were more male staff than female staff at the shelter. They indicated that they would like more African American staff and more female staff. Participants felt that African American staff, specifically female staff, were more aware of their hair care needs and were more responsive when they needed special hair care products. They also indicated

that there was an overall shortage of staff in their cottage and that the staff shortage was interffering with their ability to get their needs met. One participant shared that with the staff shortage, they often had to wait to use the restroom until a staff was available to accompany them. They also stated that they could not take care of their hair properly because there was not enough staff to supervise them while they are grooming their hair.

Participants also felt that the staff were disrespectful to youth, yelled too much at them, had poor attitudes toward, were immature, were poor listeners, and were not empathic towards youth. They stated that they felt like nobody cared about them and that the staff did not understand what it was like for the youth to be away from their families and to live in the shelter. Overall, members of the focus group felt that the staff were not responsive to their needs, culturally and in general.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-In general, there's more Caucasian staff.
-There's not enough female staff.
-It's easier to talk to female staff than male staff, but there's more male staff than we have female staff.
-There's not enough African American staff.
-There's not enough staff for our needs.
-We have different hair than other kids and we need different products for our hair. One African American staff understands what we need for our hair.
-Our cottage is intense and we don't have that many staff. We can't go to the restroom. We don't have many privileges because there are so many kids.
-We don't have much time to (take care of our hair) because the staff won't take us up there to do it. They won't really take us because they are low on staff.
-Some staff can be very disrespectful.
-I don't like getting yelled at.
-To me, kids are people too. We want to be treated with respect like they want to be treated with respect.
-A lot of the staff have attitude problems and it effects us more than it effects them.
-The staff are still young, they are in their teen stages and they still have attitude problems and they don't know how to talk to kids yet.
-Staff are supposed to talk to us and understand us and they just get an attitude with us.
-They don't understand how it is to be here. Away from your family. Away from everyone I really care about. It's really hard. It's my first time and it's really hard.
-It feels like nobody really cares.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Participants did not have specific recommendations about how the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups. They

did have the following recommendations about how the shelter might be improved in general. Participants felt that kids needed more freedom and they should be given more leeway. They stated that it was like living in juvenile hall and they would like more understanding and empathy from staff. They felt they were being punished for something that their parents or guardians did and that they received little understanding or empathy from staff. They also felt that they were punished too much and too harshly. Participants suggested that the staff treat the shelter like a home because the kids live there full-time and they don't get to leave as the staff do.

Participants indicated that there needed to be more outings because they were cooped up all day, every day. They felt that being cooped up caused more problems between residents and felt that more frequent outings would reduce some of the tension between residents. In addition, participants felt that younger girls should not be housed with older girls because the older girls negatively influence the younger girls. They also felt that the shelter was loud and there was little privacy, specifically when they were changing their clothes. They also suggested granting kids more phone time because five minutes was not enough time.

Participants also recommended that the staff receive training in how to work with kids and that staff not favor some kids over others. In addition, they suggested improving the food, making food available in the cottages for kids that get hungry between mealtimes, and allowing kids to choose seven outfits each week, one for each day of the week, instead of only five outfits. They also suggested that social workers contact kids more frequently and respond to their calls in a timely manner. Participants reported that one girl in the shelter had been there for a month and she still had not spoken to her social worker.

Members of the focus group spoke extensively about the school and the teacher at the shelter. They felt that they were being deprived of a proper education and that the teacher was inappropriate, and at times, very insensitive and mean. For example, participants shared a story about an incident when the teacher told the students that he didn't care if they learned or not because he got paid whether they learn or not. They also shared that he calls them "shelter kids" and says he likes teaching "institutionalized kids." In addition, they stated that the teacher did not help students with questions and he did not try to help them understand the material. They also suggested that the list of rules the teacher distributes to students be condensed and easy to follow. Currently, participants reported that the list of rules was three-pages long. Finally, they stated that it was difficult to learn in that environment because there were too many kids and the class was out of control.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

  -We need freedom. A little bit more leeway.
  -Because here, basically this is one step down from juvenile hall.
    -We need more understanding. It seems like people care, but they don't at the same time.

They could be more understanding.

-I think they punish us too hard.

-I think they come down on us too hard 'cause I'm not here for my mistake.

-If we have low points we have to go to bed at 7:15 and we lose free-time and TV time.

-They make it so hard to make your levels. They are always taking points, especially at school.

-Some of us are here for what our parents are doing and it's like they are taking it out on us.

-Treat this like our home.

-I feel like we could go out to a park instead of being here 24-7 days a week unless you make your levels.

-It's very hard and it brings you down, as well as other people. You don't have nothing better to do but sit there and argue with people.

-There's a little girl in our cottage, she's 11, and she is influenced by all of us older girls. She is trying to get attention by wearing make-up and dressing provocatively.

-It's loud here. You don't have any privacy.

-There is a window on the door and if we are getting dressed, some people put tape or paper up on the window when they are getting dressed and the counselors just lift it up.

-We only get five-minutes on the phone. You can't hardly say anything. It's hard. Sometimes we get restricted from the phone and we can't even use it.

-The staff needs training on how to work with all kids.

-There's a lot of favoritism, but it's not related to the cultural stuff.

-We eat from the cafeteria and their food is so gross.

-We have food in our cottage, but they won't let us eat it.

-We only get five outfits. Some girls want seven outfits, one for every day of the week, but they say "no" unless you go to outside school.

-Social workers need to be on top of stuff because we need approval for everything. I couldn't speak to anyone outside of here because my social worker wasn't calling me back and when we first get here they need to set things up for us.

-We wait a long time. There is one girl here, she's been here for a month and she hasn't even talked to her social worker yet.

-Since I've been here I've been deprived of an education.

-The teacher is not understanding.

-The teacher told us that he gets paid whether we learn or not and he can sit there and get paid. I think that's not right because half of us think everybody's in it for the paycheck and don't care about us anyway, but for him admit that, I thought that was very wrong.

-He (the teacher) says oh I don't really have to be here to teach you shelter kids. It's like if he were in our shoes and he was in the shelter and I was a teacher he wouldn't appreciate it if I said that to him. If he was in my shoes. We don't really learn much in the class because everybody is out of control and out of hand and some kids in the high school class influence kids in the junior high class.

-He works at outside school, but he said that he would rather work with kids in facilities. And was like this isn't a facility. The terms to use to describe where we living and what we are. We are our own individuals and he's labeling us a shelter kids. I never thought about myself as a shelter kid. It's like I was raised here and I thing that is very wrong. Like we just nobody. Don't nobody really care. We just a waste--shelter kids.

-School is hard for me because I can't understand the things and he brushes me off. I feel very ignored by him. I think that's wrong. He should take some time to listen to us and see how we work and how to cope with us.

-He gives three full pages of rules and we are supposed to know them rules in paragraph form. He could summarize that into five or ten rules that would be easy to remember.

-Education is very important and I try to get as much as I can here which is very hard when I'm being kicked out of the class for little things.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Members of the focus group stated that it was very difficult living in the shelter.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-I'm just trying to keep faith, but it's hard in here.
-It's hard here.

American Indian Youth

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants stated that the terms cultural group and ethnicity were used to describe one's race. Some examples of cultural/ethnic groups that members of the focus group identified were African American, American Indian, Caucasian, and Pacific Islander.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Your race.
-Caucasian, American Indian, African American, Pacific Islander.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants indicated that Latino children were the largest population of children at the shelter followed by African American and Caucasian children as the second largest groups at the shelter. Asian American children were identified as the third largest population of children and American Indian children were identified as the smallest

group at the shelter. One participant indicated that he/she had been in and out of the shelter for four years and during those years had observed changes in the population of children at the shelter. He/she reported that four years ago the largest group of children at the shelter was Latino, but that there were fewer African American and Caucasian children and very few Asian American children at the shelter. He/she felt that there were more African American, Caucasian, and Asian children in the shelter now than four years ago. Members of the focus group also indicated that group home populations were primarily African American or Latino.

Regarding tension between youth from different cultural/ethnic groups, participants stated that most of the kids in the shelter did not separate by ethnic group. They reported that kids separated into the following groups: kids that had known each other for long periods of time because they had been in and out of the shelter together for years; kids that were new to the shelter and were only there for a short period of time; quiet kids that spent most of their time with counselors; and kids that were "stuck up and just liked to talk about everyone else." They also reported that Caucasian kids separated themselves from other groups unless they had friends from other cultural/ethnic groups. Finally, participants indicated that there was tension between kids at the shelter, but that the tension was about relationship issues between boys and girls not cultural/ethnic issues.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The largest group is Hispanic.
-The second largest groups are African American and Caucasian. They have equal numbers.
-The small group is Asian and the smallest group is American Indian. There are hardly any Native Americans.
- I've been in and out of the shelter for 4 years. When I first came here it was mostly Hispanic and after a while more African Americans started coming here and then a lot of Caucasians too. There were hardly ever any Tongans or Hawaiians or Asians. There are a few more Asians now than there were four years ago. More Caucasians now than four years ago.
-In the system there was one group home that was mostly African American and then Mexican American. It depends on the group home.
-It depends on the people, but most mix with other races.
-People mix pretty much.
-People get along pretty much. It doesn't matter what their race is.
- It depends on who your friends are. It's mostly broken into different groups like the one's that are friends for years and years they stick together. The other ones that are stuck up and just like to talk about everybody else. The kids that don't talk much, they stick mostly with the counselors. People who have been here longer are good friends.
- Caucasian people stick to their own race because they are too scared to talk to the other races and then the other races don't want to hang out with them unless they actually talk to them. It's kind of racial in here, but it depends on the person.
-Kids fight because of drama over relationships between boys and girls. Some

people just argue to argue. It's like their thing.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Members of the focus group stated that most of the staff were Latino or Asian American. They also reported that in the past there were more African American staff than Asian American staff and currently there were equal numbers of Asian American staff and African American staff. One participant felt that the demographics of the staff were constantly changing and that the ethnicity of the staff was not an issue for kids at the shelter. Members of the focus group felt that there were adequate numbers of staff of color, however, one participant indicated that there were cultural activities that he/she could not participate in because the shelter denied her out time (OT) to participate in these traditional activities.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

- A lot of the staff are Hispanic.
-A lot of the staff are Asian.
-It used to be more Hispanic and African American, but now it's more Hispanic and Asian. There are about the same number of African American staff as Asian staff.
-I have been here a long time and it always changes.
-No one ever talks about the race of the staff.
-I think there are an adequate number of staff of color.
-There was a traditional thing that my family, each year they would go to a pow-wow at different places and they would have big old pow-wow's for Native American people. It was for any tribe, not a specific tribe. Sometimes it's a specific tribe. But I used to go every year or twice a year and then in the shelter they wouldn't give me OT's for it. And that was the end of that. My family goes with their family, but since they can't take me they don't really go anymore. My little sibling, he/she lives with his/her father and he/she's all Native American and he/she gets to go. But since my family couldn't take me (and my sibling) everything is all messed up. That's been happening for years. The whole family tradition has been messed up.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups?

One participant indicated that the system could better meet his/her cultural needs by allowing him/her to attend the traditional pow-wow's with his/her family. No other specific recommendations about how the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups were made by the participants. They did make the following general recommendations on how the shelter could be improved overall. Members of the focus group indicated that kids did not have very much freedom in the shelter. They felt the shelter administration should re-evaluate the self-OT policy

so that kids could get out of the shelter more frequently. They also suggested that the staff take kids on weekly outings and that all kids be allowed to attend the outing, not just those on higher levels. They felt that more freedom and more outings would reduce the number of kids running away from the shelter.

Participants suggested that the school be improved to facilitate their learning and education. Members of the focus group also suggested giving kids more phone time because they felt that five minutes on the phone was not sufficient to communicate with their family and friends. In addition, they stated that many of their personal belongings got lost while they were at the shelter or being transferred to the shelter from group homes. They suggested that the shelter put more effort into keeping track of their personal belongings. Finally, participants felt that the younger children should not be living in the same cottages as the older kids because the older kids in the cottages negatively influenced the younger kids. One participant reported that three years ago the younger kids that needed to have the structure of an intensive cottage were not housed with older kids in the intensive cottages. He/she stated that now younger kids were housed with older kids in the intensive cottages and the younger kids were picking up negative behaviors from the older kids including becoming sexualized, cussing, and making obscene gestures.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-If they could have allowed me to go to pow-wow's that would have been good. Now the pow-wow's aren't as important to me as they were.

-We don't have a lot of freedom in here. Some people don't even have OT's unless their social worker picks them up and a social worker only has to see them once a month and they don't have to take them out. Some people don't get out for a long time. It was better before with self-OT.

-Re-evaluate the self-OT policy.

-For outings, try to take everybody. People don't get out much and if you're here for a month you need to go out at least once a week.

-Freedom. A lot of kids run away just to get some freedom. I ran away because I couldn't go any more. This place just gets to me. I was here last year and just after two weeks I ran away because I was stuck in here. Even two weeks you can't talk on the phone. You lose complete contact with everybody the whole time you are here. You get ten minutes on the phone, but that's not really enough. While you are on the phone everyone is loud. There is no privacy. I just didn't like it so I left and then I came back after seven months and I was here for two weeks again and my social worker was telling me I couldn't get out and that I couldn't get outings because I was always on a lower level. I ran away again and I came back. What's helping me stay here is that I'm gone every weekend.

-You get five-minute phone calls and that's not enough sometimes.

-It's not a very good school or program.

-The classes are overcrowded.

-You don't really get an education in here. They just give us dittos and I'm sick of it.

-We don't learn anything. He says if we walk in late and you don't know what they are doing, you can't socialize so you can't ask someone else what they are doing or you'll get your points taken off for the day and that means you get early bed and stuff. If you ask the teacher he's like talk to me after class and then you can't do your assignment for that thing and then he gives you not following directions for not doing that assignment and it's just horrible.

-We have to sign a paper before we get here that is an inventory of our things and it also states that the shelter is not liable for lost or stolen things. Every time I come here I've lost at least a box or two of my personal belongings. The shelter just says you signed that paper and we're not responsible for that. Right now I have hardly any clothes and the group home I was at before lost all of my belongings. Two bags full of clothes and a bag full of hygiene and they lost all that stuff and now I hardly have anything. They said they are not responsible for that. They don't keep track of our things. They say that there are so many kids that they don't know what to do and they are not responsible because we signed that paper. If we don't sign it we don't get our personal stuff, only shelter stuff. Everything goes into a big shelter storage and sometimes it gets lost there. Or they put someone else's name on the box and someone else gets your stuff.

-Three years ago they changed the way that kids are housed here at the shelter. Now in the intensive cottages you have kids of all ages. Even young kids with older kids. The little kids are influenced by the older kids. They are getting into sex. The younger girls are learning from the older girls and I think they should change it back to how it used to be which was divided by age group.

-There are five- year olds that will be flipping you off and cussing you out. They will be getting naked in their windows and stuff. It's pretty disgusting and the little kids see that. They tell the girls to flash them and they will get naked in their windows and dance and stuff. Little girls are having boyfriends and doing stuff in the back of the classroom and the bathrooms. I think it is disgusting.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Members of the focus group spoke extensively about the run away problem at the shelter. They stated that the shelter staff and administration did not discourage kids from running away and that if a child ran away the shelter staff would not try to find them. They reported that kids could run away as long as they were twelve years old or older, were not suicidal or homicidal, and did not have a chronic medical condition that needed continuous care. Both participants had run away many times from the shelter and had stayed away for as long as a year. They indicated that the reason they came back was because they could not enroll in school because they were listed as a runaway.

One participant spoke about being at the shelter with his/her sibling and indicated that there was a sibling cottage, but when one sibling reached the age of fourteen they were separated from their younger sibling and moved to a cottage of older kids. He/she stated that when his/her sibling moved to another cottage, he/she started running away from the shelter. Finally, participants reported that they did not ask other kids why they were in the shelter and stated that everyone had different reasons for being there.

The following are representative comment from respondents:

> -The shelter doesn't try to find you if you run away. They make you fill our your own runaway report. To runaway you just walk out the door. You have to be twelve or older and you can't be suicidal or homicidal. If you have an illness you can't run away or they come and get you if you have an illness. They say that it's okay to run away.
>
> -A lot of things happen when you're on the run. I use to go to my family's house and sometimes I would run away just to stay away from here. Before I didn't really care where I was. I went from house to house every day. I didn't care. Sometimes I would run away every day and come back and then leave again because sometimes I just can't stand it here. I came back because I couldn't get into school. I was listed as a runaway so I couldn't get my transcripts and I didn't want to just be laying around doing nothing.
>
> -When my sibling was here we were together, but then they separated us. After they separated us I started running away because my sibling and I were really close. Now, the siblings cottage doesn't let kids older than fourteen live in there. It is generally younger siblings that are allowed to live together. Then as you reach a certain age then the siblings are separated. If the sibling is under five then they go in the baby cottage.
>
> -Everyone has all different reasons for being here.

Asian American/Pacific Islander Youth

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Members of the focus group understood the terms cultural group and ethnicity to mean someone from outside of the United States. Some examples of cultural/ethnic groups that they were familiar with were: East Indian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Samoan, Asian American, Caucasian, Latino, and African American.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -Someone from out of the United States; from a different area.
> -Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Asian, Korean, Asian American, Caucasian, Filipino, Hispanic/Latino, African American, Samoan.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants indicated that there were many kids from different cultural/ethnic groups at the shelter. They reported that the largest group of children in the shelter was Latino, the second largest group was Caucasian, and the smallest group was Asian American. One participant felt that Caucasians were not the second largest group of children in the

shelter and indicated that he/she did not know which group of children was the second largest group.

Regarding tension between youth from different cultural/ethnic groups, participants stated that there is not racial tension between groups at the shelter. They reported that groups do not segregate by culture or ethnicity and that most youth from different cultural/ethnic groups get along. One participant indicated that some groups do not like other groups. Members of the focus group reported that the tension at the shelter was based on cottage rivalry and relationship issues, not racial issues.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There are a lot of kids here.
-The largest group is Mexican American.
-The second largest group is Caucasian.
-The smallest group is East Indian, Samoan, Vietnamese; kids from Asia.
-It's hard to say, but I don't think that Caucasians are the second largest group.
-Everyone mixes. They don't stay together according to ethnic group.
-Some groups don't like each other.
-I don't like the Chinese and they don't like me.
- There is tension, but it is not between ethnic groups. It's kids stuff. Fighting over little things. The tension is between cottages. We are at Randall and there is another cottage called Valley and most of the kids from Valley don't like the kids from Randall. That's just how it is from the beginning: Valley vs. Randall--even before we came. Usually the conflict between Valley and Randall is over the cottage full of boys. There are pretty girls in Randall and then one of the boys from the boy's cottage wants to talk to them, then one of the girls from Valley will come out and say "he's mine." Tension happens around that, not if you are Asian or Black or anything else.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants indicated that a majority of the staff were Caucasian. They reported that a staff member's ethnicity was not important to them and that there were enough Asian American staff to meet their needs. Members of the focus group felt that it was important for staff to be easy to talk to and good listeners. One participant stated that he/she felt that staff were more like friends than counselors, while another participant felt that the staff were not helpful to children in the shelter.

The following are representative comments from participants:

-There are lots of Caucasian staff.
-Even if they're not Asian, it's okay. We can still be close to them. It's just who they are. Ethnicity doesn't matter.
-There are some Asian staff. There is enough Asian American staff for us.

-I like the staff. I wouldn't change the staff. It doesn't matter what the ethnicity of the staff is. What matters is if we can talk to them. they are not just like here are the rules and just follow these. They listen to us.
-I see them more as friends than staff.
-There aren't staff that help me.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Members of the focus group did not make specific recommendations about how the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups. They felt that the shelter, as it currently operated, was satisfactory, but they had several recommendations. Participants suggested that the food be improved and that the shelter invest in more shoes and clothing for the kids. They stated that many of the kids at the shelter were not able to pack any of their own belongings before coming to the shelter and might not feel comfortable in the clothing available at the shelter. They also suggested improving the school. Finally, participants indicated that they liked it when they were able to cook and eat in their cottages.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-The shelter is okay now.
-Change the food. It is horrible. Put a little more effort into cooking.
-They don't cook Asian food that we like to eat. I can understand that because they can't cook something from each different culture, but the food is so bland.
- Get new clothes and shoes. There are a lot of clothes and shoes that people don't want to where. Sometimes kids get picked up from school or something and they don't see their parents usually for a while and they don't have anything. There is a big storage thing full of clothes and sometimes they don't feel comfortable because you don't know who used them. And the shoes are like the shelter shoes. It's not fun walking around wearing shelter shoes and clothes when everybody else has their clothes. Have a cleaner place for the clothes.
-I think that they should make their school a little better. I've been to their school. They have school here year round and I think that's not fair because the kids that are here during the summer have to actually get up as early and go to school even when other kids (who aren't in the shelter) aren't going.
-What the kids think is that this is just the shelter, this isn't school. They don't care, but I think if they work a little harder and let them know that this is a school and get right to work. What I've seen last time I was here is the teacher just gives kids free time, but the school is really bad.
-I didn't like the school here because there was a lot of drama. The kids just cuss at the teacher and then they get suspended and then they have to go to bed at 8:00. There's not a lot of learning at the school here.
-Sometimes our counselors cook in our cottage. One of them knows how to cook really good and he/she will make lasagna.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants discussed how they were able to attend outside school. They stated that if a child wanted to attend outside school they must talk to their social worker that would then make arrangements for their release to attend outside school. They indicated that the shelter provided transportation to and from school.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> - To go to outside school you have to talk to your social worker and they have to fill out a report to give to the people up front so that they know that it is okay. They provide transportation to school. For me, my social worker knew that I wanted to go to outside school so she just made that happen for me.

Hispanic/Latino Youth

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Participants stated that they understood the terms cultural group and ethnicity to mean different groups of people based on their race. Some of the groups that participants indicated as examples of different ethnic and cultural groups were African American, Caucasian, and Chinese.

The following are representative comments from participants:

> -Lots of different colors of people.
> -Different groups of races.
> -I think of Chinese and Black and White.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Members of the focus group reported that Latino children were the largest cultural/ethnic group in the shelter and that Asian American children were the smallest cultural/ethnic group in the shelter. They also reported that Caucasian children were the second largest group and African American children were the third largest group in the shelter. Participants indicated that there were very few American Indian children in the shelter, but that there was a substantial number of children that were part or half American Indian in the shelter.

Regarding tension between youth from different cultural/ethnic groups, participants stated that there was not any tension between youth that was race based. They stated that all the kids in the shelter had something in common and that commonality superceded any issue about race. They stated that kids did not fight over race or gang-related issues

in the shelter. They indicated that the tension between youth in the shelter was focused on relationship issues and issues of jealousy.

The following are representative comments:

> -In the shelter, the largest group is Mexican American.
> -The second largest group is White.
> -The third largest group is African American.
> -The smallest group is Asian.
> -There aren't many American Indians, but there are a lot of kids that are half Indian.
> -No, you don't ever see that going on in here. Even if guys outside are in gangs, they don't bring it in here.
> -Why would you want to fight in the shelter? Everybody knows what everybody else is going through.
> -If you want to know about the race thing, no one fights over race or gang issues in here.
> -There is a lot of drama in here between girls over guys. It's jealousy. the drama is about relationships and jealousy, not ethnic groups.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants indicated that a large number of the staff was African American and that there were few Latino staff at the shelter. Participants felt that if the staff were treated with respect, they would treat the children with respect. They also indicated that if a staff did not like a child that child might not receive appropriate interaction from that staff member. Two participants felt that the staff adequately met their needs and one participant felt that occasionally the staff met their needs.

Members of the focus group spoke at length about the high school teacher and the school at the shelter. They felt that the high school teacher did not adequately explain the material to students, especially new students; that he did not make reasonable efforts to help students understand the material; that he was not kind toward the students; that he punished students unfairly; and that he singled out African American students more frequently for punishment than other students. Participants felt that the school was focused on "babysitting" students not educating them. Finally, participants stated that it would be beneficial to hire Latino staff to work in the school.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

> -There's a lot of Black staff.
> -There aren't many Mexican American staff at the shelter and it's cool. As long as they respect me.
> -If you treat them with respect (it is good). If they don't like you then they can do whatever they want. It depends on how they feel about you.

-Overall, they meet our needs.

-Sometimes the staff meet our needs.

-The teacher is really bad. The high school teacher is really mean and lies a lot. He treats kids really bad.

-When I was new (they were taking a test) and I didn't know the words on the test. He told me that I didn't have to take the test. Then he said a word (that I didn't understand) and I asked him what that word meant because I had never heard it before. He told me that it was on the test and gave me a zero on the test.

-(The teacher) singles out Black kids and puts their names on the board even though other kids are doing the same thing.

-I don't like the school here. It's like babysitting.

-It would be better if there were more Mexican American teachers because the teacher is really bad.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Participants did not make specific recommendations about how the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups. However, they felt that the shelter should consider the following improvements. They felt that there should be more outings, even daily outings, and that these outings should include all kids on level two or higher. They stated that they felt like they were in a locked cage and felt that more outings would result in fewer children running away from the shelter. One participant indicated that he/she had an advocate and, therefore, was able to go out regularly. Participants stated that kids that did not have an advocate or family members to take them out could spend long periods of time in the shelter without any time away from the shelter.

Members of the focus group felt that more freedom should be given to youth. They suggested self-OT's and more phone time as possible ways to give youth more freedom. In addition, one participant felt that shelter employees should trust kids and give them more responsibility. He/she stated that when they leave the shelter they would have a lot of responsibility and that the shelter should help them build that skill by giving them more responsibility while they were in the shelter. Participants also felt that social workers needed to work more quickly to get children and youth out of the shelter. They indicated that many social workers did not return phone calls resulting in kids languishing in the shelter for months. Participants indicated that it was important for social workers to communicate with their kids often while they were in the shelter and to help them get out of the shelter quickly.

Other recommendations included: improve the school; hire new teachers for the school; improve the food; have food available in the cottages; allow kids to keep their make-up in their rooms; improve the beds; and improve efforts to keep track of their personal belongings while they are in the shelter. Finally, participants felt that the cleaning personnel did an excellent job at keeping the shelter clean.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Take us on outings. It may be a lot of kids, but they should take level two and higher on all the outings. Take us out daily and to more places. Sometimes we sit here all day, especially in the unit. You're there all day.

-It's like a locked cage.

-Get more out time because if you are in here too long, that's why people run away. Run aways would go down a lot if they let us out more. You can only go out if your worker signs you out and thinks you are responsible enough to handle it out there.

-Some people have advocates and they take you out. I had to wait a year for an advocate to get it. Anyone can have an advocate, but you have to be good to get an advocate. If your have family that is willing to take you out, you don't need an advocate.

-More freedom.

-I want self OT's.

-More phone times. We only get 5 minutes a day if we are on level 1 including talking to your family. They should extend that because when we first come you can only get five minutes and I want to talk to my family and tell them how you are doing. They should give you more time.

-They should put more trust on some kids. A lot more responsibility because when you leave you are going to have a lot of responsibility so you might as well start now.

-Get us out of here. Our social workers do not call us back. Work harder to get us out. I know they have a lot of kids, but don't leave us in the shelter for months. Communicate with me. Help me get out of this place.

-The school needs to be fixed. New teachers. Change is required because he's not helping any of the kids. All the kids burst out and they are suspended every single day. It is just like babysitting school. We just sit there and we don't do nothing.

-Improve the food.

-In my cottage the food is always gone.

-Why can't we have our make-up?

-The beds hurt my back.

-Our stuff gets lost. They send it to different places.

-The cleaning ladies do an excellent job.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants spoke about the difficulties of having relationships in the shelter and about having roommates while living in the shelter.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

- I don't understand why they have relationships in here because people come and go.

-People don't trust each other because kids come and go and they could leave any

day and go anywhere. What's the use of having a relationship if you can't even trust anyone.

-People come in here with problems and I don't want to have a relationship with them and bring any more problems on them. Or be another strain on them. I have to take care of myself before I can think about anybody else.

-Some of us have roommates and some of us don't. I don't like roommates because sometimes they stink or they are just dirty people.

-You would be lucky to have a nice roommate that doesn't touch your stuff and doesn't get in your business. But usually they are people who smell. They have bad hygiene and they are in your room stealing your stuff.

White Youth

1. Can you share with the group your understanding of the terms cultural group and ethnicity?

Members of the focus group stated that culture was the belief system, rituals, and behavior patterns taught by one's family. They reported ethnicity to be one's color or race. Some examples of cultural/ethnic groups in society identified by participants were African American, Caucasian, Chinese, Native American, and Vietnamese.
The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Your culture is how you were raised.
-Ethnicity is what color or what race you are.
-Caucasians, African Americans, Native Americans, Chinese, Vietnamese.

2. Based on your experience within the system, what would you say about the numbers of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups in the system?

Participants reported that there were many different cultural/ethnic groups in the shelter. They indicated that the Latinos were the largest group, African Americans were the second largest group, Caucasians were the third largest group, and Asian Americans were the smallest group in the shelter. However, they reported that the number of children from a specific cultural/ethnic group varied by age. For example, participants indicated that there were more young Caucasian children than African American children, but fewer older Caucasian kids than older African American kids in the shelter. Participants also reported that in other parts of the system, like group homes, a majority of the youth were African American, Latino, and Caucasian. One participant indicated that in the foster homes he/she had been in, most of the kids in those homes were Caucasian.

Regarding tension between youth from different cultural/ethnic groups, participants stated that, generally, did not segregate according to race. They reported that fighting between kids in the shelter was not racially based and that most of the fights were about relationships and jealousy. Members of the focus group felt that some kids made racial comments, but that most youth were joking when they made these comments and that

there was not serious racism among youth at the shelter. Participants felt that Caucasians received more racial comments than other groups.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There's a lot of different cultural groups here.
-The largest group is Mexican Americans.
-The next largest group is African Americans.
-Then Caucasians and the smallest group is Asians. There are hardly any (Asians).
-There are more little White kids and more little Black kids.
-There are fewer older White kids.
-There are mostly Mexican Americans and Blacks in group homes.
-Some group homes have mostly Whites and Mexican Americans.
-In the foster homes that I've been in, the kids are mostly White.
-Groups of kids mix at lunch and dinner in the cafeteria.
-Sometimes when they are sitting in the coach they do separate by race.
-There's a lot of fights and drama in the shelter, but they fight about guys. They don't fight about race.
-Fighting is not racially based.
-At times there is (racism). Some (kids) are just joking, but others really mean it.
-People make comments, but it's not an ongoing thing and it's not a major problem.
-I don't think anyone is really racist. They just make different comments. Half the time they mean them and half the time they don't. They just say things 'cause they're mad.
-I don't think the race issue between kids is a serious one.

3. What about staff? Are there enough staff members to meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups?

Participants indicated that most of the staff at the shelter were African American and Latino. Overall, they felt that staff were responsive to their needs, but felt that some staff treated youth of their same ethnicity better than youth of other ethnicities. Participants felt that there was an adequate number of Caucasian staff to meet their needs. However, one participant reported that one Caucasian staff member was more strict with Caucasian youth than other youth. Participants reported that the ethnicity of the staff was not important. They felt that the individual characteristics of the staff, like being open and easy to talk to, being available when youth needed to talk, being good listeners, and being respectful to youth, were the most important characteristics for staff members to possess.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

- Most of the staff here are African American or Mexican American.
-Yes, the staff are responsive to our needs.
- They seem to treat people of their same race better. On a more friendly basis.
-There are enough White staff.

-One of the cottage managers was really hard on me. I asked him/her why and he/she said because I'm White. He/she's White and he/she said that he/she expects more from me because I'm White too. He/she's really hard on girls.

-I don't really notice. I don't look at their color. If they are a counselor, they are a counselor.

-The race of the staff doesn't really matter.

-What matters about the staff is that they are easy to talk to, they are available to talk to. The way they treat you, if they treat you with respect. If they listen to us. It is more about their individual characteristics than what race they are.

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different ethnic/cultural groups?

Participants did not make specific recommendations about how the system might be improved to better meet the needs of youth from different cultural/ethnic groups however, they did make several recommendations. They felt that staff should treat every child equally, that staff should not favor one child over another, and that staff should not form close relationships with children in the shelter. They also felt that staff needed to be consistent and fair with consequences, that staff should not flirt with youth in the shelter, and that the administration should listen to their complaints. Members of the focus group also felt that the staff did not listen to youth and that staff did not keep conversations with youth confidential. Finally, participants felt that there was no privacy at the shelter, that they needed more space, and that the school needed to be improved.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-Treat everyone equally.

-A lot of counselors have favorite kids. The favorites are not racially based.

-Some staff spend more time with some kids than others. I think the staff shouldn't get too close to anybody.

-Staff need to be more consistent with consequences and give consequences to all kids, not just some kids.

-Staff shouldn't flirt with kids. Keep it on a professional level. If staff do flirt with kids, we can file an incident report. Sometimes they don't listen to you, especially if you are by yourself. But if a lot of people go together, that's when you start winning the battle.

-Staff are just there to do their job. They don't listen to anything we have to say. And then that's why a lot of people run away from the shelter because they feel locked up. Nobody they can really talk to. A lot of people leave because they are fed up with the way counselors are treating them and the way the staff are disrespectful of us. When a counselor doesn't want to listen to me and keeps interrupting me I just want to leave.

-The staff are constantly in your face.

-There is no privacy. It feels like everyone is in your business and knows your business.

-We need more space.

-The school here is not so great. You don't learn anything in school here.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants spoke extensively about running away from the shelter. All three participants had run away from the shelter a minimum of three times. One stated that "I ran away just to get out of here. You can't get out." Another stated that "Most of the time I run because the staff expect so much of me because I'm supposedly this mature person. They give me responsibilities that I don't want." Members of the focus group described the shelter as a "dome in space or something. It feels like a bubble. Sometimes we are inside for a whole week and that's when it sucks...even when we go outside it doesn't feel like we are outside (because) we can only go into the courtyard between the cottages."

Participants felt that there were not many incentives to stay at the shelter, that the staff and administration of the shelter did not encourage kids to stay, and that the consequences for leaving generally did not outweigh being out of the shelter for some period of time. They also reported that there was often a smell of marijuana in the shelter and they attributed this to all the kids that run away and then bring marijuana back into the shelter when they come back.

The following are representative comments from respondents:

-There are not big reasons to stay.
-They don't encourage us to stay.
-When you come back, the staff give you consequences, but it depends on what cottage you are in. Some have more consequences than others.
-The whole inside of the shelter smells like weed because people keep going out and coming back and bring it in.

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