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The Race Factor in Child Welfare: The Role of Poverty There are many racial issues that have been acknowledged over the years and there have been many changes in the institution working for blacks and other races. However, we still have individual discrimination among the society in this world today. Research shows very clearly that African-American families and children are treated far differently by the system than white families and their children. Latinos, too, suffer from racial and ethnic bias.

Asians also have this problem, but the state and city don't really keep up with the data for that population, so there is no way of knowing for sure. This is a time of change in child welfare for this new millenium. The number of children the city removed from parents and placed in foster care increased even as crime rates declined, drug use was down, and the general standard of living in poor neighborhoods had improved. The impact of this increase is proportioned more towards African Americans and Latinos. Research shows that black parents are far more likely to be reported for abuse or neglect than whites.

Therefore, black children are twice as likely as whites to be removed from the home. I am not arguing that children don't need protection, but some parents refuse to care for their children in a good way, and these kids often have to be placed in someone else's care. Racism is defined as the unfair control that one group places over another group due to the belief that those to be controlled are inferior to others. The removal of a Black or Latino child from his or her parents is without a doubt a racist action in a system controlled by whites.

Many minority leaders argue that because our child welfare system serves minorities and the very poor, it has become a series of interventions that tear up families, rather than providing a support network that gives them what they need to survive. Poverty, drugs, and abuse are critical factors in a government worker's decision to remove a child. One national survey of abuse and neglect cases in the 80's found that children in families with incomes below \$15, 000 were five times more likely to be victimized by their parents than those with incomes above that level(Pelton, 1994). Low-income parents are often under greater stress and are more poorly educated.

And black and Latino families are far more likely to be poor than white families. The government data reflect a huge racial disparity in the way families are treated by the city's child welfare system. In 1996, two of every five African-American children in confirmed-abuse and neglect cases were removed from their parents' custody. Nearly half were removed in 1995. And nearly three in five were removed in 1994.

Meanwhile, only one of every five white children in confirmed reports was removed in 1995 and 1996, and one of every four in 1994. Families whose children are not taken away are usually referred to community-based social service programs, drug treatment or counseling. Racial and cultural bias, as well as higher rates of poverty among African-Americans, appears to be among the key factors underlying the removal of children, according to academic researchers and child welfare practitioners.

Racial bias, however, was not the only factor underlying this disparity. A study points out that the black women may have had less stable housing and

inadequate access to prenatal services-two factors researchers determined were statistically related to the removal of a child. Black leaders in the advocacy and nonprofit fields say that black children are removed from their families more often than white children primarily because of age-old stereotypes about black families.

The structure of African-American families is very different from that of American society as a whole. A single mother usually heads many black families and Black families also have far lower income on average than white families, partly because so many black households have only one parent." Children have always been an important component of families. However, changing family patterns have meant that children are no longer central to our definition of family(Eitzen & Zinn 352)." Sometimes it is good for the child to get removed from a family.

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