“If You Do Nothing Else, Please Take Time to Listen”:
Black Families and the Child Welfare System.

Open Classroom - Building a Transformative 21st Century Research Agenda Series

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Overview

1. Introduction by Hope Newton
2. Black families in the child welfare system
3. Research on versus knowledge development in partnership with families
4. Parents’ Experiences in Family Court – a case example
5. Open Discussion
“If this system were truly devoted to protecting children and promoting their welfare, why weren’t the vast majority of its clients white? The United States has consistently reserved its best resources for white people. Black people have had to fight tooth and nail to gain access to services meant for whites only. Conversely, the institutions where government has confined Black people, like segregated schools, housing and prisons have been substandard. Why would this state system that takes children from their parents, be any different.” - Dorothy Roberts, Torn Apart, 2022
A History of Exclusion

• Segregation

• Access to entry marked by:
  – Channeling into worst conditions
  – Active labeling of Black children as “mentally ill, delinquent or even criminal” (Rosner & Markowitz, 1997)

• This legacy remains within the CW system with new language utilized
Epistemology Matters!

Yet, it can be utilized to support what should be unacceptable.
Segregation Ends – A Good Thing (one would think?)

• Once segregation was legally ended, and Black families gained access to services, the CW system became increasingly punitive, moving from a primarily in-home, supportive model to one that utilizes out-of-home placement as a viable option especially for families of color.
Disproportionality

• A palatable word for racism in action in CW

• Quantification of the decades long higher number of reports made, accepted, removals, extended stays and worse outcomes for Black children and families (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Maloney et al., 2017; Shipe et al., 2017)
Contemporary inquiry into the legacy of Anti-Black racism built into the child welfare system has exposed the ways in which this system now serves as an effective tool of surveillance and policing for Black families — (Detlaff et al., (2021); Roberts (2022); Stephens (2022))
"Nothing About Us Without Us" – NYC
CW Affected Parents and Parent Advocates
A Collaborative Research Agenda

- Inclusive research, from the outset, strengthens findings

- Building relationships with families and communities to support the democratization of knowledge related to their lives
Parents’ Experiences of Family Court

• Epistemological framework
• Sampling (parents, parent advocates, attorneys, and SWs)
• Development of Interview Guides
• Dissemination of Findings to Key Stakeholders
• Scholarly Distribution of Knowledge
References


