# Who am I? Who do you think I am? Stability of racial/ethnic self-identification among youth in foster care and concordance with agency categorization.

**Contributors: Molly Oberweiser Kennedy, M.Ed., Jessica Schmidt, Ph.D., M.S.W.**

## Literature Review

♦ The presence of racial disproportionality for children of color in child welfare is well documented.

♦ While research exists about racial identity and fluidity for some groups, there is currently no literature on this topic for foster youth.

♦ Youth in care may lose connections to their culture through the residential instability of foster care and spend less time with those in their family and community.

♦ While there are specific guidelines for child welfare (45 CFR 1355) and schools (Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity) regarding categorizing youth of color, no research exists examining the concordance of youth self-identification and agency categorization.

♦ **Positive racial identity is connected to well-being and buffering negative effects of racism** and discrimination while **misclassification can lead to poorer mental health outcomes** for some groups, especially Native American youth.

## Methods

♦ Secondary data analysis of *My Life* RTC

♦ Racial/ethnic categories across all three data sets were in alignment with "Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity"

♦ Participants responses collected from baseline and one-year term assessments

♦ Child welfare and school data was collected from the agencies respective electronic databases

## Sample

♦ n = 122

♦ Eligible youth were:

- ♦ between 16.5 and 18.5 years of age;
- ♦ resided w/in an urban, tri-county area;
- ♦ were under the guardianship of the state's welfare agency;
- ♦ had completed baseline and one-year term assessment;
- ♦ for whom foster care and school data collection had been completed

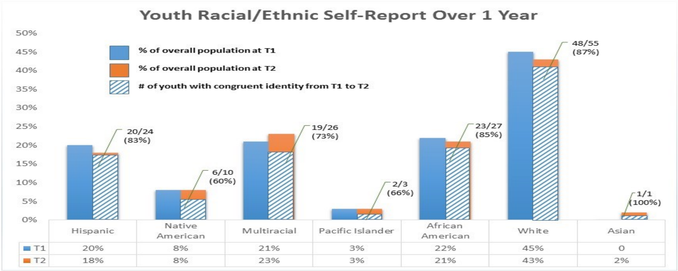
## Research Questions

♦ How stable is the racial and ethnic self-identification of youth in foster care over time?

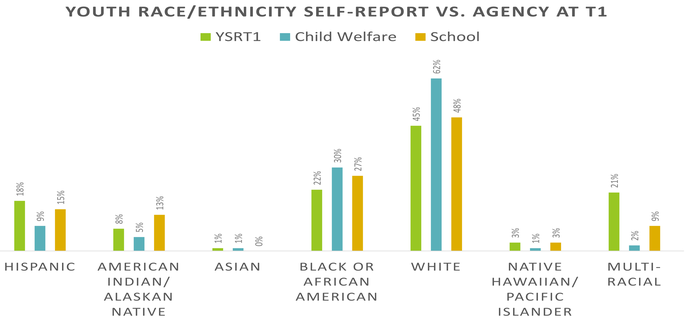
♦ To what extent does child welfare's racial/ethnic designation for a youth match the young person's self-report?

♦ To what extent does the school's racial/ethnic designation for a youth match the young person's self-report?

♦ To what extent are the racial/ethnic classifications used by school and child welfare similar?




- Kappa= .73; substantial agreement of ethnic/racial identity from T1 to T2
- Nevertheless, nearly 1 in 5 (19.6%) youth changed their ethnic/racial identity over time
- Native American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial youth at T1 were most likely to change identity at T2




- Kappa =.45; moderate agreement between youth and child welfare
- Kappa= .51; moderate agreement between youth and schools
- Kappa= .56; moderate agreement between school and child welfare
- Discordance between self-report of Native youth and child welfare was 90%
- Youth-child welfare discordance was 96% for multi-racial youth

## Discussion

♦ There is initial evidence that nearly 20% of youth in foster care will report fluidity of their racial/ethnic identity over time.

♦ Late identification or misidentification of children and youth in child welfare, particularly Native American young people, has negative implications as opportunities for culturally appropriate services and foster placements might be missed.

♦ ICWA finding.....

♦ Evidence from this study suggest racial disproportionality is underreported when child welfare records are compared with youth self-report and school records.

♦ Results suggest a shift from the practice of cultural competence to cultural humility to strengthen service provision and provide more concordance between youth and families' self-reports and agency data.

Schmidt, J., Dubey, S., Dalton, L., Nelson, M., Lee, J., Oberweiser Kennedy, M., The Research Consortium to Increase the Success of Youth in Foster Care. (2015). Who am I? Who do you think I am? Stability of racial/ethnic self-identification among youth in foster care and concordance with agency categorization. *Children and Youth Services Review*, (56), 61–67.

Funders and Partners:

PPS

Eunice Kennedy Shriver NICHD National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

ies INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

DHS Oregon Department of Human Services