## Chapter 3: Youth in Conflict Cases, 1995-2000

A total of 22,573 youth entered the child welfare system under the Youth in Conflict program between 1995 and 1999. Of these, 20,158 have known ethnicities. We focus on these youth in this section of the report. We examine the rates relative to the Colorado population for both child welfare case opening and for out of home placement. For youth in the child welfare system, we examine ethnic differences in demographic variables and presenting problems, followed by a focus on service patterns and out of home placement. We present information on ethnic patterns in youth's residence at case closure, including indications of transfer to the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC). We examine the likelihood of a second case following closure of the first case, and the service patterns for second and third cases. We present two predictive models using ethnicity, gender, age, income, program target and service pattern to predict out of home placement and the likelihood of a second case. Finally, we examine some service patterns and predictive models across the 10 large counties and across regions of the state.

The format of the report is as follows. For each section a data figure is presented along with a short discussion of conclusions that may be drawn. We begin with the question: Do youth of different ethnicities enter the Youth in Conflict program area at differing rates?

# Entry Rates for Youth in Conflict Cases by Ethnic Group

Figure 3.1: YIC Cases Opened, Children 0-17, 1995-1999, Rates per Thousand
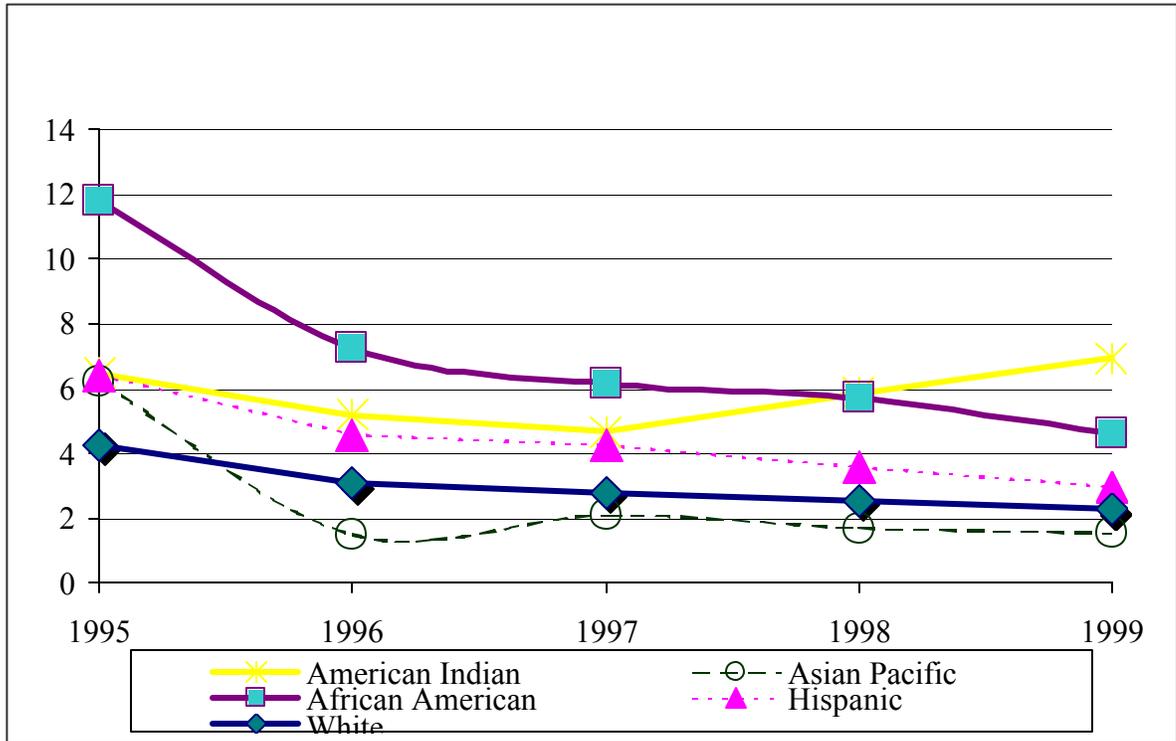
The data figure uses census data to calculate the rate per thousand at which youth of differing ethnicities enter Colorado's Youth in Conflict program. Clearly differential entry rates are seen. African American youth enter services at a higher rate than youth of all other ethnicities, except for American Indian youth in 1999. The entry rate for African American youth have been declining, however it remains some 2.3 time greater than the entry rate for White youth. Entry rates for Asian / Pacific Island youth were greater than those of Whites in 1995 but have been below that of Whites in subsequent years. Entry rates for Hispanic youth are declining and are now slightly above those for Whites. Entry rates for American Indian youth are higher than those for Whites and have been increasing substantially in recent years.

**Placement Rates for Youth in Conflict Cases by Ethnic Group**

Figure 3.2 Children Ever Placed in First Case, YIC Cases 1995-1999, Rates per Thousand
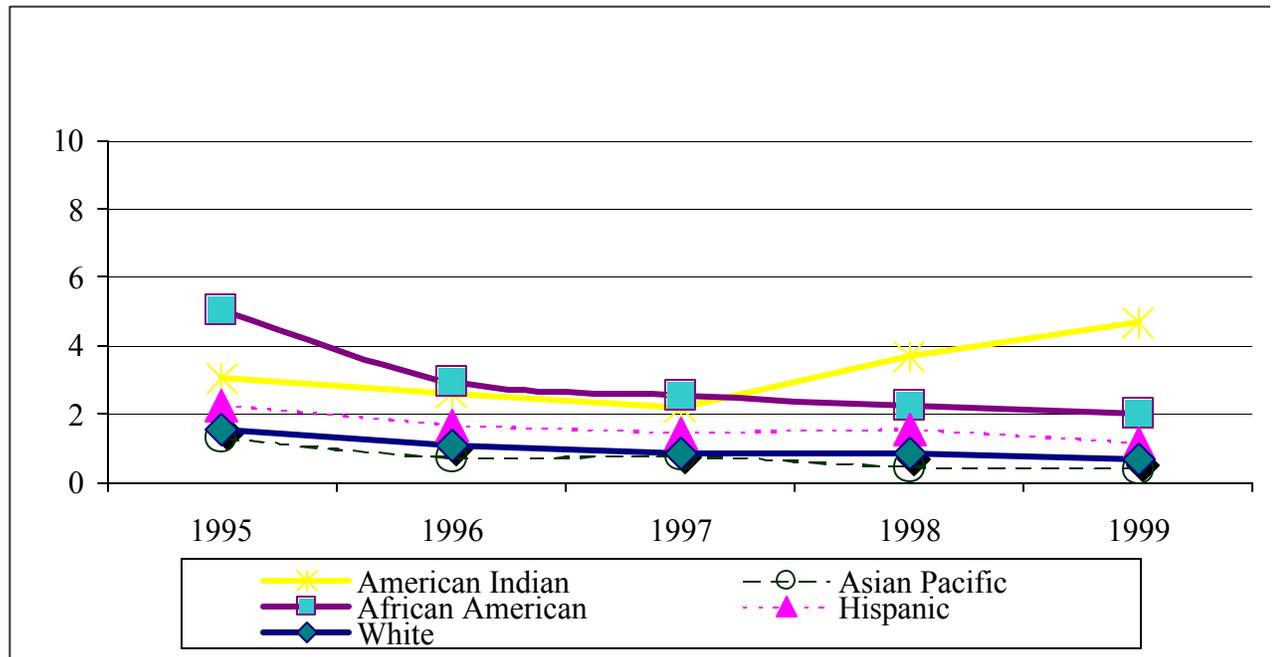
This data figure also uses census data to calculate placement rates per thousand. A pattern similar to entry rates can be seen. Placement rates for White, Hispanic and Asian / Pacific Island youth are similar. Rates for African American youth are falling such that over-representation is less over time, however rates are still twice that of White youth. Rates for American Indian youth rose substantially in 1998 and 1999 to a level where American Indian youth were almost placed at a rate almost 5 times that for White youth.

Demographic Characteristics of Minority Youth, Youth in Conflict Cases

Figure 3.3: Minority Youth Served, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents
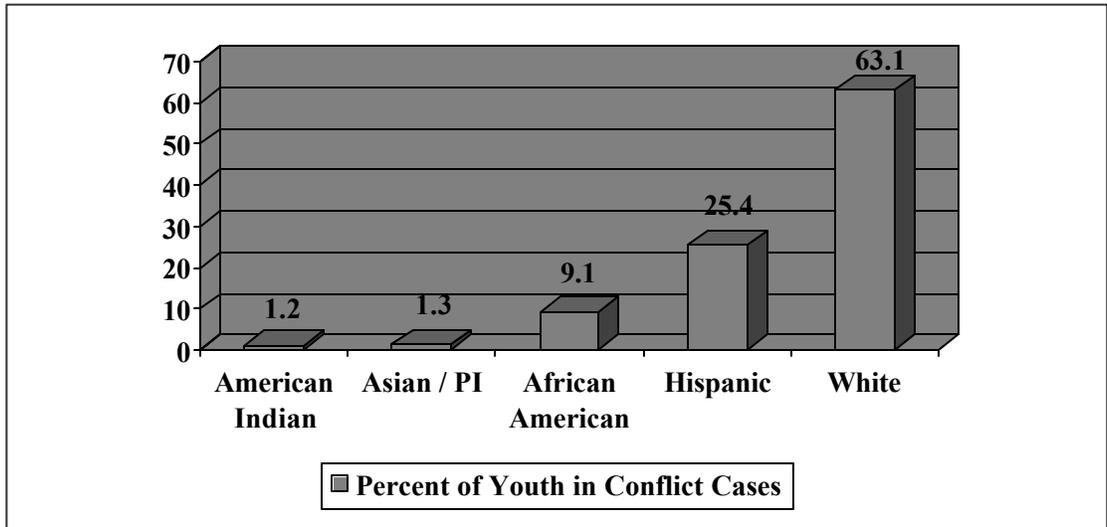

Most youth in the Youth in Conflict program area are White, followed by Hispanic and African American youth. American Indian and Asian / Pacific Island youth make up slightly more than 1% of YIC cases. As can be seen below, African American girls are less likely to be involved in the YIC program area than are girls of other ethnicities.

**Figure 3.4: Gender by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases, 1995 – 2000, Percents**
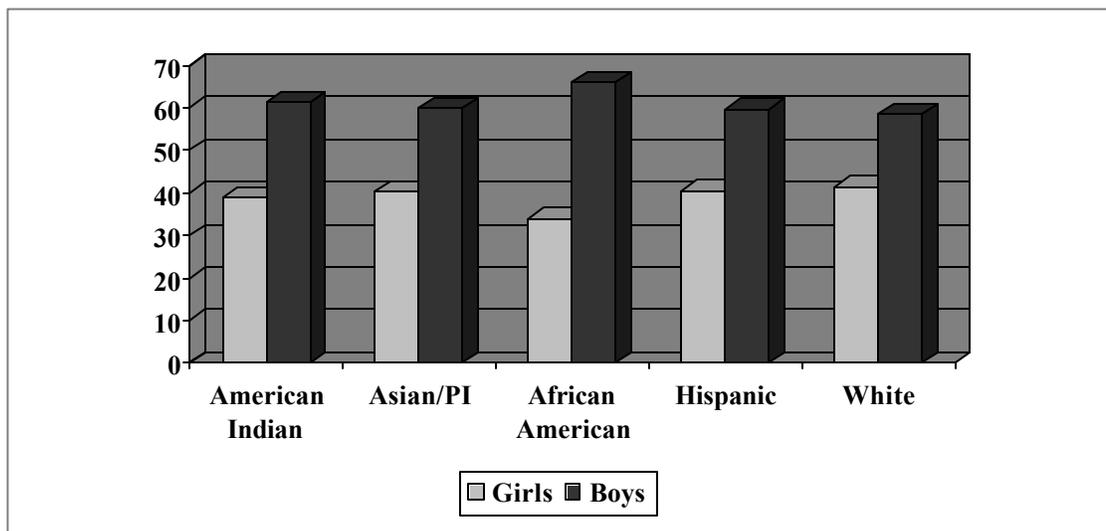
Youth vary by age and ethnicity as well. Specifically, American Indian and Hispanic youth are most likely to be aged 12-15, while Asian / Pacific Island youth are most likely to be older.

Figure 3.5: Age Groups by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases, Percents
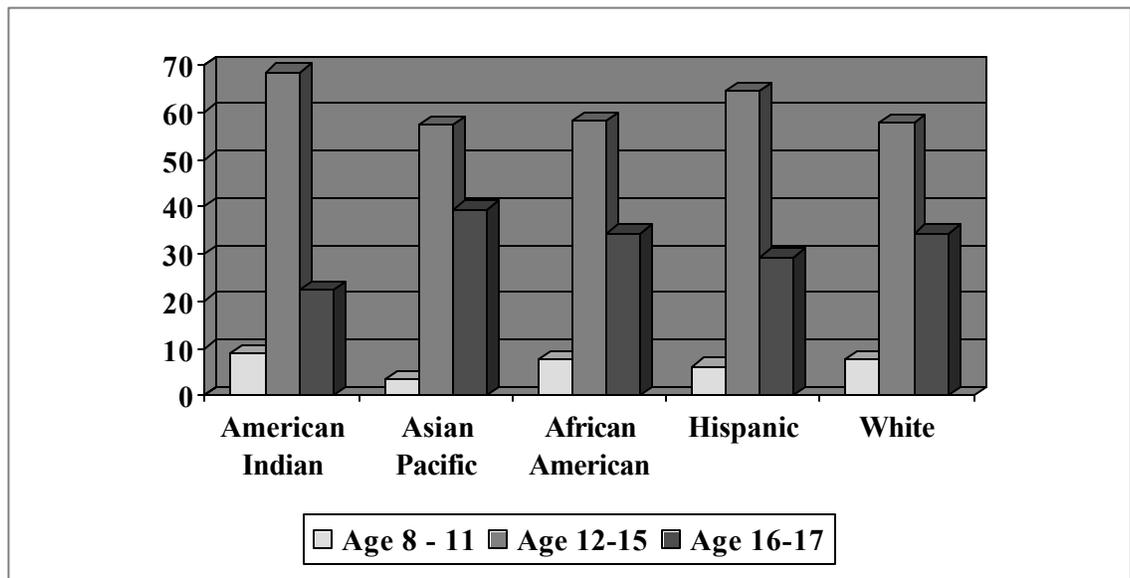

With regard to income, only one imperfect income variable is available. This variable describes those youth who are eligible for IV-E status based purely on income, and represents youth from extremely poor families. However, it must be cautioned that many other youth may come from poor families. American Indian youth are by far the most likely to be represented among the extremely poor.

Figure 3.6: Extreme Poverty by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases, 1995 – 2000, Percents
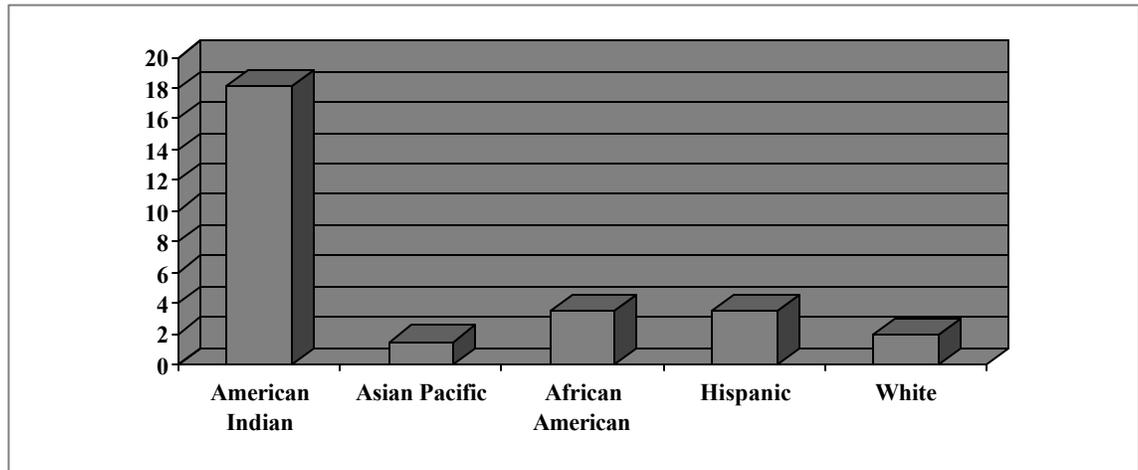
Permanency Goals

Figure 3.7: Permanency Goals in the First Case by Ethnic Group, Percents
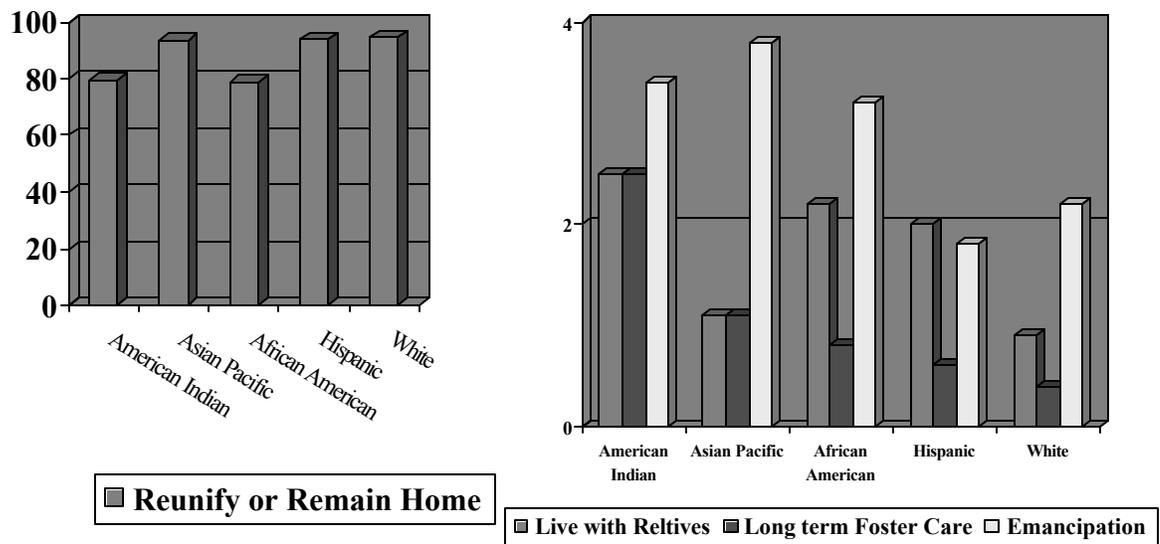

The vast majority of youth, more than 75% for all ethnicities, have a permanency goal to return home or to remain home. There is greater ethnic variation among those with other permanency goals. American Indian, African American and Hispanic youth are most likely to

have a goal to live with relatives. American Indian, Asian Pacific Island and African American youth are most likely to have emancipation goals. American Indian youth are by far the most likely to have a goal of long term foster care.

Presenting Problems

**Figure 3.8: Program Target by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
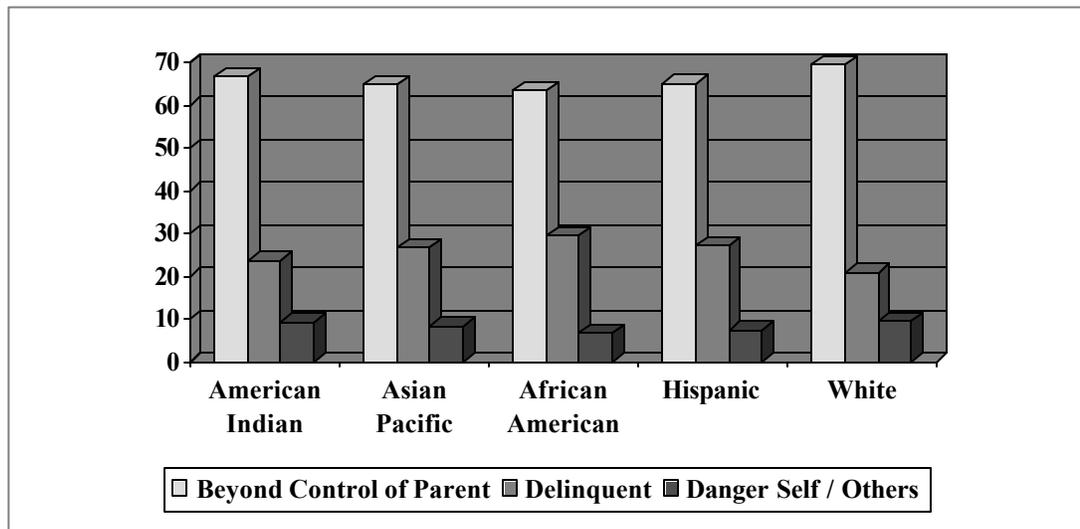
Many variables of interest in the CWEST data have large amounts of missing data and are, therefore, not reliable descriptors of the Youth in Conflict population. However, program target can be recoded into these three conceptual categories and is available for the entire data set. As can be seen African American youth are more likely to have committed acts that could cause a delinquency adjudication, followed by Hispanic and Asian / Pacific Island youth. American Indian and White youth are most likely to be seen as posing a danger to themselves or others.

One example of variables of interest where significant amounts of missing data interfere with use are those recording special considerations of youth. These variables also illustrate another data problem, that is, whether caseworker characterizations of youth problems may be

biased. Special emotional and behavior considerations are coded for only 69% of cases (15,970 youth). Of these youth some 60% have one of the three codes described below. As can be seen, workers code significantly more minority youth as having behavioral problems as opposed to emotional problems. This raises the question of whether data elements that describe risk factors may themselves be the product of biased perceptions.

**Figure 3.9: Special Considerations by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
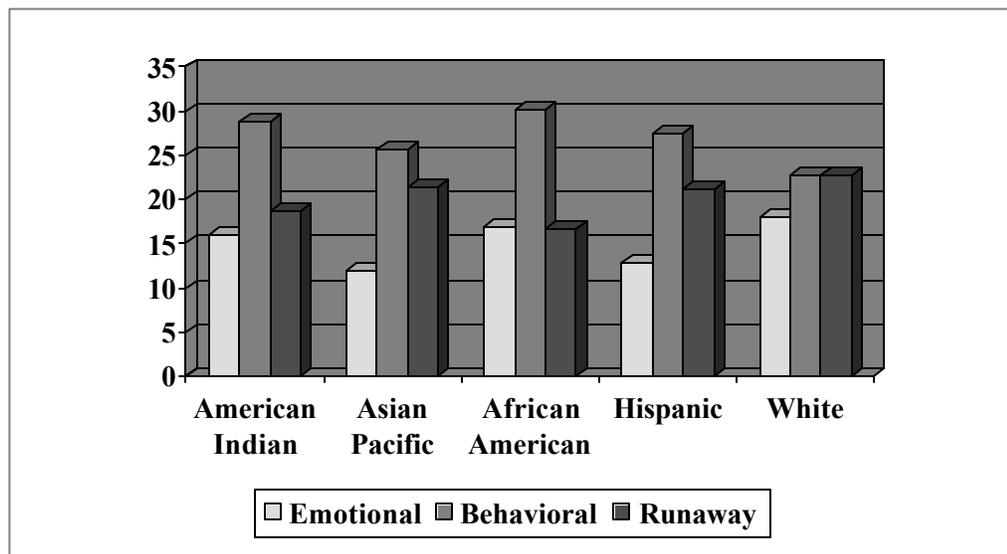
Service Patterns

We examine service patterns in several ways. The CWEST data system is complex and was designed to pay providers under contract with county Departments of Social Services for services provided to clients. Thus, service data is only available for paid services. All those provided by county caseworkers are invisible to the data system. Using account codes, we have classified accounts as being Core services, Out of Home Placement (OOH) or Casework Services provided by the county worker. Core services are those designated as Core under the Child Welfare Settlement Agreement as well as similar services described in the old coding system. Core services are typically intensive services for the child and family aimed at preventing the

need for placement. Here we examine patterns in the first and last services of the case, as well as a variable describe the broad pattern of services across the case: All Core, Any OOH and Casework Supervision only.

**Figure 3.10: First Service of the First Case by Ethnic Group,
YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
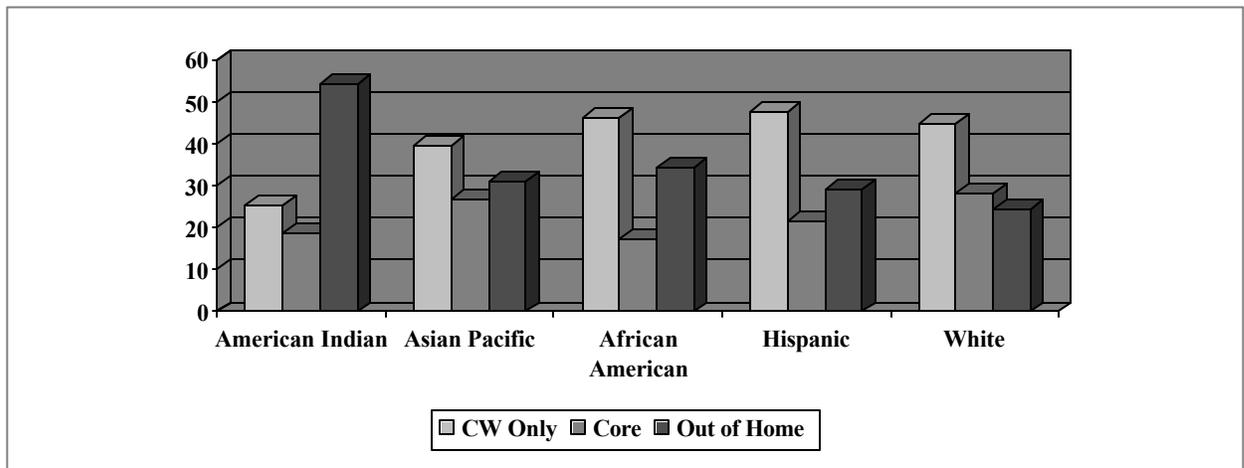
Minority youth, especially American Indian youth, are significantly more likely to experience out of home placement as the first service in their first YIC case. They are significantly less likely to receive core, in-home supportive services. White and Asian / Pacific Island youth are most likely to receive in-home services. African American, Hispanic and White youth are most likely to receive casework supervision only.

The following data figure describes the most common types of out of home care used for youth placed as a first service. Minority youth are significantly more likely to be placed in temporary shelter care than are majority youth. White and Hispanic youth are more likely than other groups to be placed in family foster care. American Indian youth are more likely than other youth to be placed in RCCF, while White, African American and Hispanic youth are more

likely to be placed in Residential Treatment Centers (RTC) care. The later is the most secure and intensive level of care.

Figure 3.11: Types of First Placement by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents
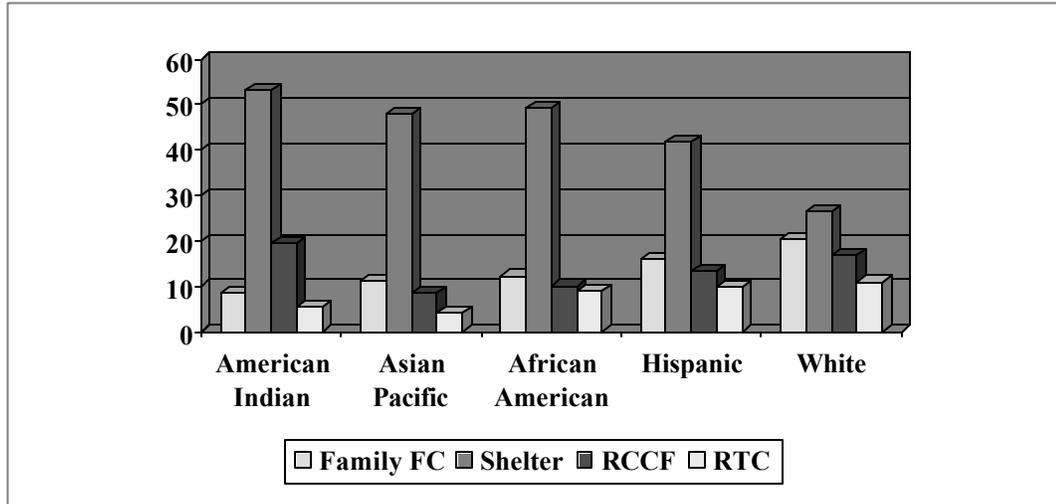
All minority youth, especially American Indian youth are more likely than White youth to have a last paid service as out of home care. On the other hand, White and Asian / Pacific Island youth are most likely to end the first case with a Core service.

Figure 3.12: Last Paid Service by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents
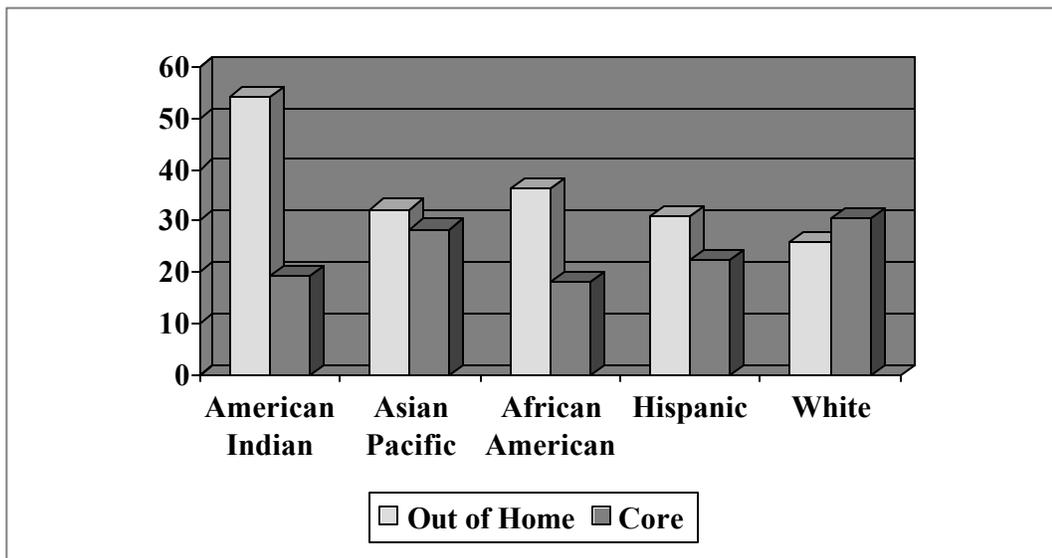
Service patterns across the first case may be summarized by looking at patterns consisting of one or more Core services, patterns that include at least one out of home placement and patterns that involve only casework supervision.
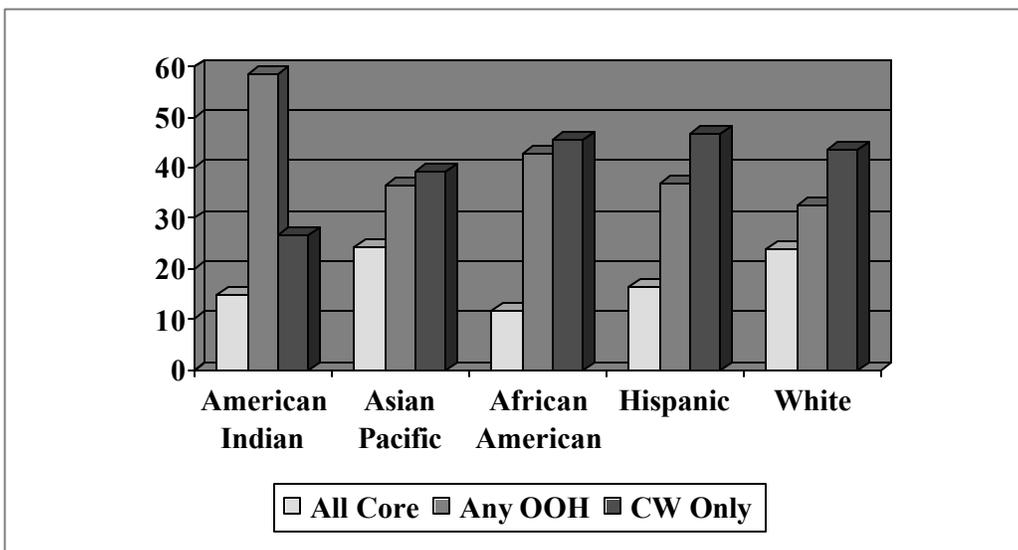
Figure 3.13: Broad Service Pattern by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents

Again, minority youth in YIC cases, especially American Indian and African American youth are most likely to have been placed at least once in the first case, followed by Hispanic and Asian / Pacific Island youth. More than half of all American Indian youth are placed during the first case. White and Asian Pacific Island youth are most likely to have received a combination of Core services.

The following table examines the use of Residential Child Care Facilities (RCCF) for minority youth. American Indian youth are by far the mostly likely to experience this level of care during the first case. RCCF are the gateway to the more intensive Residential Treatment Facilities and often represent the point at which youth move from family and group-home

settings to more restrictive, institutional settings, and are the most expensive options available.

For use of any non-family setting (Group-Home, RCCF, RTC) the pattern is similar (American

Indian 29.1%, Asian / PI 18.9%, African American 21.2%, Hispanic 18.1% and White 18.3%).

**Figure 3.14: Use of Residential Child Care Facilities by Ethnic Group,
YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
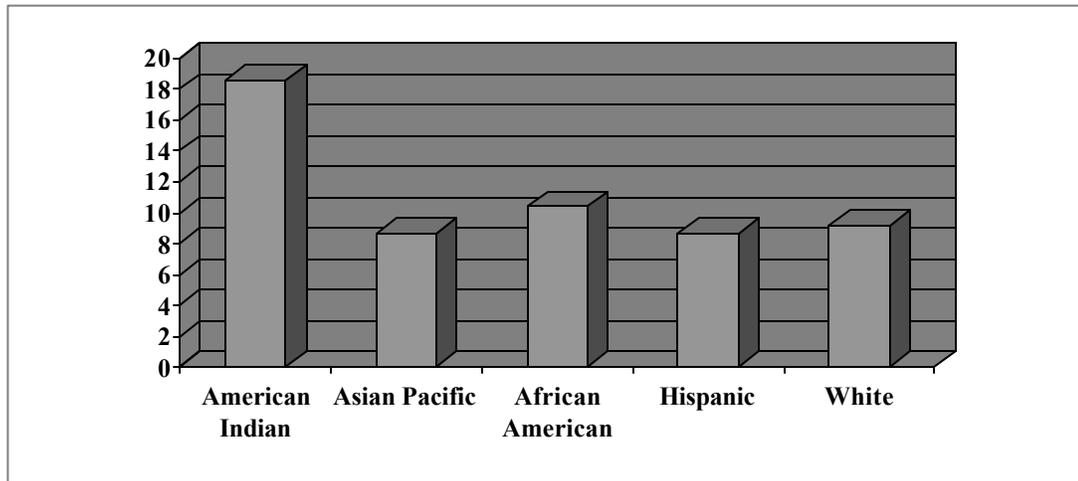
We examined differences among ethnic groups on several service related, continuous

variables such as the number of services in the first case, number of placements, number of Core

services, and percent of the first case spent in out of home care.   With regard to the number of

service accounts in the first case, African American youth have significantly more service

accounts than do Hispanic or White youth. There are no other significant differences

Table 3.1 Average Number of Total Services (accounts) in YIC Case 1		
Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian	2.17	3.07
Asian Pacific	2.06	2.70
African American*	2.2.4	2.86
Hispanic	1.92	2.38
White	1.92	2.40

* African American youth have significantly more service accounts than Hispanic or White youth.

White youth receive significantly more Core Services than do American Indian, African

American or Hispanic youth.

Table 3.2 Average Number of Core Services (accounts) in YIC Case 1		
Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian	1.24	.85
Asian Pacific	.97	.85
African American	.42	.83
Hispanic	.48	.93
White*	.58	.90

   * White youth have significantly more than African American and Hispanic Youth.

American Indian, African American and Hispanic youth have significantly more out of home

accounts than do White youth.

Table 3.3 Average Number of OOH Services (accounts) in YIC Case 1		
Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian*	1.24	1.94
Asian Pacific	.97	1.90
African American*	1.14	2.08
Hispanic*	.85	1.67
White*	.77	1.63

   * American Indian, African American and Hispanic significantly different from White.

American Indian youth spend significantly higher percentage of case length in out of home care

compared to all other ethnicities.

Table 3.5 Percentage of Case Spent in OOH in YIC Case 1

Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian*	.30	.4
Asian Pacific	.14	.29
African American	.13	.25
Hispanic	.11	.23
White*	.11	.24

?? * American Indian significantly different from White.

African American youth have significantly longer cases than do White youth.

### Table 3.6 Length of Case 1 in YIC Case 1 (Days)

Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian	171.69	245.75
Asian Pacific	173.46	277.62
African American*	169.7	252.84
Hispanic	157.3	232.80
White*	150.2	230.12

* American Indian significantly different from White.

Residence at the Close of Case 1

The majority of youth of all ethnicities reside with parents at case closure, however American Indian and African American youth are least likely to do so. On the other hand, American Indian and African American youth are most likely to live with kin or guardians. When these two percentages are summed, youth of all ethnicities are almost equally likely to live in a kinship environment of some kind. A relatively small proportion of youth are living in DYC facilities at case closure. However, African American, Asian Pacific Island and Hispanic youth are more likely than White and American Indian youth to be living in DYC placements at case closure.

**Figure 3.16: Residence at Case Closure by Ethnic Group,
YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
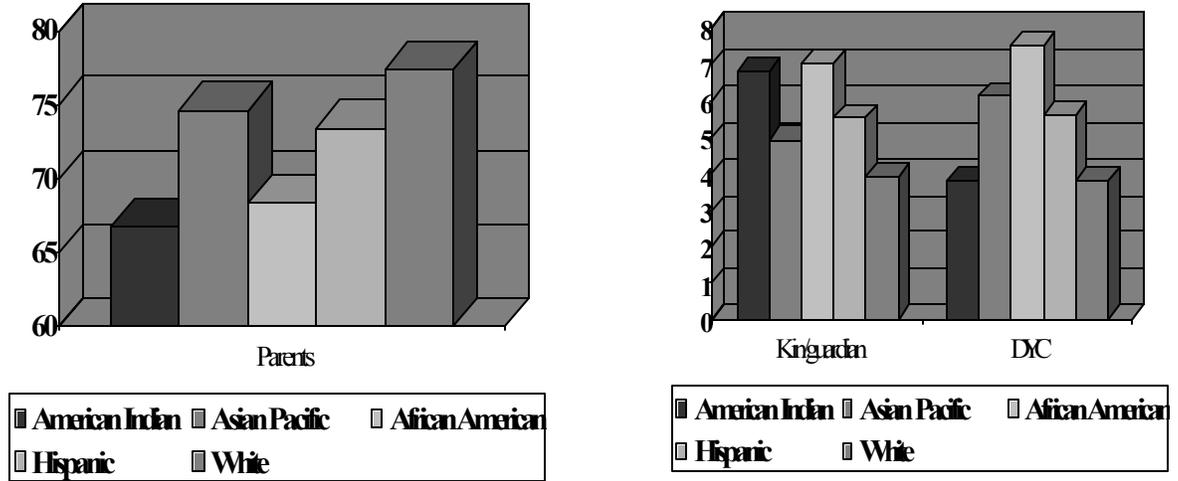
Subsequent Cases

Overall 30.5% of youth return with a second case, some 6911 youth. American Indian

and African American youth are significantly more likely to return to Youth in Conflict

programs with a second case following closure of the first case. Moreover, African American

youth have significantly more cases opened than do Hispanic or White youth, although these

differences are not large.

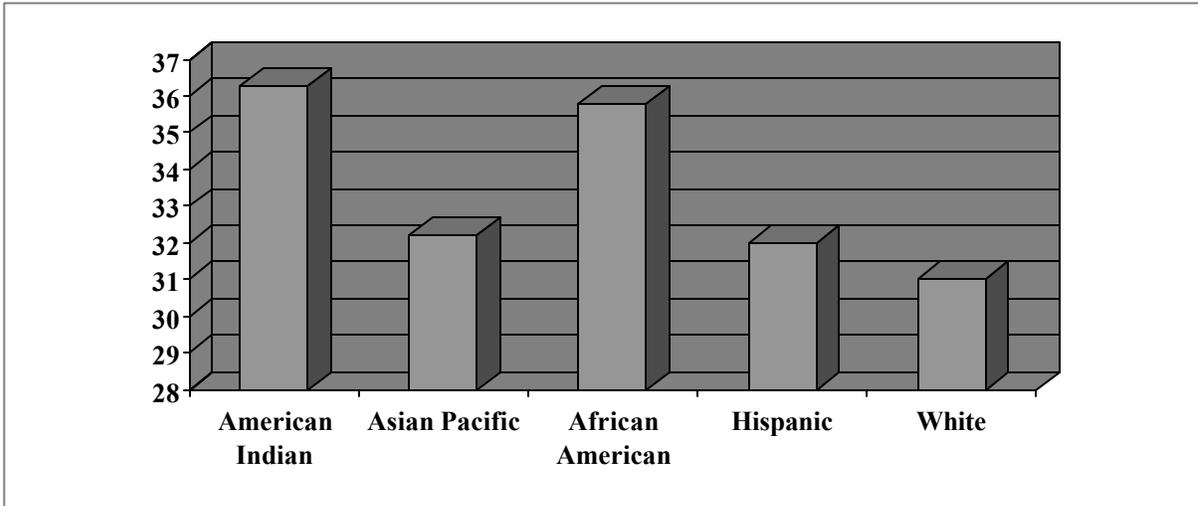**Figure 3.16: Second Case by Ethnic Group, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**

Table 3.7 Average Number of Open Cases for YIC Cases		
Ethnic Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
American Indian	1.50	.76
Asian Pacific	1.42	.70
African American*	1.55	.91
Hispanic*	1.48	.85
White*	1.46	.84

* African American significantly more than Hispanic and White.

The first service of the second case follows a similar pattern to services in the first case. American Indian and African American youth are most likely to receive placement as a first service in the second case, followed closely by Hispanic and Asian / Pacific Island youth. In contrast White youth are most likely to receive a first Core service and least likely to receive placement as a first service.

Figure 3.17: First Service of the Second Case by Ethnic Group,
**YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
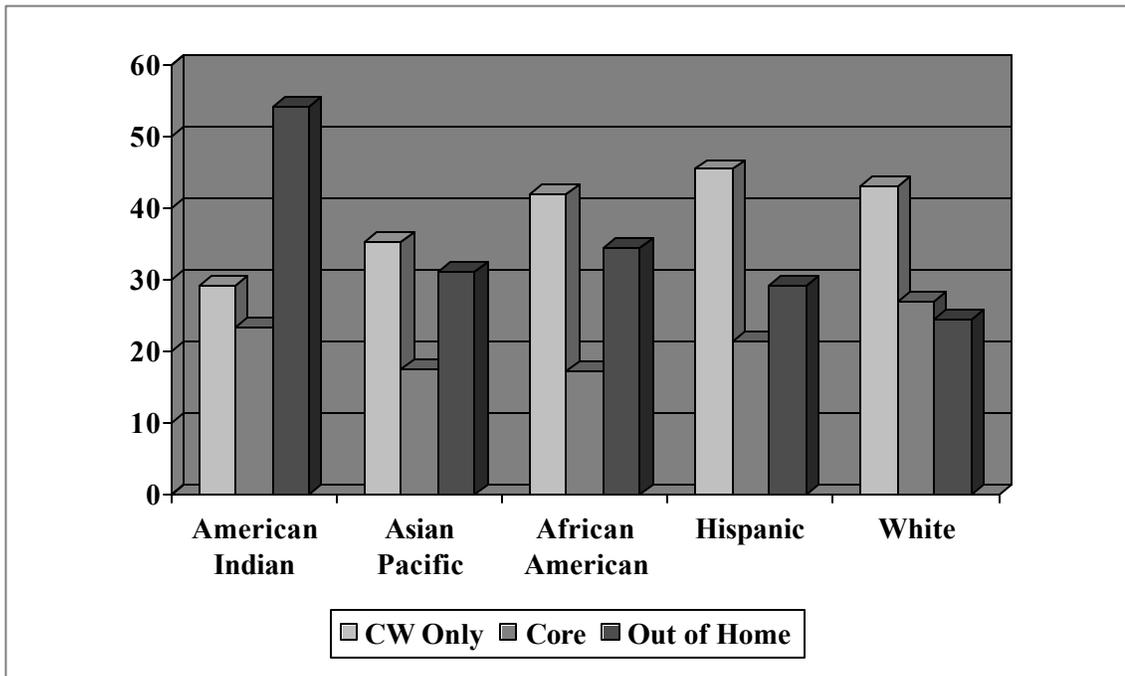
Differences in overall placement patterns during the second case are smaller, than was seen during the first case. Almost 40% of White and Hispanic youth are placed at some point during the second case. The percentage for American Indian and Asian / Pacific Island youth is greater than 50%, followed by Asian Pacific youth at 44%.

**Figure 3.18: Ever Placed Out of Home in the Second Case by Ethnic Group,
YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
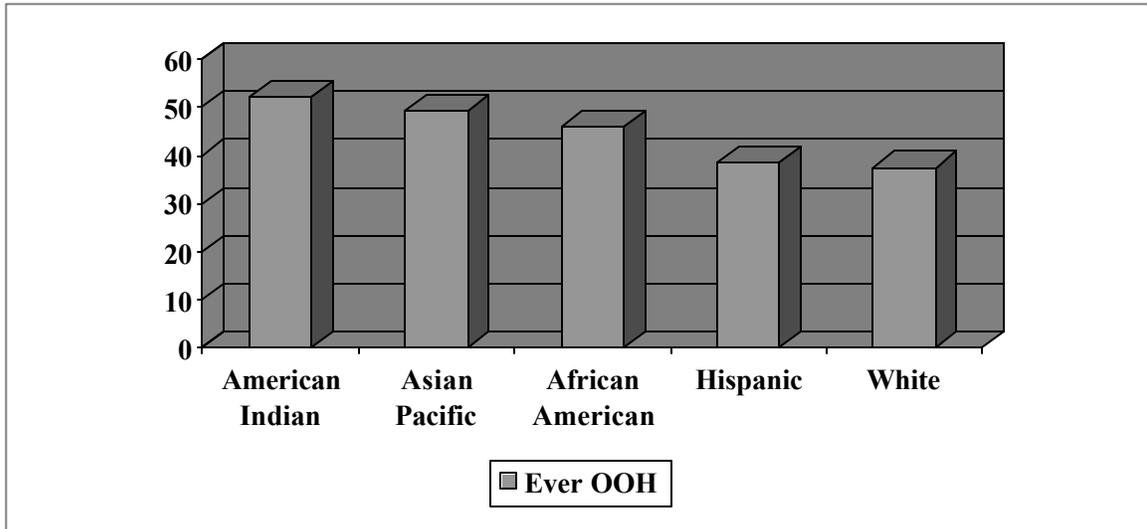
Only 2167 youth return for a third case. In some ways service patterns follow the now familiar pattern. White youth are still most likely to receive a first, Core service compared to minority youth. Minority youth, especially American Indian youth are more likely to be placed as a first service as compared to White youth.

**Figure 3.19: First Service of the Third Case by Ethnic Group,
YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
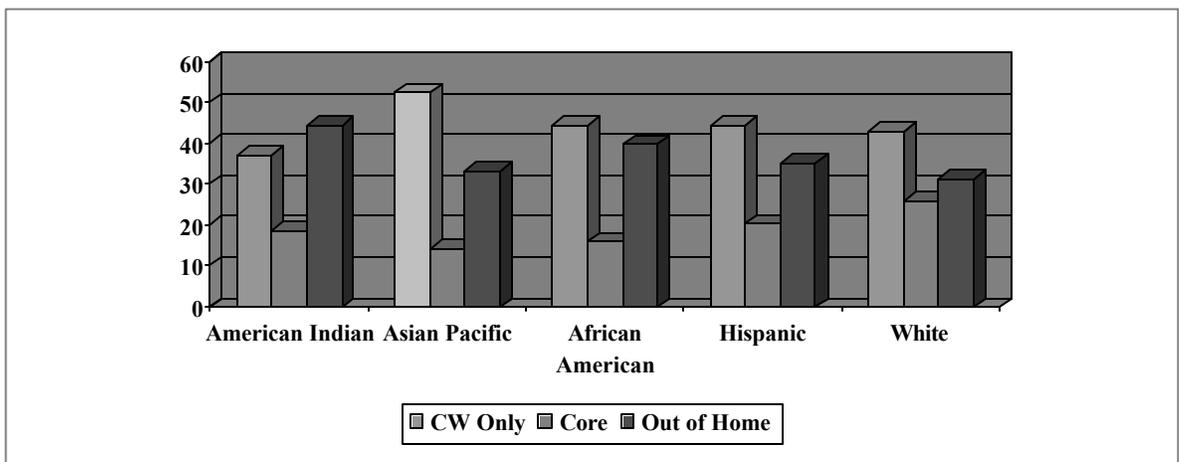
Predicting Placement in the First Case: Logistic Regression

We used logistic regression to predict placement during the first case. In addition to ethnicity, we used the demographic and service need variables that were available for all cases:

- ?? Age
- ?? Gender
- ?? Program Target
- ?? Extreme Poverty.

Logistic regression is used to predict a dichotomous outcome (placed vs. not placed) and gives an assessment of both the statistical significance and influence of each variable in the model.

Before presenting our results we must emphasize that all of our models explain very little of the variance in the outcomes we seek to predict. What this means is that while some variables are significantly associated with the outcome and increase the odds of its occurrence, we know that we are missing many, many explanatory variables. Given the amount of variance explained by these models, we must conclude that ethnicity is but one of many variables influencing case outcomes and may not, ultimately have the strongest association. We also caution that models vary greatly by county and region indicating that local assessments are probably most appropriate.

Table 3.8: Logistic Regression Predicting Placement

Variable	Effect of the Odds Ratio
Ethnicity (compared to White)	
American Indian	2.29 times more likely
Asian / Pacific Islander	no difference
African American	1.42 times more likely
Hispanic	1.18 times more likely
Program Target (Compared to Beyond Control of Parent)	
Delinquent Acts	1.17 times more likely
Danger to Self or Others	1.22 times more likely
Extreme Poverty	52 times more likely
Gender	no difference
Age	8% more likely for each additional year
Percent of Variance Explained: Nagelkerke R Square = .07	

All Minority youth except Asian youth are more likely to be placed during their first case than are White youth. The magnitude of the effect of ethnicity is greatest for American Indian youth who are 2.29 times more likely than white youth to be placed. African American youth are 1.42 times (42%) more likely to be placed than white youth and Hispanic youth are 1.18 times (18%) more likely to be placed than white youth. However this model does not explain much of the variance in placements. This means that many other factors not included in this study may be major predictors of placement.

Among the variables we have, extreme poverty is the strongest predictor of placement. Youth from these families are 52 times more likely to be placed. Older youth are more likely to be placed. Youth served because of delinquent conduct or danger to self or others are more likely to be placed.

Predicting a Second Case: Cox Regression

We used Cox regression to predict the probability of return in a second case. In addition

to ethnicity, we used the demographic, service need and service pattern variables that were

available for all cases:Age

- ?? Gender
- ?? Program Target
- ?? Extreme Poverty
- ?? Broad service pattern (All Core, Any OOH, Casework Supervision Only)

Cox regression is used to predict the time to the occurrence of a specific event. While it is used

to predict an event and its likelihood of occurrence over time, the technique is similar to logistic

regression in that it also identifies significant predictors and their odds ratios.

Table 3.8: Cox Regression Predicting a Second Case

Variable	Effect of the Odds Ratio
Ethnicity (compared to White)	
American Indian	no difference
Asian / Pacific Islander	no difference
African American	1.15 times more likely
Hispanic	no difference
Program Target (Compared to Beyond Control of Parent)	
Delinquent Acts	16.4% less likely
Danger to Self or Others	14.5% less likely
Extreme Poverty	no difference
Gender	Boys 6.5% less likely
Age	11% less likely for each year older

African American youth are 15% more likely to have a second case opened than are

White youth. Boys are less likely to return in a second case as are youth who are older at first

entry to the system. Youth who are served due to conflict with parents are more likely to return

than are those served due to delinquent conduct or danger to self or others.

County and Regional Patterns

We examined regional differences and differences among the 10 big counties for a number of service pattern variables and for each of our predictive models. A complete set of county and regional profiles may be found in Appendix B. We will not attempt to summarize these findings in detail. However, it is important to note that there is wide variation among counties and regions on almost all service variables and in both predictive models. This finding emphasizes that minority over-representation is very much a local, contextual event. Some predictive models explain a good proportion of variance; others explain almost nothing. This finding emphasizes that while ethnicity and other variables may play some part in influencing the case outcome, many other factors are at play.

Regions were constructed as follows:

- ?? Four Corners: Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, San Miguel
- ?? Southern Tier: Alamosa, Baca, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Huerfano, Las Animas, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache
- ?? Northern and Rural: Everything else except the 10 big counties
- ?? Denver Metro: Denver, Arapaho, Jefferson, Adams and Boulder

- ?? DYC Central: Eagle, Summit, Lake, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson, Douglas, Elbert, Arapahoe, Lincoln
- ?? DYC Denver: Denver
- ?? DYC Southern: Park, Teller, El Paso, Fremont, Chaffee, Saguache, Custer, Pueblo, Mineral, Rio Grande, Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Huerfano, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Crowley, Otero, Bent
- ?? DYC North: Jackson, Larimer, Weld Morgan, Broomfield, Boulder, Adams, Logan, Sedgwick, Phillips, Yuma, Washington, Kit Carson
- ?? DYC Western: Moffat, Routt, Grand, Rio Blanco, Garfield, Pitkin, Mesa, Delta, Gunnison, Montrose, San Miguel, Ouray, Hinsdale, Delores, San Juan, Montezuma, La Plata, Archuleta

Here we present a few regional comparative findings for YIC cases focusing on areas of the state serving differing ethnic groups.
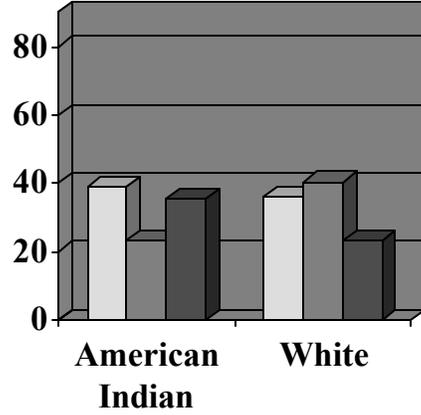
Figure 3.20: American Indian Youth, Four Corners vs. Metro Denver
First Service of the First Case, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents

Four Corners
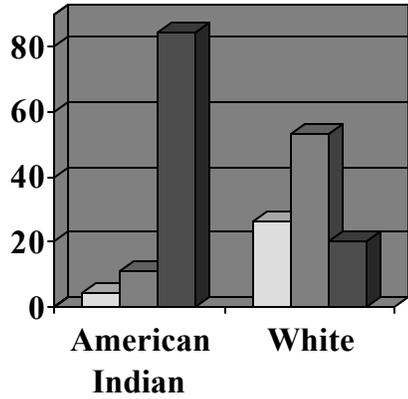
Metro Denver

Supervision ☐ CORE ■
Out of Home ■

Service patterns clearly vary considerably between the Four Corners Region and the Metropolitan Denver Area. While out of home care is used more often as a first service for American Indian youth in both regions, the disparity is much greater in the Four Corners Region where 80% of American Indian youth are placed as a first service.

**Figure 3.21: Hispanic Youth, Southern Tier vs. Metro Denver,
First Service of the First Case, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents**
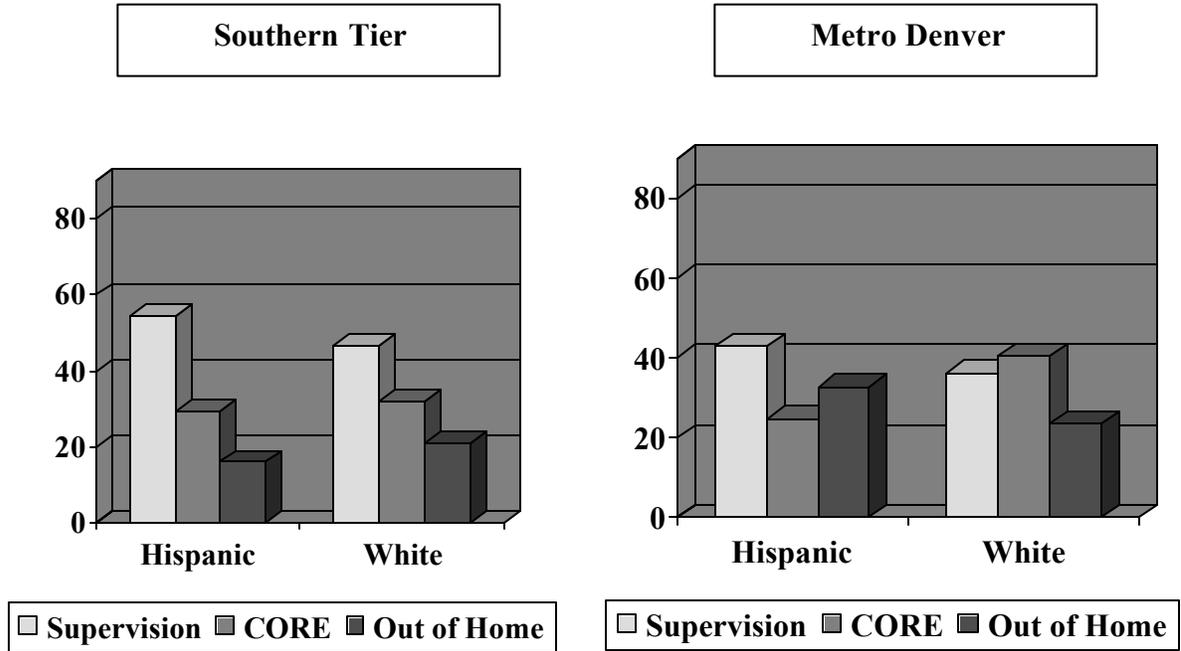
For Hispanic youth placement is most likely to be used as a first service in the Denver Metropolitan Are that it is for White youth. In the Southern Tier Region, where Hispanic youth make up the majority of the YIC service population, Hispanic youth are less likely than white youth to be placed as a first service. They are also almost as likely to receive a first, Core service as are White youth in the Southern region whereas this is not true in the Metro Denver region.

African American youth are served most often in the Denver Metropolitan area. Compared to White youth they are less likely to receive a first, Core service and more likely to receive casework supervision only or placement.

Figure 3.22: African American Youth, Metro Denver
First Service of the First Case, YIC Cases 1995 – 2000, Percents
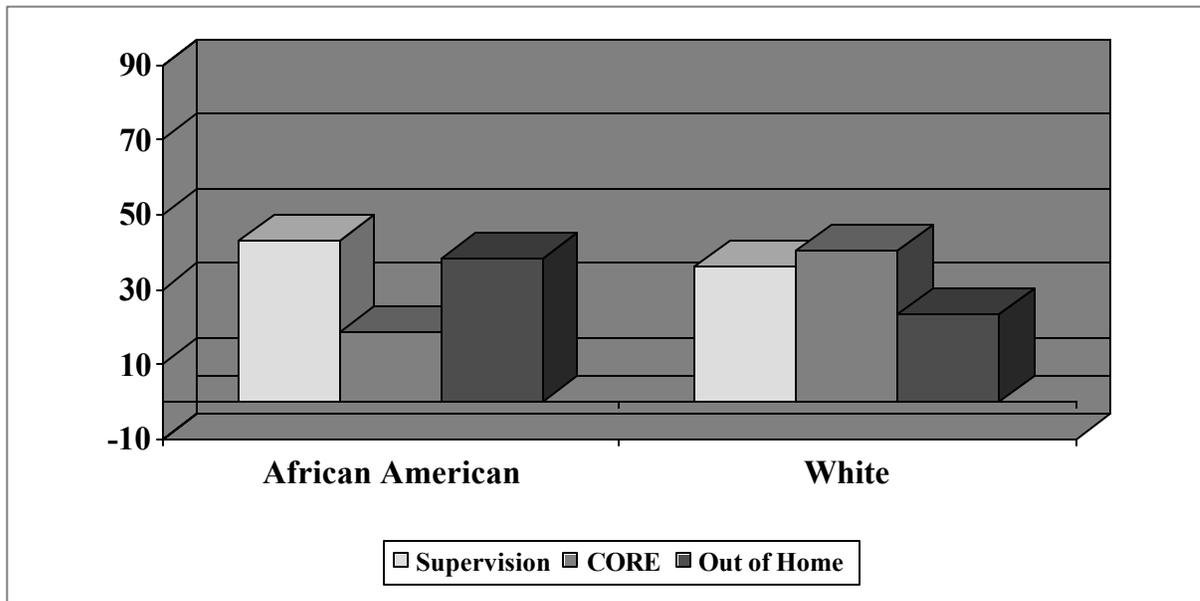
Conclusions

This examination of minority over-representation in Youth in Conflict services highlights a few critical issues.

?? Minority youth are over-represented in the YIC population and in the out of home placement population relative to that expected based on census figures. The magnitude of the over-representation has been decreasing over time, except for American Indian youth for whom it is increasing.

?? There is clear disparity in service patterns and return to care based on ethnicity. In general minority youth are more likely to receive placement services and less likely to receive supportive, community-based Core services. Patterns for this disparity typically

describe American Indian and African American youth as most likely to receiver more intensive, out of home services.

?? Predictive models using ethnic group and other demographic variables do not explain much of the variance in placement or return to care. Therefore, although ethnic group is associated significantly with these outcomes, it is not clear how large a role it places.

?? There are very large differences between the 10 largest counties and between regions in the existence and nature of ethnic disparity in service patterns and case outcomes. This implies that closer examination of minority over-representation would best take place in local contexts.

?? We are not able to address questions about the appropriate match between service patterns and family needs. As noted in the literature review, there is pressing need for studies that address this question, a question that is central to understanding the experience of minority families and to accurately assessing the impact of race / ethnicity on child welfare decisions and outcomes for families.

Examination of CWEST data reveals some intriguing patterns of minority over-representation in Colorado. We caution that given the nature of the data, it is clear that many, probably most, risk and protective factors affecting differential case outcomes were not available for our use. Better study of the predictors of case outcomes is needed. Specifically, it would be useful to model individual youth and family factors, service provision factors reflecting the nature of intervention and of child welfare system performance, and neighborhood and community factors.