

Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services

A Conceptual Framework
based on work completed under HHS 233201500041 (OPRE Report #2017-69)

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Consortium

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Purpose of Urban Institute Study for OPRE

- To provide a framework for identifying and interpreting racial and ethnic differences in Administration on Children and Families (ACF) human services programs.
- To assist ACF in determining how to distinguish difference from disparity.
- To review the literature in six program areas on difference and disparity: TANF, Child Support Enforcement, CCDF, Head Start, and Family and Youth Services Bureau programs.

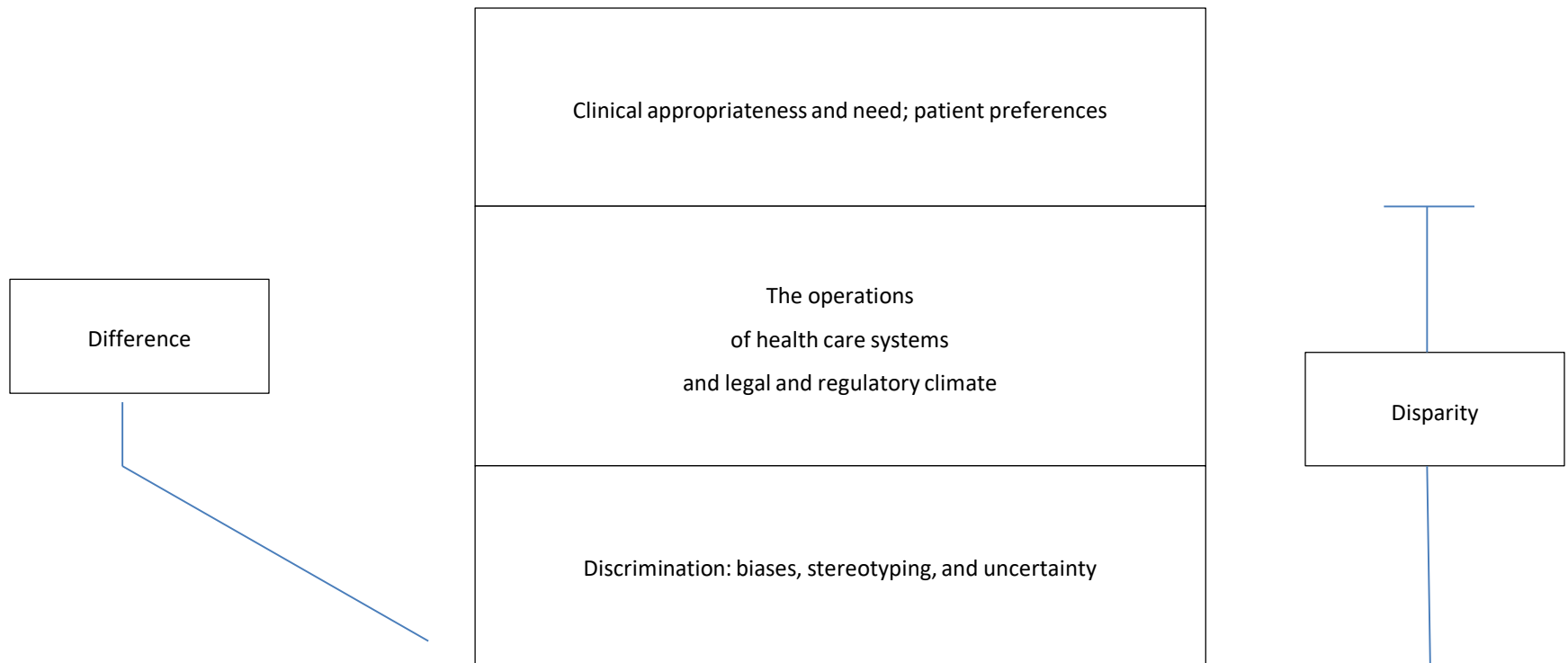
Primary Research Questions

- How are racial and ethnic disparities defined? How are they identified?
- Do the selected human services programs show evidence of racial and ethnic disparities in access, services and treatment, or outcomes?
- Does a program's operation or implementation contribute to or alleviate disparities?
- What does the literature tell us about racial and ethnic disparities in human services? What doesn't the literature tell us?
- What additional information, data, or evidence would help us better understand racial and ethnic disparities in human services?

Definitions of Disparity

- Oxford Dictionary definition: “A great difference”
- Used in “Unequal Treatment” (IOM): “Racial or ethnic differences in the quality of health care that are not due to access-related factors or clinical needs, preferences, and appropriateness of intervention.”
- Used in Urban Institute Study: “All things being equal—including need, eligibility, and preferences—one group systematically fares worse than another.”

Differences versus Disparities

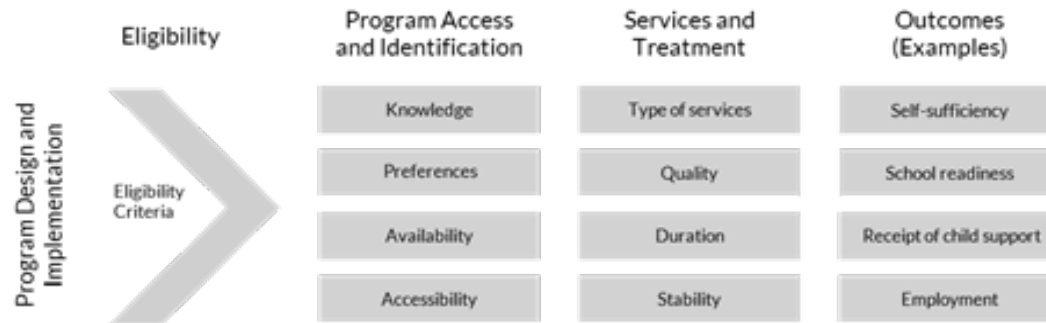


Reasons for Difference in Service

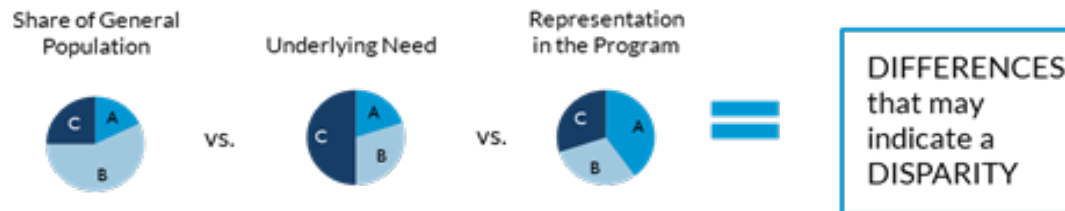
- Underlying risk among the population
- Take up rates
- Differences in service needs
- Differences in expected outcomes

Conceptual Framework

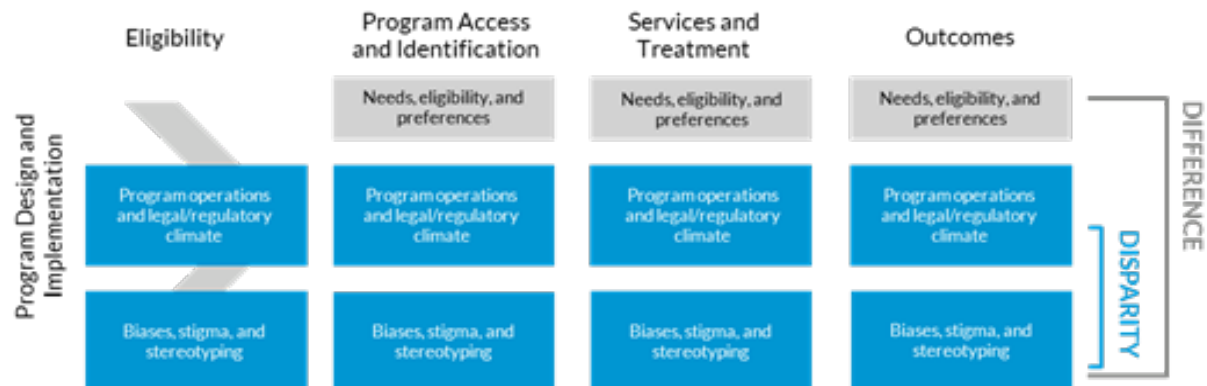
We might see racial and ethnic differences at several points along the service delivery path



To establish differences that may indicate disparities, for each of these points along the service delivery path, we need to know the following



For any differences found along the service delivery path, is the reason related to...



Factors to Consider in Identifying Disparities

- Eligibility Criteria
- Application Processes
- Program Requirements
- Administrative Decisions
- Services and Treatment
- Outcomes

Primary Questions for Literature Review

- Eligibility Criteria
- Application Processes
- Program Requirements
- Administrative Decisions
- Services and Treatment
- Outcomes

Overview of Main Findings from Literature Review

- There was no systematic definition or body of research focused on understanding racial and ethnic disparities.
- The term most commonly used in the literature was difference.
- It was difficult to disentangle race and ethnicity from poverty.
- There was a lack of robust or consistent findings for groups aside from African Americans and, to a lesser degree, Hispanics.

Summary of Findings in CCDF Studies

- The research literature examines racial and ethnic differences in access to child care subsidies, subsidy knowledge and use, subsidy duration, and patterns of child care arrangements using subsidies. The research generally does not use the term “disparities” or, more importantly, examine whether some racial and ethnic groups systematically fare worse after accounting for differences in need, eligibility, and services and treatment.
- Controlling for characteristics such as age, education, and family size, most studies have found that African Americans are more likely to receive child care subsidies than other racial groups. The research on Hispanic participation in child care subsidies is mixed: some research shows that Hispanic families use child care subsidies at lower rates than non-Hispanic families, but other studies indicate Hispanic families may use child care subsidies at slightly higher rates.

Summary of Findings in CCDF Studies, Continued

- African Americans tend to have more spells and more cumulative months of subsidy receipt than other racial groups. They are also more likely to experience greater instability in their child care arrangements.
- There is no easily identified research on racial and ethnic differences in outcomes associated with receiving child care subsidies.

Summary of Findings in Head Start Studies

- The literature on Head Start examines racial and ethnic differences in access and enrollment, the quality of Head Start centers, and the impact of Head Start on school readiness. Researchers generally do not use the term “disparities,” but they discuss “differences” or “gaps.”
- Disproportionate shares of African American and Hispanic families are eligible for Head Start compared with white children.
- Eligible African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians and Alaska Natives enroll in Head Start at higher rates than eligible white and Asian American families.

Summary of Findings in Head Start Studies, Continued

- Research exploring racial and ethnic differences in services and treatment in Head Start is limited, but some studies find that African American children are more likely to be enrolled in medium- or low-quality Head Start centers compared with white or Hispanic children.
- Recent studies have shown that African American children experience more social-emotional gains than their Hispanic and non-Hispanic white peers in attentiveness, parent and peer interaction, and relationships with teachers. Most of the differences only lasted until the end of kindergarten.

Conclusions

- Using Data to Build Better Research Evidence
 - Estimating Underlying Population Need
 - Assessing Program Access and Participation, Services and Treatment, and Outcomes
- Current Data Challenges
 - Producing National Estimates from State or Locally Run Programs
 - Small Sample Sizes that Limit Subgroup Analyses
 - Reliance on Self-Reported Measures

References

McDaniel, Marla, Tyler Woods, Eleanor Pratt, and Margaret C. Simms. 2017. *Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services: A Conceptual Framework and Literature Review*. OPRE Report #2017-69. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Smedley, Brian D., Adrienne Y. Stith, and Alan R. Nelson, eds. 2003. *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.