

A collage of images showing children and families. In the top left, a man carries a child on his shoulders. In the top center, a woman smiles. In the top right, two boys smile. In the bottom right, a woman kisses a child on the cheek.

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Disproportionality in Illinois Child Welfare

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11th National Child Welfare Data &
Technology Conference--Session E.1
July 22, 2008

Dr. Mark Testa, Director



School of Social Work
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

1996: African Americans Over-Represented

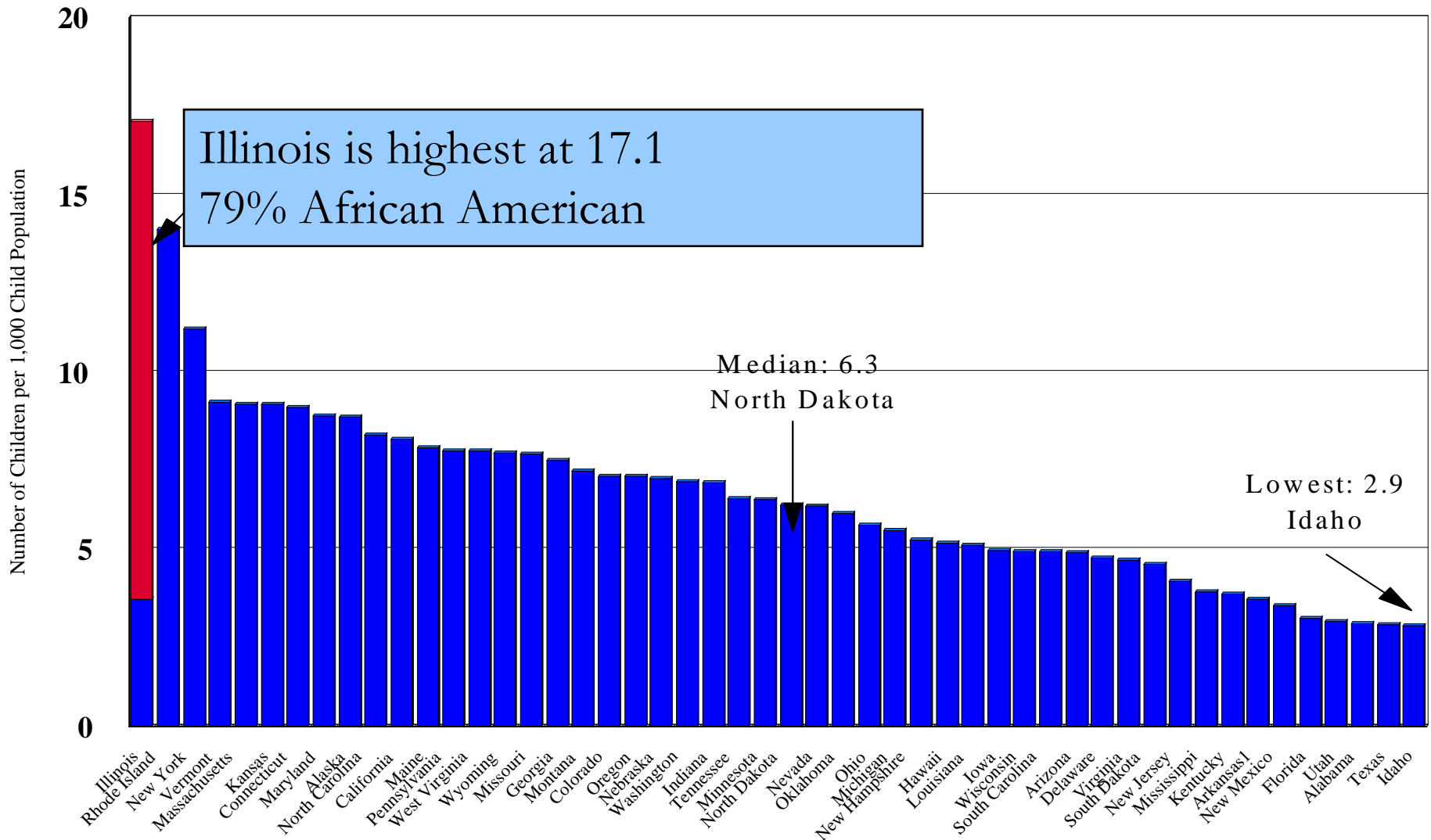


Figure 1. Illinois Children in Care

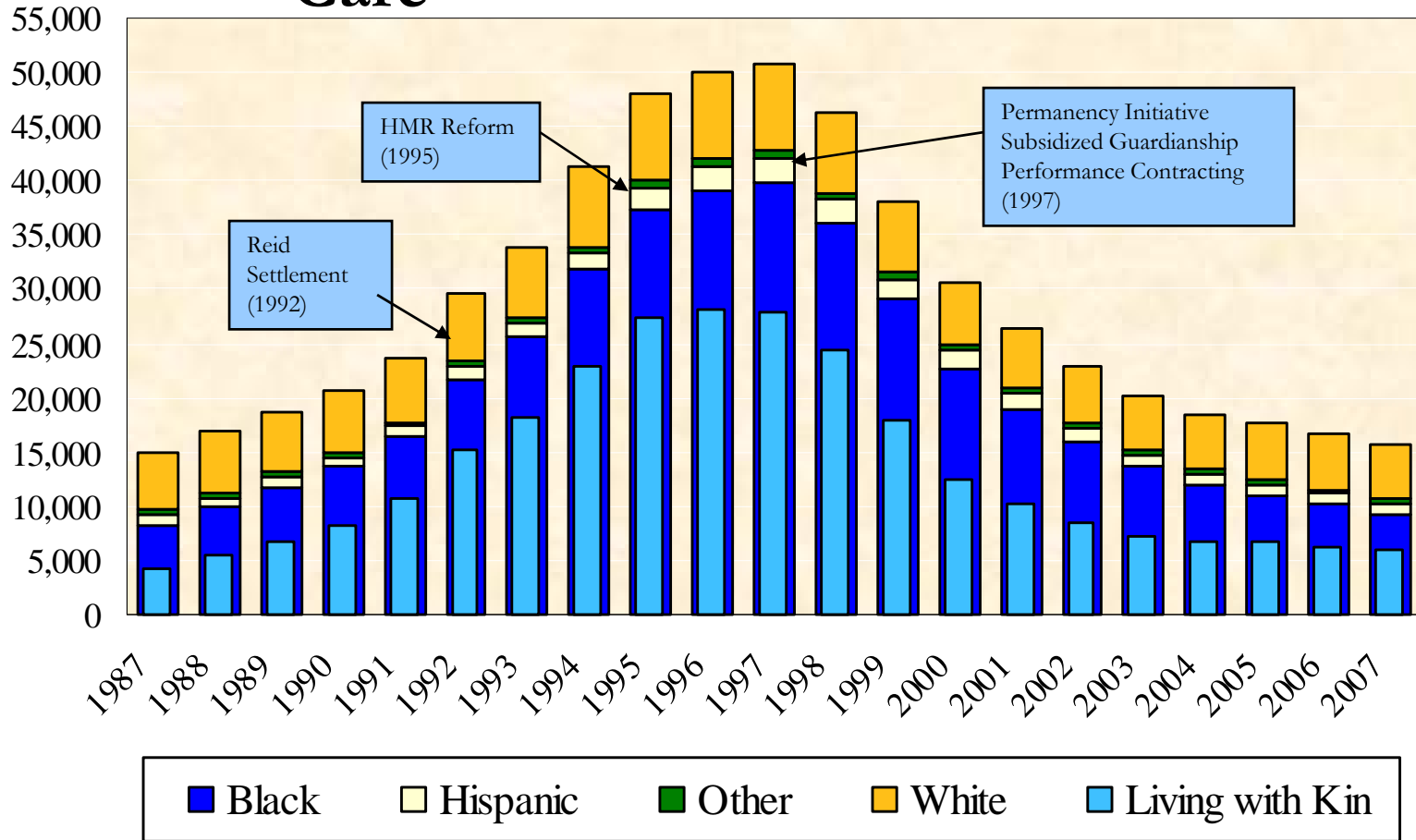
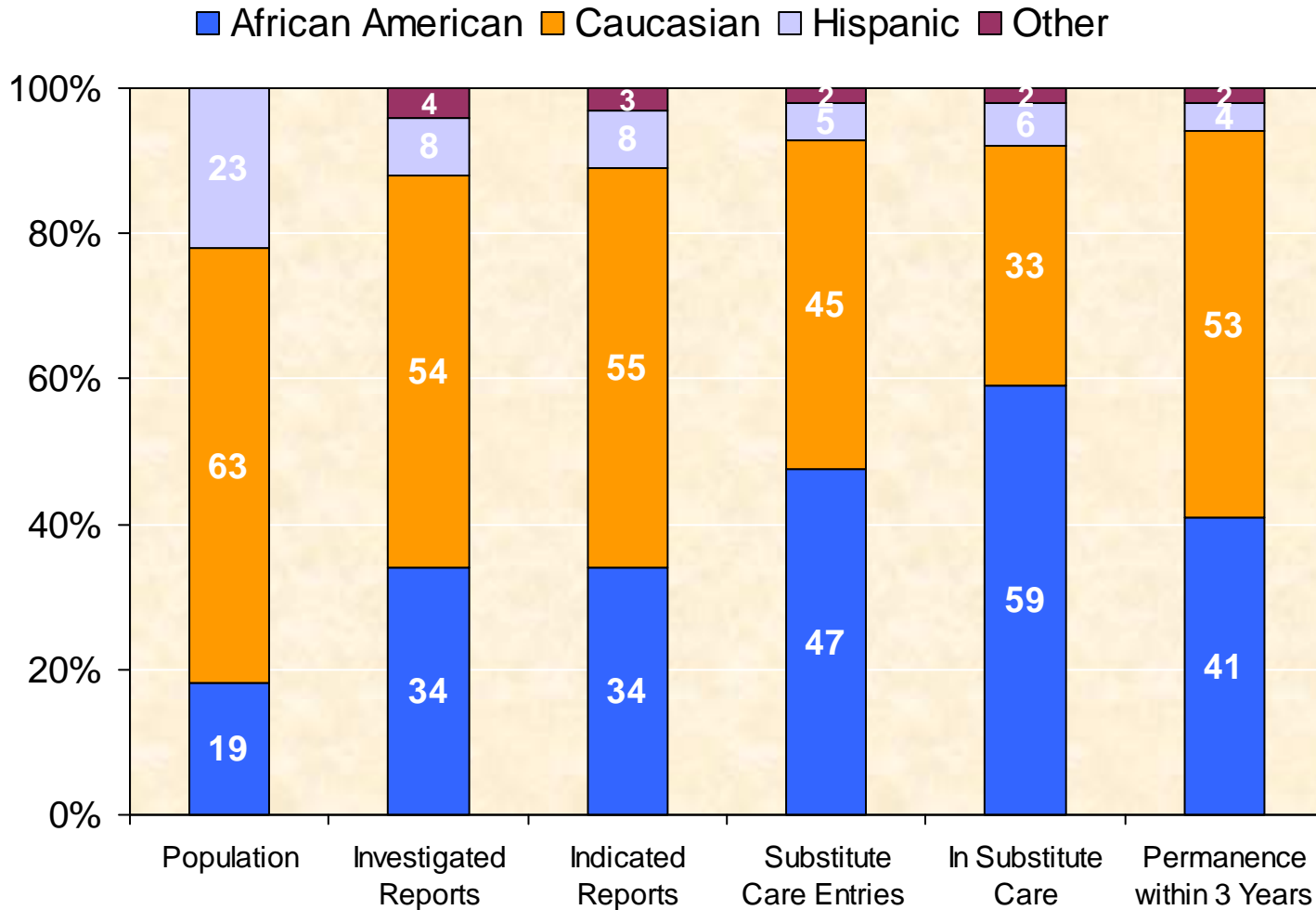


Figure 2. Illinois Child Welfare System: 2007



Points of Intervention

- **Prevent the removal of children** from their nuclear and extended families when their safety can be assured.
- Provide **continuity and stability** through placements with kin when foster care is needed.
- Restore children to **family permanence** by connecting them to kinship adoptive and guardian homes when reunification is no longer recommended.

Over-Representation: Failure to address racial disparities at each of these points of intervention contributes to the over-representation of African-American children in the child welfare system.



Measuring Regional Disproportionality

- Disproportionality looks different depending **where in the state children live.**
 - Chicago area: AA children are **32%** of the child population; **54%** of indicated reports, and **74%** of entries
 - Non-Cook, AA children make up **9%** of the child population; **26%** of indicated reports, and **36%** of entries
- Limited resources require that we **target intervention** to the communities most in need.
- Need a way to assess disproportionality **at each stage**, within the state.



Measuring Regional Disproportionality

Weighted risk ratio: When racial demographics vary substantially from one region to the next, it standardizes the risk ratio to that of the state so that comparisons can be made across the state.

Weighted risk ratio for African American =

$$\frac{\text{Regional Risk for AA}}{\text{Weighted risk for all other children (all non-AA); weighted according to the racial composition of the state}}$$

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Prevent Removals



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Children not removed from their homes

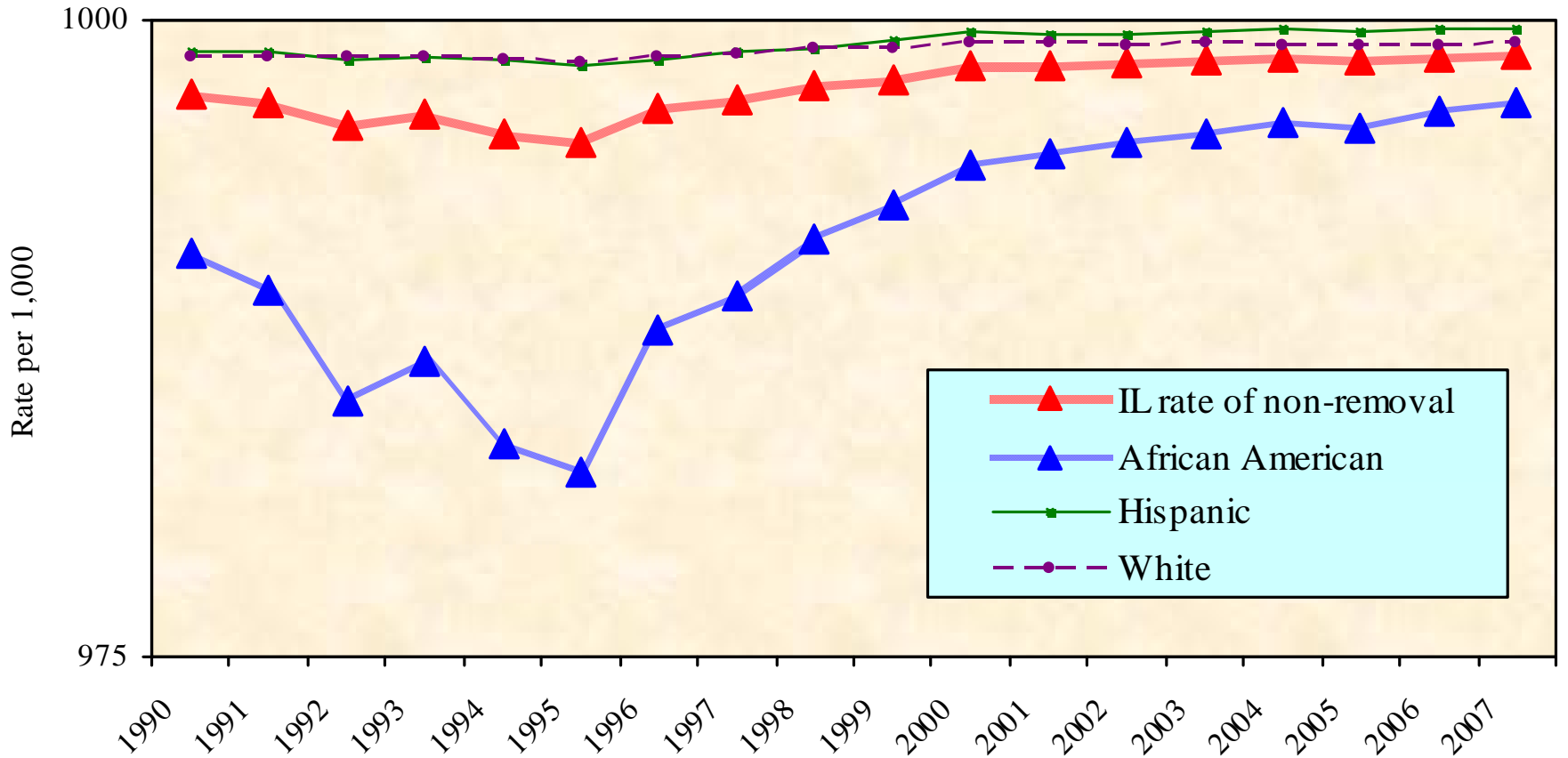


Figure F.3 Maltreatment Investigations

Representation

Under

Equal

Over

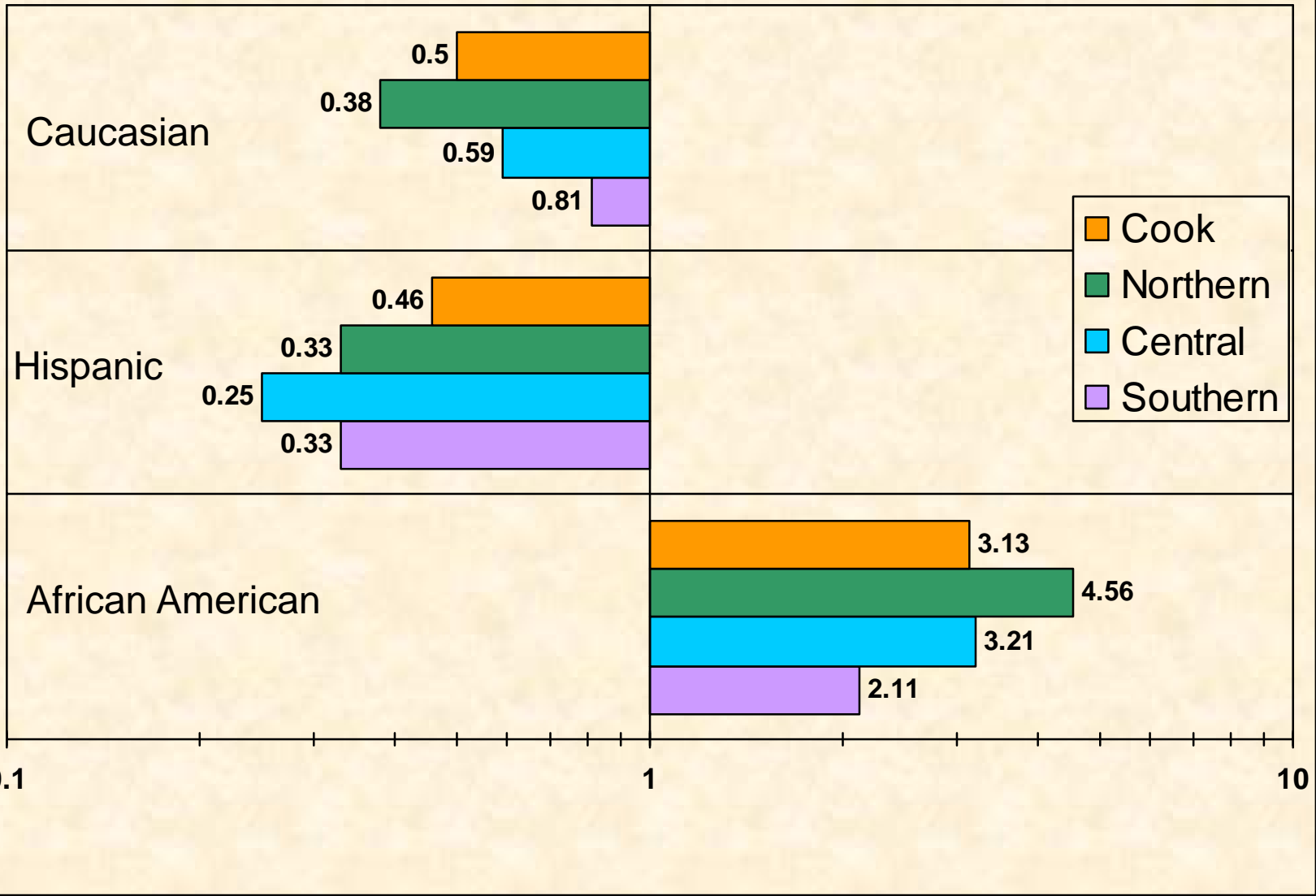


Figure F.4 Indicated Reports of Maltreatment

Representation

Under

Equal

Over

Caucasian

1.01
0.95
0.9
0.99

Hispanic

1.16
1.05
1.03
0.91

African American

0.93
1.09
1.13
1.04

- Cook
- Northern
- Central
- Southern

0.1

1

10

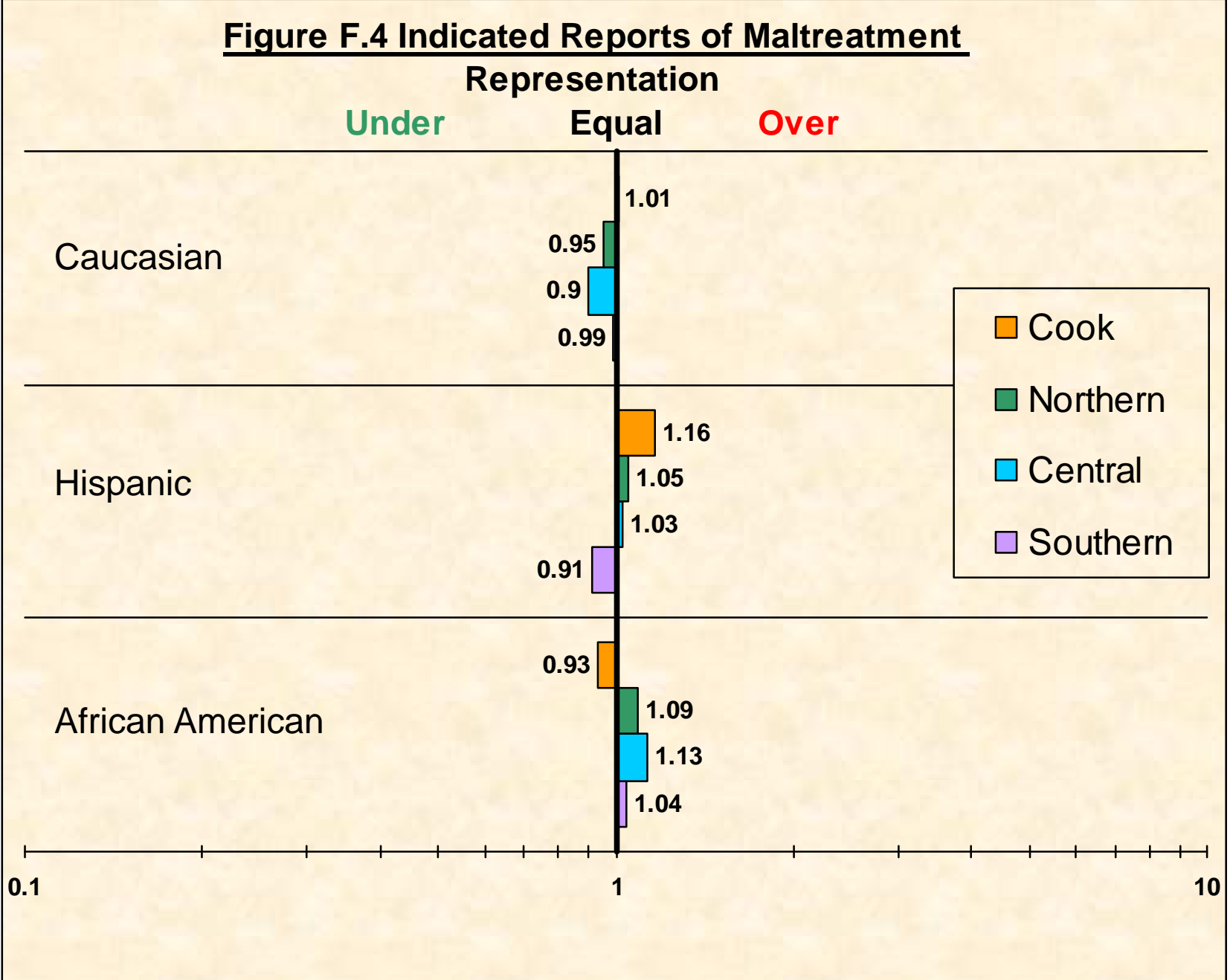
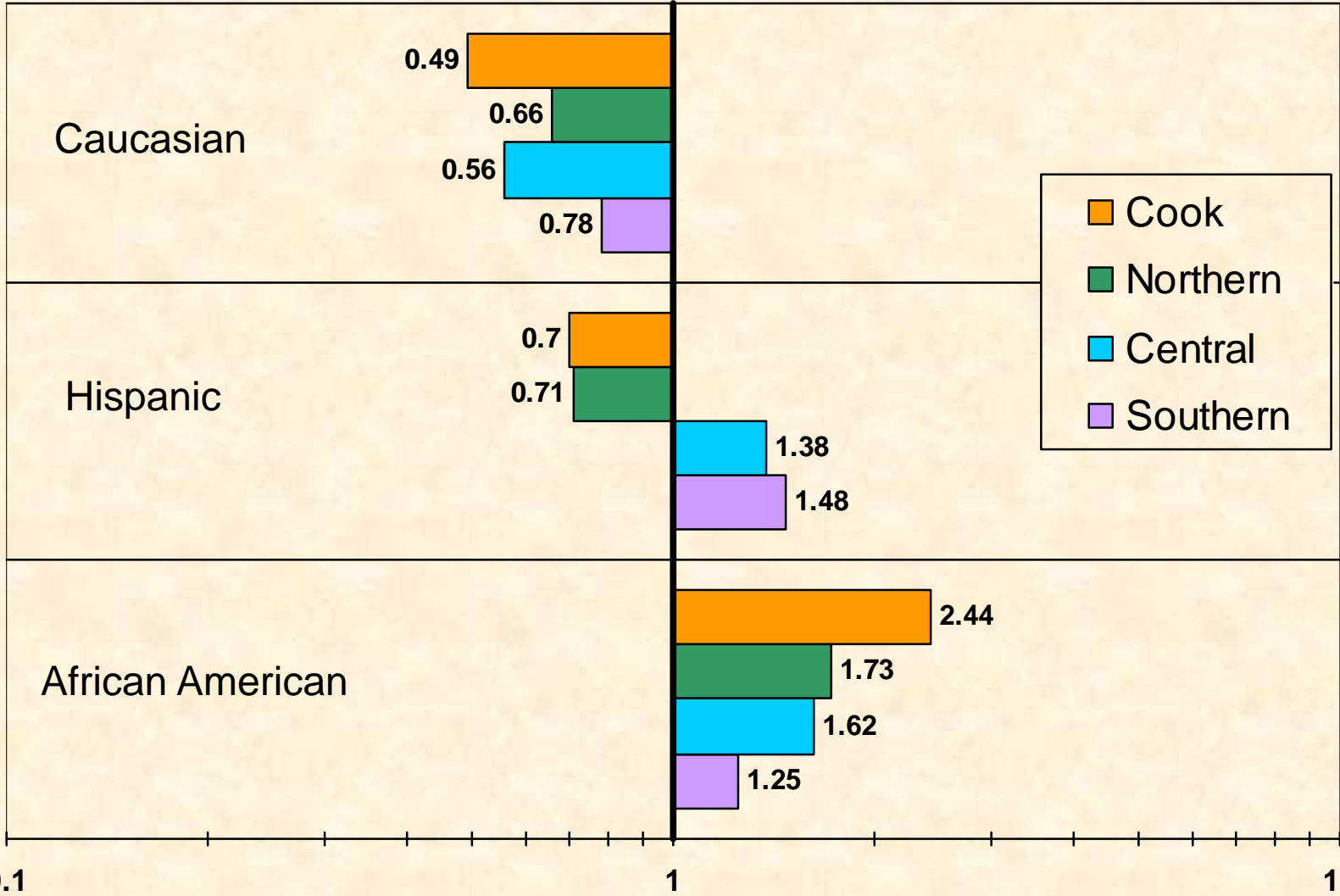


Figure F.5 Entered Foster Care Representation

Under Equal Over





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Provide Continuity and
Stability



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Figure F.6 Initially Placed with Kin

Representation

Under

Equal

Over

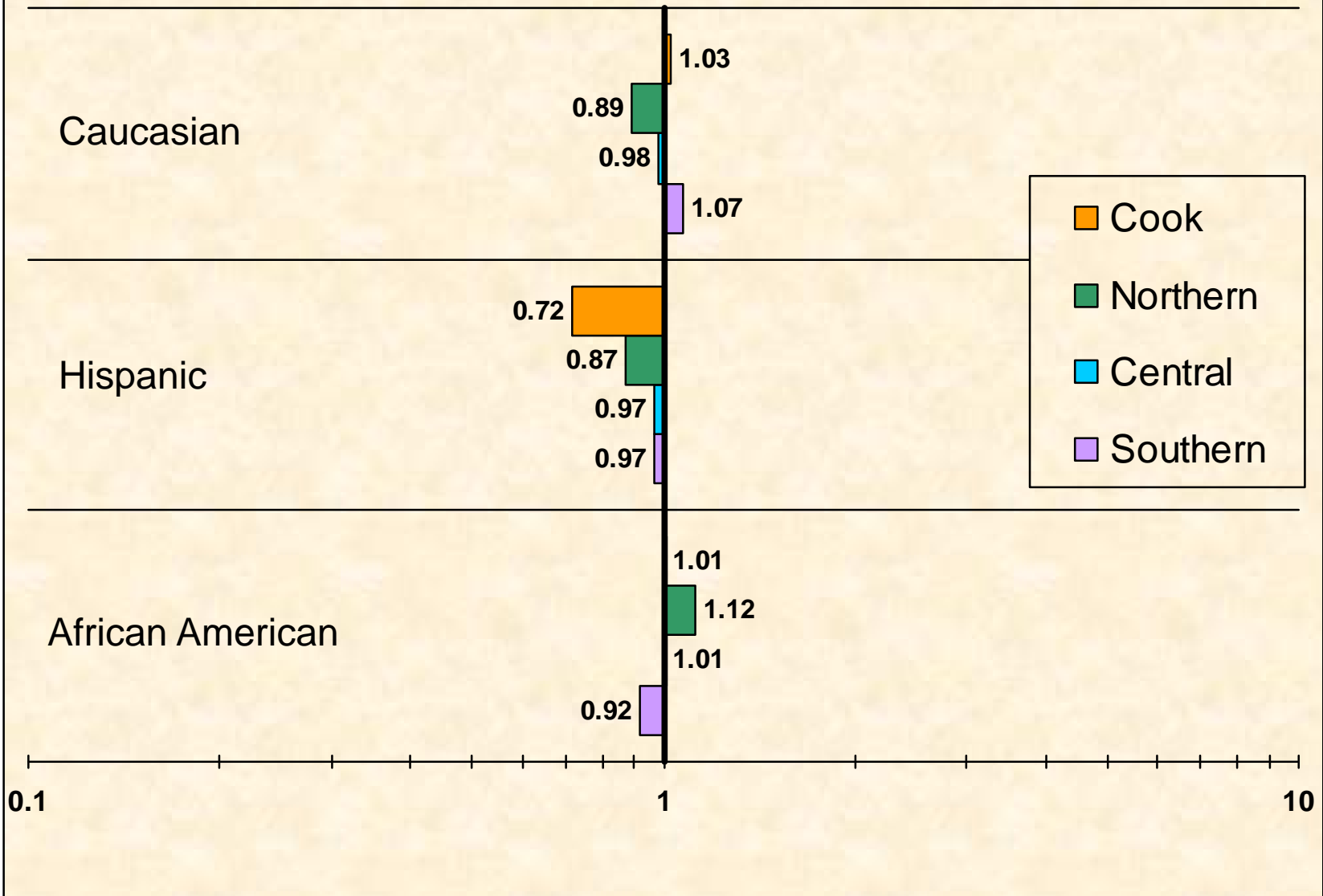


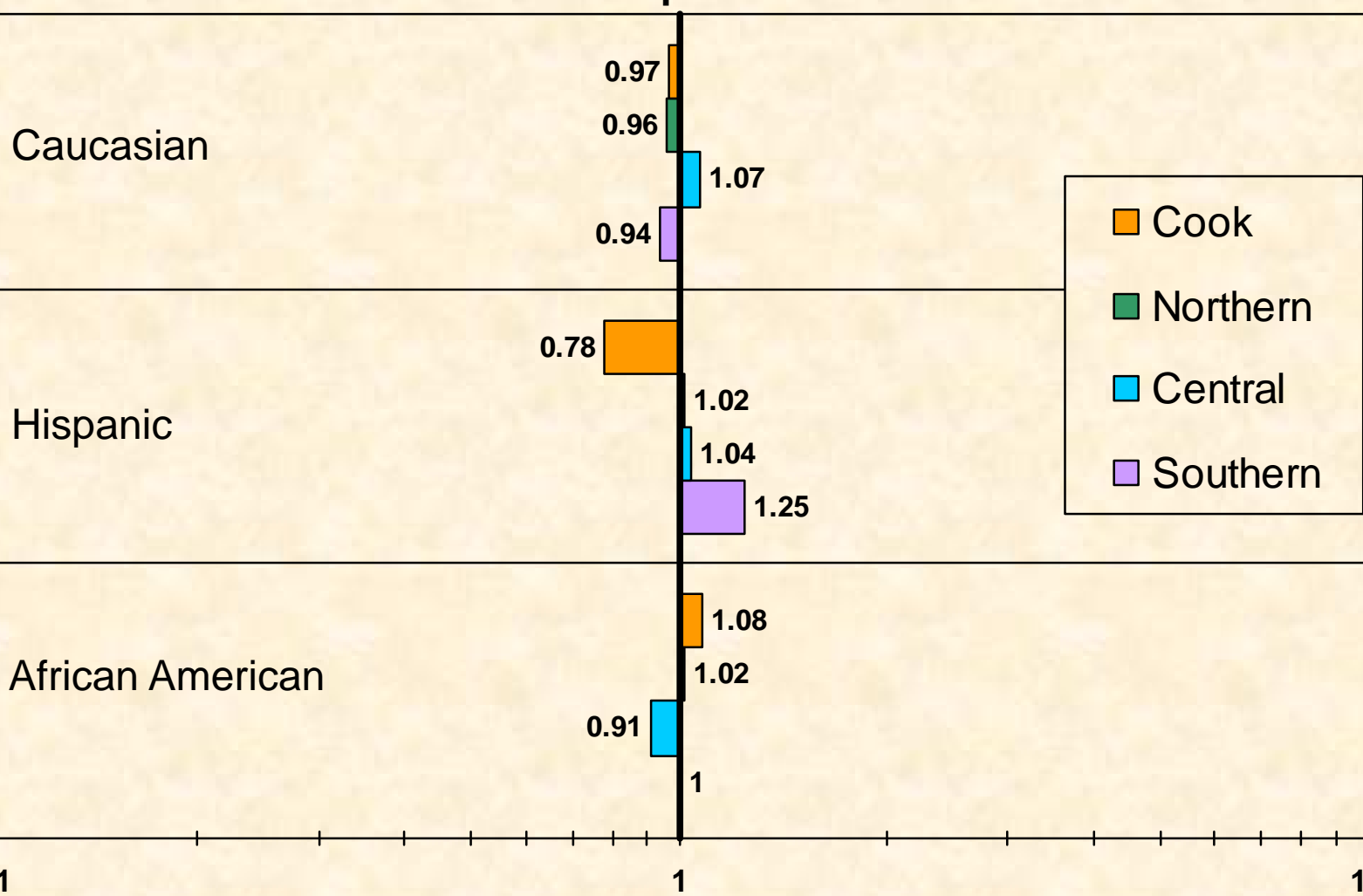
Figure F.7 Stability in Foster Care

Representation

Under

Equal

Over



- Cook
- Northern
- Central
- Southern



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Restore Children to Family Permanence



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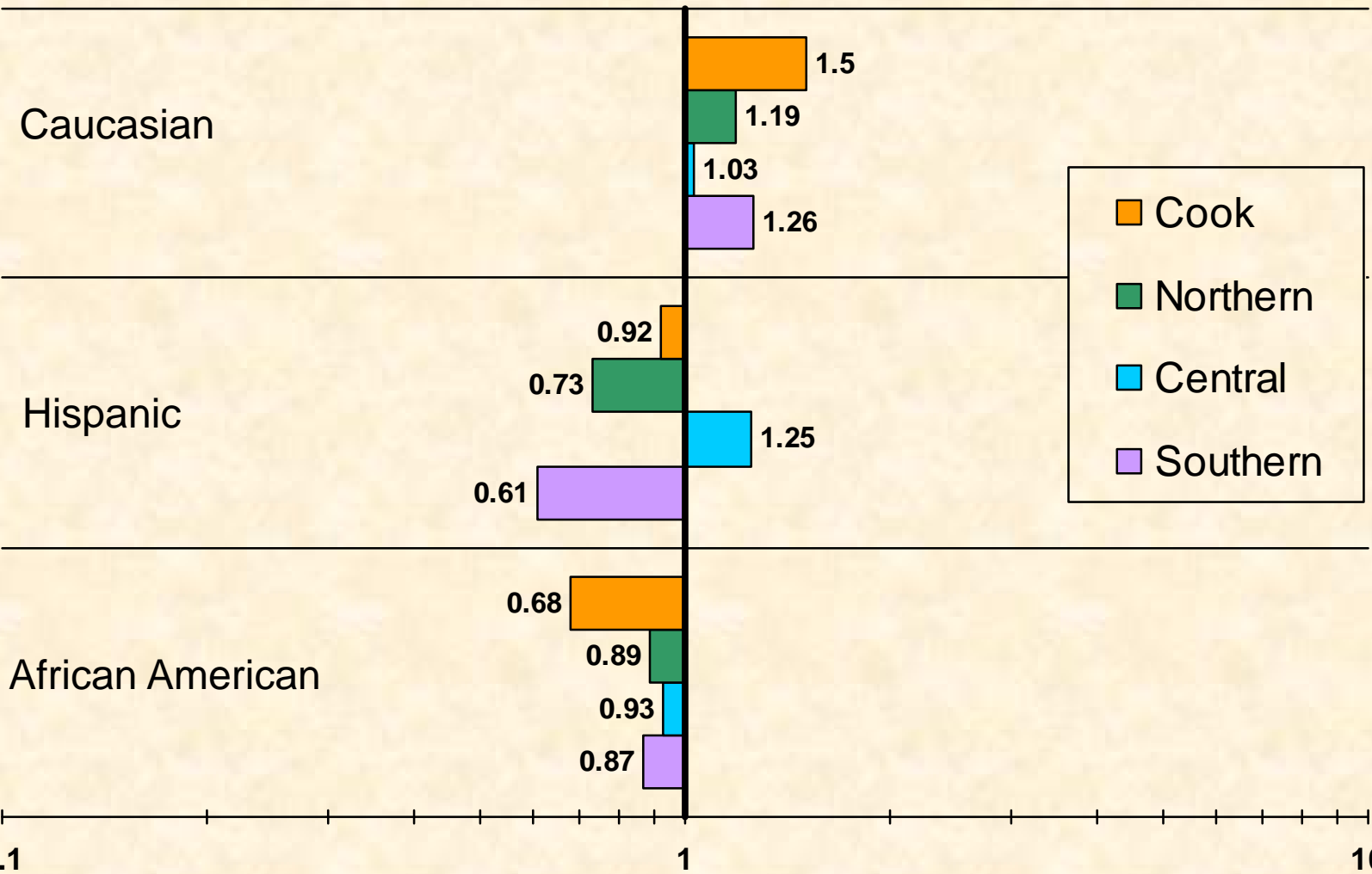
Figure F.8 Permanence within 3 Years

Representation

Under

Equal

Over



- Cook
- Northern
- Central
- Southern

0.1

1

10

Figure F.9 Reunification within 3 Years

Representation

Under

Equal

Over

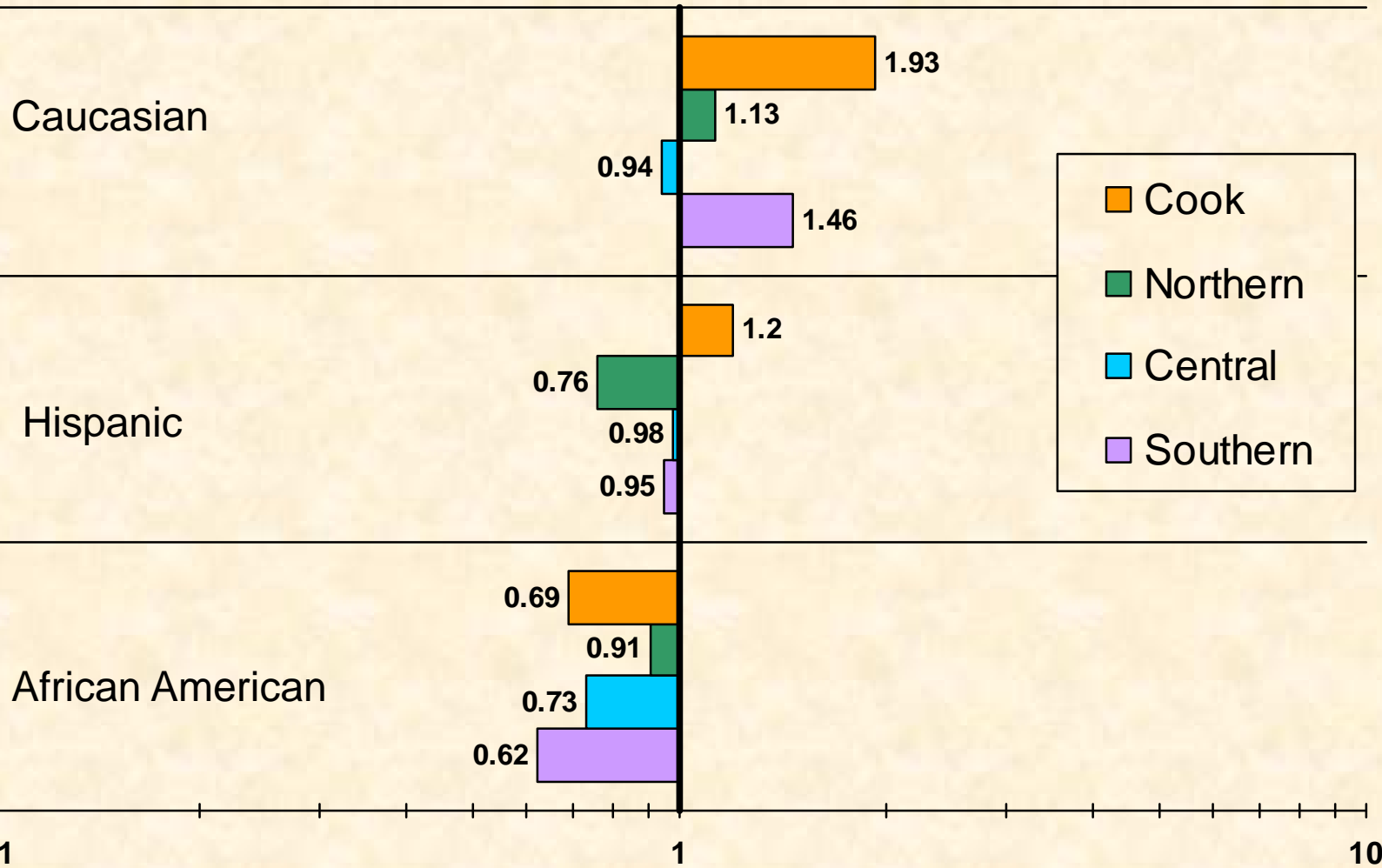


Figure F.10 Adoption and Guardianship within 3 Years

Representation

Under

Equal

Over

Caucasian

Hispanic

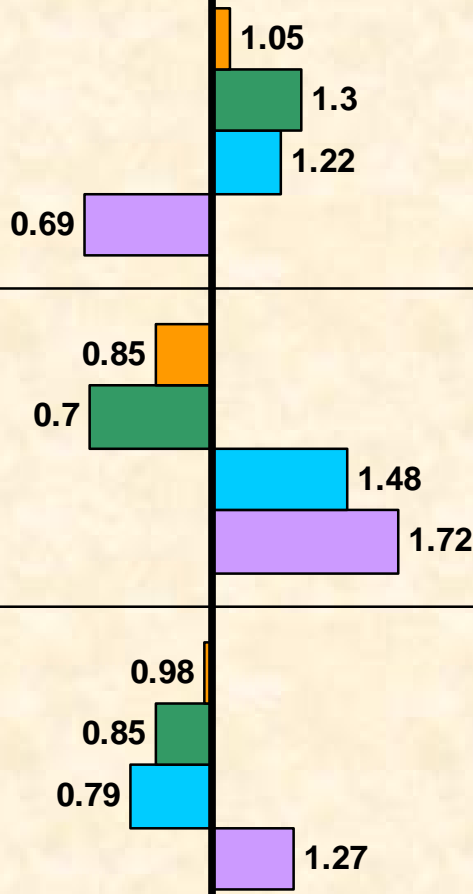
African American

- Cook
- Northern
- Central
- Southern

0.1

1

10



The background features a collage of images related to children and families. In the top left, a man carries a child on his shoulders. In the top center, a woman smiles. To her right, a young girl with yellow flower accessories looks forward. Further right, two boys smile. In the top right corner, a close-up of a girl's face is visible. A large, dark blue curved shape dominates the lower half of the page, containing the word 'Methodology'.

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Methodology



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Methodology

Weighted risk ratio for African American =

$$\frac{[(1 - \text{state African American composition}) * \text{Region African American risk for outcome}]}{[(\text{State Caucasian composition} * \text{Region Caucasian risk for outcome}) + (\text{State Hispanic composition} * \text{Region Hispanic risk for outcome}) + (\text{State Other composition} * \text{Region Other risk for outcome})]}$$



Methodology

Compared to Other Methods:

The disparity index also compares one race to all other children, but it is not weighted according to the racial makeup of the state.

In communities where the number of children of a specific race/ethnicity is small, under/over representation can still be calculated.

Does not need a comparison group, other than all other children.



Methodology

Thanks to Westat

Methods for Assessing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: A Technical Assistance Guide, July 2007 ([PDF](#))
available at: <https://www.ideadata.org/TAMaterial.asp>

Bollmer, Julie, Bethel, James, Garrison-Mogren, Roberta, and Brauen, Marsha, *Using the Risk Ratio to Assess Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education at the School-District Level*
Journal of Special Education, v41 n3 p186-198 Fall 2007.