

Race and Addiction as Significant Variables in Child Welfare Matters

Notes for Introductory Comments, May 28, 2015
Robert S. Wright, MSW, RSW

Who is Robert Wright?

- RSW Private Practitioner - direct practice and forensics
- Former:
 - Frontline C.W. Worker
 - Race Relations Coord. DDSB
 - Ex. Dir. FCS Cumberland
- Expert in child development, parenting assessment, mental health, addictions
- Author and Consultant, Nia Centre, ANSMHAI
- PhD Student in Sociology – Race, Identity, Power



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Child Welfare Eras

- Pre – 1875 – The time before childhood. Courts and authorities intervened in only the most egregious cases
- 1875-1962 – Emergence of organized community based child protection services, community standards enforced
- 1962-Present – Child Welfare professionalizes and becomes a government responsibility, clinical standards enforced (Meyers, John E. B. (2008). A Short History of Child Protection in America. Family Law Quarterly, 42, 448-463.
- Future – less reactive, more preventive, support families and healthy development, increased awareness of cultural competence, avoid injustices caused by trying to “rescue children” from parents and communities

Eras of Understanding Addictions

- Moral model – temperance the cure - 1700's
- Disease model introduced - private medical tx (for the wealthy) the cure – 1870's
- Disease model formalized – prohibition fails, gov. invests, AA born – 1930's
- Disease model entrenched – industry partners onboard 1940's
- Gender Diff. Acknowledged - Women for Sobriety est. – 1975
- Sociocultural Model Attention to Minority Tx. - 1980's

Race and Culture . . . Why?

- Preamble: AND WHEREAS the preservation of a child's cultural, racial and linguistic heritage promotes the healthy development of the child
- 3 (2) g: Interpretation of Best Interest
- 20 d: Placement Considerations
- 9 i: Functions of an Agency
- 39 (8) c: Interim Hearing Placement Considerations
- 44 (3) c: Temporary Care and Custody Order Considerations
- 47 (5): Permanent Care and Custody Order Considerations
- 88 (2) e: Advisory Committee Membership Considerations (2 persons)

Race and Culture . . . Why?

- **Article 30:** In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Ways Race and Culture “Show Up”

- Misunderstood culture based behaviours and practices, including parenting practices, concepts of “family” – Cultural Competence
- **Presence of problematic parenting behaviour caused by historical, multi-generational effects of racism (cultural strain, cultural pain, post-traumatic slave syndrome, colonial cultural impact) – Clinical Cultural Competence in assessment and treatment**
- Egregious, racist treatment of families by communities, the “systems” and workers therein, and racial profiling – Critical Race Analysis, Human Rights, Criminal investigations and sanctions

Race as a significant variable in the legal system

The history of Nova Scotia is steeped in a racialized narrative. Colonialism, treatment of Aboriginal persons, participation in slavery, segregation, exclusion of racialized persons from all the relevant instruments of civil society until a minute ago in the timeline of our province – these are the reasons race is always an issue in any social interaction. To ignore the complex ways in which persons of European descent have been in an intergenerational familial and social location of privilege is to forget the lessons of the most frequent Nova Scotia greeting until very recently: “who are your people?” or “who are your parents” or “where are you from?”

The importance of recognizing this history as a relevant and important issue in any matter before the courts is being increasingly recognized. This has been seen quite vividly in the Supreme Court of Canada’s discussion of the reasonable person in the often quoted *R.v.S. case (R.v.S. (R.D.), [1997] 3 S.C.R. 484 – 1997 – 09 – 26)*: “The reasonable person is cognizant of the racial dynamics in the local community, and, as a member of the Canadian community, is supportive of the principles of equality.”



Robert Wright, MSW, RSW & Jacqueline Barkley, MSW, RSW

Wright, R. S. & Barkley, J. (2014, Spring). [Race as a significant variable in the legal system](#). The Society Record. Halifax, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society.

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SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBER 1 & 2, 2015

Trauma Informed Practice:
A Lens on the African Canadian Community

A conference hosted by



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African Canadians

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Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Joy DeGruy

Author - *Post Traumatic Slave
Syndrome: America's Legacy of
Enduring Injury and Healing*
www.joydegruy.com

Location:

Holiday Inn Harbourview
101 Wyse Road, Dartmouth

Fees:

Thursday, 9am-4pm
Pre-Conference Clinical Workshop - \$100
(limited seats)

Thursday, 6pm-9pm
Mental Health Network Mingler - FREE

Friday, 9am-4pm
Conference - \$125

The Problem

- Rather than focusing on substantive issues of risk CW practice can be distracted by the presence of troubling or misunderstood behaviour
- In attempts to address the substantial areas of risk, race, culture and ethnic community are rarely incorporated as a resource nor interventions tailed to address these issues

Toronto PCA Project Guidelines

1. Family Status/Current Stressors (context)
2. Child's Developmental Progress
3. Pattern of Parent/Child Relationship
4. Observations of Parenting Ability
5. Impulse Control
6. Parental Acceptance of Responsibility
7. Behaviours Affecting Parenting
8. Manner of Relating to Society
9. Parent's Use of Clinical Interventions

Hx of African Substance Patterns

- Precolonial, culturally bounded, ritualized use:
 - Fireside use by nomadic traders
 - Hospitality shown to honored guests
 - Religious and ritualistic use
- Qat, Cannabis, fermented beverages, and a range of hallucinagens

European Trade Triangle



Fallacy of Re-habilitation

- Re-habilitation assumes use and addiction is the primary issue:
 - Assumes pro-social functioning pre-drug use
 - Assumes stopping use and returning is good

Concept of Habilitation

- Habilitation promotes foundational socialization as its focus:
 - Acknowledge historical and systemic devastation of traditional cultural patterns (cultural genocide)
 - Acknowledges that “drug culture” may be substantially more functional than racialized location
 - Promotes critical analysis and efforts to reclaim pre-European contact level of cultural cohesion

Sociocultural Treatment Model

- Critical curriculum that analyzes the past present and future of racialized and Aboriginal peoples
- Use of culturally appropriate & competent facilitators
- Group work focusses on community building and reestablishment of historical cultural norms and practices
- Community development, political and social activism an essential component to acknowledge and address injustice

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