Towards a Policy Actionable Analysis of Geographic and Racial Health Disparities

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Three themes from the “Eight Americas”

• “Geography” matters for health:
  – Why?

• Large geographic variations in health (and health disparities):
  – Why?

• What can we do about it?
• And Latinos
Geography as a social determinant of health

• Geographies used to examine health disparities should be consistent with a social determinants of health framework.

• Geographies should map onto socioeconomic factors driving racial inequality, e.g.
  – state income inequality,
  – disparities in neighborhood environment in metropolitan areas
Why metropolitan areas?

• Two-thirds of America’s children live in 100 largest metro areas.

• 40% (18 of 45 million) of children in largest metro areas live in "majority-minority" metros.
“Minority” children are the majority in 28 of 100 largest metros

- Millions of children live in majority-minority metros:
  - **Chicago** (2.2 million; 51% minority)
  - **Dallas** (1 million; 53% minority)
  - **Los Angeles** (2.7 million children; 80% minority)
  - **Washington, DC** (1.3 million; 50% minority)
Why metropolitan areas?

- Metropolitan areas have an unequal “geography of opportunity”, i.e. vast disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods.
- Large disparities in opportunity in metropolitan areas have a substantial impact on well-being of America’s children.
  - And, in turn, on economic and social prospects of entire metropolitan regions.
Why neighborhoods?

• Evidence of neighborhood effects on health (above and beyond individual and family level factors).

• Poor neighborhood conditions may put children at risk for developmental delays, teen parenthood, and academic failure.

• Disadvantaged neighborhood environment associated with hazardous physical environment, low quality schools, and lack of public safety.
Evidence of wide geographic variations in health and health disparities

• Health and social determinants show large geographic variations in absolute terms and in level of disparities.

• Differences among metropolitan areas, and among neighborhoods within metro areas suggest that there is room for improvement.
  – Neighborhoods (and schools) with opportunities do exist in metropolitan areas. But not all children have access to them.
Low-Birthweight Rates: Distributions by Race/Ethnicity
100 Largest Metro Areas: 2001-2002

Note: Excludes metro areas with less than 100 births to mothers in the specified subgroup over the 2001-2002 time period. Excludes plural births and births which occurred abroad, in Puerto Rico, or in U.S. Territories.
Source: DiversityData analysis of National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics Natality Birth Data
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Pyramid Graph: Theoretical Equal Neighborhood Environment for 2 Groups: A Mirror Image

Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates

Neighborhood Poverty Rate

0-10%
10.1-20%
20.1-30%
30.1-40%
Over 40%

White
Black
Metro Chicago
Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Black v. White Children

Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates

Neighborhood Poverty Rate

- Over 40%
- 30.1-40%
- 20.1-30%
- 10.1-20%
- 0-10%

Black

White
Metro Chicago
Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Poor Black v. Poor White Children

Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates

Neighborhood Poverty Rate

- Over 40%
- 30.1-40%
- 20.1-30%
- 10.1-20%
- 0-10%

Poor Black

Poor White
Metro Chicago
Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of All Black v. Poor White Children

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<th>Neighborhood Poverty Rate</th>
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Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates
White and Black Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))
Poor White and Black Children: Separate Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000
(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))
Metros with best neighborhood environment

• For black children: Denver, Colorado Springs and Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill
• For Hispanic children: Ann Arbor, Cincinnati and Washington DC
• For Asian children: Austin, Baltimore and Washington DC
• For white children: Ann Arbor, Boston and San Francisco
Metros with **worst** neighborhood environment

- **For black children**: Buffalo, Chicago and New York
- **For Hispanic children**: Bakersfield, Providence and Springfield
- **For Asian children**: Bakersfield, Fresno, and New York
- **For white children**: Bakersfield, El Paso and New York
Metros with **worst** black/white child disparities

- Largest black/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Mobile
  - Detroit
  - Chicago
- In all these areas, share of black children living in low-income neighborhoods was more than 10 times larger than share of white children living in low-income neighborhoods.
Metros with **worst** Hispanic/white disparities

- Largest Hispanic/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Chicago,
  - Hartford
  - Milwaukee-Wausheka.
Metros with **worst**
Asian/white disparities

- Largest Asian/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Milwaukee-Wausheka
  - Minneapolis-St. Paul
and Latinos?

• Largest minority group

• Evidence of a positive health profile for some outcomes but…

• A socioeconomic profile very similar to that of African Americans
  – Long term implications
White and Hispanic Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))
Poor White and Hispanic Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))
What can be done about it?
Policy relevant geographies

- Geographies should be actionable from a political and policy standpoint.

- But political and governance fragmentation prevent adoption of policies to correct disparities:
  - Devolution – e.g. state variation in child welfare policy
  - Metropolitan areas
Public health/medical interventions vs. social policy

• Need both

• Race-based solutions are becoming increasingly difficult:
  – Need different frameworks, e.g. opportunity
Neighborhood choice and mobility

• Improve access of children in black and Hispanic families to “opportunity neighborhoods”.

• Policies to reduce residential segregation include expanding neighborhood choice in the HUD Section 8 Voucher program, fair housing enforcement, inclusionary zoning, and increased availability of rental housing.
Metropolitan wide policies: “Regional Equity”

• Metropolitan areas cut across traditional jurisdictions that may vary widely in tax base and resources.

• Regional equity policies try to address the disparities arising from residential segregation by improving access to neighborhoods and schools with resources across jurisdictions in the entire metropolitan area.
and Latinos?

- Largely an immigrant group suggesting the need for different strategies and policies:
  - More limited access to health insurance (e.g. SCHIP reauthorization excluded “legal immigrant children”)
  - More limited access to social safety net (restrictions in access to health and social safety net after welfare reform for legal immigrants)
St. Louis Metro Area: Disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods among children

- Neighborhood racial segregation: the average black child lives in a neighborhood that is 71% black;
  - The average white child in a neighborhood that is 87% white.
St. Louis Metro Area: Disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods among children

- The average white child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 6%;
  - The average black child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 23%.

- This is not about family poverty status: The average poor white child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 11%;
  - The average black child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 29%.
Poor Childrens’ Exposure to Neighborhood Poverty
Distributions by Race/Ethnicity
100 Largest Metro Areas: 1999

Note: Excludes metro areas with less than 5,000 children of specified racial/ethnic group. Neighborhoods defined as census tracts.
Source: DiversityData analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Summary File 3 data.
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