The Black/White Placement Gap

Fred Wulczyn
University of Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/admindata_conferences_presentations_2017


This paper is posted at Scholarly Commons. https://repository.upenn.edu/admindata_conferences_presentations_2017/4
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
The Black/White Placement Gap

Fred Wulczyn
Center for State Child Welfare Data
Chapin Hall Center for Children
University of Chicago
Overview

- Disparity is a central problem when thinking about the nation’s child protection system
- Conceptual clarity
  - How might bias present itself?
  - Supply vs. need
  - Cross-sectional vs. dynamic views of the problem
- Using administrative data to unpack the problem
Trends: 2000 - 2010
Rural, Suburban, and Urban Counties

Rural

Suburban

Urban

- Black
- Hispanic
- White
Disproportionality vs. Disparity

- Language of observation vs. action
  - Disproportionality is an observation
  - Disparity speaks to what happens to children
    - Entry rate vs exit rate disparity
      - The mechanisms that give rise to disproportionality
  - Explanations that rely on disproportionality as the construct confound the sources of disparity and therefore offer less insight

University of Chicago
Chapin Hall Center for Children
Center for State Child Welfare Data
Entry Rate Disparities

- Differences in the probability that a child of one race/ethnicity will enter care as compared to a child of another race/ethnicity
  - The Black / White placement gap
- Conventional explanations
  - Poverty
  - Bias in its various forms
- Empirical work and explanatory models underdeveloped
  - Sampson’s et. al. work on ecological similarity has not penetrated research with services data
Ecological Similarity

- Look at ecologically similar places and ask about the experiences of children of different races/ethnicities within those ecologically similar places.
- Inspired by the observation that few white children are exposed to the conditions many black children experience.
- Counties as a unit of analysis:
  - No counties in the US without white children.
  - Many counties in the US without Black children.
  - Without adjustment, limits our ability to understand disparity.
The Model

- Counts of children placed
  - Number of Black children placed in a given year
  - Number of White children placed in a given year
- Ecological context
  - Percent of white children in poverty
  - Percent of Black children in poverty
- Statistical model
  - Predicted number of placements per 1000 children adjusted for ecological factors
  - Coefficients in the model produce a direct measure of the Black/White Placement gap
  - Controls at the county level allow us to measure directly how the gap varies with attributes of context
Results

The Black/White Placement Gap by County
Social Disadvantage and Urbanicity
Results

- Conventional theory predicts that disparity will be greatest in areas with higher poverty rates.

In this case, we are using social disadvantage as the measure. Disadvantage is a composite of adult education levels, unemployment, family structure, and child poverty, all at the county level.

The Black / White placement gap is actually smaller in areas with greater levels of social disadvantage, contrary to conventional thinking.

The Black/White Placement Gap by County
Social Disadvantage and Urbanicity
• Conventional theory predicts that disparity will be greatest in areas with higher poverty rates.

In this case, we are using social disadvantage as the measure. Disadvantage is a composite of adult education levels, unemployment, family structure, and child poverty, all at the county level.

The Black / White placement gap is actually smaller in areas with greater levels of social disadvantage, contrary to conventional thinking.
Maltreatment Rates by State Poverty Rate
Maltreatment Rates by State Poverty Rate
Maltreatment Rates by State Poverty Rate

![Graph showing the relationship between victimization rate and white child poverty rate.](image-url)
Maltreatment Rates by State Poverty Rate

![Graph showing a scatter plot with Victimization Rate - Blacks on the y-axis and Black Child Poverty Rate on the x-axis. The graph includes a trend line.]
Maltreatment Disparity by State
Maltreatment Disparity by State

![Disparity vs Child Poverty graph]

- X-axis: Child Poverty
- Y-axis: Disparity

The graph shows a downward trend, indicating that as child poverty increases, maltreatment disparity decreases.
Maltreatment Disparity by State

![Graph showing the relationship between White Child Poverty Rate and Maltreatment Disparity. The graph plots points on a scatter plot, with a trend line indicating a negative correlation.]
Maltreatment Disparity by State

![Graph showing disparity by state against black child poverty. The x-axis represents black child poverty, ranging from 0 to 50, and the y-axis represents disparity, ranging from 0 to 6.0. The graph displays a downward trend line with scattered data points.](image-url)
Implications

- Problem statement
  - More careful understanding of the dynamics
- Data resources
  - More diverse understanding of the administrative data needed to explore explanation
- Important insights gained from a study that uses aggregate data as opposed to person-level data