Neighborhood Influences on Child Indicators

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Outline

✓ Relevance of neighborhood for child indicators

✓ Two challenges:
  ✓ Definition of neighborhood
  ✓ Interpreting neighborhood influence

✓ Two examples:
  ✓ Resident maps
  ✓ Review of neighborhood influence on child maltreatment indicators

Why neighborhood indicators for children?

✓ Place is implicated in the reproduction of social disadvantage (social exclusion)

✓ Neighborhood as target and context for prevention

✓ Place as context for child development and community practice

✓ Location for organizing and mobilization

Theory of place in social research

✓ Neighborhoods or small areas as important places and of research interest

• Origins in sociology, notably Chicago School
• Environmental and community psychology (e.g., behavior settings, place identity, etc.)
• Developmental psychology and social work (ecological models)

Theory of place (continued)

✓ Concentration of poverty (social exclusion) and other social ills brought renewed interest

• Concentration effects Socialization, contagion
• Social disorganization, community capacity, collective efficacy
• Stress-Coping paradigms (health/mental health)
• Segregation, selective mobility

Neighborhood definition problematic for child indicators

✓ Many definitions
  ✓ E.g. Geographical, historical, social interaction, place identity

✓ Neighborhood indicators
  ✓ Typically use postal codes, census tracts, administrative boundaries, etc.

✓ Importance of resident perceptions and exposure
Example: Variation in resident perceptions

Example: AECF’s Making Connections

Example: Parents differ from children

Example: Cleveland neighborhood children’s maps

Neighborhood definitions suggestions

Example: Neighborhood and child maltreatment indicators

• How do residents view their neighborhoods spatially and symbolically?
  – Differences across cities and demographic groups
• How do residents’ views compare with pre-defined boundaries?
  – Boundaries differ, but average size like block groups
• Can information about resident perceived neighborhoods prove useful in neighborhood indicators?
  – Yes, to guide formulation of neighborhood units; but difficult across time
• Can individual’s (unique) neighborhoods be useful?
  – Yes, to examine influence of “perceived” neighborhood on child indicators

• Lit. review
  – 25 studies (in English, 1975-2002)
  – Neighborhood—Sub-city area
• Maltreatment Indicators
  – Most “official” reports or investigations
  – A few “self-reported” behaviors
• Findings
  – “Ecological” correlations moderate
  – Individual neighborhood effects weaker
• Mechanisms of influence need to be sorted out
Alternative Pathways: Neighborhood influence on child maltreatment indicators

Research agenda: Neighborhood and child indicators

- Control for neighborhood mobility and selection
- Uncover unintended consequences of formal social control or reporting bias
- Incorporate neighborhood perceptions
- Study effectiveness of community change strategies on indicators