Data Equity and Impact

Using Information to Advance Racial Justice and Social Change

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High-Level Background

- **Education**
  - DrPH in Health Equity and Social Justice – Johns Hopkins
  - MPH – UT Health Science Center
  - BBA/BS - UT Austin (Hook ‘Em)

- **Work**
  - 8 years of nonprofit community +leadership experience
  - Former epidemiologist (health informatics)
  - 12 years of full-time praxis in health equity and racial justice

**TLDR: Intersectional Womanist and Social Epidemiologist**
Key Learning Points

• What is data equity?
• Frameworks to operationalize data equity
• Biases to consider when comparing impact/data of one organization to another
• Who gets to define how impact is measured?
• How can we use data to better inform our investments in social change work?
Introduction and Background
What is Data Equity?

**Data Equity** refers to the consideration, through an equity lens, of the ways in which data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and distributed (Lee-Ibarra, 2020).
Why does data equity matter?

• Mask existing or emerging inequities
  • EX: Mass incarceration and ethnicity data collection

• Reduces the agency of the people who are receiving the intervention or being studied
  • EX: Carrying out an analysis on exclusionary discipline in Texas' K-12 schools

• Perpetuate biases
  • EX: NHANES data and sugary drink consumption interpretation
Data Equity Across The Data Life Cycle

**Collection**
- Are my instruments designed to gather the information I need?
- Who has identified this information as being important?
- Am I missing an opportunity for granularity?

**Analysis**
- How does the population receiving the intervention or being studied view the data?
- What factors may be missing (confounders)?
- Is my analysis plan the best approach for what I am seeking to understand?

**Interpretation**
- How have biases been considered?
- Does my interpretation have the potential to cause more harm?
- What do participants gain from the results?
Intersectionality Framework

**Intersectionality** is a theoretical framework for understanding how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES, and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) at the macro social-structural level. (Davis, 2008)

*It was developed by American Civil Rights advocate and leading scholar of Critical Race Theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw*
Example: Mass Incarceration and Women

- Although jail populations for men have decreased 9% between 2008 and 2018, women's jail populations grew 15% (Vera Institute, 2021)

- LGBTQIA+ Women overrepresented at every stage of criminal legal system
  - 21% of transgender women have been incarcerated during their lifetime

Racial/Ethnic disparities in having been in jail/prison among transgender women (N = 3,878), Reisner, et. Al
Racial Justice Framework

*Racial Justice* is a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self-determination to fully thrive (Race Forward)
Example: Obesity and Health Disparities

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), non-Hispanic Black adults have the highest age-adjusted prevalence of obesity at 49.9% (CDC, 2020)

- This is a ~8.5% difference between the overall rates for non-Hispanic White people aged 18+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(2020)</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Black</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Black/Non-Hispanic White Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>49.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Obesity and Health Disparities: COVID-19

In December 2019, a new disease emerged in the city of Wuhan, China that is capable of producing respiratory illness. We named this disease COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and thus far, it has infected more than 72 million people worldwide.

COVID-19 is dangerous because we have not yet developed a universal vaccine for it and severe illness often has never been seen before in humans. This virus has caused the worst pandemic the world has seen in more than 100 years. COVID-19 presents similarly to the flu and may include the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Persistent muscle pain

COVID-19 is particularly dangerous for those with obesity and other health disparities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 Mortality (MI)</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Black</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
<th>B/W Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>254.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>147.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 Mortality (GA)</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Black</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
<th>B/W Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>128.5</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Checking For Bias
Nonprofit Industrial Complex

- The **nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC)** refers to a system of relationships between foundations/donors and private nonprofits (typically large)
- Usually deploys a top-down approach where what is funded is driven by the interests of donor
Comparing Impact

- Data Gaps in Minoritized Populations
  - Example: Indigenous erasure
- Organizational Capacity Challenges
  - The NPIC reduces the opportunity for smaller, community-led organizations to advance social change
Fundraising Inequities

- Only 20% of large foundations give to Indigenous communities and causes; Indigenous people represent 2% of the population but receive .4% of annual grant dollars specifically marked to benefit their community. (Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2016)

- Unrestricted net assets are 76% smaller for Black-led organizations compared to White-led ones (Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2020)
  - Particularly challenging given there is a large call for these types of funds to advance equity and build internal capacity
  - This is after controlling for education level of the leaders; Black women consistently receive less financial support as leaders
Considerations for Measuring Impact
Considerations

What is the problem?

• Who has defined the problem?
• Is there an existing publicly available dataset?
• How does the priority population view the problem?
• Is measurement possible during the grant-cycle?

Who is the priority population?

• What inclusion and exclusion criteria define this population?
• Are there identities within this population that may increase risk?
• How does this population define themselves?
Power Dynamics

• Often disconnected from culturally relevant approaches
  • EX: Food is Medicine as opposed to strategies to Indigenize food systems or advance food justice

• Overreliance on certain types of data, evaluation metric, and approaches
  • EX: Social justice approaches to people that are experiencing homelessness are discounted as lacking an evidence base (Housing First)

• White-centric view of priorities influence retention rates and sustained relationships with organizations led by racially and/or ethnically minoritized populations
  • EX: Paternalism in how to measure success and not treating diverse leaders like authentic partners
Using Data for Social Change
Be honest about the implications of the data

Do not overstate the data's significance for complex social challenges

Identify opportunities for more equitable data collection and analyses
Questions?

Email any questions to me directly at ashley.hickson917@gmail.com. Please add “Impact Austin” to the subject line when reaching out.

Connect on LinkedIn at https://www.linkedin.com/in/ashleyhickson917/
References


Overcoming the Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding. (n.d.). Retrieved February 8, 2023, from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/overcoming_the_racial_bias_in_philanthropic_funding