

Assessing Racial Disparity in Juvenile Risk and Needs Classification

Paige Lee, School of Criminal Justice
 Research Mentor: Christopher Sullivan, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

- Risk assessment are used to classify offenders risk level and target their risk/needs with effective supervision and intervention.
- The Ohio Youth Assessment System is a dynamic risk/needs assessment. That consist of seven different domains. *
- Risk assessments can be race neutral which would reduce or eliminate racial biases in the classification of youths—relative to other classifications. *
- High risk offenders are more likely to receive intensive supervision or incarceration.
- Non-white youths account for 2/3 of incarcerated youths but only 1/3 the US juvenile population. *
- When using the OYAS non-whites are more likely to receive high risk classification compared to their white counterparts. *

*See reference page for citations

Research Aims

- To determine what part of the OYAS influences racial disparities in risk classification for youths involved in the juvenile justice system.

METHOD

Participants

- N= 4,331 Juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system across two states who have received OYAS
- 72% male. 63% white

Measures

- Risk classification and score from the assessment process
- Risk classification of low, moderate, high
- Race- white or non-white

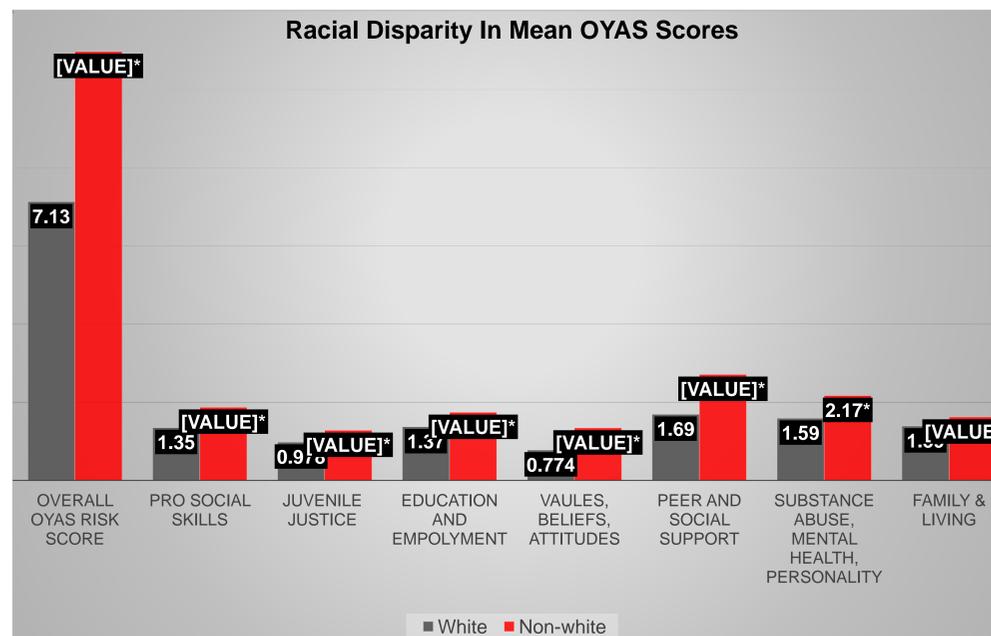
Procedures

- A secondary data analysis of *Multi-Method Study on Risk Assessment Implementation and Youth Outcomes in the Juvenile Justice System*. *

*See reference page for citations

RESULTS

	White	Non-White
Low Risk OYAS	50.25% (1,380)	36.13%(572)
Moderate Risk OYAS	40.42%(1,110)	47.06%(745)
High Risk OYAS	9.32%(256)	16.80%(266)



*p<.05 with independent samples t tests

OYAS Domain with Race	Cohen's D	Point Biserial r
Overall OYAS Risk Score	.251	.111
Prosocial Skills	-.409	-.186
Juvenile Justice History	-.243	-.112
Education & Employment	-.351	-.160
Values, Beliefs, & Attitudes	-.476	-.215
Peer & Social Support	-.624	-.278
Substance Abuse, Mental Health, & Personality	-.341	-.156
Family & Living	-.162	-.075

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

- There is a significant difference in risk level of offenders who are moderate and high when comparing non-white and white.
- The difference of overall risk score between white and non-white offenders is statistically significant and moderate in size.
- The difference in scores in all domains of the OYAS is statistically significant when comparing white and non-white offenders.
- The domain with the biggest disparity between white and non-white offenders is Peers and Social Support, followed by Values, Beliefs, & Attitudes and Prosocial Skills.

Limitations

- The race measure is limited to a binary coding.
- It would be useful to have more information on the attributions made based on the risk scores and domains.

Implications and Future Directions

- There is a well-known disparity in juvenile justice outcomes for youths of different race/ethnicity groups.
- The large variation in certain domain scores is leading to the racial disparity in overall risk classification.
- The largest variations is coming from domains that assess the individual's social support and values, which both can differ from culture to culture.
- Future research could be done on how risk classification disparities lead to decision making within the criminal justice system.

This work was supported in part by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, under Grant 2014-MU-FX-0006. The opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice.