Risks of Foster Care Re-Entry for Children in Relative & Non-Relative Foster Homes

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• In 2003, 121,030 children were placed in kinship foster homes
  - 23% of foster care population
• Wide Acceptance & Use of Kinship Placements
  - Attention to comparative outcomes of children in kinship & non-kinship foster care,
  Especially in the area of family permanence
Permanency Outcomes of Kin Children

- Disadvantages of Kinship Foster Homes
  - Legal permanence:
    Reunification & adoption
  - Length of stay in care
- Advantages of Kinship Foster Homes
  - Placement stability
  - Foster care re-entry
Limitations of Prior Research

- Heavily relied on statistical regression model to handle the problem of selection bias
  - Limitations of adjusting for pre-existing group differences and selection biases
  - Grogan-Kaylor (2001)’s study:
    Provided evidence of the limitations of standard regression methods
Purpose of Study

• Examine the permanency outcomes of children in relative foster homes in comparison with children in non-relative foster homes in the contexts of different state child welfare systems
  - Focus on the outcome of foster care re-entry
  - Address the problem of selection bias that has been prevalent in previous literature.

• Research Question:
  - Are children in relative foster homes no less likely to re-enter out-of-home care after their discharge than children in non-relative foster homes?
  - Are the effects of placement type the same across the states?
• Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting Systems (AFCARS)
  - AFCARS data for 6 states: AZ, CT, IL, MO, OH, & TN
  - AFCARS 6-month submissions from March 2000 to September 2005
  - Observational period of the study: From October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2005
Sampling Procedure

Children who entered out-of-home care for the first time between October 1, 1999 and September 30, 2004

↓

Children who have ever experienced discharge into reunification with parents before the end of the observational period

↓

Children who have their last-reported placement setting at either relative or non-relative foster homes
Method of Analysis

- Propensity Score Matching (PSM)
  - Known to minimize selection biases, allowing for more accurate comparison of groups in their outcomes
  - Matches subjects on their conditional probability of group membership (a propensity score)
    - A propensity score: a single scalar variable that is calculated from observed covariates or conditioning variables
Method of Analysis

- Propensity Score Matching in the Study
  - Was used to control for different characteristics of relative and non-relative foster homes
  - Applied logistic regression model to predict the likelihood that a child would be placed in a relative foster home
  - Created matched samples of kin & non-kin children
Method of Analysis

- Variables included in Logistic Regression Model
  - Child’s age at discharge, gender, race, and disability
  - Reason for removal
  - Number of previous placement settings experienced
  - Length of time in care prior to discharge
  - Year of exit
  - County of service provision (largest vs. the others)
  - Primary caregiver’s (parent’s) age and marital status
  - Title IV-E eligibility
  - Primary foster caregiver’s age and marital status
  - Match of child and primary foster caregiver’s race
Method of Analysis

- **Bivariate Analysis**
  - To investigate the outcome of foster care re-entry for children in relative foster homes in comparison with children in non-relative foster homes

- **Survival Analysis**
  - To analyze the outcome of foster care re-entry for children in relative and non-relative foster homes, modeling time to re-entry
**Method of Analysis**

- **Survival Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Type of Placement (Kin)  
  • State  
  • Interaction of Kin & State | • Monthly Foster Care Payment ($)  
  • Interaction of Kin & $ | • Covariates Included in Logistic Regression Model |
### Findings: PSM

- **Sample Size by State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Unmatched Kin</th>
<th>Unmatched Non-Kin</th>
<th>Matched Kin</th>
<th>Matched Non-Kin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>1,672</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>883</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>2,412</td>
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<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>2,655</td>
<td>2,724</td>
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<td>MO</td>
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<td>2,235</td>
<td>1,366</td>
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<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>6,478</td>
<td>10,726</td>
<td>4,050</td>
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<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: PSM

- Characteristics of Relative & Non-Relative Foster Homes
  - Before matching
    - Significant differences
    - No consistent trend among states
  - After matching
    - Complete matching: AZ, CT, IL, TN
    - Incomplete matching: MO, OH
## Findings: Bivariate Analysis

- Rates of Foster Care Re-entry for Kin and Non-kin Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Unmatched Kin</th>
<th>Unmatched Non-Kin</th>
<th>Matched Kin</th>
<th>Matched Non-Kin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>19.09</td>
<td>28.41</td>
<td>21.74</td>
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<td>CT</td>
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<td>22.14</td>
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<td>IL</td>
<td>15.52</td>
<td>20.04</td>
<td>19.81</td>
<td>16.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>14.41</td>
<td>19.51</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>18.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>20.07</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>20.59</td>
<td>25.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>16.47</td>
<td>22.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance levels: p<0.001, p<0.05*
Findings: Survival Analysis

- Likelihood of Re-entering Out-of-Home Care

### Unmatched Sample

- AZ: 1.477
- CT: 1.649
- IL: 1.224
- MO: 1.563
- OH: 1.448
- TN: 1.778

### Matched Sample

- AZ: 1.322
- CT: 0.939
- IL: 0.668
- MO: 1.534
- OH: 1.625
- TN: 1.861
• Wide Variations Among States
  - Different child welfare policies & practices regime of each state may have a greater impact on permanency outcomes of children in care
    ▪ Future study should examine such effects of child welfare policy and practice
  - Advantages of kinship placements in the outcome of foster care re-entry cannot be generalized
    ▪ Future study should be conducted at a national level or compare the findings among states
• Contradictory Findings between Analysis of Unmatched and Matched Samples
  - Limitations of standard regression model in investigating causal relationship
    ▪ Future study should identify causal factors that account child welfare outcomes, which are independent from pre-existing group differences
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