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# Towards a Policy Actionable Analysis of Geographic and Racial Health Disparities

Institute of Medicine  
July 30, 2007

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, MPA-URP  
Associate Professor



With funding from W. K. Kellogg Foundation and  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute



## Three themes from the “Eight Americas”

- “Geography” matters for health:
  - Why?
- Large geographic variations in health (and health disparities):
  - Why?
- What can we do about it?



- And Latinos



# Geography as a social determinant of health

- Geographies used to examine health disparities should be consistent with a social determinants of health framework.
- Geographies should map onto socioeconomic factors driving racial inequality, e.g.
  - state income inequality,
  - disparities in neighborhood environment in metropolitan areas



## Why metropolitan areas?

- Two-thirds of America's children live in 100 largest metro areas.
- 40% (18 of 45 million) of children in largest metro areas live in "majority-minority" metros.



## “Minority” children are the majority in 28 of 100 largest metros

- Millions of children live in majority-minority metros:
  - **Chicago** (2.2 million; 51% minority)
  - **Dallas** (1 million; 53% minority)
  - **Los Angeles** (2.7 million children; 80% minority)
  - **Washington, DC** (1.3 million; 50% minority)



## Why metropolitan areas?

- Metropolitan areas have an unequal “geography of opportunity”, i.e. vast disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods.
- Large disparities in opportunity in metropolitan areas have a substantial impact on well-being of America’s children.
  - And, in turn, on economic and social prospects of entire metropolitan regions.



## Why neighborhoods?

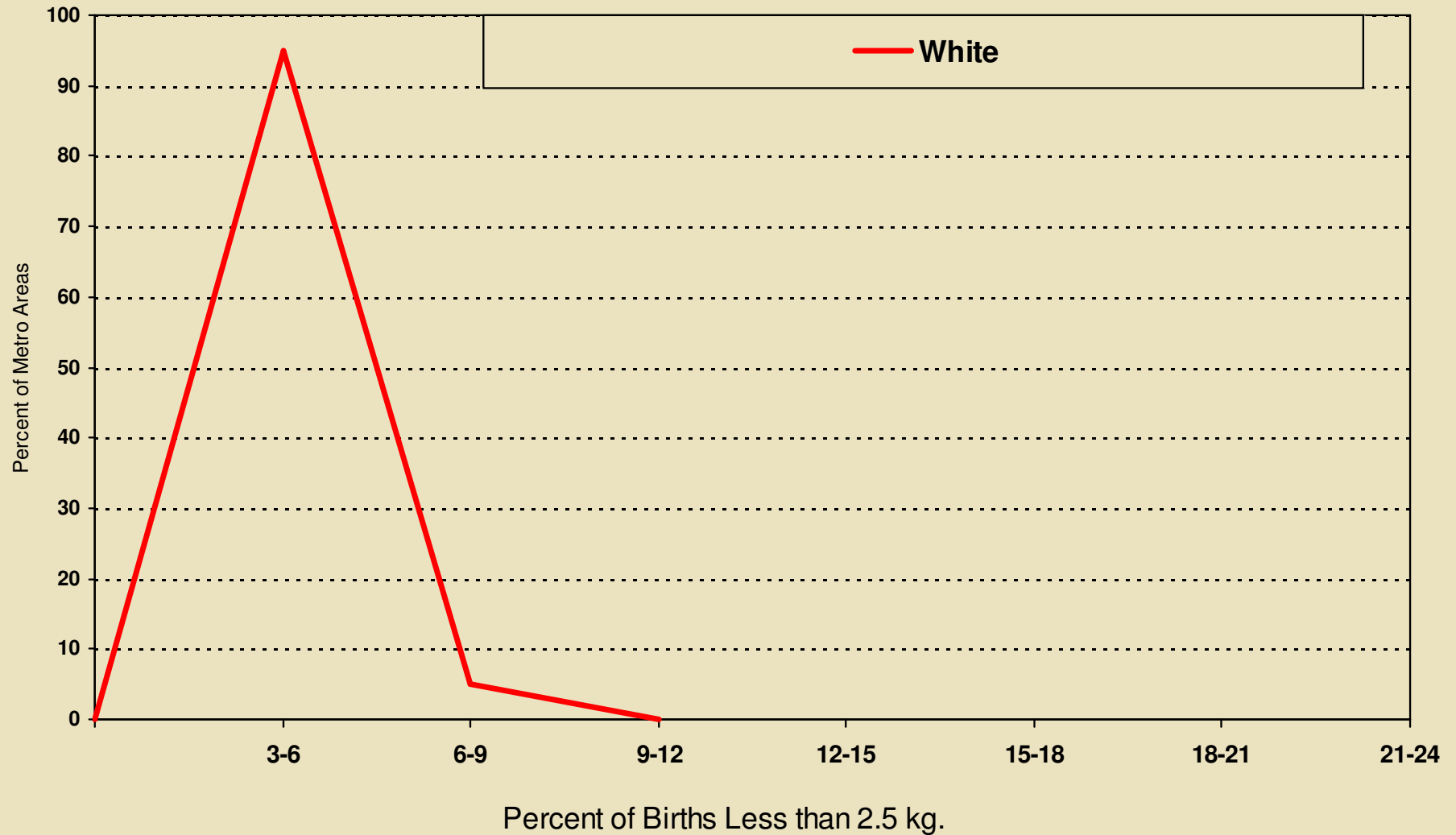
- Evidence of neighborhood effects on health (above and beyond individual and family level factors).
- Poor neighborhood conditions may put children at risk for developmental delays, teen parenthood, and academic failure.
- Disadvantaged neighborhood environment associated with hazardous physical environment, low quality schools, and lack of public safety.



## Evidence of wide geographic variations in health and health disparities

- Health and social determinants show large geographic variations in absolute terms and in level of disparities.
- Differences among metropolitan areas, and among neighborhoods within metro areas suggest that there is room for improvement.
  - Neighborhoods (and schools) with opportunities do exist in metropolitan areas. But not all children have access to them.

## Low-Birthweight Rates: Distributions by Race/Ethnicity 100 Largest Metro Areas: 2001-2002



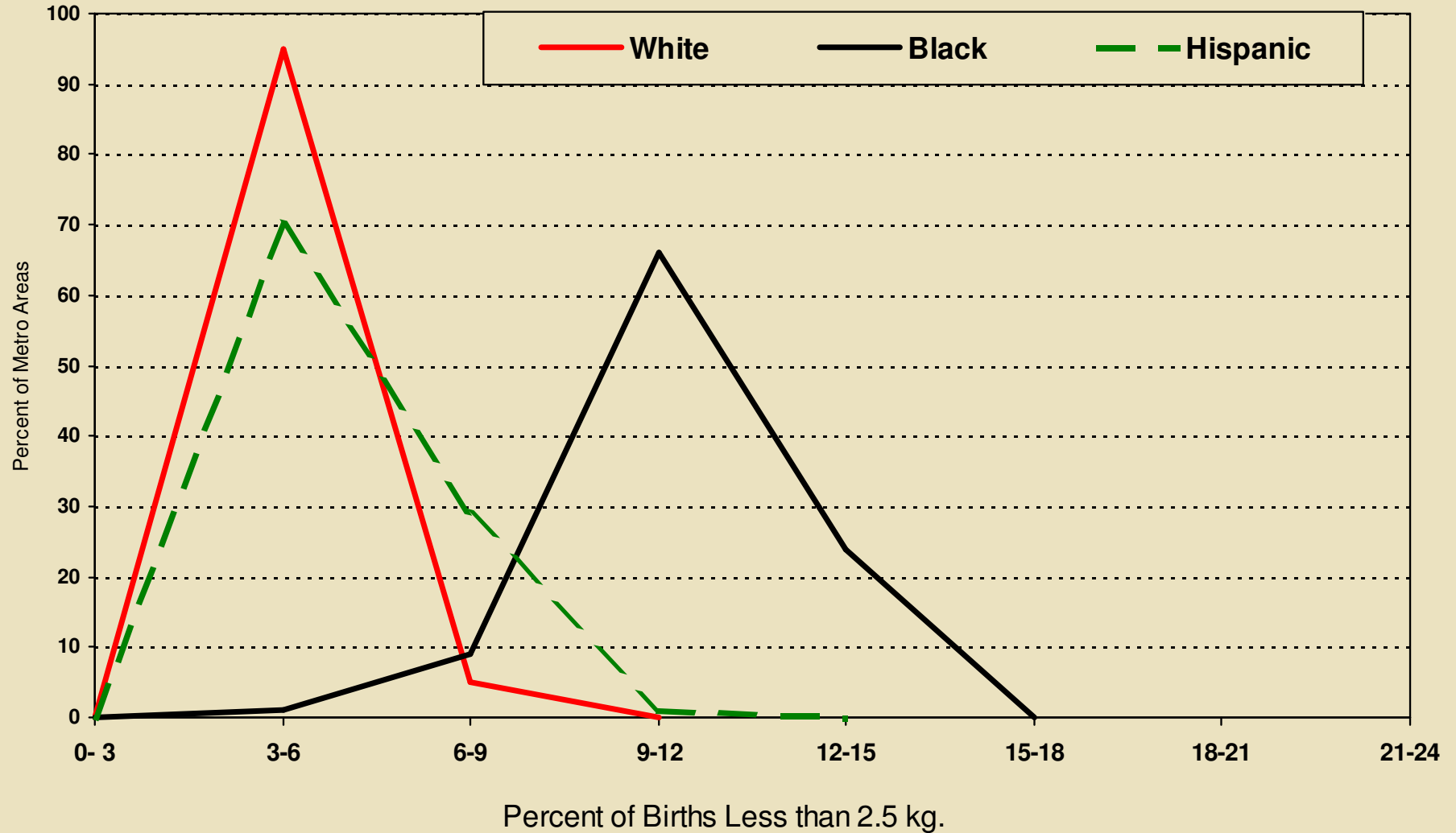
Note: Excludes metro areas with less than 100 births to mothers in the specified subgroup over the 2001-2002 time period.  
Excludes plural births and births which occurred abroad, in Puerto Rico, or in U.S. Territories.  
Source: DiversityData analysis of National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics Natality Birth Data

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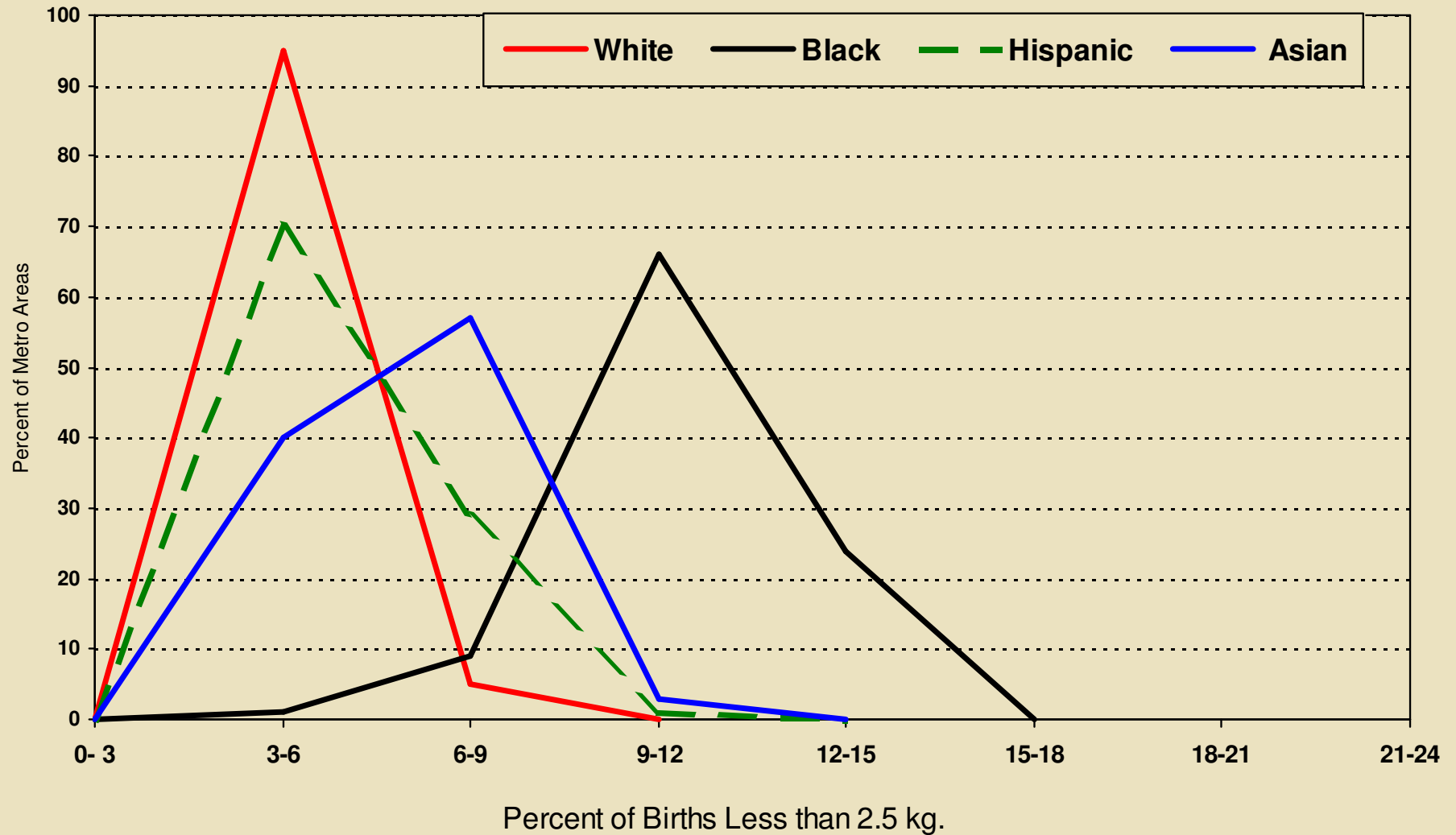
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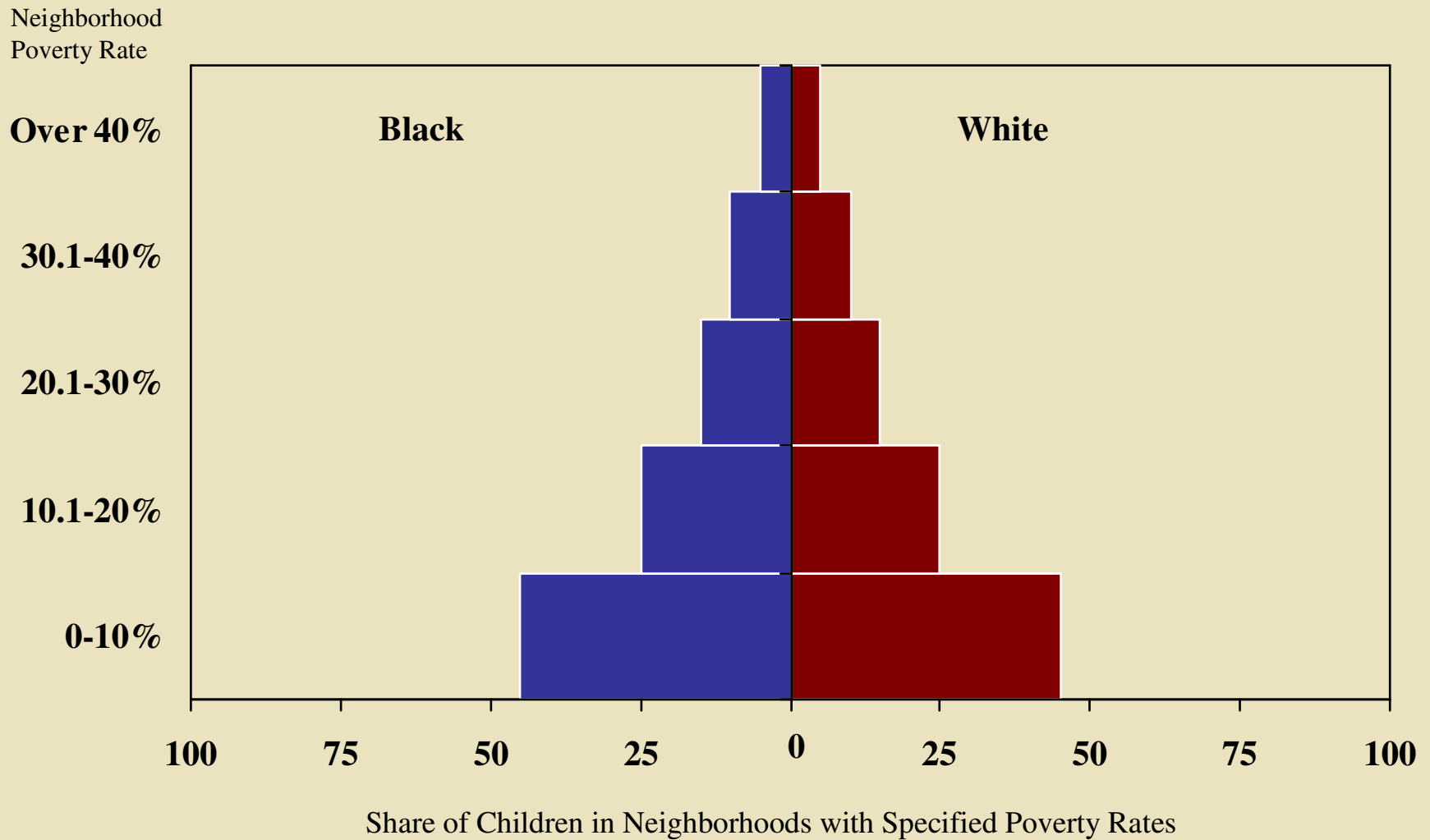
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# Pyramid Graph: Theoretical Equal Neighborhood Environment for 2 Groups: A Mirror Image



# Metro Chicago

## Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Black v. White Children

Neighborhood  
Poverty Rate

**Over 40%**

**Black**

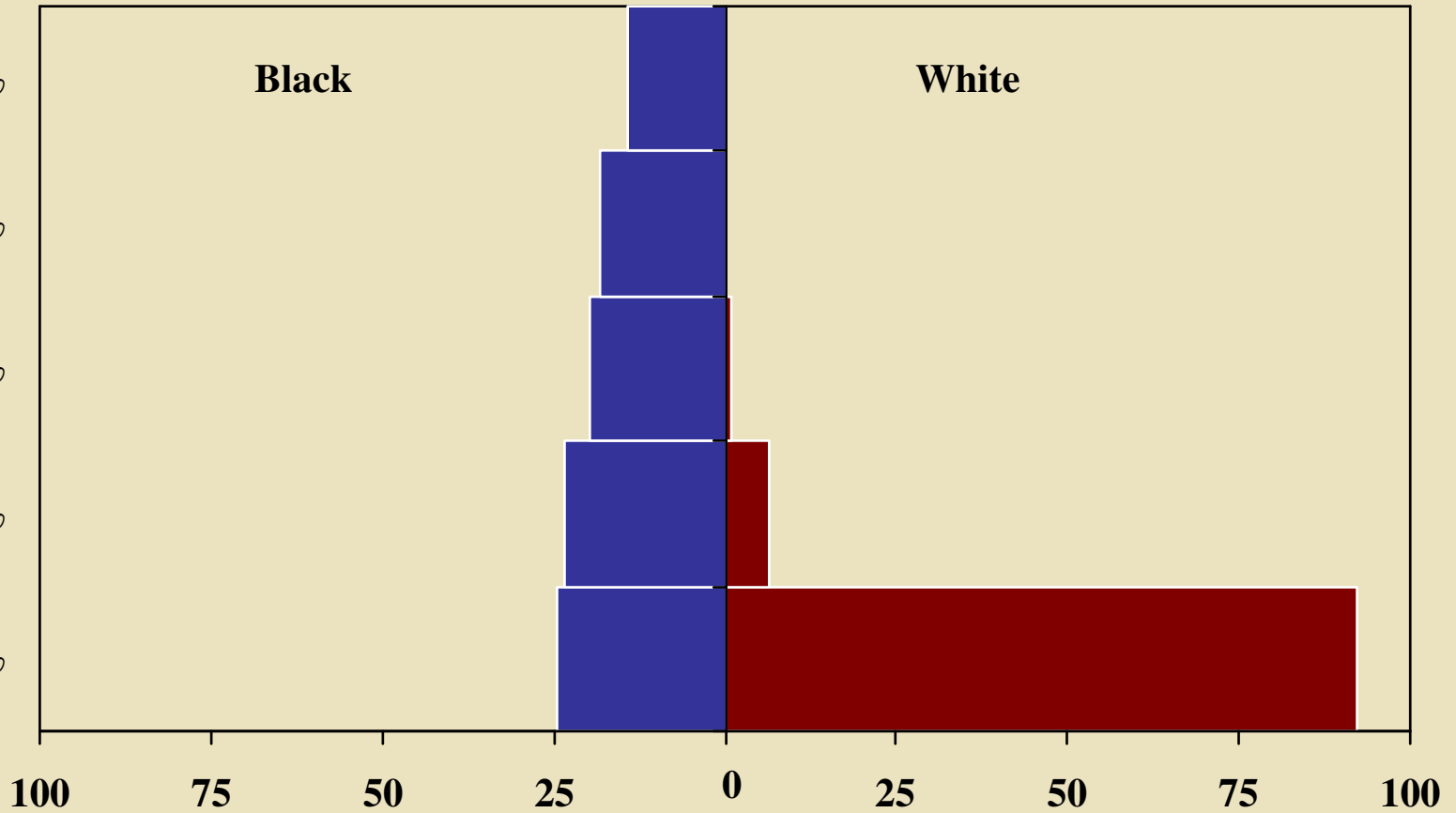
**White**

**30.1-40%**

**20.1-30%**

**10.1-20%**

**0-10%**

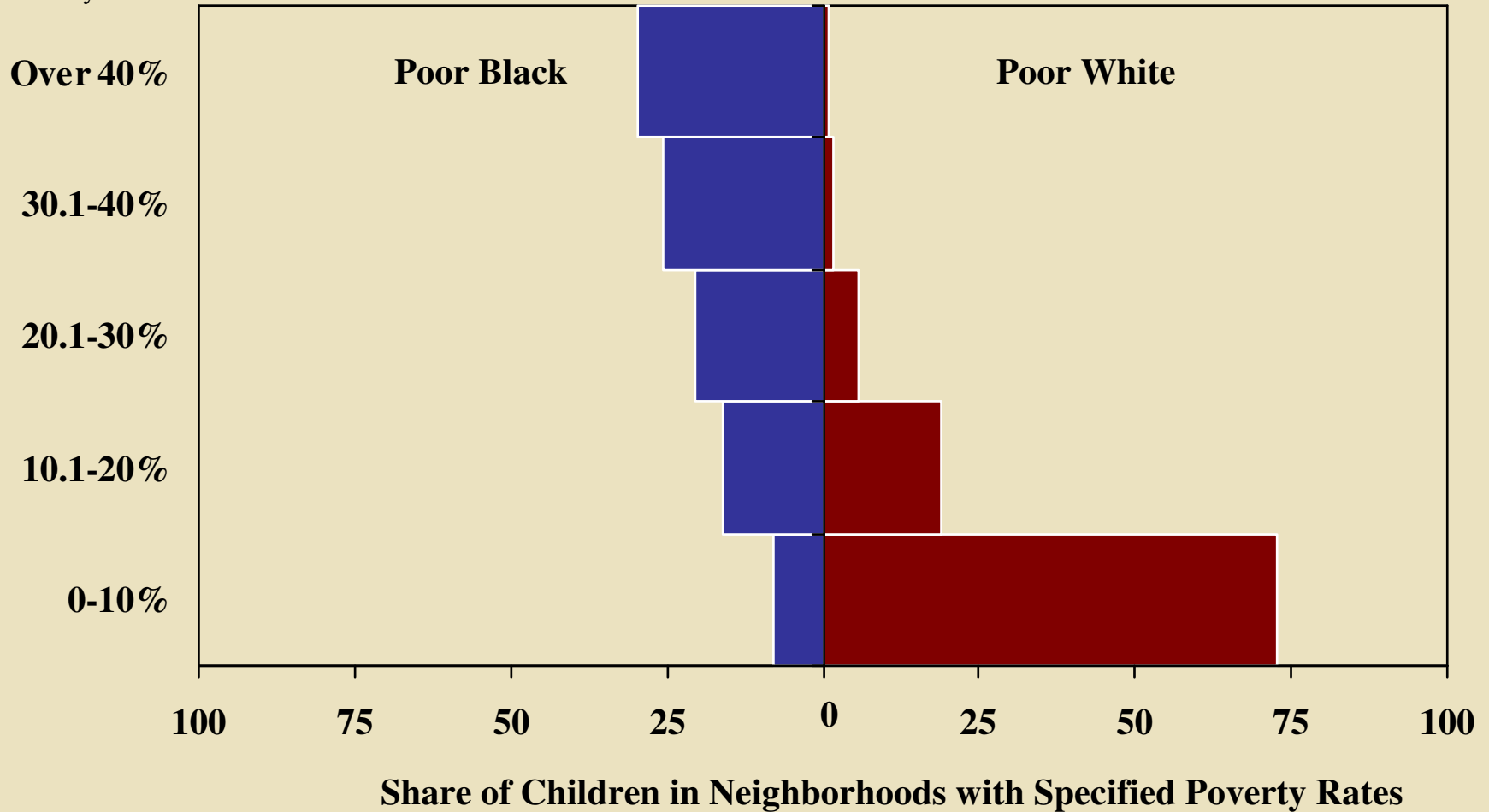


**Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates**

# Metro Chicago

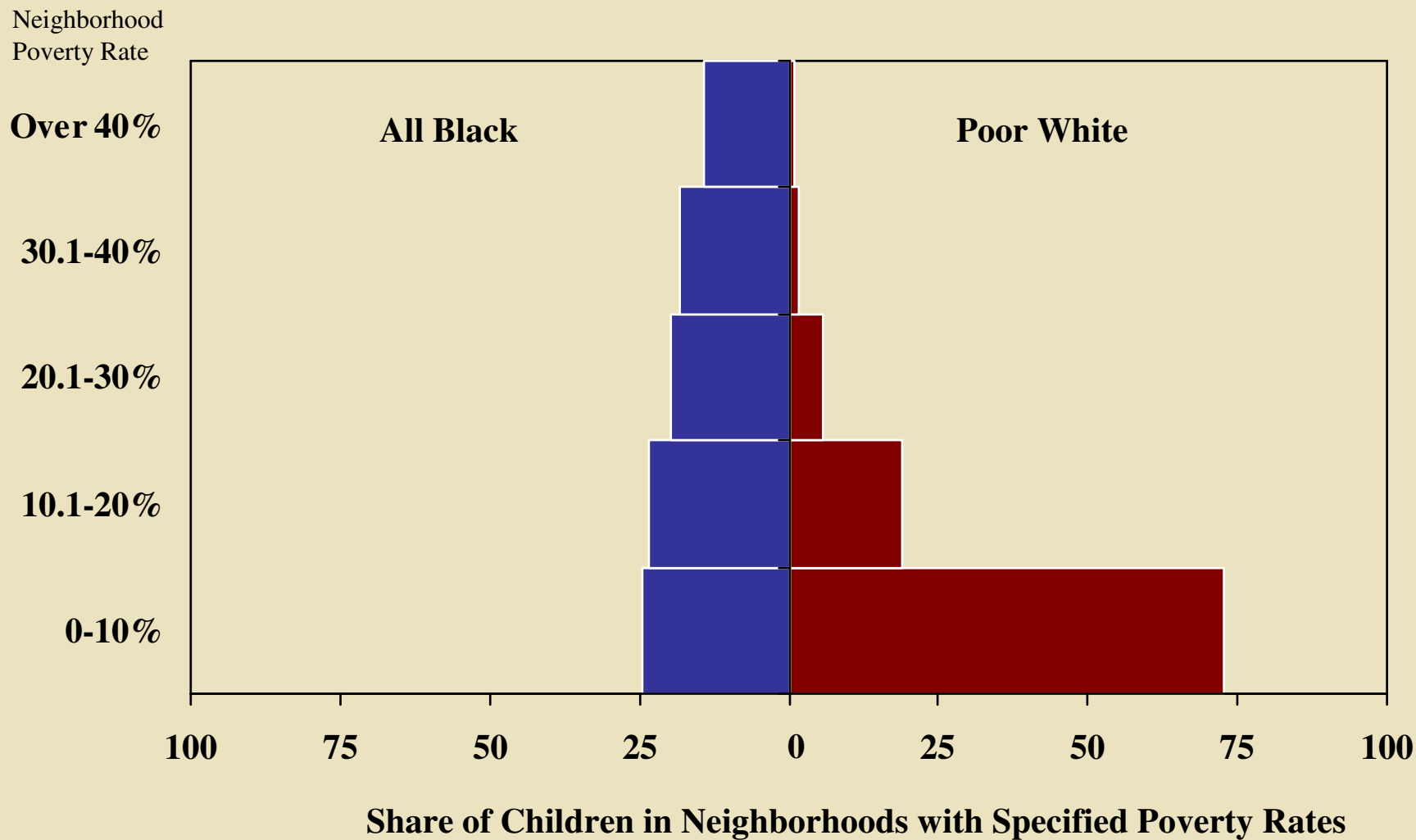
## Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Poor Black v. Poor White Children

Neighborhood  
Poverty Rate



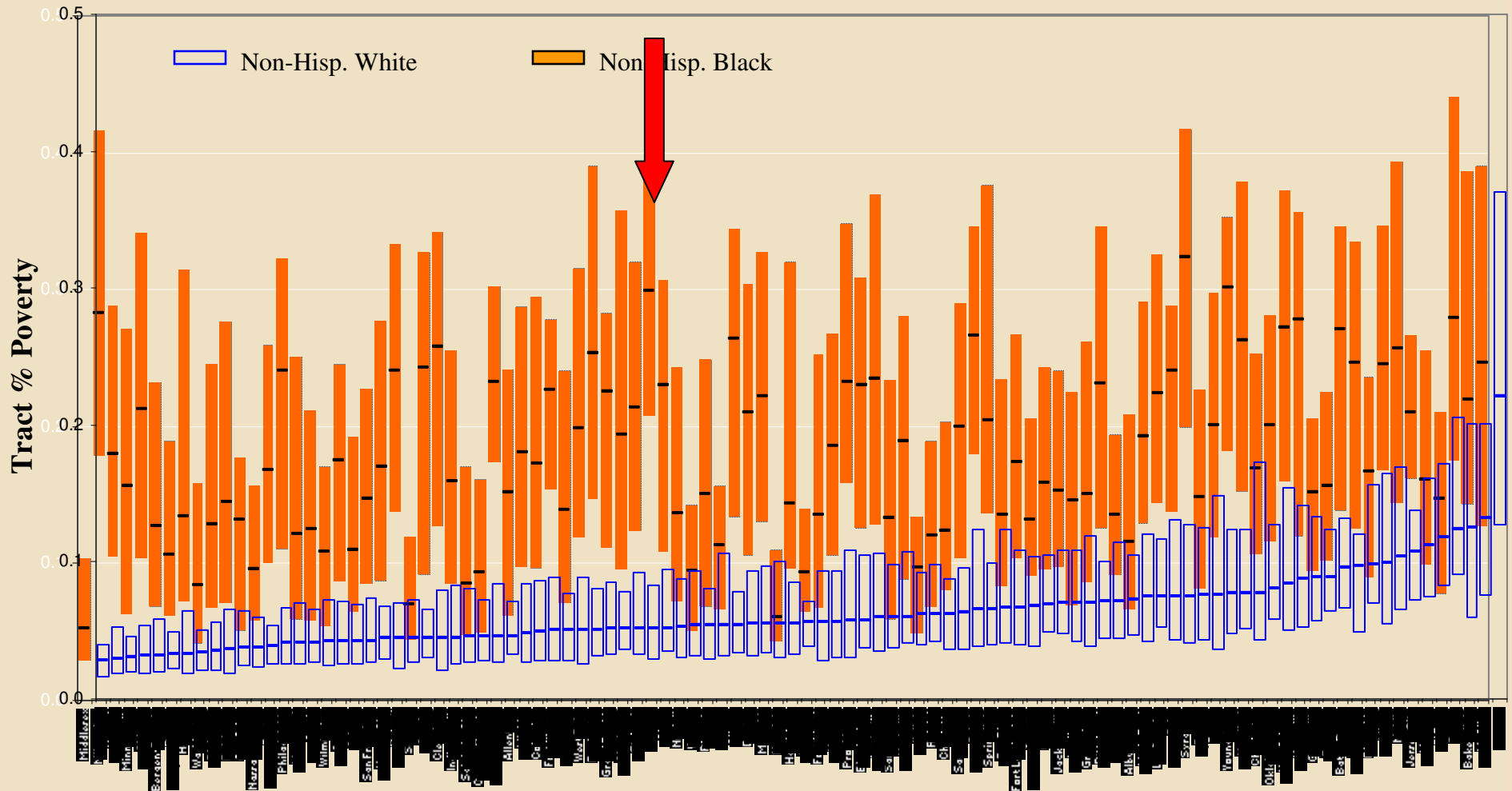
# Metro Chicago

## Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of All Black v. Poor White Children





# White and Black Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

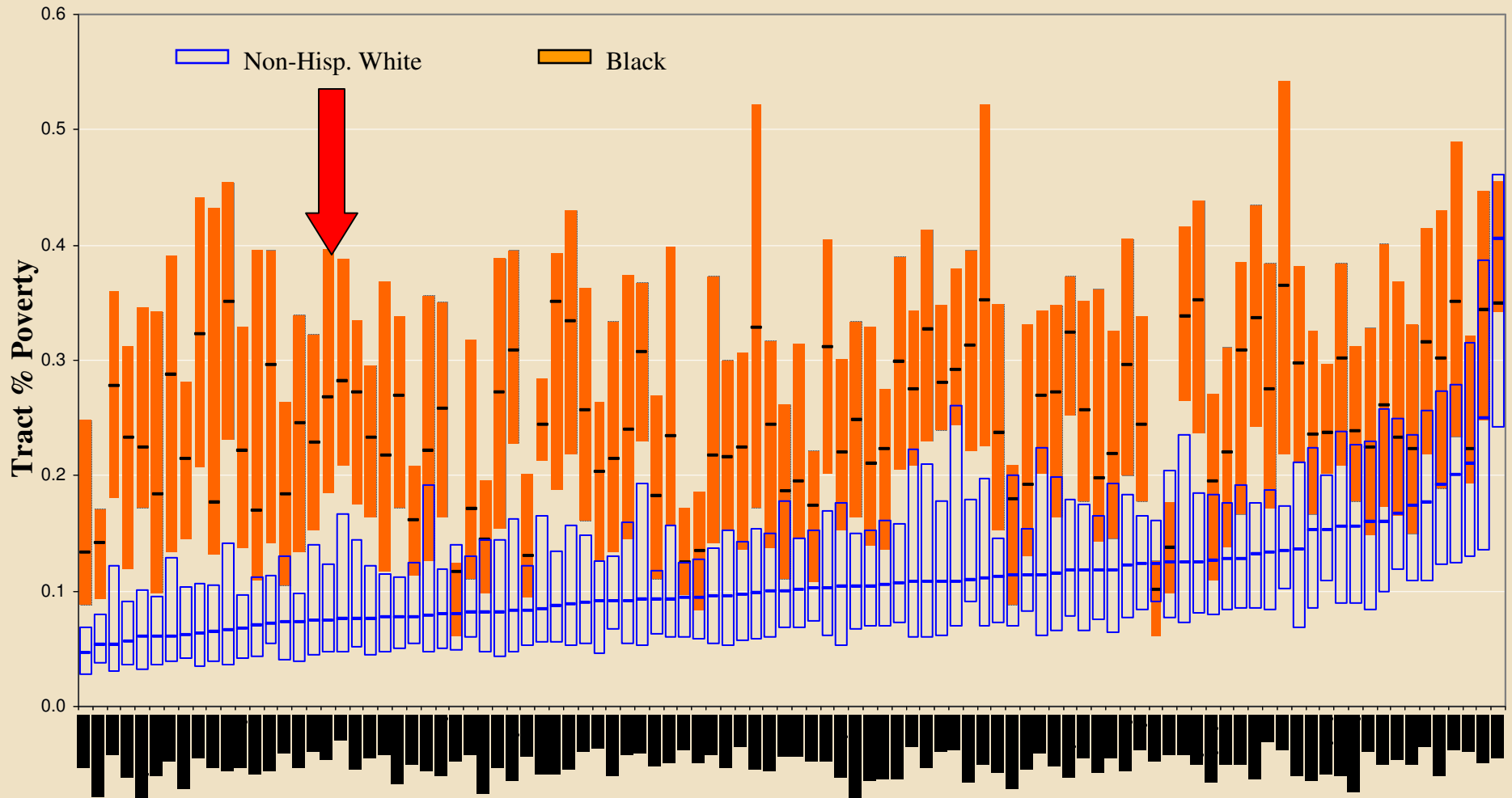


100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))



# Poor White and Black Children: Separate Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty



100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))



## Metros with best neighborhood environment

- For black children: Denver, Colorado Springs and Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill
- For Hispanic children: Ann Arbor, Cincinnati and Washington DC
- For Asian children: Austin, Baltimore and Washington DC
- For white children: Ann Arbor, Boston and San Francisco



## Metros with worst neighborhood environment

- For black children: Buffalo, Chicago and New York
- For Hispanic children: Bakersfield, Providence and Springfield
- For Asian children: Bakersfield, Fresno, and New York
- For white children: Bakersfield, El Paso and New York



# Metros with worst black/white child disparities

- Largest black/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Mobile
  - Detroit
  - Chicago
- In all these areas, share of black children living in low-income neighborhoods was more than 10 times larger than share of white children living in low-income neighborhoods.



# Metros with worst Hispanic/white disparities

- Largest Hispanic/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Chicago,
  - Hartford
  - Milwaukee-Wausheka.



# Metros with worst Asian/white disparities

- Largest Asian/white disparity in share of children living in low-income neighborhoods:
  - Milwaukee-Wausheka
  - Minneapolis-St. Paul

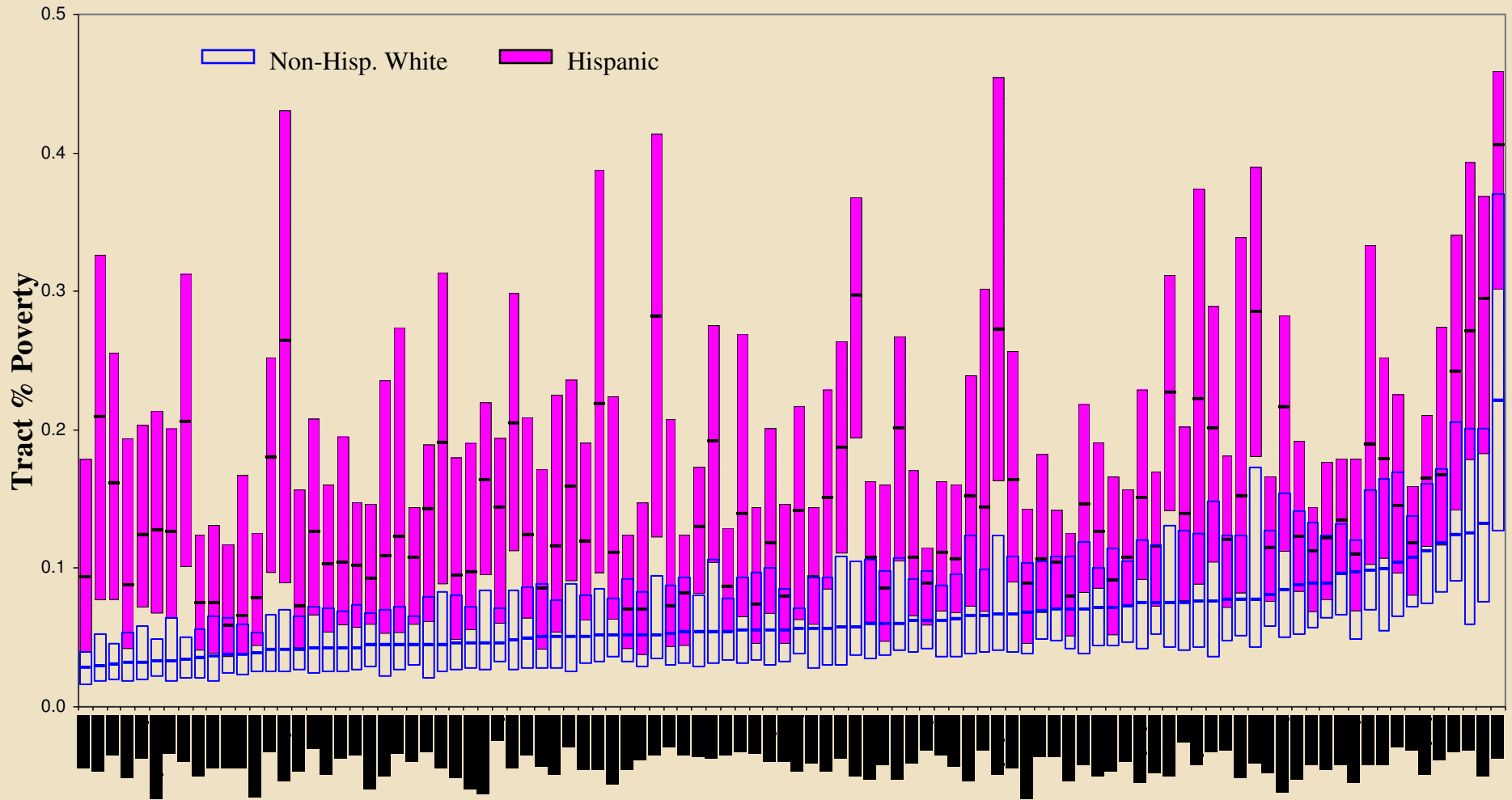


## and Latinos?

- Largest minority group
- Evidence of a positive health profile for some outcomes but...
- A socioeconomic profile very similar to that African Americans
  - Long term implications



## White and Hispanic Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty

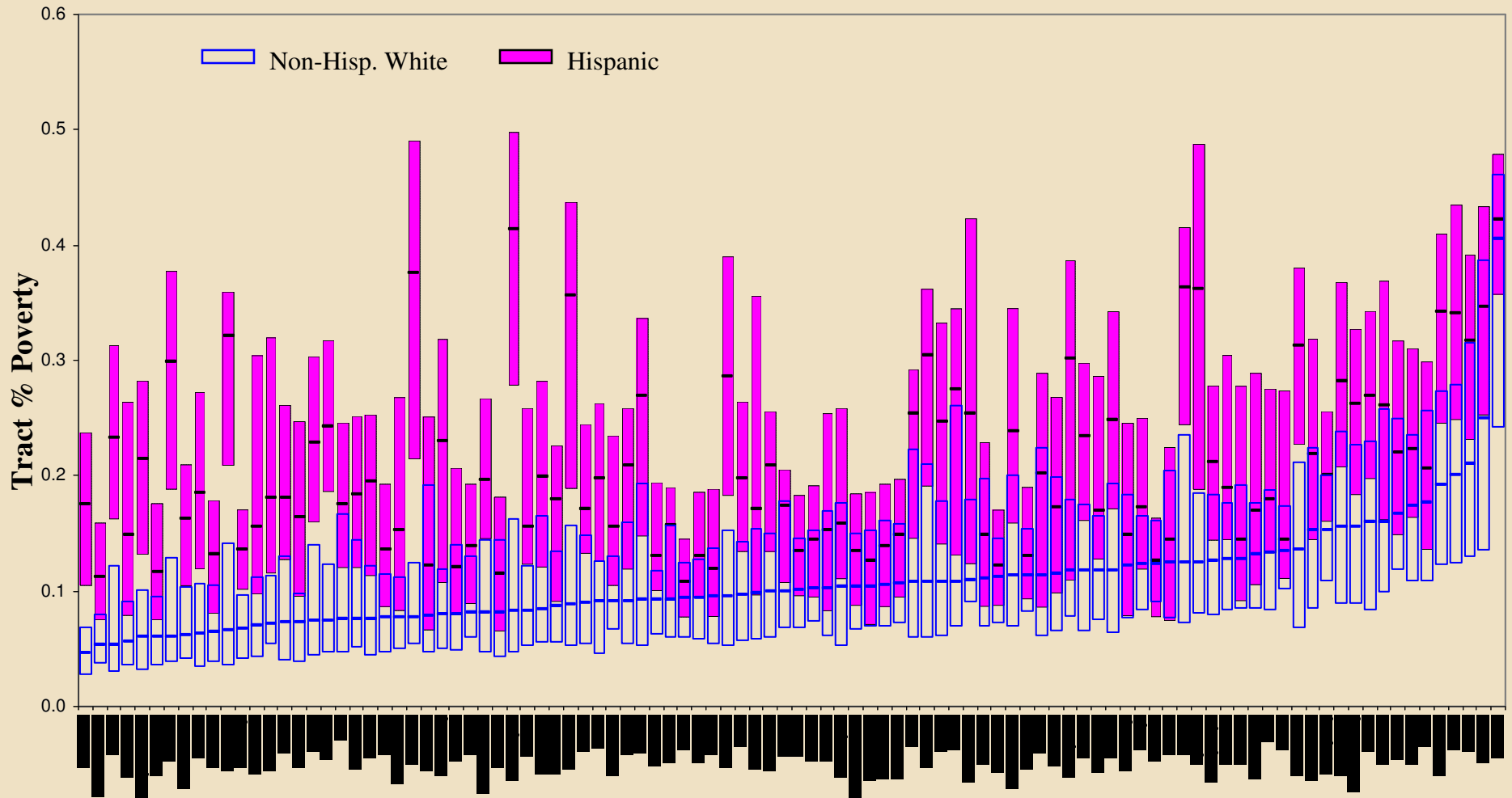


**100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000**

(weighted Interquartile Range (IQR))



## Poor White and Hispanic Children: Unequal Distributions of Neighborhood Poverty



**100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 2000**

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What can be done about it?



# Policy relevant geographies

- Geographies should be actionable from a political and policy standpoint.
- But political and governance fragmentation prevent adoption of policies to correct disparities:
  - Devolution – e.g. state variation in child welfare policy
  - Metropolitan areas



# Public health/medical interventions vs. social policy

- Need both
- Race-based solutions are becoming increasingly difficult:
  - Need different frameworks, e.g. opportunity



# Neighborhood choice and mobility

- Improve access of children in black and Hispanic families to “opportunity neighborhoods”.
- Policies to reduce residential segregation include expanding neighborhood choice in the HUD Section 8 Voucher program, fair housing enforcement, inclusionary zoning, and increased availability of rental housing.



# Metropolitan wide policies: “Regional Equity”

- Metropolitan areas cut across traditional jurisdictions that may vary widely in tax base and resources.
- Regional equity policies try to address the disparities arising from residential segregation by improving access to neighborhoods and schools with resources across jurisdictions in the entire metropolitan area.



## and Latinos?

- Largely an immigrant group suggesting the need for different strategies and policies:
  - More limited access to health insurance (e.g. SCHIP reauthorization excluded “legal immigrant children”)
  - More limited access to social safety net (restrictions in access to health and social safety net after welfare reform for legal immigrants)







## St. Louis Metro Area: Disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods among children

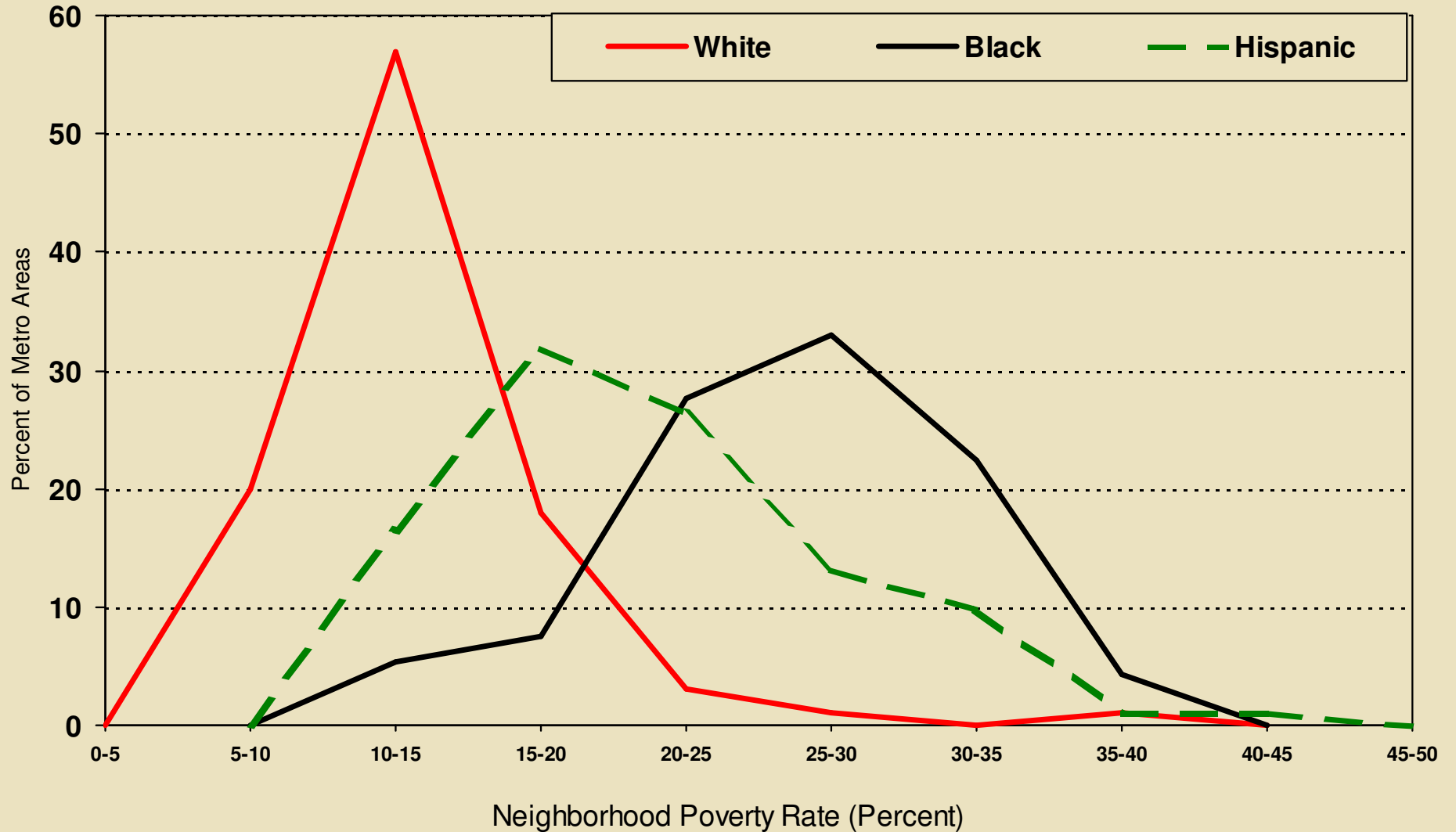
- Neighborhood racial segregation: the average black child lives in a neighborhood that is 71% black;
  - The average white child in a neighborhood that is 87% white.



## St. Louis Metro Area: Disparities in access to opportunity neighborhoods among children

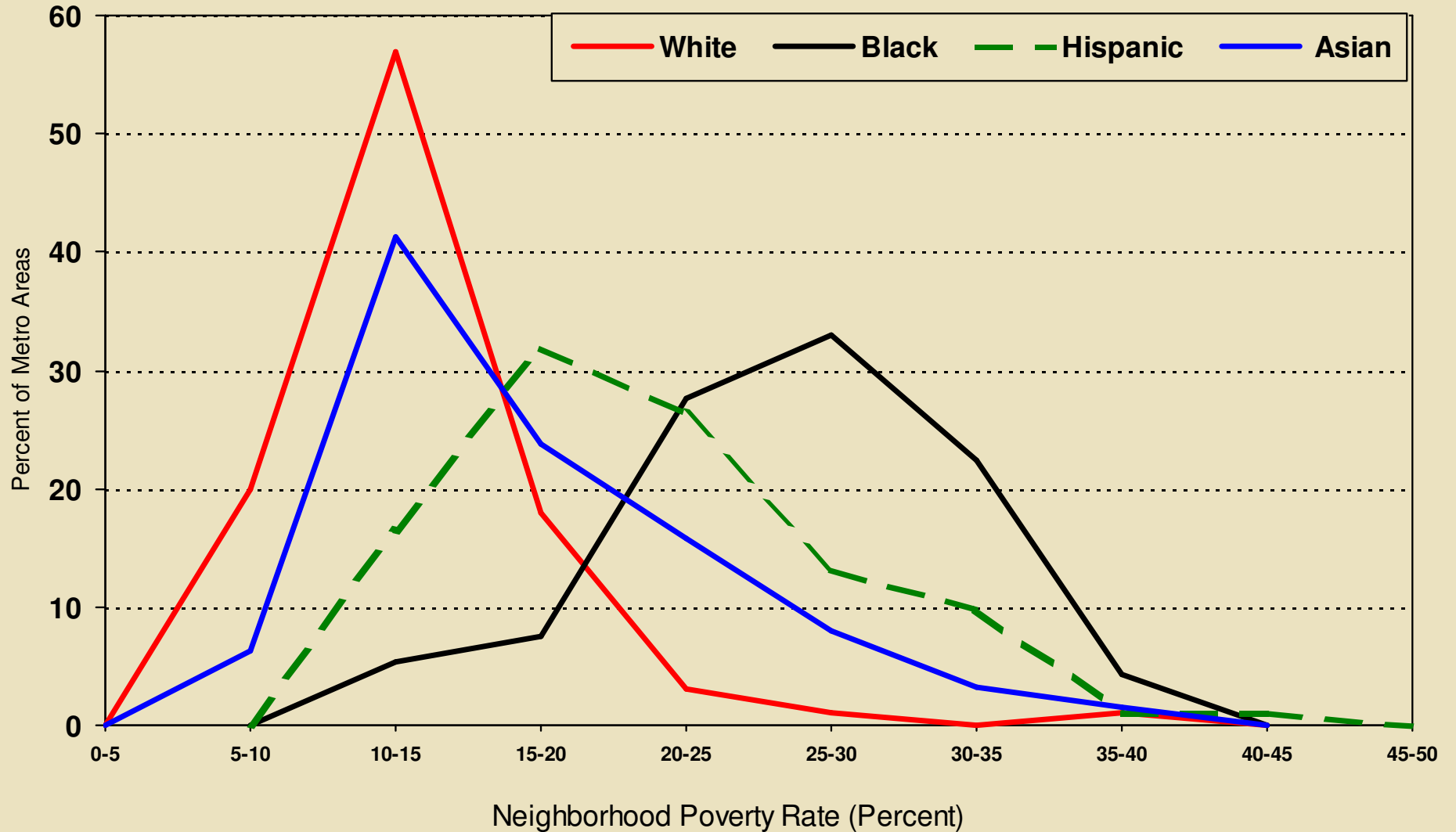
- The average white child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 6%;
  - The average black child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 23%.
- This is not about family poverty status: The average poor white child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 11%;
  - The average black child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 29%.

# Poor Children's Exposure to Neighborhood Poverty Distributions by Race/Ethnicity 100 Largest Metro Areas: 1999



Note: Excludes metro areas with less than 5,000 children of specified racial/ethnic group. Neighborhoods defined as census tracts.  
Source: DiversityData analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Summary File 3 data.

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