Child Care Subsidies and Child and Family Outcomes Panel

Discussant Remarks
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What to make of the different findings across the studies

- Keep in mind the papers are not asking the same questions.
Interpreting across the studies

- What is the counterfactual?
  - “compared to what”

- What are the selection processes?
  - what might explain differences between the two groups besides the “treatment”

- What are the key pathways?
  - If the observed differences are real, how do we understand the “why” and “how”?
Selection Processes

- All papers address selection in creative ways.
- None of the papers can really rule out selection.
- Makes me want to study the selection processes themselves.
  - Who takes up and why?
  - Correlation of employment conditions and child care type
Subsidies may influence whether and what employment parents get, and have their effects on child and family outcomes via the effect they have on employment.

In this case, we’d want to understand how subsidies affect employment, and whether subsidies directly or indirectly influence the pathways between employment and child well-being (e.g., financial resources, time, stress).
Hypothesized Relationships between Employment and Child Outcomes

- **Financial Resources hypothesis**
  - Employment increases income, thereby increasing the economic resources of families. More money allows for greater investment in children. (+)
    - If subsidies facilitate employment that successfully increases income, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal wellbeing/child outcomes to be positive (+)

- **Family Stress hypothesis:**
  - Employment taxes psychological resources of parents, making them less able to invest emotionally in children, and affecting their ability to parent effectively. (-)
    - If subsidies reduce family stress related to employment, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal health to be positive (+)

- **Family Time hypothesis:**
  - Employment reduces the amount of time directly invested with children, or overlaps with family time thereby interrupting family routines and practices and affecting ability to parent effectively. (-)
    - If subsidies result in parents working more, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal wellbeing/child outcomes to be negative. (-)
Key Pathways Through Child Care

- Subsidies may influence whether and what child care and early education children receive, and have their effects on child and family outcomes via the effect they have on children’s out of home care.

- In this case, we’d want to understand how subsidies affect care, and whether subsidies directly or indirectly influence the pathways between child care and child well-being (e.g., quality of nonparental care; dosage; continuity; family-responsiveness of care).
What outcomes should we look at?

- What can we expect from subsidies, and what can we not expect?
- Can we think of intermediate outcomes that are reasonable and measurable?
- Importance of contextualizing findings