Determinants of Parental Child Care Choice

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Child Care Consortium Meeting July 31, 2008
Overview

- Policy Tools for Child Care Sector
- Current US Strategy
- Determinants Framework
- US Research Update
- Final Thoughts
Why Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Matters

ECEC (early childhood education and care) “…includes all arrangements providing care and education of children under compulsory school age regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or program content” (OECD 2001a, p. 14)

- Care and education of Children
  - Equity, access, quality

- Employment of Parents
  - Equity
Policy Tools & Child Care

- Leave & Associated benefits
  - Maternal/paternal/parental
  - Child/family rearing
    - With or without wage replacement
- Public provision of universal or restricted/targeted services
- Supply side subsidies
  - Wage/operating grants to care facilities
  - Capital grants
  - Tax incentives
- Demand side subsidies
  - Tax deductions/credit
  - Voucher for type of service
  - Income-conditional subsidies

US System within this context

- **Leave & Associated benefits**
  - FMLA
    - No guarantee of wage replacement
    - Stratified by occupational sector and job classification

- Public provision of universal or restricted/targeted services
  - Head Start
  - Pre-K

- Supply side subsidies

- **Demand side subsidies**
  - Tax deductions/credit
  - Income-conditional subsidies

Choice
Labour Supply & Consumption Choices

- *Optimisation of waged work and family commitments*
  - Quality
    - Carer will choose best quality of care based on perceived child needs
  - Costs
    - Higher price or lower perceived quality of care will depress maternal employment and/or use of care
Contextualized Patterns of Action or Accommodations

- Observed decision-making of parent/carer occurs within context of financial, market and social constraints.
  - Both an economic and a social transaction
  - Includes calculus about cultural expectation of gender roles
  - Accommodation to and engine for, reproduction of other forms of stratification (e.g., racial/ethnic)
Contextualized Patterns of Action or Accommodations

- Preferences & Beliefs
  - Trade-off to balance desire to be ("good providers and good mothers" (Edin & Lein 1997)
  - Quality and satisfaction

- Information
  - Imperfectly available
  - Reliance on social networks limits and filters information
Contextualized Patterns of Action or Accommodations

- Child Care Supply & Resources
  - Uneven geography of supply
  - Informal/relative/kith and kin
  - Price constraints
  - Availability/constraints

- Contextual factors make child care choices more or less costly in terms of
  - Time and money budgets, and
  - Psychic and social well-being dimensions
Extensions to Framework

- Research Update
  - Race/ethnicity
    - Hispanic children benefit more in cognitive development from centre attendance than White or Black children. [1] Loeb, Bridges, Bassok, Fuller, Rumberger 2007)
    - Latino and Vietnamese –non-English speakers - less likely to select centre care than Whites. In areas with more abundant supply, these groups are more likely to use centre care than otherwise ([2] Hirshberg, Huang, Fuller, 2005)
    - More consensus around “desired core care attributes” as opposed to differing desires based on race/ethnicity ([3]Shlay 2008)
  - Income/SES
    - Differences for low- and high-income children in hours of centre-attendance, skills, and social behavioural problems
  - Low income married parents, less likely to use centre care [2]
Extensions to Framework

- Research Update (continued)
  - Child age & type of care
    - Greatest cognitive benefits enter centre care age 2-3 \([1]\)
    - Negative behavioural effects enter centre care before age 2, particularly large if before age 1 \([1]\)
    - Long term effects of higher quality early child care on vocabulary scores at 5\(^{th}\) grade \([4]\) Belsky et al, 2007
  - Systems
    - Welfare & employment policies may reduce use of Head Start for single mothers with 3-4 year olds \([5]\) Chang, Huston, Crosby, Gennetian, 2007]
    - Pre-K movement \([6]\) Fuller 2007
    - Supply & race/ethnicity \([2]\)
Where do we go from here

- *Leave & Associated benefits*

- **Public provision of** universal or *restricted/targeted services*
  - Information asymmetries
    - Child age and best practices

- **Supply side subsidies**

- **Demand side subsidies**
  - Decreasing information asymmetries
  - Coordination between systems
  - Variability in quality

*Choice*
References