

Sociodemographic Disparities in Market Change and Programmatic Mission under Preschool for All: A Case Study of Illinois
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Project Description.

The goals of this project are to examine the effect of Illinois' universal program -- Preschool for All -- on the supply of preschool and child care in sociodemographically different Illinois ZIP codes; to understand how the program is being received among a sample of Chicago area center directors; and to identify what mechanisms explain different opinions about the program among those serving families of different sociodemographic backgrounds.

Research Questions.

1. Among ZIP codes characterized by varying family income, racial/ethnic, and linguistic categories, how has the Preschool for All slot per child ratio changed between 2008 and 2013? How has the ratio of all other preschool-aged slots per child changed? Are there differences in slot per child ratios within year by sociodemographic characteristics?
2. Is there evidence of "crowd out" (reduction in supply of other types of care with an increase in PFA care)? If so, does the "crowd out" effect differ by income, racial/ethnic, and linguistic characteristics of families in the ZIP codes?
3. What area, center, and director characteristics predict center directors' preference for universal versus targeted programs?
4. What explains the observed racial/ethnic differences in directors' support for universal versus targeted programs?

Sample. Data to analyze research questions 1 and 2 come from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) which provides statewide data from various state agencies. Research question 3 relies on 2012 Chicago Area Study (CAS) survey data collected from 229 non-school based center directors in 33 diverse Chicago area ZIP codes, drawn from a universe of the local Resource & Referral agency list.

I collect interview data from a subsample of surveyed directors to address research question 4.

Methods.

Repeated measures ANOVA and t-tests of difference are employed to address research question 1. Research question 2 will be analyzed with difference-in-difference models, and research question 3 will be analyzed with logistic regression models. Research question 4 will be analyzed with deductive qualitative analysis subsequently inductive coding.

Progress Update.

Data analyses are ongoing. Preliminary results from quantitative analyses of IECAM supply data show that low income ZIP Codes had significantly more Preschool for All slots per child in 2008 than did mid or high income ZIPS, but PFA slots per child decreased significantly between 2008 and 2013 in both low income ZIPs and majority White ZIPs. Early results from difference-in-difference models show that ZIP Codes that had an increase in Preschool for All did not experience significant decreases in other types of care, suggesting that Preschool for All has not crowded out other care arrangements.

To address research question 3, latent class analyses were first conducted to define typical types of ZIP Codes within the CAS sample. Three classes emerged. Logistic regressions show that directors serving in the class of ZIPs described as having majority White, middle income, and low percentage of non English speaking populations were less likely to prefer a universal preschool program than were those serving in the other two types of ZIPs, described as majority Hispanic, low/mid income, and more than 20% non English speaking and majority Black/other race, low income, and less than 20% non English speaking.

Primary interview data to address research question 4 have been collected and transcribed and are now in process of being coded. These data will be analyzed to better understand reasons for sociodemographic differences in opinions about universal preschool.

Implications for policy/practice

As universal preschool debates gain national attention, surprisingly little research examines the implications of state preschool programs in existing markets. This project will serve as a case study to inform policymakers about key issues and considerations for successfully integrating early care and education systems under a universal plan toward the goal of expanding access to high-quality preschool care for a diversity of families.

Experiences with and opinions about Preschool for All appear to differ across sociodemographic categories in Illinois. While it appears that Preschool for All has not pushed out other forms of preschool care in the market, Illinois policymakers should pay attention to low income and majority White ZIPs as they have undergone significant decreases in PFA; in these areas, parents and providers may have experienced more market uncertainty over the last several years which may ultimately jeopardize the well-being of families and children.

Still, most directors in the CAS sample prefer universal preschool. However, there are significant differences depending on the sociodemographics of the ZIP Code in which the director serves. Further research using qualitative interview data will be focused on understanding the extent to which sociodemographic differences predicting preference for universal preschool reflect philosophical differences or whether there might be alternative

explanations, such as market uncertainty in the current economic context or (dis)incentives due to disparities between local market rates and state reimbursement levels.

Implications for research

Experts have offered arguments about why, under what conditions, and for whom universal preschool programs may be beneficial or detrimental. There exists some research evaluating “crowd out” hypotheses, but more studies are needed to analyze data from different states, like Illinois, and to focus on implications across sociodemographic groups. This project also extends research on the role of providers’ ideas and beliefs beyond its current focus on home-based to center-based providers and examines whether certain arguments surrounding universal preschool hold in terms of predicting providers’ opinions about universal programs.

For more information:

<http://annacolaner.weebly.com>

Information about the 2012 Chicago Area Study:

<http://igpa.uillinois.edu/cas/2012-chicago-area-study>

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