

Examining Access to and Participation in Early Care and Education among Children of Immigrants

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Project Description

This study aims to examine the role of structural factors in parents', specifically immigrant parents', use of center-based early care and education (ECE). Children of immigrants are less likely to participate in center-based ECE compared with children of U.S.-born parents, in part due to their family characteristics (e.g., lower income and parental education level). Yet, it is possible that state child care subsidy policies and ECE supply contribute to the gap in center-based ECE participation. The first part of the study examines the associations between state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policies, particularly subsidy generosity and ease of application process, and center-based ECE participation among low-income children of immigrants. The second part of the study considers whether the availability of different types of ECE help explain the gap in center-based ECE participation between children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born parents.

Research Questions

Part 1:

1. Are more generous subsidies and an easier application process under state CCDF policies associated with higher center-based ECE participation among low-income children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born parents?
2. Is the positive association between subsidy generosity and center-based ECE participation smaller for low-income children of immigrants than low-income children of U.S.-born parents? Is the positive association between ease of application process and center-based ECE participation larger for low-income children of immigrants than low-income children of U.S.-born parents?

Part 2:

1. Is the availability of center-based and home-based ECE lower in neighborhoods where children of immigrants live compared with neighborhoods where children of U.S.-born parents live?
2. Does lower availability of center-based and home-based ECE help explain the gap in center-based ECE participation between children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born parents?

Sample

The sample for Part 1 uses repeated, cross-sectional, national data from the American Community Survey from 2009 to 2016, merged with state CCDF policies data, and includes 269,511 low-income children ages three to five living in 38 states (about 28% are children of immigrants). The sample for Part 2 uses data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) and includes approximately 8,700 children ages zero to five (about 34% are children of immigrants). Data on center- and home-based providers from the NSECE are merged with the household data.

Methods

This study uses secondary data analysis of multiple national data sets and conducted in two parts.

Part 1—State CCDF Policies. The first part of the study uses state and year fixed-effects logistic regression to model changes in state CCDF policies within states over time to examine the associations between subsidy generosity, ease of application process, and center-based ECE participation among low-income children of immigrants. Subsidy generosity is measured by initial income eligibility, continuing income eligibility, family copayment rate, and base provider reimbursement rate. Ease of application process is measured by verification of the

applicant's identification, verification of the child's citizenship or immigrant status, and having a 12-month redetermination period. Moderation analysis is used to examine the differential effects of state CCDF policies on center-based ECE participation between children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born parents.

Part 2—Availability of ECE. The second part of the study uses logistic regression to predict center-based ECE participation by parents' nativity and the availability of different types of ECE. Types of ECE include center-based, child care homes, and care provided by relatives or friends. Center-based ECE is further grouped into different categories by funding stream, including Head Start and public prekindergarten, child care subsidies, and private pay. Method developed by Karlson, Holm, and Breen (2012) and Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition method are used to evaluate whether and to what extent the availability of different types of ECE explain the gap in center-based ECE participation between children of immigrants and children of U.S.-born parents.

Progress Update

Analysis is largely complete for Part 1 and underway for Part 2. Results suggest that accounting for family demographic characteristics, children of immigrants are more likely to participate in center-based ECE compared with children of U.S.-born parents. Not verifying the applicant's identification is associated with higher likelihood of using center-based ECE for low-income children regardless of parents' nativity. In addition, higher initial income eligibility thresholds, not verifying the child's citizenship or immigration status, and having a 12-month redetermination period are associated with higher likelihood of using center-based ECE for children of immigrants, but not children of U.S.-born parents. By contrast, higher family copayment rates and higher

base provider reimbursement rates are associated with higher likelihood of using center-based ECE for children of U.S.-born parents, but not children of immigrants. Continuing income eligibility thresholds are not predictive of center-based ECE participation for either groups of low-income children.

Implications for Policy/Practice

States CCDF policies that set higher initial income eligibility thresholds and an easier application process (i.e., not verifying the child's citizenship/immigration status and having a 12-month redetermination period) are particularly beneficial to supporting center-based ECE participation for children of immigrants. States CCDF policies that do not require to verify the applicant's identification or efforts to help parents obtain identification would support all low-income children to participate in center-based ECE. Additionally, examining the role of ECE supply in immigrant parents' use of center-based ECE can help identify potential shortage of center-based ECE in local communities and target resources to improve access to ECE for children of immigrants.

Implications for Research

This study provides insights on the need to consider multiple policies under state child care subsidy program and different types of ECE for future research to gain deeper understanding of how factors beyond family characteristics affect center-based ECE participation among children of immigrants.

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