



Determinants of Parental Child Care Choice

Dr Lucy Jordan
University of St Andrews
Scotland, UK

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

Framework from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). 2001, 2006



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 5th 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

- Meyers, MK and Jordan, LP. 2006. Choice and accommodation in parental child care decisions. *Journal of Community Development Society*, 37: 53-70.
- OECD. 2001. *Starting Strong I: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD. 2006. *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- Edin, K and Lein, L. 1997. *Making ends meet: How single mothers survive welfare and low-wage work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hirshberg, D., Huang, DS-C, Fuller, B. 2005. Which low-income parents select child care? Family demand and neighbourhood organizations. *Children and Youth Services Review* 27: 1119-1148.
- Shlay, AB. 2008. Racial and ethnic differences in welfare leavers child care preferences: A factorial analysis. Working Paper.
- Sanders, KE., Diehl, A., and Kyler, A. 2007. DAP in the 'hood: Perceptions of child care practices by African American child care directors caring for children of color. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22: 394-406.
- Loeb, S., Bridges, M., Bassok, D., Fuller, B., Rumberger, RW. 2007. How much is too much? The influence of preschool centers on children's social and cognitive development. *Economics of Education Review* 26: 52-66.
- Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., McCartney, KM., Vandell, DL., Clarke-Stewart, KA., and Owen, MT. 2007. Are there long term effects of early child care? *Child Development* 78: 681-701.
- Fuller, B. 2007. *Standardized childhood: The political and cultural struggle over early education*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Chang, YE., Huston, AC., Crosby, DA., and Gennetian, LA. 2007. The effects of welfare and employment programs on children's participation in Head Start. *Economics of Education Review* 26: 17-32.
- Hochschild, A. 2000. "The nanny chain". *American Prospect* 11: January.