Child Care, Disability, and Family Structure: Use and Quality in a Population-Based Sample of Low-Income Preschool Children

Based on the work of
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Presentation developed by Zach Addison, MSW student
Overview

This presentation is drawn from the first nationally representative investigation of child care for low-income children with disabilities.
Child Care for Children with Disabilities - Background

- In 2000, approximately 6.6 million children in the U.S. had a disabling condition (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001)
- 12% of children 5-17 in the U.S. have a disabling condition (Hogan, Msall, Rogers, & Avery, 1997)
- Use of child care for low-income children with disabilities unknown
Children with Disabilities and Poverty

- PRWORA (welfare law) did not excuse parents of disabled children from work requirements
  - Previously, AFDC had provided such exemptions
  - Child care critical to TANF participation
- Children with disabilities significantly more likely to live in impoverished households
  - 28% live in households with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), as compared to 16% of typically developing children (Fujjura & Yamaki, 2000)
Research Questions

- What are the types, general costs, and hours of use of child care by low-income preschool children with disabilities in the United States?
- How does family structure influence the child care used by low-income children with disabilities in the United States?
- Do differences exist in the quality of care received by children with disabilities as compared with nondisabled children?
Child Care for General Population

- Approximately 75% of children under five were in some form of regular child care in 1995 (Smith, 2000)
- Growing number of children in child care reflects increasing number of mothers working
- Usually three settings for child care:
  - Child’s home
  - Family day care home (kinship or nonkinship)
  - Day care center
(Zigler & Lang, 1991)
Diversity of Child Care

Great range in terms of the following:

- Caregiver age
- Caregiver training
- Caregiver experience
- Caregiver-child relationships
- Facility size
- Facility licensure
- Quality of care

(Zigler & Lang, 1991)
Concerns Over Child Care

- Children spend much time in child care
  - Arguably one of four primary social systems that interact to determine child’s development
    - Other three are families, schooling, and health care
      (Zigler & Gilman, 1996)
  - Quality of care associated with improved cognitive and social development (Child Care Bureau, 1999; Loeb et al., 2003)
- U.S. child care in crisis because of
  - Supply
  - Cost
  - Quality
Cost of Child Care

- One of most significant expenditures for families
  - Especially true for poor families
    - Non-poor spend average of 7% of their income
    - Families below federal poverty level spend average of 35% of their income on child care (Smith, 2000)
Quality of Child Care

- Some debate over whether high cost ensures quality (Blau, 2001)
- All classes define quality in terms of:
  - Nurturing and experienced providers
  - Safe environment
  - Cognitively enriching atmosphere
    (Larner & Phillips, 1994)
- Low-income parents have difficulty attaining high quality child care due to issues of:
  - Cost
  - Availability
  - Schedule flexibility
    (Brandon & Hoffert, 2003; Larner & Phillips, 1994)
Difficulty of Finding Child Care for Children with Disabilities

- Extent to which day care and family home care centers accept children with disabilities unclear
  - In a study of one state, 34% of centers had one or more children with disabilities enrolled (Buysse et al., 1991)
  - In another state
    - almost one-third of parents reported being denied child care due to child’s disability
    - 23% without child care were still seeking it (Cutler & Gilkerson, 2002)
Difficulty of Finding Child Care for Children with Disabilities cont.

- Barriers parents of children with disabilities face include:
  - Inadequate number of trained caregivers
  - Prejudice and fear
  - Limited knowledge of disabilities
  - Transportation barriers for children with mobility impairments (Zigler & Lang, 1991)

- In small scale studies, mothers of children with disabilities noted a lack of affordable, adequate child care as a limitation on staying employed (Cuskelley, Pulman, & Hayes, 1998; Shearn & Todd, 2000)
PRWORA Reauthorization

- Current (as of 2005) House and Senate reauthorization bills would increase TANF work requirements
- Neither provides further work exemptions for parents of children with disabilities
- Need for child care for these parents will likely increase
Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)

- PRWORA consolidated existing child subsidy programs into CCDF
- CCDF provides assistance to working low-income parents who receive or were diverted from TANF (Han & Waldfogel, 2001; Meyers et al., 2002)
- Pending reauthorization bills will increase CCDF funding
- Increase in funding not sufficient to
  - Maintain current levels of child care
  - Address increase in need that will result from increase work requirements
Subsidies

- Only 10% of eligible children benefited from subsidies in 1998 (Child Care Bureau, 1999)

- Possible reasons include:
  - Parents unaware of programs
  - Believe they are not eligible
    (Blau & Tekin, 2001; Shlay, Weinraub, Harmon, & Tran, 2004)
  - Long waiting lists act as deterrent
    (Ganow, 2000; Meyers et al., 2002)
Traditional Child Care Centers

- One study of low-income communities found participation in center-based child care led to better school readiness and greater cognitive outcomes than kinship or family care homes (Loeb et al., 2003)
- Traditional child care problematic for low-income families
  - Inflexible work schedules characteristic of low-paying jobs (Ganow, 2000; Knox, London, & Scott, 2003)
  - Cycles in and out of employment (Iceland, 2003) make child care needs dynamic (Knox et al., 2003)
Preferred Forms of Child Care for Low-Income Families

- About half of children under three in low-income families cared for by a relative (Ehrle, Adams, & Tout, 2001)
  - One-third of these children were in care provided by another family
- Nonkinship family day care centers often more flexible in terms of
  - Schedule
  - Payment
  (Bromer & Henly, 2004)
- Care by a relative may be
  - More accommodating (Bromer & Henly, 2004; Knox et al., 2003; Lowe & Weisner, 2004)
  - A way to avoid substandard care common in low-income neighborhoods (Larner & Phillips, 1994)
Family Structure and Child Care

- Children of single parents likely to be cared for by relatives (Brandon & Hoffert, 2003; Ehrle et al., 2001)
- Children in two parent households likely to be cared for by parents (ibid)
- Single-parent households have
  - Lower income than two-parent households (Lichter & Eggebeen, 1994)
  - Fewer child care choices (Brandon & Hoffert, 2003; Ehrle et al., 2001)
  - Different patterns of child care utilization (ibid)
- Children in single-parent households are in child care for more hours per week (Ehrle et al., 2001)
Data Source for Study

- Data from 1999 National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF)
- 42,000 U.S. households surveyed in two ways:
  - Random-digit dialed telephone survey
  - Area survey for households without telephones
    (Judkins, Brick, Broene, Ferraro, & Stickler, 2000)
- Sample representative of civilian, noninstitutionalized population of children and adults under 65 (Safir, Scheuren, & Wang, 2000)
- Minority and low-income persons oversampled
Data Source for Study cont.

- Information collected:
  - Health factors
  - Economic factors
  - Children’s social well-being
  - Adult’s social well-being
  - Child’s participation in child care
  - Demographics
  - Socioeconomic data

(Safir et al., 2000)
Sample for This Study

- Subsample taken from NSAF study included families
  - With preschool children under age six
  - In households with income below 200% of the federal poverty level
  - With available child care and demographic data
Selection of Children

- One child randomly selected from within sampled family
- The adult most knowledgeable about that child answered the survey (most often the mother)
Presence of Children with Disabilities

- Of 5,065 children in sample
  - 321 had a disability (representing 228,000 children across the U.S.)
  - 4,744 did not have a disability (representing 2.5 million children across the U.S.)

- Disability status determined by yes/no response to:
  - “Does the child have a physical, learning, or mental health condition that limits his or her participation in the usual kinds of activities done by most children his/her age?”
Measures

- Measures employed for the following:
  - Use
  - Cost
  - Quality

- Two proxy measures used for quality of care:
  - The number of children per adult caregiver (for center based care)
  - Hourly cost of care
Analytic Approach

- Children stratified by
  - Disability status
  - Whether lived in single or two parent home

- All models controlled for factors associated with maternal employment and use of child care:
  - Age of the child
  - Maternal education
  - Number of children living in the household under 17 (Blau & Robins, 1991; Waldfogel, 1997)

- Results can be generalized to noninstitutionalized children under six living in the U.S. in 1999
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disabled n=321</th>
<th>Nondisabled n=4,744</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Age</strong></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>162 (50.5)</td>
<td>2,983 (62.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>159 (49.5)</td>
<td>1,761 (37.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of children in household &lt; 17 years of age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>161 (50.2)</td>
<td>2,723 (57.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>132 (41.1)</td>
<td>1,698 (35.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>28 (8.7)</td>
<td>323 (6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother’s highest degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than high-school</td>
<td>99 (34.3)</td>
<td>1,366 (30.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school/some college</td>
<td>171 (59.2)</td>
<td>2,641 (59.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college graduate</td>
<td>19 (6.6)</td>
<td>459 (10.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined household income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Federal poverty level</td>
<td>146 (45.5)</td>
<td>1,815 (38.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199% of the FPL</td>
<td>175 (54.5)</td>
<td>2,929 (61.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>144 (44.9)</td>
<td>2,243 (47.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>84 (26.2)</td>
<td>1,049 (22.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>78 (24.3)</td>
<td>1,304 (27.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15 (4.7)</td>
<td>148 (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>121 (37.7)</td>
<td>2,397 (50.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200 (62.3)</td>
<td>2,347 (49.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent</td>
<td>149 (46.4)</td>
<td>1,899 (40.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent</td>
<td>172 (53.6)</td>
<td>2,841 (59.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measure</th>
<th>Disabled child with single-parent (n=149)</th>
<th>Disabled child with two-parents (n=172)</th>
<th>Nondisabled child with single-parent (n=1,899)</th>
<th>Nondisabled child with two-parents (n=2,841)</th>
<th>Test Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of care arrangements</td>
<td>1.20&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.75&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.16&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.74&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21.7&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours in care per week</td>
<td>40.1&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>33.2&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>22.5&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21.9&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in center</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly expenditure for care</td>
<td>$179&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$271</td>
<td>$250&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$225</td>
<td>1.9&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly cost of care</td>
<td>$1.24&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$2.20</td>
<td>$2.60&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$2.51&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8.1&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children per adult in center</td>
<td>5.4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.6&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.0&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Predicted Probabilities

| In some form of child care              | 78%<sup>a</sup>                        | 59%<sup>b</sup>                        | 79%<sup>b</sup>                              | 54%<sup>a</sup>                             | 23.5<sup>**</sup> |
| Center is primary form of care          | 29%<sup>a</sup>                        | 29%<sup>b</sup>                        | 28%                                           | 15%<sup>a,b</sup>                           | 11.9<sup>***</sup>|
| Relative is primary form of care        | 35%                                     | 19%                                    | 31%                                           | 22%                                         | 4.0             |

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Statistically significant and trend-level group differences are indicated by alphabetic superscripts for each measure.
Results, continued

- Single-parent households had significantly more child care arrangements than two-parent households
- Similar child care use rates for children in single-parent households regardless of disability status
- Similar child care use rates for children in two-parent homes regardless of disability status
Results, continued

- Weekly average of hours spent in child care:
  - 40 for children with disabilities in single-parent homes
  - 24 for children with disabilities in two-parent homes
  - 23 for children without a disability in two-parent homes

- In two-parent households, children with a disability more likely to use a center as primary form of care
  - 15% of children without a disability
  - 19% of children with a disability
Results, continued

- Children with disabilities more likely to live in households below the FPL
  - 45.5% of children with disabilities
  - 38.3% of children without disabilities

- In single-parent households
  - Average of $179/month was spent on child care for children with disabilities
  - Average of $250/month was spent on child care for nondisabled children

- In two-parent households
  - An average of $271 was spent on child care for a child with a disability
  - An average of $225/month was spent on child care for a child without a disability
Results for Quality Indicators

- Care ratio (number of children per caregiver)
  - No disability-based differences; families differed by whether single- or two-parent home

- Hourly cost
  - On average, single parents spent
    - $1.24/hour for care for a child with a disability
    - $2.20-$260/hour for care for all other children

- Troubling disparities in costs of care for children with disabilities in single parent-homes
Limitations of Study

- Relationship between parental employment and child care use cannot be inferred
  - A child’s disability may influence parent’s employment
    - Selection methods did not rule out possibility of a nondisabled child having a sibling with a disability
- Small sample size of children with disabilities limits understanding of the role of race/ethnicity
  - Race has been cited as a predictor of the impact a disability has on a family (Barnes & Marcenko, 2004)
Limitations of Study cont.

- NSAF did not collect information on severity of disability
  - Magnitude of impact related to severity of impairment (e.g. Lukemeyer, Meyers & Smeeding, 2000)
  - Children with milder impairments less likely to be represented in this study
    - Sample consisted of preschool children
      - Learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, and other more mild impairments usually diagnosed in school
Implications

- Family structure
  - More important than disability status for some measures
  - More important than acknowledged in previous studies
    - This study distinguished from previous studies by
      - Use of probability sample
      - Focus on low-income participants
Implications cont.

- Low hourly cost of care for children with disabilities in single-parent homes suggests lower quality
- Single-parent households having more care arrangements
  - Organizing, arranging care creates additional stress and obstacles
    - Especially true for children with disabilities
      - Fragility puts them at greater risk for adverse developmental outcomes from inadequate care
Recommendations

- Address unique issues of children with disabilities through
  - Public income support
  - Child care policies
- Expand existing child care subsidies for low-income children with disabilities
- Create policies to ensure minimum care standards for children with disabilities
- Pursue research into the needs and barriers surrounding child care for children with disabilities
References


References


Cutler, A., & Gilkerson, L. (2002). *Unmet needs project: A research, coalition building, and policy initiative on the unmet needs of infants, toddlers, and families.* Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Disability on Human Development.


References cont.


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