

Child Care Research Scholars: 2009 Grantees

Scholar:

Susan H. Butler

Project Title:

The Intersection of Access and Quality: Examining the Effects of Child Care Subsidy System Policies and Practices on Parental Decision Making in North Carolina

Mentor:

Lorraine Klerman

Project Funding Years:

2009 – 2011

University Affiliation:

Brandeis University

Project Abstract:

This dissertation will be a mixed methods examination of how child care subsidy policies and practices affect the child care decisions of parents, specifically the quality of child care parents choose. The responsiveness of child care subsidy policies to the needs of low income families and the implementation of these policies have been identified as important variables in the child care decision-making processes of parents. The devolved nature of child care subsidy disbursement to the county level has resulted in important differences in both the content and implementation of subsidy policies and provides an opportunity to examine the impact of the policies themselves, as well as their implementation. This study is designed to answer two research questions. First, in what ways do child care subsidy policies and procedures vary in their responsiveness to family needs, both as they are written and as subsidy workers implement them? And second, how does the variation in the implementation of these child care subsidy policies, as determined by adherence, or lack thereof, to written policies, affect parental decision making as it relates to high quality child care choices? This study uses implementation and decision-making theory to understand the dynamics between caseworkers and parents in the child care subsidy system and the relationship of these dynamics to the decision parents make.

Scholar:

Anna Johnson

Project Title:

Child care subsidies: Who uses them and what do they buy low-income families and children?

Mentor:

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

Project Funding Years:

2009 – 2011

University Affiliation:

Teachers College, Columbia University

Project Abstract:

This study uses data from the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) to: (1) determine whether eligible recipients of child care subsidies differ from the eligible non-recipients of child care subsidies on child and family characteristics and parental preferences for child care; (2) examine whether subsidy receipt in preschool leads parents to purchase higher-quality child care than they could have afforded without the subsidy; and (3) test whether subsidy receipt in preschool is associated with better school readiness in kindergarten.

Expanding on prior work, this study will identify eligible non-recipients of child care subsidies who resemble subsidy recipients not only on observable demographic characteristics but also on variables that are harder to measure, like parental preferences for specific features of child care. Subsidy recipients will be compared to eligible non-recipients on family and child characteristics and parental preference variables. Then, a propensity score matching technique will be used to estimate the causal effect of subsidy use in preschool on the quality of preschool care children experience.

Finally, state-fixed effects regressions with a lagged dependent variable will be employed to test whether subsidy use in preschool is associated with children's school readiness in kindergarten. If such an association exists, the possibility that preschool child care quality mediates this link will be explored. In all analyses, children who receive subsidies will be compared to children who are eligible for subsidies but who instead use either Head Start, or public pre-kindergarten, or unsubsidized care.

Scholar:

LaShawnDa L. Pittman-Gay

Project Title:

Awareness, Accessibility, & Adequacy: Child Care Management among Low-

Income, Urban Black Custodial Grandmothers

Mentor:

Aldon Morris

Project Funding Years:

2009 - 2010

University Affiliation:

Northwestern University

Project Abstract:

The proposed project is an analysis of how low-income, urban black custodial grandmothers manage child care using ethnographic research methods- including in-depth interviews with custodial grandmothers and child care agents over a twelve-month period and participant observation sessions in child care settings- to explore the following questions: (a) What do low-income, urban black custodial grandmothers do for child care when they are thrust into the role of parenting their grandchildren; (b) What are the strategies they adopt for their grandchildren's care and development while they are serving as their primary and sole caretakers; (c) How do different strategies affect the way children spend their time; (d) What comparisons can be made in the care offered children being cared for by their grandmothers that differ by the type of care arrangement grandmothers have with their grandchildren (e.g. private kinship care, legal guardianship, or kinship foster care) and/or the types of child care services and resources available in their neighborhoods? The goal of this project is to better understand individual family decisions within the context of their family forms and dynamics and the choices available at the state and community level.

Scholar:

Cara L. Preuss

Project Title:

Licensed and Learning: Mexican-American Family Child Care Providers' Learning Goals and Opportunities within the Pathways Program

Mentor:

Joy Egbert

Project Funding Years:

2009-2010

University Affiliation:
Washington State University

Project Abstract:

The Pathways Program works with licensed Spanish speaking child care providers in Washington State. They have one main goal: to improve school readiness for children. To achieve this goal, Pathways and their partners aim to 1) improve the literacy levels of child care providers, and 2) improve the quality of care given by the providers to the children they serve. The project currently includes 62 Mexican-American child care providers; of the families with children in their care, about 82% receive subsidized child care through the Department of Social and Health Services. Using a multiple literacies framework, this study will explore the literacy goals of the child care providers as well as how these goals are being addressed through the current educational model provided by Pathways and collaborating agencies. This study will review archival data collected by the agencies, including participant portfolios, mentor records, home visit forms, reports, and analyses of the quality of care based on the Family and Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised (FCCERS-R). Additional data to be collected and analyzed includes participant observation, interviews, and a survey. The results will inform the curricular choices of the project to ensure that they meet literacy needs and goals and improve quality of care. This study has the potential to impact policy, as it will also help inform the Department of Early Learning and, provide potential for replication of the project.

Scholar:
Terri Walters

Project Title:
Improving Child Care Quality in Virginia: An Evaluation of the Star Quality Initiative

Mentor:
Robert Pianta

Project Funding Years:
2009-2011

University Affiliation:
University of Virginia

Project Abstract:

This study will evaluate Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), the Star Quality Initiative. Star Quality is the first initiative to

systematically rate and improve child care quality in the state; however, there has been little evaluation of the implementation and scope of this system. The purpose of the current study is to (1) describe the characteristics of the centers participating in the Star Quality Initiative, including location, demographic information and measurement properties; and (2) examine whether Star Quality Initiative's four indicators of quality (staff qualifications, teacher-child interactions, structure, and environment) are predictive of child outcomes. This study aims to link Virginia administrative data on the QRIS to state-administered language and cognitive measures. Additionally, this study will collect teacher surveys in a subsample of centers in Richmond, Virginia in order to assess children's socioemotional functioning in centers participating in the Star Quality Initiative. Results will aid stakeholders in the development of the QRIS as they seek to expand and refine the system.