CARING FOR THE YOUNG: VARIATION IN THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

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Why?

Access to childcare is essential to families and communities.

- Well-being of children
- Community vitality (2015 Urban Institute report)
- (Re)entry to workforce for parents
- Attraction for in-migration.

Our prior research,

- “Colliding Worlds” (Ed Policy, 2011)
- Qualitative data from five communities suggests there may be variation across NY State (Casto, Sipple, & McCabe, 2014).
- Pre- and post- recession investment variability across locales (Sipple & Yao, 2015)
- “Community-Aware” public policy (EPAA, 2016)
Research Questions

• In what ways does the capacity to care for young children vary across the communities of New York State?

• What are the effects of community- and school-level characteristics on the capacity of a community to serve children ages birth to five?

• If variation exists, given the relevant community and school-level policies, how do we explain the variability?

• "Capacity" - % of age-eligible infants/toddlers/preschool children for which there is a registered slot available.
Rural Early Care & Education

- Supply in rural areas is diminished (Beach, 1995; Choi, Johnson, Lake, & Robinson, 2009; Maher, Frestedt, & Grace, 2008)
  - Lower demand? More informal care
  - Sparse population
- Parents choose non-center based settings for their children (Colker & Dewees, 2000; Maher, Frestedt, & Grace, 2008)
  - Unknown quality of child care centers
  - Frequency of non-standard work schedules
  - Transportation challenges

Non-center based care is associated with lower measures of school readiness. It is essential to understand the capacity of communities to care for young children and potential geographic variation.
Policy Landscape

**Community-level:** Child Care Subsidies
- $$ from federal and state governments
- $$ to eligible families based on income
- $$ for child care expenses for children age 0-13

**School-level:** Universal Pre-Kindergarten
- $$ from state and local community
- $$ to school districts and partnering CBOs
- $$ for pre-kindergarten education for children age 3 or 4
Data & Methods

Office of Child and Family Services
• Registered Day Care Facilities
• Available slots for infants, toddlers and pre-school age children & Calculated cohort size.

New York State Education Department
• Enrollment and District Demographics (FRPL, % minority)
• Needs/Resource Categories and Community Wealth
• Per Pupil Expenditures

Methods
• Geocoded registered facilities to place in school districts
• Analyzed slot capacity by school and community variables
Findings
### Base Descriptives

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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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# Correlations

Table 6 - Correlation Matrix for study variables.

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<td>1.4*</td>
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Key Takeaways!

• Over the 7 years of this study, we see growth in capacity of each modality. But it would take over 20 years for rural capacity to increase to where suburbs are today.
• Location matters! Really bad for rural and typically positive for city – even after controlling for key indep variables.
• Poverty & Wealth matters (infant/toddler) except for where public policy has successfully worked to eliminate the effect (preschool)
• Enrollment matters and is linked to greater capacity.
• Tax effort matters for infant and toddlers but not for preschool.
• Public policy mechanisms discussed for infant and toddler capacities and how different from PreK mechanism.
Areas for further research

Above and beyond community wealth, increased school district spending is associated with greater capacity.

• With UPK policy comes partnering that may enhance the whole early care sector.
• With UPK policy comes increased spending, which is associated with greater capacity.
• With UPK policy comes a local commitment to early education that may suggest a culture of financially supporting the early care sector.
Thank you!

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Lisa McCabe, Cornell University
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