

ELN Session 2 Discussant: Sustained Environments

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January 7, 2020

Overview

- ELN is an ambitious project
 - Focused on an important topic about which we need much more understanding
 - Topics identified are the ones of concern to the field.
 - The researchers involved are all experts in early childhood education and intervention
 - Unfortunate, however, that you identified attenders and non-attenders of pre-k only in kindergarten
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Why Do Some Families Not Take Advantage of Pre-k?

- Ohio State data comparing the groups are informative.
 - Non attenders
 - More likely to be white
 - Less likely to be black or Asian
 - Less likely to be Hispanic
 - Much poorer
 - Less educated mothers
 - These are important differences but they may not capture other unidentified differences in parental motivation and interest for which we have no controls.
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Most Variance in Gain is at the Child Level

- ❑ This is an issue that needs much more exploration
 - ❑ Most of the gains children make appear to stem from individual factors within the child and not to classrooms
 - ❑ Efforts in the field have been to identify the “right classroom practices” that will be good for the children in them.
 - ❑ But we have had little luck either because we have not looked at the right practices or because classrooms are essentially similar or because individuals within the classroom do not have equivalent experiences.
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“Fade Out” versus “Catch Up”

- ❑ You consistently use the term fade out.
 - ❑ Your data and other data in the field portray *catch up* instead
 - ❑ Puma (Head Start Impact Study) said that it took the comparison children one year to learn what it took the Head Start children two years to learn. Your data look the same.
 - ❑ This is a difference in interpretation which has important developmental implications
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Catching Up

- ❑ Is it possible that the overly academic focus of pre-k is a poor fit with the developmental needs of 4 year olds?
 - ❑ Pre-k academic focus is primarily on concrete readiness skills – Bailey characterizes them as “fragile”
 - ❑ Is it possible that learning these readiness skills occurs rapidly in kindergarten as soon as children are exposed?
 - ❑ Perhaps your data will spark more attention to the focus of pre-k – are there competencies that would have more lasting effects?
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Consequences of Early Academic Focus and Behavioral Control

- ❑ Pre-k attenders had higher rates of conduct problems according to teachers (Virginia)
- ❑ Attenders have higher rates of student-teacher conflict (Ohio State)
- ❑ Findings similar to work published by Ron Haskins and myself in the early 1980's from the Abecedarian project
- ❑ Findings replicated in the TN study.

Parent Teacher Relationships

- The field needs more nuanced scales, less susceptible to social desirability
 - On a 5 point scale, the mean scores from the Nebraska project were 4.69 for parents and 4.65 for teachers (the range of responses from teachers was much larger than from parents)
 - How do teacher and parent reports agree? To create one index, did you add the two together or examine differences between the ratings?
 - How do you separate child effects from T-P relationship effects?
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Issues to Consider

1. Do you think that all populations are the same in terms of what their pre-k experiences should be?
 - Virginia sample is predominantly Hispanic (62%)
 - Ohio State sample predominantly white
 - Nebraska sample mixed: White, black and Hispanic
 - Do you think you can generalize across these samples?
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Second Issue: Iatrogenic Disorder

2. An **iatrogenic disorder** occurs when the deleterious effects of the therapeutic or diagnostic regimen causes pathology independent of the condition for which the regimen is advised.
- Therapeutic regimen = Pre-K for children from poor families
 - Regimen advised for school readiness and long term school success
 - Resulting pathology = conduct problems, teacher-child interaction difficulties, suspensions and expulsions

First do no harm. How sure are we that we are not asking parents to voluntarily put their children in a less than facilitative environment in pre-k/Head Start?

Conclusions

- ❑ Your data mirror data from other studies including my own, the only randomized control trial of state wide pre-k
 - ❑ With the consistency of these results, what are our/your responsibilities?
 - ❑ Your focus has been on examining the subsequent environment but that has not proven to be the key we hoped for
 - ❑ What should we do next? The field will be looking to you for answers.
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THANK YOU!

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