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CHANGES IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM USE: 1999 - 2005

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, after-school programs have seen large increases in government funding from $730 million in 1997 to almost $2 billion in 2005. Despite the remarkable increase in funding, research on changes in after-school program use over this same period is noticeably lacking. This study examines changes in after-school program use among school-aged children from 1999 to 2005 using the National Household Education Surveys Program. The results indicate that there was a significant overall increase in after-school program use from 18.1% in 1999 to 21.5% in 2005. Subgroup analyses reveal that trends in program use are nuanced by poverty status and employment and family structure. Children above 200% of the poverty line have stable rates of program use over time at about 19% whereas poor children increase their rates of use from 18.6% 1999 to 23.2% in 2005. Children of single, working parents have the highest rates of program use, though poor children in this group are less likely to attend after-school programs than near poor and not poor children who also come from single, working families. Findings are discussed with respect to the dual function of after-school programs as child care and as a way to foster positive youth development.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

After-school programs have become increasingly popular over the past 30 years, in part as a response to increasing maternal employment rates and also as a proponent of positive youth development. Given this dual function, after-school programs enjoy the support of various social and academic groups, including community leaders, educators, parents, and developmentalists (Hollister, 2003). In addition to their rising popularity, government support for after-school programs increased dramatically following the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. Channeled through three large federal funding sources, the Child Care and Development Fund, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, funds for after-school programs have nearly tripled from $730 million in 1997 to almost $2 billion in 2005 (Administration for Children and Families; Child Care Bureau 2008a; Greenbook, 2004).

Despite the considerable increase in government funding, there is a dearth of research on the proportion of and characteristics of children who take advantage of after-school programs. Using data from the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), this study will explore the changes in the proportion of children using after-school programs from 1999 to 2005, with special attention to the demographic characteristics of the families who send their children to after-school programs. I will begin by discussing the role of after-school programs in society and child development, the changes in funding for after-school programs and how the allocation of funds may affect rates of after-school program use, and provide a critique of the existing literature of after-school program use. The analyses that follow will explore changes in the rates of after-school program use from 1999 to 2005 by poverty status and family structure subgroups.
By examining the data with respect to poverty status and the family’s structure and parental employment status, this study will attempt to reveal where the changes in after-school program use are occurring. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the findings and implications for future research.

Need for after-school care

Parents may enroll their child in an after-school program for two distinct reasons. The first is simply practical: the school day ends hours before the work day ends, and parents use after-school programs as a means of childcare. This arrangement is particularly salient for single, working parents and two-parent families with dual earners. Maternal labor force participation increased throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s before dipping slightly between 2002 and 2005. Despite the recent decline, however, over 73% of women with children aged 6-17 remain in the workforce with the vast majority working full-time, underscoring the need for childcare in the after-school hours (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

In addition to keeping children busy during the time gap between the end of the school day and the end of the work day, after-school programs are touted as a way to improve children’s social and academic outcomes. Low-income children who do not have access to good schools or community resources may particularly benefit from after-school programs that attend to their academic needs and social development.

The research on child outcomes associated with after-school program use is decidedly mixed, however. After-school programs are lauded for keeping children occupied during the hours of the day that they are most likely to engage in criminal activities and risky behavior (Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 2000). A handful of studies and meta-analyses of after-school programs have revealed positive outcomes for children. A meta-analysis of studies by Durlak &
Weissberg (2007) examining the effects of after-school programs on children’s social behavior found that children who attend after-school programs specifically designed to promote personal and social development had significant improvements over their peers in their feelings of self-confidence, positive social behaviors, and positive feelings and attitudes towards the school. The same study also found that those in after-school programs had reduced problem behaviors, better school grades, and better achievement test scores than their peers who did not attend after-school programs. Another meta-analysis by Lauer et al. (2006) focused on academic outcomes associated with after-school programs, finding small but significant effects for both reading and math achievement for children in after-school programs. Posner & Vandell (1994) found similar results with a low-income sample: compared to children who did not attend formal after-school programs, children in after-school programs had better academic achievement and social adjustment as well as increased time in activities correlate with academic grades, conduct, peer relations, and emotional adjustment (e.g. outside play, activities with siblings and peers, etc.). However, contrasting research findings indicate that there are no significant effects on child outcomes and programs may even be associated with negative outcomes. A review of 5 studies by Zief & Lauver (2006) found no overall effects for any social, behavioral, or academic outcomes. In addition, a report on the 21CCLC by James-Burdumy and colleagues (2005) found higher levels of negative behaviors among those randomly assigned to 21CCLC programs than those in the control group, including higher rates of suspensions and phone calls home about students’ behaviors.

The contrasting outcomes associated with program use reflected in these studies may very well be due to the idiosyncrasies of each study’s approach. For example, Durlak & Weissberg (2007) only included programs that were specifically designed to promote personal
and social development, whereas Lauer et al. (2006) focused on after-school academic programs, and Zief & Lauver’s (2006) study included programs that offered both academic and recreational activities. Research by James-Burdumy et al. (2005) suggests that children often do not use after-school programs consistently and parents may alter their childcare arrangements depending on changing work schedules and employment status. Therefore children may not be receiving a large enough dose of the intervention to produce identifiable results (James-Burdumy et al. 2005; Kane 2004). Regardless of the mixed findings, it remains that after-school programs are widely sought after both as a means for childcare and as an agency of positive youth development.

Changes in Funding

The government has responded to the need for both after-school childcare and after-school enrichment programs through two separate sources of funding: the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which provides subsidies for poor, working families, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC), aimed at low-income children who can benefit from academic and social enrichment programs. In recognition of their distinct aims regarding after-school program use, the two programs are housed in different government agencies.

Administered by the Child Care Bureau (under the Department of Health and Human Services), the CCDF was developed to target families moving off the welfare rolls and into the workforce. CCDF expenditures on both early childhood childcare and after-school programs have steadily increased since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) from just under $4 billion in 1997 to over $9 billion in 2002 and over $10 billion in 2005 (Administration for Children and Families, 2006a; Administration for Children and Families, 2006b; Child Care Bureau 2008a; Greenbook, 2004). Although the majority of
CCDF funds are spent on early childhood programs, 35% of CCDF funds went to school-aged
(Administration for Children and Families 2005). CCDF funds are also not restricted to certain
program types, though over half (54%) of the funds went to center-based after-school programs
in 2005. Assuming that these proportions have not changed over time, CCDF funding for
school-aged children in after-school programs has seen a 250% increase from $750 million in
1997 million to $1.89 billion in 2005.

In addition to government allocations to the CCDF, states can use excess TANF funds to
support after-school programs, either by directly spending TANF money on programs or by
transferring up to 30% of their funds into the CCDF. Transfer funds are subject to all CCDF
rules and eligibility requirements, whereas direct spending of funds provides states with greater
flexibility to support after-school programs in ways that best serve the individual state. Like the
increase in CCDF funding, direct spending of TANF funds on after-school programs has
dramatically increased since welfare reform: only $13 million was spent in 1997, compared to over
$3 billion in 2002. Assuming the CCDF and TANF funds are allocated the same way, funding
for school-aged children in center-based care through TANF increased from $2.5 million in 1997
to $567 million in 2002. Combined with CCDF expenditures, government funding through these
two sources increased from $730 million in 1997 to almost $2 billion in 2005 for all school-aged
children in center-based after-school programs. (Administration for Children and Families
2006b; Greenbook 2004).

Unlike the Child Care and Development Fund, 21st Century Community Learning
Centers funds are spent exclusively on after-school programs. 21CCLC programs are clearly
targeted towards underprivileged children, providing them with opportunities for academic
enrichment, community service, and cultural appreciation. Housed in the Department of
Education and administered by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, after-school programs that run under 21CCLC are charged with the task of improving low-income children’s academic achievement. Funding 21CCLC programs has increased from $40 million in 1998 to $900 million in 2005 (Department of Education 2006; Child Care Bureau 2008a).

Research on After-School Program Use

Despite these remarkable increases in funding for after-school programs over the past 10 years, research on changes in after-school program use over this same period is noticeably lacking. Many scholars focus their attention on the whether programs are effective in promoting positive social development and academic skills, but only provide a cursory description of how many children are being served by these programs. Part of the reason for the dearth of research in this area stems from inconsistent measures of after-school program use both across data sets and even within the same data set.

For example, the National Household Education Surveys Program, housed in the Department of Education, collected after-school program use information in 1995, 1999, 2001, and 2005, but the age range of the children is different in 1995 than the other years. Reports using this data vary in their distinction of before- and after-school program use as well as frequency of use: Brimhall, Reaney, & West (1999) estimate that 13% of kindergarten – 3rd graders attended a center-based after-school program at least once a week in 1995, Kleiner, Nolin, & Chapman (2004) report that 19% of all kindergarten – 8th graders attended a center-based after-school program at least once a month in 2001, and Carver, Iruka, & Chapman (2006) conclude that 20% of all kindergarten-8th graders attended a center-based after-school program at least once a week in 2005. As previously mentioned, children often have sporadic attendance at after-school programs (James-Burdumy et al. 2005); given the propensity of children to move in
and out of after-school programs, the sensitivity of the question regarding frequency of use is extremely important. The changing age and attendance measures make comparisons across years difficult from these published reports, even within the same survey.

The National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF) provides consistent measures of after-school program use, but research using this data has thus far been restricted to the 1997 and 1999 waves, failing the capture the significant funding increases in the early 2000s (Sonenstein et al., 2002). The authors find stable rates of after-school program use among two-parent, working families, but identify a significant decrease in program use among low-income, single-parent working families. Their findings warrant further investigation with particular attention to the unexpected drop in program use among single-parent working families, given their obvious need for childcare.

Previous research has revealed that overall, single-parents have the highest rates of after-school program use, though rates vary within family structure categories by income level (i.e. higher income families have higher rates of program use, regardless of family structure) (Sonenstein et al., 2002). Minority children have higher rates of program use than white children, given that government subsidies are targeted at low-income populations that are most often comprised of minority families, older children typically have lower rates of after-school program use (Brandon & Hofferth, 2003), and having older children in the household may provide the family with an alternative option for after-school care.

**Research Questions**

The current study will add to the existing literature by extending the period of study while maintaining consistent measures of after-school program use. It will first explore what characteristics are associated with after-school program use and whether there have been changes
in the proportion of school-aged children attending after-school programs from 1999 to 2005. Given the increases in government funding and the rising popularity of after-school programs, I expect that a higher proportion of children attended after-school programs in 2005 than in 1999. However, it remains to be seen whether different poverty groups have nuanced trends of after-school program use over time.

In order to better understand where the changes over time have occurred, I will explore changes in after-school program use by poverty status. Although previous research has found that higher income children are more likely to attend after-school programs than low-income children (Brandon & Hofferth, 2003), it is possible that this gap has closed over time due to government funding targeted at low-income families. Conversely, this gap may have remained stable or even widened due to the rising popularity of after-school programs as a way to foster positive youth development regardless of poverty status.

Although many studies focus on after-school program use for children in single-parent or two-parent working families (who use after-school programs as childcare during the post-school hours while the parents are still at work), the relationship between each employment and family structure group and after-school program use may have also changed over this time period. For example, the availability of programs through the 21CCLC may increase after-school program use among children whose parents do not work, perhaps due to the combination of the increased affordability for low-income families and their focus on positive child outcomes. By identifying the rates of program use and the changes over time within each of these groups, we will have a better understanding of the nuanced composition of overall changes in after-school program.

Finally, I will determine whether after-school program use for each employment and family structure group differs by poverty status. Single-parent, working families may have the
clearest need for after-school childcare, but their rates of use may vary by poverty status. High rates of after-school program use by poor, single-parent, working families could be a reflection either of the popularity of programs or of the increased affordability of programs. The rates of use by not poor families in this category speak to the popularity of the programs, given that affordability is not an obstacle. Families with non-working parents do not have as clear a need for after-school care because the non-working parent is most likely available to care for the child in during the after-school hours. However, low-income families in this group may take advantage of programs offered through the 21CCLC that are intended to bolster both academic achievement and social development. By examining the characteristics of children in each distinct employment and family structure category, this study will provide a clearer depiction of who uses after-school programs.
Chapter 2

Method

Data

Data are drawn from the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), a repeated cross-sectional study that describes the educational activities of the U.S. population from 1991 to 2005. This nationally representative survey provides information on the before-and after-school activities of school-aged children. This study uses data from three waves of the NHES: the 1999 Parent Interview (PI) and the 2001 and 2005 After-School Programs and Activities (ASPA) questionnaires. All three waves include detailed information about the after-school childcare arrangements of one randomly chosen child in the household between kindergarten and 8th grade, as well as the family’s demographic and economic information. The 1995 wave also collected information regarding after-school program activities, but the sample was restricted to 6 – 9 year olds, invalidating a comparison across all school-aged children. For this reason, this study will only use NHES data from 1999, 2001, and 2005.

The NHES incorporates multiple steps to ensure that the respondents are representative of the target population of all civilian, non-institutionalized U.S. children in kindergarten through 8th grade (up to age 15). The overall response rates for the preliminary screening were 74.1% in 1999, 69.2% in 2001, and 66.9% in 2005. Response rates for the extended interviews (PI and ASPA) were 83.0% for the 1999 PI, 86.4% for the 2001 ASPA, and 84.1% for the 2005 ASPA (Hagedorn et al., 2006). As with any large scale survey, there is the possibility of non-response bias. The exclusion of nontelephone households could produce undercoverage bias, particularly among subgroups of certain race/ethnicity or region. Taylor series approximations are used to provide valid estimates of the sampling error given this complex survey design.
The analysis sample is restricted to children aged 6-12 who attend school outside of the home. Those in transitional grades (between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten), special education, and categorized as “ungraded” are excluded from analyses, as these children may have different needs for after-school care than those who attend traditional schools. The analyses include 24,430 children: 9397 from 1999, 6727 from 2001, and 8306 from 2005.

The NHES is particularly well suited to address the research questions of this study because of its design and wealth of information regarding after-school programs and activities and family characteristics. The repeated cross-section design is ideal for assessing change over time in after-school program use at the national level because each wave of data represents the population of school-aged children at that particular point in time. Whereas a longitudinal study would provide information on how a particular group of individuals changed over time, the repeated cross-sectional design describes changes in the entire population.

**Measures**

**After-school Program Use**

The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the child attends an after-school program at least once a week (0 = no, 1 = yes). The existing after-school program literature does not employ a standard definition of what types of arrangements constitute an after-school program; while some studies restrict their definition of after-school programs to school-based programs (e.g. Brandon & Hofferth, 2003), others include non-academic activities such as sports teams and clubs (e.g. Coley, Morris, & Hernandez, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the dependent measure includes any center-based after-school program in either in a school or community building.
Poverty Status

The NHES includes a categorical measure of income with a $5000 spread between each category. In order to create a family’s poverty status, I divided the mid-point of their reported income category by the poverty threshold for the appropriate household size. The resulting per capita index represents an income-to-needs ratio; a value less than or equal to 1 signifies that the family is below the federal poverty line.\(^1\) Given that increasing government funding for after-school programs is targeted at low income children, the respondents are classified into one of three poverty groups: poor (<100% of the federal poverty line), near-poor (100-200% poverty) and not poor (>200% poverty).

Previous research that has treated the poor and near-poor groups as one subgroup of the population (e.g. Sonenstein et al., 2002) ignores the fact that although many near-poor are indeed eligible for CCDF subsidies, the cutoff for eligibility often lies in between 100-200% of the federal poverty line and does not include the entire group. For this reason, this study will maintain three categories of poverty status. Specification tests will be done to test whether results with a two-category poverty measure (<200% poverty; >200% poverty) differ from the three-category poverty measure.

Because of this crude income measure, there may be an imbalance between families who are actually poor and who are coded as poor. For example, in 2005, the poverty threshold for a family of 5 was $22,610 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). A family of this size that reported its income between $20,000 and $25,000 would be coded as having an income at $22,500, which would then result in an income-to-needs ratio below 1. Because the income is coded at the midpoint of the category, every family of 5 who reported their income in this

\(^1\) Families with missing income data (10.3% of the sample) are estimated by the NHES using a hot deck procedure that takes into account the family’s census region, age of family members, home tenure, family structure, and parental education (Hagedorn et al., 2006). All analyses are run with a missing income data flag.
category would be coded as poor, regardless of whether their actual income was more or less than the poverty threshold of $22,610. Consequently, there is a discrepancy between the child poverty rates in the analysis sample and national rates. The Census Bureau reports that the child poverty rate for 1999 was 17%, compared to the 23% of 6-12 year olds I coded as in poverty in the NHES. In 2001, the national child poverty rate was 16.3%, whereas I coded 21.5% of the children in the NHES as in poverty. The NHES more closely approximates national poverty rates in 2005: I coded 19.8% of the children in the NHES in poverty compared to the 17.6% national child poverty rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). These discrepancies can all be attributed to the blurring of the line between poor and near-poor; the inflated poverty rates reflect the coding of near-poor children into the poor category.

This limitation mostly has consequences for comparisons with the existing literature, however. For the purposes of this study, the distinction between poor and near-poor is nominal; programs targeted at low-income families increasingly include families above the federal poverty line (Karolak, 2005). To be eligible for CCDF funds, families must earn less than 85% of the State Median Income, though the vast majority of states set income caps below this federal maximum (Child Care Bureau 2008b), which most often falls between 100-200% of the federal poverty line.

Because eligibility levels vary by state, the limitation of this study to accurately delineate between poor and near-poor does not influence the interpretation of the results; both the poor and near-poor groups must be acknowledged when discussing the rates of after-school program use among children targeted by government subsidies. The 21CCLC does not have individual eligibility requirements, but does specifically target students who attend high poverty, low-performing schools. Again, the distinction between poor and near-poor does not effect the
interpretation of results with respect to the children who benefit from government funding of these programs.

**Employment and Family Structure**

Households with varying family structures and parental employment are also expected to have different rates of after-school program use. Employed parents have greater need for after-school childcare for their children, and children of single-parents may have higher rates of after-school program use, given that two working parents may still be able to arrange their schedules so that one of the parents can supervise the child after school. To capture these differences, this study uses a categorical variable for employment and family structure, where 1 = single-parent, working, 2 = single-parent, not working, 3 = two parents, both working, and 4 = two parents, only one working.²

**Child and Household Characteristics**

The remaining independent variables have been associated with child care choices in previous research and reflect the characteristics of the child and make-up of the household, including a dummy variable for if the child is age 10-12 (0 = no, 1 = yes), child race/ethnicity (1 = non-Hispanic white, 2 = African American, 3 = Hispanic, 4 = other), child sex (0 = female, 1 = male), maternal education level³ (1 = less than high school, 2 = high school degree, 3 = more than high school), the number of children in the household age 0 to 5, and the number of children in the household age 6 to 17 (including the target child). Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all variables in each year.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

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² Families with two unemployed parents were coded in the two-parents, one employed category. Information on the guardians’ employment is substituted for children in non-parent guardian households.

³ Information on the respondent is substituted in instances where information on the child’s mother is not available.
Plan of Analysis

Descriptive analyses are run to determine overall changes in after-school program use from 1999 to 2005, as well as changes within each poverty category and employment and family structure category. The data from all three waves are pooled into a single dataset in order to run formal tests of the research questions using multivariate logistic regression models. The first model uses the entire sample to determine whether there have been overall changes over time in rates of program use. The next model shows whether changes in after-school program use over time differ by poverty status by interacting poverty status with year. This model tests whether changes in after-school program use over this time period varies by poverty status. I next address differences in program use among employment and family structure subgroups by running logistic regression models separately for each subgroup. These four models allow for a comparison of the factors that influence after-school program use among families with single working parents, single not-working parents, two working parents, and families with two parents, only one of whom works. These models are purely exploratory; I do not have any hypotheses for these groups beyond where we will see changes over time.

All analyses are run using Taylor-series estimates to produce more accurate approximations of the sampling error by taking into account the design of the survey. Specification tests are conducted to test whether a two-category poverty variable (<200% vs ≥200% of the federal poverty line) produces different results than the three-category variable. Comments in the text reveal where these tests find differences.
Chapter 3

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The descriptive statistics provide indications of the findings for each of the research questions. First, they reveal that there has been a significant overall increase in after-school program use from 18.1% in 1999 to 21.5% in 2005. Figure 1 shows that this increase was not uniform for all children, however: the proportion of children using after-school programs in each year varies by poverty status. Averaging across all years, poor children have the highest rates of after-school program use and near-poor children have the lowest rates of use. Analyses of rates of after-school program use within poverty categories found significant increases between 1999 and 2005 for both poor children and near-poor children, with a 4.5 percentage point increase for poor children and a 6.0 percentage point increase for near-poor children.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Figures 2 and 3 show descriptive changes over time in after-school program use by employment and family structure. Because of welfare reform’s emphasis on poor, single-mothers’ entrance into the labor force, the break-down of after-school program use by employment and family structure is particularly salient. Figure 2 shows changes over time for families with employed mothers (both single- and two-parent). It is important to note that overall, single-parent, working families have the highest rates of after-school program use among all employment and family structure categories, most likely due to the need for childcare between the time children are released from school and their parents finish the work day. Children of two-parent, dual earner families who are near-poor significantly increased their rates
of after-school program use from 13% in 1999 to 22% in 2005, but the rates of use did not significantly increase for the oft-targeted welfare group: single-parent families living below the poverty line.

There is, however, an increase in use in two-parent, single-earner families for both poor and not poor families, perhaps reflecting the popularity of after-school programs (see Figure 3). The rates of use almost doubled for poor children in two-parent, single-earner families from 9.8% in 1999 to 19% in 2005. Because children in this group most likely do not have high demands for after-school childcare, this increase may reflect the increase in popularity of programs, the availability and affordability of programs, or targeting by 21CCLC programs. Not-poor children in this same employment and family structure group saw their largest jump between 1999 and 2001 from 6.3% to 10.2%.

Of note is the significant decrease in after-school program use between 1999 and 2001 from 21.3% to 18.6% for dual-earner, two-parent families over 200% of the poverty line, a phenomenon that Sonenstein and colleagues (2002) had previously identified as being restricted to single-parent families below 200% of the poverty line. Despite the drop in program use for this group in 2001, there is a rebound in 2005: rates of program use significantly increase from 18.6% in 2001 to 22.8% in 2005 (results not shown) such that the rates of use are not significantly different between 1999 and 2005. The fluctuation within this group mirrors overall oscillations in the data, but perhaps is only identified as significant for this group given the large number of individuals in this particular category (see Appendix).

Figure 3 also shows that there are no significant changes in program use over time for single-parent, non-working families. There are trend increases within the near-poor group from 13.0% in 1999 to 23.4% in 2005 and within the not poor group from 8.3% in 1999 to 18.5% in
2001. In addition, there is a large, not significant increase within the poor group from 18.2% in 1999 to 27.4% in 2005. The lack of significant results despite the remarkable increases in program use is most likely due to the small number of individuals in this category. Again, the increase in program use for this group may be a result of increased program availability and affordability for low-income children through agencies such as the 21CCLC.

[FIGURES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE]

**Primary Analyses**

Although the descriptive statistics provide preliminary indications of the changes in after-school program use for all children and among the specific subgroups, logistic regression models are used to formally test the observed trends. Regression analyses ensure that the changes over time are not due to changes in the subgroups of the populations that are more or less likely to have after-school program use; any significant increases or decreases in program use in these models are evidence of change above and beyond the characteristics of children and households that are associated with after-school program use.

The first model in Table 2 tests whether there has been an increase in after-school programs over time as well as which child and family characteristics are associated with after-school program use by including all children and all years. Indeed, children are significantly more likely to use after-school programs in 2005 compared to 1999. Near-poor children are slightly less likely than poor children to attend programs, but there is not a significant difference in program use between poor and not poor children. Specification tests that combine both poor and near-poor into the same poverty category reveal that the poor/near-poor group is less likely to use after-school programs than the not-poor group.
The demographic variables confirm that, as previously discussed, children of working, single-parents have the highest rates of after-school program use. Even after controlling for employment and family structure, racial/ethnic minorities have higher rates of use than white children. African-Americans are more than 2 times as likely to attend after-school programs as whites, and Hispanics are 1.6 times more likely than whites to attend. Older children are less likely to attend programs, and children whose mothers have more than a high school degree are more likely to attend than those whose mothers have less than a high school degree.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Model 2 builds on this analysis by testing an interaction between year and poverty status to determine if rates of program use have nuanced changes over time for each poverty group. The analysis confirms the significance of the interaction effect, suggesting that changes in after-school program use by year were different depending on income category. Given the difficulty in interpreting interaction coefficients, Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities of after-school program use for each poverty category in each year, determined by using the coefficients from the interaction model.\(^4\) For poor children, there is a marked increase in program use between 1999 and 2001. Program use for both near-poor and not-poor children drops slightly in 2001 before rebounding in 2005, though the increase is greater for near-poor children. Again, the drop in rates of use during between 1999 and 2001 echo findings by Sonenstein et al. (2002).

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

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\(^4\) Predicted probabilities are estimated by calculating the expected level of use for each year and poverty status, holding all other variable coefficients constant. The calculations include both the main effect coefficients for year and poverty status as well as the interaction coefficient.
In order to better understand the patterns of after-school program use by employment and family structure, Models 1-4 in Table 3 examine the characteristics of children in after-school programs within each of employment and family structure groups.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Analyses thus far have shown that single, working parents are the most likely to send their children to after-school programs, regardless of family income status. Identifying how program use has changed for each of these groups will provide a better understanding of the relationship between employment and family structure and how that relationship has changed over time.

Each of the employment and family structure subgroups show idiosyncratic changes over time in their levels of after-school program use. Children of single, working parents have stable rates of program use from 1999 to 2005, whereas children of single, non-working parents are 1.6 times more likely to attend after-school programs in 2001 compared to 1999 and 1.7 times more likely to attend in 2005 than 1999. Those in two-parent families where both parents work are 1.2 times more likely to attend after-school programs in 2005 than in 1999, while children in two-parent families with only one working parent show a significant increase in program use in 2001 compared to 1999 and a trend increase between 1999 and 2005. These results largely confirm the descriptive statistics, and even capture the increase in program use for single-parent, non-working families that was evident but not significant in the descriptives.

I also examine the factors within each of these groups that are associated with after-school program use. For single-parent, non-working families, poor children are the least likely to attend after-school programs when compared to near-poor and not-poor children who are also from single-parent, working families. Further analyses for this group confirm that rates of use by
poverty status are a main effect; there is no interaction between year and poverty status (results not shown). Alternatively, poor children in two-parent, single-earner families are more likely to attend programs than children in other income categories.\(^5\) Poverty status is not a significant predictor of use for single-parent, working families or two-parent, dual earner families.

\(^5\) Specification tests show that there is no difference in program use between poor/near-poor and not poor.
Chapter 4

Discussion

Given the substantial increase in government funding for after-school programs over the past 10 years, the study of how after-school program rates of use have changed and the identification of the demographic subgroups that are driving these changes is extremely important. By analyzing data from the 1999, 2001, and 2005 waves of the NHES, this study establishes an overall pattern of after-school program use as well as an examination of the factors that influence this use and whether those factors have changed over time. The interpretation of these results with respect to poverty status, family structure, and parental employment reflect the dual function of after-school programs as both a means for childcare and an agency of positive youth development.

Perhaps the most salient finding is the leveling out of after-school program use among poverty groups. Though there has been an overall increase in program use, examining these changes by poverty status reveals that the movement is nuanced in a manner that suggests that government funding is reaching its targets. For example, analyses show that rates of program use for children living more than 200% above the poverty line are not significantly different between 1999, 2001, and 2005; the overall increase in after-school program use is a consequence of growing program use among poor and near-poor children. The specification tests that were conducted to examine differences between a two-category and three-category poverty measure only produced significant results in the same direction as the original results for the near-poor group. Given that the poverty ratio calculation in this study categorizes some of the near poor families into the poor category, the actual levels of after-school program use for poor families may in fact be higher than revealed here.
These results suggest that low-income families are increasingly using after-school care, perhaps as a result of targeted subsidies. The closing of this gap may be attributed to government programs that support after-school programs: the CCDF provides subsidies primarily for low-income families, the 21CCLC programs reach out to families that could benefit from academic enrichment services, community service, and cultural activities (often in low-income neighborhoods), and TANF funds are often rolled directly into the CCDF, allowing for more low-income children to have access to affordable programs.

The assessment of change within each employment and family structure group further identifies where the overall changes in use are rooted. Not surprisingly, given the need for childcare during the after-school hours, single-parent working families have the highest rates of after-school program use, and their rates are stable over time. Although research by Sonenstein et al. (2002) shows a sizable decrease in program use for this same group from 21% in 1997 to 15% in 1999, the results from this study suggest that perhaps the drop captured in the Sonenstein et al. study was not a long-term trend. The limited time span of the Sonenstein et al. study impedes a direct comparison between the studies; further research with current data from the NSAF is needed to see if children in this group return to their baseline level of after-school program use.

Poor children in single-parent, working families are less likely than both near-poor and not poor children of single, working parents to attend after-school programs. This finding is unexpected in light of support for this demographic through both the CCDF and direct use of TANF funds to ease the transition from welfare to work. However, this pattern supports previous research findings that low income, single-parent families are less likely to use after-school programs than high income, single-parent families (Sonenstein et al., 2002). Low
income, single parent families are more likely to use kin care over after-school programs (Sonenstein et al. 2002); future research can explore whether these patterns of use are an issue of preference, timing of work, or funding.

Increases in after-school program use by single-parent, non-working families and two-parent families in which only one parent works reflect the growing popularity of after-school programs as a way to foster positive youth development. Both of these subgroups are defined by having one parent at home, suggesting that after-school programs are not needed as a means of childcare but rather as a way to improve children’s social and academic outcomes. Similarly, there is also an increase in program use for two-parent, dual-earner families, even though the majority of families in this group are above the 200% poverty line and do not benefit from government subsidies. Increases for single-parent, non-working families (the majority of whom are poor) may be due to increased affordability and availability of after-school programs through organizations such as the 21CCLC, or to the extension of subsidies to TANF recipients who are in job training or actively looking for employment.

This study provides a detailed description of who uses after-school programs and how those rates have changed over time, expanding a literature in which descriptive statistics are remarkably sparse. However, the limitations of this study should be noted and addressed in future research. First, this area of study could benefit from continued research using data with consistent measures over time that include the period both leading up to and following welfare reform. Though the current study covers a span of 6 years following welfare reform, it fails to provide a base level examination of after-school program use before the onset of substantial increases in government funding. Second, a better understanding of the reach of government subsidies could also be reached by exploring how families pay for after-school programs; are the
increases in use due to increased use by families that pay out of pocket or are the due to improved affordability as a result of subsidies?

Third, researchers should pay close attention to the plausible effects of a specific amount of government funding. Though funds have increased dramatically as outlined earlier in this paper, a discussion of how much change those funds could possible provide is warranted. Certainly the reach of funds depends on the types of programs that are receiving support and how they employ their awards. Programs that are geared towards childcare do not need the same amount and quality of resources as those that have specific positive youth development aims, and therefore may cost significantly less to implement. The delineation between the use of funds for quality enhancements and subsidies is also an important distinction; increased funding may translate into better programs rather than an increase in the reach of programs, which may change estimates of expected trends in program use over time.

Finally, in light of the rising popularity of after-school programs that is reflected by this study, future research should continue to focus on the effects of these programs on children’s academic and social development. Although the closing of the gap in after-school program use between low-income and high-income children identified in this study is encouraging because it signifies availability and affordability across income levels, it remains to be seen whether after-school programs have a positive effect on the children who attend. The existing literature provides conflicting reports of developmental outcomes for children in after-school programs, bolstering the call by Granger (2008) for a standardization of the goals and aims of after-school programs.

There is growing disagreement among after-school program providers on what role the programs should play in child development. Some practitioners advocate for after-school
programs to do little more than provide a safe haven for children who would otherwise be home alone, while others promote after-school programs as a way to enhance academic and social achievement (Hollister, 2003). Even 21CCLC programs, which have the benefit of a clear mission statement, are feeling the pressure from their host agency, No Child Left Behind, to treat the program as an extension of the school day and focus on academic tasks rather than adhering to its mandate of community involvement and positive social development. For all of these programs, further research is also needed to understand what program characteristics support positive youth development and how to best make those programs available to children.

Despite these limitations, this study provides current, detailed information on the after-school program use for all school-aged children. The identification of the characteristics of children who are using after-school programs may be particularly relevant for policy-makers, and by exploring the rates of use by subgroups of the population, I provide a more accurate estimation of who is using after-school programs and how their rates of use have changed over time.
References


Appendix

Appendix. Number of individuals in employment and family structure categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single-Parent, Working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Poor</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single-Parent, Not Working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>369</td>
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<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
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<td>117</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Poor</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two-Parent, Working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>1065</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Poor</td>
<td>3158</td>
<td>2672</td>
<td>3231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two-Parent, Not Working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Poor</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>1027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9397</td>
<td>6727</td>
<td>8306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Household Education Surveys Program, 1999-2005*
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for All Analysis Variables, by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly after-school use</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.215*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is 10 – 12</td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>0.445*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is male</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent family, mother employed</td>
<td>0.249</td>
<td>0.231*</td>
<td>0.212*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent family, mother not employed</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.069*</td>
<td>0.064*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent family, mother employed</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.492*</td>
<td>0.504*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent family, mother not employed</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td># of children 0 – 5 in household</td>
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<td>0.431</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td># of children 6 – 17 in household</td>
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<td>2.098*</td>
<td>2.097*</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.103</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child lives in poverty</td>
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<td>0.215</td>
<td>0.198*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 100 – 200% poverty line</td>
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<td>0.224*</td>
<td>0.219*</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 200+ poverty line</td>
<td>0.493</td>
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<td>0.583*</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>0.620*</td>
<td>0.569*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.156</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.189*</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.086*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother &lt; HS education</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.114*</td>
<td>0.100*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother HS education</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.329*</td>
<td>0.300</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother &gt; HS education</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>0.602*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>9397</td>
<td>6727</td>
<td>8306</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All analyses are weighted with Taylor series estimates.
*p < .05 compared to 1999
Table 2. Logistic Regression Models of Factors Associated with Weekly After-School Program Use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1 Main Effect Model</th>
<th>M2 Interaction Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year (1999 omitted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1.028 (0.056)</td>
<td>1.377* (0.192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.213** (0.065)</td>
<td>1.439** (0.203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Income (&lt;100% Poverty omitted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200% Poverty</td>
<td>0.845* (0.066)</td>
<td>0.972 (0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;200% Poverty</td>
<td>1.041 (0.077)</td>
<td>1.327** (0.144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment &amp; Family Structure (Single-parent, working omitted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent, not working</td>
<td>0.687** (0.073)</td>
<td>0.695** (0.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent, both working</td>
<td>0.771** (0.044)</td>
<td>0.769** (0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent, one working</td>
<td>0.340** (0.028)</td>
<td>0.338** (0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is 10-12</td>
<td>0.783** (0.034)</td>
<td>0.781** (0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is male</td>
<td>0.983 (0.043)</td>
<td>0.982 (0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ Ethnicity (White omitted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.178** (0.139)</td>
<td>2.190** (0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.566** (0.101)</td>
<td>1.569** (0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>1.430** (0.129)</td>
<td>1.436** (0.130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children 0-5 in house</td>
<td>0.974 (0.044)</td>
<td>0.974 (0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children 6-17 in house</td>
<td>0.931* (0.032)</td>
<td>0.931* (0.032)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternal Education (&lt;High school omitted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>1.026 (0.093)</td>
<td>1.018 (0.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;High school</td>
<td>1.240* (0.106)</td>
<td>1.234* (0.106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction terms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200% Poverty * 2001</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.674* (0.121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200% Poverty * 2005</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.971 (0.177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;200% Poverty * 2001</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.678* (0.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;200% Poverty * 2005</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.737* (0.113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>24430</td>
<td>24430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Standard errors are in parenthesis. All models include a flag for missing income data. All analyses are weighted with Taylor series estimates.
*p<.05 **p<.01
Table 3. Logistic Regression Models Predicting Weekly After-School Program Use, by Employment and Family Structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.957 (0.101)</td>
<td>1.576* (0.332)</td>
<td>0.934 (0.068)</td>
<td>1.371* (0.218)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.121 (0.109)</td>
<td>1.729* (0.403)</td>
<td>1.159* (0.083)</td>
<td>1.320† (0.198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income (&lt;100% Poverty omitted)</th>
<th>M2 Single-Parent Not Working</th>
<th>M3 Two-Parent Both Working</th>
<th>M4 Two-Parent One Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-200% Poverty</td>
<td>1.151 (0.131)</td>
<td>0.817 (0.140)</td>
<td>0.537** (0.095)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;200% Poverty</td>
<td>1.365** (0.151)</td>
<td>1.046 (0.165)</td>
<td>0.690* (0.115)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)</th>
<th>M3 Two-Parent Both Working</th>
<th>M4 Two-Parent One Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.994** (0.192)</td>
<td>2.766** (0.676)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.418** (0.164)</td>
<td>1.381† (0.228)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>1.311 (0.235)</td>
<td>1.721* (0.460)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal Education (&lt;High school omitted)</th>
<th>M3 Two-Parent Both Working</th>
<th>M4 Two-Parent One Working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>1.029 (0.170)</td>
<td>1.166 (0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;High school</td>
<td>1.304† (0.202)</td>
<td>0.913 (0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is 10-12</td>
<td>0.633** (0.052)</td>
<td>1.389* (0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is male</td>
<td>0.914 (0.075)</td>
<td>0.953 (0.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children 0-5 in house</td>
<td>1.065 (0.081)</td>
<td>1.015 (0.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children 6-17 in house</td>
<td>0.941 (0.062)</td>
<td>1.066 (0.076)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Notes: Standard errors are in parenthesis. All models include a flag for missing income data. All analyses are weighted with Taylor series estimates. |
| † p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 |
Figure 1. Changes in After-School Program Use, by Poverty Status


Figure 2. Changes in After-School Program Use Among Children Whose Mothers Are Employed

Figure 3. Changes in After-School Program Use Among Children Whose Mothers Are Not Employed


Figure 4. Predicted Probabilities for After School Program Use by Poverty Status