



2009

Review of *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics*. David L. Kirp. Reviewed by James Midgley.

James Midgley
University of California, Berkeley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Midgley, James (2009) "Review of *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics*. David L. Kirp. Reviewed by James Midgley.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 1 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol36/iss1/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



Four additional studies incorporate data from Mexico to compare populations and examine the impacts of U.S. immigration policy on migration. Robert Fairlie and Christopher Woodruff use the 2000 PUMS and 2000 Mexico Census to examine differences in self-employment rates between Mexicans and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. by industrial sector and gender. Pablo Ibarra and Darren Lubotsky use similar data in Chapter 5 to compare the educational attainment of Mexican migrants to that of non-migrants, the latter of whom they find to be more educated. In Chapter 8, Susan Richter, J. Edward Taylor, and Antonio Yunez-Naude use the 2003 National Mexico Rural Household Survey to test the effects of the the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and increased border enforcement on the flow of migrant labor from rural Mexico to the United States. They find that while policies and macroeconomic effects significantly influence migration, these effects are small when compared to the effects of migration networks. Gordon Hanson's examination of how Mexican emigration has affected regional labor supply and regional earnings in Mexico also highlights the salience of the strength of migration networks for the economic outlook of certain Mexican states.

In a political climate strong on opinion about Mexican immigration but weak on viable policy solutions, this data driven collection is one that should be of interest to academic audiences, policymakers, and students of immigration generally. An important limitation of many of the studies is the undercount for undocumented Mexican immigrants in analyses based on U.S. Census data. Though undocumented individuals participate in the Census, undercount estimates have ranged from 6 to 40 percent depending on the year. Despite this caveat, the papers enhance knowledge of the economic consequences of immigration for both Mexico and the U.S. and point to important directions for future research.

Michelle Johnson, University of California, Los Angeles

and Kids-First Politics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. \$26.95 hardcover.

The disproportionate number of children living in conditions of poverty is a major topic in social policy today. To address the problem, social policy scholars have proposed that a number of anti-poverty interventions ranging from universal family allowances to subsidized child savings accounts be introduced. However, they have paid relatively little attention to the role of early childhood intervention programs such as child care and preschool in poverty alleviation. Although long regarded as the proper concern of educationalists and developmental psychologists, scholars in social welfare and social policy will benefit from knowing more about the field.

David Kirp's lively new book should certainly spark interest in the topic. Although not focused specifically on child poverty, his broad ranging overview of the preschool movement in the United States has implications for poverty reduction. He provides an engaging history of the emergence of preschool education in the late 19th century and its expansion in numerous experiments including the Perry preschool program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, Headstart and the Abecedarian project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He also discusses the emergence of child care provision with the Kaiser Child Service Centers during World War II and the expansion in child care as a result of welfare reform over the last decade. An interesting comparative chapter reviews Britain's Sure Start program and the efforts of the current Labour government to abolish child policy.

Kirp is emphatic that long-term outcome research into the impact of a high-quality preschool experience demonstrates that these programs are very successful. The effects of these interventions, he contends, last well into middle age. Those who participate in these programs acquire higher educational credentials and are more successful in their subsequent careers than those who do not participate. However, he recognizes that much of this research has methodological problems, and he does not shirk from airing the strong opinions of those who oppose public investments in preschool education. They include traditionalists on the political right who believe that

children should be raised at home by their mothers as well as market liberals who criticize government spending on social programs and particularly programs such as Head Start which, they claim, do not achieve their goals.

Despite opposition from traditionalists and market liberals, the author reveals the growing bipartisan political support for public preschool and child care provision. This is largely because of a substantial body of cost-benefit research that demonstrates the investment effect of these programs. Hard-nosed economists including Nobel Prize winners have shown that the rates of return to preschool education are considerable. However, Kirp repeatedly points out that the positive outcomes of preschool and child care are dependent on quality. Large classrooms with poorly trained teachers have few positive effects and indeed, as one study revealed, may even promote antisocial behavior.

Although Kirp writes for a popular readership, he provides a wealth of carefully documented statistical and other research information and examines the issues with care and thoughtfulness. It is an extremely readable book which will hopefully capture the attention of the social policy community. It will also be of major interest to social workers who are on the front-line of the provision of services to poor families and children. Hopefully they will have a better understanding of the role of preschool education and day care in addressing the pervasive and apparently contractible problem of child poverty today.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Karyn R. Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. \$60 hardcover, \$22.95 papercover.

To understand social identities in black communities, scholars have conducted ethnographic studies regarding the black middle-class community using single site designs. However, the communities they have studied are not uniformly middle-class but often include members of the black working-class and in some instances, the black poor. By not differentiating the classes from each other within these communities, they