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Paper Title: Studying the Roles of Nonprofits, Government, and Business: Youth Services in Phoenix-Mesa

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Summary of Research

There is debate about the services that businesses, governments, and nonprofits should provide and the role each should play in redistribution. Using diary data on 1,036 children in the Phoenix area in 2003-04 we found that for-profits served upper income families, white non-Hispanics, and long term residents. Government providers served lower income families, Hispanics, and short term residents. Nonprofits served upper income families, but did not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity or length of time in the community. Churches provided the fewest services, but served all income brackets, Hispanics and non-Hispanics, and newcomers and old timers.

Description

There is a continuing debate in the public administration literature about the appropriate roles of for-profits, governments, and nonprofit organizations (which includes faith-based groups) in the delivery of human services. While the economics literature (e.g., Weisbrod and Hansmann) has outlined a set of normative guidelines for when one form is more desirable than another, the empirical work continues to show that there is not a clear division of labor either in terms of service activity or clientele and there are not consistent differences in the way services are provided or the quality of service. Furthermore, there is continuing debate about the role of each sector in redistribution. While there is some agreement that this is not an issue for for-profits and the responsibility of government, there is no agreement about the role of nonprofits.

During the course of a typical Saturday children and families utilize a variety of services and venues in their communities. This study examines utilization patterns of 1,036 children in the Phoenix-Mesa metro area during the fall and winter of 2003 and 2004. We collected data via phone on the hourly activities of children, where they partook in these activities, and who provided these services. We are particularly interested in the latter and distinguish between business, nonprofit, congregational, government, and household service organizational forms.

Using hypernetwork sampling methods, we constructed the interface between population segments (e.g., based on income, age, gender, race/ethnicity, length of residence in the Valley), types of activity (e.g., personal care, sports, entertainment, arts/crafts, academic, socializing, religion), and types of provider (business, nonprofit, congregational, government, and household). We examine changes in the resource space, hour by hour, during the course of a typical Saturday.

We structure our analysis around the question: how do families come to use different types of providers? All analyses were done controlling for the type of activity provided by the organization, e.g., sports, developmental, eating and shopping, socializing, etc.

We first looked at household resources and found that for-profits tend to serve upper income families, white non-Hispanics, and those who have been in the community longer. Government providers tend to serve lower income families, Hispanics, and those who have been in the area longer. Nonprofits tend to serve upper income families, but do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity or length of time in the community. In contrast, churches provided the fewest services, but served all income brackets, Hispanics and non-Hispanics, and newcomers and old timers.

We subsequently present qualitative data on users' preferences for nonprofit, government, and for-profit

providers. We find that there is no difference across income groups. Rich and poor have very favorable opinions of nonprofits and government providers.

We mapped the providers respondents identified using geographic information systems to see what kinds of providers are located in which types of neighborhoods. Looking at the number of each kind of provider in Phoenix area census tracts, we find that businesses, churches, and nonprofits are less likely to be located in low income tracts and are more likely to be located in middle and upper middle income areas. Government organizations tend to be located in low, middle, and upper middle income communities. We also find that the number of churches, nonprofits, and government providers increased as the percent Hispanic in the community increased.

We concluded that the use of different providers by different types of families is influenced by location, however, not all utilization patterns can be explained by location alone. We discuss what else affects the matching of client/user to provider.