

“Parental Employment, Child Care, and Child Outcomes in Immigrant Families.”

The focus of our proposed paper is on parental work and child care arrangements and how they influence the early cognitive and behavioral development of children of immigrants in the United States. A large literature has examined the effects of parental employment and child care arrangements on child outcomes, but rarely with an explicit focus on children of immigrants. This is an important omission, because immigrant families are likely to have quite different work and child care arrangements than their native born peers. Immigrant parents, we hypothesize, would be more likely to be employed, would work longer hours, would work for jobs with fewer benefits (e.g., sick leave, child care assistance), and would be more likely to work non-standard schedules than native-born parents. In addition, immigrant families, on average, would be less likely to use formal child care for their preschool age children and more likely to rely on informal and family-based care.

Our paper uses data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), a large nationally representative birth cohort study that collects extremely rich data on children and families at 9 months, 2 years, 4 years, and 5 years post-birth. The ECLS-B has a large sample of children of immigrants and extensive data on child cognitive and behavioral development. We use the ECLS-B to 1) document patterns of parental employment and child care arrangements for children of immigrants in comparison to children of native-born parents and 2) to estimate the effect of those parental employment and child care arrangements on child outcomes for both groups. Where sample sizes permit, we will also carry out some analyses for specific sub-groups of immigrant families (e.g. families from Mexico). We define children of immigrants as children who have at least one parent born outside the United States.

Our preliminary descriptive results, shown in Table 1, confirm that children of immigrants tend to rely on informal and family-based care. In contrast, parental employment patterns are more complicated than hypothesized. For example, foreign-born mothers were less likely to be working and to be working at nonstandard hours than the native-born. However, foreign-born mothers tend to have fewer benefits associated with their jobs than the native-born, despite they were equally likely to work at full-time hours. On the other hand, foreign-born fathers were equally likely to be working and working at full-time hours than native-born fathers. However, foreign-born fathers were more likely to work at evening hours or split shift and to have jobs with fewer benefits than native-born fathers.

These differences in employment patterns between foreign-born and native-born and between mothers and fathers highlight the important scenario that immigrant couples are likely to have different parental employment patterns than the native-born. And these differences in parental employment patterns may make a difference in their children's well-being. These differences in parental employment patterns may also be related to differential use of child care arrangements (for example, mothers of immigrants may be more likely to take care of their young children and thus opt for not working than those of native-born mothers). And these differences in parental employment patterns, and child care arrangements, may in turn be related to children's well-being. Our study therefore fills a knowledge gap by answering questions regarding the interplay between child care arrangements and parental employment patterns, and between mother's and father's employment patterns, how such interplay might differ between foreign-born and native-born families, and how in turn these differences may be related to their children's well-being.

Table 1. Selected Descriptive Characteristics of Analyzed Sample, ECLS-B (Weighted)

Variables	Total <i>M (SD) / %</i>	U.S. born <i>M (SD) / %</i>	Foreign born <i>M (SD) / %</i>	<i>t / χ^2</i>
<i>Parent characteristics</i>				
Mother's age at birth	27.31 (6.18)	27.19 (6.25)	27.74 (5.89)	-2.99**
Father's age at birth	39.07 (23.72)	39.48 (24.42)	37.57 (20.91)	2.77**
Mother's highest education				575.20***
Less than high school	27.4	22.0	47.1	
High school	21.8	22.8	18.1	
Some college	26.3	28.9	16.9	
More than college	24.5	26.3	18.0	
Father's highest education				734.09***
Less than high school	21.6	14.8	43.5	
High school	22.9	24.6	17.6	
Some college	26.1	28.8	17.5	
More than college	29.4	31.9	21.4	
<i>Child care arrangements</i>				
No non-parental care	50.0	47.2	60.3	189.18***
Relative care	25.7	25.8	25.3	
Non-relative care	15.2	16.4	10.6	
Center-based care	8.5	9.8	3.6	
Multiple arrangement	0.7	0.8	0.3	
<i>Employment characteristics</i>				
Mother worked before a birth	71.3	76.0	54.3	406.37***
Work hours before a birth	36.16 (11.28)	36.19 (11.26)	35.99 (11.40)	0.43
Taking maternity leave	65.4	66.8	58.5	30.55***
Weeks of maternity leave	11.17 (8.34)	11.21 (8.32)	10.96 (8.45)	0.55
Mother's employment continuity				420.46***
WBB & WAB	45.1	48.8	31.9	
WBB & NWAB	26.2	27.2	22.4	
NWBB & WAB	5.5	4.8	7.9	
NWBB & NWAB	23.2	19.2	37.8	
Mother's work status at 9 months				155.55***
Not working	47.8	44.7	59.1	
Full time	32.3	33.7	27.2	
Part time	19.9	21.6	13.8	
Mother's work status at 24 months				131.75***
Not working	44.9	42.0	55.8	
Full time	34.8	36.1	29.9	
Part time	20.3	22.0	14.3	
Mother's work status at preschool				86.52***
Not working	40.5	38.1	49.6	
Full time	39.6	40.6	36.0	
Part time	19.9	21.3	14.5	
Mother's work status at kindergarten				97.52***
Not working	37.0	34.0	48.1	
Full time	43.0	44.6	36.7	
Part time	20.1	21.4	15.2	
Mother's benefits through current job				
Any benefit				
At 9 months	75.3	78.1	61.9	104.15***
At 24 months	74.0	75.8	65.2	43.24***
At preschool	82.6	84.5	73.8	61.94***
At kindergarten	84.1	86.6	72.5	93.63***
Number of benefits				
At 9 months	2.12 (1.61)	2.21 (1.59)	1.66 (1.63)	7.36***
At 24 months	2.08 (1.62)	2.14 (1.60)	1.79 (1.67)	4.27***
At preschool	2.21 (1.51)	2.28 (1.49)	1.85 (1.54)	6.04***
At kindergarten	2.31 (1.52)	2.39 (1.48)	1.92 (1.61)	5.61***
Mother's work shift at 9 months				13.96

Regular day time shift	70.8	70.3	73.5	
Regular evening shift	12.2	12.1	12.5	
Regular night shift	3.5	3.6	3.2	
Rotating shift	6.2	6.5	5.2	
Split shift	2.0	2.3	0.6	
Other schedule	5.3	5.3	5.1	
Mother's work shift at 24 months				16.37
Regular day time shift	73.9	73.3	77.0	
Regular evening shift	11.7	11.6	12.4	
Regular night shift	3.5	3.7	2.6	
Rotating shift	5.8	6.2	3.5	
Split shift	1.5	1.5	1.7	
Other schedule	3.6	3.8	2.9	
Mother's work shift at preschool				23.37*
Regular day time shift	74.1	73.7	76.0	
Regular evening shift	9.2	8.8	10.9	
Regular night shift	4.0	4.2	3.0	
Rotating shift	7.3	7.4	6.9	
Split shift	1.6	1.6	1.6	
Other schedule	3.9	4.4	1.6	
Mother's work shift at kindergarten				17.08+
Regular day time shift	74.8	74.2	77.7	
Regular evening shift	6.9	6.6	8.5	
Regular night shift	4.4	4.5	3.9	
Rotating shift	5.6	5.8	4.8	
Split shift	1.4	1.6	0.7	
Other schedule	6.9	7.4	4.5	
Father's work status at 9 months				28.95***
Not working	7.7	7.0	10.3	
Full time	87.4	88.4	83.9	
Part time	4.9	4.6	5.7	
Father's work status at 24 months				8.39+
Not working	7.1	7.5	5.8	
Full time	87.2	87.1	87.6	
Part time	5.7	5.5	6.6	
Father's work status at preschool				8.20
Not working	6.3	6.7	5.0	
Full time	89.2	89.0	89.6	
Part time	4.5	4.3	5.3	
Father's work status at kindergarten				9.58+
Not working	6.8	7.1	5.6	
Full time	88.5	88.5	88.2	
Part time	4.8	4.4	6.2	
Father's benefits through current job				
Any benefit				
At 9 months	80.2	84.6	65.9	292.93***
At 24 months	79.4	84.1	64.0	307.20***
At preschool	83.8	87.7	70.4	241.94***
At kindergarten	82.1	86.3	67.9	198.04***
Number of benefits				
At 9 months	2.37 (1.56)	2.55 (1.49)	1.77 (1.61)	13.80***
At 24 months	2.36 (1.57)	2.54 (1.50)	1.77 (1.64)	12.59***
At preschool	2.37 (1.46)	2.53 (1.39)	1.84 (1.55)	11.44***
At kindergarten	2.38 (1.50)	2.55 (1.43)	1.79 (1.57)	10.78***
Father's work shift at 9 months				41.89***
Regular day time shift	78.0	77.7	78.8	
Regular evening shift	6.6	5.9	8.8	
Regular night shift	3.6	4.0	2.4	
Rotating shift	6.2	6.5	4.9	
Split shift	1.5	1.3	2.0	

Other schedule	4.2	4.5	3.1	
Father's work shift at 24 months				73.47***
Regular day time shift	79.2	79.9	76.9	
Regular evening shift	6.5	5.3	10.4	
Regular night shift	3.6	3.8	2.9	
Rotating shift	6.0	6.0	6.1	
Split shift	1.1	0.9	1.6	
Other schedule	3.6	4.1	2.1	
Father's work shift at preschool				74.57***
Regular day time shift	79.3	79.4	79.1	
Regular evening shift	5.2	4.1	8.9	
Regular night shift	3.7	3.9	3.0	
Rotating shift	7.1	7.7	5.3	
Split shift	1.2	1.0	1.6	
Other schedule	3.5	3.9	2.1	
Father's work shift at kindergarten				47.49***
Regular day time shift	79.9	79.4	81.5	
Regular evening shift	5.1	4.6	6.9	
Regular night shift	3.6	3.5	3.8	
Rotating shift	5.9	6.4	4.3	
Split shift	0.6	0.4	1.3	
Other schedule	4.9	5.7	2.3	

Note. WBB=work before birth; WAB=work after birth; NWBB=no work before birth; NWAB=no work after birth. +p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001