

2008 CCPRC Meeting  
Session 9 (Breakout B-2)  
July 31, 2009, 2:15-3:30 pm

## **Child Care Utilization Issues for Diverse Families**

### **Description**

Panelists provided a framework for discussion by sharing presentations on the obstacles to child care access for immigrant families, emerging research on understanding Latino families' child care choices, and a definition of parent involvement for diverse families. The session highlighted child care issues relevant for language and ethnic minorities; discussed new findings and theories related to child care utilization for this population; and promoted an exchange of ideas, challenges, and successes related to the study of culture and child care.

### **Moderator**

Eva Marie Shivers, Indigo Cultural Center, Inc.

### **Panel Members**

Dina Castro, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
Christine McWayne, New York University  
Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Harvard Graduate School of Education

### **Scribe**

Meagan McSwiggan, Child Trends

### **Documents in Session Folder**

### **Discussion Notes**

- One of the goals of this session is to keep culture in the forefront of our minds as we implement policies and create studies. Researchers are now considering culture in policy. We would also like to provide updates on new findings and to stimulate discussion and ideas. We will discuss child care selection and family involvement, and we will present a framework as a grounding (Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children [Garcia-Coll et al. 1996]). This model is useful because scholars are arguing that we need to be using this framework as we create new studies.
- Social position (e.g., race, class, ethnicity, gender) is an issue that most researchers are good at considering.
- Racism, prejudice, discrimination, and segregation are issues that are not as widely considered.
- The idea of adaptive culture is important to promote a positive outcome. This would include the consideration of cultural legacies and migration history.
- We need to change the discourse in child care policy research.

### **Dina Castro**

- Latinos constitute 14.4 percent of the U.S. population.

- A total of 23 percent of all babies born in 2004 were to Latino mothers.
- Latino children constitute 33.9 percent of all children in poverty.
- Critical issues related to Latino low-income families and child care systems are as follows:
  - Low rate of the use of licensed or registered child care; among children ages 3 to 5 who were attending some sort of center-based child care program, only 43 percent were Latino/Hispanic.
  - Low percentage receiving subsidies; among children living in poverty, only 5 percent of Latinos are using subsidies.
  - Information about the quality of the child care that they receive.
- Among children who attended child care, Latino children lag behind at kindergarten entry. For example, they lagged behind other ethnic groups in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and reading proficiency (as per the Early Childhood Education Linkage System-Kindergarten).
- What explains the low use rates among Latino families?
  - Research has suggested that the role of race/ethnicity in child care use varies, and economic and structural factors may be more salient than demographic and/or cultural factors in explaining the low use rates.
  - Limited knowledge about the availability of child care services.
  - Limited accessibility (shortage of center-based child care slots in Latino neighborhoods).
  - Differences in child-rearing perspectives.
  - Limited affordability.
- We are not saying that cultural issues are not present, just that they are not the whole picture, which would involve the complexities of the influence and interactions among such factors as parenting practices, large family households, immigration status, children's development status, and the use of several types of child care arrangements by one family (e.g., half day center plus relative care, frequent changes in child care providers).
- Dina Castro began a study trying to classify families into center-based; family child care homes (nonrelatives); and relative-provided, home-based care. She found that a lot of families did not fit perfectly into just one of these categories. This issue is complex and needs to be addressed.
- In another study (funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation [OPRE]), the Latino population in the South has been researched. The South has the largest growing population of Latinos in the United States.

#### Hirokazu Yoshikawa

- Disentangling culture and context in examining child care choice among immigrant families.
- A contextually sensitive definition of culture: patterns of routine, value-laden ways of thinking and behaving that are shared by persons within cultural groups, transmitted across time and generations, and responsive to constraints and opportunities in the environment.

- What are some of the dominant approaches to studying this issue?
  - Research on health and school readiness disparities.
  - Some cultural theorists examine parental goals and values as indicators of family socialization and cultural transmission.
  - Researchers studying ethnicity and race consider sources of discrimination and identity.
- Traditional explanations of Latino culture are inadequate in explaining child care choice. Latinos are often characterized as having strong values of “familismo.” This characterization leaves out context and how that context might influence values. Some unconsidered factors include the following:
  - Variation among Latino groups.
  - Availability of support for child care.
  - Variation in undocumented status.
- Barata and colleagues (2007): Birth cohort (n=310) of Mexicans, Dominicans, African-Americans, and Chinese infants.
  - Surveys at birth and at 1, 6, 14, and 24 months.
  - Child assessments and videotaped interactions at 14 and 24 months.
  - Qualitative data are available (n=28).
  - Ethnic group variation exists regarding the entrance of nonrelative care. Dominican children enter sooner than Mexican children. The contextual variable that had the strongest relationship with timing is the number of adults in the household. Mexican families had more adults in the household and showed later entry for their children into outside care.
  - Mexican mothers showed more of a preference for home-based care and Dominican mothers more for child care centers.
- Familismo does not provide an adequate explanation for the difference in choice and preference among the Latino and African-American families. Dominicans have been coming to New York for 40–50 years but Mexicans for only 15–20 years. The current Mexican wave of immigration involves those with much lower incomes than their Dominican counterparts. Mexicans are more likely to be undocumented, so they are unlikely to have access to savings accounts and drivers licenses, which may prevent their children’s entry into child care.
- To sum up, values and goals are predictive of child care choice, but they do not always follow common hypotheses (about Latino culture).
- Contextual influences are important, such as Dominican and Mexican waves of immigration in New York and differences in undocumented status.
- Efforts to encourage child care subsidy takeup should take into account the factors specific to each immigrant group:
  - Cultural norms.
  - Fears of the consequences of subsidy use.
  - How information about policy, child care, and quality travels in the immigrant community.
  - Where are the trusted settings, service providers, and networks to convey this information?

Christine McWayne: Considerations for Examining Family Involvement across Cultures

- Many factors affecting child care use also affect family involvement. What is family involvement?
  - A multidimensional construct.
  - Bidirectional in nature.
  - Shared family context (needing to take into account family involvement activities of all family members, not just mothers).
  - Need for understanding of the cross-cultural applicability of our common assumptions/traditional models around family involvement.
- Examples of home-based contributions:
  - Spending time at home on reading and mathematics.
  - Talking about one's own experience in school.
  - Taking children to the zoo, library, and so forth.
- Examples of school-based contributions:
  - Attending parent-teacher meetings.
  - Volunteering in the classroom.
  - Attending workshops and our field trips.
- Home-school communication—communication between the family and school (notes exchanged, formal meetings, discussing child's progress, phone conversation, etc.).
- Recent cross-site research conducted by myself and my colleagues, Patricia Manz and Marika Ginsburg-Block, has been focused on Latino families. We have found evidence that suggests different family involvement behaviors operate across cultural groups. For example, in our earlier work with low-income, African American families, the home-based activities parents engaged in with children were found to relate most strongly with academic and social outcomes. In our studies with low-income Latino families, we have consistently found (with different samples in different geographic regions) that school-based activities seem to relate most strongly with children's performance in school. In one sample, the more involved Latino families were in school-based activities, the less well the children were doing. In another Latino sample, the opposite was found. This situation was confusing, so we took a deeper look at the constructs of family involvement we were using.
- We used Rasch analysis, and it showed us that the three family involvement dimensions (home-based, school-based, and home-school communication) represent the overall construct of family involvement in differential ways for this group. For example, the home-based factor was too easy; too many people can endorse too many items at high levels. For the school-based factor, the opposite story holds. This factor is too difficult in that the majority of parents find they cannot endorse most of the items. The home-school communication factor was just right in that there appeared to be adequate content coverage and parents seemed to be endorsing at various levels across the items. This result demonstrates that our typical ways of asking about school-based involvement is not working. For home-based involvement, everyone said "yes" to our questions, so there is little variability across people. Both are, therefore, in need of revision.

2008 CCPRC Meeting  
Session 9 (Breakout B-2)  
July 31, 2009, 2:15-3:30 pm

- Because of this study and a large, qualitative literature supporting the need for better measurement of family involvement among Latinos, my colleague Gigliana Melzi and I received funding to create two new measures (English- and Spanish-language versions) to assess family involvement. We want to get at the goals, aspirations, and conceptualizations of low-income Latino families' involvement in their children's early educational experiences.

### Discussion

*Question:* What does your (Hirokazu) African-American population look like? What's the level of immigration within the African-American group? (Some recently immigrated Jamaicans might consider themselves "black.")

*Answer:* There are two major African-American immigrant groups (western Caribbean and African). The majority are third generation or higher. It is hard to define each ethnic group, and we need to be more specific when determining these ethnic groups.

*Comment:* There is a tendency to equate use with preference and the preference with cultural issues. I conduct research with Sudanese, Cambodian, and Somalian families. I was listening to Sudanese parents, and one man said that he wants preschool for his son but not for his daughter. Is there a gender bias here or cultural issue? Later, it came out that his son was old enough and his daughter was not. So this was a lesson to me not to seek out specific reasons for things. Cambodian parents said that they preferred to keep children close and not to let them leave home as early, but after more probing, they all wanted to take advantage of Head Start but did not put their children in the program because they thought it cost money. Some parents mentioned that they wanted their children at home to learn family values.

*Comment:* As researchers, we are humans and have our assumptions. It is difficult to be objective when it comes to others' belief systems. A colleague shared with me that she had observed (working with Puerto Rican families) that they called their young children "mamita" and "papito." This phenomenon is natural, but her interpretation was that Latino families socialized their children to be mothers and fathers. She took this completely literally, which just showed that we try to find explanations for almost everything.

*Comment:* The issue of class is used in many areas. We definitely need to consider this issue.

### Main Themes

There is a need to understand variation within a group. Creating arbitrary groupings and drawing conclusions may lead to faulty results. How do we start to promote the use of more variation within the group studies? We need to develop our rationale for why this issue is necessary. We need more and better cultural validations of measures. If we took a look at the measures generally used, we would see that many of the constructs do not

2008 CCPRC Meeting  
Session 9 (Breakout B-2)  
July 31, 2009, 2:15-3:30 pm

have universal meaning. We are struggling to get cultural items on such tools as the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, and we need to develop better ways to measure cultural issues.

There is an underlying assumption that center-based care is best for all children. We need to be cautious with this and to recognize that parents have an idea of what is best for their child. Then we can develop practices to support caregivers so that we can promote infant mental health. There is a lot to be said about home-based care that is often overlooked.