

How Parental Preferences and Subsidy Receipt Shape Immigrant Families' Child Care Choices

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Project Description. We analyze data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education to: 1) document the parental preferences and child care arrangements of immigrant families with young children; 2) determine the factors that predict immigrant families' child care settings, including the relative roles of *parental preferences* for different care types, *family characteristics*, *employment characteristics*, the *local community context*, and *local child care marketplace characteristics*; 3) identify the state subsidy policies that promote subsidy participation among eligible immigrant families, and 4) estimate the extent to which subsidy receipt facilitates access to regulated care settings for potentially eligible immigrant families.

Research Questions.

- 1) What child care settings do immigrant and limited English proficient (LEP) parents use, and how do they differ from those used by families headed by US-born and English speaking parents?
- 2) What types of information do immigrant and LEP parents report researching when searching for prospective providers? What factors are important to them in their child care search? What are their perceptions of different care settings: center-based, family child care, informal care, and parental care? How do these perceptions differ from those of families headed by US-born and English speaking parents?
- 3) What factors are associated with the type of care families with young children use, such as parental care preferences, family demographic characteristics, parents' work/school experiences, community demographic characteristics, and local child care market characteristics? How do factors differ for immigrant families and US-born families?

- 4) Among low-income immigrant families, is child care subsidy receipt associated with greater use of center-based care?
- 5) Among low-income immigrant families, what state subsidy policies (e.g., waiting lists, application verification requirements, approved activities, minimum work hour requirements) are associated with (a) higher subsidy uptake and (b) greater use of center-based care?

Sample. Our study draws on two data sources: the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) and the Child Care and Development Fund Policies Database. We rely primarily on data from the NSECE household survey (N=11,629) but merge on data from the NSECE center-based provider survey to capture characteristics of the local child care market. Likewise, we use the CCDF Policies Database to identify state-level subsidy policies and link that information to the NSECE household survey data. We use data from the American Community Survey on community characteristics that is already attached to the NSECE household survey data.

We restrict the NSECE household survey sample to households with at least one child under the age of 5. The survey randomly selects a child under 13 in the household to be the focal child for a set of questions regarding parental perceptions of different care types. Our analyses focus on the child care arrangements for any selected children under age 5 so that we can together analyze parental perceptions and care settings used.

In our descriptive analyses (RQ1 and RQ2), we focus on several key subsamples: 1) families in which the NSECE household survey respondent was born outside the United States (immigrant households); 2) families in which the respondent was born in the United States (US-born households); 3) families in which the respondent is limited English proficient (

LEP); and 4) families in which the respondent is not LEP. We examine these subgroups at all income levels and then restrict the sample to low-income families under 200% of the federal poverty level. In select analyses, we look separately at immigrant families with Mexican origins, since they are the largest immigrant group in the country and in the NSECE household data.

In RQ3, we run regression analyses for the full sample of households with a selected child under age 5. For RQ4 and RQ5, we restrict the sample to households we estimate are eligible for child care subsidies according to the subsidy policies in their state, including income and work and school requirements.

Methods. We generate descriptive statistics and conduct simple comparison tests to address the first two research questions. Next, we run: 1) multivariate, multinomial regression models predicting the child care setting families use for the selected child under 5, considering the most formal arrangement when there are multiple arrangements; 2) logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of receiving a subsidy among subsidy-eligible households, based on state subsidy policies; and 3) multinomial regression models to analyze the relationship between subsidy receipt and the chosen care setting, using instrumental variables to instrument for subsidy receipt (if the sample size permits). We will use survey weights to account for the sampling design and survey non-response error.

Progress Update. We have obtained access to restricted-level data from the NSECE, cleaned and merged data files, and completed descriptive analyses. We also reviewed and selected the state subsidy policies that we will use in our analyses. We have identified the variables we will use in our regression models. In 2017, we will complete our analyses and write a research brief, a methods brief, and a manuscript for a peer-reviewed journal.

Our analyses to date show some significant differences between low-income immigrant/LEP households and their low-income counterparts. Although perceptions of care settings are more similar than different, patterns of care use are distinct. Initial findings suggest factors beyond parental perceptions or preferences for certain care types are playing a strong role in care selection.

Implications for Policy/Practice. Strengthening our understanding of low-income immigrant and LEP parents' child care choices can help policymakers to both accommodate parental preferences and target consumer education to educate parents about the benefits of high-quality care settings. Related to this, we explore how local child care markets shape child care choices (and the care type used), which can inform efforts to build the supply of high-quality child care that respects parental choice and increases access. Finally, we will show how subsidy policies shape subsidy take-up and whether certain subsidy policies encourage use of center-based care, to inform states' efforts in the context of the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization.

Implications for Research. Our analysis of the NSECE points to the richness and utility of these data as well as several methodological challenges. The first is the challenge of identifying households receiving subsidy recipients or that may be subsidy eligible, given data limitations and local variation in subsidy eligibility rules. Second, while this is a study of immigrant families, we recognize how diverse that group is and have tested different definitions of immigrant households (e.g., arrived in the US in the past 5 years; arrived after childhood/age 13). We also look specifically at survey respondents with limited English proficiency (regardless of nativity), assuming language may be a barrier to accessing subsidies and publicly supported early care and education. Our work will inform future data users' efforts and highlight where we may need additional research to expand on our proposed model.

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