

Title: Childcare Provided by Older Immigrant Women: The Effect of Time Since Arrival

Author: Alma Vega, University of Pennsylvania

Abstract

Older adults comprise an increasing share of new legal admits to the United States. While many are financially dependent on their families upon arrival, a more complete picture requires taking into account the non-monetary contributions of this population. Qualitative studies suggest that older adults sometimes travel to the United States from abroad to care for young grandchildren, allowing their adult children to remain in the labor force. Using the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), the present study examines whether recent immigrant status is a significant predictor of the amount of time spent caring for non-own children without remuneration. Results suggest that older recent immigrant women provide more minutes of unpaid childcare per day than native-born women and their more established immigrant counterparts. These results may signal reciprocal supportive networks within immigrant households whereby working-age adults financially support newly arrived immigrant elderly while newly arrived immigrant elderly provide unremunerated childcare for working-age adults.

Introduction

Older adults comprise an increasing share of new legal admits to the United States. The proportion of all immigrants legally admitted to the United States who were aged 50 years and older increased from approximately 11% among those who entered between 1981 to 1985 to 17% among those who entered between 2006 and 2009 (Carr & Tienda, 2013). This development holds important economic implications. Studies show that older immigrants disproportionately consume certain public programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (Smith & Edmonston, 1997), and subsets of these elderly are heavily dependent on their families

upon arrival (Angel, Angel, Lee, & Markides, 1999; Glick & Hook, 2002; Van Hook & Glick, 2007).

A more complete picture, however, requires taking into account the non-monetary contributions of this population. Qualitative studies suggest that older adults sometimes travel internationally to care for young grandchildren, allowing their adult children to remain in the labor force (Toro-Morn, 1995; Treas, 2008; Xie & Xia, 2011; Zhou, 2013). While valuable contributions, these studies are based off of non-representative samples and do not quantify the amount of childcare that is provided. This latter omission is important as the level of childcare reflects its physical and emotional toll and tangibly influences a household budget. The present study contributes to this discussion by granularly examining, in minutes, the amount unpaid childcare provided by recent immigrant women using a nationally representative sample.

Methods

Data

This study employs the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) (Hofferth, Flood, & Sobek, 2013) pooled across the years 2003 to 2013. The ATUS is a nationally representative survey sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on time use among the 15 and older population in the United States. ATUS respondents are selected from a group of households that completed the final months of interviews for the Current Population Survey (CPS). Respondents are interviewed one time two-to-five months after completing the CPS about how they spent their time in the previous day. Their responses on time use are linked to those they provided during the CPS interview.

It is important to acknowledge attrition bias in using this sampling frame. By the time households become eligible for the ATUS, they will have undergone eight CPS interviews and

likely differ from the original CPS households. This is likely especially true for immigrant households which are typically undercounted in national surveys (e.g., Costanzo, Davis, Irazi, Goodkind, & Ramirez, 2002).

Sample

The sample consists of non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Asian and Hispanic women aged 50 years and older who completed the ATUS interview (N=29,629), the main immigrant groups in the United States (Grieco et al., 2012). Other ethnic groups were excluded due to restrictive sample sizes which did not allow for appropriate model diagnostics.

Dependent variables

The dependent variable is the total number of minutes the respondent reported engaging in primary childcare activities while children under 18 were present and secondary activities while having at least one child under 13 under her care in the previous day. Because this study is concerned with informal rather than formal childcare, only unpaid primary childcare activities are included in this definition. This care includes that provided to household and non-household children.

This definition assumes that the presence of a child entails providing care for that child even though both are conceptually distinct (Folbre & Yoon, 2007). Primary childcare activities include providing physical care for children, reading to children, producing arts and crafts with children and other activities through which the respondent directly cared for a child. Secondary childcare activities are those conducted while a child under 13 was under the respondent's care. Including both types of care is important since secondary childcare constitutes a significant portion of all childcare (Folbre & Yoon, 2007). Secondary childcare is captured through a series of questions asking respondents if a child under 13 was under her care while she

performed the activity. Only respondents with a child under 13 in the household are asked about secondary childcare. Children 13 years and older require little supervision (Kimmel, 1998) and secondary care is presumably minimal for this population.

This definition departs from previous definitions of childcare used in the literature. In their comparison of different definitions of childcare, Folbre and Yoon (2007) exclude childcare provided to children between the ages of 13 and 17 since secondary care is not asked for children in this age range, thus barring a direct comparison of primary and secondary care for this age group.

However, primary childcare activities for children aged 13 to 17 are not excluded in the definition of childcare in the present study for two reasons. The first is that it is not possible to determine the age of non-household members who were with the respondent while she performed the activity. Household children are categorized separately according to their relationship with the respondent but non-household children are lumped together under the categories “other non-household family members under 18” and “other non-household children under 18.” As these categories may refer to multiple children, specific ages are not given. The second reason why primary care for children aged 13 to 17 is not excluded is conceptual. While these children may require minimum secondary care, they may still require certain forms of primary care such as travel to receive medical care, school conferences, and attending events in which they participate. For these reasons, primary care for this group is included in the present definition of childcare.

This continuous form of childcare is used to measure the intensity of childcare. A childcare provider is defined as someone who provides at least 30 minutes of care to children who were not her own. Respondents who provide less than this amount (approximately 1.5% of

the sample, not shown) are presumably only minimally affected in their daily lives and may be more likely to provide care only sporadically.

Independent variables

The independent variable of interest is the number of years the respondent had lived in the United States. This question was asked during the CPS interview and is measured by a question asking “When did you come to live in the United States?” Admittedly, this variable is not without limitations. Redstone and Massey (2004) found that the immigrants vary in their interpretation of this question. Some interpret it as soliciting the year in which they first arrived to the United States, others as the year in which they first came to the United States to stay and others as the year in which they first decided to stay in the United States. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind the potential error in this estimation. The CPS provides year of entry into the United States as an interval. These intervals range from ten years for those who entered between 1950 to 1959 to two years for respondents who entered in recent decades. For each respondent, one year within the corresponding interval is randomly chosen and subtracted from the survey year to estimate the number of years since she arrived.

This continuous variable is grouped into two categories (less than and ten or more years of U.S. migration experience) to allow for variation in the experiences of immigrants based on their duration in the United States. The literature describes numerous characteristics on which migrants who have been in the United States a longer time frame differ from their newly-arrived counterparts including employment patterns (Chiswick, Cohen, & Zach, 1997), certain health conditions (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2004) and occupational prestige (Redstone Akresh, 2008). These factors may influence the propensity to care for children. Thus, migrants

with ten years of U.S. residence under their belt are treated as more established immigrants who may behave similar to the native-born given their longer tenure in the United States.

Results

The unadjusted estimates presented on table 1 suggest that recent immigrant women are not more likely to provide unpaid childcare than the native-born and more established immigrants but when they do, they provide *higher levels* of care. As shown on table 1, the vast majority of women in all three groups reported not having provided any unpaid childcare for non-own children in the previous day. However, a higher proportion of recent immigrant women (9.16%) provided four or more hours of childcare compared to non-recent immigrant women (3.40%) and native-born women (2.36%). Among caregivers, i.e., those who provided at least half an hour of care, native-born women cared for non-own children approximately 3.5 hours (207 minutes) in the previous day compared to almost five hours (294 minutes) for non-recent immigrant women and 7.5 hours (450 minutes) for recent immigrant women.

However, numerous factors may account for the propensity for recent immigrant older women to provide more childcare. Table 2 displays striking sociodemographic differences between recent immigrant women, non-recent immigrant women and native-born women. A much higher proportion of native-born women were non-Hispanic White (95.83%) compared to non-recent immigrant women (36.87%) and those who arrived less than 10 year ago (24.21%). Native-born women were also generally older than older women who arrived within the previous ten years. The median age of native-born women was 63 compared to 61 for non-recent immigrant women and 58 for recent immigrant women. Immigrant women were also less educated than native-born women. Only 20.49% of women who arrived within the previous 10 years completed college compared to 21.64% of women who arrived more than ten years ago

and 25.42% of the native-born. Although the marital and employment status and of women from all groups did not differ substantially, pronounced differences existed in family income and other household-level characteristics. Approximately 55.46% of recent immigrant women lived in household at the bottom of the family income distribution for that year compared to 45.06% of non-recent immigrant women and 40.42% of native-born women. This is the case even as the median number of adults over 15, the adults on which family income is based, was highest for recent immigrant women.

Perhaps most importantly, recent immigrant women were more likely to live in a household with at least one child under the age of 13. Approximately 17% of recent immigrant women lived in a household with at least one child under 13, compared to 8.26% of women with over ten years of U.S. migration experience and only 2.86% of native-born women. It is possible that recent immigrant women were simply more exposed to children for whom they could provide care.

Intensity of childcare

Table 3 presents estimates of an Ordinary Least Squares regression of childcare minutes on time since arrival and numerous controls among those who provided at least 30 minutes of care. To conform to OLS assumptions, childcare minutes were expressed in terms of natural logarithm. Results suggest that among childcare providers, i.e., women who provided at least 30 minutes of childcare, women who had been in the United States less than ten years provided 30% more minutes of childcare than native-born older women. Consistent with the descriptive results presented in table 1, recent immigrant women were not more likely to provide but they provided more minutes of care.

Discussion

This study offers new insights into the interaction between childcare and immigration. While immigrants are overrepresented in the formal childcare workforce (Singer, 2012), this article offers quantitative evidence of their participation in the informal childcare workforce. This study finds that recent older immigrant provide higher levels of unpaid childcare to children who are not their own.

Before discussing the policy implications of these findings, it is important to note important limitations of this study. First, it is associational and cannot be interpreted as causal. The results of the present study suggest that older immigrant women who have been in the United States less than 10 years provide more minutes of unpaid childcare than other women, but they do not indicate why. It may be the case that older women enter the United States specifically to care for children, or that they are called upon to care for children because they are recent immigrants. Understanding this mechanism is a worthy future pursuit. Another limitation is that it does not indicate whether migrants are legally present in the United States or if they are undocumented. Migrants with U.S. legal status are more freely able to cross international borders to accommodate childcare requests. An interesting future research question is the effect of U.S. legal status on the provision of childcare. Yet another limitation is the sampling frame of the ATUS. As previously mentioned, after eight rounds of Current Population Survey data collection, ATUS respondents likely differ from non-respondents.

Despite these limitations, the results of the present study add a new dimension to understanding a long-standing trend in the American labor force: immigrants as a solution to the increasing demand for care providers. Among the 15 occupations expected to see the largest numerical growth between 2010 and 2020, four relate to care provision, i.e., home health aides, nursing aides, personal care aides and childcare workers (Singer, 2012). Immigrants are

overrepresented in all of these industries (Singer, 2012). The complex role of immigrants in the childcare workforce received national attention during what the media described as “nannygate” wherein two candidates for United States Attorney General nominated by President Clinton, Zoe Baird (Krauss, 1993) and Kimba Wood (Berke, 1993), both withdrew from consideration after admitting to hiring undocumented immigrants as nannies. The results of the present study illuminate the importance of immigrants in the provision of unpaid informal care, aside from that which they provide with remuneration to the American upper middle-class.

In addition, the present study provides evidence that more intense levels of childcare are concentrated among recent immigrant women in particular. This finding informs the broader debate regarding the economic costs of older recent immigrants to the United States. Current U.S. immigration policy requires that sponsoring families attest that they can financially assist new immigrants who are “likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2009).” This legal declaration does not, however, reflect any direct non-monetary household contributions made by newly admitted older migrants. Though more costly to the economy at the macroeconomic level (Smith & Edmonston, 1997), recently-arrived older immigrant women may provide the unpaid childcare requisite to enabling other household members to remain in the labor force. Studies show that the availability of childcare providers can capacitate other household members keep working (Chevalier & Viitanen, 2002; Powell, 1997; Tienda & Glass, 1985).

Table 1. Childcare provided to non-own children by native- and foreign-born women in the U.S. aged 50 years and older

Years in the U.S.	Natives	Foreign-born	
		10+	0-9
Unweighted <i>N</i>	26,006	3,346	277
No child care (%)	90.46	90.48	84.46
< 1 hour (%)	1.51	1.09	1.54
1-4 hours (%)	5.67	5.03	4.84
4+ hours (%)	2.36	3.4	9.16
Total	100	100	100
Mean minutes of childcare ≥ 30 minutes care (standard error)	206.85 4.16	293.99 15.98	450.11 45.07

Source: Author's calculations using the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). Estimates weighted using

ATUS-provided survey weights.

Table 2. Weighted descriptive statistics of recent and non-recent migrants and native-born women aged 50 years and older in the American Time Use Survey, 2003-2013.

	Natives	Foreign-born	
		10+	0-9
Years in the U.S.			
Unweighted <i>N</i>	26,006	3,346	277
Race (%)			
Non-Hispanic White	95.83	36.87	24.21
Non-Hispanic Asian	0.48	18.74	26.29
Hispanic	3.7	44.39	49.5
Total	100	100	100
Median Age	63	61	58
Completed college (%)	25.24	21.64	20.49
Marital Status (%)			
Married	59.4	60.34	61.57
Widowed	20.5	17.69	17.2
Divorced/Separated	14.9	15.9	16.51
Never married	5.19	6.08	4.72
Total	100	100	100
Employed (%)	43.01	42.53	42.22
Family income (%)			
1 st tertile	40.42	45.06	55.46
2 nd tertile	30.16	28.66	23.9
3 rd tertile	29.43	26.27	20.65
Total	100	100	100
No. of adults 15 and older living in household	2	2	3
Living with 1+ children under 13 (%)	2.86	8.26	16.87
Living with 1+ adult daughter (%)	9.52	18.63	28.3

Source: Author's calculations using the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) pooled across 2003 to 2013. Estimates weighted by ATUS provided survey weights.

Table 3. OLS model predicting ln(minutes) of unpaid childcare to non-own children in the previous day for women aged 50 years and older

	(1) β/(se)
<u>Immigration/Ethnicity</u>	
Native-born	
0-9 years in U.S.	0.3021* (0.1453)
10+ years in U.S.	0.0727 (0.0897)
Non-Hispanic White	
Non-Hispanic Asian	0.1983 (0.1524)
Hispanic	-0.0795 (0.0837)
<u>Individual-level</u>	
Age	-0.0277 (0.0374)
Age^2	0.0002 (0.0003)
Completed college	-0.0357 (0.0573)
Married	
Widowed	-0.0786 (0.0728)
Divorced/Separated	-0.0598 (0.0604)
Never married	-0.1798 (0.1323)
Employed	-0.1392** (0.0480)
<u>Household-level</u>	
Family Income	
2 nd Tertile	-0.0598 (0.0541)
3 rd Tertile	-0.0915 (0.0608)
No. of adults 15+ in household	-0.0598 (0.0608)
No. of adults 15+ in household	-0.0917** (0.0319)
Lives with 1+ child under 13	1.0460*** (0.0634)
Lives with 1+ adult daughter	0.0243 (0.0775)
Constant	5.9396*** (1.1927)
Dummies for Survey Year	Yes
Unweighted N	2230

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Author's calculations using the American Time Use Survey, 2003 to 2013. Estimates weighted using ATUS provided survey weights.

References

- Angel, R. J., Angel, J. L., Lee, G.-Y., & Markides, K. S. (1999). Age at Migration and Family Dependency Among Older Mexican Immigrants: Recent Evidence from the Mexican American EPESE. *The Gerontologist*, 39(1), 59-65. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/geront/39.1.59>
- Berke, R. L. (1993, February 8). Judge Wood Backs White House Stand on What She Told. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/08/us/judge-wood-backs-white-house-stand-on-what-she-told.html>
- Carr, S., & Tienda, M. (2013). Family Sponsorship and Late-Age Immigration in Aging America: Revised and Expanded Estimates of Chained Migration. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 32(6), 825-849. doi: 10.1007/s11113-013-9300-y
- Chevalier, A., & Viitanen, T. K. (2002). The Causality Between Female Labour Force Participation and the Availability of Childcare. *Applied Economics Letters*, 9(14), 915-918.
- Chiswick, B. R., Cohen, Y., & Zach, T. (1997). The Labor Market Status of Immigrants: Effects of the Unemployment Rate at Arrival and Duration of Residence. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 50(2), 289-303.
- Costanzo, J. M., Davis, C., Irazi, C., Goodkind, D., & Ramirez, R. (2002). Evaluating Components of International Migration: The Residual Foreign-Born. Washington, D.C.
- Folbre, N., & Yoon, J. (2007). What is child care? Lessons from Time-Use Surveys of Major English-Speaking Countries. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 5(3), 223-248.
- Glick, J. E., & Hook, J. (2002). Parents' Coresidence with Adult Children: Can Immigration Explain Racial and Ethnic Variation? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(1), 240-253.
- Grieco, E. M., Acosta, Y. D., de la Cruz, G. P., Gambino, C., Gryn, T., Larsen, L. J., . . . Walters, N. P. (2012). The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010. Washington, D.C.
- Hofferth, S., Flood, S. M., & Sobek, M. (2013). American Time Use Survey Data Extract System: Version 2.4 [Machine-readable databased]. Maryland Population Research Center, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. . Retrieved March 8, 2014, from <https://www.atusdata.org/atus/index.shtml>
- Jasso, G., Massey, D. S., Rosenzweig, M. R., & Smith, J. P. (2004). Immigrant Health: Selectivity and Acculturation. In N. B. Anderson, R. A. Bulatao, & B. Cohen (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Differences in Health in Late Life* (pp. 227-266). Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.
- Kimmel, J. (1998). Child Care Costs as a Barrier to Employment for Single and Married Mothers. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 80(2), 287-299.
- Krauss, C. (1993, January 20). The New Presidency: Attorney General; Baird Apologizes to Senate Panel for Illegal Hiring. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/20/us/new-presidency-attorney-general-baird-apologizes-senate-panel-for-illegal-hiring.html>

- Powell, L. M. (1997). The Impact of Child Care Costs on the Labour Supply of Married Mothers: Evidence from Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue canadienne d'Economie*, 30(3), 577-594. doi: 10.2307/136234
- Redstone Akresh, I. (2008). Occupational Trajectories of Legal U.S. Immigrants: Downgrading and Recovery. *Population and Development Review*, 34(3), 435-456.
- Redstone, I., & Massey, D. S. (2004). Coming to Stay: An Analysis of the U.S. Census Question on Immigrants' Year of Arrival. *Demography*, 41(4), 721-728.
- Singer, A. (2012). Immigrant Workers in the U.S. Labor Force. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, .
- Smith, J. P., & Edmonston, B. (1997). *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.
- Tienda, M., & Glass, J. (1985). Household Structure and Labor Force Participation of Black, Hispanic, and White Mothers. *Demography*, 22(3), 381-394.
- Toro-Morn, M. I. (1995). Gender, Class, Family, and Migration: Puerto Rican Women in Chicago. *Gender and Society*, 9(6), 712-726.
- Treas, J. (2008). Transnational Older Adults and Their Families. *Family relations*, 57, 468-478.
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2009). Public Charge. Washington, D.C.
- Van Hook, J., & Glick, J. E. (2007). Immigration and Living Arrangements: Moving Beyond Economic Need Versus Acculturation. *Demography*, 44(2), 225-249.
- Xie, X., & Xia, Y. (2011). Grandparenting in Chinese Immigrant Families. *Marriage and Family Review*, 47, 383-396.
- Zhou, Y. R. (2013). Time, Space and Care: Rethinking Transnational Care from a Temporal Perspective. *Time and Society*. doi: DOI: 10.1177/0961463X13491342