

Choice of Care Among Language Minority Families: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort

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1. Introduction

Previous research shows that most parents choose center-based care for their preschool children. However there is variability in choice of care across different types of families. Parental choice of care is driven by a complex set of factors, most notably demographic characteristics of families such as race/ethnicity, parental employment and other economic factors, family structure, and to some extent family beliefs about child care and child development.

2. Purpose

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort, we examined three research questions:

- To what extent are race/ethnicity, parental citizenship, and other demographic characteristics of families related to language minority status?
- Do language minority groups differ based on their views of child development and school readiness?
- How do language minority status, demographic characteristics, economic factors, and views on child development predict choice of care at preschool?

3. Study Methods

Data Source

This study utilizes data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). The ECLS-B is a nationally-representative, longitudinal study of U.S. children born in 2001 and their families, which follows children from infancy to kindergarten entry. It includes oversamples of specific minority groups (i.e., Chinese and Asian children) for a sufficient number of cases from families that may be more likely to use some language other than English in the home. Data reported here are from the preschool wave of data collection.

Participants

Approximately 8,900 parents participated in the preschool wave of data collection. These analyses focused on a subset of about 8,700 parents who had complete data on each of the variables of interest. Please note: All n's are rounded to the nearest 50. Parents were divided into 4 groups according to language minority status:

- English only (n = ~5,900)
- English primary (may also speak another language at home) (n = ~1,100)
- Non-English primary (may also speak English at home) (n = ~1,300)
- Non-English only (English not spoken at home) (n = ~400)

Measures

These analyses focus on data from the parent interview, as well as the resident and nonresident father questionnaires.

The parent interview was conducted in the child's home and lasted approximately 90 minutes. The parent interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. An interpreter (e.g., either a community or a household member) was used to interview families who spoke other languages. The interview covered a variety of topics, including family sociodemographic characteristics, child care arrangements, parent education and employment, receipt of public assistance and household income, and information about the children's development and the parent's views on school readiness skills.

The resident and nonresident father questionnaires were used to provide information on the father's citizenship status. Questionnaires were either mailed (nonresident father) or dropped off during the home visit (resident father).

4. Results

The results are organized around the three research questions.

- To what extent are race/ethnicity, parental citizenship, and other demographic characteristics of families related to language minority status?
 - As shown in Table 1, household language use was related to all respondent and family demographics and economic factors.
 - More White, non-Hispanic and Black, non-Hispanic families were in the English only group or the English primary group whereas more Hispanic and Asian, non-Hispanic families were in the Non-English primary and Non-English only groups.
 - A higher percentage of families where one parent was not at US citizen were in the Non-English primary and Non-English only groups
 - Families in the Non-English primary and Non-English only groups reported higher percentages of extended family in the home, lower levels of education, and never having been married
 - Likewise, families in the Non-English primary and Non-English only groups were more likely to have only of parent employed and be below the poverty threshold.

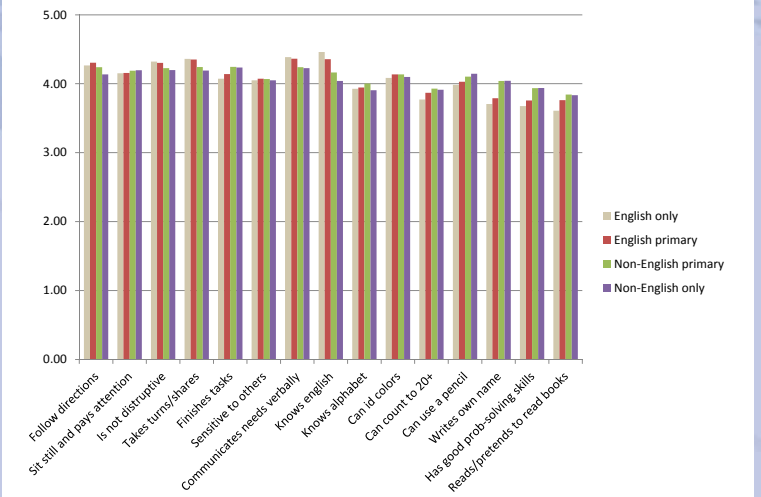
Table 1. Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Families across Four Types of Household Language Use (in Percentages).

	All families N = 8,700	English only N = 5,900	Multilingual English primary N = 1,100	Multilingual Non-English primary N = 1,300	Non-English only N = 400	Chi-square
Respondent gender (female)	99	98	98	99	100	1.99
Respondent race/ethnicity						5162.06***
White, non-Hispanic	58	74	37	9	4	
Black, non-Hispanic	14	18	7	4	1	
Hispanic	22	5	45	74	88	
Asian, non-Hispanic	3	1	7	12	7	
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	
American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	1	1	2	<1	0	
More than one race	2	2	2	<1	0	
Parent citizenship						4832.08***
Missing	5	5	5	7	8	
US citizen(s)	78	94	74	24	6	
1 US citizen, 1 not	8	1	18	32	23	
Non-US citizen(s)	9	<1	3	37	63	
Single parent (yes)	22	23	24	15	13	152.33***
Extended family in home (yes)	18	15	22	26	30	106.90***
Respondent education						611.94***
Less than HS	15	10	13	35	50	
HS or GED	27	28	25	29	24	
Some college	31	35	34	20	13	
Bachelor degree	15	17	15	9	10	
Graduate degree	10	11	13	7	3	
Parental employment						188.02***
Single or two parents – unemployed	6	6	7	6	4	
Single parent – employed	17	18	18	11	10	
Two parents – one employed	30	28	27	40	45	
Two parents – both employed	47	48	47	43	41	
Below poverty threshold (yes)	25	21	20	37	45	58.28***
Respondent English skill (mean [SD])	3.74	4.00	3.96	2.86	1.87	118.12***

- Do language minority groups differ based on their views of child development and school readiness?
 - Families were asked a series of questions about how important it was for their child to demonstrate a variety of school readiness skills before kindergarten entry (1= not at all important to 5 = essential).
 - English only and English primary families were more likely to rate behavioral skills (e.g., following directions, taking turns) higher than Non-English primary and Non-English only families.
 - Non-English primary and Non-English only families rated academic skills as more important (e.g., count to 20, write own name).

4. Results (continued)

Figure 1. Views on school readiness skills by language minority status



- How do language minority status, demographic characteristics, economic, factors and views on child development predict choice of care at preschool?
 - Three multinomial logistic regression models were run to examine choice of care at preschool: (a) language minority status only [base model], (b) all variable of interest [full model], and (3) all variables minus some demographic characteristics [comparison model].

Table 2. Predictors of Choice of Care using Household Language Use, Economic Factors, and Views on Child Development (Full Model minus Demographics).

	No nonparental care ^a B (SE)	Relative care ^a B (SE)	Nonrelative care ^a B (SE)	Combination of care ^a B (SE)
Household language group ^b				
English primary	0.02 (0.11)	0.25 (0.15)	-0.16 (0.21)	0.14 (0.10)
Non English primary	0.01 (0.12)	-0.27 (0.18)	-0.51 (0.25)*	-0.19 (0.13)
Non English only	0.29 (0.16)	-0.27 (0.25)	-0.14 (0.33)	-0.80 (0.22)***
Parent citizenship				
One parent US citizen	0.07 (0.10)	-0.30 (0.16)	0.07 (0.21)	-0.10 (0.11)
Neither parent US citizen	0.33 (0.16)*	-0.65 (0.26)*	0.18 (0.34)	-0.52 (0.20)**
Single parent	-0.21 (0.26)	0.80 (0.59)	1.80 (2.12)	0.12 (0.37)
Extended family or non-relative in home	0.28 (0.08)***	1.01 (0.11)***	-0.23 (0.18)	0.38 (0.08)***
Parental employment				
Single or two parents – unemployed	0.82 (0.22)***	-1.37 (0.54)*	-3.10 (2.06)***	-0.93 (0.32)**
Single parent – employed	-0.29 (0.27)	0.45 (0.59)	-1.56 (2.12)	0.35 (0.36)
Two parents – one employed	1.00 (0.07)***	-1.16 (0.15)***	-1.59 (0.21)***	-1.44 (0.10)***
Below poverty threshold	0.34 (0.08)***	0.18 (0.11)	-0.43 (0.18)*	-0.05 (0.08)
School readiness: Behavior	0.29 (0.10)*	0.29 (0.15)	0.24 (0.19)	0.00 (0.10)
School readiness: Academic	-0.14 (0.07)*	-0.23 (0.11)*	-0.46 (0.13)***	-0.09 (0.07)
Prep for kindergarten	-0.95 (0.07)***	-0.80 (0.10)***	-0.81 (0.11)***	-0.13 (0.08)
Provides sick care	0.30 (0.04)***	0.42 (0.07)***	-0.00 (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)
Close to home	-0.16 (0.06)**	-0.10 (0.09)	-0.50 (0.10)***	-0.03 (0.06)
Cost	0.21 (0.06)***	0.05 (0.10)	0.15 (0.12)	0.05 (0.06)
Small number of children	0.04 (0.06)	0.05 (0.09)	0.23 (0.12)*	-0.10 (0.06)
Caregiver speaks English	-0.17 (0.08)*	-0.44 (0.12)***	-0.84 (0.13)***	-0.31 (0.08)***
Caregiver has flexible hours	0.33 (0.05)***	0.68 (0.10)***	0.57 (0.10)***	0.14 (0.05)**
Caregiver shares beliefs	-0.02 (0.06)	0.14 (0.11)	0.53 (0.14)***	0.24 (0.06)**
Caregiver same race/ethnicity	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.13 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.14 (0.06)*
Caregiver speaks native language	0.10 (0.05)**	-0.02 (0.08)	0.17 (0.10)	0.14 (0.05)**
Caregiver knew child	0.03 (0.05)	1.41 (0.07)***	1.17 (0.08)***	0.81 (0.05)***
Was affiliated with your religion	0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.23 (0.09)*	-0.18 (0.05)**

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

4. Results (continued)

Once respondent demographic characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, English skill) were dropped in the comparison model

- Language minority status
 - English primary families did not differ from English only families in their choice of care
 - Non-English primary families were less likely than English only families to choose non-relative care compared to center-based care only
 - Non-English only families were less likely to use a combination of care settings than English only families
- Citizenship
 - When neither parent was a US citizen, families were more likely to have no non-parental care and less likely to use relative care or a combination of care settings.
- Other family demographics
 - Single parents were less likely to have no non-parental care.
 - Extended family in the home was associated with higher use of no non-parental care, relative care, and a combination of care settings.
 - When single or two parent families were unemployed families were more likely to have no non-parental care and less likely to use all other types of care.
- School readiness skills
 - Families who rated behavior skills higher were to use no non-parental care
 - Families who rated academic skills higher were less likely to use relative and nonrelative care
- Importance of child care characteristics
 - Families who used no non-parental care were more likely to rate sick care, cost, flexible hours, and caregiver speaks native language were most important
 - Families who used nonrelative and relative care were less likely to rate caregiver speaking English as important and that knowing the caregiver was most important

5. Discussion

- Families' household language use is highly related to demographic characteristics
 - In general, families in English only group were more affluent than the other 3 groups
- Non-English primary and Non-English only families were more interested in looking for early care and education settings that focused on academic skills whereas English only and English primary families wanted a behavioral focus.
- Choice of care was driven by household language use, demographic characteristics, economic factors, beliefs about school readiness, and importance of child care characteristics, however the most powerful predictors were
 - Whether there was extended family in the home
 - Parental employment (e.g., if one parent stayed home with child)
 - Preparation for kindergarten

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Presented at: Annual Meeting of the Child Care Policy Research Consortium

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