

**Low-income Latina and African Immigrant Mothers' Experiences  
Selecting and Securing ECCE**

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This study used in-depth interviews to examine the experiences of 40 low-income immigrant mothers (21 Latinas and 19 Africans) as they selected and secured early childhood care and education (ECCE) for their young children. Mothers discussed various aspects of this process including: reasons for seeking ECCE; desired characteristics of ECCE; connections to ECCE; and, obstacles they faced in securing ECCE. African and Latina mothers' experiences were both similar and distinct from each other. In particular, Latina mothers sought ECCE for employment and education (English classes) reasons more often than their African counterparts. To help their children be a part of U.S. society, both Latinas and Africans indicated looking for ECCE programs in which their children could learn English, and interact with children from diverse backgrounds. African mothers tended to utilize close friends and

organizational connections to secure ECCE; Latinas also relied on their social networks, but included both weak and close ties to find ECCE. Finally, Latinas faced greater obstacles than African mothers in relation to documentation of residence. The findings from this study will inform researchers, policymakers, and practitioners of: immigrants' unique ECCE needs related to employment and learning English; immigrant parents' focus on language and diversity of programs; ways to use immigrants' networks to provide these parents and families with information regarding ECCE; and, the unique challenges to enrollment in ECCE immigrant parents face particularly in relation to documentation required by many programs. Finally, this study provides insight into how diverse immigrant groups vary in terms of their ECCE needs and system experiences.

	Total mothers (n=40)	African mothers (n=19)	Latina Mothers (n=21)
<i>Maternal age</i>			
Mean age (in years)	32.25	33.89	30.72
20-29	15	5	10
30-39	18	9	9
40-49	7	5	2
<i>Maternal education</i>			
less than high school	12	5	7
high school	15	8	7
some college	11	5	6
college	2	1	1
<i>Income</i>			
Income less than 100% of federal poverty threshold	40	19	21
<i>Maternal employment</i>			
Full time employment	24	7	17
Part time employment	7	4	3
Not employed	9	8	1
<i>Maternal time in U.S.</i>			
Avg. years	9.08	9.57	8.62
<i>Child characteristics</i>			
Focal child is 1 <sup>st</sup> child	21	11	10
Avg. number of children	2.22	2.42	2.05
<i>Couple relationship</i>			
Married/ Cohabiting	31	16	15
Single	9	3	6