

Balancing Work and Family: The Policy Problems and Opportunities of Child Care and Nonstandard Work Schedules

Project Team: Abby Lane (Scholar) and Cynthia Osborne (Mentor/PI)

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Project Description

This mixed-methods study seeks to deepen our understanding of the implications of nonstandard work schedules (i.e., non-weekday schedules) for work-family balance. The three papers of this dissertation aim to increase our understanding of: (1) the association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress; (2) the role and importance of social, economic, and structural factors driving child care decisions for low-income mothers working nonstandard schedules; and (3) the availability of licensed, center-based child care at nontraditional times for children preschool age and younger in Texas. This study primarily uses quantitative data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) and the Child Care Market Rate Survey (CCMRS) in Texas, as well as qualitative data collected from focus groups and interviews with mothers in a large city in Texas.

Research Questions

Paper 1:

- Is there an association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress?
- Does the strength of any association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress vary by: type of work schedule, relationship status, or family income?
- Does the type of primary child care arrangement moderate any association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress?

Paper 2:

- What factors (social, economic, structural) are important in child care decision making among low-income mothers working nonstandard schedules?
- Does the importance of factors driving child care decisions differ for mothers working irregular schedules or mothers not cohabiting with a romantic

partner compared to other low-income mothers working nonstandard schedules?

- What factors would make center-based child care during nontraditional hours more accessible and appealing to mothers working nonstandard schedules?

Paper 3:

- What is the availability of licensed, center-based child care during nontraditional times for children preschool age and younger in Texas over time?
- How has the provision of nontraditional-hour care by these providers changed over time depending on the: (a) hours of care offered, (b) age of child cared for, (c) accreditation or Texas Rising Star status of the provider, and (d) provider's acceptance of subsidies?
- Across Texas counties, how does the availability of nontraditional-hour care provided by licensed centers vary by demographic indicators of economic vulnerability?

Sample

Paper 1: The two samples for secondary analyses of FFCWS data includes 3,020 mothers in sample 1 and 1,753 mothers in sample 2 (limited to those currently working).

Paper 2: The sample for secondary analyses of FFCWS data includes 656 mothers. Qualitative data were collected from 20 low-income mothers (of young children) who work nonstandard schedules in a large city in Texas.

Paper 3: Secondary analyses of CCMRS data will be drawn from four survey years (2013/2014-2016/2017) and is expected to include approximately 7,200 licensed, center-based care providers. Other data will be drawn from public sources, such as the BLS (Geographic Profile of Employment and

Unemployment, Occupational Employment Survey) and the KIDS COUNT Data Center and limited to Texas counties.

Methods

Paper 1: Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models (using city sample weights) were estimated to measure the association between nonstandard work schedules and mothers' parenting stress. Additional models included interaction terms to test variation by family income, mother's relationship status, and moderation by primary child care arrangement. Two definitions of nonstandard work schedules were used in modeling to test variation by type of work schedule.

Paper 2: First, a series of multinomial regression models using FFCWS data were estimated to test the association of social, economic, and structural factors and mothers' reported primary child care arrangements. Second, focus groups and in-person interviews of mothers were conducted and audio recorded. Guided discussions focused on five themes: child-care decision making factors, child-care preferences vs. arrangements, work and child care, specific concerns for single mothers and mothers working irregular schedules, and the use/availability of center-based care at nontraditional times. Transcripts were coded and analyzed using MAXQDA.

Paper 3: Descriptive analyses will map trends in the supply of licensed, center-based care at nontraditional times in Texas by a number of characteristics identified in the research questions. These data will be compared to demographic indicators of economic vulnerability across the state of Texas.

Progress Update

Data collection is complete for all three papers. Data analysis is complete for papers 1 and 2. Data coding is underway for paper 3. Results from analyses in paper 1 do not suggest evidence of an association between work schedules and maternal parenting stress, even in models using detailed work schedule variables. This paper does not find evidence of variation in an association between work schedules and maternal parenting stress by family income or the mother's relationship status, or moderation by primary child care arrangement. Preliminary results from the quantitative portion of paper 2 suggest several social

and economic factors that are associated with use of different child care arrangements among low-income moms reporting at least one type of nonstandard work schedule. Findings from qualitative data suggest that many low-income mothers of young children included in this study have difficulty balancing work and family, particularly related to child care arrangements. Mothers' opinions on the type of care preferred at nontraditional times was varied, but many expressed that center-based care at these times was difficult to find and access. Additional findings from paper 2 will be presented at the grantee meeting and CCEEPRC.

Implications for Policy/Practice

This study provides valuable information relevant to state and federal policymakers concerned with child care as a work and family support. In particular, policymakers can gain knowledge on how child care may support low-income working mothers, the decision making and preferences of these mothers regarding child care at nontraditional times, and the availability and accessibility of licensed, center-based care at nontraditional times.

Implications for Research

Through mixed methods, this study deepens researchers' understanding of the association of nonstandard work schedules and maternal well-being, the role of child care as a work support, the factors relevant to choosing child care at nontraditional times, and the availability and accessibility of child care at nontraditional times for low-income families with a parent working a nonstandard schedule.

For more information:

"Nonstandard Work Schedules, Maternal Parenting Stress, and the Moderating Role of Child Care" (paper 1) is being prepared for journal submission. Results from qualitative data from "Child Care Preferences and Choices of Mothers Working Nonstandard Schedules" (paper 2) will be presented at CCEEPRC 2019. Draft papers and other materials can be found at abbyclane.com.

Contact

Abby Lane, Ph.D. Candidate
LBJ School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin
abbyclane@utexas.edu, (507) 301-8202