

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Because Care Matters

Care capital and the work/family “dilemma”

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Introduction

Extraordinary technological, demographic, and economic changes in industrialized countries since the 1950s have fundamentally transformed family life and the nature of work (Casper and Bianchi 2002). In today's economy, parents confront numerous challenges in their efforts to balance the demands of work and family. This paper is engaging in the development of the concept of *care capital* – the material, the social, the institutional and other resources that are necessary for the care of children – The aim is to test for systematic variation in availability and impact on how mothers balance childcare and employment in the American context. Care capital will be juxtaposed the classic explanations of mothers' employment participation, namely human capital and economic capital. We hypothesize that care capital—specifically on the provision side factors such as maternal and paternal leaves, flexible hours of work and financial supports and on the 'personal' side the availability of a partner, the proximity of parents and siblings and social support networks—will have a measurable impact on mothers' distribution of paid and unpaid labor.

Theory

Existing evidence suggests that decisions about the integration of work and family are most salient for parents raising young children. Our theoretical model views families as dynamic, reacting to their changed circumstances as demands and resources increase or decrease. Mothers' and families' resources create a life history and a context for agency in which previous experiences and existing resources influence subsequent behaviors. This framework allows us to treat increases in maternal employment as endogenous, the outcome of a process of decision-making that revolves around choices and constraints, rather than as something imposed on households from without. A further strength of our approach is that, by positioning employment and care in the same domain, we avoid setting up a dichotomy or opposition between them. This more holistic view is in tune with available research on everyday life. Rather than separate, decisions and practices around employment and care are closely interwoven in people's lives over the life course and across generations (Brannen, Moss and Mooney 2004). This paper, then, adopts the principles of the life course perspective as a theoretical orientation to the study of mothers (and couples to a lesser extent) as they move from the childless to parent stage of life. Our interest is driven by what Elder (Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003) refer to as social pathways—the pattern of work and family life that women experience as their lives as mothers evolve. We use the life course perspective as the conceptual framework for investigating the life pathways of mothers of infants from the time the child is born until they reach age 4, and differences in those pathways by economic capital, social capital, and care capital. In this study of new mothers, we focus attention on the various configurations of work, childcare, and parenting responsibilities (i.e., if another child is born) at eight six-month intervals beginning when the child is born. These are not independent activity states. We use a second-order hierarchical latent class model that allows us to examine these transitions simultaneously, taking into account their relationships of one another.

We follow Macmillan and Eliason's (2003) model, which posits that all individuals occupy several roles at any one point in time. In this study, this includes employment (not employed, employed part time, employed full time), child care (mother, family member, formal child care), and the parenting of an infant under age 2. We call the totality of roles occupied by mothers at specific intervals after the birth as “child-age-graded role configurations.” These child-age-graded role configurations change over time and the combination of all role configurations that any mother

occupies over time constitute “the postbirth life-paths of mothers.” The structure of these role configurations and life paths combine to constitute the life course of mothers of newborn children. Thus, life path schema embed role configuration schema, which, in turn, embed roles, which, in turn, embed individuals. Moreover, multiple pathways through the lives of the mothers of newborn children characterize the highly differentiated mother, childcare, and work pathways typical of modern societies, including the United States. We expect that mothers will combine their child-age-graded roles in different ways as they become older, and the sequences of these role configurations will also vary by economic capital, human capital, and care capital.

Data

This paper will use a prospective birth cohort study that follow children from birth to preschool age. Birth cohort studies gather remarkably detailed information about the human capital and economic situations of families before and at intervals after the birth of a child, the care capital available to mothers, as well as event histories of the dependent variables measuring mothers’ employment and child care. Birth cohort data are, for the kind of study undertaken here, an untapped resource.

Our data is comes from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), which follows a birth cohort of 14,000 children born in the United States in 2001 (<http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>). The study over-sampled very low birth weight children, in effect providing an over-sample of children with disabilities. The cohort is followed from birth to kindergarten entry, with data collection at 9 months of age (2001/02), 2 years of age (2003), 4 years of age (2005), and kindergarten entry (2006/07). The primary method of data collection was personal interviews with the primary caregiver (typically the mother), with additional self-completed questionnaires for mothers and their partners.

The population for this research includes all mother/child pairs. Whether the mother is partnered or unpartnered, she makes decisions about childcare and employment. The contributions of men to the family economy (through childcare and employment/income) will be incorporated in these models as a time-varying variable. These men include coresidential married fathers, coresidential partners who are not biologically related to the child, noncoresidential biological fathers, and noncoresidential partners of the mothers who are not biologically related to the child. We will include a variable indicating the relationship of the partner to the mother and the child. The birth cohort studies include births of all parities; the statistical models will include a control for the presence of other siblings at birth and their age.

Analytic sample

As mentioned above, the original sample included 14,000 children born in the United States in 2001. Out of these 14,000 children’s primary caregivers (mothers), 10,688 responded to the first wave of the study, which yields a 76% response rate. Out of the 10,688 respondents from wave 1, 9,835 responded to the second wave of the study, - a 92% response rate. In the third wave, 8,941 out of the 9,835 respondents from wave 2 responded, which equals a response rate of 91%.

Dummy variables have been created in order to generate an indication of the sample at a single point in time. Table 1 provides a quick overview of the composition of the sample at the end of wave 1 (9 months). We see that at the at this point in time, 50% of the mothers were out of the labor force, 16% was working part-time (defined as 1-30 hours a week), and 34% was employed in full-time jobs (defined as more than 30 hours a week). The mean age for mothers at this point in time (not at child’s birth) was 28 years. At this point in time, White is by far the most prevalent racial group among the mothers in the sample. 46% of the mothers are White, 16% are Black, 18% are Hispanic and 13% are Asian. Among the children, 49% are female, and 63% of these have siblings present in the household to which they belong. Finally, 78% of the respondents report to have a partner present in their household.

In Table 2 some of the identified indicators of the different capital forms are presented. Economic capital is here operationalized as yearly income. The percentage of respondents in the lowest income category (0-20.000) is declining over the course of the three waves from 27% in wave 1, to 25% at wave 2, and to 21% in the wave 3. However, it should be kept in mind for all of the variables presented in Table 2, that it is not necessarily the same people remaining in each category across waves. Often it is a much more dynamic process of people moving in and out of the possible categories, - as well as out of the study. The percentage of respondents in the two middle categories of income (20.001-35.000 and 35.001-75.000) remains relatively constant in all three waves. With regard to the category of respondents with a yearly income above 75.000, there seem to be an increase over the course of the three waves. At the first wave we find 20% of the respondents in this category, in the second wave this percentage have slightly increased to 22%, and at the third wave we locate 28% of the respondents here.

Human capital is the building up of skills through training and formal education. In Table 2 we have defined human capital as formal education. The category of respondents with less than high school is shrinking during across the three waves. In the first wave it holds 20% of the respondents, in the second wave 17%, and in the third wave 15%. Throughout the three waves, the majority of respondents have more education than high school. In wave 1 this category accounts for 51% of the respondents, in wave 2 this number is 53%, and in wave 3 it has increased to contain 58% of the respondents.

The concept of care capital is defined as the material, social, institutional and other resources that are necessary for the care of children. Table 2 provides examples of each of these types of resources in our analytical sample. We see that 45% of the respondents states that they took maternity leave, and 24% report to have flexible working hours available at the end of wave 1. 5% reports have received financial help with care in wave1, and in wave 2 6% reports to have received such. With regard to having received help from a relative on a regular basis in caring for the child, 8% answers yes in wave 1, and in wave 2 only 3% states that this is the case. Finally, 12% of the respondents have received support from their surrounding community in form of help or advice with parenting.

Method

We will exploit the panel designs of the ECLS-B, and the retrospective fertility, employment, and child care histories collected at each interview to estimate mothers' employment transitions and use of non-parental childcare for individual mothers at eight six month intervals, beginning at birth. We will use the Latent Gold software to run a second-order hierarchical latent class model with a set of latent variables capturing the within-age role configurations and a latent variable capturing the across child-age life path schema. The latent life path model partitions the within and across age association among the full set of observed role indicators into (1) a set of age-specific latent role configurations that capture the within-age association among the observed role indicators and (2) a latent life path variable capturing the across-age association among the observed role indicators. This model estimates conditional probabilities showing the degree to which each observed role (e.g., employment pattern, child care arrangement, and mother of a child under age 2) is embedded in, or constituent of, each child-age-graded latent role configuration, and also the degree to which each latent role configuration is embedded in each latent life path. The model is estimated in a single stage using a nonparametric multilevel latent class specification.

At this point, we are still preparing the ECLS-B data files for analysis. We have completed identifying the indicators of economic capital, human capital, and care capital at each survey wave. We also have measures of mother's fertility, employment, and child care behaviors at six-month intervals. We have successfully applied the proposed statistical model to the study of five indicators marking the life pathways of adolescents from age 12 to 24. We therefore are confident that a completed draft of this paper will be available by mid-February.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of sample at the end of wave 1

(N=10.688)	Range	% or Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>Mothers Employment</i>			
Out of labor force	0-1	50	-
Part-time work (1-30 hours/week)	0-1	16	-
Full-time work (>30 hours/week)	0-1	34	-
<i>Demographics</i>			
Mothers age	15-65	28	6.4
<i>Mothers race</i>			
White	0-1	46	-
Black	0-1	16	-
Hispanic	0-1	18	-
Asian	0-1	13	-
Female children in Sample	0-1	49	-
<i>Household Composition</i>			
Partner present	0-1	78	-
Sibling(s) present	0-1	63	-

Table 2: Available capital forms for mothers at the end of each wave, percentages

Wave :	<u>1 (9 Months)</u>	<u>2 (2 years)</u>	<u>3 (Pre-school)</u>
N :	10.688	9.835	8.941
<i>Economic capital (family)</i>			
<i>Income</i>			
0 - 20.000	27	25	21
20.001 – 35.000	23	21	20
35.001 – 75.000	30	32	31
> 75.000	20	22	28
<i>Human capital (mother)</i>			
<i>Education</i>			
< High School	20	17	15
High School	29	30	27
> High School	51	53	58
<i>Care capital (mother / family)</i>			
Maternal leave ^I	45	-	-
Flexible work hours ^I	24	-	-
Financial help with care ^M	5	6	-
Regular help from relatives ^S	8	3	-
Support from community ^S	12	6	-

I = Institutional resource			
M = Material resource			
S = Social resource			