

**Caring for
Children of Color**
*The Child Care Patterns
of White, Black, and
Hispanic Children
under 5*

Jeffrey Capizzano
Teaching Strategies, Inc.
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Occasional Paper Number 72



Assessing
the New
Federalism
*An Urban Institute
Program to Assess
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Executive Summary

Studies that focus on parental child care decisions have uncovered several important patterns relevant to child care policy. These studies find that the age of the child, family income, maternal education, and numerous other child and family characteristics are related to parental child care choices. Most of these studies, however, focus only on the national population of children and do not examine whether the patterns hold for subgroups. Subgroup analyses are important because the focus on children nationally may mask markedly different patterns among specific groups of children—patterns that may have important policy implications.

One strand of subgroup analysis involves the study of child care patterns of different racial and ethnic groups. While past research has found that white, black, and Hispanic children are, on average, placed in different forms of care, what is less clear are the factors associated with these differences and whether documented national patterns of child care behavior hold among white, black, and Hispanic children separately. Given that white children make up a sizeable majority of the under-5 population, they may be driving the national child care patterns, masking different patterns among black and Hispanic children. To look more closely at these issues among children under 5 in families where each parent present in the family is employed, this paper attempts to answer two questions:

1. Do the national child care patterns found in past research, such as those by age or income, hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately?
2. Do differences in the types of child care used by white, black, and Hispanic children persist when examining specific groups of children, such as low-income children or children of single parents?

Data and Methods

This report uses combined 1997 and 1999 data from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) to investigate the child care patterns of white, black, and Hispanic children. It examines the child care patterns of non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic children under 5 years old. Because of the particular challenges facing employed parents, the analysis is limited to children in families where each parent present in the family is employed at least part-time.

The report examines the child's primary child care arrangement, defined as the type of child care used for the most hours while the primary caretaker is working. The types of nonparental care examined are center-based arrangements (a child care center, Head Start, nursery school, preschool, prekindergarten, or before- and after-school program), family child care (care by a nonrelative in the provider's



home), nanny/baby-sitter care (care by a nonrelative in the child's home), relative care (care by a relative inside or outside the child's home), and parent/other care (when the primary caretaker did not report using any regular child care arrangement while he or she worked). In addition to the primary child care arrangement, the report examines the percentage of children in care for 35 hours or more a week.

In the body of the report, the child care patterns of white, black, and Hispanic children are examined across eight important child and family characteristics:

- child age,
- family structure (i.e., whether the child lives in a single-parent or two-parent family),
- family income,
- education level of the child's primary caretaker,
- work schedule of the child's primary caretaker,
- "parental availability," which measures the amount of time parents have to care for their children by looking simultaneously at family structure and employment,
- the presence of an unemployed nonparental relative in the household, and
- the region of the country in which the child lives.

Among children younger than 5 nationally, past research has shown each of these characteristics relates to the use of different child care arrangements or the time spent in care. For example, 3- and 4-year-old children nationally are more likely to be placed in center-based care and less likely to be in relative or parent care than children younger than 3. This paper examines whether these patterns hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately. It also examines whether differences in the characteristics of white, black, and Hispanic children help explain differences in child care use across these three groups.

Cross-tabulations are used to examine the relationship between these characteristics and the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children. In the most obvious cases, control variables are included in an attempt to isolate the independent influence of highly correlated variables (e.g., income and education). This more straightforward approach is used, rather than a multivariate approach, to make the paper accessible to a broad audience and to allow the reader to reference statistics on the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children in various demographic and economic circumstances.

Findings

Five major findings emerge when examining the child care patterns of white, black, and Hispanic children.

Finding 1: A large majority of white, black, and Hispanic children under 5 in families where each parent present in the family works is in some form of nonparental child care.

Black children younger than 5 are the most likely of the three groups to be in a nonparental child care arrangement (87 percent, or roughly 1.4 million children). Eighty-one percent of white children—roughly 5.3 million children—are regularly in a nonparental child care arrangement each week and 80 percent of Hispanic children (roughly 1.1 million children) are regularly in nonparental care.

Finding 2: While children from each racial and ethnic group are found in each form of nonparental child care, white, black, and Hispanic children under 5 differ in the extent to which they are placed in the various forms of care.

Black children are far more likely than white or Hispanic children to have center-based care as their primary child care arrangement (44 percent). Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center-based care (20 percent), while the percentage of white children falls directly in between these two groups (32 percent). Hispanic children are much more likely (40 percent) than black (28 percent) or white children (24 percent) to be in the care of relatives as their primary child care arrangement. Black children are significantly less likely to be in parent/other care than white and Hispanic children. Only 12 percent of black children are in this category, compared with 20 percent of white children and 19 percent of Hispanic children.

Finding 3: White, black, and Hispanic children are placed in nonparental child care for different amounts of time.

In addition to being more likely to be in nonparental child care, black children spend significantly more time in child care than their white or Hispanic counterparts. Sixty-four percent of black children spend at least 35 hours a week in nonparental child care, compared with only 43 percent of Hispanic children and 40 percent of white children.

Finding 4: White children appear to drive national child care patterns, often masking different patterns among black children and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic children.

When examining whether white, black, and Hispanic children follow the national patterns associated with each child and family characteristic examined here, we find that only white children follow these patterns in every case. In contrast, black children follow the national patterns only about half the time. For example, among children nationally, increases in family income and the education level of the child's primary caretaker are related to the increased use of center-based care and decreased use of relative and parent care. These patterns, however, do not hold among black

children. The use of center-based care is high among black children regardless of family income and primary caretaker education.

Hispanic children tend to follow the national patterns more closely, with at least one notable exception. While the child care arrangements of children in single-parent families tend to look much different from those of children in two-parent families nationally, this is not true among Hispanic children.

Finding 5: Certain differences in the characteristics of white, black, and Hispanic children help us understand why child care arrangements vary among the three groups. However, many important differences appear not to help us understand why this variation exists.

While white, black, and Hispanic children come from families with vastly different characteristics, only some of the differences examined here contribute to our understanding of why the three groups use different forms of care. Characteristics related to family structure, parental availability, relatives living in the household, and region appear to explain at least some of the differences in child care use among the three groups. For example, white and black children (but not Hispanic children) with single parents who work full-time look very similar in their use of child care arrangements and in the amount of time they spend in care.

However, some important characteristics that one might expect to explain differences in child care use do not. For example, differences in income among white, black, and Hispanic families do not appear to explain the differences in their use of center-based care. Even when examining low-income children separately, black children are significantly more likely to be in center-based care than white or Hispanic children. Indeed, black children are more likely than the other groups to be in center-based care across most categories of children examined. The same can be said for the low use of center-based care and the high use of relative care among Hispanic children: these findings persist regardless of the child or family characteristic examined. It will be important, however, to examine these characteristics within a multivariate framework.

Policy Implications

The findings in this paper have important implications. Large percentages of children in each group are in some form of nonparental care regularly each week. This fact underscores the importance of child care in the lives of all of America's children and reinforces the need for policymakers to pay close attention to child care-related issues. Indeed, despite different patterns across the groups, children of each race and ethnicity are in every form of care.

Accordingly, the growing policy concern about school readiness and child development means policymakers must continue to focus on addressing concerns of quality in all forms of care. This is true whether we are talking about supporting the

quality of centers, where the greatest proportion of black children in our study are placed, or relatives, the most likely arrangement for Hispanic children.

Finally, given only some of the family characteristics examined here help us understand the differences in the child care arrangements used by white, black, and Hispanic children, it is important to examine other factors that might play a role. These factors may include differences in child care preferences across the groups as well as differences in the constraints they may face (e.g., the inadequate supply of certain forms of care in specific communities). As such, policymakers must continue to focus on ensuring that parents of every racial and ethnic group have real parental choice by seeking to understand and address such issues as the costs of child care, the supply and quality of child care, and language and cultural barriers that can keep parents from choosing the forms of care they prefer.

Caring for Children of Color

The Child Care Patterns of White, Black, and Hispanic Children under 5

Child care functions as both a work support for parents and an environment in which young children are cared for and educated before entering school. This dual role means the care arrangements used for young children can affect not only a parent's ability to work, but also a child's social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. Given the importance of child care arrangements in the lives of parents and children, researchers and policymakers take a keen interest in the types of care that parents use and the factors that influence the use of different types of care.

Studies that focus on parental child care decisions have uncovered important patterns relevant to child care policy. For example, among children younger than 5, age plays an important role in the types of care used, with 3- and 4-year-olds much more likely to be in center-based care than children younger than 3 (see, e.g., Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000). In addition, across most studies, higher family incomes have been associated with a greater likelihood that children will be in center-based and paid child care (Capizzano and Adams 2004; Burstein and Hiller 1999). Higher levels of maternal education have also been associated with the use of center-based and paid care, even after controlling for income and maternal employment (see, e.g., Fuller, Holloway, and Liang 1996).

For the most part, researchers have documented child care patterns like these using samples that are generalizable to the national population of children. Relatively few studies have examined whether the child care patterns found in this research hold for different groups of children, despite the fact that focusing on children nationwide may mask markedly different patterns among subgroups of policy interest. Given evidence that the child care patterns of subgroups can differ from national patterns (Fuller, Eggers-Piérola, et al. 1996), it seems important that researchers begin to look closely at subgroups of substantive interest.

One important strand of subgroup analysis involves studying the child care patterns of different racial and ethnic groups. Past research comparing the child care patterns of white, black, and Hispanic children has revealed large differences in the types of arrangements used by the three groups. Black children are significantly more likely to be placed in center-based care than white and Hispanic children, while Hispanic children are more likely to be placed in the care of relatives (see, e.g., Ehrle, Adams, and Tout 2001; Hofferth et al. 1991). Moreover, at least one study has found that some generally accepted patterns of child care behavior do not hold for minority populations. While an increase in family income is generally associated with the increased likelihood of using center-based care, this pattern plays out differently among white, black, and Hispanic children (Fuller, Holloway, et al. 1996).



The fact that child care patterns may differ among white, black, and Hispanic children has important implications for child care research. Because white children make up a sizeable majority of the population of children younger than 5 (63 percent), they may drive national child care patterns.¹ The national patterns, therefore, may not accurately reflect the dynamics of child care use among black and Hispanic families. Given that white, black, and Hispanic families use different types of care for their children, and that the relationship between population characteristics and child care use can differ among the groups, it is important to look at the child care patterns of each racial and ethnic group separately.

This paper investigates child care patterns uncovered in past research to determine whether they hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately or if these subgroups exhibit patterns that differ from the patterns for children nationally. Unlike previous research on this topic, this paper takes a significantly more detailed look at the child care patterns of white, black, and Hispanic children across different economic, family, and work situations.

Examining the Child Care Patterns of White, Black, and Hispanic Children

This report examines the child care patterns of non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic children under 5 years old.² Because of the particular challenges facing employed parents, the analysis is limited to children in families where each parent present in the family is employed at least part-time. Throughout the paper, we refer to these children as “children in families with working resident parents.” (Note this definition differs from what has been used in past Urban Institute child care papers.)³

Because white, black, and Hispanic families vary dramatically in ways that may affect child care patterns, we begin by examining the major demographic and socioeconomic differences among the three groups. We first document differences across the three groups in employment patterns, which indicate how many families in each racial and ethnic group fall into the sample studied in this paper. We then examine several socioeconomic differences among white, black, and Hispanic children in families where each resident parent works, including differences in family structure, family income, primary caretaker education, primary caretaker work schedule, parental availability, the presence of nonparental relatives in the household, and region of the county in which the child lives. This examination provides a context in which to understand how differences in population characteristics may help explain some of the child care arrangements used by the three groups.

In the body of the paper, we investigate the child care patterns of each group. Two aspects of child care are examined—the *primary child care arrangement* and the *percentage of children in full-time care* (35 or more hours a week). We start by examining these two aspects of care for all white, black, and Hispanic children in our study, and identify four key differences in the child care patterns of the racial and ethnic groups.

We then examine the arrangement and time-in-care patterns by different family and child characteristics, including the age of the child, family structure, family income, the education and work schedule of the child’s primary caretaker, and the amount of time the parents have “available” to care for the child.

The examination aims to understand whether accepted patterns of child care hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately and to see whether the differences among the groups become smaller or disappear when we compare the groups within the categories of a certain characteristic. Looking at the data in this way, the analyses are designed to investigate two questions:

1. Do the national patterns found in past research hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately?

To answer this question, we begin each section by briefly reviewing the relationship past research has found between the focal characteristic (e.g., age) and the arrangements used and the time spent in care among children nationally. We then examine differences in child care use *across the categories of the focal characteristic* for each racial and ethnic group to see if the patterns hold. For example, among children nationally, research finds that 3- and 4-year-olds are more likely to be in center-based care than children younger than 3. Do we see this pattern among black children as they get older? Is this pattern true among Hispanic children?

2. Do the differences among white, black, and Hispanic children nationally still exist when we examine each category of the focal characteristic separately (e.g., low-income/higher-income, single-parent/two-parent)?

For this question we look at whether the racial and ethnic differences observed for all children younger than 5 hold when examining *within each category of the focal characteristic*. For example, while we know black children overall are more likely to be in center-based care than white or Hispanic children, is this finding true among black children younger than 3? Is it true among black 3- and 4-year-olds?

The paper concludes by summarizing the findings and discussing potential implications.

Data and Methods

To analyze the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children under 5, we created a data set that combines data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF) to ensure an adequate sample size for each group.⁴ In both years, the NSAF gathered child care information on a nationally representative sample of children under 5, as well as on representative samples of children in 13 states.⁵ Information about the types of arrangements used and the hours the child spent in each form of care was obtained from the adult in the household who was most knowledgeable about the child. While the most knowledgeable adult (MKA) could be any member of the household, the mother was the respondent for 80 percent of the sample, and the father was the respondent for another 17 percent.⁶ These respondents are referred to as the child’s “primary caretaker” throughout the paper.



We examine the child’s primary child care arrangement, which is the arrangement in which the child spent the most hours while the primary caretaker worked. To be counted as a child care arrangement, the arrangement had to be used regularly, defined as at least once a week during the past month. We grouped the primary child care arrangements into the following categories:

- **Center-based care**, which includes care in a child care center, nursery school, preschool, prekindergarten program, Head Start program, or before- and after-school program.
- **Family child care**, which is child care by a nonrelative in the provider’s home.
- **Baby-sitter or nanny care**, which is care by a nonrelative *inside* the child’s home.
- **Relative care**, which is care by a relative either inside or outside the child’s home.
- **Parent/other care**, which includes primary caretakers who did not report any regular child care arrangement while they worked. The category includes children whose parents arrange their work schedules to avoid the use of nonparental child care, parents who bring their children to work with them, and parents who may patch together child care arrangements in a way that does not meet the survey’s definition of “regular.”

Understanding the Data

It is important to keep several issues in mind when considering the data presented in this paper. First, these data show the primary child care arrangements of children and do not measure the quality of any arrangements used. Each arrangement examined can range broadly in quality, so it is important not to assume any form of care is an inherently better environment for a child than any other.

Second, the estimates presented in this paper show the types of care in which white, black, and Hispanic children are placed; they do not indicate *why* children are placed in these arrangements. The extent to which these findings reflect parental *preferences* (i.e., parents choosing the care option they desire) or *constraints* (i.e., parents having no other option but a specific form of care) cannot be discerned here.

Third, the universe for this paper is limited to families where each parent present in the family works at least part-time. This universe was selected because of our specific focus on the challenges facing working families, and to control for the large differences in employment patterns across the three racial and ethnic groups. Because these patterns differ dramatically, looking at children regardless of parental employment would yield different estimates of child care use (see appendix A).

Fourth, while we will highlight a number of different child care patterns, it is important not to assume a causal connection between any given characteristic and child care use. Only with more sophisticated methodological techniques can such causal connections be made.⁷

Finally, these data focus on the child care arrangements of young children during the school year and are not intended to represent summer child care arrangements.

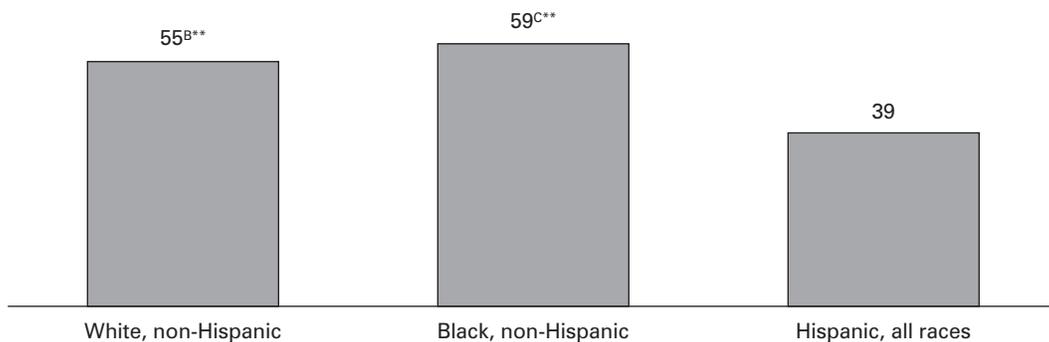
Research has shown the child care arrangements of children under 5 can change significantly during the summer months (Capizzano, Adelman, and Stagner 2002). Thus, an analysis of similar patterns during the summer may yield different results.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Families

A number of parent and child characteristics influence both the decision to use non-parental child care and the type of care used. Parental employment patterns, family structure, the ability to afford different child care arrangements, work schedules, the amount of time parents have available to care for their children, the presence of nonparental relatives in the household, and the region of the country in which the family lives are some of the characteristics associated with the use of different forms of care.⁸ White, black, and Hispanic families vary in these characteristics. Therefore, before discussing the child care patterns, these major differences should be documented in order to understand the possible roles they play in the child care usage patterns of the three groups.

Among children overall, the share of children in families where each resident parent works differs across the three groups (figure 1). Hispanic children are less likely than either white or black children to live in families where each parent present in the family works. While 55 percent of white children and 59 percent of black children live in such households, only 39 percent of Hispanic children do. The smaller percentage of Hispanic children living in families where each parent present works reflects that a large percentage of Hispanic children lives in two-parent families where only one parent works. As a result, the findings in this paper reflect the patterns of a minority of Hispanic children. (See appendix A for an analysis of the child care arrangements of all Hispanic children.)

Figure 1. White, Black and Hispanic Children under 5 in Families Where Each Resident Parent Works at Least Part-Time (percent)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families.

B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children. **Difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Even looking only at children in families where each resident parent works, we find white, black, and Hispanic children live in families with vastly different characteristics. These families, on average, differ in their family structures, income levels, education levels, work schedules, parental availability, how often nonparental relatives live in the household, and the region in which they live (table 1).

White and Hispanic children under 5 in our study are much more likely than black children to live in two-parent families. Eighty-five percent of white children and 71 percent of Hispanic children live in two-parent families, compared with only 43 percent of black children.

Table 1. Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of White, Black, and Hispanic Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Marital status of primary caretaker			
Married or cohabiting	85 ^{A**B**}	43 ^{C**}	71
Single (never married, separated, widowed, divorced)	15	57	29
Family income as a percentage of federal poverty level (FPL)			
Less than 100% of FPL	8 ^{A**B**}	24	21
Between 100% and 200% of FPL	17 ^{A**B**}	26 ^{C**}	33
Between 200% and 300% of FPL	20 ^{A*}	24 ^{C*}	19
Above 300% of FPL	57 ^{A**B**}	26	27
Education level of primary caretaker			
Less than high school	4 ^{A**B**}	9 ^{C**}	23
High school	61 ^{A**}	74 ^{C**}	62
College/advanced degree	35 ^{A**B**}	17	15
Work schedule of primary caretaker			
Between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM	80 ^{A**B**}	71	73
After 6:00 PM	20	29	27
Parental availability			
Single parent, full-time	11 ^{A**B**}	45 ^{C**}	22
Two parents, full-time	47 ^{A**}	31 ^{C**}	44
Single parent, part-time	4 ^{A**B**}	13 ^{C**}	7
Two parents, partial employment ^a	39 ^{A**B**}	12 ^{C**}	27
Available nonparental relatives in household^b			
Yes	5 ^{A**B**}	19	16
No	95	81	84
Region			
Northeast	21	15	16
Midwest	29	24	7
South	33	55	30
West	17	6	46

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. "Working resident parents" is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

^aTwo-parent families with partial employment are those where one or both parents work part-time.

^bAn available nonparental relative is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, or other relative who is at least 18 years old, lives in the household, and has not worked for pay in the past year.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Black and Hispanic children under 5 in our study share several characteristics that differ from white children. For example, black and Hispanic children on average live in families with significantly lower incomes than white children. While only 8 percent of white children in our study live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, 24 percent of black children and 21 percent of Hispanic children live in poor families. Black and Hispanic children are also more likely than white children to live in households with an unemployed nonparental relative, who may be able to provide care for children in the household. Nineteen percent of black children and 16 percent of Hispanic children live in households with a nonworking adult relative, compared with 5 percent of white children.

Further, the primary caretakers of black and Hispanic children under 5 differ from those of white children under 5. Black and Hispanic children live with primary caretakers who have less formal schooling than the primary caretakers of white children. While 35 percent of white children under 5 have a primary caretaker with a college degree, only 17 percent of black children and 15 percent of Hispanic children have a primary caretaker with this level of education. In addition, Hispanic and black children in our study are more likely than white children to have a primary caretaker who works primarily after 6:00 PM. Twenty-nine percent of black children and 27 percent of Hispanic children have a primary caretaker who works “nontraditional” hours, compared with 20 percent of white children.

Black children are the most likely of the three groups to live in families with the least amount of parental time available to care for children. Seventy-six percent of black children under 5 live in households where either a single parent works full-time or two parents both work full-time, compared with 66 percent of Hispanic children and 58 percent of white children.

Black and Hispanic children under 5 are concentrated within certain regions of the country. Hispanic children are more likely to live in the West (46 percent) than in other regions, while black children are most highly concentrated in the South (55 percent). White children, in contrast, are fairly evenly distributed across all regions of the country.

These demographic and socioeconomic differences among children in white, black, and Hispanic families could explain at least some of the variation in the child care arrangements among the three groups. Therefore, in each section of the paper, we investigate, to the extent possible, how each difference plays a role in the different child care arrangements used by white, black, and Hispanic families.

Child Care Patterns of White, Black, and Hispanic Children under 5 in Families Where Each Resident Parent Works

Before examining whether the child care patterns found in past research hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately, it is important to recognize that a large majority of children from each group is in some form of nonparental care.

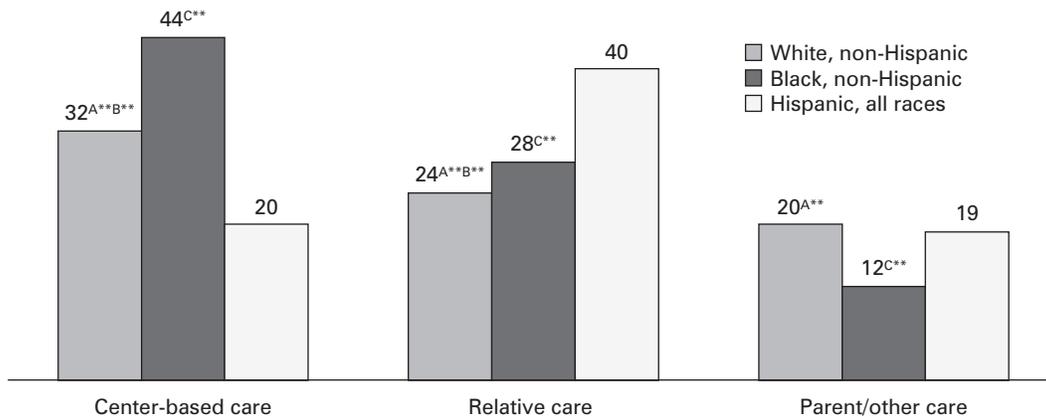


Black children in our study are the most likely of the three groups to be in a non-parental child care arrangement (87 percent, or roughly 1.4 million children). Eighty-one percent of white children (roughly 5.3 million children) are regularly in a nonparental child care arrangement and 80 percent of Hispanic children (roughly 1.1 million children) are regularly in nonparental care.

White, black, and Hispanic children are placed in different forms of care and spend varying amounts of time in care (figures 2 and 3). Four major differences emerge when comparing the child care arrangements used by these three groups and the time children spend in care. Throughout the paper, we will examine these four differences to see if they continue to hold when studying specific categories of children:

- Black children in families where each resident parent works are far more likely than white or Hispanic children to use center-based care as their primary child care arrangement (44 percent, as shown in figure 2). Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center-based care (20 percent), while white children fall directly in between these two groups (32 percent).
- Hispanic children in families where each resident parent works are much more likely to be in the care of relatives as their primary child care arrangement (40 percent) than black (28 percent) or white children (24 percent).
- Black children are significantly less likely to be in parent/other care than white or Hispanic children. Only 12 percent of black children are in this category, compared with 20 percent of white children and 19 percent of Hispanic children.

Figure 2. Primary Child Care Arrangements among White, Black, and Hispanic Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents (percent)

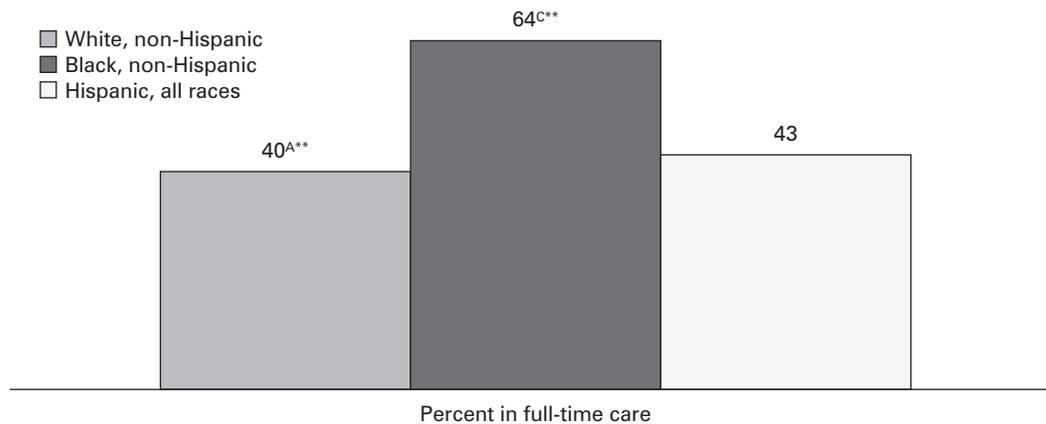


Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because family child care and baby-sitter/nanny care are not shown. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. "Working resident parents" is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children. **Difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Figure 3. Time Spent in Care among White, Black, and Hispanic Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents (percent)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families.

Note: "Working resident parents" is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

A = significant difference between white and black children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children. **Difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

- In addition to being more likely to be in nonparental child care, black children spend significantly more time in care than their white or Hispanic counterparts (figure 3). Sixty-four percent of black children in families where each resident parent works spend at least 35 hours a week in nonparental child care, compared with only 43 percent of Hispanic children and 40 percent of white children.

In addition to the four differences described above, another point is important to keep in mind throughout the paper. Given the white population is significantly larger than the black and Hispanic populations, a larger *percentage* of children in one form of care does not necessarily mean more *children* are in that form of care. For example, while black children have the largest percentage of children in center-based care, there are close to three times as many white children in center-based care as black children.

Patterns by Age of the Child

Prior research has found the child care arrangements of children under 5 vary substantially by the age of the child. Children of different ages have different developmental needs, and center-based care is generally more readily available for 3- and 4-year-olds than for younger children. Not surprisingly, then, as children grow older, the use of center-based care increases and the use of relative and parent care declines (see, e.g., Smith 2002). In contrast, little difference has been found in the amount of time younger and older preschool children spend in child care (see, e.g., Capizzano, Adams, et al. 2000).

Given the current policy emphasis on school-readiness and the growing interest in ensuring that 3- and 4-year-old children can access group settings that help prepare them for school, it is important to examine whether these age patterns hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately.

Do the Age Patterns Hold for White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

When examining the age pattern for each racial and ethnic group, we find 3- and 4-year-old white children are more likely to be in center-based care than their younger counterparts and are less likely to be in relative care and parent/other care, similar to the national pattern. Moreover, the amount of time white children spend in care follows the national pattern: a similar share of younger and older white children is in full-time care.

Older black children are also more likely to be in center-based care and less likely to be in relative care and parent/other care than younger black children. However, unlike children nationally, a larger share of black 3- and 4-year-olds apparently is in care for 35 hours or more a week than their younger counterparts. This difference, however, is not statistically significant.

Similar to the national pattern, Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are over 2.5 times as likely to be in center-based care than younger Hispanic children, and are less likely to be in relative care or parent/other care. Like the national pattern, there is little difference in the share of younger and older Hispanic children in full-time care.

As children grow older, parents of children in all three racial and ethnic groups increasingly place their children in center-based care and use relative care and parent/other care less often. Interestingly, we find the greatest *percentage* increase in the use of center-based care among Hispanic children; this sharp increase is largely due to very small proportion of younger Hispanic children in this form of care to begin with (12 percent). As discussed in the next section, however, despite the large increase in the use of center-based care as children grow older, Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are still significantly less likely to be in center-based care than black or white children.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Younger and Older Children Are Examined Separately?

Differences among white, black, and Hispanic children hold regardless of the age of the child (table 2).

Use of center-based care: Black children in both age groups are significantly more likely than white or Hispanic children to be in center-based care. Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center-based care in each age group. These differences are most pronounced among 3- and 4-year-olds: sixty percent of black 3- and 4-year-olds are in center-based care, compared with 45 percent of white and 32 percent of Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds.

Table 2. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Child’s Age and Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Children under 3			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	23^{A**B**}	32^{C**}	12
Family	19 ^{B**}	17	14
Nanny/baby-sitter	7 ^{A**}	3 ^{C*}	6
Relative	27^{A*B**}	33^{C**}	48
Parent/other care	24^{A**}	16	21
Children in full-time care	38	59	41
3- and 4-year-old children			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	45^{A**B**}	60^{C**}	32
Family	16 ^{A**}	8 ^{C**}	16
Nanny/baby-sitter	6 ^{A**}	2 ^{C*}	5
Relative	19^{B**}	22^{C*}	31
Parent/other care	15^{A**}	8^{C**}	16
Children in full-time care	43	71	45

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. Numbers in **bold** indicate a statistically significant difference between younger and older children within each racial and ethnic group at the $p < 0.10$ level.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Use of relative care: In both age groups, Hispanic children are more likely than white or black children to be in relative care. The difference among the three groups is somewhat larger among children younger than 3. Forty-eight percent of Hispanic children under 3 are in relative care, followed by 33 percent of black children and 27 percent of white children.

Use of parent/other care: Among both younger and older children, black children are the least likely of the three groups to be in parent/other care. Even among children younger than 3, only 16 percent of black children are in this category, compared with 24 percent of white children and 21 percent of Hispanic children.

Percentage in full-time care: Younger and older black children also appear to spend significantly more time in care than other children, although the large differences observed here are not statistically significant. The largest difference observed is among 3- and 4-year-olds: seventy-one percent of black children are in full-time care, compared with 43 percent of white children and 45 percent of Hispanic children.

These findings indicate that despite the dramatic increase in the use of center-based care as children grow older, racial and ethnic differences in the use of this form of care remain for both younger and older children. While the differences are true regardless of age, they are most pronounced among 3- and 4-year-old children.



Patterns by Family Structure

One potential reason for the dramatic overall differences in the use of nonparental child care among white, black, and Hispanic children may be the different percentages of children living in single- and two-parent families. Not surprisingly, prior research finds children under 5 in single-parent working families are much less likely to be in parent care than children in two-parent families (Hofferth et al. 1991). Instead, children in single-parent families are more likely to be in nonparental arrangements, most notably center-based and relative care. Therefore, it is important to explore whether the large percentage of black children living in single-parent families helps explain the small percentage of black children in parent/other care and the large percentage in center-based care.

Distinct differences also exist in the amount of time children from single- and two-parent families spend in care. Again, not surprisingly, research finds children from single-parent families spend significantly more time in child care than children in two-parent families (Hofferth et al. 1991). Therefore, it is also important to explore whether this fact may also help explain the large percentage of black children in full-time care.

Do the Family Structure Patterns Hold for White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

Examining the family structure pattern for each group, we find that, much like the national pattern, white children from single-parent families are more likely to be in center-based care and less likely to be in parent/other care than their counterparts in two-parent families (table 3). In terms of the time spent in care, white children in single-parent families are significantly more likely to be in full-time care than white children in two-parent families.

Among black children, family structure is less closely associated with the use of different child care arrangements. In contrast to the national pattern, the percentage of black children from single-parent families in center-based care is *smaller* than that of children in two-parent families, and the difference in the use of parent/other care between the two groups is not statistically significant. Indeed, regardless of family structure, small percentages of black children are found in the parent/other care category. However, similar to the national pattern, black children in single-parent families are more likely to be placed with relatives than those in two-parent families. In terms of the time spent in care, while it appears a greater share of children from single-parent families is in full-time care (consistent with the national pattern), the percentage is not statistically different from that of children in two-parent families.

Family structure does not appear related to the use of different child care arrangements among Hispanic children. A similar percentage of Hispanic children is in center-based care, relative care, and parent/other care, regardless of family structure. As with black children, while Hispanic children from single-parent families are apparently more likely to be in full-time care, this difference is not statistically significant.

These findings suggest the family structure patterns observed nationally reflect the patterns of white children and should not be assumed to hold for black or His-

Table 3. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 with Working Resident Parents, by Family Structure and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Single-parent families			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	38^{B**}	42 ^{C**}	20
Family	20	13	18
Nanny/baby-sitter	3	2 ^{C*}	6
Relative	28 ^{B**}	32	39
Parent/other care	10^{B*}	10 ^{C*}	17
Children in full-time care	63^{B**}	67 ^{C**}	47
Two-parent families			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	30^{A**B**}	46 ^{C**}	21
Family	17 ^{A*B*}	13	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	7^{A**}	3 ^{C**}	5
Relative	23 ^{B**}	23^{C**}	41
Parent/other care	22^{A**}	15	20
Children in full-time care	36^{A**B**}	61 ^{C**}	41

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. Numbers in **bold** indicate a statistically significant difference between children in single- and two-parent families within each racial and ethnic group at the $p < 0.10$ level.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

panic children. Accordingly, the obvious and commonly hypothesized reasons children in single-parent families are more likely to be in nonparental care than children in two-parent families should only be applied to white children. It is important, therefore, for future research to understand what other family, employment, and child care market factors affect the relationship between family structure and the child care patterns of black and Hispanic children. To that end, later in this paper we examine the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic families by “parental availability,” a variable that simultaneously captures family structure and the employment patterns of each parent.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Single- and Two-Parent Families Are Examined Separately?

The overall differences among white, black, and Hispanic children—particularly those between white and black children—are significantly reduced or eliminated when examining children in single-parent families. Among children in two-parent families, however, differences in child care choices among the three groups persist.

Use of center-based care: Among children in single-parent families, there is little difference in the use of center-based care between white and black children. The



difference between these two groups and Hispanic children, however, remains. On the other hand, among children in two-parent families, black children are much more likely to use center-based care than white children, while Hispanic children are significantly less likely than both groups to be in this form of care.

Use of relative care: The higher use of relative care among Hispanic children persists regardless of whether children are in single- or two-parent families. The difference in the use of relative care across the three groups is most pronounced among children in two-parent families. Forty-one percent of Hispanic children in two-parent families are in relative care, compared with only 23 percent of white and black children.

Use of parent/other care: While black children overall are the least likely of the three groups to be in parent/other care, there is no difference in the percentage of black or white children from single-parent families in the parent/other care category. Hispanic children in single-parent families, however, are significantly more likely than the other two groups to be in parent/other care. Among children in two-parent families, however, black children appear to be the smallest percentage of children in parent/other care, but only the difference with white children is statistically significant.

Percentage in full-time care: Although black children overall are the most likely of the three groups to be in full-time care, similar percentages of white and black children in single-parent families are in care for 35 hours or more. These percentages are much larger than the percentage of Hispanic children in full-time care. Among children in two-parent families, black children have the highest percentage of children in full-time care, followed by Hispanic children and then white children.

Given the findings in this section, it appears differences in family structure explain at least some of the difference in child care use between white and black children. Indeed, looking at child care use by family structure reveals that children from single-parent white and black families look very similar in their use of different child care arrangements and in the amount of time the children spend in care. Hispanic children in single-parent families, however, continue to differ from these two groups.

However, the similarities between white and black children do not exist among children in two-parent families. White and black single-parent families may be more similar in the characteristics that influence child care use than white and black two-parent families. Moreover, given that similar percentages of white and black children from single-parent families are in parent/other care, the high percentage of black children in single-parent families may be at least partially driving the low overall number of black children in parent/other care.

Patterns by Family Income

Nationally, child care use for children under 5 varies depending on whether the child is from a low- or higher-income family. Young children from higher-income families are more likely to be placed in center-based arrangements and are less likely to be in relative care and parent care than children from low-income families (Sonenstein et al. 2002; Capizzano, Adams, et al. 2000). There are a number of possible explanations for this pattern. For example, center-based care is usually more expensive than relative care, making it more difficult for low-income families to afford. In addition, lower-

income families are more likely to work hours that do not conform with the hours that centers are open (Presser and Cox 1997) and in general may have less access to affordable center-based options in their communities (GAO 1997). However, when looking at how long children spend in care each week, research has found little difference between low- and higher-income children (Capizzano and Adams 2000).

Given this income pattern and the fact that, on average, the incomes of white, black, and Hispanic families vary dramatically, it is important to examine the three groups by income. In the analysis below, we define low-income families as those with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, while higher-income families are those with incomes at or above that level.

Children under 5 by Income

Do the income patterns hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately?

When examining the income pattern for each group, we again find that white children follow the national pattern. Higher-income white children are more likely to use center-based care, and less likely to be in relative care and parent/other care, than low-income white children (table 4). Also similar to the national pattern, comparable percentages of white low- and higher-income children are in full-time care.

Black children, however, do not adhere to the national pattern. There is little difference between low- and higher-income black children in the use of any child care arrangements. Similar percentages of low- and higher-income black children are in center-based care, relative care, and parent/other care. The percentages of black low- and higher-income children in full-time care are not statistically different.

Among Hispanic children, children from higher-income families are more likely to be in center-based care than children from low-income families. It is less clear whether the income pattern holds true for the other types of arrangements, as the percentages of low- and higher-income Hispanic children in relative care and parent/other care are not statistically different. Similar percentages of Hispanic low- and higher-income children are in full-time care.

Like family structure, these findings suggest the income patterns observed nationally, while adequately capturing the reality of white children, do not reflect the income patterns of other children—particularly black children. It will be important for future research to investigate why income does not appear to influence the ability of families with black children to access center-based care. Indeed, factors that account for the high use of centers among black children and the quality of center-based care accessed should be studied.

Do the differences among white, black, and Hispanic children persist when low- and higher-income families are examined separately?

The overall differences among white, black, and Hispanic children hold regardless of income.

Use of center-based care: Among both low- and higher-income families, black children are the most likely and Hispanic children the least likely to be in center-based care, with white children falling in between these groups. The difference between



Table 4. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Family Income and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL)			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	25 ^{A**B**}	42 ^{C**}	15
Family	15	12	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	5	3	6
Relative	29 ^{B**}	29 ^{C**}	44
Parent/other care	25 ^{A**}	14 ^{C**}	21
Children in full-time care	41 ^{A**}	61 ^{C**}	41
At or above 200% of the federal poverty level			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	33^{A**B**}	46 ^{C**}	27
Family	18	14	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	7 ^{A**}	1 ^{C**}	5
Relative	22^{B**}	28 ^{C**}	37
Parent/other care	19^{A**}	11	17
Children in full-time care	40 ^{A**}	68 ^{C**}	45

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. Numbers in **bold** indicate a significant difference between families with incomes below 200% of FPL and those with incomes at or above 200% of FPL at the $p < 0.10$ level. A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

the groups is most pronounced among low-income families, where 42 percent of black children are in center-based care, compared with 25 percent of white children and 15 percent of Hispanic children.

Use of relative care: In both income categories, Hispanic children are more likely to be placed in relative care than either white or black children. The difference in the use of relative care is more pronounced among low-income families; almost half of Hispanic children are in relative care, compared with almost one-third of both white and black children.

Use of parent/other care: For both low- and higher-income families, black children are significantly less likely to be in the parent/other care category than white or Hispanic children. For example, among higher-income families, only 11 percent of black children are in parent/other care, compared with 17 percent of Hispanic children and 19 percent of white children.

Percentage in full-time care: For both low- and higher-income families, a larger percentage of black children under 5 is in full-time, nonparental child care than white or Hispanic children. For example, 68 percent of black children in higher-income families are in full-time care, compared with 45 percent of Hispanic children and 40 percent of white children.

Given the overall differences among white, black, and Hispanic children are found regardless of the income category examined, differences in family income apparently play at best a small role in explaining the overall differences in care arrangements across the three groups. It will be important, however, to test this relationship in a multivariate context.

Children under 5 by Income and Age

A number of programs (such as state prekindergarten programs and the federal Head Start program) are targeted to improving the school readiness of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds through participation in more formal care arrangements. Because such programs usually target this age group, it is important to examine the types of arrangements low- and higher-income white, black, and Hispanic children are in by the age of the child (see appendix table B.1). Below we summarize the key findings of an analysis of the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children by income and age.

The analysis reveals that the income patterns observed among white and black children nationally are true regardless of the age of the child. Among both younger and older white children, income significantly influences the types of care used. Among younger and older black children, income has no influence. Among Hispanic children, however, the relationship between income and the use of different forms of care seems conditional on the age of the child. Hispanic children younger than 3 are generally placed in the same arrangements regardless of income, while higher-income Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are more likely than low-income 3- and 4-year-olds to be in center-based care and less likely to be in relative and parent/other care.

Even when examining children of specific ages and incomes, the differences between white, black, and Hispanic children in their use of child care arrangements remain. The one exception from the overall pattern involves the use of parent/other care. Black children are not consistently the least likely of the three groups to be in the parent/other care category. Among higher-income 3- and 4-year-olds, similar percentages of white, black, and Hispanic children are in parent/other care.

Two other points are important to note. First, when looking at the child care arrangements of these groups by age and income, the largest gap between black children and white and Hispanic children in the use of center-based care occurs among low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. Second, relatively few low-income Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are in center-based care. Only around one in five (21 percent) low-income Hispanic children in families where each resident parent works are placed in center-based care as their primary child care arrangement.

Patterns by Primary Caretaker's Education Level

Numerous studies have charted a clear relationship between maternal education and the use of center-based care. Higher levels of maternal education have consistently been associated with the increased use of center-based or paid care, even after control-



ling for such factors as maternal employment and income (Burstein and Hiller 1999). In addition, research has shown higher maternal education is related to decreased use of relative care, but is not related to the use of parent care (Smith 2002). In terms of the hours children spend in care, little research has discerned how the time children spend in care varies by maternal education. Below, we examine whether these education patterns, where documented, hold for white, black, and Hispanic children, and whether differences in primary caretaker educational levels can at least partially explain the differences in child care use among the three groups.⁹

Children under 5 by Primary Caretaker's Education Level

Do the primary caretaker education patterns hold for white, black, and Hispanic children separately?

Examining the education patterns for each group we find, similar to the national pattern, that the percentage of white children in center-based care almost doubles when moving from children of the least educated primary caretakers to children of the most educated (table 5). The use of relative care decreases as primary caretaker education increases; the use of parent/other care does not change. In terms of the time spent in care, white children with primary caretakers in the two highest education categories are more likely to be in full-time care than white children in the lowest education category.

Unlike the national pattern, the child care arrangements of black children do not appear associated with the education level of the primary caretaker. The use of center-based care does not increase as education increases, and relative care decreases only among black children with the highest educated primary caretakers. In terms of the time spent in care, the percentage of black children in full-time care increases steadily as primary caretaker education increases.

The national education patterns hold among Hispanic children. The percentage of Hispanic children in center-based care more than triples as the education level of the primary caretaker increases, while the use of relative care declines. Also like the overall pattern, primary caretaker education is unrelated to the use of parent/other care among this group. Unlike with white or black children, primary caretaker education is not associated with how long Hispanic children spend in care.

For white and Hispanic children, the education level of the child's primary caretaker is associated with the use of center-based care. Among these two groups of children, the more educated the primary caretaker, the more likely the child will be placed in center-based care. Interestingly, this association appears strongest among Hispanic children. However, there is no association between primary caretaker education and the use of center-based care among black children. Regardless of primary caretaker education, a high percentage of black children is in center-based care.

Do the differences among white, black, and Hispanic children persist when the primary caretaker education groups are examined separately?

Regardless of the level of primary caretaker education, the overall differences between white, black, and Hispanic children still exist.

Table 5. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Primary Caretaker’s Education Level and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Less than high school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	20 ^{A**B**1**2**}	48 ^{C**}	9 ^{1**2**}
Family	13 ^{A*1*}	6 ^{C**1**2**}	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{2*}	2 ^{C**}	9 ^{1**2**}
Relative	41 ^{1**2**}	32	46 ^{2**}
Parent/other care	20	13	22
Children in full-time care	31 ^{A**1**2**}	49 ^{2**}	39
High school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	28 ^{A**B**3**}	42 ^{C**}	22
Family	20 ^{A**B*3**}	12	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{A**3**}	2 ^{C*}	5
Relative	27 ^{B**3**}	30 ^{C**3*}	41 ^{3**}
Parent/other care	21 ^{A**}	13	18
Children in full-time care	41 ^{A**}	63 ^{C**3**}	45
Bachelor’s degree or higher			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	38	50 ^{C**}	31
Family	15	21	17
Nanny/baby-sitter	10 ^{A**B**}	3	3
Relative	17 ^{B**}	20	28
Parent/other care	20 ^{A**}	8 ^{C*}	20
Children in full-time care	40 ^{A**}	76 ^{C**}	40

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

1 = significant difference between children whose primary caretakers have less than a high school education and children whose primary caretakers have a high school diploma or GED; 2 = significant difference between children whose primary caretakers have less than a high school education and children whose primary caretakers have a bachelor’s degree or higher; 3 = significant difference between children whose primary caretakers have a high school diploma or GED and children whose primary caretakers have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Use of center-based care: Black children are the most likely and Hispanic children the least likely of the three groups to be in center-based care in each category of primary caretaker education. The most striking differences are found among children whose primary caretakers have less than a high school education, where black children are more than twice as likely as white children and five times as likely as Hispanic children to be in center-based care.

Use of relative care: Hispanic children have the highest percentage of children in relative care in all categories of primary caretaker education. The difference between



the groups in the use of relative care is similar in each category of primary caretaker education.

Use of parent/other care: Black children have the smallest percentage of children in the parent/other care in each education category. The difference in the use of parent/other care appears most pronounced among children with primary caretakers in the highest education category. Both white and Hispanic children in this category are 2.5 times as likely to be in parent/other care as black children.

Percentage in full-time care: Black children spend longer hours in care regardless of the primary caretaker's education level. The differences are most pronounced among children with primary caretakers in the highest education category. Indeed, the percentage of black children in full-time care is 36 percentage points greater than the percentages of white and Hispanic children in this category.

The fact that differences among white, black, and Hispanic children appear to persist even when examining children whose primary caretakers have the same education level implies that the large differences in the education levels of primary caretakers of white, black, and Hispanic children may not explain the overall differences in child care arrangements among these three groups.

Children under 5 by Primary Caretaker's Education Level and Income

Because education is highly correlated with income, it is difficult to know whether the relationship between primary caretaker education and the use of different child care arrangements is truly the effect of primary caretaker education or if it is driven by the income differences of the primary caretakers across the different education groups. Accordingly, it is important to examine the relationship between primary caretaker education and child care use among low- and higher-income families separately. Conducting the analysis this way controls for income and allows us to examine the association between primary caretaker education and the use of different arrangements independent of income.

Although small sample sizes in some categories make the child care patterns difficult to discern, the findings concerning education patterns are the same and the four main differences remain among white, black, and Hispanic children (see appendix table B.2), even when controlling for income. For example, the relationship between primary caretaker education and the use of center-based care still exists for white and Hispanic children but not black children even when looking at this relationship for low- and higher-income groups separately. In addition, both low- and higher-income black children are the most likely to be in center-based care and least likely to be in parent/other care in each education category.

Two points are important to note. First, because the primary caretaker education patterns still exist when controlling for income, it appears primary caretaker education has an independent and fairly robust association with the use of center-based care among white and Hispanic children. Even among low-income families that may find it difficult to afford center-based care, children with primary caretakers in the highest-educated group are more likely to be in this form of care than children with primary caretakers with less formal education. Second, because the differences remain

among white, black, and Hispanic children even when looking at children in specific income and education levels, it appears these two factors together may not explain the differences in child care use among white, black, and Hispanic children.

Patterns by Primary Caretaker’s Work Schedule

Whether a child’s primary caretaker works predominantly during the day or mostly at night influences the types of care in which children are placed. For parents that work “traditional” work schedules—defined here as working primarily between the hours of 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM—more child care options are available. However, for parents who work nontraditional hours—predominately after 6:00 PM—formal child care programs may be less available. Accordingly, past research has found that children with parents who work traditional hours are more likely to be in center-based and family child care than children with parents who work nontraditional hours. Children with parents who work nontraditional hours, on the other hand, are more likely to be in parent care. This may be because parents who work nontraditional hours may have difficulty finding other forms of care. Or, it may mean one parent is choosing to work nontraditional hours while the other works a traditional schedule in order to avoid the use of nonparental child care. In terms of the time spent in care, there is little published research on how the hours young children spend in care vary by parental work schedule.

Do the Work Schedule Patterns Hold for White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

Among white children, those with primary caretakers who work traditional hours are nearly twice as likely to be in center-based and family child care as children with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours (table 6). Moreover, white children with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours are more than twice as likely to be in parent/other care as children with primary caretakers who work traditional hours. In terms of the hours white children spend in care, children with primary caretakers who work traditional hours are more likely to be in full-time care than children with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours.

A similar pattern exists among black children. Black children with primary caretakers who work traditional hours are more likely to be in center-based and family child care, and less likely to be in parent/other care, than black children with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours. Black children with primary caretakers who work traditional hours are far more likely to be in full-time care than their counterparts with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours.

This pattern also holds among Hispanic children. Hispanic children with primary caretakers who work traditional schedules are more likely to be in center-based care and family child care and less likely to be in parent/other care than Hispanic children with primary caretakers who work nontraditional hours. Like white and black children, Hispanic children with primary caretakers who work traditional schedules are



Table 6. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Primary Caretaker’s Work Schedule and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Traditional work schedule (6:00 AM to 6:00 PM)			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	35^{A**B**}	49^{C**}	22
Family	19	16	17
Nanny/baby-sitter	6^{A**}	1^{C**}	5
Relative	23^{B**}	27^{C**}	40
Parent/other care	16^{A**}	7^{C**}	15
Children in full-time care	45 ^{A**}	71 ^{C**}	49
Nontraditional work schedule (after 6:00 PM)			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	19^{A**}	32^{C**}	15
Family	11^{A**}	5	9
Nanny/baby-sitter	7	6	5
Relative	27^{B**}	31	40
Parent/other care	36^{A*}	25	29
Children in full-time care	22 ^{A**}	48 ^{C**}	27

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. Numbers in **bold** indicate a significant difference between traditional and nontraditional work schedules at the $p < 0.10$ level.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

more likely to be in full-time care than their counterparts with primary caretakers who work nontraditional schedules.

For white, black, and Hispanic children, the work schedule of a child’s primary caretaker appears highly associated with the types of care used. This should not be surprising. Whether a primary caretaker works a traditional or nontraditional schedule in large part defines the types of care available, regardless of other family characteristics. Because work schedule is related to the supply of care available, few family variables (the presence of relatives in the household excepted) can mediate the effect of work schedule on the types of care chosen. At the same time, parents’ work schedules are not the only factor affecting child care use among the groups. As we discuss below, even after considering the different work schedule categories, differences among white, black, and Hispanic children remain.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Different Primary Caretaker Work Schedules Are Examined Separately?

The overall differences between white, black, and Hispanic children remain even when looking within the categories of primary caretaker work schedule.

Use of center-based care: Black children are still significantly more likely and Hispanic children significantly less likely to be in center-based care regardless of whether the primary caretaker works a traditional or nontraditional schedule. In both categories, black children are significantly more likely than white children and more than twice as likely as Hispanic children to be in center-based arrangements.

Use of relative care: In both categories of primary caretaker work schedule, Hispanic children are more likely than either white or black children to be in relative care. The differences among the groups appear slightly more pronounced among children with primary caretakers who work traditional hours. For example, 40 percent of Hispanic children are in relative care, compared with 27 percent of black children and 23 percent of white children.

Use of parent/other care: For the most part, black children are still the least likely of the three groups to be in parent/other care within both categories of primary caretaker work schedule. The differences among the three groups are largest among children whose primary caretakers work traditional hours.

Percentage in full-time care: In addition, in each category of primary caretaker schedule, a significantly higher percentage of black children is in full-time care compared with white or Hispanic children.

Differences between white, black, and Hispanic children persist even when examining children with primary caretakers with the same work schedule. As with the other characteristics, this finding implies that while work schedule is related to the use of different arrangements among white, black, and Hispanic children, the differences in primary caretaker work schedules across the three groups do not explain the overall differences in child care arrangements among them.

Patterns by Parental Availability

Over the past 25 years, increases in labor force participation rates among women with children, as well as a growth in divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births, have changed the structure of the American family. Compared to a quarter-century ago, children today are much more likely to live in households headed by a single, working parent or in households with two working parents (Hernandez 1995). The fact that the family structures and employment patterns of American families differ fundamentally from those of 25 years ago has important implications both for the use of nonparental care and the nonparental care arrangements used.

Not surprisingly, research has shown that child care patterns of young children vary depending on whether the household consists of one or two parents and whether the parent or parents in the household are employed. To measure the combined relationship of family structure and employment on the types of child care used, researchers have categorized families with different family structures and employment patterns by the amount of time parents have available to care for their own children (Smith and Casper 1999; Ehrle et al. 2001; Capizzano, Tout, and Adams 2000). Single parents working full-time are considered to have the least amount of parental time available, while two-parent families where one or



both parents do not work full-time are considered to have the most “parental availability.”

Two clear patterns have emerged from the research on the relationship between parental availability and the use of different forms of care. First, as parental availability decreases, the use of two forms of nonparental care—center-based care and family child care—increases. Second, not surprisingly, as parental availability decreases, the use of parental care decreases (Capizzano, Tout, et al. 2000).

In addition, in terms of the time that children spend in care, as parental availability decreases, the amount of time that children spend in nonparental child care arrangements increases, again not surprisingly.

In this section, we investigate whether these parental availability patterns hold for children in white, black, and Hispanic families. We group children from working families into four categories according to the number of parents in the household and the employment patterns of each parent:

- children with a single parent working full-time,
- children in two-parent families where both parents work full-time,
- children with a single parent working part-time, and
- children in two-parent families where one or both parents work part-time.

Do the Parental Availability Patterns Hold for White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

The patterns of parental availability hold among white children. The use of center-based and family child care increases as parental availability decreases, while use of parent/other care decreases. In terms of the hours that children spend in care, the percentage of white children in full-time care increases dramatically as parental availability decreases (table 7).

Among black children, the relationship between parental availability and the use of different arrangements does not hold for center-based care. All categories of parental availability have relatively large percentages of black children in center-based care. Like the overall pattern, the percentage of children in the parent/other care category decreases as parental availability decreases. Moreover, the percentage of black children in full-time care increases as parental availability decreases.

Similar to black children, the relationship between parental availability and the use of different arrangements does not hold for center-based care among Hispanic children. Decreasing parental availability is associated with the increased use of family child care, but not center-based care. Like the overall pattern, as parental availability decreases, the percentage of children in parent/other care decreases. In addition, the percentage of children in full-time care increases as parental availability decreases.

While the use of center-based care among black and Hispanic children does not follow the parental availability pattern, the relationship between parental availability

Table 7. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Parental Availability and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Single parent working full-time			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	41 ^{B**3**}	44 ^{C**}	21
Family	23 ^{2**3**}	16 ^{2**3**}	21 ^{1*2*}
Nanny/baby-sitter	2 ^{2*3**}	2	5
Relative	25 ^{B**1**2**}	31	40
Parent/other care	10 ^{1*3**}	8 ^{C*3**}	14 ^{2**3**}
Children in full-time care	75 ^{B**1**2**3**}	74 ^{C**2**3**}	55 ^{2**3**}
Two parents working full-time			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	36 ^{A*B**5**}	46 ^{C**}	23
Family	20 ^{B**4*5**}	15 ^{4**5*}	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{5**}	3 ^{C*5**}	7 ^{5**}
Relative	23 ^{B**4**}	24 ^{C**4*}	44
Parent/other care	16 ^{5**}	12	13 ^{4**5**}
Children in full-time care	57 ^{A**4**5**}	71 ^{C**4**5**}	53 ^{4**5**}
Single parent working part-time			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	32 ^{B**}	34 ^{C**}	15
Family	11	5	10
Nanny/baby-sitter	7	3	7
Relative	39 ^{6**}	39	38
Parent/other care	11 ^{B**6**}	19	29
Children in full-time care	27 ^{6**}	41 ^{C*}	23
Two parents working part-time			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	24 ^{A**B**}	49 ^{C**}	16
Family	14 ^{A**}	7	14
Nanny/baby-sitter	10 ^{A**B**}	0 ^{C*}	2
Relative	23 ^{B**}	21 ^{C**}	36
Parent/other care	29	23	31
Children in full-time care	12 ^{A**B**}	35	22

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

1 = significant difference between children in single-parent and two-parent full-time families;

2 = significant difference between children in single-parent, full-time and part-time families;

3 = significant difference between children in single-parent, full-time and two-parent, part-time families;

4 = significant difference between children in two-parent, full-time and single-parent, part-time families;

5 = significant difference between children in two-parent, full-time and part-time families;

6 = significant difference between children in single-parent and two-parent part-time families.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.



and the use of family child care, parent/other care, and full-time care is strong across all three groups. These findings—particularly those relating to parent/other care and full-time care—should not be surprising. Because parental availability is a measure of the need for nonparental care and the amount of time in which care would be necessary, parental availability and the use of nonparental care should be closely related.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Parental Availability Categories Are Examined Separately?

Many of the overall differences among white, black, and Hispanic children—particularly between white and black children—are less pronounced within certain categories of parental availability.

Use of center-based care: While Hispanic children are consistently the least likely to be in center-based care across the categories of parental availability, in both single-parent categories (full- and part-time), the percentages of black and white children in center-based care are similar. In the two-parent categories, however, the differences in the use of center-based care among the three groups remain.

Use of relative care: Hispanic children are more likely to be in relative care in three of the four categories of parental availability. The only exception is children with single parents who work part-time. Interestingly, there are no significant differences between white and black children in the use of relative care across the categories of parental availability.

Use of parent/other care: While black children overall are less likely to be in parent/other care than the other two groups, this is not the case within most categories of parental availability.

Percentage in full-time care: Across most categories of parental availability, black children continue to spend more time in child care than white or Hispanic children. The major exception is among children with single parents who work full-time. In this category, similar percentages of white and black children are in full-time care.

Differences in the amount of time that white, black, and Hispanic families have to care for their children explain some of the differences among the groups, especially in the use of parent/other care. As we have discussed, black children are the most likely of the three groups to live in families with the least amount of parental availability. And while all three groups have low use of parent/other care among single- and two-parent families working full-time, the greater proportion of black children in these categories relative to white and Hispanic children drives down the overall number of black children in parent/other care.

Parental availability, however, may only partially explain the large amount of time that black children spend in care. Indeed, even among families in the “partial employment” category—those we have defined as having the most parental time available—black children are significantly more likely than white or Hispanic children to be in full-time care.



Patterns by the Presence of Nonparental Relatives in the Household

The availability of convenient sources of care can also influence the types of care used by working families with children under 5. For example, the presence of nonparental relatives in the household is associated with the higher use of relative care. Accordingly, the fact that black and Hispanic children under 5 are more likely than white children to live in households with a nonworking adult relative may explain why black and Hispanic children are more likely than white children to be in the care of relatives. Below, we examine whether the presence of a nonparental relative in the household is associated with a higher use of relative care among white, black, and Hispanic children.¹⁰ We also examine whether the overall differences among the three groups remain when separately examining families with and without a relative living in the household.

Does the Presence of a Relative in the Household Increase the Likelihood of Relative Care among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

Across all three groups the presence of a nonparental relative is associated with an increased likelihood that a child will be in relative care and a decreased likelihood that a child will be in center-based and nanny/baby-sitter care. Among white children in particular, the presence of a nonparental relative in the household is associated with a large increase in the use of relative care (table 8). Indeed, the percentage of children in relative care is nearly twice as large among children living in households with a nonparental relative as it is among children living in households with no nonparental relative. In contrast, the percentage of children in center-based care is significantly lower among children in households where a relative is present.

Among black children, the percentage of children in relative care is also much larger among children in households with a nonparental relative compared with children living in a household with no relative. Similar to the pattern with white children, center-based care is used less often among black children in households with a nonparental relative.

Among Hispanic children, the percentage of children in relative care is larger among children in households with a nonparental relative than among children in households where there is not, but this difference is not nearly as large as among white and black children. In addition, the percentage of children in center-based care is smaller among children in households with a nonparental relative present compared with Hispanic children not living with a nonparental relative, but the difference is not statistically significant.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Relative Categories Are Examined Separately?

Differences in the use of relative and parent/other care among the three groups are greatly reduced when examining children with nonparental relatives present in the



Table 8. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by the Presence of Nonparental Relatives in the Household and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
No nonparental relatives in household			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	32^{A**B**}	47^{C**}	22
Family	18	14	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	7^{A**}	3^{C**}	6
Relative	23^{B**}	25^{C**}	39
Parent/other care	21 ^{A**}	11 ^{C**}	19
Children in full-time care	40 ^{A**}	64 ^{C**}	42
Nonparental relatives in household			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	22	31^{C**}	14
Family	17	9	12
Nanny/baby-sitter	1	1	3
Relative	45	42	50
Parent/other care	16	17	20
Children in full-time care	46 ^{A**}	64 ^{C**}	47

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. A nonparental relative is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, or other relative who is at least 18 years old, lives in the household, and has not worked for pay in the past year. Numbers in **bold** indicate a significant difference between households with and without nonparental relatives at the $p < 0.10$ level.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

household. Differences among the three groups persist, however, when examining children in households with no nonparental relative present.

Use of center-based care: In households that have nonparental relatives and those that do not, black children are the most likely of the three groups to be in center-based care. Similarly, Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center-based care, regardless of the presence of a nonparental relative.

Use of relative care: The presence of nonparental relatives seems to explain at least some of the difference in relative care among the three groups. Among children with a relative living in the household, the percentages of white, black, and Hispanic children in relative care are similar. However, among children with no nonparental relative in the household, Hispanic children are more likely than the other two groups to be in relative care.

Use of parent/other care: The presence of a nonparental relative in the household also explains some of the differences in the use of parent/other care. Among children living in households with a relative, there is little difference in the use of parent/other care across the three groups. However, among children with no relative in the house-

hold, black children are significantly less likely to be in parent/other care than children in the other two groups.

Use of full-time care: While the presence of relatives may help to explain some of the differences in the use of different child care arrangements among white, black, and Hispanic children, it does not explain differences in the amount of time that children spend in care. Black children are significantly more likely to be in full-time care regardless of the presence of a nonparental relative.

Patterns by Region

The types of child care arrangements that children are placed in can vary by the region of the country in which the family lives. Most notably, children living in the South are more likely than children from other regions to be placed in center-based care (Hofferth et al. 1991). Below we examine whether this pattern holds for white, black, and Hispanic children separately. In addition, we examine whether the overall differences among white, black, and Hispanic children remain when examining children living in various regions.

Does the Regional Pattern Hold for White, Black, and Hispanic Children Separately?

The finding that children from the South are more likely to be in center-based care holds for white and black children but not Hispanic children. More generally, region also appears to play a role in the use of other arrangements among white and black children. This is also not true among Hispanic children (table 9).

Similar to the national pattern, white children in the South are more likely to be in center-based arrangements than white children in other regions of the country. In addition, white children in the Northeast are the least likely to be in family child care and the most likely to be in nanny/baby-sitter care and parent/other care, compared with white children in other regions.

Black children in the South are more likely than black children in other regions to be in center-based care. In addition, black children from the Northeast are more likely to be in family child care than other black children. Finally, black children from the Northeast and South are less likely to be in parent/other care than children from the Midwest and West.

The regional pattern does not hold among Hispanic children. Hispanic children in the South are no more likely to be in center-based care than Hispanic children in other regions. In fact, there appears to be little regional variation among Hispanic children across all arrangements.

These findings indicate that there is a relationship between region and the types of care used—particularly the use of center-based care—among white and black children. This regional variation may be caused by differences in the types of white and black families who live in each region, including their employment patterns and



Table 9. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Region and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Northeast			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	28 ^{2**}	34 ^{2**}	23
Family	11 ^{A**B**1**2**3**}	20 ^{1**3**}	17
Nanny/baby-sitter	10 ^{A**B**1**2**}	2	5
Relative	26 ^{B**3*}	34	37
Parent/other care	25 ^{A**B*1**2**3*}	11 ^{C**}	19
Midwest			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	26 ^{A**B**4**}	43 ^{C**}	15
Family	24 ^{A**4**}	7 ^{4*}	17
Nanny/baby-sitter	5	4	4
Relative	25 ^{B**}	29 ^{C*}	46
Parent/other care	20	17	19
South			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	39 ^{A**B**6**}	49 ^{C**6**}	23
Family	15 ^{6**}	14	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{A**B*6*}	2 ^{C**}	8 ^{6*}
Relative	23 ^{B**}	26 ^{C**}	41
Parent/other care	18 ^{A**}	10 ^{C*}	15
West			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	31 ^{B**}	29	19
Family	21 ^{A**B**}	10	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	8 ^{B**}	4	4
Relative	20 ^{A**B**}	26	41
Parent/other care	20	22	22

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

1 = significant difference between children in the Northeast and the Midwest; 2 = significant difference between children in the Northeast and the South; 3 = significant difference between children in the Northeast and the West; 4 = significant difference between children in the Midwest and the South; 5 = significant difference between children in the Midwest and the West; 6 = significant difference between children in the South and the West.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

income. In addition, differences in the supply of certain forms of care in each region may play a role in these differences.

Do the Differences among White, Black, and Hispanic Children Persist When Different Regions Are Examined Separately?

In certain regions, differences in the use of center-based care, relative care, and parent/other care among white, black, and Hispanic children are significantly reduced.

Use of center-based care: While black children are significantly more likely than the other groups to be in center-based care in the Midwest and South, differences among the groups in the use of center-based care are greatly reduced in the Northeast and West. In the West, for example, roughly equal proportions of white and black children are in center-based care, while the percentage difference between black and Hispanic children is much less pronounced.

Use of relative care: Hispanic children are the most likely to be in relative care in every region except the Northeast. Among children in the Northeast, there is very little difference in the use of relative care between Hispanic and black children, and the difference between Hispanic children and white children is less pronounced.

Use of parent/other care: Differences in use of parent/other care are greatly reduced when looking at the regions separately. Black children are not the least likely of the three groups to be in parent/other care in the Midwest and West. Indeed, there is virtually no difference among all three groups in the percentage of children in parent/other care in these regions. Differences in use of parent/other care persist in the South and are most pronounced in the Northeast.

From the findings discussed above, it is possible the region of the country in which a child lives can help explain at least some differences in child care use across the three groups. In certain cases, differences in the use of center-based care, relative care, and parent/other care are reduced when looking at white, black, and Hispanic children in specific regions. Moreover, it is possible that the high use of center-based care among black children overall is partially driven by the high use of centers among black children in the South, where a large proportion of black children live (see table 1). Finally, Hispanic children are not more likely than black children to be in relative care in the Northeast. It is important to note that the Hispanic population consists of many different subgroups and that this finding may reflect that specific Hispanic subgroups that use relative care less often live in the Northeast. More research is necessary to better understand the child care patterns of different Hispanic subgroups.

Summary and Policy Implications

Similar to past research, we find that on average, white, black, and Hispanic children under 5 with working parents are placed in different forms of child care. Five major findings relating to the child care arrangements of these groups are summarized below.

Finding 1: A large majority of white, black, and Hispanic children under 5 in families where each parent present in the family works is in some form of nonparental child care.

Black children younger than 5 are the most likely of the three groups to be in a nonparental child care arrangement (87 percent, or roughly 1.4 million children). Eighty-one percent of white children—roughly 5.3 million children—are regularly in a nonparental child care arrangement each week and 80 percent of Hispanic children (roughly 1.1 million children) are regularly in nonparental care.



Finding 2: While children from each racial and ethnic group are found in each form of nonparental child care, white, black, and Hispanic children under 5 differ in the extent to which they are placed in the various forms of care.

Similar to past research, we find that black children (44 percent) are far more likely than white or Hispanic children to use center-based care as their primary child care arrangement. Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center-based care (20 percent), while white children fall directly in between these two groups (32 percent).

Hispanic children are much more likely to be in the care of relatives as their primary child care arrangement (40 percent) than black (28 percent) or white children (24 percent). Black children are significantly less likely to be in parent/other care than white and Hispanic children. Only 12 percent of black children are in this category, compared with 20 percent of white children and 19 percent of Hispanic children.

Finding 3: White, black, and Hispanic children in families where each parent present in the family works are placed in nonparental child care for different amounts of time.

In addition to being more likely to be in nonparental child care, black children spend significantly more time in child care than their white or Hispanic counterparts. Sixty-four percent of black children spend at least 35 hours a week in nonparental child care, compared with only 43 percent of Hispanic children and 40 percent of white children.

Finding 4: White children appear to drive national child care patterns, often masking different patterns among black children and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic children.

When examining whether white, black, and Hispanic children follow the national patterns associated with each child and family characteristic examined here, we find that only white children follow these patterns in every case. In contrast, black children follow the national patterns associated with these characteristics only about half the time. For example, among children nationally, increases in family income and the education level of the child's primary caretaker are related to the increased use of center-based care and the decreased use of relative and parent care. These patterns do not hold among black children. The use of center-based care is high among black children regardless of family income and primary caretaker education.

Hispanic children tend to follow the national patterns more closely, with at least one notable exception. While the child care arrangements of children in single-parent families tend to look much different than those of children in two-parent families nationally, this is not true among Hispanic children.

Finding 5: Certain differences in the characteristics of white, black, and Hispanic children help us understand why child care arrangements vary among the three groups. However, many important differences appear not to help us understand why this variation exists.

While white, black, and Hispanic children come from families with vastly different characteristics, the findings from this report suggest that only some of these differ-

ences contribute to our understanding of why families in the three groups use different forms of care. Characteristics related to family structure, parental availability, relatives living in the household, and region appear to explain at least some of the differences in child care use among the three groups. For example, white and black children (but not Hispanic children) with single parents who work full-time look very similar in their use of child care arrangements and in the amount of time that they spend in care.

However, a number of important characteristics examined here that one would expect to help explain the differences in child care use among the three groups appear not to help. For example, differences in family income among white, black, and Hispanic children do not appear to explain the differences in their use of center-based care; even when examining low-income children separately, black children are significantly more likely to be in center-based care than white or Hispanic children. Indeed, black children are more likely than the other groups to be in center-based care across most categories of children examined. The same can be said for the low use of center-based care and the high use of relative care among Hispanic children; these findings persist regardless of the child or family characteristic examined.

It is important to note, however, that the characteristics examined in this paper are only some of the factors related to the use of different child care arrangements. It will be important for future research to explore other influences on the use of different child care arrangements, such as preferences for certain forms of care and the supply of care, to see if these factors help explain the variation among white, black, and Hispanic children. It will also be important to examine the influence of these characteristics and those discussed in this paper simultaneously in a multivariate context.

Policy Implications

The findings in this paper have several important implications. First, while white, black, and Hispanic children are placed in different forms of care and may not always adhere to commonly accepted child care patterns, large percentages of children in each racial and ethnic group are in some form of nonparental care regularly each week. Among the children in our study, 87 percent of black children, 81 percent of Hispanic children, and 80 percent of white children in families where each parent present in the family works are in a regular child care arrangement. This fact underscores the importance of child care in the lives of all America's children and reinforces the need for policymakers to pay close attention to child care-related issues. Supporting child care quality and removing barriers to parental choice are important for all three groups of children and their families.

Despite different patterns across the groups, we find children of each race and ethnicity in every form of care. Accordingly, the growing policy concern about school-readiness and child development means that policymakers must continue to focus on addressing concerns of quality in *all* forms of care. This is true whether we are talking about supporting the quality of centers, where the greatest proportion of black children in families where each parent present in the family works are placed, or relatives, the most likely arrangement for Hispanic children. Supporting quality care among relative caregivers can be particularly challenging because these providers



are not part of the licensing system and most often serve small numbers of children (Adams and Rohacek 2002).

Finally, it is important to remember the estimates presented in this paper simply show the types of care that white, black, and Hispanic children are placed in. They do not indicate *why* children are placed in these arrangements. It is unclear from this research how often these findings reflect parental *preferences* (i.e., parents choosing the care option they desire) or *constraints* (i.e., parents having no other option but a specific form of care). As such, it is essential that policymakers continue to focus on ensuring that parents of every racial and ethnic group have real parental choice by addressing issues including cost, supply, quality, and language and cultural barriers that can keep parents from choosing the forms of care they prefer.



Appendix A: The Child Care Patterns of All White, Black, and Hispanic Children Regardless of the Employment Status of the Parents

While this paper focuses predominantly on the child care arrangements of children in families where each parent present in the family works, it is also important to look at the care arrangements of *all* white, black, and Hispanic children regardless of the employment status of their parents. Not all children live in families where each parent works, and some portion of these children may regularly be in nonparental care for the purpose of academic enrichment. Therefore, to look exclusively at children from families where each resident parent works misses an important part of the early care and education story. Looking at the child care arrangements of all children presents the full picture of the arrangements that white, black, and Hispanic children are in while they are not with their parents.

As one would expect, there are major differences in the use of nonparental child care arrangements among white, black, and Hispanic children (table A.1). Black children are the most likely to be in center-based care (38 percent), followed by white (28 percent) and Hispanic children (16 percent). White children are slightly more likely than black or Hispanic children to be placed in family child care (13 percent, compared with 11 and 9 percent, respectively). Hispanic children rely most often on relatives as their primary child care providers. Thirty percent of Hispanic children use relative care as their primary child care arrangement, compared with 25 percent of black children and 22 percent of white children.

Given the differences in employment patterns among white, black, and Hispanic families, it is not surprising that large differences exist in how often children in these groups are reported *not* to be in any of the nonparental child care arrangements discussed above. As would be expected, Hispanic children are much more likely to be in parent/other care than white and black children. Forty-one percent of Hispanic children are in parent/other care, compared with 32 percent of white children and only 25 percent of black children.

In terms of the hours that children spend in care, black children are significantly more likely than white or Hispanic children to spend 35 hours a week or more in a nonparental child care arrangement. Forty-five percent of black children spend at least 35 hours a week in nonparental care, compared with only 25 percent of white children and 22 percent of Hispanic children.

Table A.1. Primary Child Care Arrangements of All Children under 5 by Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Nonparental care			
Center-based	28 ^{A**B**}	38 ^{C**}	16
Family	13 ^{A*B**}	11	9
Nanny/baby-sitter	6 ^{A**B**}	2 ^{C*}	3
Relative	22 ^{A*B**}	25 ^{C**}	30
Parent/other care	32 ^{A**B**}	25 ^{C**}	41
Children in full-time care	25 ^{A**B**}	45 ^{C**}	22

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working.

A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Appendix B: Data Tables

Table B.1. Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by Age of Child, Family Income, and Child’s Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Children Younger than 3			
Below 200% of FPL			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	18^{A**B**}	30 ^{C**}	10
Family	15	13	14
Nanny/baby-sitter	3	4	4
Relative	34^{B**}	35 ^{C**}	51
Parent/other care	30^{A**B**}	18	20
Children in full-time care	38^{A**}	55 ^{C**}	42
At or above 200% of FPL			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	24^{B**}	33 ^{C**}	13
Family	20 ^{B*}	20	14
Nanny/baby-sitter	8^{A**}	1 ^{C**}	7
Relative	25^{B**}	32 ^{C*}	43
Parent/other care	23^{A**}	14	23
Children in full-time care	38^{A**}	62 ^{C**}	40
3- and 4-Year-Olds			
Below 200% of FPL			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	34^{A**B**}	57 ^{C**}	21
Family	15	10	16
Nanny/baby-sitter	7 ^{A*}	3 ^{C*}	7
Relative	23 ^{B*}	22 ^{C*}	34
Parent/other care	20^{A**}	8 ^{C**}	21
Children in full-time care	44 ^{A**}	69^{C**}	40
At or above 200% of FPL			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	48^{A**}	63 ^{C**}	44
Family	16 ^{A**}	7 ^{C*}	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{A**B**}	1	2
Relative	17 ^{B**}	22	28
Parent/other care	13	8	11
Children in full-time care	43^{A**B*}	74^{C**}	52

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America’s Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. “Working resident parents” is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. (Note this definition differs from what has been used in past Urban Institute child care papers.) **Bold** estimates indicate a significant difference between children in families with incomes those below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and children in families with incomes at or above 200% of FPL at the $p < 0.10$ level. A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table B.2. Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under 5 in Families with Working Resident Parents, by the Primary Caretaker's Education, Family Income, and Child's Race or Ethnicity (percent)

	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic, all races
Below 200 Percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)			
Less than high school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	13 ^{A**}	39 ^{C**}	7
Family	14	7.0	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{B*}	2.1 ^{C**}	10
Relative	41	36	46
Parent/other care	28	17	23
Children in full-time care	28 ^{A**}	50	37
High school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	26 ^{A**}	42 ^{C**}	21
Family	16	13	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	4	4	4
Relative	30 ^{B**}	28 ^{C**}	43
Parent/other care	24 ^{A**}	14	18
Children in full-time care	44 ^{A**}	62 ^{C**}	44
Bachelor's degree and higher			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	31	—	—
Family	12	—	—
Nanny/baby-sitter	8	—	—
Relative	15	—	—
Parent/other care	34	—	—
Children in full-time care	29	—	—
At or Above 200 Percent of FPL			
Less than high school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	29	—	—
Family	12	—	—
Nanny/baby-sitter	6	—	—
Relative	41	—	—
Parent/other care	12	—	—
Children in full-time care	34	—	—
High school			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	29 ^{A**}	43 ^{C**}	24
Family	21 ^{A**B*}	12	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	5 ^{A**}	1 ^{C**}	5
Relative	25 ^{B**}	33 ^{C*}	40
Parent/other care	19 ^{A*}	13	17
Children in full-time care	40 ^{A**}	65 ^{C**}	46
Bachelor's degree and higher			
Nonparental care			
Center-based	39	49	35
Family	15	21	15
Nanny/baby-sitter	10 ^{A**B**}	3	4
Relative	17 ^{B*}	19	27
Parent/other care	19 ^{A**}	8	19
Children in full-time care	41 ^{A**}	76 ^{C**}	41

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. Some estimates are not presented because they are based on sample sizes of less than 100 observations. The primary child care arrangement is the arrangement used for the most hours while the parent is working. "Working resident parents" is both parents working at least part-time in two-parent families and a single parent working at least part-time in single-parent families. A = significant difference between white and black children; B = significant difference between white and Hispanic children; C = significant difference between black and Hispanic children.

*Difference significant at the $p < 0.10$ level; **difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.



Notes

1. The 63 percent figure was calculated using a combined 1997 and 1999 sample of the National Survey of America's Families.
2. Throughout the paper, we use the terms "white," "black," and "Hispanic" to refer to these children. American Indian, Asian, and other minority children are not included in this analysis because of their small sample sizes.
3. While past NSAF child care papers have focused on children with a working primary caretaker (usually the mother), we use a different definition of "working" in this paper. Here we focus on families where all parents present in the family, whether one or two, work at least some time. Different definitions of "working" make sense for different questions. We have chosen this definition for two specific research purposes. First, as noted in the text, we are specifically interested in understanding the child care patterns of children in families where all parents present work, given the challenges they face in balancing work and child care responsibilities. Second, we focus on this universe to control for the dramatic differences in parental employment rates across the three racial and ethnic groups (as shown in figure 1). For example, Hispanic children are much less likely than either white or black children to live in households where both parents present in the family work. If one were to examine all families regardless of parental employment patterns, it would be more difficult to understand whether the differences in child care patterns across groups resulted from having one parent home or from other characteristics like income or work schedule. Limiting the universe to families where all parents present in the household work allows us to look more closely at the non-employment-related child care differences across groups. For those interested, appendix A discusses the overall differences across the three groups regardless of parental employment status.
4. The NSAF was administered in 1997, 1999, and 2002. The 2002 data are not included here because the data set was not available when this paper was initiated. The NSAF is a national survey of more than 40,000 households and is representative of the noninstitutionalized, civilian population under age 65. It oversamples the low-income population (those families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and focuses primarily on health care, income support, job training, social services, and child care. Samples sizes of black and Hispanic children in one year of the NSAF are too small to conduct statistical analyses, so the 1997 and 1999 NSAF data were combined into one large sample to produce the estimates presented in this paper. Before combining the samples, preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that combining the two years of data did not collapse over significant trends across the years. Few differences between 1997 and 1999 were found (see Sonenstein et al. 2002). To derive the correct percentages and population estimates, the sample weights for each wave of the NSAF were halved.
5. The states are Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.
6. Other household members who were designated as the MKA included grandparents, aunts, uncles, and nannies.
7. In this paper, cross-tabulations are used to examine the relationship between important characteristics and the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children. In the most obvious cases, controls are added to separate out the influence of highly correlated variables (e.g., racial/ethnic child care patterns by income and parental education), but a true multivariate framework is not used. This more straightforward approach is used to make the paper accessible to a broad audience and to allow the reader to reference statistics on the child care arrangements of white, black, and Hispanic children in various demographic and economic circumstances.
8. While characteristics of the child care market can also influence the types of care families choose, they are not measured by the NSAF and are therefore outside the scope of this study. We provide an analysis of child care by region, which is sometimes used as a rough proxy measure for the child care market.
9. Most studies that investigate the relationship between parental education and the use of different child care arrangements focus on the education level of the child's mother. Due to the sampling structure of the NSAF, we instead focus on the education level of the child's primary caretaker, defined as the member of the household most knowledgeable about the child. In most cases the primary caretaker is the child's mother (80 percent), but it also often the child's father (17 percent).
10. A nonparental relative is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, or other relative who is at least 18 years old, lives in the household, and has not worked for pay in the past year.



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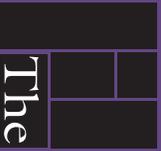
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