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Intergenerational Welfare Use among Immigrants: Myth of Culture of Poverty and Welfare Dependency

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Abstract

Secondary data and logistic regression were used to analyze risk factors in welfare use by immigrant parents and, over time, their adult children. The data described 2,087 parent–child pairs and came from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. Results showed a link between parent's receipt of factors: current Medicaid and food stamps use; receipt of nongovernmental aid on arrival in the United States; low income; unemployed status; unmarried status; minority ethnicity other than Black. Results for the adult children of the studied immigrants showed the children's use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families to be associated with low income, unemployed status, number of dependent children, and White race/ethnicity. It was not associated with parental factors, including parent's welfare use. Parents' and children's welfare use were not associated with citizenship status and length of residence in U.S. This study concluded that restrictive policies against immigrants' TANF receipt should be re-evaluated.

Introduction

In 2010, foreign-born immigrants constituted 13% of the United States population (U. S. Bureau of Census, 2012). Among other goals, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was meant to promote immigrants' self-sufficiency and reduce taxpayer outlay for public assistance, by limiting immigrants' access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs (104th Congress, 1996; Balistreri, 2010; Fomby & Cherlin, 2004; Guetzkow, 2010). In 2014 just two states (out of 50 plus Washington, D.C.) excluded from consideration for TANF all lawful permanent residents immigrating prior to PRWORA's enactment. That year, 15 states used their funds to help such residents immigrating *after* PRWORA's enactment and thus subject to the act's "five-year bar" on federal means-tested benefits for immigrants. In turn, six states excluded from TANF consideration any post-PRWORA lawful permanent resident with 5-year legal immigrant status (Huber, Cohen, Briggs, & Kassabian, 2015). The enactment of PRWORA was fueled in part by the notion of *intergenerational welfare dependency*. From some viewpoints for instance the culture of poverty perspective and welfare culture perspective welfare programs appear to foster beliefs and behaviors deviating from mainstream culture's endorsement of self-reliance (Corcoran, 1995). These perspectives suggest, moreover, that children growing up in families using welfare benefits fail to acquire the "work ethic" as well as mainstream "family values," trapping them in the welfare system as they become adults never taught to be self-sufficient (Jones & Luo, 1999; Lee, Singelmann, & Yom-Tov, 2008). Other perspectives on welfare use exist (Corcoran, 1995), some comprising social structural approaches.

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The mass media, however and therefore much of the public is focused narrowly on cultural approaches to welfare use, tending to overlook social structural mechanisms involved in use (Jones & Luo, 1999). The present study's purpose was to look for risk factors in intergenerational welfare use.

Intergenerational Welfare Use

Before 1996 and PRWORA's enactment, *welfare* generally meant support from Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs (AFDC). Studies of the general population then showed no marked difference between belief systems held by low-income families versus those held by higher-income families (Jones & Luo, 1999). They did show, however, a tendency among AFDC users to have parents receiving AFDC in the past (usually, during the AFDC user's childhood) (Kimenyi, 1991). Studies that controlled relevant demographic factors observed immigrants to be less likely to receive AFDC (2.7%–4.3% participation rate) than were the U.S.–born (3.4%–4.7% participation rate) (Bean, VanHook, & Glick, 1997; Van Hook, Glick, & Bean, 1999). In contrast, however, one prior study found that immigrants from countries other than Mexico were more likely to receive AFDC than U.S.–born Whites were (Van Hook & Bean, 2009).

Often, immigrants are admitted into the U.S. thanks to a work visa or work permit; jobs await them. Yet many other immigrants are admitted only after proving a relative or other sponsor can and will be financially responsible for them (U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2013a, 2013b, 2016). One study showed, however, that an immigrant to the U.S. was less likely to have access to support from relatives or friends than a U.S.–born respondent was (Hao, 2003). Further published research observed noncitizen immigrants' greater likelihood of receiving AFDC, compared to naturalized citizens; the research found a link between such immigrants' AFDC use and the factors single motherhood, relatively numerous dependent children, low income, and lack of high school diploma (Hao, 2003). Research on immigrant and U.S.–born welfare participants in the years since AFDC was replaced by TANF has provided mixed results. One study showed noncitizens to be more likely than citizens to receive TANF assistance (Albert & King, 2011); other studies found immigrants to be less likely than the U.S.–born to receive TANF (Fomby & Cherlin, 2004; Girard, 2015). One study indicated that parents' welfare use increased children's likelihood of TANF participation in adulthood, also reporting specifically, however, that parents' belief systems showed no effect on children's later TANF use (Lee et al., 2008). Perhaps, another study has posited, this is explained by negative effects of parents' welfare use diminishing their children's educational achievement yet not their children's adulthood employment (Balistreri, 2010; Ku, 2001).

Some have identified PRWORA as a measure discriminating against immigrants (Landry, 1996). Moreover, TANF applicants are likely to encounter discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity (Schram, Soss, Fording, & Houser, 2009). One study observed that immigrants tended to eschew TANF due both to being an immigrant and to having encountered discrimination since coming to the U.S. (Lopez-Cevallos, 2014); another found current TANF users' discrimination experiences to be more frequent than those of immigrants who were former TANF users (Kalil & Crosby, 2010). The literature reports that immigrants from Mexico are less likely than other immigrants of minority ethnicity to experience discrimination from Whites in the U.S. This has led some researchers to argue that Mexican immigrants have been and will continue to be steadily assimilated into American society (Bean, Feliciano, Lee, & Van Hook, 2009). But according to conflict perspective, each additional day lived in the U.S. makes an immigrant more likely to have encountered discrimination (Portes & Bach, 1985). TANF use by immigrants is likely to be affected both by the duration of their residence in the U.S. and by their discrimination experiences.

The literature just reviewed offers a limited picture of immigrants' AFDC/TANF use and of how use by a child's parent shapes the child's own use in adulthood. Longitudinal research designs offer sound means of understanding immigrants' possible intergenerational welfare use. The present study of immigrant parent-child pairs had two hypotheses. (1) The first was that parents' welfare use would be associated negatively with receipt of informal support, being married, and being relatively well educated but associated positively with receipt of other public assistance, relatively numerous dependent children, longer U.S. residency, attainment of naturalized citizenship, relatively frequent discrimination experiences, and minority ethnicity. (2) The second was that adult children's welfare participation would be associated positively with their parents' welfare participation and education and discrimination experiences, as well as with the number of the adult children's own dependent children, length of their own U.S.

residency, their own citizenship status, their own discrimination experiences, and their own ethnicity; and associated negatively with their own education and marital status.

Method

Sample

The sample for the present study was extracted from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS). In three interview waves dating 1991–2003, CILS researchers collected data from over 5,000 children of immigrants (some were born in U.S. and some were brought at young age to U.S.) in metropolitan areas in Florida and California (Portes & Rumbaut, 2012). In 1995's second-wave interviews, they re-surveyed the initial sample and surveyed as well 2,400 parents of the initial sample's members. The third-wave interviews followed the initial sample's transition to adulthood. Data for the present analysis came from 2,087 parent–child pairs participating in the third interview wave, who were at that time able-bodied adults.

Measures

Outcome variables in the present study were *parent's AFDC use* and *adult child's TANF use*. The dichotomous *parent's AFDC use* indicated a surveyed parent's report, during a Wave-2 interview, of having received AFDC at some point. The dichotomous *adult child's TANF use* denoted a surveyed adult child's report, during a Wave-3 interview (2001–2003), of having received TANF at some point. The present study employed two groups of explanatory variables, a parent characteristics group and an adult child characteristics group. Six dichotomous variables measured benefits receipt by parents. *Parent received government assistance upon arrival* indicated whether a parent arriving in the U.S. as an immigrant was met with government assistance; *parent received nongovernment assistance upon arrival* indicated whether an arriving immigrant parent was met with assistance from a private or religious organization or agency. Also measured were each parent's receipt of specified aid types in 1995: *parent received food stamps*, *parent participated in Medicaid*, *parent received SSI benefits*, and *parent received other public assistance*. (For all four dummy variables, the reference was *parent received no public assistance*.) These four acted as controls during the data analysis, in light of the fact that before PRWORA's enactment, AFDC benefits were often augmented with other public benefits. Two variables were employed in the present study to describe immigrant parents' informal support. *Relatives' support to parent* indicated how much help from relatives an immigrant enjoyed upon arriving in the U.S., while *friends' support to parent* quantified how much help from friends an immigrant enjoyed upon arrival. A 3-point scale was used to measure the variables, higher scores indicating greater support: 1 (none), 2 (a little), 3 (a lot). Additionally, the continuous variable *parent length of residence* reported how many years a parent had lived in the U.S. following immigration; and the dichotomous variable *parent U.S. citizenship* noted whether a parent had attained U.S. citizenship by 1995. The variable *parent discrimination experiences* quantified encounters with discriminatory behavior or attitude a parent reported having, higher scores indicating more such encounters: 1 (rarely), 2 (occasionally), 3 (often).

For the present study, four demographic characteristics of parents were measured, *age* (in years), *female* (yes/no), *married* (yes/no), as well as ethnicity, represented by the dummy variables *White* (the reference), *Black*, *Hispanic*, *Asian*, and *other minority*. Three variables described each parent's socioeconomic status in 1995. While *parent family income* was measured via scores from 1 ($0 annually) to 15 ($200,000 or more annually), *employed* was dichotomous. Finally, *parent's educational level* was assigned a score as follows: 0 (no schooling), 1 (8th or lower grade completed), 2 (9th, 10th, and/or 11th grade completed), 3 (high school diploma), 4 (less than one year in vocational/trade school), 5 (between one and two years in vocational/trade school), 6 (more than two years in vocational/trade school), 7 (less than two years in college), 8 (more than two years in college), 9 (college degree), 10 (master's degree), and 11 (Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree).

All data for variables describing the adult children were collected in the third wave of interviews. Variables measured were *adult child's age* (in years); *adult child's female gender* (yes/no); *adult child's being married* (yes/no); *adult child's number of dependent children*; *adult child's employment* (yes/no); *adult child's education* [1 (some high school), 2 (high school diploma), 3 (between one and two years in vocational/trade school), 4 (associate's degree), 5 (three or more years in college), 6 (college degree), 7 (some graduate school), 8 (master's degree), 9 (doctoral/professional degree or other advanced degree)]; *adult child's family income* (annual), chosen from 12 responses ranging from "less than $5,000" to "$200,000 or more"; *adult child's U.S. citizenship* (yes/no); *adult child's length of residence* [1 (less than 5 years), 2 (5−9 years), 3 (10 years or more), 4 (all her/his life)].

The study also measured the three dichotomous variables *adult child's Wave-1 discrimination experiences*, *adult child's Wave-2 discrimination experiences*, and *adult child's Wave-3 discrimination experiences*; the three gauged these respondents' perceptions of being discriminated against at distinct points in time. Adult child's ethnicity was, in this study, identical to that of the corresponding parent participant.

Limitations

During the second interview wave, the parents of fewer than half of the initial respondents were surveyed. This fact limits the present study, in that it diminished the representativeness of the parent-child pairs' data. In the present study, a participating parent was usually (in 98.6% of pairs) the father or mother of a participating adult child, although a few pairs featured another relative who had been the child's guardian. A further limitation is that CILS did not report adult children's receipt of food stamps, Medicaid, or other public assistance. But TANF lacks the ties to other public assistance that AFDC featured (Daponte, Sanders, & Taylor, 1999; Mills, Dorai-Raj, Peterson, & Alwang, 2001; Thompson & Gais, 2000), making acceptable the present study's focus on, solely, adult children's TANF use. A third limitation of the present study is the extent to which CILS lacked data on states of residence for its sample of adult children. Without such data, impacts that state policies might have on immigrant families could not be explored, nor could state-level economic factors or demographics (e.g., poverty and unemployment rates; proportions of immigrants and U.S.–born) be considered, within the present analyses.

Data Analysis

Logistic regression was applied separately to two distinct models' outcome variables. The modeling of parents' AFDC use incorporated only those explanatory variables measured for parents; in turn, the modeling of adult children's TANF use incorporated the explanatory variables measured for them along with most such variables measured for parents. Preliminary analysis of the data for parents suggested no multicollinearity problems (correlation coefficients were $-.41 \leq r \leq .68$; tolerance statistics yielded $\geq .43$). Preliminary analysis did, however, show multicollinearity to exist when measures of parents' 1995 use of food stamps, Medicaid, SSI, or other public assistance were included in the modeling of adult children's TANF use. For that reason, only parents' 1995 AFDC use was included in regression modeling for adult children's TANF use. Moreover, when modeling the adult children's TANF use, two demographic variables were shown by preliminary analysis to be vulnerable to multicollinearity: Both *Asian* and *other minority* yielded tolerance statistics below .4 (correlations ranged from -.66 to .67). Despite this drawback, because the present researchers believed all data on ethnicity to be important for understanding welfare use, the compromised variables were ultimately included during the regression modeling.

Results

Of 2,087 parents studied, 13.3% had received AFDC in 1995 (see Table 1), while 14.7% had used food stamps, 20.8% had used Medicaid, 8.8% had received SSI, and 4.4% had received other public assistance; 72.1% had never used public assistance. Upon arriving in the U.S., only 7.0% of the parents received government assistance, with 13.8% receiving some type of nongovernment assistance; most (79.2%) had not received either. As they arrived in the U.S., the parents had received help from relatives at a level of 2.2 (a little), on average; and had received help from friends at an average level of 2.0 (again, a little). By 1995, 53.2% of the parents studied had become American citizens. On average, they had resided in the U.S. for 19 years. On average, they reported experiencing discrimination at a level of 1.8 (occasionally). Additionally, their average age was 46.4 years, their average education score was 5.1 (between one and two years in vocational/trade school), and their average annual family income measured 9.5 ($25,000−$34,999). Over 71% of the parents were employed, almost 81% were married, and 63.5% were mothers. Of the 2,087 adult children studied, only 2.1% had received TANF sometime during 2001–2003 (see Table 2). On average these children's annual family income measured 7.3 ($30,000−$34,999), their education level was 3.4 (between one and two years in vocational school or college), and their length of residence was 3.1 (10 year or more). Of the adult children studied, almost 61% were U.S. citizens. Furthermore, 55.8% reported in their Wave-1 interviews that they had experienced discrimination, 82.8% reporting the same during Wave-2 interviews, and 38.6% during Wave-3 interviews. Of the adult children, 59% were employed, 49.3% were female, and 15.0% were married. They were 24.8 years old, on average, and had an average of 0.5 children. By ethnicity, proportions for the studied parent-child pairs were as follows: 15.7% White, 6.3% Black, 20.4% Hispanic, 25.6% Asian, and 32.0% other minority.

Multivariate analysis confirmed that the hypothesized model of parents' AFDC use differed significantly from the null (-2*log-likelihood = 541.56; $p < .01$; see Table 3). Parents' likelihood of having used AFDC was associated positively with parents' use of food stamps (OR = 15.08; $p < .01$) and Medicaid (OR = 8.50; $p < .01$). Their likelihood of AFDC use was also associated positively with their receipt of nongovernment assistance as new arrivals in the U.S. (OR = 2.06; $p < .01$). AFDC use showed no association, however, with newly arrived parents' receipt of government assistance. Lesser likelihood of AFDC use was associated with parents who were employed (OR = .40; $p < .01$), had relatively more family income (OR = .84; $p < .01$), or were older (OR = .97; $p < .05$) and/or married (OR = .52; $p < .05$). For parents in the present study, Black ethnicity showed no association with likelihood of AFDC use; in turn, study respondents who were Hispanic (OR = 2.91; $p < .05$), Asian (OR = 11.16; $p < .01$), or of other minority ethnicity (OR = 6.06; $p < .01$) were more likely than White respondents to have used AFDC. Logistic regression confirmed that the hypothesized model of adult children's TANF use achieved statistical significance (-2*log-likelihood = 348.70; $p < .01$; see Table 4). It appears, then, that no explanatory variable used to describe the sample of parents was significantly associated with likelihood of welfare use by their adult children. For the sample of adult children, family income (OR = .84; $p < .01$) and being employed (OR = .44; $p < .05$) were associated negatively with likelihood of TANF use; while having relatively many of their own children (OR = 2.41; $p < .01$) was associated positively with TANF use. For this sample of adult children, the results showed Black, Hispanic, and Asian ethnicity to have no significant association with likelihood of welfare use. In turn, results showed other minority ethnicity to be linked to a TANF-use likelihood lower (OR = .10; $p < .01$) than that associated with White ethnicity.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of parents' variables (n=2,087)

Variables	Percent	Mean	Range	sd
AFDC use	13.3			
Received food stamps	14.7			
Participated in Medicaid	20.8			
Received SSI benefits	8.8			
Received other public assistance	4.4			
Received no public assistance	72.1			
Received government assistance upon arrival (yes)	7.0			
(no)	93.0			
Received nongovernment assistance upon arrival (yes)	13.8			
(no)	86.2			
Relatives' support to parent		2.2	1-3	.7
Friends' support to parent		2.0	1-3	.5
Length of residence (years)		19.0	1-51	8.3
U.S. citizenship (yes)	53.2			
(no)	46.8			
Discrimination experiences		1.8	1-3	.4
Age (years)		46.4	20-82	7.0
Female	63.5			
Male	36.5			
Married (yes)	80.8			
(no)	19.2			
White	15.7			
Black	6.3			
Hispanic	20.4			
Asian	25.6			
Other minority	32.0			
Family income		9.5	1-15	2.3
Employed (yes)	71.6			
(no)	28.4			
Educational level		5.1	0-11	3.2

Note: sd = standard deviation

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of adult children's variables (n=2,087)

Variables	Percent	Mean	Range	sd
TANF use (yes)	2.1			
(no)	97.9			
Length of residence (years)		3.1	1-4	.9
U.S. citizenship (yes)	60.9			
(no)	39.1			
Wave-1 discrimination experiences (yes)	55.8			
(no)	44.2			
Wave-2 discrimination experiences (yes)	62.8			
(no)	37.2			
Wave-3 discrimination experiences (yes)	38.6			
(no)	61.4			
Age (years)		24.8	23-28	.8
Female	49.3			
Male	50.7			
Married (yes)	15.0			
(no)	85.0			
Number of dependent children		.5	0-5	.5
Family income		7.3	1-12	2.2
Employed (yes)	59.0			
(no)	41.0			
Educational level		3.4	1-5	1.0

Note: sd = standard deviation

Table 3: Results of logistic regression on parent's AFDC use (n=2,087)

Variables	OR
Parent received government assistance upon arrival (no)	.57
Parent received nongovernment assistance upon arrival (no)	2.06**
Parent received food stamps (parent received no public assistance)	15.09**
Parent participated in Medicaid (parent received no public assistance)	8.50**
Parent received SSI benefits (parent received no public assistance)	1.39
Parent received other public assistance (parent received no public assistance)	1.86
Relatives' support to parent	1.11
Friends' support to parent	.77
Parent length of residence	.99
Parent U.S. citizenship (no)	.78
Parent discrimination experiences	1.06
Age	.97*
Female (male)	.68
Married (no)	.52*
Black (White)	1.86
Hispanic (White)	2.91*
Asian (White)	11.16**
Other minority (White)	6.06**
Parent family income	.84**
Employed (no)	.40**
Parent's educational level	.96
Constant	.28
-2*log-likelihood =	541.56**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; reference groups are in parentheses; OR = odds-ratios

Table 4: Results of logistic regression on adult child's TANF use (n=2,087)

Parent Variables	OR
Received government assistance upon arrival (no)	.187
Received nongovernment assistance upon arrival (no)	.424
AFDC use (no)	1.071
Length of residence	1.022
U.S. citizenship (no)	.705
Discrimination experiences	.546
Age	.970
Female (male)	1.143
Married (no)	.657
Black (White)	1.307
Hispanic (White)	.858
Asian (White)	1.965
Other minority (White)	.101**
Family income	.916
Employed (no)	1.539
Educational level	1.031
Adult Child Variables	
Length of residence	1.170
U.S. citizenship (no)	.746
Wave-1 discrimination experiences	.974
Wave-2 discrimination experiences	1.890
Wave-3 discrimination experiences	.903
Age	.940
Female (male)	1.457
Married (no)	1.037
Number of dependent children	2.414**
Family income	.837**
Employed (no)	.437*
Educational level	1.023
Constant	2.704
-2*log-likelihood =	348.70**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; reference groups are in parentheses; OR = odds-ratios

Discussion

In the present study, the parents' AFDC-use rate, at 13.3%, easily surpassed rates of 2.7%–4.3% obtained by national studies conducted in 1979, 1989, and 1991 (Bean et al., 1997; Van Hook et al., 1999). The present study also found a rate of TANF participation among the adult children that, at 2.1%, was well below the 18%–20% measured in 1999 for immigrants in metropolitan cities in three states (Fomby & Cherlin, 2004). These discrepancies are perhaps due to the present study's reliance on AFDC-use data from 1995 with simultaneous reliance on TANF-use data from 2001–2003. Moreover, while the cited 2004 study (Fomby & Cherlin, 2004) analyzed data representing three states that housed, according to the census bureau, just 17.3% of the nation's immigrants, the CILS data represented more than a third of *all* the nation's immigrant residents even though its sample came exclusively from California (where 25.4% of immigrants to the U.S. lived) and Florida (where 9.2% lived) (U. S. Bureau of Census, 2012). Compared to the 2004 study, then, the picture drawn by the CILS research may be more exact. The present study suggests that the immigrant parents studied received AFDC benefits at a rate nearly six times that at which their adult children received TANF benefits. A plausible explanation for this substantial generational difference lies in post-PRWORA welfare policies that restricted immigrants' access to benefits (Landry, 1996). There could, of course, be other intergenerational factors at play. However, in this study, from one generation to the next, education level and family income appeared fairly stable. The study found only weak parent-to-child correlations for education level ($r = .27$; $p < .01$) and family income ($r = .19$; $p < .01$).

Furthermore, the marital statuses of parents and adult children were not linked to each other to a degree of statistical significance. Such findings tend to challenge the culture of poverty and welfare culture models, with their assertions of intergenerational dependency stemming from repudiation of American norms of educational and financial success and of "family values" like marriage (Corcoran, 1995). In addition, the present study did not observe the two generations' experiences of discrimination to be significantly correlated. It seems probable that the adult children's experiences with schooling and peers were different from their immigrant parents'.

The present multivariate analysis partially supported the first hypothesis, that parents' welfare use would be associated negatively with receipt of informal support, being married, and being relatively well educated but associated positively with receipt of other public assistance, relatively numerous dependent children, longer U.S. residency, attainment of naturalized citizenship, relatively frequent discrimination experiences, and minority ethnicity. Results showed that, among the studied parents, use of AFDC was associated positively with use of food stamps and Medicaid, an anticipated result since before PRWORA's passage, AFDC eligibility automatically made one eligible as well for these and other supports. It is also implied, of course, that meeting one's family's basic needs, in other words, surviving required the additional assistance. On the other hand, accessing government assistance upon arriving in the U.S. showed no significant association, in this study, with immigrant parents' later AFDC enrollment; although having nongovernment assistance at that key time did. These results would seem to suggest that accepting initial government assistance need not promote later reliance on it. Nor did receipt of nongovernment assistance appear to lead to AFDC dependence, in this study. When newly arrived parents accepted such help, they did so out of need. The present analysis did not, in any significant way, link later AFDC use to receipt of relatives' or friends' support when immigrating. This contradicts some expectations of immigrants held by the U.S. government (U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2013a, 2013b). The present findings also support the idea that new immigrants typically receive little material assistance from relatives or friends, compared to U.S.-born Americans (Hao, 2003), belying the widespread conviction that immigrants arriving in the U.S. typically enjoy sufficient, even vigorous, material assistance from their associates in the new home.

Corroborating one prior study (Hao, 2003), the present study found AFDC participation to be relatively less likely among immigrant parents who were employed, married, and had relatively more family income. Unlike a single parent, of course, a married parent can belong to a dual-earner family, and second incomes no doubt lower a family's likelihood of AFDC participation. In addition, and also in line with earlier findings (Van Hook & Bean, 2009), the present study found non-White immigrants (excepting those who were Black) to be more likely than White to use AFDC. The present analysis included the creation and testing of individual interaction terms between each ethnicity and each of the three variables *being employed*, *being married*, and *family income*. None proved to have any significant association with parents' AFDC use. Contradicting prior findings (Hao, 2003), the present study observed no significant link between parents' AFDC use and their length of U.S. residency or citizenship status. The study also observed only insignificant links between the parents' AFDC use and their discrimination experiences, a further inconsistency between the present study and earlier findings (Lopez-Cevallos, 2014). Again, in this study, immigrant parents who were single parents needed AFDC's support to meet their families' basic needs; neither their citizenship nor their experiences of discrimination affected this financial reality.

The present findings offer little support for the second hypothesis, that adult children's welfare participation would be associated positively with their parents' welfare participation and education and discrimination experiences and with the number of the adult children's own dependent children, length of their own U.S. residency, their own citizenship status, their own discrimination experiences, and their own ethnicity; and associated negatively with their own education and marital status. Contradicting one prior study (Lee et al., 2008), no significant association was observed between the adult children's TANF use and their parents' AFDC use or indeed any of the explanatory variables describing the parents. The present findings imply that, among immigrants, intergenerational welfare use is uncommon, and intergenerational patterns of socioeconomic status and of family values are unlikely. Corroborating prior results for a general population (Cheng & Lo, 2014), the present study found employment to significantly reduce adult children's likelihood of using TANF. Further, it found such likelihood to be increased when family income was relatively low and number of children was relatively high, again supporting prior results (Hao, 2003). There is, in results such as these from the present study, the implication that individuals whose parents immigrated to the U.S. and who lack much human capital and who have relatively many dependent children will likely seek help in TANF.

TANF-use likelihood among the adult children studied here was not significantly linked to length of U.S. residence, to citizenship, or to discrimination experiences.

Once again, financial assistance was sought by those respondents clearly in need of that financial assistance; such help seeking would not be hindered by their immigrant status or discriminatory treatment/experience. One of the more striking present results was that immigrants identifying themselves as White were more likely to use TANF than were immigrants self-identified as other (non-Black, non-Hispanic, and non-Asian) ethnic minority. This interesting result points up a need for future research exploring whether any particular ethnicity constitutes a protective factor against immigrants' use of public assistance.

Conclusion

The present study of immigrant families examined family generations' use of welfare in the AFDC era as well as the later TANF era launched by the PRWORA and featuring new restrictions on the welfare-eligibility of immigrants. The study did not include analysis of evolving state TANF policies. It obtained for its adult-children sample, however, a TANF-participation rate substantially lower than the AFDC-participation rate obtained for its parents sample. The difference could well stem from restrictions on immigrants' TANF use enacted by states with PRWORA's passage. Yet any state decision to make immigrants ineligible for TANF during their initial five years of U.S. residence should be promptly overturned or at least reevaluated. The literature, including the present findings, simply lacks sound evidence that most (or even many) new immigrants have relatives and friends who are well-off enough to financially support the immigrants as they establish their families in America.

The present analysis, for instance, pegged as either nonexistent or weak statistical relationships observed between one generation's welfare use, socioeconomic status, and "family values" and the subsequent generation's. Such absent and not-significant relationships signal the insufficiency of the culture of poverty and welfare culture models—while some structural factors, like human capital, explain welfare use with some sufficiency (even though, in the present study, experienced discrimination failed to explain public assistance). Again, the literature contains at least one study of a general-population sample demonstrating an association between welfare participation and the social-economic environment, which the researchers measured using county unemployment rate and county racial composition (Cheng & Lo, 2014). In light of that association, future research should explore how immigrant families' welfare use is affected by state unemployment rates; proportions of state populations made up of immigrants and made up of U.S.-born; and, finally, state TANF policies. Moreover, future research should strive to detect and then compare by recipient race/ethnicity any patterns in factors that influence welfare use.

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