

PARENTAL WORK AND FAMILY POVERTY EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST SIX YEARS OF A CHILD'S LIFE

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BACKGROUND

What is known

- Globally, particularly in the US, parents are increasingly working at jobs that are precarious (e.g., nonstandard hours, low-wages, instability).
- Family economic lives have become increasingly unsecure and volatile.
- Families with relatively disadvantaged backgrounds are hit the hardest (e.g., low education, low skill, low wages).

What is unclear

- If there was an association between precarious parental work and family poverty experiences during early childhood?

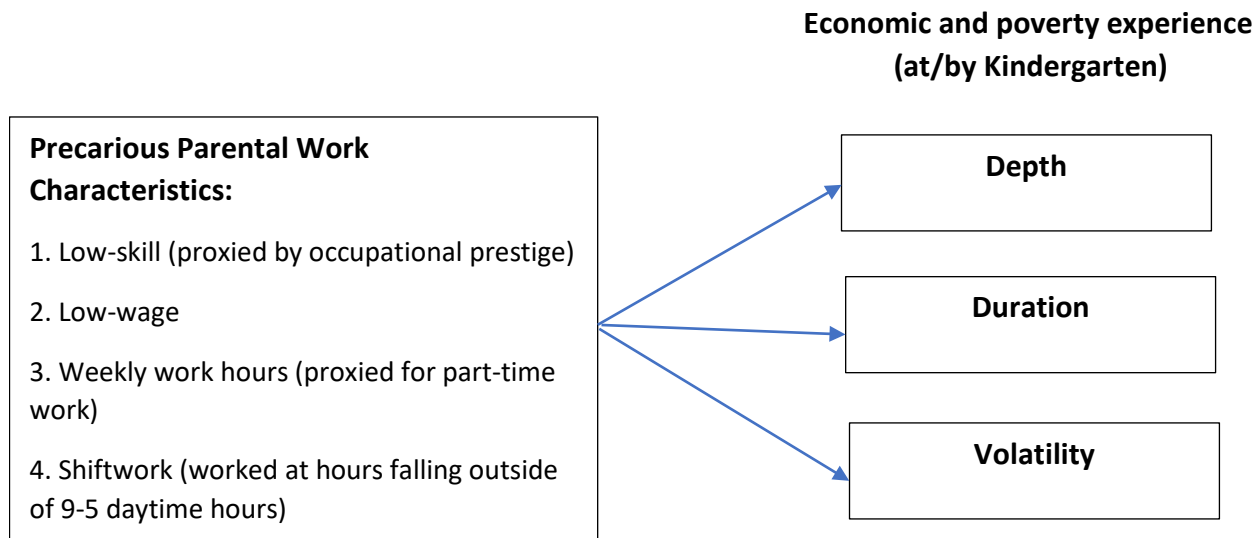
A Multi-Dimensional Approach to comprehend precarious parental employment and early childhood poverty and economic experiences

- **Economic Experience**: Depth (how far), Duration (how long), and volatility (rising or falling)
- **Precarious employment**: occupation (low-skill), work hours (part-time), schedules (nonday time hours), and wages (low-wage)



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- To examine the relationship between precarious parental work and families' poverty experience from 9-month to kindergarten.



Bottom-Line Hypothesis:

Children were more likely to experience poverty (e.g., near poor, poor, or extremely poor), to be in poverty longer, and/or to have more frequent changes in family income if their parents worked at jobs with at least one precarious characteristic





Data

- The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)

Participants

- Families with children born in the United States in 2001 ($N \approx 10,700$)
- Data were collected when children were about 9 months old, 2 years old, 4 years old (preschool age), and 6 to 7 years old (kindergarten age).

Empirical Strategy

- Latent Cluster Analysis (LCA) to examine the latent profiles of precarious parental employment
- Multivariate regressions with either OLS or Logit depending on the outcome

MEASURES

- **Poverty and Economic Experience (at/by kindergarten)**
 - **Depth:** corresponding to US federal poverty threshold
 - Extremely poor ($\leq 50\%$ of poverty threshold)
 - Poor ($> 50\%$ & $\leq 100\%$)
 - Near poor ($> 100\%$ & $\leq 200\%$)
 - Not-poor ($> 200\%$)
 - **Volatility:** number of income shocks
 - Stable (less than 33%)
 - Increasing (equal to or greater than 33%)
 - Decreasing (equal to or greater than -33%)
 - **Duration:** number of times in poverty between 9 month and kindergarten
- **Precarious Parental Employment Latent Profile** (at 9 months, 2 years, and preschool) separately by Mothers and Fathers
 - Work schedules
 - Occupation prestige score proxied for low-skill
 - Hourly wage proxied for low-wage
 - Weekly work hours proxied for part time work
- **Child and Family characteristics**



LATENT PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT PROFILE FOR MOTHERS — FIVE CLASSES

Class 1: intermittent employment in low-wage, low-skilled jobs with a mix of part- and full-time hours, and with a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules.

Class 2: mothers entering the labor force after the 9-month-old wave in low-wage, low-skilled jobs with a mix of part- and full-time hours, and with a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules.

Class 3: mothers entering the labor force after the two-year wave in low-skilled and low-wage part-time jobs with a lower prevalence of nonstandard schedules.

Class 4: consistent employment in mid-range wage, mid-range skilled full-time jobs with a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules.

Class 5 (the most favorable employment-related characteristics): consistent employment in high-wage, high-skilled full-time jobs with less prevalence of nonstandard schedules.



LATENT PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT PROFILE FOR FATHER – THREE CLASSES

Class 1: low-wage, low-skilled jobs with a mix of part- and full-time hours and with a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules; these fathers were also at risk of unemployment.

Class 2: having low- to mid-wage and skilled full-time jobs with a high prevalence of nonstandard schedules.

Class 3: having mid- to high-wage and skilled full-time jobs with a low prevalence of nonstandard schedules.



MULTIVARIATE REGRESSION RESULTS SNAPSHOT

- About half of the children in our sample were poor at some point during their early childhood, with varying depths of poverty.
- A sizable share of children also experienced strong fluctuations in family income, and some endured long-term poverty.
- In all our analyses, one message comes across clearly:
 - **Precarious employment characteristics that involve low wages, low skill levels, part-time work, or nonstandard schedules in the early years of a child's life are strongly associated with precarious family economic conditions by the time the child enters kindergarten.**
 - **At least two-thirds of the children in our sample had parents who worked at jobs with a certain degree of precarity.**
- For both the mother and the father, engaging in precarious employment significantly increased the probability of their child experiencing three types of economic stress:
 - (1) being near-poor, poor, or even extremely poor;
 - (2) having volatility in family income; and
 - (3) experiencing more spells of poverty.
- The only group of children who might be shielded from adverse economic circumstances are those whose parents hold high-wage, highly-skilled, full-time jobs, with few if any nonstandard hours.
- The so-called middle-class families in our sample were at reasonably high risk of falling into poverty, even if parental work included only one of the four characteristics of precarity studied, as was the norm in our sample.



SIMULATED PROBABILITIES OF BEING IN DIFFERENT POVERTY DEPTH BY MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S WORK PATTERNS

	Not Poor	Near Poor	Poor	Extremely Poor
M class 1 & F class 1	0.4612	0.2870	0.1783	0.0735
M class 1 & F class 2	0.5660	0.2710	0.1250	0.0379
M class 1 & F class 3	0.7722	0.1508	0.0514	0.0256
M class 2 & F class 1	0.4271	0.3464	0.1361	0.0904
M class 2 & F class 2	0.5290	0.3286	0.0956	0.0468
M class 2 & F class 3	0.7416	0.1866	0.0398	0.0321
M class 3 & F class 1	0.4224	0.2819	0.1861	0.1096
M class 3 & F class 2	0.5317	0.2746	0.1349	0.0588
M class 3 & F class 3	0.7455	0.1570	0.0567	0.0408
M class 4 & F class 1	0.5126	0.3382	0.1065	0.0427
M class 4 & F class 2	0.6059	0.3031	0.0704	0.0206
M class 4 & F class 3	0.7980	0.1612	0.0276	0.0131
M class 5 & F class 1	0.6986	0.1887	0.0877	0.0250
M class 5 & F class 2	0.7747	0.1589	0.0550	0.0113
M class 5 & F class 3	0.9011	0.0735	0.0192	0.0062

Note. Results are based on the multinomial logit results from Table 4. M = Mother; F = Father.





**BOTTOM-LINE
MESSAGE**

- **The significance of both the mother and the father's work characteristics to family resources and family stability.**
 - A family's economic prospects and poverty experiences in a two-parent family no longer depend on only one parent's—historically the father's—work, but upon both parents
- **Contexts matter**
 - The combinations of work hours, work schedules, wages, and occupation skills offer us a nuanced understanding of employment precariousness and how multilayered precarity may work against or with each other in shaping a family's poverty and economic experience.
- **The importance of poverty reduction strategies and prevention practices** that focus on (1) families' specific economic and poverty experiences, and (2) the multidimensional aspects of precarious parental employment that may shape families' poverty conditions.