

**“Mothers’ Investments in Child Health in the U.S. and U.K.: A Comparative Lens on the Immigrant  
‘Paradox’”**

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**Abstract:** Research on the “immigrant paradox”—healthier behaviors and outcomes among more socioeconomically disadvantaged immigrants—is mostly limited to the U.S. Hispanic population and to the study of birth outcomes. Using data from the Fragile Families Study and the Millennium Cohort Study, we expand our understanding of this phenomenon in several ways. First, we examine whether the healthier behaviors of Hispanic immigrant mothers extend to other foreign-born groups, including non-Hispanic immigrant mothers in the U.S. and white, South Asian, black African and Caribbean, and other (largely East Asian) immigrants in the U.K, including higher SES groups. Second, we consider not only the size of the paradox at the time of the child's birth, but also the degree of its persistence into early childhood. Third, we examine whether nativity disparities are weaker in the U.K., where a much stronger welfare state makes health information and care more readily accessible. Finally, we examine whether differences in mothers’ instrumental and social support both inside and out of the home can explain healthier behaviors among the foreign-born. The results suggest that healthier behaviors among immigrants are not limited to Hispanics or to low SES groups; that nativity differences are fairly persistent over time; that the immigrant advantage is equally strong in both countries; and that the composition and strength of mothers’ support plays a trivial explanatory role in both countries. These findings lead us to speculate that what underlies nativity differences in mothers’ health behaviors may be a strong parenting investment on the part of immigrants.