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# Using Factorial Survey Analysis to Examine Parents' Child Care Preferences

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Research from the Temple University Family Child Policy Collaborative

[www.temple.edu/fcpc](http://www.temple.edu/fcpc)



*Doing Research that Informs Policy*

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# Importance of understanding parental views of quality child care

- Three requisites for delivering quality child care
    - Availability
    - Affordability
    - Desirability
  - For care to be desirable, policy makers need to understand how parents define quality care
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## Most of what is known about parental choice is obtained by examining parent child care usage

- Low-income families more likely than higher income families to rely on kin and kith care
  - African American families tend to use center care at a higher rate than White or Latino families
  - Relative care is more common for Hispanic families
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In interviews, parents cite quality as a major consideration. Findings show

- Parents emphasize types and quality of interaction between child and caregiver
  - Parents place less emphasis on structural features of care
  - African American families may place special emphasis on the educational aspects of child care
  - More educated and higher income parents more likely to emphasize quality when choosing a child care situation
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## Limits on contemporary knowledge of how parents evaluate child care quality

- Findings on child care preferences reflect the child care market -- what's available to parents, not what they really want.
  - Parent decision-making reflects trade-offs among multiple child care characteristics.
  - Child care is a multidimensional phenomenon.
    - Characteristics come in bundles
    - characteristics can proxy for other characteristics.
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# Factorial survey approach

- Technique used to assess how people make judgments over multi-dimensional phenomena
  - Measure the value of individual attributes that contribute to a summative judgment
  - Used by sociologists to study definitions of sexual harassment, housing and neighborhood preferences, measures of household prestige
  - Enables us to separate competing influences among items that covary together across multiple factors
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# The vignette: the basic unit of analysis

This is a relative care arrangement not in your home that is a short distance from your job.

The arrangement is licensed and participates in Keystone Stars, a state-wide program that rates the quality of child care provided. The state Department of Education has given this program 3 out of a possible 4 stars for quality of care. It accepts subsidized children and does not offer care during the evenings and weekends.

The care provider has little training in child development. She has a lot of experience taking care of children. She is warm and strict. She acts like a school teacher with the children. Children get a lot of individual attention. The care provider speaks mostly Spanish with the children and is the same race/ethnicity as your child.

This child care meets state regulations for staff-child ratios. The children are in large groups.

The arrangement includes religious teaching. There are no planned daily activities. There are computers for the children. The care provider celebrates holidays and traditions of your own culture.

The care provider does not always make sure that everything is clean and safe. The children cared for are mostly Latino. The children are mostly from high income families.

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# Vignettes include dimensions and levels

- Dimension = category of variable

- Examples

- Child care type
    - Specialized training in child development
    - Group size

- Level = specific value within a dimension

- Examples

- Family day care, center day care, relative day care
      - Caregiver has specialized training; caregiver has little training in child development
      - The children are in small groups; the children are in large groups
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# More about factorial survey technique

- Dependent variables = ratings of desirability, willingness to pay, and fair price
    - Desirability: “How much would you like this child care for you and your family?”
  - Researchers identify the dimensions and levels
  - Computers generate the vignettes
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## Two studies with this technique

- One with 141 African American low income parents of preschoolers (Shlay, Tran, Weinraub, Harmon, 2005)
  - One with 93 White, African American and Hispanic welfare leaver parents of preschoolers (Shlay, 2008)
  - Each participant rated 30 vignettes
  - Reports available at [www.temple.edu/fcpc](http://www.temple.edu/fcpc)
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# Factorial survey advantages

- ❑ Sample size is considered 30 (number of vignettes each person rated) x n
    - because each vignette is considered independent
  - ❑ Can estimate contribution of dimension as well as level
    - Which dimensions are most important?
    - Can compare the impact of each level within the dimension
  - ❑ Can control for each participant's overall ratings for each individual rating
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# Dimensions of quality, according to 141 low income African American parents

- Most important
    - Safety/ sanitation practices
    - Frequency of caregiver-child interactions
    - Caregiver experience
  - Next most important
    - Caregiver's warmth and disciplinary attitude (warm and not strict)
    - Caregiver training
    - License status
    - Presence of curriculum
  - Least important or not at all important
    - Accreditation
    - Subsidy acceptance
    - Commute time from child care to work
    - Subsidy used of children
    - Type of care
    - Religiosity
    - In home or out of home care
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## Shared ratings of quality across 93 White, Hispanic, and African American welfare-leavers

- Important to all
    - Safety/ sanitation practices
    - Keystone STAR Rating (even if they hadn't heard of it before!)
    - Caregiver's warmth and disciplinary attitude
    - Children receiving a lot of individual attention
    - Meeting state regs for staff-child reactions
    - Presence of curriculum and planned activities
    - Presence of computers
  - Not important
    - Accreditation
    - Race and ethnicity of other children in the setting
    - Ability to provide extra hours of care on short notice
    - If caregiver acted like a teacher more than like a parent
    - Familiarity with provider
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# Preferences unique to African American parents

- Neighbor over relative care
  - Licensed over unlicensed care
  - Caregiver training in child development
  - Caregiver experience
  - Religious teaching
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# Preferences unique to White and Hispanic parents

- Important characteristics to White and Hispanic parents
    - Short distance from job
    - Accepts subsidized children
    - Caregiver does not speak mostly Spanish with children (as compared to mix of Spanish and English)
  - Important to Hispanic parents only
    - Care offered during evenings and weekends
    - Whether children are mostly white or mostly African American (rated lower if mostly white)
    - If caregiver had little experience taking care of children (negative)
  - Important to White parents only
    - Holiday and traditions celebrate holiday and traditions of many cultures, not just their own
    - Emphasis on letters and numbers
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# Implications

- Low income parents value similar qualities of care as child care experts
  - There is a great deal of consensus across race and ethnicity
  - Observed differences in childcare use by race and ethnicity may not be due to preferences for particular types of care but for bundles of characteristics people associate with chosen care situations.
  - Child care choices in real life may not reflect preferences so much as market constraints – issues of availability and affordability
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