

Paying the price: Constrained choice and the consumption of unregulated child care in Alberta ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online via Taylor & Francis Online ^[2]

Excerpted from abstract

In the absence of a universal, publically funded child care system, the majority of families with pre-school children in Canada depend on unregulated child care. In this study, we explore mothers' strategic and rationalized decision to use unregulated care in the context of a child care 'non-system'. Using the province of Alberta as a case study, drawing upon data from 15 focus groups with 109 mothers in urban and rural locations, we problematize and extend the relationship between cost and quality in the context of informal, unregulated care – where care is provided by family and friends at little-to-no cost – and examine the non-economic and economic costs of this type of care. Describing their experiences, mothers were conscious of the price they were paying: the choice to use informal, unregulated care resulted in non-economic and economic trade-offs in terms of relationships with caregivers, the quality of care provided, and maternal labour force attachment. We show how mothers' options for both quality child care and satisfactory labour market attachment are constrained.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: licensing ^[4]

female labour force participation ^[5]

unregulated care ^[6]

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