

Profiles of choice: Parent's patterns of priority in child care decision-making ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Abstract: Responding adequately to parental priorities for child care is important for shaping children's early experiences and development, and for facilitating parenting at the nexus of work and caregiving roles. Although much research on child care choice has relied on variable-centered approaches that treat parental priorities as distinct and isolated, this article aims to understand parents' care choices from a person-centered, holistic perspective. Using data from the National Household Education Survey of Early Childhood Program Participation of 2005 (n = 4570), we conduct latent class and multinomial logistic regression analyses, identifying four empirically and substantively distinctive classes of parents based on their scores on seven indicators of child care priority. Class 1 parents (35%) rank all seven indicators as very important. Class 2 parents (18%) prioritize practicality factors. Class 3 parents (9%) do not, on average, rank any of the indicators as highly important. Class 4 parents (37%) emphasize learning and quality-focused factors. Class membership is associated with child's age, race/ethnicity, and parent respondent's gender, age, employment status, and socio-economic status. After controlling for socio-demographic factors, parents in the learning-focused class are more likely to choose center-based cares whereas practicality-focused parents prefer home-based relative or non-relative care arrangements.

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