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Child Care as 'Concerted Cultivation':

Parenting Orientation and Child Care Arrangements for Preschoolers

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ABSTRACT

As family structures and work schedules change, non-parental child care has become a necessary resource for parents with young children, with parents using a variety of forms of care. Because child care arrangements differ in their characteristics and quality, work and family researchers have devoted a good deal of attention to examining what determines the types of arrangements parents use. The purpose of this paper is to examine parents’ choices of early childhood non-parental care arrangements using social class status and parenting orientation as predictors of the likelihood of spending time in different types of child care. Drawing on Lareau’s parenting orientation typologies, I argue that middle-class parents will be more likely than working class parents to engage in educational activities with their children as these are manifestations of a cultural logic of parenting Lareau referred to as ‘concerted cultivation’. I then argue that those parents engaged in concerted cultivation will be more likely to choose formal child care arrangements as these are educationally based, typically mimicking the school environment. The results indicate that parenting orientation may operate such that parents engaging in concerted cultivation are actually less likely to use any non-parental care at all.
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As family structures and work schedules change, more and more children are spending a significant portion of their day in non-parental care. Recent estimates state that 64 percent of mothers with children under the age of six and 77 percent of mothers with school-age children were in the labor force (NAEYC 2006). In 1999, 73 percent of children under the age of five with an employed parent were in some form of non-parental care. For preschool age children, 28 percent were in center-based care, 27 percent were being cared for by relatives, 14 percent were in family child care homes, 14 percent were being cared for primarily by nannies or babysitters, and 27 percent were being cared for primarily by their parents (NAEYC 2006). Clearly, child care has become a necessary resource for parents with young children, with parents using a variety of forms of non-parental child care.

This paper examines parents’ choices of early childhood non-parental care arrangements using social class status and parenting orientation as predictors of the likelihood of spending time in different types of child care. Using data from the 2001 National Household Education Surveys Early Childhood Program Participation study, I first test the relationship between parenting activities and measures of social class status. According to Lareau (2002), middle-class parents should be more likely than working-class parents to emphasize cognitive development in their young children. So, drawing on Lareau’s (2002, 2003) parenting orientation typologies, I argue first that middle-class parents will be more likely than working-class parents to engage in educational activities with their children as these are manifestations of a cultural logic of parenting Lareau (2002) referred to as ‘concerted cultivation’. I then argue that those parents engaged in concerted cultivation will be more likely to choose formal child care arrangements as
these are educationally based, typically mimicking the school environment (Clarke-Stewart and Allhusen 2005). Working-class parents who are not engaged in educational activities with their child will be considered to be engaging in the cultural logic of parenting Lareau (2002) referred to as ‘the accomplishment of natural growth’. When working-class parents are engaged in the accomplishment of natural growth I would expect them to rely on informal child care arrangements as these are less structured, less likely to be focused on education.

This paper provides a test of Lareau’s parenting orientation typologies in research on social class and patterns in family life by applying her conceptualizations to quantitative data. The results of this study could inform policy makers in implementing programs designed to increase parental awareness of early childhood education by providing a greater understanding of who is choosing which kinds of child care. Child care choices vary in their characteristics and level of quality and not all child care choices are equally beneficial for children. Experts cite the importance of early care in the growth and development of young children and argue that the child care environment has a profound impact on later life outcomes (Campbell 1986, 1994, 1995, 2002; NICHD Child Care Research Network 2002; Burchinal et al 1996). Findings from large studies of children attending high quality centers show an increase in later school performance and higher scores on social-emotional and cognitive development measures (Peisner-Feinberg et al 2000; Campbell and Ramey 1994; Campbell et al 2002). Thus, knowing where the children are has important policy implications.
Child Care Choices

When choosing non-parental care for their children, parents must decide between what I refer to as “informal care” and “formal care”. Informal arrangements are those that are not regulated by the state, including care provided by family, friends, neighbors, and babysitters. Formal care arrangements are those arrangements that are regulated by the state, including licensed child care centers, preschool programs, and Head Start programs. These types of child care arrangements differ on a number of characteristics, including their size, presence of educational curriculum, caregiver qualifications, caregiver to child ratios, and age groupings of the children. In choosing child care parents are constrained by what they can afford and what is available them. Even so, studies controlling for cost and availability have found other factors, such as age, race/ethnicity, and childrearing ideology, to be important in determining the types of arrangements parents choose.

Both child and family-level characteristics influence parents’ choices of non-parental child care arrangements. For example, the child’s age significantly predicts the use of different types of non-parental care, with infants and toddlers more likely to be in informal care arrangements and children age three to five more likely to be in center-based arrangements (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000; Ehrle, Adams, and Tout 2001). Estimates from the National Survey of America’s Families (1997) indicate that only 22 percent of children under the age of three with working parents are in center-based care, as opposed to 45 percent of children ages three and four with working parents.
Race and ethnicity also significantly influence child care choice, with African American families relying more on center-based arrangements than either whites or Hispanics (Fuller et al 1996). Hispanic families are more likely to utilize relative care than either African Americans or whites (Capizzano et al 2000). According to estimates from the National Survey of America’s Families (1997, 1999), 44 percent of Black children in families where each resident parent works are in a center-based child care arrangement, as opposed to 32 percent of white children and 28 percent of Hispanic children.

Income has been discussed as a factor predicting child care use because of its ability to constrain choices, but income alone doesn’t account for all of the variation. Shlay et al (2005) cited findings that low-income families are more likely to rely on kin and kith care, and argued that this is a product of their inability to pay for more formal options. However, the influence of income may be due to its association with other factors of social class status, such as parental education. Johansen, Leibowitz, and Waite (1996) found that mothers with higher levels of education are more likely to emphasize their own child’s education and are more likely to use center-based care.

The differences between race and ethnic groups could be, at least in part, the product of income disparities, but could also be a product of cultural differences in child rearing beliefs. Indeed, Fuller, Holloway, and Liang (1996) find that after considering family income and mother’s employment status, social structural and parental practices appear to play a more influential role and it is these differences between black, white, and Hispanic families that drives the differences in child care choices. Utall (1999) found that Mexican-American and African-American mothers were more likely to approve of
the use of relative care, even when they didn’t use it themselves, whereas white mothers thought using relative care was inappropriate, even when they were using it. Mexican-American women sought caregivers that were also Mexican-American, in order to match the home culture with the culture of the caregiver (Utall 1996).

Several authors have linked what they consider parenting ideology to the use of one form of child care over another (Mason and Kuhlthau 1989; Rapp and Loyd, 1989; Kuhlthau and Mason 1996). Their conceptualizations of parenting ideology are based on gender-role ideology. The basic argument is that mothers with a more traditional gender-role orientation will show a preference for parent-only care or informal care. Rapp and Lloyd (1989) found that mothers who espoused what they termed a “home as haven” ideology were more likely to use family day care. Mason and Kuhlthau (1989) found that mothers espousing egalitarian gender views are less likely to prefer exclusive parental care than are women who hold more traditional gender attitudes. These findings highlight the significance of factors other than affordability and availability in the choice of non-parental care. Even when controlling for income and work hours, these beliefs had a significant impact on child care use. However, it should be noted that their conceptualizations of parenting ideologies, or “home as haven” ideologies, were based entirely on gender-role ideologies. They measured these attitudes using gender-attitudes scales. Thus these preferences for child care arrangements appear to have more to do with beliefs about the proper place of women than about how children should be raised, per se.

Obviously parents are attempting to balance not only availability and affordability, those things termed “extrinsic” characteristics by Johansen, Leibowitz, and
Waite (1996), but also factors such as the values and attitudes of the provider and their definition of the role of child care in their children’s lives. These previous findings indicate that child care choice could stem more from parenting orientation than the availability and affordability of arrangements. While some have examined measures of socioeconomic status in relation to child care choice, I contend that socioeconomic status is related to parenting orientation, which in turn predicts child care choice.

**Using Social Class to Predict Parenting**

Socioeconomic status in the family of origin is one of the strongest predictors of later educational outcomes and occupational status attainment. The impact of social class is passed from parent to child, not only as the advantages gained as a result of economic resources, but also in the form of cultural capital. Bourdieu described cultural capital as “cultural goods and services including educational services” and also encompassing as “verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, and information about the school system” (Swartz 1997: 74-75). In short, parents of differing social classes differ in the level and type of cultural knowledge they draw upon when raising their children.

Kohn and Schooler (1969) argued that the qualities that parents of any social class background wish to instill in their children are those they believe will be most valuable in the workforce. Their findings indicate that working-class parents tend to emphasize conformity and discipline, characteristics that, because of their position in the occupational structure, were imperative to their success in the workplace. Middle-class
parents tend to emphasize assertiveness and self-direction in their children, characteristics that are necessary for success in the professional workplace.

Consistent with Kohn and Schooler's findings, Lareau (2003) also noted differences in the attitudes and behaviors of working- and middle-class parents. Lareau observed that poor, working-class, and middle-class parents organized key areas of family life – daily life, language use, and interventions in institutions – in different ways. Lareau identified two different cultural logics of parenting: "concerted cultivation", the parenting orientation of the middle-class families in her study, and "the accomplishment of natural growth", the parenting orientation of the working-class and poor families in her study. Concerted cultivation requires a "deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children’s development and to cultivate their cognitive skills" (Lareau 2002, 773). Working-class parents engaging in the accomplishment of natural growth viewed their children’s development as "spontaneously unfolding, as long as they were provided with comfort, food, shelter, and other basic support" (Lareau 2002, 773).

Lareau (2002) attributes the differences in parenting behaviors between working- and middle-class parents to different cultural logics that parents employ when raising their children. These different parenting orientations reflect how each group of parents defines their roles as parents in the lives of their children. Without devaluing the parenting styles of other group, Lareau (2003) asserts that these differences lead to the transmission of differential advantages in children.

Concerted cultivation, the parenting orientation of the middle-class, entails a "deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children’s development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills" (Lareau 2003, 238). Middle-class parents believe that it is
important to find their child’s talents and help their child develop their talents through after school lessons and activities. As a result, middle-class children spend less time socializing with other children in unstructured settings and spend less time during non-school hours choosing their own activities. Further, middle-class children spend more time interacting with non-related adults (tutors, coaches), allowing these children to be comfortable conversing with adults and asserting themselves in the adult world.

In contrast, working-class parents employing the parenting orientation Lareau (2003) termed the accomplishment of natural growth define their roles in their children’s lives somewhat differently; they do not believe that their children need to be cultivated. For working-class children, life tends to be structured less around adult-directed activities. Working-class children spend a great deal of time in self-directed activities: playing outside in their neighborhoods with other neighborhood children, visiting with cousins, watching television. They participated in far fewer formal extracurricular activities and their social circles were more likely to include children of varying ages from their neighborhoods and family members. “The cultural logic of the accomplishment of natural growth grants children an autonomous world, apart from adults, in which they are free to try out new experiences and develop important social competencies” (Lareau 2003, 67).

In the area of family life that Lareau termed “interventions in institutions” differences in middle-class and working-class parents were pronounced; nowhere was this more obvious than in the schools (Lareau 2000). Middle-class parents approach teachers with confidence and at times a sense of superiority. They are quick to question a teacher’s methods when they disagree and are very likely to be “in the know” when it
comes to their child’s school and education (Lareau 2000). Their status affords them the
cultural capital necessary to converse with their child’s teachers and other professionals
with confidence. Their efforts pay off when their children are privileged with the good
teachers, special services, or gifted programs.

For working-class families dealings with the schools are far less positive and
often riddled with a sense of distrust and anxiety. Their sense of inferiority, as a result of
their status and lack of cultural capital, leaves them feeling vulnerable. Feeling that they
lack the specialized knowledge of the teachers they are at once dependent on these
institutions to educate their children and powerless to effect any changes when they see
fit (Lareau 2000). As a result, they are much less likely to intervene on their child’s
behalf when something is not right and when they do intervene they are far less
successful at getting their needs, and the needs of their children, met.

The belief in the need to “cultivate” children can be found elsewhere in
mainstream childrearing manuals and magazines. Parents are taught that a lack of
stimulation can be devastating for a child’s development. According to one well known
parenting expert, “without the advantage of a stimulating, individualized environment in
infancy, a child’s future development will be impaired” (Brazelton 1983a p.32 in Hays
1996 p. 59). Mothers are instructed to talk to their infants constantly in order to insure
their proper cognitive development (Hays 1996). Lareau’s findings indicate that this
carries over into middle-childhood as middle-class parents engage their children in
lengthy discussion, encouraging them to communicate and express their ideas. Physical
punishment is strongly discouraged, and parents are instead encouraged to reason with
their young child (Hays 1996). This, too, was cited by Lareau as another indication of “concerted cultivation”.

Although many have linked social class, parenting behaviors, and the transmission of privilege, these studies have looked mainly at the behaviors of parents of older children, those in middle- or high school, and able to engage in many outside enrichment activities. The same logic that guides these parents as they communicate with teachers in parent-teacher conferences, encourage children to participate in sports or other enrichment activities, and choose one form of discipline over another guides the parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as well. Although Lareau (2002) discusses the interaction of working- and middle-class parents with the school system and points to the importance of enrichment activities in middle childhood in the passing on of privilege, the process begins much sooner. The parenting orientations discussed by Lareau are manifestations of a reliance on a specific cultural logic of parenting which includes a set of beliefs about what children need and what parents are supposed to do and would be present long before middle-childhood. Thus, the choices parents make regarding their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers would also be based on a particular parenting orientation.

**Parenting Orientations and Non-Parental Care in Early Childhood**

If child care can be understood as the outsourcing of one’s parenting, then it only makes sense that the child care a parent selects will be an outgrowth of their cultural logic of parenting. For parents engaged in concerted cultivation, this should result in a reliance on formal, center-based child care arrangements. Research on child care quality and
child development has shown that child care centers are more likely than family day care or home care settings to have an educational curriculum, age-appropriate toys, and staff with training in early childhood education (Johansen, Leibowitz, and Waite 1996). Thus the use of formal child care arrangements is consistent with the middle-class parenting orientation of concerted cultivation in that it favors structured activities and is educationally based. The use of formal child care arrangements demonstrates a trust of institutions and a belief that children’s cognitive and social development needs to be cultivated.

In contrast, the use of informal child care arrangements is consistent with the use of working-class parenting orientation of the accomplishment of natural growth. Use of informal care demonstrates both a distrust of institutions and a reliance on a belief that children’s growth and development will proceed as long as they are supervised and their basic needs are met. Thus, my hypothesis states that parents engaged in concerted cultivation will be more likely to be using formal, center-based child care arrangements than parents who are engaged in the accomplishment of natural growth. Parents engaged in the accomplishment of natural growth will be more likely than parents engaged in concerted cultivation to be using informal child care arrangements.

METHODS

Data
The data for this study come from the 2001 National Household Education Survey’s Early Childhood Program Participation (ECPP) study. This study was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) using random digit dial telephone
surveys of households in the United States. The 2001 administration of the NHES ECPP was conducted from January 2, 2001 through April 14, 2001 by Westat. The survey gathered information on the non-parental care and early childhood education program participation of 6,749 children ages birth through six who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten or a higher grade.

The respondent was the adult living in the household who was most knowledgeable about the child’s care and education. Typically, this was the mother of the child, but the respondent could have been the father, a stepparent, an adoptive parent, a foster parent, a grandparent, another relative, or non-relative designated as the most knowledgeable household member. The survey collected information on all of the child’s current, regular care arrangements, including care by relatives, care by persons not related to the child, and care in a day care center or preschool, including Head Start programs. All respondents were asked basic demographic questions about the child, questions about the child’s health and disability status, questions about parent/guardian characteristics, and questions about household characteristics. Respondents were then routed to either an infant path, for children newborn through two years of age, or a preschool path, for children age three or older but not yet enrolled in kindergarten. Respondents on both the infant and preschool paths were asked about early childhood care and programs, program continuity, parental perceptions of the quality of arrangements, factors in parental choice of arrangement, literacy-related skills and activities, and participation in training and support for parents and families. Parents of children who were not enrolled in a center-based program were not asked about the characteristics of or the quality of their programs.
The survey was completed for 6,749 children but 3,599 of those children were infants and toddlers. Because four out of the five items used to measure parenting orientation were only asked of preschool age children (those ages three through six but not yet in kindergarten), this analysis only includes the 3,150 preschool-age children. Within the preschool-age sub-sample 64 children were being cared for by guardians (no mother or father in the household). Because several of the variables in the analysis are of parent characteristics, such as parent education level, hours parents worked per week, and age of parents, these 64 cases had missing data on too many important variables to be included in the analysis. The final sample size for the analysis was 3,086.

Measures

Different household compositions and work schedules result in differing levels of need for non-parental child care. When a household has two parents and both work, it is highly likely that they will need to rely on some form of non-parental care. In single-parent families, the only parent present often must work to support the household, leaving no other parent available to care for the child(ren). For this reason the sample was divided into sub-groups based on household composition and work arrangements in order to compare the outcomes for these families with one another and with the results for the sample as a whole.

When the respondent indicated that both the mother and father were present and that both worked at least part-time, the family was considered a dual-earner family. The dual-earner category included 1,388 families, comprising 45.0 percent of the sample. Families with two parents in the household where one worked outside of the home at
least part time and the other stayed home were included as two-parent with one parent at home families. This category contained 997 families, comprising 32.3 percent of the sample. Out of those 997 families with an at-home parent, in 917 cases it was the mother who stayed home.

Families with only one parent present were categorized as single-parent families. There were 646 single-parent families (20.9 percent of the sample), and about 91 percent of those were single-mother families. The working status of the parent in single-parent households was not included as a criterion for inclusion in this sub-group. However, it should be noted that within the single-parent group there were 179 single-mothers and 7 single-fathers who were either looking for work or not in the labor force at the time of the survey. In addition, there were 55 two-parent families where neither parent was working at the time of the survey. Thus the subgroups only add up to 3,031 cases. Because this situation is rare and usually transitional, these families were not examined separately but were included in the analysis of the whole sample.

Type of Child Care Arrangement

The NHES ECPP study collected data on relative, non-relative, and center-based care. The survey allowed for more than one child care arrangement to be recorded and recorded the characteristics of each child care arrangement. However, because the focus of this analysis is on the use of formal and informal arrangements, all children who spent time in a center-based program, including Head Start programs, were coded as enrolled in formal care. Children who spent time in relative and/or non-relative care, but not center care, were coded as in informal care. Because of the way this variable was constructed, it
is possible that some of the children coded as “formal care” were also being cared for in relative and/or non-relative care at the same time. This overlap is not problematic, however, because the assumption is that parents who are engaged in concerted cultivation will seek out formal care arrangements for their child, in order for their child to enjoy the socialization and educational benefits of such an arrangement. Whether or not they also supplement that arrangement with an informal arrangement is inconsequential for these purposes. The informal child care arrangement category includes only those children in informal arrangements ONLY, and those said to be in parent-only care relied on no formal or informal type of arrangement.

The distribution over informal, formal, and no non-parental care is shown in Table 1. Of the 3,086 included in this analysis, 60.6 percent of the children were enrolled in a formal child care program, 15.3 were in informal child care arrangements only, and 24.1 percent were being cared for exclusively by their parents. The use of informal, formal, and parent-only child care varied across the family subgroups. Dual-earners and single-parents utilized non-parental care more frequently than did two-parent families with one parent at home. For dual-earners, 67.4 percent relied on formal care and 20.2 percent relied solely on informal care. Single-parent families were similar, with 61.8 percent using formal care and 21.1 percent relying on informal care arrangements.

It is interesting to note that 18.5 percent of dual-earner families used parent-only care. Families in the dual-earner group were thought to be highly in need of non-parental child care. For these cases, it is apparent that the parents had arranged their schedules so that one would always be home. The single-parent families also had a higher than expected percentage of children in parent-only care (17.2 percent), as they were also a
group thought to be at a higher risk for needing to use non-parental child care. However, that 32 percent of the single-parents in the study were either looking for work (10 percent) or not in the labor force (22 percent) makes it plausible that 17.2 percent of the children in single-parent families were at home with a parent.

Table 1: Percent of preschool-age children in Informal, Formal, and Parent-Only Child Care Arrangements, 2001 NHES ECPP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Dual-Earners</th>
<th>At-Home Parent</th>
<th>Single-Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Only</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Child Characteristics*

Previous studies have indicated that preschool-age children in general are more likely to be found in center-based care than are infants and toddlers (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000; Ehrle, Adams, and Tout 2001). Although this analysis only includes preschool-age children, age was still included as a control variable because the likelihood of being in a formal arrangement increases with age. This is based on the fact that many public preschool programs serve only four to five year olds (pre-kindergarten) and have the goal of getting children ready for kindergarten. Table 2 below shows that the mean age of children in the sample was 3.69 years.

Race and ethnicity also influence the use of different types of care arrangements (Fuller et al 1996; Capizzano et al 2000). The child’s race/ethnicity was measured using a dichotomous variable and equaled “1” if the child was white, non-Hispanic and “0” otherwise. Table 2 shows that for the entire sample of 3,086 children, 58.7 percent were white, non-Hispanic. For dual-earners and two-parent families with an at-home parent
these figures were higher, 67.7 and 61.0 percent, respectively. For single-parent families, the percent white dropped to 37.0.

Gender was also included as a control variable in the analysis because of the potential for parents to treat children differently according to their gender. For the sample of 3,086 and for all of the subgroups the percent female was approximately fifty percent, as would be expected.
Table 2: Descriptive statistics for variables in analysis of the use of parent-only, informal, and formal child care, 2001 NHES ECPP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Families</th>
<th>Dual-Earners</th>
<th>At-Home Parent</th>
<th>Single-Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (%white)</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%female)</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Age</td>
<td>32.22</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>32.93</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Age</td>
<td>35.19</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>35.25</td>
<td>6.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>34.62</td>
<td>9.61</td>
<td>33.41</td>
<td>12.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>46.16</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>45.64</td>
<td>10.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total HH Income</td>
<td>55,175</td>
<td>42,168</td>
<td>66,828</td>
<td>40,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=&lt;HS; 5=Grad/Prof.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=&lt;HS; 5=Grad/Prof.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Children &lt;6yrs in HH</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># older siblings in HH</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Orientation Index</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Class Variables

Social class was measured using total household income, mother’s highest level of education, and father’s highest level of education. Total family income was included in the analysis as a control variable, as it accounts for part of the variation in social class status and indicates what child care arrangements a family can afford. Family income was measured using total household income, which was measured using categories for ranges of income mid-point of each category. The highest category, “Over $100,000” was recoded to $150,000. For the entire sample, total household income had a mean of $55,175. Income varied as expected between the groups, with dual-earners having the highest average income ($66,828) and single-parent families the lowest ($30,080).

Another indicator of social class status is educational attainment. Johansen, Leibowitz, and Waite (1996) based their study on the assumption that mothers with higher levels of education would place a higher value on their child’s education than mothers with lower levels of education. In the present study, both mother’s and father’s levels of education were included as controls in the analytic model. Parental education was measured using a variable that indicated levels of education from less than high school (“1”), high school graduate or equivalent (“2”), vocational or technical degree or some college (“3”), college degree (“4”), through graduate or professional degree (“5”). In cases where only one parent was present in the household, the other was recoded to the mean. This resulted in imputed values for mother’s level of education for 58 cases (recoded to mean of 2.86) and father’s level of education for 588 cases (recoded to mean of 2.90).
Table 2 above presents the mean scores for parents’ levels of education for the entire sample and across family groups. The entire sample had a mean of 2.86 for mothers and 2.90 for fathers, meaning that on average mothers and fathers in the sample had an education level somewhere between a high school diploma and some college. Dual-earner parents had higher levels of education; mothers in dual-earner families had a mean of 3.14 and fathers had a mean of 2.94. In two-parent families with an at-home parent, mothers had a mean of 2.79 and fathers had a mean of 2.91. In single-parent families, mothers had a mean of 2.45 and fathers had a mean of 2.87.

*Parent and Family Characteristics*

Other parent and family level-characteristics are thought to influence the use of non-parental child care. The hours that parents work, the availability of others in the household who could have provided care, and the presence of other young children in the home could all influence the choices parents make regarding child care. The number of hours that each parent worked per week for both parents were included in the analysis. In two-parent families where one parent stayed home (most often the mother), the at-home parents’ work hours were recoded to the mean. This was also done in single-parent families, in which case it was most often the father. This resulted in imputed values for the mothers’ mean work hours of 34.62 in 1,209 cases, 917 of which occurred when the mother was the at-home parent in a two parent household, 55 when the both parents in a two parent household stayed home, and 58 when the mother was absent from the household (the remaining 179 occurred when a mother was present in the household and working at least part-time but had missing data on the number of hours she worked). For
fathers, a total of 730 cases were recoded to the fathers’ mean work hours of 46.15, 588 of which occurred when the father was absent from the household and 80 when the father was the parent at home in a two-parent family with an at-home parent (the remaining seven occurred when the father was present in household and working at least part time but was missing data on the number of hours he worked). Table 2 shows that the mean hours worked per week for mothers in the entire sample was 34.62 and for fathers was 45.15. In the analysis of the entire sample, binary controls for single-parent families or intact families with a stay-at-home parent (the reference category consists of dual-earner families) serve as controls for mean assignment on measures of parental work hours.

The number of children under the age of six in the household was included as a control in the analysis because the presence of other young children in the household who also need child care could pose a greater expense and influence the choice of care. The mean number of children under the age of six in the household for the entire sample was 1.52. For dual-earners, the mean was 1.46, for two-parent families with an at-home parent the mean was 1.64, and for single-parent families the mean was 1.45.

The number of older siblings in the household was also controlled. Older siblings were considered to be those between the ages of ten and eighteen years. This measure was included in the analysis because older siblings could serve as an alternative source of non-parental care and thus influence choice of care. However, the average number of older siblings in the household was low. For the entire sample the mean was .35, for dual-earners the mean was .31, and for two-parent families with an at-home parent and single-parent families the mean was .39.

*Parenting Orientation*
The parenting orientation index was designed to capture the presence of concerted cultivation. This was measured with an index composed of educational activities that parents may have done with their child throughout the past week. The index included questions asking how often parents read to their child, told stories to their child, did crafts with their child, taught music or songs to their child, and taught letters, numbers, or words to their child. The question asking respondents about reading to their child was phrased, “How many times have you or someone in your family read to (CHILD) in the past week?” and respondents were given the choice of “Not at all”, “Once or twice”, “Three or more times”, or “Everyday” as responses. For the questions on stories, crafts, music and songs, and letters, numbers, and words, the questions respondents were asked, “In the past week, has anyone in your family done the following things with (CHILD). . . . Told (HIM/HER) a story? . . . Taught (HIM/HER) letters, words, or numbers? . . . Taught (CHILD) music or songs? . . . Worked on arts and crafts with (HIM/HER)?”. When respondents indicated that they or someone in the family had done one of those things with the child, they were asked if this occurred “One or two times” or “Three or more times”.

The scoring of the responses resulted in possible scores of zero to three for the question about reading and zero to two for the rest of the questions. In order to create a scale where all variables were measured the same, I collapsed the last two response categories of the reading question into one, so that if the respondent indicated that they or someone in their family had read to the child three or more times or everyday, these were scored as “2”. All measures then had responses that ranged from zero to two and the entire scale had a range of zero to ten.
The higher the score on the index, the more often parents were engaging in the above activities with their children. A high score indicated that parents were engaged in concerted cultivation. The absence of concerted cultivation behaviors was considered equivalent to the presence of the accomplishment of natural growth, as the accomplishment of natural growth is defined by the belief that children’s development will unfold on its own without intervention. Thus, a low score on the index indicates that they were engaged in the accomplishment of natural growth. The scale had an alpha of .6 and factor analysis revealed that all five indicators load onto one factor.

The mean scores on the concerted cultivation index across family groups are given in Table 2 above. The scores ranged from zero to ten, and the entire sample of 3,086 had a mean of 7.47. Out of the subgroups, dual-earner families had the highest mean score (7.54), two-parent families with a stay-at-home parent had a mean of 7.53, and single-parent families scored the lowest with a mean of 7.22. The only difference that was statistically significant was that between single-parent families and all others (t-tests not shown).

Analysis

Parenting orientation was argued to be a manifestation of a cultural logic of parenting that is specific to social class. Ordinary least squares regression was used to assess the relationships between the social class variables and the parenting index. All variables (such as child’s age, race, and gender, parents’ age, parents’ work hours, and household composition) that might influence parenting orientation were controlled.
The final dependent variable is the child care arrangement type, which has been conceptualized in terms of formal and informal. Because this variable is trichotomous, ordinary least squares regression would not be appropriate. Rather, a logit model would allow for the comparison of the log odds of choosing each form of care. The model could have been constructed so as to compare the likelihood using formal versus informal care, but this would have excluded children in parent-only care. Although the emphasis has been on choices of non-parental care, the choice to not use only parental care merits attention as well. Some parents make great efforts to ensure that they can be the only ones to care for their child, rearranging work hours, reducing work hours, or dropping out of the workforce altogether. Thus, the model was set up so that the choice to use parent care only was the reference category to which formal and informal care arrangements were compared. The use of multinominal logistic regression analysis allows for the comparison of the log odds of using formal care versus parent care only and informal care versus parent care only.

RESULTS

Social Class and Parenting Orientation

Social class status was expected to predict parenting orientation. This relationship was tested using ordinary least squares regression analysis of the parenting index on the social class variables (see table 3 below). This analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship in the predicted direction with both mothers’ and fathers’ education, that held even when controlling for all other factors that could influence parenting. The results indicate that as parental education increases, participation in activities that indicate the
presence of concerted cultivation also increases. There was no significant relationship between income and parenting orientation.

Table 3: OLS Determinants (standardized coefficients) of parenting index, NHES

**ECPP 2001, N=3,086.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total HH Income</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.109***</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.090***</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=&lt;HS; 5=Grad/Prof.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.085***</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.079***</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=&lt;HS; 5=Grad/Prof.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Child Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.108***</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.080***</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parent Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Age</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Age</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>0.037***</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Children &lt;6yrs in HH</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-earner Family</td>
<td>-0.186</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay at Home Parent</td>
<td>-0.148</td>
<td>0.390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>6.388</th>
<th>6.693</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05 **<.01 ***p<.001
There were also statistically significant relationships between the child’s race and gender. Being white and being female were positively related to the child’s parents engaging in concerted cultivation. The number of hours worked by the father was also positively related to engaging in concerted cultivation.

*Determinants of Child Care Choice*

Families were analyzed separately based on composition and parental employment status, based on reasoning that certain types of families would have a greater need for non-parental child care than others. Indeed, parenting orientation proved more significant in predicting child care arrangements for some groups of families than others. Before discussing the results for the parenting index, I discuss some of the statistically significant effects of the control variables in the models. Table 3 presents multinomial logistic regression slope determinants of child-care arrangements for all families, as well as separately for two-parent families, two-parent families with a stay at home parent, and single-parent families.

*Child Characteristics*

Previous studies have found the age of the child to be a significant predictor of the use of informal and formal child care arrangements (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000; Ehrle, Adams, and Tout 2001). In the present analysis, age was statistically significant in predicting the use of formal child care arrangements (in the positive direction) for the entire sample of 3,086 and for each sub-group, but not for predicting the use of informal care arrangements. The positive slope coefficient for age in each of the models indicates an increase in the log odds of using formal child care rather than parent-
only care for each one year increase in the age of the child. Each of the age coefficients for formal care are significant at the .001 level (except for single-parent families when it is significant at the .01 level), indicating a strong relationship between age of the child and the use of formal child care. For the entire sample, this relationship resulted in a .753 increase in the log odds of using formal child care for each one year increase in the child’s age.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Characteristics</th>
<th>All Families</th>
<th>Dual-Earners</th>
<th>At-Home Parent</th>
<th>Single-Parent Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>-0.368</td>
<td>-0.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Age</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Age</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>0.054***</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Work Hrs/wk</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total HH Income</td>
<td>0.061**</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>0.144*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(#Children &lt;6yrs in HH)</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>1.447*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># older siblings in HH</td>
<td>-0.160</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>-0.248</td>
<td>-2.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Parent HH</td>
<td>1.529**</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>-1.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Mother HH</td>
<td>-2.100</td>
<td>-4.038</td>
<td>5.649</td>
<td>1.320*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Orientation Index</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>-0.090</td>
<td>-0.133*</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-3.201</td>
<td>-3.645</td>
<td>-2.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R²</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>0.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001
Race of the child was statistically significant only in single-parent families, and then it was significant only in predicting the use of formal care, not informal care. The negative coefficient indicates that being white was associated with a decrease in the log odds of using formal child care arrangements in contrast to parent-only care. Why race was significant for the single-parent families and not the others cannot be ascertained in the present study, but the fact that race was insignificant across the other groups is interesting given previous studies showing marked differences in child care arrangement type by race. It is possible, however, that the effects of race were accounted for by several of the other control variables in the study.

It is also interesting to note that child's gender was found to be significant in predicting the use of formal child care arrangements in dual-earner families and in the analysis of the entire sample. The positive coefficient indicates that being female increased the log odds of being in a formal child care arrangement versus a parent-only arrangement. Gender was not significant in predicting the use of informal care in any of the other subgroups. Again, this finding cannot be explained in the present study.

*Parent Characteristics*

Parents use non-parental care primarily because they are working, so it only makes sense that their work hours would have an effect on the use of child care arrangements. This was the case for all but the families with a stay-at-home parent, and in each case it was the mother's work hours that was a significant predictor of child care arrangement, not the father's. In dual-earner families, mother's number of hours of work per week had a significant and positive effect on the use of both formal and informal care arrangements. In other words, in dual-earner families every additional hour of mothers'
work hours increases the log odds of using informal care increases by .057 and increases the log odds of using formal care by .038, both significant at the .001 level of significance. This same pattern was found when examining the model with the entire sample of 3,086 families as well, but differed for single-parent families. In single-parent families mother’s work hours was a significant predictor in the use of informal care versus parent-only care, but not for the use of formal care.

Other Family Characteristics

Other family characteristics that were expected to influence the choice of non-parental child care were included in the analysis as control variables as well. The number of children under the age of six in the household was expected to influence decisions about non-parental care because they would pose a greater expense. This was not found to be a significant factor in predicting the use of either informal or formal care in the present analysis.

The number of older siblings in the household was included in the analysis as a control variable because it was expected that older siblings would be a potential source of non-parental care and would thus influence the choice to use other forms of non-parental care. The number of teenagers in the household was found to be a significant predictor for the use of formal care versus parent-only care in every case except for the single-parent family subgroup. In dual-earner families and two-parent families with a stay-at-home parent, an increase in the number of teenagers in the household decreased the likelihood of using a formal child care arrangement.
Social Class

Total household income had a positive and significant effect on the use of formal arrangements versus parent-only arrangements for all families except for single-parent families. An increase of $10,000 in total household income resulted in an increase in the log odds of using either form of non-parental care. This relationship was expected, and highlights the affordability factor in the use of non-parental care.

Another dimension of social class status is education level, and parents’ education level was significant in each of the models. When all families were analyzed together, both mother’s and father’s education was highly significant in predicting the use of formal child care versus parent-only care but not in predicting the use of informal care. An increase in the level of education of the mother and father increased the likelihood of using formal care versus parent-only care. This was also the case for two-parent families with a stay-at-home parent. In dual-earner families, only the father’s education was significant in predicting the use of formal care and neither the mother’s nor the father’s level of education was significant in predicting the use of informal care. For dual-earners, an increase in father’s level of education increased the likelihood of using formal care arrangements versus parent-only care. In single-parent families, father’s education was significant in predicting the use of both formal care and informal care versus parent-only care, such that an increase in the father’s level of education increased the log odds of using informal and formal care. However, there were only 58 fathers in the single-parent group as most of them were single mothers.


*Parenting Orientation*

I predicted that parenting orientation, which is influenced by social class status, would predict the likelihood of using different types of non-parental care arrangements.

Specifically, I predicted that an increase in the concerted cultivation index would result in an increase in the log odds of using formal non-parental child care arrangements and a decrease in the log odds of using informal non-parental child care arrangements.

The parenting index only had a significant effect in the two groups of two-parent families, the dual-earners and those with a stay-at-home parent. In dual-earner families, the parenting index was insignificant in predicting the use of informal care, and for formal care an increase in the parenting index decreased the likelihood of using formal care versus parent-only care (significant at the .05 level of significance). This relationship was in the opposite direction of what was expected.

In two-parent families with an at-home parent, an increase in the parenting index decreased the log odds of using an informal care arrangement versus parent only care (significant at the .05 level), but was insignificant in predicting the use of formal care. This relationship was in the predicted direction.

I tested for an interaction effect between each social class indicator (household income, mother’s education level, father’s education level) within each model but none were significant. I also ran each model dropping out the social class variables. Dropping these variables did not significantly change the effect of the parenting index in any of the models.
Predicting Arrangements for Families Using Any Form of Non-Parental Care

The above analyses were based on the use of forms of non-parental care versus using parent-only care. For many families, using parent-only care is not an option, and the child care choice is limited to informal or formal arrangements. It is possible that parent-only care would be the preferred choice of parents when given a choice, but that parenting orientation would influence the choice of care when parents were forced to rely on non-parental care. That is, when parents are using non-parental care solely, those engaged in concerted cultivation could be more likely to choose formal care over informal care.

This relationship was tested using logistic regression models that predicted the log odds of using formal care versus informal care for dual-earner and single-parent families who were using non-parental child care. The pattern of significant relationships was similar to those observed in Table 4, and the parenting orientation index was only significant in predicting the use of formal versus informal care for two-parent families with a stay-at-home parent. In this case, the concerted cultivation index was positively related to using formal child-care arrangements. I tested for interaction effects within these models between the social class variables and parenting orientation index as well, and none of the interaction terms were significant. Running the models without the social class variables did not change the significance of the index.
SUMMARY

Previous studies have examined the effects of several child and family characteristics on choices of non-parental child care. None to date have examined the effects of parenting orientation. In this analysis I include parenting orientation as a predictor of child care choice when controlling for child and family characteristics. I expected that parenting orientation would be largely driven by social class status. The results indicate that two social class indicators, mother’s and father’s level of education, are highly significant in predicting parenting orientation, but household income is not.

I also expected that parent’s who scored higher on the parenting orientation index, indicating that they are engaged in concerted cultivation, would be more likely to choose formal child care arrangements. The results were mixed. Scoring higher on the parenting orientation index led to a decrease in the likelihood of using informal care among families with an at-home parent, and a decrease in the likelihood of using formal care arrangements for dual-earner families.

DISCUSSION

The child care literature lacks consensus regarding the major factors influencing parents’ decisions about non-parental child care arrangements. Previous studies have found parental level of education (usually mother’s education) to be influential in guiding parents’ choices of child care. In this paper I have argued that it may not be social class (or parental education) per se that is driving parents’ choices of care, but the parenting orientation that goes along with social class status. I offer parenting orientation as a mediating variable between other known factors of child care choice and use of informal and formal care arrangements.
I’ve defined parenting orientation according to the parenting typologies offered by Lareau (2000). While Lareau based her typologies on the parenting behaviors of parents of elementary and middle-school age children, the typologies she describes are based on a reliance on a specific cultural logic of parenting that would be present in early childhood as well as middle-childhood. In early childhood, one of the ways parenting orientation could be seen is in the choice of non-parental child care. While I hypothesized that the higher the parents scored on the parenting index, the more likely they would be to choose formal care, it turns out that scoring higher on the index decreases the likelihood of using either informal or formal child care. For parents engaged in concerted cultivation, it appears that they are more likely to keep their children home with them.

In making the connection between concerted cultivation and formal care arrangements, I relied on the idea that center-based child care emphasizes many of the concerns that parents engaged in concerted cultivation with older children espouse. Relying on formal care arrangements would appear to stem from an interest in education, a further belief that children’s growth and development require intervention, and a trust in and reliance on institutions outside of the home for the socialization of children. The children observed by Lareau spent a great deal of time outside of the home engaging in organized activities associated with the schools or other organizations. Their parents put forth a great amount of effort to make these activities possible for their children, believing that it was in fact necessary for their children to engage in these activities, be it sports or music lessons or tutoring sessions, indicating a reliance on a belief that children’s growth and development will not unfold on its own. Parents acting in a similar fashion with younger children could be expected to want their children to engage in
multiple activities outside of the home, providing them with opportunities for learning and socialization that are deemed necessary for success in school and later life.

However, another facet of concerted cultivation is control over a child’s environment and experiences. This can be seen in the time use of the children in Lareau’s study. For those whose parents were said to be engaging in concerted cultivation, nearly all of their time was spent in a scheduled activity. Children whose parents were engaging in the accomplishment of natural growth had much more free time, and much more time in which they controlled what they did. Thus, the fact that engaging in concerted cultivation in the present study resulted in a decrease in the likelihood of using informal or formal care could be interpreted as parents wanting to have control over their children’s environment.

Although parenting orientation did not affect choice of non-parental care arrangements as expected, this study makes two major contributions to the current literature. First, I have applied Lareau’s theories of parenting and social class to parents of preschool children. Lareau based her work on older children, and what remains to be known is what these parents engaging in concerted cultivation or the accomplishment of natural growth do with their younger children. What would concerted cultivation look like in the preschool years? Or with infants and toddlers? Mainstream parenting magazines and manuals tout the importance of early learning and interaction, and one could argue that those most likely to buy into the mainstream notions of childrearing would be middle-class parents. Dropping out the social class indicators from my models did nothing to increase the significance of the parenting orientation index, and one way to interpret this finding is that what is being measured in the index is an attitude or set of
beliefs about parenting that cuts across social classes. The question remains then, do parents differ in their orientations according to social class status during the early childhood years? Do the differences noted by Lareau only emerge in later childhood?

This study also adds a new dimension to the literature on what factors drive parents’ choices of non-parental care arrangements. Those studies that have included parenting orientation conceptualized it as gender attitudes regarding the mother’s responsibility for providing care. To date no one has applied parenting orientation as I conceptualize it to models of child care choice.

A more complete index of parenting orientations would be optimal. The index used here was constructed based on a limited number of parental behaviors. Constructing a parenting orientation index that includes measures of parents’ beliefs and attitudes, in addition to parental behaviors such as were measured in the present study, would provide a more complete view of the manifestations of concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth in early childhood.

The study was also limited by the sample, which had to be limited to exclude infants and toddlers because of missing data on key variables used to construct the parenting orientation index. What affects the choices that parents of infants and toddlers make regarding non-parental care is also of importance. A study that questioned both parents of infants and toddlers and parents of preschoolers on their parenting behaviors and non-parental care arrangements would be optimal.

Another limitation of this study is that the data is cross-sectional. Using longitudinal data would allow for examination of parenting behaviors over time. This
would allow us to see if the differences in parenting orientation observed by Lareau
would be evident in early childhood or not appear until later childhood.

Future studies should seek to apply Lareau’s parenting typologies to children in
the early childhood years. A more complete measure of parenting orientation would
allow for the examination of both differences in parenting orientations by class and by
age of the child, and how these differences influence the use of non-parental care.
References


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