

Parental Preferences for Early Intervention Programming Examined Using Best-Worst Scaling Methods

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Introduction

- Early intervention offers cost savings from a long-term perspective (Heckman, 2000).
- Early intervention often includes a family-based approach
- Outcomes are supported through the promotion of family stability and self-sufficiency.
 - Child academic readiness and socio-emotional skills
 - Parenting and co-parenting
 - Improved education and workforce skills, opportunities, and outcomes

Sobering Findings

- There are mixed results related to efforts to engage and retain families in stability and self-sufficiency efforts (e.g., Avellar, 2012).
- Similar findings are obtained in mental health service provision (Sanders & Kirby, 2012).
- Relatively little is known about what families really want from policy and practice in real-life choice situations.
 - Choice situations always have trade-offs

Parameters that May Influence Choice

- Outcomes of Intervention
 - Child outcomes
 - Academic Readiness
 - Behavior Improvement
 - Parent outcomes
 - Parenting
 - Education
 - Job skills
 - Mental health/Mood

Parameters that May Influence Choice

- Characteristics of the Intervention
 - Provision of meals, childcare, transportation
 - Length of intervention
 - Time offered
 - Intervention implementers
 - Inclusion of other family members

Participants

- 426 parents (170 fathers and 256 mothers)
- Inclusion criteria:
 - 2013 Annual family income of \$30,000 or less
 - Child between 3-6 years of age
 - Child enrolled in a UPK/preschool/daycare
- All respondents came from an online survey panel provided by Qualtrics.com
- Sawtooth Software Inc. programmed and hosted the survey.

Demographic characteristics of survey respondents.

| Demographic Category | Percent (Total N) | Mean (SD) |
|---|-------------------|--------------|
| Gender | | |
| Men | 40% (170) | |
| Women | 60% (256) | |
| Race | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 3% (12) | |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 5% (22) | |
| Black or African-American | 12% (53) | |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 1% (2) | |
| White | 70% (298) | |
| Mixed Race | 6% (25) | |
| Declined to answer | 3% (14) | |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 16% (66) | |
| Not Hispanic/Latino | 82% (350) | |
| Declined to answer | 2% (10) | |
| Adults in the home | | |
| One | 25% (108) | |
| Two | 56% (240) | |
| Three | 11% (48) | |
| Four | 5% (19) | |
| Five | 2% (7) | |
| Six or more | 1% (3) | |
| Children in the home | | |
| One | 32% (138) | |
| Two | 34% (145) | |
| Three | 23% (97) | |
| Four | 7% (28) | |
| Five | 2% (9) | |
| Six | 1% (5) | |
| Seven or more | 1% (4) | |
| Age | | 34.05 (8.47) |

Note: Total N equals 426.

Best-Worst Scaling Methods

- Preferences can be assessed systematically using discrete choice experiments using Best-Worst Scaling Methods
- Mirrors the complex decision-making process that occurs in typical choice-based situations
 - Incorporates trade-offs
 - Includes rank-ordering of preferences



Which of the following is MOST important to you?

Which is LEAST important to you?

Most important

Least

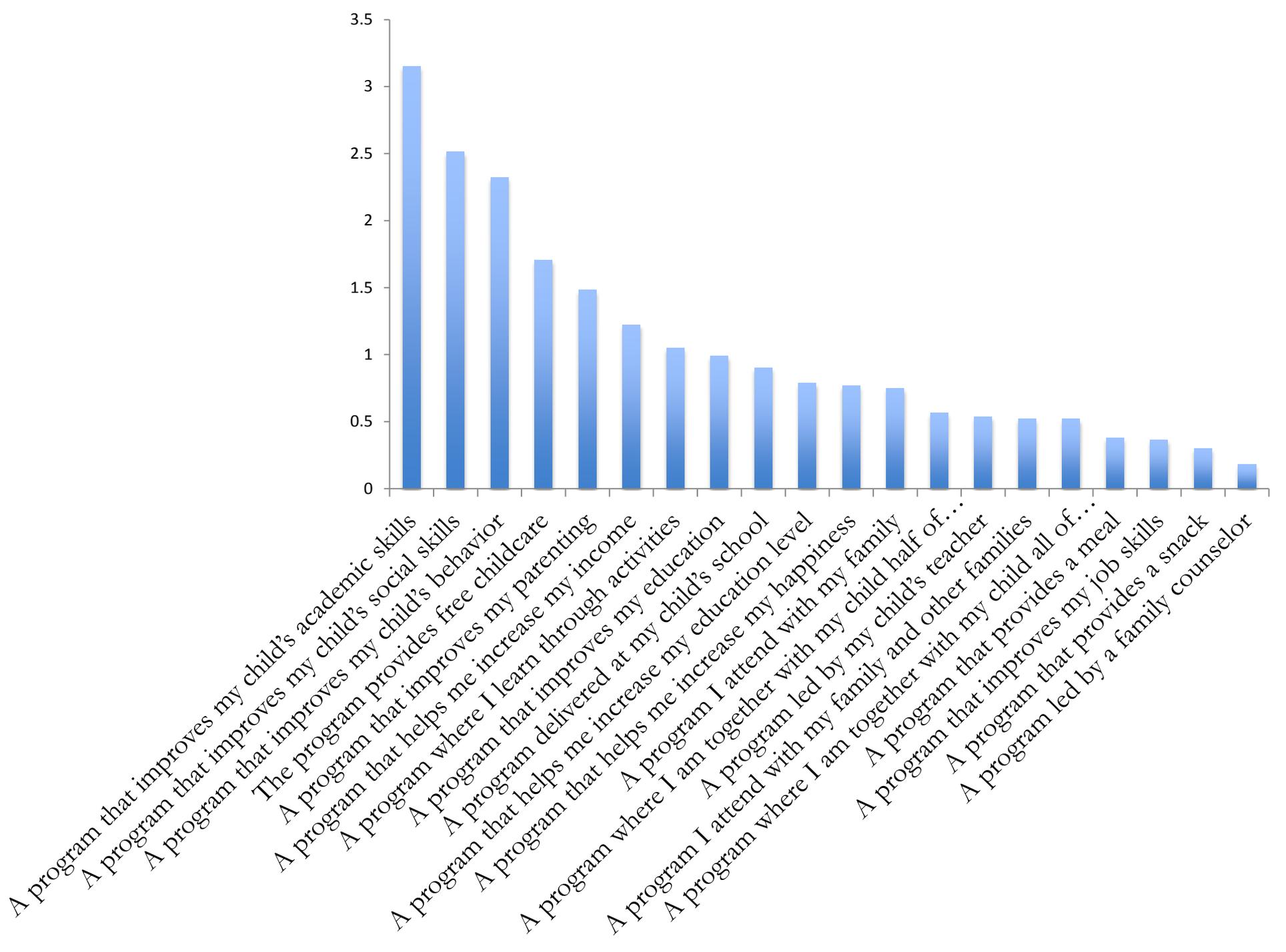
Important

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | The program provides transportation. | |
| | A program delivered in my home. | |
| | A program held during a weekend. | |
| | A program that helps me increase my happiness. | |
| | Program sessions last for 60 minutes. | |

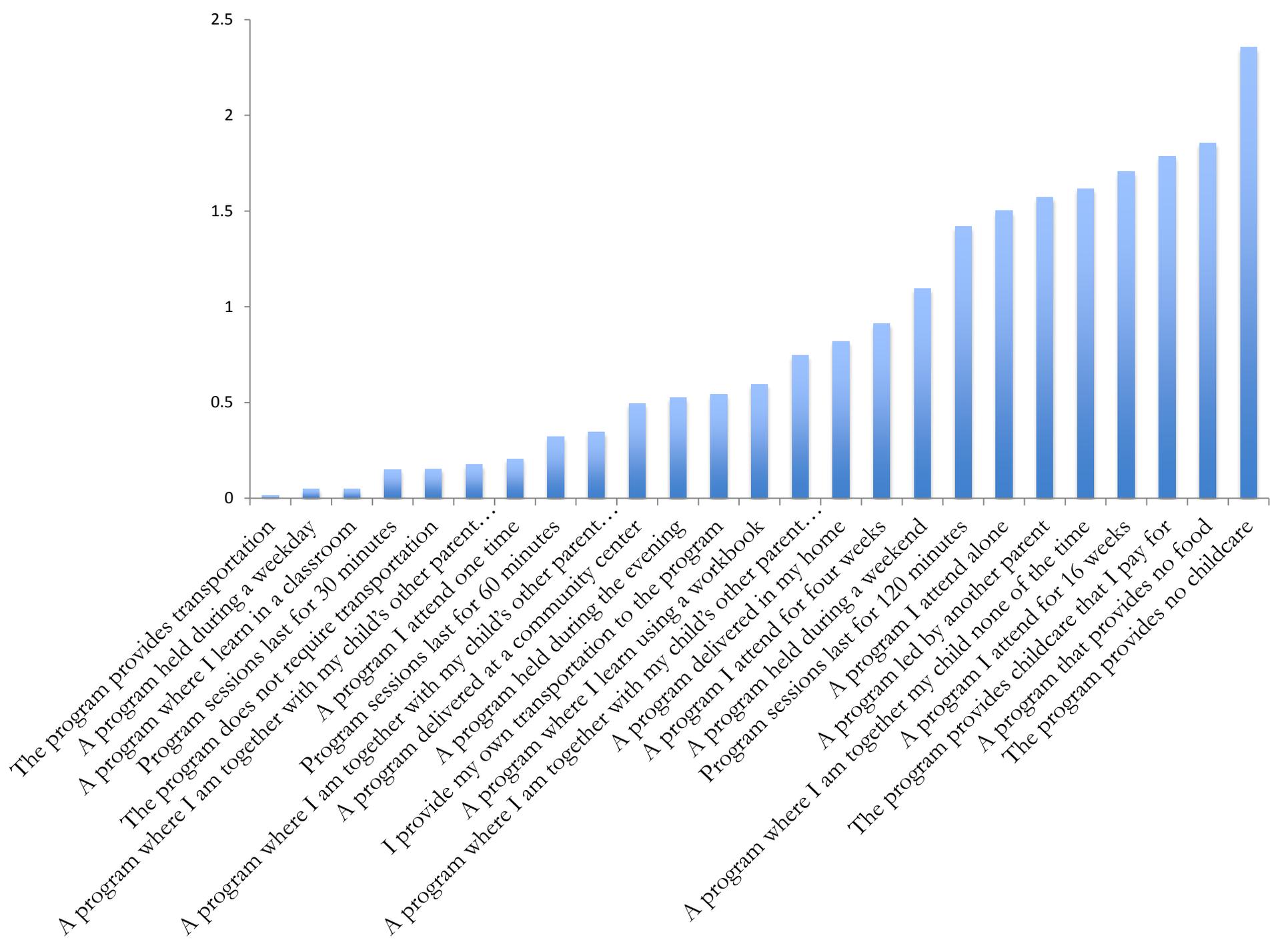
Results

- For each of the attributes, overall utility values were calculated.

Most Preferred Program Characteristics



Least Preferred Program Characteristics



Preference Differences Across Demographic Groups

General Results by Group

- Overall, there were few significant differences in preferences between demographic groups
 - Mothers vs. Fathers
 - Majority vs. Minority Race/Ethnicity
 - Single Parent vs. Multiple Adult Homes

Mothers vs. Fathers

- Mothers more likely to prefer a program delivered at the child's school.
- Although both parents highly preferred child outcomes (i.e., behavior, academics, social skills), mothers were significantly more likely to prefer this attribute.
- Mothers found attendance with a co-parent to be significantly less preferable with Utility values of -0.336 and -0.615 for attendance with the other parent some or all of the time, relative to fathers.
- Finally, neither parent preferred an option of paid childcare, but mothers significantly reported this to be less preferable than fathers (Utility values of -1.517 and -1.963 for fathers and mothers, respectively).

Majority vs. Minority Race/Ethnicity

- Members of a minority group were significantly more negatively sensitive to programming held at night (Utility value = $-.904$) versus white respondents (Utility value = $-.299$).
- Although both groups indicated a lack of preference for program length of 16 weeks, members of the racial/ethnic majority preferred this attribute less.
- White respondents had a lower preference for being together with the other parent for the entire program (Utility value = $-.545$) whereas this was not an important attribute for minority parents (Utility value = $-.001$).
- There were significant differences in preferences for program outcomes with minority respondents preferring education, education level, and job skills outcomes to a greater extent.

Single Parent vs. Multiple Adult Home

- Single parents were less sensitive to programs held on the weekend relative to multi-adult households (Utility values of $-.70$ and -1.229 , respectively).
- Parents in multiple adult households were more likely to prefer attending a program with the family (Utility value of $.865$ vs. $.405$) and attending with the family and other families (Utility value of $.642$ vs. $.166$).
- Parents in single-parent households also indicated a significant sensitivity for attending programming without the other parent involved, relative to multiple parent households.
- Finally, single parent households were significantly more likely to prefer a program that improved the child's behavior.

Summary and Discussion

- Parents strongly preferred programs that resulted in positive child outcomes
 - Academic Outcomes
 - Social Outcomes
 - Behavioral Outcomes
- Parents also strongly preferred programs that resulted in positive outcomes for themselves.
 - Improved Parenting
 - Increased Income
 - Improved Education
 - Increased Happiness

- There was a clear pattern that suggested demanding programs that resulted in costs or inconveniences for families (i.e., no provision of meals; lengthy programs; child care costs) *were not preferred*.
- Although many preference scores remained consistent across demographic groups, there were some significant differences.

- Mothers:
 - Preferred programming at the child's school
 - Were more positive toward outcomes for the child
 - Preferred attending programming without the other parent
 - Did not want to pay for childcare
- Parents from minority racial/ethnic groups:
 - Did not want programming at night
 - Preferred shorter programming
 - Preferred programs that improved education, job skills, and income
- Parents who described race as white:
 - Less preference for being in the program with the other parent

Limitations

- This panel generated sample may not generalize to local groups.
- Other demographic factors that may influence preferences not assessed (e.g., family size; age).
- Racial/ethnic composition of this sample.
- History of engagement within intervention services for this sample not known.
- Results may change if the program description is more precise.

Conclusions

- Preference data can be used to inform policy and practice.
- Programs with preferred characteristics may promote uptake, adherence, and maintenance.
- Future studies need to address how preferences change over time, and whether preferred programs are ultimately more efficacious.

Thank you!

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