

PARENT PERCEPTIONS, INTERESTS AND INVOLVEMENT
IN A
CAMPUS CHILDCARE CENTER

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to assess the involvement of parents within a campus childcare center for the 2000-2001 school year. The subjects of this study were parents of children (ages 6 weeks-6 years) who attended childcare at the UW-Stout campus childcare center at UW-Stout in Menomonie, WI. There were 85 surveys distributed and 43 were returned for analysis. The return rate was 50%.

The instrument used for this study was designed and developed by the investigator based upon the literature review. It consisted of four sections: general information, parent perceptions, parent interests in participation, and family activities.

Section I of the survey contained nine items that pertained to demographic characteristics of the population. These items included age, gender, race, marital status, highest educational level completed, employment status, student status, number of children, and ages of children. The independent variables for the analysis were age, gender and educational level.

Section II included 17 perception statements that were rated on a Likert scale from 1-5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings revealed that respondents perceived doing activities with their children and being aware of the activities in their child's classroom as important. They also felt comfortable participating in center activities.

Section III, interest statements, included twelve statements. These statements were divided between seven center activities and five home activities. It was found that respondents were most interested in parent teacher conferences and reading the parent letters that were sent home.

Section IV included 12 family activity statements that were rated just as the items in Section III. The respondents indicated that the two activities that they most frequently participate in as a family were talking to their child about their day and eating one meal a day together.

The responses of the surveys were analyzed by the University of Wisconsin Stout Computer user support services using descriptive statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were used in Section I. Means, standard deviation and rank order were computed for Section II, III and IV. A T-test, ANOV and the Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test was used to analyze the objectives.

It can be concluded that these parents felt strongly about being involved with their child at home and knowing what their child is doing at school. They felt that parents and teachers should work as a team and that the center staff should do more to encourage parent involvement.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Parent involvement can take many different forms. Parents may be involved by helping in the classroom or chaperoning a field trip. Others may be involved by doing projects at home. Gestwicki (1996) states that there is not one definition for parent involvement. It may be viewed as a continuum, ranging from a low level to a high level of parent involvement.

A low level of involvement would consist of the parents receiving second hand information about their child's school activities. Such common practices as newsletters, parent/teacher conferences and parent meetings. Programs that provide opportunities for parents to be in the classroom would be considered to have a higher level of parent involvement.

Parents and teachers need to work together for the benefit of the child. In an early childhood setting the level of parent involvement has a direct effect on a student's achievement (Henderson, 1987). Therefore collaboration between home and school is of great importance for the success of every child.

As far back as the nineteenth century people such as the Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi saw the home and school environment as continuous and closely linked (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993). Pestalozzi also believed that the child's education at home and the love and support found there represented the foundation of learning (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993). Other early educators such as Froebel also saw a link between early home education and later schooling. Early educators also believed that the proper context for early education of children was at home with their mothers. But as the twentieth century began to evolve, so did parent cooperative nursery schools, Lanham Centers and Head Start. The option of coming to school with their children

to learn more about child rearing was probably a strong selling point of these nursery schools (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993).

There can be many reasons why parents chose not to be involved or to be involved on a limited basis. Assumptions can create barriers that prevent families from becoming involved in their child's education (Kieff & Wellhousen, 2000). Kieff and Wellhousen (2000) have also found that family structure, family lifestyles and family culture can influence how involved a family becomes with their child's education and school. Other barriers to involvement can include a parent's own school experience (Finders & Lewis, 1994).

Teachers may also create barriers that prevent parent involvement. Many of today's teachers may not be knowledgeable in the area of parent involvement and working with parents. The lack of training that some teachers have in this area may decrease their desire to pursue parent involvement with the parents of their students. Preparing teachers to work with parents and other adults has been given very little attention (Lazar & Slostad, 1999). Many teachers and parents see themselves in separate worlds.

As Jennings (1990) notes, far too many parents and teachers find themselves strangers. Separated by vast bureaucracies, mutual fear, and the lack of time and energy, parents and educators have slid into a polite, but distant, relationship. One way to overcome that separation may be to involve more fathers. Research supports their involvement as a means of obtaining better outcomes for the children and the rest of the family (Turbiville, Umbarger & Guthrie, 2000). Turbiville, Umbarger and Guthrie (2000) also found that fathers' involvement may be more important for academic

achievement.

According to Parker and Boak (1999) evidence from the elementary school literature shows that greater parent involvement in children's learning positively affects the child's school performance, including greater cognitive development and higher academic achievement. Parker and Boak (1999) also report that greater parent involvement positively affects school readiness and adaptation to elementary school.

One of the biggest barriers to parent involvement may be parent resistance. Louv (1999) has found that one way to increase parent involvement may be to connect parents to schools before their children enter school. Conducting home visits, having group get-togethers for parents and providing educational referral services are a few ways that may connect parents to schools and increase parent involvement.

Parent/family involvement has the greatest impact on student achievement when it is meaningful (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998). Parents and teachers need to form partnerships. They have a common goal and a shared responsibility, the child. They need to communicate and collaborate with each other to help the child reach his/her full potential (Workman & Gage, 1997).

It is the goal of this investigation to explore the perceptions, interests and family activities as they relate to parent involvement in a given campus childcare setting. There may be certain parent and teacher barriers that are preventing a higher level of parent involvement to occur at this center. Current parent involvement practices may need to be expanded and/or changed according to the needs of the currently enrolled parents.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to assess the involvement of parents within a campus childcare center for the 2000-2001 school year. The research will be based on a four-part written survey designed by the researcher.

Research Objectives

1. Describe the perceptions of parents with regards to the campus childcare environment.
2. Analyze parent perceptions, interests, and family activities and their relationship to gender, age, level of education.
3. Identify campus parent priorities for involvement in their child's childcare center.

Definition of Terms

Parent Involvement: Numerous activities in which parents and teachers work together to build a strong school/home relationship, which in turn, provide children with a successful education and a positive self image.

Early Childhood Education: Education provided to children between birth and 8 years of age.

Campus Childcare Center: A childcare center located on a university campus which cares for children ages 6 weeks through 6 years.

This chapter has presented an introduction to the study. Subsequent chapters include a review of literature, methodology of the study, and a statistical and narrative presentation of the results. The last chapter of the study will be comprised of a

summary, the conclusions of this study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a synopsis of parent involvement within early childhood education. For the purpose of this study, the research literature has been divided into six sections. The first section is a definition of parent involvement. Section two gives

an overview of the history of early childhood education. Section three addresses some of the parent barriers that influence the level of parent involvement that parents have. Section four focuses on the issue of father involvement. Section five describes barriers which teachers may have that prevent them from establishing parent involvement relationships. The last section examines a few ways that have been shown to increase parent involvement.

Definition of Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a broad term that can mean several different things to parents, other family members, teachers, school staff and community members. Parent involvement to some means little more than bringing refreshments to class parties, selling items for school fundraising events or coming to school for a child's holiday program (Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998). Those interested in a higher level of parent involvement may take part in activities which include such activities as breakfast meetings, workshops lead by teachers, discussion seminars and school-community planning councils. According to Hampton, Mumford and Bond (1998), these higher level activities help to build a relationship between school and home that is based on first hand information.

History of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education started to gain strength in the 1830s and 1840s with the American infant school movement. Schools were begun for children ages 3-5 as a possible remedy for poverty. The most famous infant school started by Bronson Alcott

in 1828 had a curriculum which focused on singing, conversation, storytelling and drawing. These activities were all done within a homelike atmosphere (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993). Day nurseries also began to develop as immigration to America spread.

In the late 1800s, day nurseries were becoming popular for the poor children. Middle-class women were starting to follow Friedrich Froebel's kindergarten movement. One of the major elements of Froebel's educational philosophy was that he saw his kindergarten as an extended family. He also believed in the continuity of domestic and school activities such as weaving, sewing and gardening (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993). Other early educators such as John Dewey also saw school as an extension of the home environment.

As the child study movement began to gain momentum in the 20th century, so did the field of parent education. The link between parents and preschool education was starting to be examined. Many parents still felt that the proper place for educating young children was at home. According to Roopnarine and Johnson (1993) parent involvement may have begun to help middle-class parents feel good about sending their young children to school. Out of this movement came the parent cooperative nursery schools.

In 1964 President Johnson began a war on poverty. Out of that effort came the longest lasting early intervention program still in practice today, Head Start. Families enrolled in Head Start are given performance standards in four areas of parent involvement. These include, from the Head Start Policy Manual (Gestwicki, 1996):

1. Membership on the Policy Council with decision making power for direction and

operation of the program.

2. Participation in the classroom as a volunteer, with the possibility of moving up the career ladder as a paid employee.
3. Parent activities planned by the parents themselves.
4. Working with their own children, along with the center staff.

There have been many studies conducted, specifically to Head Start, concerning lasting effects on children and their families. One such study, the Perry Preschool Project, published results in 1981. Those children who had participated in Head Start showed a higher high school graduation rate, lower enrollment in special education, a lower rate of welfare dependency and high rates of employment (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993).

Parent Barriers to Parent Involvement

Evidence suggests that family-school collaboration works (Jennings, 1990). Studies have consistently linked parental involvement with higher student grades and test scores, more positive attitudes and behaviors, and improved school climates (Jennings, 1990). But research has also shown that there are several barriers that may prevent parents from becoming involved in their child's education. Crozier (1999) found that such barriers include social class factors, gender relations, ethnicity and power relations.

With the growing cultural diversity in America, many parent may want to be involved but language and written literacy skills can be a barrier (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Many parents want to be involved, but because both parents must work to support the

family there is little time left to be involved with their child's education. Many employers still are not flexible about allowing parents time off for participation in their children's educational activities.

Until recently mothers were the primary care givers of young children. Fathers rarely participated in school activities. With more fathers taking an active role in their child's early years, more attention has been focused on the impact that fathers have on their children. One study found that children whose fathers were involved in their child's education were more likely to receive As on assignments, participate in extra curricular activities and enjoy school (Turbiville, Umbarger, & Guthrie, 2000). It has also been noted that when men become actively involved in home and school they can have a positive impact on many aspects of their child's development (McBride & Rane, 1996).

Father Involvement

Fathers may feel limited in their level of involvement because of work schedules and gender differences (Turbiville, Umbarger, & Guthrie, 2000). Other barriers that may cause fathers to become involved with their child's education may include; a father's fear of being inadequate in the classroom, gate-keeping by mothers, the design of the program or school and program staff fears about having fathers in the classroom (McBride & Rane, 1996). Mothers are commonly the primary childcare providers. Therefore they are usually the person who is most actively involved in the home-school relationship. Fagan (1996) has also found father involvement barriers to include; traditional attitudes about father involvement in children's lives, staff attitudes,

women's' attitudes and lack of fathers child care experience.

As early childhood programs begin to place a greater importance on father involvement, there are several key issues that need to be addressed. McBride and Rane (1996) have identified eight of these key issues. Childcare centers must be specific about why they want fathers to become involved in their program. Centers should not do it just because it is a hot social issue. Programs should understand that there may be strong resistance to having fathers involved. A major reason for children's school failure is often associated with lack of male involvement and "responsible" fathering behaviors (McBride & Rane, 1996). Another key issue for educators is to identify who the men are in the lives of the children that they work with and how they can target these men to become involved. Family styles have become very diverse in America. Children come from many backgrounds, many of which may not include a father who lives at home. The male role model in many children's lives include grandparents, uncles, a mother's boyfriend or sometimes a good friend of the family. Centers need to be open in their definition of father. Staff need formal in-service training experiences on parent involvement, especially as it relates to father involvement. Centers must keep the parents they already have involved, especially mothers. Females must be willing to accept male involvement in the center. We must acknowledge the unique strengths that males bring to the parenting realm. When initiating new father involvement programs, centers need to proceed slowly. Centers need to build a male friendly environment. Most early childhood centers already have a parent involvement component. Centers need to build on what they have that is already working.

Early childhood education programs offer many opportunities to overcome these barriers. Centers may have a planned activity such as a class trip in which fathers may feel comfortable participating. Often starting with something this simple is best. One Head Start program had a group of fathers start a support group for the fathers in the program. As Fagan (1996) found, programs are much more likely to succeed when men take the initiative to organize activities for other men. Only men can tell other men what it means to be a father.

According to Fagan (1996) early childhood programs that have had greater father involvement found that the fathers often require less nurturance and attention from the other staff than females do. Sometimes mothers who come to the classroom are more on a social visit. Centers found it helpful to have the fathers participate in the block corner as they may enjoy this type of activity more than women do.

Male involvement programs must be tailored to the population of men in them (Fagan, 1996). This means that programs must take into consideration when fathers are available and how much time they may have to be involved in the center and activities. Offering a variety of options and at varying times will help to increase the amount of father involvement a center may have. Centers may also have more male involvement if the center has a clear and appropriate vision and set of principles that are used to guide the program (Fagan, 1996). Fagan (1996) also suggests that the support of staff and administration, commitment of resources and other male leadership in the program may help to build male involvement in an early childhood program.

There is beginning to be more awareness of the importance of father involvement

in the lives of young children. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (2001) has developed a special initiative to address this specific issue. It was developed to strengthen and support the roles of fathers in families. The initiative is guided by five principles. The first being that fathers can be important contributors to the well-being of their children. Even when parents do not live in the same household, parents are partners in raising their children. The roles fathers play in families are diverse and related to cultural and community norms. Men should receive the education and support necessary to prepare them for the responsibility of parenthood. The last guiding principle is that the government can encourage and promote father involvement through its programs and through its own workforce policies. This initiative is still in the beginning stages. Many more public offices need to follow this lead and promote father involvement to the lives of young children.

The National Center For Education Statistics (1997) has examined the influence of family structure on a parents level of involvement. There study suggested that two parent families tend to have fathers that are less actively involved in their child's school. By nature the mother usually assumes a more active role in school activities. On the other hand, single mothers and fathers seem to have a similar rate of parent involvement. Single parent involvement, whether it mothers or fathers, seems to be almost equal to that of two-parent mothers. When a nonresident father is actively involved in their child's schooling, there is less likelihood of grade repetition, being suspended or being expelled from school. Nonresident fathers who only see there children but do not become actively involved have children who fair no better than those children who never see their father (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997).

The National Center For Education Statistics (1997) found that as a child grows older, parents tend to become less involved in their child's schooling. School climate may be one reason for this. Often times preschools and early elementary grades are more inviting to parents and have greater opportunities for parents to become involved. Another factor may be that of family resources. Families with more resources, especially financial ones tend to be more involved. Families who own a home tend to be more stable and stay in a school district for a longer period of time enabling them to become familiar with the school and its staff. This may provide a greater level of comfort for parents and remove some of the anxiety about becoming involved in an unfamiliar setting (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997).

Parent involvement can promote school success and lead to better parent and teacher relationships. Parents and teachers can build a better understanding of each others roles. When parents are actively involved there is the increased likelihood that there will be earlier intervention if and when problems arise. When children see their parents involved on a regular basis at school, it shows them that school is important. Research has made us aware of some of the barriers that prevent parents, especially fathers from becoming involved in their child's schooling. We must also examine the other side and look at the barriers that prevent teachers from involving parents in their classrooms.

Teacher Barriers to Parent Involvement

The failure of teacher education may be another barrier to parent involvement. Teachers have not been trained adequately in the area of parent involvement. Parent

involvement is often times seen as an extra chore for teachers. Lazar and Slostad (1999) state that information about creating effective parent involvement programs is rarely incorporated in pre service preparation programs.

Teachers can over come some of the barriers associated with parent involvement by understanding that the way parents view involvement may be shaped by views and circumstances of their culture (Lazar & Slostad, 1999). Lazar and Slostad (1999) found that some teachers who regularly partnered with parents found these partnerships to actually reduce the stress of teaching.

School resources may also influence how much parent involvement teachers are comfortable with. Private schools often have more parent involvement than do public schools. This may be do to the often times higher income level of the parents and also parent values about education. The size of the school may also be a factor. It is often times easier to know parents in a smaller school. The climate and policies of the school will also influence how the teachers view parent involvement in their classrooms. If the administration is not open to having parents take an active part in the school, then teachers will be less willing to put in the extra effort to have parental involvement (National Center For Education Statistics, 1997). A recent survey shows that teachers have identified parent involvement as the greatest priority for improving education (Kieff & Wellhousen, 2000).

Increasing Parent Involvement

Having parents be involved in their child's early education can often times be a difficult task. One way to increase parent involvement is to encourage parent

involvement at home. Parker and Boak (1999) found that parents' participation in home-based literacy activities can increase children's overall language ability. Parent participation at home is a key element to young children's success. Parent involvement is a process, not a one time event. Parent involvement occurs on various levels and at various times. The home environment is twice as predictive of academic success as the economic status of the family (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998). Parents need to be encouraged to read together with their children, ask about their day, ask about homework and treat children with love, respect and encouragement.

Teachers can also increase parent involvement by clarifying how parent can be involved. One group of mothers felt that being involved meant attending school parties (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Teachers need to develop trust with their students' parents. Make them feel welcome in the classroom and help parents to know that their involvement is valued. Teachers must build on the child's home experiences. When time and commitment are devoted to strengthening relationships between home and school, positive results occur (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998).

Minnesota has developed a program that has increased parent involvement among all income levels. The Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program is a voluntary public school program for families with children between the ages of birth and kindergarten (Ryan, 1998). The ECFE program offers parents the opportunity to become involved with their child's education from the very beginning. The program offers parents the opportunity to learn parenting skills and how to foster their child's learning and education. Parents are also able to network through parent discussion groups.

A 1996 study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning found that ninety-two percent of the lower income families enrolled in ECFE had increased their understanding of child development, felt better connected with other parents, and had gained more confidence in their parenting abilities through their participation in the ECFE program (Minnesota Department of Children ,Families and Learning, 1998). The study also found that 72%of the children who participated in the program were more independent, had better communication skills and improved relationships with other children (Ryan, 1998).

In her masters research, Ryan (1998) found that the preschool parents she surveyed had a high interest in communication with the teacher. These parents were also interested in participating in activities that assisted the teacher. Teachers need to take into consideration available parent time and examine the types of communication preschool teachers have with the parents in their classrooms.

Preschool teachers need to have more in service training on family dynamics and how it can influence a child's behavior and learning in the classroom. Teachers need to become aware of the perceptions, interests and family activities of the parents in their classroom (Ryan, 1998). Parents like to be aware of the activities that are occurring in their child's classroom. They also like to communicate with the teacher on a regular basis. Parents are interested in helping the teacher by reading stories, chaperoning field trips, and doing other odd jobs to help the teacher. Ryan (1998) found that the parents that she surveyed felt very strongly about family rituals. Some of the family rituals included reading to their child daily, having a bedtime routine, playing games with their child and having playmates over to play. Similar findings will be

discussed in chapter four.

Summary

The definition of parent involvement covers a broad spectrum. Parent involvement can range from a low level to a high level. High levels of parent involvement can help to build positive relationships between parents and schools.

Schools began in the early 1800's as a way to remedy poverty. In the later 1800's, middle-class women began to follow Froebel's kindergarten movement. Froebel saw his kindergarten as an extension of the family. During the 20th century parent cooperative nursery schools began to gain popularity. These nursery schools focused on the parent/child connection. One program that still has a strong parent involvement component to this day is Head Start.

Many times parents want to be involved with their child's education, but there are barriers that prevent the desired level of involvement from occurring. Many lower income families are struggling to provide for their families and do not have the extra time and energy for parent involvement. Fathers are often forgotten when it comes to parent involvement. Mothers are usually the primary care givers and the parent who becomes most actively involved in a child's education. Cultural differences may also prevent some parent from becoming actively involved. On some occasions there may be a power struggle between the parent and school as to who is doing what is best for the child.

Fathers can have a positive impact on their child's education when actively involved. Fathers may feel less obligated to become involved because it is usually seen as the role of the mother. Males may also feel that they lack adequate knowledge to be

involved. Programs may not be designed to offer men opportunities to be involved and staff may have fears about male involvement.

Early childhood programs need to look at their definition of father and how and why they want fathers to be involved in their programs. We need to promote the growing awareness of the importance of father involvement in education and that it does promote school success.

Teachers may feel uncomfortable having parents involved in their classrooms. Many teachers are not adequately trained in the area of parent involvement. We need to offer more in service training on all aspects of parent involvement. Teachers should be aware that good parent involvement can reduce teacher stress.

Increasing parent involvement in children's education should build on home experiences. Parents should be made to feel welcome in their child's school. The Early Childhood Family Education program is one example of a program that has helped to increase parent involvement. We need to look at parent's perceptions interests and family interests in order to start to increase parent involvement.

This chapter has provided a review of research literature to the study. The following chapters involve methodology of the study, a statistical and narrative presentation of the results, and finally, a summary that includes conclusions of the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess the perceptions and interests of parents about parent involvement within a campus childcare center for the 2000-2001 school year. This chapter contains the research methodology and design that includes the following areas: research objectives; subjects; development of the instrument; pilot study; data collection procedures; data analysis and limitations of this study.

Research Objectives

1. Describe the perceptions of parents with regards to the campus childcare environment.
2. Analyze the relationship between parent perceptions, interests, and family activities to the parents gender, age, and level of education.

3. Identify campus parent priorities for involvement in their child's childcare center.

Subjects

The population for this proposal were the parents of children (ages 6 weeks-6 years old) who attended preschool at UW-Stout's Child and Family Study Center located in Menomonee, Wisconsin during the 2000-2001 school year. There were 85 subjects, male and female, with various educational levels and backgrounds. To alleviate time, money, and difficulty of sampling, cluster sampling is was used for this study.

Development of the Instrument

The survey was developed by the investigator for this study based upon the literature review. The statements were designed from *Planning Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programs* by Judith Kef and Karin Wheelhouse (2000), Ryan's (1998) study and personal parent involvement situations by the investigator.

Pilot Study

A pilot test of the parent survey was administered to six parents in March 2001. All of the surveys were completed in the presence of the investigator. All six surveys were completed immediately because time was a crucial factor. All measures were taken to insure the content validity and confidentiality of this study. As a result of the pilot study, the format was changed to condense section one onto one page. The response format on section four was changed to the same response format as section three for consistency. A few statements were also revised. It was then approved by the thesis advisor. See Appendix A, Survey.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was administered in April 2001. In March, the investigator spoke with and obtained permission to administer the survey from the director of the Child and Family Study Center, Menomonee, WI. A copy of the Preliminary Statement of Research was placed on file at the center. On April 11 the investigator distributed surveys at the center. The surveys were placed either on the child's clipboard or taped on the child's cubbies to be taken home, with a cover letter (See Appendix B, Cover Letter) and a return envelope labeled **Parent Involvement Survey**. Each participant was asked to read all information carefully, complete the survey, and return it in the envelope provided. They were asked to return the survey by April 20, 2001. Upon return of the survey they would receive a handout on activities to do with their children. Three different reminder notices were posted on the exit doors and also on the sign in/out clipboards. A total of 43 out of 85 surveys were returned and useable. The return rate was 50%.

Data Analysis

The survey (see Appendix A) used in this study was especially designed to assess the perceptions of parents within a campus childcare center. It also included statements designed to assess the interests of parents within a campus childcare center.

The survey consisted of four sections. Section I of the survey -- General Information -- recorded age, gender, race, marital status, educational level, employment status, student status, number of children and age of each child. Section

II was Perceptions of Parents (17 items); Section III was Interests of Parents (Center Activities, 7 items; Home Activities, 5 items); Section IV was Family Activities (12 items).

The Likert scale was the response format used in Section II, III and IV. Section II format: 1(strongly disagree), 2(disagree), 3(undecided), 4(agree), and 5(strongly agree). Section III and IV format: 1(never), 2(rarely), 3(sometimes), 4(frequently), 5(almost always). Circling the responses was easily transposed to a 1-5 scale.

The responses to the survey will be analyzed by the University of Wisconsin Stout Computer User support services. Frequency counts and valid percentages will be used on each item of Section I. In Sections II, III, and IV the mean (\bar{x} = average score of the participants), standard deviations (SD = distance from \bar{x} of participant's score) and rank order of importance were calculated. To analyze the population, ANOVA and Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test were used to determine any significant differences by gender, age and educational level.

Limitations

Selections of participants for this study is limited to the parents whose children attend the Child and Family Study Center in Menomonie, WI. This study cannot be considered representative of all campus childcare centers or of all childcare centers in Menomonie, WI. Furthermore, the instrument was designed by the researcher; not a standard instrument.

This chapter has discussed methodology for the research study. The next chapter will include the survey results and a discussion of these findings. The last chapter will

summarize the study, draw conclusions from the results of the survey, and state future recommendations.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the survey and a discussion of these results. The demographic findings of the participants will be presented. The data collected in sections II, III and IV of the survey were analyzed and discussed for the total population in reference to the research objectives.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic information from section I of the survey is presented in Table I through Table 8. The following is an overview of each demographic area: age, gender, race, marital status, highest educational level completed, employment status, student status, total number of children in your family and age of children.

Age

Respondents were asked to indicate their age according to six categories. When the ages were computed, all categories were represented. The majority of respondents (n = 20, 46.6%) were 22-25 years old or 31-35 years old. Fourteen of the respondents (32.6%) were 26-30 years old or 36-40 years old, six respondents (14.0%) were 41 years or older, and three respondents (7.0%) were 21 years or younger. Table 1 presents the computed results.

Table 1: Age Range

Age Level	Frequency	Valid Percent
21 or younger	03	07
22-25 years old	10	23.3
26-30 years old	07	16.3
31-35 years old	10	23.3
36-40 years old	07	16.3
41 or older	06	14
Total	43	100

Gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. For all respondents 7 (16.3%) were male and 36 (83.7%) were female. See Table 2.

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	07	16.3
Female	36	83.7
Total	43	100

Race

Respondents were asked to indicate their race. In the survey, the categories that included African American, Asian, and Native American were not represented. The majority of respondents (n = 41, 95.3%) were white. Two respondents (4.7%) were Hispanic. See Table 3.

Table 3: Race

Race	Frequency	Valid Percent
African American	00	00
Asian	00	00
Native American	00	00
Hispanic	02	04.7
White	41	95.3
Other	00	00
Total	43	100

Marital Status

Respondents were asked to indicate their marital status. In the survey, the categories that included divorced, widowed or separated were not represented. The majority of respondents (n = 29, 69.0%) were married. Twelve respondents (28.6%) were single and one respondent other. See Table 4.

Table 4: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Single	12	28.6
Married	29	69
Divorced	00	00
Widowed	00	00
Seperated	00	00
Other	<u>01</u>	<u>2.4</u>
Total	43	100

Highest Educational Level Completed

Table 5 reflects the level of education for the respondents. The highest percent of respondents (n = 15, 34.9%) had a High School Diploma. Thirteen of the respondents (30.2%) had a Bachelor's degree, eight of the respondents (18.6%) had a Master's degree, four of the respondents (9.3%) had a Vocational/Technical degree and three of the respondents (7.0%) had a Doctoral degree. See Table 5.

Table 5: Highest Educational Level Completed

Highest Educational Level Completed	Frequency	Valid Percent
High School Diploma	15	34.9
Vocational Degree	04	09.3
Bachelor's Degree	13	30.2
Master's Degree	08	18.6
Doctoral Degree	<u>03</u>	<u>07</u>
Total	43	100

Employment Status

The respondents were asked to indicate their employment status. Almost half of the respondents (n = 16, 40.0%) were working full-time, 40 or more hours per week. Fourteen respondents (35.0%) were working part-time, less than 20 hours per week and ten respondents (25.0%) were working part-time, 20-30 hours per week. See

Table 6.

Table 6: Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Part time < 20 hours	14	35
Part time 20-30 hours	10	25
Full time 40+ hours	16	40
Missing	<u>03</u>	<u>missing</u>
Total	43	100

Student Status

Respondents were asked to indicate their student status. Nearly half of the respondents (n = 19, 47.5%) were not students. Fourteen of the respondents (35.0%) were full time undergraduate students, six respondents (15.0%) were either full time or half time graduate students and one respondent (2.5%) was a half time undergraduate. See Table 7.

Table 7: Student Status

Student Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Full time undergraduate	14	35
Half time undergraduate	01	02.5
Full time graduate	03	07.5
Half time graduate	03	07.5
Not a student	19	47.5
Missing	<u>03</u>	<u>missing</u>
Total	43	100

Number of Children in Family

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of children in their family. The majority of respondents (n = 25, 58.1%) had only one child. Sixteen of the respondents (37.2%) had two children and two respondents (4.7%) had three children. See Table 8.

Table 8: Number of Children in Family

Number of Children	Frequency	Valid Percent
One Child	25	58.1
Two Children	16	37.2
Three Children	02	04.7
Total	43	100

Ages of Children

Respondents were asked to indicate the ages of all their children. The mean (x) for the child’s age was computed in months. The first child was four years and nine months old; the second child was three years and five months; and the third child was two years and three months. The first child ranged in age from three months to nineteen years of age. The second child ranged in age from expecting the second child to ten years of age. The third child ranged in age from twenty months to three years of age.

Perception Statement

Section II in the survey, Perceptions, was designed to measure parental perceptions about parenting and being involved with their child's life. The 17 perception statements were rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5: 1 = strongly agree, 3 = undecided, 5 = strongly agree. There were nine perceptions that the respondents agreed ($x = 4.12$ to $x = 4.81$) upon; there were two perceptions that the respondents were undecided ($x = 3.31$ to $x = 3.51$); two perceptions that the respondents disagreed ($x = 2.05$ to $x = 2.21$); and three perceptions with which the respondents strongly disagreed ($x = 1.6$ to $x = 1.74$). See Table 9.

The respondents were most positive about "I enjoy doing activities with my child", and "Being aware of the activities in my child's classroom are important to me". This indicates that the parents like to know what their child is doing at the center. The parents also find it enjoyable to do activities with their child.

The lower end of agreement included "I do not know enough about children and their development to be involved in the center" and "Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable". This indicates that parents feel they know enough about children and development and feel comfortable coming into the classroom.

Table 9: Perceptions

	Perception	Mean	S.D.	Rank Order
1	I enjoy doing activities with my children.	4.81	0.39	1
7	Being aware of the activities in my child's classroom are important to me.	4.79	0.41	2
17	Parents and teachers should work as a team.	4.74	0.69	3
4	I feel welcome to visit the center at any time.	4.6	0.58	4

	Perception	Mean	S.D.	Rank Order
3	My child enjoys when I come to the center and stay in the classroom for awhile.	4.53	0.64	5
9	Parent/Teacher conferences are worthwhile.	4.47	0.7	6
14	It is important to talk with my child's teacher daily.	4.42	0.76	7
2	I would like to help my child's teacher.	4.37	0.66	8
13	The parent is the child's best teacher.	4.14	1.17	9
16	It is important to read the center's Parent Handbook.	4.12	0.85	10
8	The center staff should do more to encourage parent participation in center activities.	3.51	0.84	11
7	Being involved with my child means working in the classroom.	3.31	1.05	12
11	Volunteering at the center means giving up my free time.	2.21	1.19	13
10	I am too busy to be involved in center activities.	2.05	1.02	14
15	Childcare teachers do not want parents to be involved in center activities.	1.74	0.88	15

	Perception	Mean	S.D.	Rank Order
6	I do not know enough about children and their development to be involved in the center.	1.65	0.72	16
12	Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable.	1.6	0.62	17

Interest Statement

Section III in the survey, Interests, was devised to evaluate how often parents would participate in activities at the center and activities at home. The 12 items were rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5: 1 = never, 3 = sometimes, 5 = almost always. There were two interests the respondents would frequently ($x = 4.49$ to $x = 4.12$) participate in; four interests the respondents would sometimes ($x = 3.58$ to $x = 3.23$) participate in; and one item the respondents rarely ($x = 2.91$) would participate in. See Table 10 and Table 11.

The respondents were most interested in participating in parent/teacher conferences at the center. The center activity that the respondents were least interested in participating in was putting up a bulletin board for the teacher. This indicates that the parents seem to have a greater interest in participating in the center when they are learning about their child.

At home the respondents were most interested in being involved by reading the parent letters that are sent home with their children. This goes back to the statement in

Section II about wanting to know about what is happening in their child's classroom.

The respondents were least like to participate in building a toy or piece of equipment at home. Few parents may feel skilled in this area.

Table 10: Interests in Center Activities

	Activity	x	S.D.	Rank Order
2	Attend parent/teacher conferences.	4.49	1.14	1
3	Help your child with an activity at the center.	4.12	0.88	2
4	Read to a small group of children.	3.58	1.31	3
1	Attend a parent workshop.	3.51	1.2	4
5	Chaperone a fieldtrip.	3.4	1.23	5
6	Share my "talents" with my child's class.	3.23	1.13	6
7	Put up a bulletin board for a teacher.	2.91	1.32	7

Table 11: Interests in Home Activities

	Activity	x	S.D.	Rank Order
1	Read the parent letters sent home with your child.	4.98	0.15	1
3	Cut out shapes.	3.93	1.1	2
4	Color pieces for a bulletin board.	3.72	1.32	3
2	Mend torn toys.	3.51	1.3	4
5	Build a piece of equipment or a toy.	3.44	1.2	5

Family Activities Statement

Section IV, Family Activities, was intended to analyze how often families participated in certain activities. The 12 family activity statements were rated on the same Likert scale as Section III. There were six items the family frequently ($x = 4.86$ to $x = 4.48$) participate in as a family; and five items the family sometimes ($x = 3.86$ to $x = 3.17$) participate in as a family. See Table 12.

The parents were most responsive to “I talk to my child about their day”, and “The family eats one meal a day together” was also responded well to by the parents. This shows that these parents value being together and spending time talking with their children.

The activities that the parents never or rarely participated in included “My child has playmates over to play”, and “We listen to classical music”. This may indicate that parents enjoy the time they spend just with their children. It also shows that classical

music is not very popular among this group of parents.

Table 12: Family Activities

	Family Activity	x	S.D.	Rank Order
7	I talk to my child about their day.	4.86	0.42	1
9	The family eats one meal a day together.	4.69	0.72	2
8	My child has a bed time routine.	4.62	0.7	4
10	I play games with my child.	4.62	0.7	4
11	I take my child grocery shopping.	4.62	0.79	4
6	I sing to/with my child.	4.48	0.71	6
4	My child and I watch PBS shows.	3.86	1.18	7
3	My child and I watch videos together.	3.79	1.05	8
2	I cook with my child.	3.67	1.36	9
12	My child has playmates over to play.	3.17	1.19	11
5	We listen to classical music.	3.17	1.01	11

Significant Differences on Parent Perceptions, Parent Interests, and Family Activities by Gender, Age and Education

Objective two was to analyze parent perceptions, interests and family activities and their relationship to gender, age and educational level. Using a T-test there was one significant difference on parent perceptions. At the .05 probability level, females mean score was significantly higher ($x = 4.61$) than males ($x = 3.71$) in regards to “Parent/Teacher conferences are worthwhile.” See Table 13.

A significant difference on parent interests by gender was also found at the .05 probability level. Item 2 “Mend torn toys” the males mean score was significantly higher ($x = 4.43$) than females mean score ($x = 3.33$). See Table 14.

Three significant differences on family activities by gender were found. Females mean score was significantly higher ($x = 3.92$) than males in regards to “I cook with my child”. Item 3 “My child and I watch videos together” females mean score was significantly higher ($x = 3.94$) than males ($x = 2.82$). Females mean score was also significantly higher ($x = 4.03$) than males ($x = 2.83$) regarding “My child and I watch PBS shows.” See Table 15.

Table 13: Significant Differences on Parent Perceptions by Gender

	Perception	Male	Female	T Value	Prob.
		n = 7	n = 36		
		x S.D.	x S.D.		
9	Parent/Teacher conferences are worthwhile	3.71 .95	4.61 .55	2.417	0.047

Table 14: Significant Differences on Parent Interests by Gender

	Interest	Male	Female	T Value	Prob.
		n = 7	n = 36		
		x S.D.	x S.D.		
2	Mend torn toys.	4.43 .98	3.33 1.29	2.127	0.039

Table 15: Significant Differences on Family Activities by Gender

	Family Activity	Male	Female	T Value	Prob.
		x S.D.	x S.D.		
2	I cook with my child.	2.17 .98	3.92 1.25	3.252	0.002
3	My child and I watch videos together.	2.83 1.17	3.94 .95	2.561	0.014
4	My child and I watch PBS shows.	2.83 1.47	4.03 1.06	2.428	0.02

Significant Differences by Age

Using an ANOV, five significant differences were found at the .01 level and three significant differences were found at the .05 level on parent perceptions by age. There was significant difference on parent perceptions at the .01 level. Using the Newman-Kuels test, the 36 and older group ($x = 4.45$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.88$) and the 25 year old and younger group ($x = 5.00$) on item 1 “I enjoy doing activities with my children”. See Table 16.

The second significant difference at the .01 level was on item 3 “My child enjoys when I come to the center and stay awhile”. The 36 and older group scored significantly lower ($x = 4.00$) than the 26-35 year olds ($x = 4.59$) and the 25 and younger group ($x = 4.92$). Also at the .01 level, the 25 years and younger group ($x = 1.38$) and the 26-35 year old group ($x = 1.47$) scored significantly lower than the 36 and older group ($x = 2.15$) regarding “I do not know enough about children and their development to be involved in the center”. See Table 16.

The next item significantly different at the .01 level was “I am too busy to be involved in center activities”. The 25 and younger group ($x = 1.54$) and the 26-35 year old group ($x = 1.82$) scored significantly lower than the 36 years and older group ($x = 2.85$). The last significant difference at the .01 level was on item 14, “It is important to talk with my child’s teacher daily”. The 36 and older group ($x = 3.69$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.59$) and the 25 year old and younger group ($x = 4.92$). See Table 16.

The ANOV found three significant differences at the .05 level on parent perceptions by age. Using the Newman-Kuels test, the 36 and older group ($x = 4.00$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.41$) and the 25 and

younger group ($x = 4.69$) on item 2, “I would like to help my child’s teacher”. In addition the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.41$) scored significantly lower than the 25 and younger group ($x = 4.00$). See Table 16.

The Newman-Kuels test also found a significant difference at the .05 level on item 5, “Being involved means working in the classroom”. The 25-35 year old group ($x = 2.94$) scored significantly lower than the 36 years and older group ($x = 3.15$) and the 25 and younger group ($x = 4.00$). In addition the 36 and older group ($x = 3.15$) scored significantly lower than the 25 years and younger group ($x = 4.00$). See Table 16.

The last significant difference at the .05 level found the 25 year old and younger group ($x = 1.38$) and the 26-35 year old group ($x = 1.47$) scoring significantly lower than the 36 years and older group ($x = 2.00$) on item 12, “Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable”. See Table 16.

Table 16: Significant Differences on Parent Perceptions by Age

25 and younger	26-35 years	36 and older
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		N=13		N=17		N=13		F	P
	Perception	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.		
1	I enjoy doing activities with my child	5.0	.00	4.88	.33	4.54	.52	.607	0.005
2	I would like to help my child's teacher	4.69	.63	4.41	.62	4.00	.58	4.245	0.021
3	My child enjoys when I come to the center and stay in the classroom for a while	4.92	.29	4.59	.62	4.00	.63	8.283	0.001
5	Being involved with my child means working in the classroom	4.00	.60	2.94	1.25	3.15	.80	4.441	0.081
6	I do not know enough about children and their development to be involved in the center	1.38	.51	1.47	.80	2.15	.55	5.602	0.007
10	I am too busy to be involved in center activities	1.54	.88	1.82	.88	2.85	.90	7.972	0.001
12	Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable	1.38	.51	1.47	.62	2.00	.58	4.457	0.081
14	It is important to talk with my child's teacher daily	4.92	.28	4.59	.62	3.69	.75	15.431	0

There were no significant differences on parent interests by age. Using the ANOV, two significant differences were found at the .01 level and one significant difference was found at the .05 level on family activities by age. Using the Newman-Kuels test,

the 36 years and older group ($x = 4.08$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.44$) and the 25 years and younger group ($x = 4.92$) on item 6, “I sing to/with my child”. In addition the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.44$) scored significantly lower than the 25 years and younger group ($x = 4.92$). Item 11, “I take my child shopping” the 36 years and older group ($x = 4.08$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 4.81$) and the 25 years and younger group ($x = 4.92$). See Table 17.

There was a significant difference on item 3, “My child and I watch videos together” at the .05 level. The 36 and older group ($x = 3.15$) scored significantly lower than the 26-35 year old group ($x = 3.94$) and the 25 years and younger group ($x = 4.23$). See Table 17.

Table 17: Significant Differences on Family Activities by Age

		25 and younger N = 13		26 – 35 years N = 17		36 and older N = 13		F	P
	Family Activity	X	S.D.	X	S.D	X	S.D.		
3	My child and I watch video together	4.23	.83	3.94	1.00	3.15	1.07	4.294	.021
6	I sing to/with my child	4.92	.28	4.44	.73	4.08	.76	5.797	0.006
11	I take my child grocery shopping	4.92	.28	4.81	.54	4.08	1.12	5.404	0.008

Significant Differences by Educational Level

Using an ANOV, one significant difference was found at the .05 level on family

activities by educational level. Regarding “My child and I watch videos together”, respondents with a Bachelor’s degree scored ($x = 3.23$) significantly lower than respondents with a Master’s or Doctorate degree ($x = 3.60$) and respondents with a High School Diploma or Vocational/Technical degree ($x = 4.26$). In addition the Master’s/Doctorate group ($x = 3.60$) scored significantly lower than the High School Diploma or Vocational/Technical Degree group ($x = 4.26$). There were no significant differences found on parent perceptions or parent interests by educational level. See Table 18.

The ANOV showed one trend in parent perceptions by educational level. Parents seemed to feel that their child enjoys having them come and stay in the classroom for awhile. In the area of parent interests there were three trends developing. The parents were interested in attending parent workshops, putting up a bulletin board for a teacher and cutting out shapes. These may be areas where the center may want to focus or enhance their parent involvement efforts.

Table 18: Significant Differences by Educational Level

		HS and Voc-Tech n = 19	Bachelor's n = 13	Master/Doct n = 10		
	Activity	x S.D.	x S.D.	x S.D.	F	P
3	My child and I watch videos together.	4.26 .81	3.23 1.01	3.60 1.17	4.651	0.015
3	My child enjoys when I come to the center and sit in the classroom for awhile.	4.72 .46	4.55 .69	4.18 .75	2.648	0.084
1	Attend a parent workshop.	3.47 1.31	4.08 .95	2.91 1.04	3.11	0.056
7	Put up a bulletin board for a teacher.	3.00 1.45	3.38 1.04	2.18 1.17	2.755	0.076
10	Cut out shapes.	4.16 1.12	4.15 .80	3.27 1.19	2.878	0.068

Discussion

This study focused on the perceptions, interests and family activities amongst

parents at one campus childcare center. Demographic characteristics were also investigated to determine their effects on the variables. Information was collected from a 50 item survey administered in April 2001 to 85 parents.

Section I of the survey provided a description of the sample population who participated in the study. There were more females (n = 36) that responded to the survey than males (n = 7). The ages of the respondents were almost equally divided between three groups. The 25 years and younger group (n = 13), the 26-35 year old group (n = 17) and the 36 and older group (n = 13). The majority of respondents were married (n = 29, 67.9%), and had one child. In the area of education, the majority (44.2%) of respondents had a High School Diploma or Vocational/Technical school degree. The majority of respondents were employed working 20-40 hours per week. In the area of student status, the highest percentage (44%) of respondents were not students and 32% were full time undergraduate students.

The perception statements in Section II indicated that the respondents perceived that doing activities with their children, being aware of the activities in their child's classroom and having parents and teachers work together as a team as being very important in the well being of their child. They also did not see themselves as being uncomfortable when it came to participating in center activities.

The interest statements in Section III were designed to evaluate how often the parents were willing to participate in activities at the center and also at home. The respondents indicated that activities at the center that they were most willing to participate in were parent/teacher conferences and helping their child's teacher with an activity. The respondents also indicated that at home they were most likely to

participate by reading the parent letters that were sent home with their children.

Section IV was composed of family activity statements. There were two items the respondents frequently participated in as a family. The respondents felt that it was important to talk with their child about their day. They also ate at least one meal together as a family each day. Rarely would the respondents have playmates over to play. This may indicate that the respondents value the family time and activities that they do as a family.

The results of the survey agreed with the research in the area of parent barriers to involvement. The research indicates that many parents do not have a high level of involvement because of their work schedules. A high percentage of the respondents to this survey were working full time or were full time students at the university.

Research states that when men become actively involved in home and school they can have a positive impact on many aspects of their child's development (McBride & Rane, 1996). The seven fathers who responded to this survey strongly agreed (85.7%) to the statement "I enjoy doing activities with my children", "I feel welcome to visit the center at any time" (71.4%), and also to the statement that "The parent is the child's best teacher" (71.4%). Over half (51.1%) of the male respondents disagreed with the statement "Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable". This leads the researcher to conclude that these male respondents were actively involved in their child's lives and were comfortable participating in center activities.

The research literature also discussed the fact that many teachers have barriers that prevent higher parent involvement. Nearly half (48.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement "Center staff should do more to encourage parent participation in center

activities”. Research shows that many childcare teachers lack training in the area of parent involvement. This may be true of the staff at this center. The majority (48.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement “Childcare teachers do not want parents to be involved in center activities”. This may indicate that these respondents see the teacher as willing to have them participate in center activities, but might not know what activities to offer the parents. It was strongly agreed upon by 81.4% of the respondents that the parents and the teachers should work as a team. This supports the research indicating that school and home collaboration works to the benefit of the child.

Pestalozzi believed that the child’s education at home and the love and support found there represented the foundation of learning (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993). The respondents of this survey seem to support this belief by the family activities in which they frequently participate. The respondents frequently ate one meal a day together and they also frequently talked to their child about their day. The respondents also frequently participated in parent teacher conferences and read the parent letters that were sent home with their child.

This chapter has examined the data analysis of the survey and a discussion to follow. Chapter V will contain a summary of the information and draw conclusions from that data. Lastly, it will include recommendations for further educational studies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter of this study summarizes the methodology and findings. It will then draw conclusions that have been deduced from the findings, and offer research recommendations for further study. Lastly, this chapter will outline the educational implications of the investigation.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess the involvement of parents in a campus childcare center. This entailed a survey that included parent perceptions, parent interests in center and home activities, and family activities. The independent variables used for the data analysis were age, gender and educational level.

Methods and Procedures

The survey was administered in April 2001. The population was drawn, by cluster sampling, from parents (ages 6 weeks-6 years old) who attended childcare at a campus childcare center in Menomonie, Wisconsin during the 2000-2001 school year. The sample group of 85 subjects received a letter and survey (see Appendix A) requesting their participation. There were a total of 43 surveys returned, computing to a 50% return rate.

Each parent anonymously completed a four part survey that encompassed demographics, parent perceptions, parent interests in center and home activities, and family activities. The investigator developed and designed the research instrument. Section I, General Information, recorded age, gender, race, marital status, highest educational level completed, employment status, student status, number of children,

and ages of children.

Section II, Parent Perceptions, contained 17 items that parents were asked to rate on a Likert scale from 1-5 with 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = undecided, and 5 = strongly agree. The statements included a variety of perceptions for which the parents could respond.

Section III, Parent Interests, included 12 items (7 center activities and 5 home activities) also rated on a Likert scale from 1-5, with 1 = never, 3 = sometimes and 5 = almost always.

Section IV, Family Activities, consisted of 12 items about activities that the respondents might participate in as a family. It was also rated on a Likert scale as in Section III.

A pilot test of the survey was conducted in March 2001 to six parents. It was administered in the presence of the investigator because time was a critical factor. All measures were taken to insure the content validity and confidentiality of this study.

Data Analysis

The responses of the survey were analyzed by the University of Wisconsin-Stout Computer User support services. Percentages and frequency counts were calculated for Section I, items 1-9. For Sections II, III and IV the mean, standard deviation, and rank order were computed. Also used in computation were T-tests, ANOV and the Newman-Kuels Range Test. The independent variables included gender, age, and education level of the respondents.

Analysis of the data found that 83% of the respondents were female and 17% were

male. Thirteen of the respondents were age 25 and younger, seventeen were age 26-35 years and thirteen were age 36 and older. The majority of the parents were married. Twenty eight of the respondents had a high school diploma or Bachelor's degree. Almost half (n = 19) of the respondents were not students.

The responses to the perception statements indicated that the respondents perceived that doing activities with their children, awareness of classroom activities and parents and teachers working as a team as very important in the well being of their children. The respondents disagreed with the statement "Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable." Since parents disagreed with this statement, it is assumed that these parents do feel comfortable being involved in center activities.

Parents indicated through their responses to the interests statements that parent/teacher conferences was the activity they would most frequently participate in at the center. At home the parents were most likely to participate in reading the newsletters that were sent home with their child.

Responses to the family activities statements revealed that the two activities which this group of parents frequently took part in were talking to their child about their day and eating at least one meal a day together. Rarely did they have playmates over to play. This may indicate that these parents value family time or are too busy to have other children over to play.

With regards to gender, females felt parent/teacher conferences were more worthwhile and they also cooked, watched videos and PBS shows with their children. Males were more willing to mend torn toys at home as a way to participate. There were seven differences by age. More respondents with a high school diploma or vocational/technical degree watched videos with their children.

Limitations

This study represents one campus childcare center in one community. It represents the perceptions, interests and family activities of that parent population in April, 2001. More females (n = 36) than males (n = 7) responded. The results of this study are generalize able only to that particular population. The research instrument was developed and designed by the investigator, it is not a standard instrument. Also, for reasons unknown, not all respondents answered all the items.

Conclusions

As a result of the data reported in Chapter IV, conclusions can be drawn. They will be discussed according to the three objectives outlined in Chapter I.

Objective 1

Describe the perceptions of parents with regards to the childcare environment. The respondents perceived that awareness of the classroom activities, reading the newsletters and parent teacher conferences as being important activities to participate in with regards to the childcare environment. These parents disagreed that the teachers do not want parents involved in center activities, that participating in center activities makes them feel uncomfortable, and that they do not know enough about children and their development to participate in center activities.

Objective 2

Analyze parent perceptions, interests, and family activities and their relationship to gender, age and level of education. There are many significant differences in each

section, as they were tested with the variables, as discussed in the summary of this chapter. Males scored significantly higher than females regarding mending torn toys. Several significant differences were found among age groups about doing activities with their children, talking with their child's teacher daily and my child enjoys when I stay in the classroom for awhile. There was a significant difference between the high school diploma/vocational-technical degree group and the bachelor's and master's/doctorate groups on watching videos with their child.

Objective 3

Identify campus parent priorities for involvement in their child's childcare center. This group of parents felt that the staff should do more to encourage parent participation in center activities. They were most willing, at the center, to participate in parent/ teacher conferences. At home they participated the most in reading the parent newsletters that were sent home with their children. Parents also agreed that parents and teachers should work as a team.

Recommendations for Future Research

Four recommendations for further research include:

1. Exam the role that fathers play in the education of their children is an area that needs further research. Recent research has shown the impact that fathers can have in their child's education. A survey on just the father's perceptions, interests and family activities could lead to a better evaluation of parent involvement at this and other

centers.

2. Administering the survey at the beginning and at the end of the year to compare parent perceptions.

3. Follow these parents into elementary school to see how their perceptions, interests and family activities change or stay the same as their children grow older.

4. Conduct research on a larger, more widespread population sample that could include other campus childcare centers in Wisconsin and/or the surrounding five state area.

Educational Implications

The results of this study should help the parents, staff and administration at the University of Wisconsin-Stout Child and Family Study Center in accessing the parent perceptions and interests in center involvement. Parents felt it important to be aware and informed about activities in their child's classroom. Newsletters and parent/teacher conferences were activities that they felt strongly about participating in. These parents felt that the teachers should do more to encourage parent participation in center activities. The center staff may need to do a questionnaire to find out activities the parents would participate in. They also need a plan on how to incorporate those activities into the center. The administration and staff needs to create a parent friendly environment and encourage parent involvement.

The childcare center is often the first experience that parents have being involved with their child's education. We as early childhood educators can help to set the ground work for a positive parent, teacher and school relationship that can lead to

increased parent involvement that can last over the child's whole educational experience. These positive relationships between home and school will enable children.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT SURVEY

This survey is intended to find out to what extent parents are involved with their child's childcare center. Please answer all of the following questions to the best of your ability. All responses are strictly confidential. Thank you for participating.

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informal consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice. Note: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knows, Chair, UW Stout Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone 715-232-1126.

Section I: General Information

Place an X in the appropriate blank.

1. Your age:
 21 and under 22-25 years 26-30 years 31-35 years
 36-40 years over 41 years
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Race: (please mark only one)
 African American Asian Native American
 Hispanic White Other _____
4. Marital Status:
 Single Married Divorced Widowed Separated Other _____
5. Highest Educational Level Completed:
 High School Diploma Vocational/Technical Degree
 Bachelors Degree Masters Degree Doctoral Degree
6. Employment Status:
 Part time, less than 20 hours Part time, 20-30 hours Full time, 40 or more hours
7. Student Status:
 Full time undergraduate Half time undergraduate Full time graduate
 Half time graduate Not a student
8. Total number of children in your family: _____
9. Please list all the ages of your children: _____

Section II: Perceptions

The following statements are related to perceptions about parenting and being involved with your child's life. Using the scale below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements by selecting a number from 1 to 5.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- ___ 1. I enjoy doing activities with my children.
- ___ 2. I would like to help my child's teacher.
- ___ 3. My child enjoys when I come to the center and stay in the classroom for awhile.
- ___ 4. I feel welcome to visit the center at any time.
- ___ 5. Being involved with my child means working in the classroom.

- ___ 6. I do not know enough about children and their development to be involved in the center.
- ___ 7. Being aware of the activities in my child's classroom are important to me.
- ___ 8. The center staff should do more to encourage parent participation in center activities.
- ___ 9. Parent/Teacher conferences are worthwhile.
- ___ 10. I am too busy to be involved in center activities.
- ___ 11. Volunteering at the center means giving up my free time.
- ___ 12. Participating in center activities makes me feel uncomfortable.
- ___ 13. The parent is the child's best teacher.
- ___ 14. It is important to talk with my child's teacher daily.
- ___ 15. Childcare teachers do not want parents to be involved in center activities.
- ___ 16. It is important to read the center's Parent Handbook.
- ___ 17. Parents and teachers should work as a team.

Section III: Interests:

Please read each statement. Indicate how often you would participate in the following activities at your child's childcare center or at home.

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Frequently 5 = Almost Always

Center Activities:

1. Attend a parent workshop.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Attend parent/teacher conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Help your child with an activity at the center.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Read to a small group of children at the center.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Chaperone a field trip.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Share my "talents" with my child's class.	1	2	3	4	5

7. Put up a bulletin board for a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
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Home Activities:

1. Read the parent letters sent home with your child.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Mend torn toys.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Cut out shapes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Color pieces for a bulletin board.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Build a piece of equipment or a toy.	1	2	3	4	5

Section IV: Family Activities:

Please read each statement. Indicate how often you participate in the following family activities.

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Frequently 5 = Almost Always

1. I read to my child daily.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I cook with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My child and I watch videos together.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My child and I watch PBS shows. (Barney, Sesame Street, Zoom etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
5. We listen to classical music.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I sing to/with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I talk to my child about their day.	1	2	3	4	5

8. My child has a bedtime routine.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The family eats one meal a day together.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I play games with my child. (pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo, candy land etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
11. I take my child grocery shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My child has playmates over to play.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

April 11, 2001

Dear Parents,

In recent years there has been more attention on the importance of family and childcare partnerships. Families and childcare centers have begun working as partners for the benefit of the child. These benefits have been shown to carry over into the child's future schooling.

The attached survey is designed to solicit your opinions and desired level of involvement in your child's childcare center. Your responses will better enable us to assess the current level and interests of parent involvement at our center. Please return it by Friday, April 20, 2001. All surveys will remain anonymous.

Please return this survey to Patti at the Child and Family Study Center or your child's teacher in the Infant/Toddler Lab. They will give you a handout of fun summer activities to do with your child. Thank you for your time and effort, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Marcia Wolf (Head Teacher-Infants)