FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICES FAMILY CENTRED CHILD CARE POLICY

by

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CHILD REARING: THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

A case study of Family Day Care Services

Master of Arts

Early Childhood Studies

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of culture as the intrinsic foundation upon which societies organize child rearing routines and its impact on family involvement with early childhood education. Investigation was carried out through the lens of Family Day Care Services family centred child care policy. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with a convenience sample of eleven participants from West Africa and Sri Lanka, the study considered (a) the patterns of implementation of policy principles; (b) extents to which the ECE program reflected families' cultural practices and; (c) extents to which these factors impacted family involvement. Study findings indicated diversity between West African and Sri Lankan participants' perceptions with regard to cultural expectation of ECE programming and identified limitations in cultural communication transactions as a major hindrance to family involvement. Recommendations were made for teacher training, on-going parent board meetings, and further research to aid understanding of the communities served and give voice to families.

Key words: Culture, Family Involvement, West African, Sri Lankan, Immigrant, early childhood

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"Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" Eccles. 4:12

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'Ènìyàn l'aso mi' is a Yorùbá proverb which literal meaning is 'people are my clothing'. This is very true for me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

This study is focused on culture and its impact on family involvement with early childhood centres. The investigation was conducted among participants recruited from Family Day Care Services (FDCS), a leading early childhood education delivery agency based in Southern Ontario. The construct of culture is explored through the lens of the agency's family centred child care policy which was formulated in 1997 to support families and enhance family involvement. The purpose of this study was twofold: (i) to explore cultural variables impacting West African and Sri Lankan family involvement with FDCS' centre-based child care programs, and; (ii) to explore the extent to which FCDS' family centred child care policy is reflected in practice.

Challenges to Diversity

Diversity in Canada

The cultural composition of Canada is changing, with this reality especially manifest in major cities like Toronto which receives about 44% of all new immigrants (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2007; Reitz, 2006). According to 2001 Canadian census data, approximately one out of every six children under fourteen years of age is a member of a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2007a). A further projection of a 56% increase in the visible minority population by the year 2017 has been made, thus making this the fastest growing population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007b). In the light of this reality and given the adverse effects which racial inequalities can have on a society's cohesiveness (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006),

it becomes essential that frameworks of inequality be critically investigated and confronted in order to promote social inclusion (Dei &Calliste, 2000) and maintain a cohesive society.

Diversity in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Settings

Although women have traditionally been primary caregivers for their young children, Statistics Canada data shows a high number of women in the work force (Statistics Canada, 2007c) as more families with children have both parents in the workforce (Vanier, 2007). The relevance of out-of-home child care facilities can therefore not be overlooked as more families are using formalized child care services (Friendly & Beach, 2005). Family involvement has been found to have an impact on the educational success of all children and especially immigrant children (Jeynes, 2003; Shimoni & Baxter, 2005; Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2002). Nevertheless, a growing body of research has demonstrated that cultural differences can constitute a barrier to the involvement of immigrant families in the education process (Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Roer-Strier & Rosenthal, 2001). With childcare providers serving more culturally diverse children and families, it becomes extremely important to explore cultural differences in child rearing expectations and practices, in order to enable culturally responsive programming and enhance family involvement.

One of the challenges faced by childcare teachers is the training they receive (Greenwood & Fraser, 2005; Fleer, 2006; Gaetano, 2007). The literature points to two factors which constitute barriers to good early childhood education practice. Firstly, foundations of early child development training, expectations and practices which remain entrenched in Eurocentric knowledge are problematic (Greenwood & Fraser, 2005; Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Norquay, 1999). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines Eurocentrism as "reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of Western and especially European or Anglo-American

values and experiences" (2007). According to Fleer (2006), these knowledge bases inevitably place some families from other cultures in a deficit position. A second factor which can constitute a barrier to good ECE practice is the impact of teacher attitude on family involvement (Lareau, 1987). Knowledge bases founded in Eurocentric ideals have been identified to negatively impact teacher's perceptions of diverse families (Fleer, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006). Further, teachers' conceptualization of 'involvement' may serve to hinder family involvement. For example, involvement ranges on a continuum from daily communication with teachers and facilitation of teachers with parents acting as helpers, to participation in the decision-making process. Parents are however, more typically offered opportunities which limit their involvement to daily communication and facilitation of teachers (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Bernhard, Freire, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Villavueva, 1998). Also, when parents are interested in low level involvement, teachers may misinterpret this for a lack of interest in any involvement.

The Setting

Historical Background

Family Day Care Services (FCDS) is a not for profit charitable organization founded in 1851 as The Protestants Orphans Home to provide institutional care and education for underprivileged orphaned children in the city of Toronto. In recognition of the changing needs of the community, the agency expanded its services during the Second World War to helping place children in foster homes. The focus of the agency evolved in the 1960's, again in response to changing community needs, with a family day care program which grew to providing full-time child care services. Celebrating its 150th birthday in 2001, FDCS is currently licensed for 200 home care programs and operates 28 centre-based child care facilities, including after school care

programs. Through these facilities, FDCS provides service to over 4,000 children and their families in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Also the lead agency for Ontario Early Years Centres in the provincial ridings of Don Valley East, Markham, Mississauga Centre, Scarborough Centre and Thornhill, FDCS in 2006, recorded over 95,000 repeat visits from families in the communities which they serve. This study will, however, focus only on the centre based childcare facilities.

The Family Centred Child Care Policy

As the communities which the Agency serves grew more culturally diverse, FDCS responded in 1996 by recognising the need for family support and culturally responsive practices in child care delivery. With research yielding evidence of the positive impact of family involvement on children's academic success, FDCS made an organizational shift from a view of the child as client to a focus on family support and wellness. To this end and in relentless pursuit of quality, FDCS management sought to integrate the principles and practices of family support into the framework of the agency's practice (Lee-Blickstead, 1996). Thus, a family centred child care policy was developed and adopted in 1997 to guide the practice of early child care delivery (see copy of the family centred child care policy in appendix A). Based on eight pivotal principles, the policy laid a strong foundation of guidelines to strengthen support family support and involvement, through relationship building between teachers and families. The aim of the Family Centred Child Care Policy was to provide support for families and promote a shift among teachers from a deficit to a strength-based view of families, ultimately to enhance family involvement. The policy was informed by family support literature and findings from interviews conducted with over 25 staff members. The policy formed the basis for in-house staff training in family support (Lee-Blickstead, 1996). In spite of these efforts however, there had been no

evaluation of the extent of involvement of families, especially among ethnically diverse groups. In compliance with its history of community responsiveness, FDCS wished to uncover cultural hindrances to family involvement by measuring the extent to which practice reflects policy. Thus, the present study was conceptualized to clarify steps needed toward increased family participation and quality service delivery.

Personal Background

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), advocates of social justice should situate the researchers self in the writing. I am a multi-lingual Nigerian immigrant who has resided in Canada for 5 years. I define myself as Nigerian. I did not always do so however, and only began learning the meaning of my culture as I endeavoured to navigate another. Rogoff (2003) wrote that when people learn more about a different culture, they also learn about their own. As I have struggled to create a new identity in an exciting new country, I have also come to understand the loss of one's own self and all that entails. The richness and beauty of experiences past and knowledge gained, all of which appear no longer relevant because they are not valued in the same way.

Working in an Ontario Early Years Centre, teaching Western based parent education curriculum to immigrant parents also lent me a better appreciation of the struggles immigrants face as they try raising their children with knowledge which no longer applies, or so they are told. I found I understood when participants would say "this is not the way we do it back home" as they struggled to learn concepts which inverted much of what they had known. Dei & Calliste (2000) assert that marginalized people are made silent and rendered invisible when their previous experiences and knowledge are constantly denied. This rang true for so many families.

I bring a social transformation perspective to my research. I believe in the importance of agency and equity and justice. The study participants had something to say. I believe in their right to say it. I believe culture defines who we are.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Culture

The concept of culture has endured through much anthropological debate. Formerly signifying the growth of an organism, the term has evolved to carry a somewhat generally accepted meaning as traditions and structures of particular societies (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Gardiner & Kosmitzki (2005) define culture as "the cluster of learned and shared beliefs, values, practices, behaviours, symbols and attitudes that are characteristic of a particular group of people ... communicated from one generation to another" (p.4). Super & Harkness (2002), describe culture as "providing organization of the developmental environment", purposefully structured to provide the culture's "core messages" (p. 271). Much research conducted on culture indicates its centrality to child development expectations and practices. According to Harrison et al. (as cited in Roer-Strier & Rosenthal, 2001), "socialization goals and strategies that people inculcate in their children derive from cultural knowledge" (p.216). Tomasello (2000) stated that cultural context "structures human cognition in fundamental ways" (p. 37). Based on inherent cultural foundations, societies and parents have ideal images of how children should be as adults. These images serve as a guide for the organizing of child-rearing routines and values inculcated in children (Roer-Strier & Rosenthal, 2001). For example, Western views see ideal children as independent, owning the choice to become whatever they want (Super & Harkness, 1996). Thus the Western approach to child rearing is focused on enabling democratic participation and aimed at guiding the development of attitudes and skills honing independence (Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez & Angelino, 2003). Unlike this approach, many other cultures view young children as equally important but lacking in the knowledge and experience required to make

important decisions. In these cultures, upbringing is therefore adult-centred and geared at teaching values and routines in order to impart necessary knowledge. For example, Bernhard et al. (2004) stated that "Latino parents do not believe that all their decisions should be discussed with the children ... and that compromised agreement should be reached" (p. 51). While in Western contexts this would be labelled as authoritarian parenting and viewed negatively, Bernhard et al. (2004) argued that the label would be inaccurate because among Latinos, parental discipline is seen as an indication of love for the children. In line with this argument, Levine et al., (1994) found that in many African contexts, obedience was purposely nurtured in children as a favourable outcome, and deliberate training was provided to ensure development of this attitude. Societal views of childhood greatly impact upon expectations of parent-child interaction. Levine et al. (1994) further stated that in these African contexts, age mates rather than adults were considered ideal playmates for children. Through age mate interactions, children practiced such concepts as respect and nurturing, both valued societal constructs, as well as other skills. Parents played more secondary roles as overall guides. This is in contrast to more Western expectations that positive parent child attachment is formed through primary parent interaction (Etzion-Carasso & Oppenheim, 2000) which is necessary to promote healthy child development. Thus, culture is clearly a significant factor influencing child development expectations and child rearing practices.

Unfortunately, although the current post modernist environment in which research and education is based disputes theories of knowledge which claim the position of universal truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), much of mainstream early child development training, expectations and practices remain Eurocentrically based (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud and Lange, 1995; Greenwood & Fraser, 2005; Rosenthal, 1999). Bowman & Stott (as cited in Rosenthal, 1999),

argued that "despite growing awareness of the misleading potential of ethnocentric thinking...much of current developmental research tends to ignore the argument that "childhood" and "child development" are cultural constructs, and remains steadfastly ethnocentric" (p. 479). According to Fleer (2006), "what has become valued within the profession of early childhood education is essentially a Western view of childhood" (p.128). In an anticipated view of the future of research, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) challenge this taken-for-granted stance by calling for "emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe...from seeing the world in one colour" (p. 212).

According to Rogoff & Chavajay (1995), awareness has increased about the fact that Eurocentric understanding of child development cannot be universally applied. Tomasello (2000) argued that Piaget's theory of cognitive development was "wrong" (p. 37). This point is also made by Gardiner & Kosmitzki (2005) who argued that many societies never achieve Piaget's stage of formal operational thinking. For example, "a study conducted among Nigerian adolescents...using Piagetian tasks, revealed little use of formal operational thinking" (p. 116). Gardiner & Kosmitzki (2005) however reported that cultures do develop types of logical thinking applicable to their society. The Nigerian society can be said to lean more towards collectivism than individualism. External social structures such as schools, markets, religious establishments and the adults within them, serve as extensions of the home, having significant impact on child rearing. In these societies, children are not expected to solve problems single-handedly as value is placed on social interaction and co-operation. With greater emphasis placed on interdependence, independence is often viewed as a negative attitude and discouraged (Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005). The strict Piagetian concept of formal operational thinking may therefore not necessarily apply in some cultures. According to Gardiner & Kosmitzki's

earlier argument, while the tested Nigerian adolescents may have displayed little use of Piaget's method of formal operational thinking, they would have developed logical thinking applicable to their society. In agreement with this position, Roggof & Chavajay (1995) argued that formal operational thinking is strongly tied to people's experience and culture. They further stated that "Piaget backed off on his claim of universal stages to say that this fourth stage was culturally variable" (p. 860). Thus, as evidenced from the literature, cultural variations may exist between immigrant parents' goals for socializing their children and those fostered by the host culture (Roer-Strier & Rosenthal, 2001).

Although much evidence abounds on the need for diversity in perspective, professional practice of early child care remains "contradictory" to the cultural practices of children and their families (Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005). For example, the philosophy of child-centred pedagogy founded on developmental psychology is a cultural construct specifically applicable to Western cultures (Norquay, 1999; Fleer, 2006). This construct has however been normalized as standard practice for organization of childcare and learning. According to Fleer (2006), "assuming universal views on child development positions some children from some families in deficit" (p.132). Edwards (2004) argued in favour of the development of pedagogy for early education which positions culture at the centre of its interactions. In discussing inclusive education, Dei (1996) found that diversity of perspectives are essential as part of the "academic discourse, knowledge and texts" (p. 78). Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena further stated that while professionals could not be expected to have knowledge of all cultural child rearing practices, evidently contradictory practices may have a harmful impact on positive identity formation in children. In the same line of argument, Wise (2002) stated that "developmental theory suggests

that the greater the consistency... across the environments in which children live and learn, the better the outcomes for the child" (p. 48).

Child care teachers must effectively negotiate relations between themselves and families of the children in their care. According to Weiss et al. (2002) the role of teachers is important in sustaining supports needed to reduce stress for parents. They argued that teachers should "actively reach out and invite parents to share" (p. 5) and further stated that "children benefit most from their school years if they enter kindergarten ready to succeed" (p. 2). In order to succeed, family involvement in early childcare has been established as essential. As indicated earlier, teachers' attitudes towards family involvement can be negatively impacted by knowledge bases which assume that other cultural practices are wrong. Dei & Calliste (2000, p.11) argue that "marginalized bodies are continually silenced and rendered invisible...through the constant negation of multiple lived experience and alternative knowledges". In discussing cultural constructs of independence and interdependence, Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena (2005) cite the following example:

> A video called *Diversity: Contrasting Perspectives* ... shows a Japanese mother in San Francisco spoon-feeding her four year old ... in our experience, early childhood students and professionals sometimes become quite uncomfortable ... they think the daughter is too dependent on her mother. They don't understand that the mother is modeling interdependence and teaching her daughter about the importance of helping one another (p.20).

Such conflict in cultural understanding may sometimes result in strained interactions between early childhood professionals and families. Differences between the organizing of child care expectations and family expectations may thus result in a breakdown of communication, effectively hindering family involvement.

According to Wise (2002), research suggests that the level of communication between children's settings (in this case childcare and home) affects children's developmental potential. Powell (1989) stated that the relationship processes between child care services and families reduced the impact of differences between the home and childcare. Wise (2002) found that cultural factors influenced parents' expectations of child care services. In order for children to receive full benefits of the ECE experience, their needs must be met within the context of their family (Kyle, 1999). This is in line with Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework of child development which found that various contexts of children's experiences – micro-system, meso-system and macro-system need to overlap in order to enhance effective learning.

Family involvement

Citing family involvement as defined by Hoge, Smit, & Crist (1997) as consisting of (a) parental expectations, (b) parental interest, (c) parental involvement in school and (d) parental involvement in family community; Jeynes found that all aspects of family involvement positively impacted academic achievement, especially among visible minority populations. According to these arguments, in order for children, and especially immigrant children to achieve academic success, family involvement is essential. Research conducted in the area of family involvement indicates that family involvement plays a significantly positive role in later student academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998; Honig, 1979; Epstein, 1987; Lareau, 1987; Jeynes, 2003). Empirical studies further link family involvement not only to improved student achievement, but also to accountability and improved attendance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Epstein (1987) defined family involvement as activities which brought families in contact with ECE teachers and childcare administrators. According to Weiss et al. (2006) family involvement has been found to be important in the cognitive and social development of

young children. Family involvement has also been found to positively impact the academic achievement of minority children (Jeynes, 2003).

A large body of literature identifies variables which have been consistently found to impact levels of parental involvement. These include gender, race/ethnicity, family socio economic status, level of parent's educational attainment, socio-psychological factors of parents and characteristics of the school (O'Bryan, Braddock II, & Dawkins 2006). In agreement about the general positive findings of family involvement studies, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) further argued that established and accepted variables such as parent's SES may not hold all the answers to why family involvement is not successful. They argued that critical questions of why parents became involved and how their involvement created success needed to be asked. The forms their decisions took and the impact on their children's education were important considerations. According to these authors, variables which had more impact on family involvement were (i) parents' construction of their role, (ii) parents' sense of their own effectiveness in helping their children academically, and (iii) parents' response to invitations and opportunities presented by the school and by their children. In their research, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) asserted that questions of why parents became involved could further advance understanding of the concept.

Family involvement has been conceptualized and measured in various ways with involvement roles ranging from parents as teachers, classroom volunteers, and staff, to parents as participants in the decision making process. Epstein (1990) developed a model which identified six types of family involvement namely: (i) basic obligations of parents to provide for the fundamental needs of their children, including building positive home conditions for learning; (ii) basic obligations of schools to provide communication between school and home including

information on child's progress; (iii) family involvement at school including parent volunteerism ; (iv) family involvement with learning activities at home including reading with a child at home; (v) family involvement with school decision making; (vi) family involvement in school-community collaborations.

With so much evidence obtained from research, governments and policy makers in many parts of the world, are encouraging family involvement through program requirements and funding opportunities (Golan & Peterson, 2002). For example, in a recent strategy developed to increase family involvement, the Government of Ontario legislated a Family Involvement Policy in December 2005 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). A new Parent Engagement Office was also set up in January 2006 to support the Ontario Government's efforts to "facilitate effective parent involvement in the school system" (Ontario Government News, 2007).

Although the advantages of family involvement have been compelling, research still clearly indicates lingering difficulties with the deep involvement of immigrant parents in the education process. Teachers' construction of their own roles and conceptualization of parents' roles have been found to impact family involvement (Bernhard et al. 1995; Gonzalez et. 2005; Keyes, 2002; Lareau, 1987). When teachers' "position themselves as the powerful professional" (Crozier, 1999, p. 323) and expert, parents and other family members become relegated to passive roles in the education of their children (Crozier, 1999; Lareau, 1987). Teachers' conceptualization of family roles in the education process also determines involvement opportunities offered to families. Gonzalez et al. (2005) found that although educational programs frequently expound family involvement, opportunities offered usually fall in the category of parents as classroom helpers, facilitating teachers rather than occupying positions as partners with the teachers. Thus, although parents are invited to be involved in their children's

education, their roles are tightly outlined. Fine (1993) stated that "they are usually not welcomed ... to the critical and serious work of rethinking educational structures and practices" (p. 460). Thus, the image of the teacher as the expert is continuously being reinforced, and families, especially immigrant families unfamiliar with the structure of the education system are hindered from active involvement.

Family involvement can be further conceptualized according to Freire's (1970) construction of the "banking versus problem-posing [transformative]" concepts of education. This conceptualization can also be employed to categorize levels of family involvement. Inviting advocates of liberation to "reject the banking concept in its entirety" (p. 79), Freire (1970) described this concept as one in which teachers are positioned as repositories of knowledge, organizing all learning processes without input from the students who are situated as docile "containers ... to be filled" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). In this concept, teachers play the role of experts, with students as passive participants in the education process. In the problem-posing or transformative concept of education, on the other hand, students are "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (p. 81), thus, learning becomes transactional and mutual, with both parties gaining empowerment through the process. According to Freire (1970), dialogue is critical to the emergence and sustenance of the transformative concept of education.

A conceptualization of family involvement according to Freire's concepts of education places involvement opportunities where teachers are positioned as experts, with families as docile recipients as the banking model, and opportunities which situate teachers and families as critical and equal partners as the transformative model. As with education, dialogue is critical to the functioning of a revolutionary model of family involvement. Indeed, much of the literature on family involvement indicates that in order for successful involvement to be achieved, a

partnership based upon mutual respect and dialogue between teachers and families must be sustained (Bernhard et al. 1995; Fleer, 2006; Gaetano, 2007; Sohn & Wang, 2006). With differences in cultural understanding having significant impact on relationship building between parents and teachers (Sohn & Wang, 2006), such dialogue must necessarily include transmission of cultural knowledge pertinent to families.

As discussed earlier, the FDCS family centred child care policy was intended as a tool to support partnership with families and enhance family involvement. In order to critically measure its effectiveness, FDCS sponsored this study which is intended to: (a) obtain the perspective of families regarding the implementation of the family centred childcare policy and (b) explore cultural factors which influence family choices of involvement with the childcare. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are families aware of the FDCS family centred child care policy and its implementation in practice?
2. To what extent are families involved in their children's FDCS childcare program? What are barriers to involvement?
3. To what extent do FDCS centres reflect families' cultural practices?

Chapter 3

Description of Methodology

This section elaborates on the methodology used to collect the data on African and Sri Lankan families with children 0-8 years enrolled in Family Day Care childcare centres in Toronto and the GTA. The object of the research was twofold (1) to understand what role culture played in how families from the chosen research populations engage with the childcare personnel and programs (2) to obtain from the families, information and feedback regarding their knowledge of and experience with the practice of the principles laid out in the Family Centred Child Care Policy. This information can contribute toward updating the FDCS Family Centred Child Care Policy. The information can also provide a basis for further in-house professional development training in order to enhance culturally responsive practice and ensure consistent family centred service delivery.

Recruitment

This study relied on a convenience sample of participants recruited from among families who had children enrolled in Family Day Care childcare centres. According to Del Balso & Lewis (2005), convenience sampling is used to enhance understanding of particular issues, in this case, implementation of the FDCS family centred child care policy. Although a major difficulty with convenience samples is that findings cannot be overly generalised, the information collected is nevertheless, valid and useful.

The study focused on first generation immigrant families from West Africa and Sri Lanka. Because the researcher shared first language with immigrants from certain parts of Africa, the project was initially intended to focus only on African families. An email inquiry originating from the Agency's Director of programming was sent to all Family Day Care centre

supervisors in Toronto and the GTA. The email requested confirmation of centres with African families on their enrolment. Responses from supervisors greatly aided in directing the researcher on centres to visit. Initial visits were made to all positive sites and fliers introducing the study distributed in all children's cubbies. Childcare supervisors and staff were enlisted to help draw parent's attention to the fliers in their children's cubbies. No responses were obtained using this recruitment method and follow up was done by the researcher who visited centres at drop off and pick up times to personally approach target families, explain the purpose of the study and facilitate the filling of pre-selection questionnaires by interested parents. Childcare supervisors were enlisted to introduce me, the researcher, to the parents.

Early stages of recruitment revealed that African families were not numerous in Family Day Care centres and a decision was made to include another group with a large representative population within Family Day Care. The Sri Lankan population, meeting this criterion, was chosen to be a part of the study. The same process was carried out, with the researcher visiting centres and personally recruiting participants. A total of eleven participants consisting of 6 West African and 5 Sri Lankan participants were interviewed for the study.

Ensuring confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality for the participants was very important. Prospective participants showed extreme wariness in filling pre-selection questionnaires and inquired about confidentiality. Participants required assurance that they could speak without their children suffering any form of retribution in the childcare. The researcher assured complete confidentiality to all prospective participants. Pre-selection questionnaires were used to ensure anonymity of final study participants. Interview dates were arranged between the researcher and participants over the phone and interviews conducted in participant's homes (except for one

interview which was conducted over the phone). The participants were informed of potential benefits and risks of the study, and the steps taken to ensure confidentiality outlined to them. Signed consent was obtained from all the participants. Pseudo names were used during the audio-taped interviews to protect the identity of the focal child.

Data collection

The principal tool used for data collection was structured interviews guided by a previously prepared questionnaire (please see interview questions in Appendix B). The design of the questionnaire was developed in different stages and research questions drawn from the literature, with participation and input from the research supervisor. Sections of the questionnaire were drawn directly from the Family Centred Child Care Policy with guidelines and practices of the policy rephrased as questions. The questionnaire contained a combination of mainly open-ended and a few closed ended questions on pertinent themes including: (1) cultural child rearing practices; (2) similarities and differences with local childcare culture; (3) levels of family involvement with the child care centre; (4) families' experiences with the FDCS' family centred child care policy. Where participants had more than one child in Family Day chid care centre, a focal child was chosen and questions were directed to measure participants' interactions regarding that child. Interviews were mainly conducted in English. In cases where the researcher also spoke the first languages of some of the West African participants, that language was spoken to establish rapport before the interview commenced. With the exception of one interview which was conducted over the phone, each participant was interviewed by the researcher in a face-to-face interview which lasted approximately one hour. Participants were compensated for their time.

Data analysis

After the interviewing and transcription process, participant responses were read, analyzed and coded into categories. Data obtained was reviewed to identify recurrent themes and organized into charts according to the themes. Pertinent comments by participants were highlighted and ordered according to the identified primary themes. Various other themes surfacing from the data were discussed with a representative from Family Day to identify other areas of particular interest to the Agency. This paper reports on three major findings in response to the research questions.

Validity and reliability

In order to ensure consistency and comparability of the findings, only primary caregivers having the most daily contact with the daycare were selected for participation in the study. Data collection was designed to capture qualitative findings. All the interviews were taped. Responses to the questions were transcribed and coded, and post-interview field notes written up by the researcher. The post-interview field notes sought to capture a range of information including emotions and non-verbal communication, logistical difficulties during the interview and particularly powerful and salient themes and discussions which transpired after the recorder had been turned off. Post-interview notes helped refine post-research data management. Transcription notes were sent via email to seven randomly selected participants for member validation. 4 participants replied confirming accuracy of transcription.

Participant Demographics

Eleven parents from Sri Lanka and parts of West Africa participated in this study. Although the West African participants are a heterogeneous group with diverse cultures and languages, the 6 participants will be referred to simply as West African in order to protect their

identities as West African families were not very numerous in the FDCS childcare centres. The parents' from Sri Lanka all spoke Tamil. In the study, there were eight female participants and three male. Ten of eleven participants had acquired education beyond high school.

All of the participants were married and in two cases, both parents participated in the interview process. The mean time families had been in Canada was 7.9 years. Further demographic information is shown in table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Table 1 Demographic characteristic of participants

Participant characteristics						Focal child			
Family Name*	Gender	Origin	Residence in Canada	Languages spoken	Education	Gender	Age	Duration of enrolment in childcare	Language spoken
Oludoyin	F	West Africa	2yrs	Yoruba, English	University Degree	M	6	5 months	English
Adokpai	F	West Africa	10yrs	Yoruba, Edo, English	Community College	M	3	2.5 years	English
Benoit	F	West Africa	10yrs	French, English	Post-graduate Degree	M	6	2 months	French, English
Inya	F	West Africa	10yrs	Ewe, Buli, Frafra, English	University Degree	M	3	1 year	English
Ariama	F	West Africa	3yrs	Ibo, English	Post-graduate Degree	M	7	9 months	English
Oyebami	M	West Africa	15yrs	Yoruba, Dutch, English	University Degree	M	3	1.5 years	Yoruba, English
Jayasuriya	M	Sri Lanka	10yrs	Tamil, English, Norwegian	Community College	M	2	1 year	Tamil, English
Senaratne	F	Sri Lanka	6yrs	Tamil, Sinhala, English	Community College	F	1.5	8 months	Tamil, English
Pillai	F	Sri Lanka	14yrs	Tamil, English	High School Diploma	F	6	3 years	Tamil, English
Aruneswathy	F	Sri Lanka	6yrs	Tamil, English	University Degree	M	4	1.5 years	Tamil, English
Thayaparan	M	Sri Lanka	1.5yrs	Tamil, Sinhala, English	University Degree	M	4	1.5 years	Tamil, English

* All the names used are pseudo names

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

Finding 1: The Family Centred Child Care Policy

The first finding relates to the extent to which families were aware of FDCS' Family Centred Child Care Policy and its implementation in practice. There were two main areas of this finding as follows:

1. Awareness of the Family Centred Child Care Policy

It is clearly evident that most of the study participants were familiar with the policy and understood its intent. Seven of the eleven participants said they were aware of the existence of the Family Centred Child Care Policy. Table 2 below outlines the responses of these seven participants.

Table 2 Awareness of the Family Centred Child Care Policy

Family Name	Residence in Canada	Duration of enrolment in FDCS	Aware of the policy	Copy received	Policy read	Clarity of policy language
Oludoyin	2yrs	5 months	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adokpai	10yrs	2.5yrs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Benoit	10yrs	2 months	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oyebami	15yrs	1.5yrs	Yes	No	No	Yes
Senaratne	6yrs	8 months	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pillai	14yrs	3 yrs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thayaparan	1.5yrs	1.5yrs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

One participant stated that at enrolment, the centre supervisor had gone over the policy with the family, explaining its principles. Five of the seven participants familiar with the policy had taken additional steps to read the policy on their own. One parent did not recall being

informed of, or receiving a copy of the policy but had read it on the bulletin board in the centre supervisor's office. All seven appreciated the agency's efforts to include them in specific ways as elaborated in the policy.

A small number of participants said they were unaware of the existence of the Family Centred Child Care Policy. Of this group, two were West African and two Sri Lankan. All four were recruited from different Family Day Care sites. These participants will be more closely looked at and Table 3 presents some demographic details regarding these families who were not aware of the policy.

Table 3 Participants unaware of the Family Centred Child Care Policy

Family Name	Residence in Canada	Duration of child enrolment in Family Day childcare
Inya	10yrs	1 year
Ariama	3 yrs	9 months
Jayasuriya	10yrs	1 year
Aruneswathy	6 yrs	1.5 years

No distinguishing factors could be found from the data to explain why this group of participants were uninformed of the policy. The participants' duration of residence in Canada and period of enrolment in FDCS was similar to the seven participants who were aware of the policy. Although these four participants were from different sites, two were recruited from the same sites as two participants in the group of parents who were aware of the policy. All four participants had achieved community college or higher levels of education. Although this group of participants were excluded from questions regarding general understanding and access to the Family Centred Child Care Policy as the questions were not applicable, one participant indicated appreciation for the existence of the policy and made observations about the importance of informing families about the existence of the policy. This participant, a mother from West

Africa, had attained a master's degree in education and used to be a teacher in her home country. She has a seven year old son. Her comments are provided below:

> *I don't remember receiving this policy. This would have been an interesting thing and I would suggest that when parents bring their children in to the daycare for enrolment, they should talk with the parents about these things. Sometimes we can overlook them, not knowing they are there. For example I didn't understand that there were things like this. It would be nice if they can sit with the parents and talk over these things. I don't know if they have the time but it's good to make out such time for parents who are new at the daycare. That way parents can know what is expected of them and what their expectations should be [Mrs. Ariama, p.5].*

2. Implementation of the principles of the Family Centred Child Care Policy

The second area of finding related to participants' perceptions regarding the implementation of seven of the eight principles of the policy. There were three patterns of responses. Table 4 below provides a general overview of participants' responses. Discussions following the table address each principle of the policy separately.

Insert table 4 here

Table 4 Implementation of the principles of the Family Centred Child Care Policy

	Principle 1	Principle 2	Principle 3	Principle 4	Principle 5	Principle 6	Principle 7	Principle 7a
Family Name	Families are treated as unique	Focus is placed on positive family qualities	Children are recognized as part of a community	Families have the most influence on their children	Parents have interests, roles and responsibilities	Teachers involve families in various ways	Teachers invite family partnership	Teacher's offer resources
Oludoyin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Adokpai	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Benoit	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Inya	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ariama	No	Neutral	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Oyebami	Yes	Neutral	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Jayasuriya	Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Senaratne	No	No	Neutral	No	No	No	No	Yes
Pillai	Neutral	Neutral	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Aruneswathy	Neutral	Yes	No	Yes	Neutral	No	No	No
Thayaparan	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

The eleven study participants were asked questions regarding their experience with the principles of the Family Centred Child Care Policy in their daily interaction with the childcare management and teachers. By their responses, it is evident that four participants felt treated as unique; four participants felt that staff placed more focus on the positive qualities in their family; five felt that the staff showed recognition that their children and their families are part of a community beyond the childcare; seven felt recognized as having the most influence on their children; five felt staff showed recognition of parents other roles and responsibilities; and six felt teachers had offered them resources at least once. None of the participants felt they had been offered options for participating with the childcare or invited to partner with teachers. We now turn to each principle of the policy.

Principle 1: Families are unique. We support each of our families in different ways.

Four of eleven participants felt very positive about the way this principle was being implemented. They gave examples indicating how they felt treated as unique; mainly for such reasons as teachers trying to pronounce their children's names properly. This appeared to have a strong impact as three participants in this group focused on this. Some participants' positive feelings are reflected in the comments provided below. The first comment was offered by a West African mother who had a six year old child and used to be an accountant in her home country.

> *When you go in there the teachers see you, they greet you. They know everybody's name. When you go in there they make you feel like you're welcome, this is your place; you can always come to us, we see you as one of us...they always recognize you. They see you and talk to you as if you are their*

friend, like you work with them. They know my children's names; they know parents' names [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.5].

In the same vein, the second comment was offered by another West African mother of a three year old child.

In the class they realized my child was ready to begin active potty training so they asked us to bring in the necessary materials to start. I think it was unique because they were not doing that with every child. They noticed that he was ready so they started. Actually, we had already started at home so I felt that we worked in partnership with the daycare [Mrs. Inya, p.5]

With the second pattern of responses, three participants had perceptions of being treated "normal" and indicated that this was fine, showing no expectations that this should be different. All three participants in this group were Sri Lankan. The comment provided below and reflecting the general theme in this group was made by the father of a two year old child, who had been resident in Canada for 10 years.

The teachers don't treat me as unique; they treat me normally, like they treat other people [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.6].

A third group was made up of four participants who reported not feeling that this principle was being effectively implemented. Of this group, three participants said that it would be desirable if teachers treated families as unique. Although all four participants reported that teachers were generally 'nice' and 'friendly', one participant reported not feeling supported in any way. Some participants' comments are provided below.

It would be nice if the daycare make parents feel unique. Right now we are not treated as unique [Mrs. Ariama, p.9].

The next comment was made by a Sri Lankan mother of a one and half year old child who had achieved community college education and was a full time homemaker.

> *The teachers don't have anything like that [treating families as unique]. They don't support families much. They only talk about children. When my child is there and I go to talk with them, they talk about the child and that's it. They don't seek to provide support to the families [Mrs. Senaratne, p.5].*

Principle 2: All families have strengths. We focus on the positive qualities in families.

Four of eleven participants were generally very positive regarding this principle and said it was well implemented in practice. The participants related this principle first to how the teachers treated their children and then to how they perceived the treatment of themselves. Some comments regarding their positive experiences are provided below. The first comment was made by a West African mother with a six year old child who had attained a master's degree in science in her home country and works as a laboratory assistant in Canada.

> *One of my strengths is that I speak another language. Sometimes the teachers try to say words in my language. I appreciate that. They try to say good morning, bye, how are you [Mrs. Benoit, 4].*

The next comment was provided by a West African mother, who works in the medical field and has a three year old child.

> *During black history month, they ask my child to bring his traditional clothes [Mrs. Adokpai, p.5].*

A second pattern of response emerged from the data. Four participants fit into this of which, three participants expressed neutrality regarding the existence and implementation of this

principle. They generally indicated a lack of expectation regarding this. The one remaining participant said that teachers had a balanced focus with regard to the implementation of this principle, and expressed satisfaction with that. Some comments reflecting these positions are provided below.

> *I can't say I have noticed anything like that. They relate nicely [Mrs. Ariama, p.5].*

> *Sometimes the teachers tell me when my child does a good job and sometimes they tell me when he's not listening. When he follows the rules and puts the toys in their proper place, they tell me too. They don't only tell me when he is not listening. Although they tell me whenever he is not listening, they tell it in a nice and friendly manner. I like this because it is better they tell me when he is not doing well so I can also teach him at home [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.6].*

A third group of participants indicated not experiencing effective implementation of this principle. Three participants fell in this group. Of this number, one participant stated simply that this principle was not being implemented in practice but indicated a wish that it would be. Two participants expressed disappointment with the lack of implementation of this principle. They also articulated a hope that implementation would be carried out.

> *I don't see that. The teachers' don't relate in a way that shows they are looking for family strengths. I would like that but I don't think the teachers are looking for family strengths. They are just taking care of the children. [Mrs. Senaratne, p.5].*

Principle 3: Children and their families are part of a community.

Five of eleven participants were in agreement that this principle was reflected in practice. These participants generally indicated appreciation of the various minor but everyday ways in which teachers implemented this principle. Some participants also stated that better recognition of children's communities could be achieved by having more staff reflecting the diverse family cultural backgrounds. Some comments reflecting these positions are provided below.

> *There are many Tamil children at the daycare so the teachers have got to know the culture a bit. I think they recognize our community [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.7].*

> *In cases where we are unable to pick him up, we have our close friend listed as someone who can pick him up. They treat her just like they would treat us [Mrs. Inya, p.5].*

The next comments were made by a Sri Lankan mother of a six year old child who works in a blue collar job.

> *At the daycare, there is a grandfather from my country who comes daily to pick up his grandchild. He can't speak English and the staff cannot speak Tamil. But the daycare teachers do everything by sign and they understand each other. They treat him well [Mrs. Pillai].*

In the second category of responses, one participant reported that this principle was not implemented but indicated an appreciation of the fact that teachers did not discriminate among people. Mrs. Pillai expressed satisfaction at the diversity of the children in the childcare and her perception of how the teachers related to everyone. Her comments are provided below.

The teachers don't celebrate my cultural group. They are multicultural. They don't divide the cultures or languages [Mrs. Senaratne, p.6].

In the third group, five participants reported feeling that there was no recognition of this principle because teachers did not know much about the families outside of issues relating to the childcare. These participants expressed that there were cultural differences which teachers were unaware of and therefore could not recognize. Some participants indicated dissatisfaction with this situation. Comments reflecting participants' perceptions are provided below. The first comment was from a Sri Lankan mother of a four year old child who was a librarian in her home country and has a job as a book keeper in Canada.

The teachers have never asked how their decisions would affect our community [Aruneswathy, p.5].

The childcare teachers don't know that I have this community so they don't recognize it [Mrs. Ariama, p.6].

Principle 4: Families have the most influence on their children.

Seven of eleven participants felt teachers recognized that families had the most influence on the children. Participants mainly expressed satisfaction with the implementation of this policy. Most participants reported that teachers sought their permission on issues regarding their children and indicated that they felt respected by teachers with regard to making decisions for their children. Some comments reflecting participants positive responses are provided below.

My child used to cry at drop off...the teachers acknowledged that that was actually very important because he needs me. The teacher by saying that made me feel that it is a most important role I play in his life [Mrs. Inya, p.6].

Before they [teachers] do anything, they will let you know. So if you say no, that's it [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.8].

When I have a concern, for example if my son is feeling ill, I would say to the teacher not to let him play with water. They listen [Mrs. Aruneswathy, p.5].

In the second category, four participants had different views regarding the practice of this principle. Of this group, three participants indicated that they felt families could have no say or impact upon childcare decisions regarding the children while in the centres because the childcare operated by rules which could not be circumvented. One participant's perception was that teachers only did what was convenient for themselves regardless of family requests. This participant also expressed frustrations about being earlier disregarded when he requested that his child not be allowed to participate in outdoor play in extreme cold weather. He however reported that this situation changed the next year but expressed concern at the inconsistency.

They don't show that [families have the most influence on their children]. They don't recognize it... They don't change to our ideas. They follow their policies and their rules [Mrs. Senaratne, p.6].

The next comment was made by a Sri Lankan father of a four year old child who was a medical professional in his country and is currently studying for his medical exams in Canada.

Our first winter, we asked for my child not to be taken outdoors in -20 temperatures. The response we got was that this was the rule in Canada, children needed to be taken outdoors 2 hours daily...so they said "no". But last winter, they were a bit flexible and took the children indoors to the gym. But not the year before, they didn't help us then [Mr. Thayaparan, p.9].

Principle 5: Parents have many interests, roles and responsibilities.

Five participants reported experiencing the implementation of this principle and generally expressed satisfaction at the empathetic understanding which teachers showed for their other responsibilities. Most of these participants indicated that they communicated daily with the teachers and said that "talking" with the teachers helped, as teachers got to understand the other roles and responsibilities which parents bore. Some comments reflecting participants feelings are provided below.

> *The teachers know me. When I have time, I spend up to 10 – 15 minutes daily talking with them. We discuss personal things [Mrs. Pillai, p.5].*

> *Sometimes when we are late in picking up the children, they call to find out what is happening, maybe because of bad weather or traffic. If you say "I'm sorry, I'll be there at this time, they say "don't worry, we just want to know you are okay". So I think they really respect your [parents'] other schedule [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.9].*

In a second category, one of eleven participants reported not seeing the effective implementation of this principle. She however indicated no expectation that it should be implemented and related her views to the fact that teachers had a lot of responsibility caring for the children and therefore little time to spend getting to know about families and the other responsibilities of parents.

> *The teachers always say "hi, how are you", things like that. They have no time to do more. They have a lot of kids and so if they spend a long time talking with me, the children will be left on their own. They don't have a lot of time to speak with me [Mrs. Senaratne, p.5].*

In a third category, 5 participants reported experiencing no implementation of this principle. Most participants in this group expressed dissatisfaction, stating that teachers had not taken the time to get to know parents and therefore could not know about their other roles, interests and responsibilities. One participant said that this lapse could be as a result of teachers not being taught to focus on families. All the participants in this group stated that the teachers were overly focused on the children to the exclusion of their families. Some comments made in this regard are provided below.

> *The teachers don't know me very well. They know I am Tamil and Sri Lankan and they know a little bit about my culture. We discuss common things. They have never asked me questions about my own interests [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.7].*

The next comment was from a West African father of a three year old child. He works in a white collar job.

> *To my knowledge, none of those things exist [recognising parents' other interests, roles and responsibilities]. Their main focus is the child they are taking care of and that's it. It's just a matter of "hi, hi" to the parents and that's it [Mr. Oyebami, p.8].*

Principle 6: There are many ways for a family to be involved in their child's care.

The practice of this policy stipulates that families are given different options of participation to enable them decide what type and level they choose. Unanimously all eleven participants reported that this principle had not been implemented with them. Study participants stated that programs were fixed before notices were sent out to them so that they had no choice when it coincided with their other responsibilities. This was a reality which many participants

identified as limiting their participation. All the participants indicated interest in some level of involvement if options were made available. Some participants' comments are provided below.

No they just give us the program, say "enjoy it" and that's it [Mr. Oyebami, p.8].

No. We get invitations, but the times are already fixed. If they gave options, I would like to participate [Mr. Thayaparan, p.10].

Two participants however digressed slightly from the general sentiments. Although in agreement that no participation options had been made available, one participant indicated appreciation at not being coerced into participating.

No. They don't give options but they don't force us [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.8].

One other participant reported feeling that the teachers did offer options although none had yet been offered to her since her child had been enrolled at the centre.

I think they do that but they have not done it with me. Maybe because we are new [9 months] at the centre [Mrs. Ariama, p.8].

Principle 7: Families and child care professionals have something to offer each other

This principle was broken into the following two areas of focus: 7a which focused on staff invitation of family contributions and; 7b which focused on teachers' contribution of resources to families.

Principle 7a. – Family contributions

With regard to families being invited to offer their input or contributions to the teachers, all participants responded in the negative. Participants stated this was a good idea but reported

not being invited to share information about their community or to contribute to their centre in any way. Many participants reported not feeling that the teachers recognized that parents had anything of value to contribute to the childcare. Some participants stated that they perceived teachers were bound by the laws of Canada, which would make it difficult to invite family input as nothing could be changed. A few participants reported that although they attended meetings, parent input had not yet been invited and discussions were usually one sided, with the teachers mainly informing families about needed supplies for the children. A few participants expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of invitation of family input. Most participants expressed appreciation that this principle existed and a hope that it could be implemented. Some comments are provided below.

> *If the teachers recognize that we have our cultures, our own ways of bringing our children up, that would be good. Our cultures are good as well and the ways we raise our children are important to us. Right now, I feel they are saying this is Canada, there are rules and laws and parents cannot contribute in any way. So there has been no occasion for me to contribute anything [Mrs. Ariama, p.9].*

> *Basically, I don't think they [teachers] really understand their policies themselves [Mr. Oyebami, p.5].*

> *No they don't have anything like that. They should have it but they don't [Mrs. Senaratne, p.7]*

One participant said she felt that teachers probably did invite the input of other parents who had more to offer but this invitation had not been extended to her family.

They may have done that for other parents who have careers that are very public. But we haven't had any invitation of that kind yet [Mrs. Inya, p.8].

Principle 7b. – Teachers' contributions

There were two patterns of responses to the question regarding teachers' contributions. In the first pattern, six participants agreed that teachers contributed and provided them with resources. Of this group, two participants said they received resources in the way of homework which teachers' sent home with the children. Both participants expressed appreciation for this practice. One participant reported that the centre supervisor had made a concession regarding admitting her child into a program. She also expressed appreciation and said that this concession enabled her cope with her other schedules. One participant indicated that flyers were occasionally mailed electronically to the family and they obtained various tips from reading the flyers. Some participants' comments are provided below.

They send homework, readings which I do with my [three year old] son [Mrs. Adokpai, p.8].

They've helped me create time out of my busy schędule to always look into what my child has done during the day. Everyday they actually give them something to bring home that their parent must read to them [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.9].

Two of the participants in this group indicated that although they did occasionally receive resources from teachers, this only happened at their own initiation.

When I request information about learning toys or books, they offer me catalogues to find what I need. But I ask them. They don't ask me and without asking them, they don't do anything [Mrs. Senaratne, p.7].

When my son comes home, he talks about books he read in school. We take the time to follow up with his teachers to find out about the books so we can buy some for home [Mr. Oyebami, p.9].

In the second pattern, five participants said that this principle was not effectively implemented. Most of the participants simply stated that teachers did not offer them any resources. These participants' however did not indicate that they expected this. One participant did express dissatisfaction and a perception of being ignored by some teachers.

Nothing [no resources]. When I drop my chid, I say good morning and that's it. Sometimes I don't know if they hear me or not but sometimes they don't answer me. If I don't say good morning, they never say anything. Especially one teacher. Sometimes my child says "mama say again, say loudly. She is like that" [Mrs. Benoit, p.6].

Findings regarding awareness of the family centred childcare policy and implementation of the principles will be more critically discussed in chapter 5.

Finding 2: Family Involvement

The second finding is related to family involvement. Study participants had different levels of current and past involvement with the childcare centre of their child. All eleven acknowledged chatting with teachers almost daily at drop-off or pick-up times. Participants reported that conversation at those times usually centred on what had transpired during the day with the child in the centre, and mostly expressed appreciation for the daily brief conversations because it helped them know how their child was doing in childcare. Most participants said they felt teachers were very busy with the number of children in their care and although they especially appreciated the time teachers spent with them, they were usually very aware of the

teachers' responsibilities and were in a hurry not to detain teachers from their duties. Some positive comments reflecting participants' responses are provided below.

I chat with the teacher. They are all nice people. Our conversations are free and friendly [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.4]

When I drop my children, I talk with the teachers. I like them, they are very nice. We talk about my child's studies and what they need like diapers or other things [Mrs. Aruneswathy, p.3].

One participant however, reported infrequent conversations with teachers at the centre where her child attends. Not surprisingly, this was the parent who reported perceptions of being ignored by some teachers. Ten participants indicated a desire to have opportunities for more personal communication with teachers, with one participant giving the example of an occasion when she had such an opportunity to share information about her family. This participant reported feeling valued.

I sat down with the supervisor and we talked. Then I started telling her what I was doing, what we were both doing. She showed appreciation and respect for what we are doing and acknowledged what challenges we may have. I really appreciated that [Mrs. Inya, p.7].

Four participants said that they had attended at least one meeting with teachers at their centre. Of this group, two indicated that the meetings were parent-teacher meetings, although they both indicated that they had not been invited to provide any input. One of the other participants, A Sri Lankan father with a two year old child, said he was invited to a meeting where he was told about his child's difficult behaviour at the centre. He also reported not being invited to contribute in any way to the meeting. Three of these participants reported that they

attended other functions organized by the childcare. Two of the participants in this subgroup had the most active involvement of all eleven participants. They reported attending all or most extracurricular functions and meetings.

When they have activities, or they have meetings, parent meetings and meetings with the teachers, I always attend. I don't miss any of those. Social activities, whatever, I don't miss any [Mrs. Adokpai, p.3].

Regarding factors that had contributed to their involvement, participants mainly credited their current levels of involvement to the friendliness of the teachers. Two participants, in addition to the reported teachers' friendliness, also reported being motivated by interest in everything that had to do with their children.

I see that in the way the teachers are taking care of the children, they are trying their best. When they see parents, they try to be nice and they try to provide more information about how your child is doing. When they say they need help, I try also to be there and participate [Mr. Oyebami, p.4].

Yes whenever they have any programs, I do [attend]. I am really interested in everything that concerns my child so I always make myself available [Mrs. Ariama, p.3].

In response to questions regarding what constituted barriers to their involvement, most participants identified work and study schedules. Further exploration however revealed that many participants felt their involvement was unsolicited and not seen as valuable.

I don't know how much parents' involvement or contribution can be accepted [Mrs Senaratne, p.4].

A number of other participants indicated feeling that trying for higher levels of involvement was pointless as parents' input could not have any impact. Most of the study participants also had a general perception that teachers could not invite them to participate at other levels of involvement because the teachers did not really know them.

> *It's what they know that they will actually do. If they don't know who you are or what you have, they won't invite you to share anything. But I guess when parents are part of a parent board which includes the teachers, then they might know a little bit about you and want to bring you into other aspects that can benefit their program or the community. But when they don't know, there is no way they can invite you [Mr. Oyebami, p. 7].*

Mr Oyebami said he was not aware if a parent board existed at the centre where his child attended. All eleven participants reported a willingness to be involved in more ways than they currently were. Some participants with no current involvement aside from daily contact with the teachers indicated an interest in getting more involved if invited.

> *I can do lots of things but they don't use me. My work is quite flexible...I could be more involved if invited [Mr. Thayaparan, p. 10].*

> *If they asked me, I would. I am usually quite busy; but as well, they have never asked me to be involved in anything. I am busy too but I could do some small things if they ask me [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.4].*

Study participants also offered their ideas of ways in which they would like to be involved and thoughts on contributions they could bring to the centres.

> *If they are doing something on cultural themes, I would love to be in that kind of program...we, parents from [our culture] can come together and do something;*

so that the children will know that there are people at the daycare from such a place. Yes I would be interested in planning that kind of program [Mrs. Oludoyin, p. 4].

It would have been nice if the teachers told me that I could be involved in a parent board or decision making process at the centre. I didn't know parents could do that. I would be interested in that kind of involvement [Mrs. Ariama, p.3].

I would be interested in parent-teacher meetings and in a parent board [Mr. Oyebami, p.4].

I would like to be a parent volunteer for trips [Mrs. Pillai, p.9].
I would like to be involved in every activity of the school where my child is. I would like to volunteer in a way that would improve the education at the school or daycare [Mr. Thayaparan, p.5].

Eight of the eleven study participants reported a lack of information regarding various options and opportunities for involvement. All eight stated that they had never been invited to parent teacher meetings and indeed had no idea that such opportunities existed. None of the eleven participants reported ever being invited to a meeting where their satisfaction with the childcare was discussed and generally expressed that this would increase their contentment with the childcare program, although most of the participants were on the whole, generally happy with the childcare program.

Table 5 provides a summary of participants' responses with regard to family involvement.

Insert table 5 here

Table 5 Family involvement

Family Name	Level of involvement *	Involvement activities	Participant identified Barriers	Willingness to be more involved
Oludoyin	Passive	Drop off & pickup child/chat with teachers	Work/study schedule	Yes
Adokpai	Active	Drop off & pickup child/chat with teachers/attend parent-teacher meetings/social activities	None	Yes
Benoit	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers-(infrequently)	Work/staff attitudes	Yes
Inya	Somewhat active	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers – work together to deal with toilet training issues	Work/no opportunities provided	Yes
Ariama	Somewhat active	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers/attend parent-teacher meetings/social activities	Lack of information/no opportunity provided	Yes
Oyebami	Somewhat active	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers/attend social activities	Work	Yes
Jayasuriya	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers	Lack of information/no opportunity provided	Yes
Senaratne	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers	Lack of information/no opportunity provided	Yes
Pillai	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers	Work	Yes
Aruneswathy	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers	Work/communication problems	Yes
Thayaparan	Passive	Drop off & pick up child/chat with teachers	Work/study/lack of information	Yes

* Family involvement categorisation was based upon Freire's (1970) concept of education. Involvement opportunities which placed participants as docile recipients (banking concept) was categorised as passive, and opportunities where families were situated as partners with teachers (transformative concept) categorised as active. This is further discussed in chapter 5.

Finding 3: FDCS centre practices as reflective of families' cultural practices

The third finding relates to FDCS centres reflection of participants cultural practices. Findings showed several areas in which participants expressed no concerns, but also areas of conflict that made parents feel disempowered. There were three main areas of this finding. These are discussed below.

1. Cultural differences between participants' home countries and FDCS practices

Participants identified several areas of difference between FDCS practices and their cultural childcare practices. Table 6 below provides a general overview of these areas. Only those participants who identified areas of difference will be discussed below. This is because participants were invited to only identify variables that were different. The data therefore does not provide information on areas of similarity.

Table 6 Cultural differences between home country and FDCS

Family Name	Food	Care Environment	Language	Learning	Discipline	Consistency between childcare and home	Cultural information elicited by childcare staff
Oludoyin	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Adokpai	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Benoit	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Inya	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Ariama	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Oyebami	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Jayasuriya	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Senaratne	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pillai	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Aruneswathy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Thayaparan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

When asked how the centres would be different in their home countries, seven of eleven participants indicated that there would be differences with regard to food. Eight participants indicated differences would exist in the child care environment. Five indicated differences in

language use with first language being primary. Seven reported differences in the children's learning with more academic structure and teacher guidance provided in their home countries. Nine participants reported differences in discipline expectations and children's behaviours, and six participants reported differences in consistency between the childcare and home. In response to the question of cultural information elicited, all eleven participants reported that no cultural information had been invited by the childcare teachers. Each area will now be discussed in the two patterns of participant responses.

Food: Seven participants identified not only differences in the foods provided but also differences in the expectation of how children should eat. A clear preference was indicated for teachers to play a more active role in guiding children's eating. One participant stated

> *The teachers' here [Family Day Care] don't encourage children to eat. Children sometimes need encouragement to eat. They should observe how much kids are eating, and if what they have eaten is enough for lunch [Mr. Thayaparan, p.6].*

With regard to differences in the foods available, some participants felt that having foods from their culture on the menu should be a welcome addition to the childcare program. In response to a question on what parents would like to change in the childcare, one parent stated:

> *Introduce foods from Africa to let the children try it...if they can introduce some food from my country, that would be good. So that African children will know that this food is from Nigeria or [somewhere in] Africa. If I could change anything, I would introduce more African stuff so that the children, our African children too will see their own background on display and know that this is them, who they are [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.3].*

Some other participants indicated a connection between food and religion. One mother stated

> *I would prefer that my child not be fed any meat or fish on Tuesdays and Fridays. That is our religion. We eat vegetable on these days but at the childcare, they give chicken nuggets and other such things [Mrs. Senaratne, p.3].*

This parent indicated discomfort in discussing this issue with the childcare teachers and further expressed a fear that the child would not be fed if this request was put to the staff.

> *I know they have their routines and menu and I don't think they will change it just for me. I am afraid that if I say something, then on those days, they will not give her anything. It's better for her to have the chicken nuggets than to have nothing [Mrs. Senaratne, p.3].*

Care environment: Eight participants identified the care environments in their home countries as being different. Participants differed in their perception of care environment with all four West African parents identifying their cultural childcare environments as more loving and four Sri Lankan parents identifying their environment as more strict. In discussing the care environment, A West African participant stated:

> *The daycare back home is more like family. The kids feel like the teachers are their parents. The teachers play with them, take care of them. They [teachers] would hug them [Mrs Benoit, p.3]*

Another West African parent reported,

> *He would be treated like somebody [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.2]*

This participant explained this to mean that the child would be given a sense of belonging and he would see his culture reflected in the environment around him, whereas here, he did not. Sri

Lankan parents on the other hand generally expressed appreciation of the childcare environment in FDCS and said they found the childcare friendlier than it would be in their home country. Some comments reflecting this are provided below.

> *I prefer this culture better I think. Back home, they sometimes handle kids with violence when they are not listening [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.4].*

> *In our country the teachers are very strict, too strict. We cannot relate with them too much and whatever they say, we have to listen to them. Here it's a friendly environment [Mrs. Senaratne, p.4].*

Both participant groups however agreed more generally about the standard of care stating that children would be better looked after in their home countries in comparison to how they are cared for here. Several parents talked about general cleanliness and hygiene care of the children.

> *I told you about the dirty nose? They don't take much care about that. They always let the children stay dirty [Mrs. Senaratne, p.4].*

The parent of a two year old child said:

> *Sometimes I go and they haven't cleaned the child properly after a diaper change or cleaned his mouth after feeding [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.3].*

Participants however, assigned blame for the hygiene situations to adult child ratios which they also found to be different from what would obtain in their culture.

> *There would be more teachers in the class. In my child's class here, there are two teachers for 12 children. In my country, there would be at least three to four teachers to the same number of children so the children would be better cared for [Mrs. Senaratne, p.2].*

The teachers are very friendly...but they have lots of children in their care. They cannot manage to focus on only one child [Mr. Thayaparan, p.6].

Language: Five participants, four of whom were Sri Lankan, indicated that the first language would be more in use in the childcare in their home countries. One participant stated

The main difference would be in the language. The teachers would speak my language to the children and that would be the first language that they learn [Mrs. Senaratne, p.2].

All four Sri Lankan parents also expressed a desire for recruitment of more Tamil speaking staff in the childcare to enable interaction with the children and with themselves.

We have some communication problems here but back home, that's our language, we can communicate clearly and they can understand what I think. Here, there are some communication problems [Mrs. Aruneswathy, p.4].

It would be better if they involve some Tamil staff at the daycare because they would understand the children more than the other staff do [Mr. Jayasuriya, 7].

Learning: Seven of eleven participants generally identified that learning would be structured differently in their home countries with more teacher-directed academic activities. Although they mostly expressed appreciation of the various play experiences which their children had at the centres, they also indicated concern that the children were not receiving help to learn academically and expressed difficulty understanding the concept of child initiated learning. One parent of a four year old child expressed frustration at having to put in so much extra effort to get his child prepared for school.

By now they would be teaching him how to read and write. My niece's child is of the same age and I was told by my grandmother that he can write up to 10. But my son cannot write. In the [home country] system, they implement that early from the start whereas here, they are not allowed to do that. They want the children to develop that by themselves [Mr. Oyebami, p.2].

I would like them to teach more. It has taken 1.5 years to learn here what my child learned before in 2 months. They don't teach much here. I spoke to the teachers but their response was that "here we don't teach children. If they want to learn, then we help them. In some other daycare's they teach but in Family Day, we don't teach. What we do is only when children want to learn something we teach them." They told us they only take care of and watch the children [Mr. Thayaparan p.4].

Discipline: Nine of eleven participants indicated that child behaviours and the expectation for children to maintain a certain standard of discipline was different here from their home countries.

Another difference would be in the attitude of the children and how they behave. Back home I think there is more discipline than you find here. The teachers have more authority. They are not mean to the kids but the kids learn to be respectful. Quite unlike what we have here where at times you see that kids are unruly, because nobody can talk to them and often there are no consequences to their behaviour [Mrs. Ariama, p.2].

Participants' reports showed high levels of congruence in the expectation that children should listen to adults. Participant's general perceptions were that the expectations were not required of children in FDCS.

Back home, children have to listen [Mrs. Inya, p.3].

If parents speak, or people older than him correct him, he has to be quiet and listen. In my culture it's like that. Children need to be quiet and listen because they are still small [Mrs Benoit, p.5].

Consistency between childcare and home: Six of eleven participants felt that there was less consistency between the childcare and home than would obtain in their culture. Parents described this concept as building relationships of trust with the childcare so that expectations for child development and consequences of child behaviour would be the same in both environments. None of the study participants felt invited to volunteer any cultural information which would help build such relationships. Participants reported feeling that in their home countries, teachers truly cared about the children whereas the impression they had with FDCS childcare was that although teachers were nice, they did not truly care for the children. Some comments are provided below.

It would be so different. In the [home country] system, you basically trust your child's teacher because they are another parent. You know they care and you also know they can handle the children without any problems. You sign your consent to them, not literally, but you trust them and you say "do whatever you feel is necessary" and they do whatever they feel is right because they really care. Like I said, they are another set of parents, away from home [Mr. Oyebami, p.4].

In [home country] if a teacher tells me that she spanked him, I would say "that's fine...that's what we believe in [home country] but here, you can't tell

them that. They don't believe that. If he does something wrong they tell me, but it's not like in [home country]. There the child knows that whether at home or at the daycare he is disciplined when he does something wrong. That is one major area that is different here from back home [Mrs. Ariama, p.4].

In [home country] if my child was misbehaving, the teacher could visit my home to come see his parents and discuss what is going on. From there, they will be involved and start trying to put corrective action to the behaviour. I believe that is a big difference between the interaction between teachers here and in my country [Mrs. Adokpai, p.4].

I would like them to also do what we do at home. To teach the same thing for example, if the child is not listening, they should also give him time out [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.4].

Regarding the eliciting of any of these identified cultural information, all eleven participants reported that no opportunity had been presented for sharing of pertinent information on cultural child development expectations and child rearing goals. Overwhelmingly, all the participants indicated perceptions that the teachers were too busy.

2. Participants cultural expectations of children

On cultural expectations of children, two main goals were recurrently identified by most of the participants. These were that children should respect parents and other adults and also that children should listen adults. Table 7 below provides an overview of participants' responses regarding both identified areas.

Table 7 Cultural expectations of children

Family Name	Respect for elders	Listen to elders	Information elicited by childcare
Oludoyin	Yes	No	No
Adokpai	Yes	Yes	No
Benoit	Yes	Yes	No
Inya	Yes	Yes	No
Ariama	Yes	No	No
Oyebami	Yes	Yes	No
Jayasuriya	Yes	Yes	No
Senaratne	Yes	Yes	No
Pillai	Yes	Yes	No
Aruneswathy	Yes	Yes	No
Thayaparan	Yes	Yes	No

All the participants identified respect as a required cultural expectation of children. The West African parents identified children not calling adults by name as a ready example of respect. Nine of eleven participants also displayed the perspective that children need to listen in order to learn. Some participants' comments are provided below.

> *For my son to be successfully Sri Lankan, the expectation is mostly for him to listen to his parents. We expect that when kids listen to their parent's direction, they will not go the wrong way. With guidance from parents and other adults, children cannot make wrong decisions [Mr. Thayaparan, p.9].*

> *My community expects young children to be good listeners and quick learners, to respect their parents and elders, to have good manners and to help other people. That's how children should grow up [Mrs. Senaratne, p.6].*
>
> *We expect children to listen to their parents and teachers, to give respect to parents and teachers, adults generally and focus on their studies [Mr. Jayasuriya, p.7].*

To be polite and to have respect for adults and the old people. I don't think the teachers here recognize that but that's what I said before. The teachers here are taught like that and they have to do what they teach them [Mrs. Benoit, p.5].

My children should have a way that they relate with adults. This must be different from the way they relate with their friends. We expect them to respect adults. For example, in Nigeria we have a way of respecting adults. We don't call everybody by name. Here in Canada, a child of one year can call a seventy year old by name. But in Nigeria it doesn't work that way. So all those things my children must understand. Yes we are living in Canada but there are some things that don't work that way where we came from. They must definitely understand that [Mrs. Oludoyin, p.7].

Parents in both groups identified obedience as a sign of respect. Many participants expressed appreciation for childcare routines where children learned how to "sit and listen to the teacher". Some participants reported feeling that this childcare practice slightly augmented parents' teaching of obedience and listening skills. They noted however, that this was not enough to fit into their cultural requirements and extra efforts were made at home and through private training schools to equip their children with these and other cultural requirements.

My child is respectful because I teach him at home. Even then, it's a bit difficult because other children are not taught in the same way. For example, my son used to greet people when he saw them and call older people aunty or uncle. Now my friends tell me they see him when he is with his friends and he won't say hello. He is trying to be like the other kids. Back home, the same behaviour

would be required of him everywhere, so it would be consistent [Mrs. Ariama, p.2].

He will study Tamil, read and write Tamil, go to our Temple, learn our cultural music and dance, and also attend cultural parties. We are doing all of this. I think he should know the Canadian culture but at the same time, he should equally follow my culture. I would like him to learn English and Tamil, both equally; know Canadian culture and Sri Lankan culture; obey the laws and know how to behave with his colleagues here in this society but also, when he comes to our people's gatherings and parties, he should behave like a Sri Lankan. When he goes back home on vacation, he should be Sri Lankan. So, he should be bilingual and competent in both cultures [Mr. Thayaparan, p.3].

All eleven participants reported working hard to develop their children's cultural identities so that they could become successful members of their community if they went back home. Some participants indicated displeasure regarding teachers' teaching their children to call emergency services. They indicated this was not in line with their cultural beliefs and made it more difficult for parents and families to maintain cultural knowledge.

Sometimes, they teach the children to call 911. If he [child] does something wrong and I tell him off, he says "I'm going to call 911". You know, because they teach them that [Mrs. Benoit, p.5].

Study participants expressed that the childcare could not really help in supporting family cultural expectations of children. Although most articulated a belief that teachers would be supportive if they knew what the expectations were, they said that teachers had no knowledge of these expectations because they had no time to solicit any cultural information.

3. First language maintenance

Study participants were asked about how important it was for their children to speak and understand their first language. All eleven participants said that maintaining their first language was important and indicated various reasons why. Table 8 provides a general overview of languages and participants response.

Table 8 First language maintenance

Family Name	First language	Importance	Reason for importance
Oludoyin	Yoruba	Important	Mother tongue/fear of extinction
Adokpai	Yoruba	Important	Identity
Benoit	French	Very Important	Mother tongue/communication with relatives
Inya	Ewe	Important	Integration in home country/communication
Ariama	Ibo	Important	Identity
Oyebami	Yoruba	Somewhat important	Communication/privacy
Jayasuriya	Tamil	Very Important	Mother tongue
Senaratne	Tamil	Very Important	Mother tongue/identity
Pillai	Tamil	Very Important	Communication with relatives
Aruneswathy	Tamil	Very Important	Communication with relatives
Thayaparan	Tamil	Very Important	Identity/communication/multi-lingual competence

As evidenced in Table 8, most participants considered maintaining their home language important for the purpose of ensuring communication with the extended family. Four parents identified their first language as a representation of theirs and their children's identities. Preservation of the mother tongue was identified by some participants, and one parent indicated that maintaining the first language was somewhat important mainly for privacy when speaking in public. All eleven participants considered maintaining their first language an important component of child rearing and most indicated fears that the children would lose their ethnic

identities if they lost their first language. A few participants expressed fears that this lose was already happening.

> *If my son has my language, he will follow our culture. Only through my language can he grow up in our culture and tradition. If he loses my language, then he becomes mixed up and we won't be able to guide him. He spoke a lot last year, but these days he is not speaking a lot of Tamil [Mr. Thayaparan, p.2].*

All of the Sri Lankan participants said they spoke mainly Tamil at home and most of the Sri Lankan children attended Tamil language schools. The Sri Lankan parents also identified the recruitment of Tamil speaking staff as a much desired and valuable enhancement to FDCS centres. Although the West African participants also identified their first language as important, four of the six participants said they mainly did not speak their first language at home and two participants indicated a desire for the recruitment of staff with the same language background. Two participants, one Sri Lankan, and the other West African indicated that although there were teachers with the same language background as theirs at the children's centres, they mainly did not speak the first language with the families. The Sri Lankan parent reported that the teacher had indicated that speaking Tamil in the childcare was inappropriate because the other teachers.

Chapter 5

General discussion of findings

Limitations of the Study

While the findings were extremely informative, this study was limited in certain respects. Firstly, the study necessarily relied on a convenience sample of participants. A major limitation of convenience sampling is that information obtained may pertain only to the study participants (Del Balso & Lewis, 2005). Thus, expressed opinions may not be reflective of the feelings of other users of FDCS childcare centres. It is important to state however, that, in qualitative research every participant's voice is valid and valuable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Secondly, the study was based on a small sample size. This further reinforces the need for awareness that findings cannot be overly generalized. Thirdly, there are many diverse cultural groups represented in Family Day Care programs. Only a small number of participants from four nationalities were part of this study. Further research involving other cultural groups is therefore required to enhance understanding of the constructs investigated in this study.

Discussion of findings

The major objective of this study was to explore the implementation of the principles of the Family Centred Child Care Policy and to uncover cultural factors which impact families' involvement with FDCS childcare centres with a view to developing recommendations for improvement. Findings indicated that many of the participants were happy with many of the practices at the centre where their child was enrolled. Indeed, one participant, a West African and mother of a six year old child reported a situation of bullying which had occurred over a period of time at the centre where her child attended and for which she had contemplated withdrawing

her child. She however expressed extreme satisfaction at the manner in which the matter was handled when she eventually reported the situation to the class teacher.

> He was scared of going to the daycare. So I had to go to the teacher and tell her what was going on...she reacted strongly. She was really furious. Later she followed up and for about 2 weeks, she was always giving me feedback. When she saw me she stopped me, she took me to their class and showed me all the things she had done. I really, really appreciated the fact that for 2 weeks, she was doing something. She helped the children understand not to do that. "We don't do bullying here" she said. She also reported it to the parents of the other child. At first, I had got depressed, but after all that, I was really impressed. When I came back home and told my husband about it, he as well as everyone I told, was so impressed. I thought they wouldn't be able to handle the situation, but they did, which really impressed me [Mrs. Oludoyin, p. 6].

Although the findings point to many such FDCS centre practices which are highly impressive and greatly appreciated by study participants, the discussion that follows will however, focus mainly on those areas requiring consideration for change. The discussion of findings will be organized according to the research questions.

1. <u>To what extent are families aware of the Family Centred Child Care Policy and its implementation in practice?</u>

Most of the participants were generally aware of the existence of the Family Centred Child Care Policy. While this is commendable, one member in that group had not received a

copy at any time and only became aware of the policy by coming across and reading it on the bulletin board in the centre supervisor's office. Four other participants had no knowledge of the existence of the policy. The intention is not to ascribe blame to any centres or teachers, for as study participants duly noted, teachers were very busy providing, in many ways, excellent care for the children. The purpose of this focus is to point out an inconsistency in the system of FDCS centre operations.

Research has shown that immigrant families have low levels of involvement with their children's education (Gaetano, 2007; Jeynes, 2003; Lareau, 1987; O'Bryan, Braddock II, & Dawkins, 2006). Various factors which limit participation include unfamiliarity with the discourses of the educational system (Lareau, 1987) and cultural differences (Bernhard et al. 1998; Fleer, 2006). Steps taken to mitigate these factors must include concerted efforts of educational institutions to understand families and facilitate partnerships (Bernhard et al. 1995; Shimoni and Baxter, 2005). The Family Centred policy very concisely and in family friendly language outlines the rights of families to expect certain standards of engagement and service from FDCS, thus providing access and consequently empowering families to become engaged in the process. Freire (1993) proposed that the solution to oppression was to transform its fundamental structures by educating the marginalized. The family centred policy provides a powerful solution to the exclusion of immigrant families from FDCS early education process. As a study participant noted, knowing about the policy would equip families with knowledge of what to expect and what is expected in return. The importance of families having and understanding the policy can therefore not be overemphasized.

With regard to the implementation of the policy principles, participant perceptions varied. Some participants acknowledged experiencing the implementation of some principles, some

participants indicated neutrality and sometimes a lack of expectation, and other participants disagreed about the implementation of some principles. This is an important finding worthy of note as it points to the diversity of family needs. A one-size-fits-all approach would constitute a negation of diversity. Childcare teachers, as the frontline contact, must therefore remain flexible in their interactions with families.

Participant perceptions were however in congruence on the lack of implementation of principle 6: teachers involve families in various ways, and principle 7a: teachers invite family contributions. These results indicate that the teachers are quite strongly, and probably unconsciously, situated in roles as experts, thus, family input may not be valued. Gonzalez et al. (2005) stated that teachers' validation of family experiences and knowledge enables parents to "authenticate their skills as worthy of pedagogical notice" (p.42). A study participant reported feeling that the teachers only recognized the value of other parents with more public careers. Thus, this participant's experiences and knowledge were not being validated. Teachers' understandings of their responsibilities may have major impact on interaction with families (Gonzalez et al. 2005; Bernhard et al. 1998). Where teachers see the children as their clients and perceive their responsibilities as limited to providing care and learning for the children, dialogue with families may be regarded as non essential and a distraction from their real responsibilities. Some study participants' noted that the focus of teachers was mainly restricted to the children, thus excluding the families.

Study findings also clearly showed that cultural information regarding families was not invited. Participants' strongly indicated a desire for pertinent cultural information to be elicited from them. This finding is in line with some other studies which indicate that tapping into the cultural knowledge of families is necessary to build partnerships and enable inclusion (Bernhard

et al. 1998; Dei, 1999; Fleer, 2006). The overwhelming need for teachers to understand the cultures of the children in their care has been well established (Jeynes, 2003; Fleer, 2006). Most participants repeatedly reported feeling that their culture was not understood. While a few indicated a lack of expectation, majority of the participants said they would like opportunities where such information could be shared with the teachers. Eliciting cultural information pertaining to parents and their children is important to build connection, increase teacher understanding of other cultures and enhance family involvement (Gonzalez-Mena, 2002). A study participant noted that teachers would invite only those families which they considered to have something valuable to offer; yet valuable contributions which families bring cannot be identified until teachers actively reach out to engage and partner with families. Study findings indicate that valuable opportunities to enhance involvement are therefore, going unobserved.

2. To what extent are families involved in their children's care program?

A conceptualization of parent involvement based on Freire's (1970) concept of education was used to categorise family levels of involvement. According to this conceptualization, a transformative concept of family involvement is one in which families are positioned as crucial partners with teachers in the education of their children. Within this concept, partnership is based on true communication, with teachers benefiting from the knowledge of parents or other family members, and families benefiting equally from the knowledge of teachers. Both parties have a critical awareness of the important role played by each other and families are enabled to provide essential input into the organization and decision-making of the childcare centre. This transformative concept of family involvement has been categorised as active involvement. Conversely, the banking concept of involvement in which families are positioned as docile

participants, lacking input in the decision making of the childcare centre have been categorised as passive involvement. Within this concept, communication is mainly one sided, with the teachers as experts, reporting the progress of the children, and families as passive recipients of the information.

Results of this study show that participants were mainly passively involved with the childcare centres. Some parents were categorized as somewhat active because although they did participate in functions, and attend meetings where they could act as important resources to the childcare centre, their input was, according to participants' reports, often not invited. Some participants said that although they had attended parent-teacher meetings, information sharing was usually one directional and based on childcare needs, with families having limited or no opportunity to make contributions or inform decision making.

The main reasons for passive involvement fell in two main categories (a) parent time constraints and; (b) a lack of opportunity, information and invitation. Although participants readily identified the first category as the primary hindrance, findings indicated that underlying factors mentioned above served as subliminal but major barriers to family involvement. Indeed most participants identified that they could make time if they received invitation to be involved.

Research indicated that educators play a major role in facilitating family involvement (Gonzalez et al. 2005; Jeynes, 2003; Shimoni & Baxter, 2005; Weiss et al. 2006). Ways in which teachers conceptualize family involvement may however, restrict families from active involvement (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggested that parents who perceived their roles as including involvement and who had a strong sense that their involvement was valuable to enhance their children's educational progress made the choice to become involved. According to these authors, teachers played a major role in enhancing parents'

sense of efficacy. Two study participants indicated that they did not feel their involvement could be valued and other study participants felt they had useful skills which they could contribute to the childcare but they had not been invited. Thus, parents' sense of efficacy was not being enhanced.

Teachers' perception of families can also have major impact on opportunities offered to families (Gonzalez et al. 2005; Bernhard et al. 1998; Fleer, 2006). Although many study participants said they had been invited to participate in social functions organized by the childcare teachers, all the participants indicated that their input had neither been sought prior to invites being sent home, nor were options made available. A large number of study participants also indicated that few opportunities for active involvement had been made available. Some parents said they had been invited to assist the teachers on field trips. Such involvement opportunities, while necessary, place families in passive roles as teacher facilitators and should not be the only opportunities families have for participating with the childcare centre. Unfortunately however, many of the opportunities identified by study participants fell in the category of passive.

According to study findings, although the family centred child care policy made provision that families be offered involvement options, these were not being offered to families. Information on involvement opportunities were also not adequately publicised so that participants, according to their report, were not aware of particular events. Another provision of the family centred policy required that families have opportunity to participate in meeting where their satisfaction with the childcare program is sought. Such opportunities would provide a forum for transformative involvement. None of the eleven study participants had however, been invited

to such forums. Thus, families were not being invited to engage in ways which crossed the borders of passivity.

3. To what extent are centre's practices reflective of parent's cultural practices?

Findings indicate that variations exist between family's cultural practices and FDCS centre practices. As identified by the study participants, these variations can be found in three main areas: (a) child behaviour expectations, (b) parental expectations of child learning and (c) availability of cultural materials (including food and language use) in the child care environment. Some of these findings are in line with other research findings which show (i) clear differences exist between expectations of child behaviour across various cultures (Super & Harkness, 2002; Keller, 2003; Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2005; Bernhard et al., 2004); (ii) in order to enhance children's learning, consistency between care environments is necessary (Brofenbrenner, 1979, Prior & Gerard, 2007) and; (iii) families value representations of their culture in the childcare environment (Bernhard et al, 1995; Shimoni & Baxter, 2005).

With regard to child behaviour expectations, study participants unanimously indicated the expectation that children should be obedient and respect adults. Although many participants said children were taught to listen in FDCS centres, they maintained that FDCS practices did not cover and sometimes clashed with family cultural expectations. For example, several West African participants said that not calling adults by name was an aspect of respect required of children. At the centres however, children call people by name. Participants observed that they needed to put in extra efforts to maintain this expectation at home and in their community. Research has indicated that consistency between family goals and program expectations is important to enhance family involvement (Shimoni & Baxter, 2005). Several participants

indicated that a lack of consistency existed between their cultural goals and some FDCS practices. For example, some participants considered children being taught to call emergency services a disregard of their role as parents and a total negation of their cultural expectations with regard to respect and obedience. Environments supportive of culturally relevant dialogue between teachers and families is essential to reduce distrust and sustain partnerships.

With regard to child learning, some participants said that the structure of learning would be different in their home countries and expressed concerns that FDCS curriculum did not provide enough opportunity for children to learn academically, or for teachers to guide children's learning. Weiss et al. (2002) found that children did better academically if they were prepared in their earlier years. While this is not a call for academically structured learning, Weiss et al. (2002) pointed out the importance of partnerships between teachers and families in the early years as a requirement to support children's learning.

With regard to the child care environment, two most prominent differences were language use and physical care of the children.

Language: First language maintenance plays the following major roles: (a) transference of knowledge to ensure successful educational competence for minority language children (Cummins, 2000; 2001) and; (b) sustaining culture, identity and familial relationships (Wong-Fillmore, 1991; Fishman, 1996; Wastie, 1994). Most of the study participants indicated that maintenance of their first language was important to them and identified cultural identity and extended family relationships as important reasons for this. It has been established that as children learn English, they tend to drop their first language (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). This could serve to fracture parent child bonds as communication declines. This fear was expressed by a participant who sadly stated that his child used to speak a lot of Tamil but was not speaking as

much anymore. According to Baker (2006), if schools do not support first language maintenance, family efforts alone may not suffice. Thus, childcare teachers can play a role in supporting first language maintenance. Some parents expressed the opinion that employing staff from the cultures represented in the childcare would help in this regard.

Physical care if the children: An interesting finding was the variation between the West African participants' perceptions of the care environment and the Sri Lankan participants' perceptions of the same. While the West African participants said that they preferred the child care environment in their home countries because they were like extensions of the home, the Sri Lankan participants expressed preference and appreciation of FDCS childcare environment because the teachers were friendlier than they would be in their home country. This finding again points to the need for dialogue and flexibility in the provision of service, to meet the diverse needs of the families involved. Many study participants however agreed on the need for more physical care to be provided for their children. Participants gave examples indicating dissatisfaction regarding general hygiene care for children. They however consistently blamed this on the adult-child ratios which they perceived as too low to permit teachers carry out their duties more efficiently.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

The results of the study indicate that the provisions of the Family Centred Child Care Policy, although written in 1997, remain largely relevant for partnership with families today. The principles of the policy serve as a strong basis not only for family support, but also for culturally responsive practices. Results indicate hindrances abide not with the principles but in the practice of the principles. A study participant noted "*basically, I don't think they [teachers] really understand their policies themselves*". The following recommendations are based on results of the study findings.

1. Professional development

a. Ongoing dialogue and staff training regarding the family centred policy: while the provisions of the family centred child care policy serve as a strong basis for family support, dialogue with childcare centre staff may be necessary to determine teachers' conceptualization of their role with regard to the policy and family support. If teachers' are not amenable to the concept of family support and view their role as providing support only to the children in their care, calling for training on the family centred child care policy may be ineffectual. On the other hand, where teachers' appear open to a shift from teacher as expert to partnering with and providing support to families, ongoing training and regular practice workshops on the family centred child care policy may be necessary for critical understanding of and successful implementation of the policy. Opportunities for back and forth revision of the family centred child care policy may be further required, depending on how teachers' view their roles.

b. Further teacher training: Findings of this study shows that support is required to strengthen teachers' capacity to engage parents. The literature on ECE training indicated that

many childcare teachers felt inadequately prepared by the curriculum of training they received, to effectively deal with issues regarding culturally sensitive practice and family support. Ongoing staff development opportunities in cultural responsive practice, critical self reflection, and other areas as determined by teachers and supervisors may be needed to further boost teachers' skills as frontline staff.

2. Towards culturally responsive care

a. Intake procedure: A laid out procedure for intake should be in place for families and centre supervisors to share pertinent information and explore FDCS policies thoroughly. This will not only help participants become aware of the agency's policies; but would also serve as a foundation for building trust relationships. As one participant noted, having an opportunity to share information about her family with the supervisor of the centre where her child attended helped her feel valued. Where there are time constraints, an informal welcome session could be organised monthly or quarterly for new families, at which time the intake procedure could be carried out. The intake procedure should cover the following:

- First language: Families differ with regard to choice of first language use. Some families enrol their children in childcare expressly so they can learn English, while other families would like to partner with the childcare to support first language maintenance. It would be important to obtain this information at intake so that supervisors and teachers' are aware of family choices and can provide appropriate support where possible.
- Study participants strongly indicated that they wanted teachers to elicit cultural information from them. Information about families' child rearing goals and cultural values are important to enable culturally sensitive practice. A participant expressed concern regarding her child eating meat in childcare on days when religion required that

they eat only vegetables. The intake meeting would be a good first opportunity to obtain such critical and pertinent cultural information. This would not only aid teachers' understanding of the families they serve, but also clearly indicate to families, that FDCS values their knowledge and culture.

- Policies: it may be pertinent to provide opportunities for families to thoroughly explore and discuss FDCS policies at intake. This would empower families with knowledge of what to expect. For example, discussing the outdoor play policy at intake would clarify FDCS provisions for weather conditions and eliminate confusion. Consistency of policy implementation would however, have to be maintained.

b. Recognizing parents' wishes to be invited to share and participate: Study participants strongly indicated interest in being more involved with the childcare than they currently were. Much knowledge and resources are lost when families are only passively involved with the childcare. Involvement with FDCS needs to move beyond prescribed extra curricular functions which, although important, do not offer much opportunity for transformative and active involvement of families. Invitation to active involvement requires impetus from teachers. This can only be achieved when teachers see families as sources of valuable knowledge. Involvement of families can be enhanced by the following:

- There are successful proven tools which aid toward building positive relationships between teachers and families, thus enhancing involvement. An example of such a tool is the Early Authors Program (Ryerson, 2006). A transformative literacy model, this tool is designed to support sharing of critical information and understanding between teachers, families and children as they work together to author books. Such interaction

opportunities facilitate a transformative environment where teachers and families become equal partners through dialogue. Teachers get to know families better as their prior knowledge and strengths are positively showcased, and family members also get to learn more about the teachers. Authored books are written in first language, thus, the centres are also enriched with multicultural materials applicable to the families, as the books are loaned to the childcare centre and available on the bookshelves. This is also a positive tool to encourage literacy development as children see themselves reflected in the books.

- Parent Advisory Boards: Made up of parent volunteers, such boards are a necessary requirement and can be a powerful tool for involving parents in the decision-making of FDCS childcare centres. Advisory boards can also be used to offer a welcoming environment to all parents and enhance family involvement with the childcare centre. Parents' or other family members should be given information about membership of the board at enrolment. Study participants were unaware of the existence of parent advisory boards in FDCS and many participants expressed interest in becoming members.
- First language groups: Facilitating development of first language groups among families in FDCS childcare centres may be an important initiative to help build stronger partnerships with families, enhance involvement and eliminate language barriers. A number of study participants expressed difficulty in communicating with teachers because of language. All participant voices would be heard in a first language group and families could then critically discuss issues regarding the childcare practices and agree on steps toward informing the childcare about such issues. First language groups would also be powerful tools to welcome new families, build partnerships between the

childcare and the community and members could organize teacher training on practices relevant to their culture. Thus, families become empowered toward active involvement with the childcare.

c. Diversity and inclusion: In order for centres to respect diversity and practice inclusion, a focus on positive and ordinary representation of diversity is required. Day to day interactions, materials and toys, languages in use, diversity of staff, foods, and curriculum expectations can help build more positively inclusive environments where program participants can see themselves adequately reflected. Families are a good resource for building a culturally diverse environment as they can contribute materials and advise regarding cultural appropriateness.

d. Ethnic Representation: Employment of staff reflecting the cultural backgrounds of families in the centres appears to be a valuable addition to FDCS practice. Research indicates the importance of hiring staff members who reflect the ethnic identities of families represented in the centre (Bernhard and Gonzalez-Mena, 2005). This is particularly important to help families identify with the childcare, thus aiding in establishing trust. As noted by some participants, having staff members who match their cultural identity would help participants feel that their children were understood.

3. Curriculum and academic learning

a. FDCS Curriculum: Several participants indicated that they had difficulty understanding the concept of learning fostered by the FDCS current curriculum. Information regarding the curriculum and its benefits needs to be communicated to families in order to aid their understanding of the leaning practices in use at the centres. Parents are however busy and may not have time to read lengthy documents. Curriculum information should therefore be

communicated during intake sessions, on information boards which indicate daily activities and learning derived from each activity. Most importantly, daily opportunity should be created for informal dialogue between parents and teachers, at which time this information can be communicated.

b. Further research: Several participants clearly stated wishes for FDCS to provide more structured academic learning. Because the study size was small, this finding cannot be used to generate recommendation for curriculum change. Extensive investigation with a more representative sample is needed to adequately assess families' requirements with regard to academic learning and literacy development. Further research would need to incorporate the use of surveys and focus groups.

4. Language policy development

FDCS may need to enact a policy reflecting the Agency's position with regard to language use in the centres. A commitment to cultural responsiveness would necessitate that FDCS take a stance which values diverse languages. Such a policy would inform both staff and parents of the appropriateness of sustaining multi-lingual classroom environments, and support staff use of diverse languages with families and children in the centre. Information regarding language use, obtained from families at intake would direct staff use of diverse languages with the children in their care. Thus, families wishing to maintain their children's first language development would be supported and FDCS centres would be language rich environments.

Conclusion

The family centred child care policy is a visionary policy providing a strong basis for support of families. Participants expressed deep appreciation for the existence of the policy and felt it was indicative of FDCS respect for families. This study found that some principles of the policy were very well implemented, to the satisfaction of study participants. Principles which were not well implemented were also clearly identified. It is hoped that the findings of this study will go towards working on implementing all the principles of the family centred policy in order to sustain a culturally sensitive delivery of child care and education, and to maintain the agency's vanguard position as leaders in community responsiveness.

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Appendix A

Family Centred Child Care Policy

March 1997

This document has been written for Family Day staff. It states our principles about family centred child care and identifies the practices that we follow that support these principles.

Family centred care means that we recognize the importance of the family and the community in child development. Family centred child care organizations focus on the relationship between children, their families, their communities, and society. Family Day understands how culture, diversity, community, and public policy affect child and family development.

At Family Day, parents and staff are partners in caring for children. We support our families. The relationships we make help develop trust and confidence between parents and staff.

Revised
March 2000

Our principles

Our policies are based on our underlying beliefs about families and the partnership between families and staff. These principles help us understand how to provide quality care and service at Family Day.

The 8 key principles that guide Family Day staff are that:

1. Families are unique. We support each of our families in different ways.
2. All families have strengths. We focus on the positive qualities in families.
3. Children and their families are part of a community.
4. Families have the most influence on their children.
5. Parents have interests, roles and responsibilities.
6. There are many ways for a family to be involved with their child's care.
7. Families and child care professionals have something to offer each other.
8. Both our staff and our home child care caregivers have opportunities to develop family centred child care practices.

In the following section, we explain how each of these principles affects our staff and our practices.

1. Families are unique. We support each of our families in different ways.

Each family has its own characteristics, strengths and resources. By getting to get to know family members we can better understand and support them in the goals they have for their children.

Family Day staff identify and build upon family strengths. Families and staff are partners who have a shared responsibility to do the best for the children in their care.

2. All families have strengths.

We focus on the positive qualities in families. We do not focus on a family's weakness or problems. We recognize that families need support. If a family asks for support or help, this is a positive sign. This reflects the family's ability to identify and seek what they need in order to raise healthy children.

3. Children and their families are part of a community.

When we make decisions that affect children and families, we need to understand how these decisions affect their families and their communities. That way, we make the best decisions.

4. Families have the most influence on their children.

Programs that reflect family culture and goals show respect for the important role that the family plays in the child's life. Staff know that it is important to support family decision making.

5. Parents have many interests, roles and responsibilities.

Human development continues throughout life. We recognize that parents balance many other interests, roles and responsibilities. We support parents' efforts in whatever way we can.

6. There are many ways for a family to be involved with their child's care.

Families have many demands placed on them. Employment, finances, housing, health care and transportation are some of the many issues facing families. Sometimes, families do not have a lot of time to spend with staff or getting to know our programs. That does not mean that they do not care.

It is important that we provide many ways for families to participate in our programs. By giving families different options, they can decide what type and level of participation they want.

7. Families and child care professionals have something to offer each other.

We believe in partnership between families and staff. We bring information and support to parents about child development and community resources, and our families provide us with information about each child and the community.

8. Both our staff and our home child care caregivers have opportunities to develop family centred child care practices.

We look for opportunities to promote the principles and practices of family centred child care with caregivers. Home child care caregivers can apply these practices in ways that are comfortable within their own home child care environments.

Our practices

In this section, we list some of the practices that we follow at Family Day. These practices show how staff and home child care caregivers create a family centred environment.

Our programs and staff support family members getting involved.

- ✓ Our programs provide high quality services for children and their families.
- ✓ We encourage parents to take an active role in their child's development. We do this by suggesting activities which parents and children can do together.
- ✓ We let families know about events and activities before they occur. This way, families can choose to participate.
- ✓ We invite parents to participate in our events.
- ✓ We hold activities at times that are convenient for families.
- ✓ We offer a variety of activities, so that families have plenty of activities to choose from.
- ✓ Parents can participate as much as they want to. It is their choice.
- ✓ Grandparents, aunts, uncles, other family members or those close to our families are also welcome to participate in activities.
- ✓ We appreciate all family contributions to program.
- ✓ If it is possible to do so, we make our activities, meetings and workshops convenient for families by providing child care, food and appropriate seating for adults.

We promote partnerships with families through communication.

- ✓ We communicate with each other and with parents in ways that show respect.
- ✓ We offer families information on child development and child rearing when they ask for assistance or request information and support.
- ✓ We get to know our families when we greet them as they pick up and drop off their children.
- ✓ Getting to know families means learning to call them by their preferred names. Parents will let you know which name they prefer. For example, you might call someone Cathy, or Ms., or Mrs. McKay rather than calling her Karen's mom.
- ✓ We work to earn a family's trust and to maintain and develop relationships over time.
- ✓ We meet with parents regularly, to assess program services and to make sure that we are meeting their needs.
- ✓ Staff and parents have a respectful process for resolving disagreements.

Program and staff honour family diversity and values.

- ✓ Family includes all those who are significant to the child.
- ✓ Staff show a genuine interest in each family.
- ✓ We involve parents in their child's care experience. We support parents in whatever way they want to be involved.
- ✓ We provide information in the languages of our families with the help of community supports.
- ✓ Our programs encourage families to share their cultural practices and celebrations.
- ✓ We follow Family Day's Anti-Racism Policy and participate in training that focus on diversity.

Staff support parents' efforts to advocate for their child.

- ✓ We recognize and respect parents as the most important caregiver for each child.
- ✓ Staff take the time to find out about family customs and preferences regarding child rearing, health practices, language, and culture during registration and on an ongoing basis.

- ✓ We work with parents to resolve any concerns they have about their child's care. Parents have the right to voice their concerns when they feel their child's best interest is not being met.
- ✓ We are flexible. We try to accommodate special requests.
- ✓ Staff advocate with parents who have requests which are not within the defined rules and policies.
- ✓ There is a feedback process for all programs. That means, families have an organized way to respond to our programs, policies and practices.
- ✓ We include parents in planning and implementing public advocacy efforts.

We encourage parent-to-parent support and networking.

- ✓ Parents are introduced to other parents and are encouraged to get to know one another.
- ✓ We hold social activities regularly so parents have opportunities to meet with other parents.
- ✓ Family members have opportunities to share their skills and talents.
- ✓ Family Day offers opportunities for parent education as a strategy of family support.

We want to establish the links between families and the community.

- ✓ We provide families with information about community programs, events and issues.
- ✓ Both families and staff participate in community events.
- ✓ We have connections with community resources and public agencies.
- ✓ We help families move between our program and other programs.
- ✓ Family Day works with others in the community to advocate for families.
- ✓ We create opportunities for families to meet through program get togethers such as concerts, potlucks and meetings.

Family day is committed to the principles of family centred care.

- ✓ Staff are given opportunities for ongoing training.

- ✓ Staff development activities are provided to help staff develop the ability and readiness to establish mutual partnerships with parents.
- ✓ Staff are encouraged to be introspective, to reflect on their own biases, values and perceptions in their work with parents.
- ✓ Staff and their families are invited to participate in Family Day events as participants.

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

Interview #: ___
Date: _____
Location of interview: _____
Name of interviewer: _____
Start time: _____
End time: _____
Language of interview: _____

Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we begin, let me introduce myself. I am Nigerian, from Akwa Ibom state. When I came to Canada 4 years ago, I went to work first at a childcare centre and then got a job with an Ontario Early Years Centre. At both jobs, I was surprised at how different the childcare environment and expectations were from what I was used to in Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which cultural differences can impact West African and Sri Lankan parents' involvement with the childcare. I don't work for Family Day and I don't work for the Government either.

As we go through the interview, please feel free not to answer any questions you don't want to. That's not a problem. The interview is being recorded so that I don't lose any piece of the information you provide. Your real name and your child's real name will not be used in any publication or provided to Family Day Care staff. For this interview, we have to focus on just one of your children so we don't get confused. You decide which child we should focus on. Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay! So now I will turn on the tape recorder.

Name of person interviewed:
ID #:
Code:
Country of origin:
Languages spoken:
Length of stay in Canada:
Relationship to child:
Focal child:
Date of birth:
Languages spoken:
Comments:

Preliminary questions

1. How long has your child been enrolled at this childcare centre?
2. What other childcare centres has your child attended in Canada?
3. Is _____ language important to you?
4. Why is it important? Do you feel that language is part of that identity?
5. Do you want your child to have that sense of identity?
6. What do you think you can do to ensure that your child has that sense of identity?

A. <u>To what extent do FDC centres reflect parents' cultural practices?</u>

We are now going to look at the differences between the childcare program your child attends here and what it would be like in your home country.

7. If this childcare program was in your country, how would it look different? Give examples.
8. What kind of information about your community and cultural practices have the childcare staff invited you to share?
9. If you could change anything at this childcare centre, what would it be?

B. <u>To what extent are parents involved in their children's care program? What are barriers to engagement?</u>

We will now talk about your participation with _____'s childcare centre. You know how often teachers in Canada like it when parents participate in childcare programs…

10. Do you participate?
11. In what ways would you say you participate with the childcare centre?

- dropping/picking up child from childcare
- chatting with teacher/supervisor
- class helper

- participating in extra curricular activities
- program planning/organization
- parent/teacher meeting
- decision making
- parent board/policy council

12. In an ideal world, would you like to participate in additional ways? How?
13. Family Day is really interested in having parents involved. What are barriers to your being more fully involved?
14. What has worked really well to enable your involvement?
15. What have you not liked which may have hindered your involvement?
16. If you were in your home country, how would the relationship with your child's teacher be different?

C. <u>To what extent are parents aware of the Family Day family centred policy and its implementation in practice?</u>

This is the Family Day Care family centred policy. We will now talk about it.

17. Have you ever seen it? Yes No
18. Where did you see it?
19. Did you ever receive a copy? Yes No
20. Did you understand the language? Yes No
21. Did you ever go back and look at it? Yes No

The family centred policy has 8 principles which are supposed to guide the teachers in how they interact with you and your family. We will now focus on those principles.

22. The family centred policy states that families are unique. In what ways would you say the teachers have demonstrated this to you? Can you give an example?

23. The family centred policy states that focus is placed on positive qualities in families. In what ways have the teachers focused on the positive strengths of your family? Can you give an example?
24. The family centred policy states that children and their families are part of a community. Who would you describe as your community (cultural group, church, etc)? In what ways would you say the childcare teachers show that they recognize your community? Can you give an example?
25. What does your community expect of young children? How do the teachers recognize these expectations? Can you give an example?
26. The family centred policy states that families have the most influence on their children. In what ways would you say the teachers have shown this to you? Can you give an example?
    - How about in situations when you have not agreed with what the teachers are doing? Whose decision carried more weight? How was the situation resolved?
27. The policy states that parents have interests, roles and responsibilities. Can you describe how the teachers have recognized this?
    - Can you give an example of how the teachers have shown an interest in you and what you are about?
28. I know we already discussed a question like this earlier, but the family centred policy states that there are many ways for a family to be involved with their child's care. In what ways have the teachers encouraged your involvement/participation?
    - Have they ever asked you about what times are convenient for you to attend any extracurricular functions? Example?

- Have they ever offered you any options for participating? Can you give an example?
- On occasions when you have been unable to participate, how have the teachers made you feel?

29. I have another question which we kind of discussed earlier. The family centred policy states that families and childcare professionals have something to offer each other. Have you been invited to offer the knowledge and skills that you have? Can you give example of an occasion?
    - Do you feel the teachers recognize that you have something to offer? Example?
    - How about the teachers, what resources have they offered you?

We are almost done now. I have a few administrative questions on which we'll spend just 2 more minutes.

Additional information:

Education: high school; community college; university degree; post graduate degree

Participant age: 18-26; 27- 35; 36-45; 45-55; 56 and older

Family Income: below $16,000; $16,000 – $28,000; $29,000 – $50,000; $51,000 - $70,000; above $70,000

Occupation: .....

Thank you for your participation. May I contact you again if I have any other questions? Would you be willing to read over my notes later, to ensure that the information I have transcribed is accurate?

Confidential Information Sheet

 # Hours Interview: _____

 # Tapes: _____

Interview Information

Informant Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Other contact information: _____

Childcare site recruited from: _____

Appendix C

Glossary

Childcare:	-	licensed, centre based out of home care for children 6 years of age and under, typically operating within the hours of 7:00am till 6:00pm Mondays to Fridays.
Parent involvement:	-	Participation of parents with childcare program. This includes daily communication with teachers, attending parent-teacher meetings, participation in decision making and other extra curricular activities
Eurocentric:	-	"Reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of Western and especially European or Anglo-American values and experiences" (Merriam-Webster's, 2007).
Western:	-	Of European heritage cultural background. Used interchangeably with Eurocentric in this paper.
Cultural responsiveness:	-	Flexibility, openness and willingness of teachers to learn from parents in order to understand what is required to respond sensitively and appropriately to cultural requirements.