
Parent Views On Race Relations in Childcare Programs

Parent Views On Race Relations in Childcare Programs

Prepared for:

**The Congress of Black Women of Canada
Toronto Chapter**

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The Congress of Black Women of Canada, Toronto Chapter was asked by the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto to conduct three focus group meetings with parents of children ages 3 to 5 in three Toronto area childcare programs. The purpose of these meetings was to ascertain parents' and children's experience of race related issues and to obtain parent perceptions of how these issues are managed when they arise. Meetings were recorded and transcribed with the permission of parents.

Focus Group Participants

Demographic information was collected from parents in the areas of race, ethnicity, gender, and level of education attained. A total of 21 parents participated. The *gender* breakdown was: 15 women and 6 men; the *racial* mix was: 14 White, 4 Black and 3 South East Asian -- no South Asian or Aboriginal parents were represented; *ethnicities* included: Anglo-European, Chinese, Ugandan, American, Somali, Francophone and Italian; *educational* backgrounds included: 3 parents with graduate degrees, 9 with undergraduate, 3 with college diplomas, and 6 with high school education.

Findings

Participants in two of the focus groups felt that there were no problems regarding race in their Centres. Parents in these Centres felt that staff were generally professional and nice and that these qualities precluded the existence of race related issues in their centres. Parents from the third centre also felt that staff were professional and "nice" but acknowledged that racism as a social phenomenon existed in their Centre as well, and addressed the issues that had arisen accordingly. Some correlation between the depth of understanding of the social genesis of racism and willingness to acknowledge it appeared to exist. The small sample prevents, however, the formulation of any firm conclusion in this matter. The most fundamental difference between parents in the first two Centres and those in the third was in their understanding of race and racism on a social level.

Incidents encountered by parents were primarily focused around the experience of their children, whether as victims, witnesses or protagonists of racially motivated

acts. White children in two of the Centres were aware of the differences between themselves and children of colour, particularly of Black children, whereas no parent of colour mentioned a similar awareness on the part of their child. Rather than being conscious of the White children's difference, Black children were aware of their own difference. Some parents were aware of this dynamic, others were not. Parents in two of the daycare Centres felt that their child's understanding of difference was simply perceptual. In the third Centre, one parent noted, with the agreement of others that she was sure little Black girls did not make the racial generalizations and associations with White that her daughter had made about Blacks.

Though parents in all three Centres recounted incidents that could be easily interpreted as racial in nature, only parents in the third Centre viewed such incidents as being race related. Some parents expressed feelings or told stories that indicated negative bias toward some racial groups of people.

Parents of Black children noted some impact on their children's self-image particularly in regards to the colour of their skin (too dark) and the texture of their hair (not straight enough). Other parents noted a concern with sexist standards of beauty in regards to what they termed the Barbie doll syndrome, but did not note any racial influence on their child's self concept.

Only one parent noted an incident with another adult that she was not sure had any racial or ethnic overtones.

Staff were generally viewed as being competent in all areas of the pre-school childcare Centre. Parents noted good supervisors and/or multiracial, multicultural staff as accounting for this. Some parents in the third Centre who had tabled racial issues with staff felt that there was a great diversity in staff abilities to handle racism. Other staff were credited with facing parent concerns and addressing them to improve the environment of their Centres.

Conclusion

In general, parents in two of the three Centres did not feel that race or racism were issues in their Centres. Comments, stories, and attitudes of parents, do indicate, however, that such issues are present in these Centres. Parent awareness seems dependent on degree of understanding of the issues, ability to identify them, and personal attitudes toward race and racism.

1. Introduction

The Congress of Black Women of Canada, Toronto Chapter was asked by the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto to conduct three focus group meetings with parents of children ages 3 to 5 to discuss their perceptions of race related issues in childcare programs. This report summarizes comments made by participants and presents limited analysis of comments and differences which occurred from Centre to Centre.

2. Purpose

The purpose of these meetings was to ascertain parents' and children's experiences of race related issues and to obtain parent perceptions of how these issues are managed when they arise.

3. Method

Though the questions posed to parents during the focus group meetings were generally open-ended, guiding questions were developed to ensure some continuity from group to group (see *Appendix A* for complete interview schedule).

Each Centre was offered translation services for parents with first languages other than English. All three Centre supervisors indicated that there was no need for translation. All Centres noted that they had multilingual parent populations.

In order to address race related issues, an important first step in this investigation was to establish the level of understanding of racism on the part of participants. Prior to investigating the range of experiences parents and their children had, parents were asked to describe or define what they think race and racism are. It was anticipated that participant understanding would range from racism as the overt expression of racist sentiments in name calling, the telling of racist jokes, taunting, and stereotyping by the individual, to a more systemic understanding of racism as a socioeconomic, ideological and historical phenomenon that is woven into Canadian society at a variety of levels. A systemic understanding of racism would include a social analysis of power in the configuration of this society along lines of race, while the individual understanding would encompass racial bias on the part of individuals with no system or institutional involvement.

Once the range of understanding was established, parents were asked questions to

establish whether or not they or their children had experienced any race related events within the daycare setting. In order to ascertain impacts of racial bias that may be present in the Centres, parents were asked what their children's perceptions of themselves and others were along racial lines. Parents were also asked if they had experienced any incidents or issues with other adults or children in the daycare that they would interpret as being racial in origin.

All three focus group meetings were scheduled to last from 1.5 to 2 hours and were tape recorded with the consent of the participants. Parents were asked to complete a consent/demographic form identifying their gender, ethnicity, race, languages spoken, and highest level of education obtained (*Appendix B*).

The results of the focus group meetings that are presented in this paper by no means represent any conclusions that can be generalized to the larger population. Rather, an opportunity exists to investigate further and more stringently the findings of this report.

Participant Perceptions

4. Participant Understanding of Race and Racism

Parents in all three groups were asked to describe or define what they felt race and racism are. Notable responses included:

...I think it's just looking at somebody and saying you don't like them because they don't look like you.

Sometimes it's not a conscious choice. It's something that's been ingrained in you from childhood or something... the media has impressed upon you.

When I hear racism, I think of people being suppressed, it really doesn't matter what colour... There have always been stronger races imposing their power on others to make them work for them.

It's a culture. What you've grown up with.

Very often, structural things are not racism.

Race is a generic term almost. It designates you by the colour of your skin and by your physical features... It doesn't actually coincide with culture.

...racism is primarily the exercise of white privilege and power over people who are not white. I have a really hard time with the notion of reverse racism. I think that a black person hating white people is very different politically and socially than white people hating black people.

I don't think it's possible for a white person in this society to be free of racism. We can be free of bigotry... It think it's a lifelong process of learning.

I don't think a child of 2 or 3 knows what racism is.

In two of the three Centres, participants had some difficulty grappling with the notion of systemic racism. Most individuals had a fairly clear notion of the obvious manifestations of racism and classed it as individual. Name calling, taunting, and

telling racist jokes were generally recognized as racism. Systemic racism was interpreted in one instance as the activities of organized hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan but was not understood as being embedded in the policy and procedure of social institutions. In two Centres, there was little understanding of racism as a social phenomenon that can manifest at any and all levels of the fabric of Canadian institutions and society. Though the level of understanding of racism in the third Centre was relatively high for some participants, others were at a loss to grasp the systemic and more subtle manifestations of it. A few participants in this group included classism and sexism in their understanding, viewing them as the same, rather than similar phenomena with different starting points and social manifestations.

Race was described by participants as culture or differences in physical appearance. Four participants out of 21 voiced the opinion that race is a social construct, two of whom saying that the notion of race as we know it today, is a creation of the majority White society.

5. Parents' Race Related Observations, Views and Incidents

In two of the three Centres, parents did not feel that there was any problem at all with regard to race related issues in their Centres. When asked if it was reasonable to deduce from their comments that there were in fact no concerns at all, parents in both of these groups concurred that race and racism were not issues in their Centres. Parents were adamant that their children were aware of colour differences in both of these Centres, and that this awareness was value-free. One parent stated that:

They don't take it as anything special or different. My son knows that R___ is not the same as he, and he knows who are Chinese in his class, who are Caucasians, who are Negroes. He knows the differences, but it doesn't mean anything to him. They are all still his friends.

Most other parents in two of the Centres agreed with this. In the third Centre, some discussion around the value-free nature of children's ability to note colour differences arose. In response to a statement similar to the one above, the following exchange took place in the third daycare:

Yes, but if you have mostly white kids, I find that the white children don't really take notice. The ones who are darker in colour are the ones who notice pigment.

Well because of dominant culture. You watch T.V., you watch different things and there is a predominant culture.

You feel outside.

In the same Centre, one parent recounted the following incident with her daughter. Her remarks are interesting.

Recently S_____ saw a little girl on the bus and she didn't really look like D_____ but she was Black. S_____ said she was like D_____, and I went "Why?" because she really didn't look like D_____. So I said, "does she look like H_____". And S_____ said "no". It's funny because I know that D_____ and H_____ aren't getting on the bus and saying about little White girls, "Hey that looks like M_____." It is so important that at a young age that they have an exposure and they don't start thinking about majority/minority... But it got me thinking a little bit, you know. I'm so glad she's exposed.

Whereas this parent felt that she had touched the tip of racial notions in her daughter's thinking, other parents felt that these expressions were neutral on the part of their children. A parent in another Centre witnessed a similar observation by a child in the Centre and felt strongly that the child's observation was simply a link between one Black face and another on the part of the child.

Parents from two of the Centres reported no racial incidents took place in their Centres. Parents from both of these Centres felt that incidents that might occur would be more perception on the part of the parent than actual incidents. For example, one Black parent reported that a staff member made a comment about how colourful his child's snow suit was. He said that there were two ways that this could have been interpreted. He could view it as the staff person stereotyping Blacks as wearing brightly coloured clothes or he could accept it as a neutral observation. He said that he took it to be a value-free comment.

Another parent in one of these two daycares reported a student on placement making a comment in front of the children to another staff person that one of the Black children was a very good dancer and that this was natural because Blacks are very good dancers. This was not viewed as problematic by the parent because it was an exchange between two adults. When asked if there were any children within

earshot of this comment, the parent replied yes. This was not, however, viewed as having any potential influence on the children. A reason given for this was that the adult making the comment was not a permanent staff person and was no longer on placement in the Centre.

In the third Centre, parents spoke openly about race related incidents they felt had occurred in their Centre and in the school environment in which it is housed. A parent of one Black and one White child made the following comment:

Both my daughter and son have had a lot of racist incidents happen in the school. In particular, my son [white] has brought that home to me all the time. Other kids making fun of other kid's accents. He's talked about other kids calling other kids racist names. He has struggled.

The ability of some parents in the third daycare to identify incidents appeared greater than most participating in the study. One parent reports the following:

We had an incident in the daycare where we walked in and the kids had head bands and feathers and playing Native Indians, and running around and whooping it up. That's what they were being taught about Thanksgiving. Now, that came out to be a really good resolution. We talked about it and we complained about it. But it isn't just that you take that away and you not do it again. You have to teach some positive stuff that talks about what is Native culture. You don't just remove it and make it invisible completely. That's the kind of stuff that happens as soon as you complain — it gets covered up... Sometimes I just think the teachers don't even know how to begin to talk about it.

In addition to this, another parent stated that:

The thing about the Native people — It took us about 6 months after that day to teach our son that Native people may do that occasionally in ceremonial functions, but most of the time they're living in the city, doing whatever they do, living wherever they live... So that took a lot of undoing.

Another incident recounted in this Centre was the taunting of a Black child because of the colour of her skin and the resulting dislike for her skin colour that the child

developed.

In another Centre in which parents felt that there was no value attached to other aspects of other children over which they had no control (race, language, religion, etc.), one parent reported that her child had begun to make fun of the way the Chinese children in the Centre spoke. The parent isolated this behaviour as the "first and only racial thing" he had ever done, saying that he plays with these children and other racial minorities. The problem was located with another child whom she blamed for teaching her child this and other anti-social behaviours and crude language.

In one of the other two Centres, one parent told a story that was not presented as a racial incident, but as one of the challenges of multiculturalism. A newly arrived Sudanese child in a school was wetting his pants. The parent commented that if the child came to the Centre, they could teach him how to use the bathroom. None of the parents engaged in this discussion showed any sensitivity to the stress factors that may have led to this child wetting himself. They expressed instead a great deal of sympathy for staff who had to clean this child.

Parents in all three Centres were asked about their satisfaction with images of race that their children are exposed to in the Centre. Several parents recognized the importance of representative materials. However, the nature of representation was not a concern voiced by all parents. One parent stated that:

We read all kinds of stories about Indian Maharajas and little Chinese guys whose brothers get caught in a well, and little African boys who have to go and herd.

One parent from the third Centre commented about the nature of covert racism in materials, saying,

...it's not just that kids or adults make overtly racist comments... It can be really subtle or systemic so that kids of colour never see themselves reflected in the books that they read or the posters on the wall in the daycare, or aren't encouraged to draw themselves when they're drawing, or when somebody makes a generalized comment... Once you point to it, people say you are just making a big deal of it. But it's a really insidious kind.

When asked questions regarding the self-image of children along lines of race, most

parents agreed that their children had suffered no ill effects to their self-concept at this stage in their development. One Black parent who felt that this was the case stopped himself when recounting his son's admiration for Michael Jackson. He said that his child felt that Michael Jackson had "pretty hair". At this point, he became thoughtful when he considered that his son valued this straight hair over his own.

A parent in the third Centre recounted a more obvious impact on the self-image of her Black daughter in relation to White images of beauty in this society.

The other form that my daughter experiences is in her self-image. She wants to have long straight blond hair... Nobody has come to her and said we hate your hair. She hasn't brought that back to us. But it's what is considered beautiful. So she absorbs that. She sees it everywhere.

Rather than dealing with this as a race issue, most parents responded to it as an issue of sexism — "the barbie doll syndrome", to which they felt all their children were exposed. The parent quoted above clarified her feelings further, however, saying that,

It's not just the barbie doll image though. It's that there are standards of beauty. White people have defined what is considered beautiful or not beautiful.

The other parents in the group considered this a valid point and made supporting comments.

When asked about diverse racial images in the Centre environment, several parents were not aware of multiracial toys that were available in the Centres or elsewhere. Two of the three Centres had a diverse collection of multiracial dolls that accurately approximated differences in physical features between groups of people. This was an observation made by the investigator. One parent from the Centre without such dolls reported that they were planning on purchasing them.

Parents in Centres 1 and 3 expressed the belief that the multiracial mix of the staff at the Centre contributed positively to the relationships between children of different races and provided children with racially diverse role models.

Only one parent relayed an encounter with a staff person that she felt some unease

about with regard to race, ethnicity and religion. A staff person had commented on a cold day that she was wearing her scarf: "Just like a Muslim woman." She reported feeling very uneasy about this comment, saying the staff person knew she was married to a Muslim man and didn't know what to make of the staff person's observation. The parent expressed some concern that she may have been overreacting to the comment. Interestingly, other parents in the group also felt that she was overreacting. It is notable that the "victim" in this instance is confused about her own interpretation and expressed some ambivalence about what she heard and what she felt.

When parents in one other Centre were asked what they thought of this particular incident, they too felt that this woman was overreacting. When asked if it was possible that the staff person did have some underlying assumptions about Muslim women, they said that it was possible but highly unlikely.

6. Parent Views on the Handling of Racial Incidents

Staff responses to incidents were not explored in two of the three Centres because parents believed that incidents did not occur. In the third Centre the multiracial mix of staff and children was noted as a positive factor in race relations in the Centre. However, this mix was not understood to guarantee satisfactory response to race related phenomena in the Centre. One parent recounts the following:

It happened another time when some parents complained about some stuff that D____ was doing. The stuff he'd been doing didn't seem to warrant the degree of upsetness that the parents had. I asked the teacher "Is it possible there is any racial stuff going on here?" She said, "Absolutely not." She said it in a way that sounded like she'd thought about that, considered it, and knew them so well that she knew they didn't have a racist bone in their body.

Parents in the third Centre were generally in agreement that they had faith in the Centre's ability to work toward addressing these issues, and also agreed that all staff were not at the same level in their ability to do this. Confidence in the Centre in this regard was heightened by a consensus vote of confidence for the supervisor's ability to address issues when they arose.

7. Analysis

7.1 Comments on Sample and Process

The number and limited diversity of participants in focus group meetings presented a challenge in examining parent perceptions for a variety of reasons. In two of the three Centres, the groups were too small (6 and 3 respectively) to gain an overview of parent perceptions in those particular Centres. It was difficult to ascertain what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the process were at play and how such mechanisms, if present, operated. The predominance of White parents over racial minority parents in the overall sample may also have an impact on the parent viewpoints expressed. Parents were invited to participate and attended or did not attend based on their perceptions of the issues, their role in the daycare, prior commitments and other unknown variables. In one Centre, the meeting was perceived as investigative and was met with considerable defensiveness. One parent expressed the sentiment that only those parents who cared about the Centre were in attendance. Another parent noted, however, that

...we obviously all came to this meeting so maybe we all have this really positive idea... When there's a meeting like this, it's the people who don't come... that I'm interested in hearing what they have to say.

It is often parents who feel a sense of alienation in the process, or who are not able for a number of reasons to participate who may have information to give and views to express that are not evident in this investigation. It is reasonable to assume that parents who may have had negative experiences in childcare programs are reluctant to come forward to speak of them out of a sense of alienation imposed by such experiences and the disempowerment that accompanies this. The parents who participated in the process saw no problem or felt empowered to speak of that which they had seen.

A more systematic and thorough approach to this type of investigation would have been to interview *all* parents at a given Centre in a series of group interviews held at different times to accommodate parent schedules. In at least one of the Centres there was a large number of parents who were most proficient in a language other than English. The numbers of Cantonese and Portuguese speaking parents would have made it productive and instructive to have arranged focus group meetings in these parents' first language. None of these parents participated in the focus group.

7.2 General

Bearing in mind the limitations of the methodology, the small sample from which information was drawn, and the limited demographic representation of participants, a most notable outcome from two of the three group meetings was that *parents generally do not see race related issues as a problem in their childcare programs*. This is not to say that such challenges do not exist in Centres or that children in the 3 to 5 year age range are not being influenced by images and experiences related to race. It may simply mean that many parents do not recognize race related issues and that they may not be aware of children's expressions of their experiences along these lines. It was interesting that parents with children in the public school system, recognized, either currently or in retrospect, some of the nuances of race related issues in daycare only when the more obvious expressions became manifest in their older children and conscious efforts were made to trace the genesis of these expressions.

In general, the level of understanding of race and racism was low to moderate for most participants. For the purposes of this report, a high level of understanding racism would involve a social analysis of race as it is used to maintain and perpetuate an existing power structure and the historical and ideological roots of race and racism that have created existing power relationships. A moderate understanding would involve some understanding of systemic features without the broader social understanding of ideology and history. A low understanding of racism does not extend beyond individual considerations.

One Centre stands out in parental analysis of race related issues. In this Centre, two White parents had mixed race families, both with Black and White children. The analysis of race and racism by these parents extended itself into an understanding of social power maintenance mechanisms and the role of the White majority society in perpetuating race related issues. The analysis by these parents was strongly supported by the presence of professionals and racial minorities in the group who had direct experience addressing issues of racism. It is difficult to say whether this group was an anomaly in relation to other Centres or programs due to the narrow scope of the study. It is also possible that the Centre's location in a school setting influenced the realities and realizations of parents as they were daily exposed to children at more advanced levels of development and socialization.

8. Conclusion

Again, the overwhelming finding from this investigation is that many parents feel strongly that race related issues are not a concern in childcare programs. Feelings to the contrary expressed in the third Centre appear to emanate primarily from the level of understanding of racism expressed by parents. In order to catalogue the nature of race related issues in daycare, it seems necessary from this, that parents receive some training/orientation before focus groups are conducted to grind their lenses, as it were, to a more focused strength.

Even parents who felt that there was no concern in the Centres reported experiences that were race related. Issues reported by parents included:

- self-image of children along lines of race
- representative materials/program (present or absent)
- diversity of staff
- racial incidents (stereotyping, name calling, etc.)
- staff abilities to respond to incidents

Rather than there being a lack of race related issues in any of the Centres, what appears to have distinguished the first two from the third, is the level of awareness and interpretation on the part of parents.

This study presents challenges for future research to examine the types of interventions that can occur to assist parents to become involved in their children's and their Centre's equity based initiatives. As noted earlier, a more in-depth examination is needed to get a full picture of parent perceptions of race related issues in childcare programs.

The participants in this study represented a highly educated sample of predominantly White participants. When many of them speak, they speak from a position which is for the most part removed from the experience of racism. It would be worthwhile to conduct focus groups with racial minority parents to ascertain differences and similarities in experience and perception. When dealing with race related issues as they relate to parent views, the race, class and experience of the parent must be considered as a variable in the exploration. The experience of race for White participants is quite different from that of racial minority parents. Further, the experiences of different racial minority groups are not necessarily the same given differences in bias expressed in social stereotypes.

It was noteworthy in this research that the two people with the most intricate analysis of race and racism were White parents with Black children whose experiences in the world would be notably different from that of their children. Dynamics such as these need to be explored further and combined with the voices of parents not heard in this study to gain a more comprehensive picture of parental views and experiences of these issues in childcare programs.

Appendix A

Purpose:

to provide a clear and concise summary of the project's purpose and objectives.

Time:

10/10/2020

Discussion:

The project's purpose and objectives are clearly defined and the project's scope is well-defined. The project's purpose and objectives are clearly defined and the project's scope is well-defined.

Appendix A

A: Focus Group Guide

- Purpose:**
- To ascertain what parents' and children's experience of race related phenomenon in daycare settings are.
 - To obtain parental perceptions of how racism is managed in the daycare centre when it occurs.

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours

- Discussion:**
- Establish how parents perceive racial awareness/problems.**
- What do parents understand race related problems to be?
 - What is included/excluded from their understanding of racial incidents?
 - How do they understand racial discrimination?

Establish whether or not the parents in the group or their children have experienced race related problems in this or any other daycare setting.

- Have parents experienced any race related problems during any part of the process of their children's involvement in daycare (application, admission, handling issues related to their children etc.) with staff?
 - Have parents experienced any race related problems with other parents, children or other adults present in the daycare setting?
- Have they or their children been subject to any form of racial harassment/discrimination?
- Have they or their children participated in an act they would consider discriminatory or harassing?
- Have they or their children witnessed any act they would consider discriminatory or harassing?

Explore children's perceptions of race as expressed to the parent(s)?

- Do children make comments about children and/or adults from other racial backgrounds?
- What is the nature of these comments? Positive, negative, descriptive?
- Do children describe other people according to their race? Are they accurate?

- When describing a child by race, do children also use that child's name if it is known to them?
- Do children express a desire to have physical features other than those belonging generally to their racial group? (Facial features, hair, skin colour, etc.)
- What popular culture figures do children emulate and aspire to be like? (Human figures such as cartoon characters, singers, athletes, etc. — not Ninja turtles and other non-human hero figures)
- Are these characters racially similar or dissimilar to the child?

How are racial incidents handled when they occur?

- By day care staff?
- By children?
- By the parents of a child engaging in racially biased action?
- By the parents of a child who is the subject of such bias?

B: Demographic

Why does your study of post-experimental gender age speaking about centres for purpose of confidentiality conference

Appendix B

Daycare Cost =

Name =

Gender 1st child

Place of Birth

First Language

Other Language

English Language

Organized by

Signature

Date

B: Demographic Information/Release Form

Why do we need this information? The Congress of Black Women is conducting a study of parents' perceptions of race related issues in daycare centres. Because individual experiences are determined in part by who they are in relation to others according to gender, age, racial background, ethnicity/culture, etc., we need to know to whom we are speaking along these lines -- particularly in a study of race related issues in daycare centres. Focus group meetings will be taped so we will also need information for the purpose of transcribing the discussion. The transcript of these meetings will be confidential and will not be used or distributed beyond the purposes outlined for the conference for which it is being conducted.

Daycare Centre: _____

Name: _____
 First **Last**

Gender: Female ☐ Male ☐ **Racial Background:** _____

Place of Birth: _____ **Ethnic Backgr ound:** _____

First Language: _____

Other Languages Spoken: _____

Highest Level of Education: _____

I _____ agree to participate in the focus group and to be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription as outlined above.

Signature **Date**

C: Centre Profiles

Centre 1: The main

Of the group, the 700 parents of children during the month commencing 1st April to parents and p

Centre 2: parents of child meeting. The results provided, as p

Centre 3: school. The group attended at the district level. The data collection was completed in the

Appendix C

C: Centre Profiles

Centre 1 is a childcare program serving 52 children in the 3 to 5 year old age range. Of this group, six parents attended the focus group meeting which was held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on a Tuesday evening. Of the six in attendance, four made mention at some point during the meeting of involvement on the Centre's parent board or other Centre committee. Outreach was conducted by the director of the Centre who sent out memos to parents and posted notices in English for parents' information in the foyer of the Centre.

Centre 2 is one of several Centres run by a childcare organization. Of the seven parents of children in the 3 to 5 year age range, three parents attended the focus group meeting. The meeting was held during a Thursday lunch period during which lunch was provided. Of the three parents in attendance, one was a member of the parent board and another a staff person with a three year old child in the Centre.

Centre 3 is a long standing childcare program operating out of a public elementary school. Despite heavy parent participation demands for the month of January, 12 parents attended the meeting which was held on a Thursday evening from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.. The director of the Centre had initial difficulties in recruiting parents to attend the meeting. She suggested that former parents who had expressed an interest in the process be included. As a result, several of those in attendance no longer had children in the pre-school Centre.

D: Focus Group Participant Profile

A total of 21 participants, a mix of participants ages 18-70, participated. 5 female, 16 males.

Appendix D

D: Focus Group Participant Profile

A total of 21 parents participated in the three focus group meetings. The **gender mix** of participants was: 15 female (71%) and 6 male (29%). Centre 1 had 1 male participant and 5 females; Centre 2: 1 male and 2 female; and Centre 3: 3 males and 9 females.

GENDER	
FEMALE	15
MALE	6

The **racial breakdown** of participants is shown in the table below. It is notable that no Aboriginal and no South Asian parents attended any of the focus group meetings. It is also noteworthy that most participants were White — those least likely to encounter the discriminatory effects of racism. In two of the three meetings, White participants comprised the majority.

RACE	
WHITE	14
BLACK	4
SOUTH EAST ASIAN	3

In Centre 1, 4 of the six participants were White, and the remaining two South East Asian. In Centre 2, two parents were Black and one white. In Centre 3, two parents were Black, one parent was South East Asian, and the remaining 9 parents were White.

The **ethnicity** of parents as listed on demographic forms included Dutch-Canadian, Anglo, Chinese, German-Canadian, Scandinavian, Ugandan, American, English, Irish, Scottish, Somali, African, Francophone, Polish and Italian.

The **educational backgrounds** of parents ranged from high school to university level. The table below indicates the level of education.

EDUCATION	
POST GRADUATE	3
UNDERGRAD	9
COLLEGE	3
HIGH SCHOOL	6

Fifteen of the 21 participants (71%) had some form of post secondary education. Several parents noted their occupations as a matter of course during the focus group meetings. Professions mentioned included Human Rights Lawyer, Refugee Lawyer, Doctor, Immigration Officer, Childcare Worker, and Business Person.