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ABSTRACT

Head Start stresses the partnership between the family and the early childhood program, a relationship that is becoming increasing important in a society where more women are entering the labor force and the number of children receiving non-familial child care continues to rise. This study sought to answer two questions: (1) Are there parents who are not participating in the parent involvement opportunities provided by Head Start? and (2) What barriers might prevent such parents from becoming involved? The study explored which parents are less involved in the parent involvement opportunities provided by Head Start to determine why this involvement was not taking place. The subjects were 27 female and 2 male parents who were in their first year with the Head Start Program. Subjects were interviewed twice, 6 months apart, to obtain information on barriers to and levels of involvement. Head Start's standard parent involvement form and participant observation were used to document amounts of involvement between interviews. The results indicated that high hours of employment, and the somewhat greater financial resources that accompany employment, may compete with spending time on parent involvement. Changes in household composition accompanying program participation, such as the birth of a baby or a divorce, were also determined to be potential barriers. (Contains 12 references.) (MOK)

Barriers to Parent Involvement in Head Start Programs

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Running Head: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

ABSTRACT

Barriers to parent involvement in three rural, upstate New York Head Start Programs were investigated. Twenty-seven women and two men in their first year with the Head Start program served as voluntary participants. Two telephone interviews, six months apart, were used to obtain information on barriers to and level of involvement. Head Start's standard parent involvement form and participant observation were used to document amounts of involvement between pre and post tests. Analysis of the results revealed that high hours of employment, and the somewhat greater financial resources that accompany employment, may compete with parent involvement. Changes in household composition accompanying program participation, such as the birth of a baby or a divorce, were also determined to be potential barriers. Discussion centers around the necessity to change the current model for parent participation in Head Start by expanding the definition of parent involvement and developing a better family needs assessment tool for use in improving the match between parents' needs and program opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Head Start stresses the partnership between the family and the early childhood program, a relationship that is becoming increasingly important in a society where more women are entering the labor force and the number of children receiving non-familial child care continues to rise (Powell, 1989; Washington & Oyemade, 1985). However, despite this major emphasis on parental involvement, little research has documented Head Start's impact on families (Powell, 1989). In addition, the research that has been done is outdated, and is limited primarily to descriptions of how many parents are participating and what parents think about the Head Start program. Despite the problems related to research on parent involvement in Head Start, there is one conclusion about which experts seem to agree: when parents get involved in their children's Head Start program it is beneficial to the children, the program, and the parents themselves (Hubbell, 1983; Levine, 1993; Powell, 1989; Siantz & Smith, 1994; Taylor & Machida, 1994; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

If involvement makes a difference, then two important questions deserve attention: 1) are there parents who are not participating in the parent involvement opportunities provided by Head Start?, and 2) what barriers might prevent such parents from becoming involved?.

Hubbell (1983) summarized a 1975 report by the U.S. Comptroller General documenting the careful monitoring of parent involvement in four Head Start centers. Forty-six percent of the parents in two of the centers attended more than fifty percent of the parent meetings, while in the

other two centers less than 17% of the parents with children enrolled attended parent meetings. Drawing from the same report Powell (1989) noted that in one Head Start center, although the parents averaged 32 hours of volunteer time a year, "thirty-five percent of the parents accounted for seventy-one percent of the total time volunteered (pg. 59)." Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, the level of parent participation may vary from one Head Start center to another. Second, some parents are likely to participate much more fully than others in the parent involvement opportunities provided by the Head Start program.

In the study reported here we assumed that this second conclusion -- some parents participate more heavily than others in parent involvement activities -- was accurate, and set out to better understand the reasons behind these differences. Several previous studies provided clues regarding possible explanations. The Educational Development Center (1992), drawing from a variety of sources, concluded that lack of time, lack of transportation, feelings of being overburdened by poverty conditions, an attitude of indifference, chemical dependency, and cultural traditions discouraging women from being assertive and participating in groups all could constitute barriers to parent involvement. A 1977 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Service Delivery Assessment study found that less involved parents were busy caring for other children, attending school, working, or simply had no desire to participate (cited in Hubbell, 1983).

Finally, several studies have been conducted to investigate culture- and gender-related differences in Head Start parent involvement. A 1975 study by the Juarez Association (cited in Hubbell, 1983) found that bilingual parents were more likely to participate in activities located within their own neighborhood. Williams (1975; also cited in Hubbell, 1983) found that Native Americans preferred to be the initiator, rather than to react to parent involvement activities proposed by others. Regarding gender, Beatty (1992) found through literature review that reasons for the low involvement of black fathers in Head Start activities included lack of interest, difficulty seeing fathers as teachers of their children, negative attitudes of others about their involvement, the inconvenient timing of parent involvement activities, lack of males on the Head Start staff, and lack of male-oriented activities within the Head Start program.

THIS STUDY

The goal of this study was to explore further which parents are less involved in the parent involvement opportunities provided by Head Start and to understand why this involvement was not taking place. A number of the variables identified by other studies as potential hurdles to parent involvement were included in our analysis (see Table 2). In addition, we investigated the possibility that certain parenting characteristics (perceived knowledge and level of comfort) and child characteristics (moodiness, activity level) might affect involvement. We also considered the

possibility of cumulative effects: that the more hurdles a parent was confronted by, the less likely she would be to get involved in her child's Head Start program.

METHODS

The Setting. The study was conducted in three Head Start programs located in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. The rural villages containing the programs lie within a twenty minute drive of a major university, which is the main employer in the area.

The Sample. In order to be eligible for the study, parents were required to have been in their first year with the Head Start Program; parents with previous Head Start experience were ruled out. Thirty-two parents, 30 women and two men, met this criterion. All identified themselves as the primary caretaker of the child in Head Start. Their ages ranged from twenty to sixty-three. Two of the parents were not present at the initial parent orientation and open house run by Head Start, and so had to be contacted by letter and telephone. One of those women ignored both invitations, and the other declined participation due to her already busy schedule. A third woman dropped out of the Head Start program completely, making her unable to complete the study. The final sample was distributed among the three programs as shown in Table 1.

(Table 1 about here)

Measures and Variable Descriptions. An interview was administered to participants in September, 1993, and again in early February, 1994 in somewhat expanded form. The interview

contained eleven sections, each addressing a different potential barrier to involvement: time constraints, transportation, the Head Start program, cultural background of the respondent, perception of benefits to being involved in the program, perceptions of parenting, marital status, personal network, characteristics of the child, chemical dependency, and financial status. The follow-up interview contained the same categories as the baseline version, with the addition of several new questions in each category.[1]

Data gathered with the standard Head Start parent involvement sheet provided the primary source of information about the parent involvement engaged in by subjects. The standard parent involvement sheet is a mandatory part of all Head Start programs. This form, which is completed at every Head Start event involving parent participation, contains spaces for volunteers to sign their name, the date of involvement, the relationship of the volunteer to the child in Head Start, the type of involvement, and the number of hours volunteered. Twenty-five percent of the total Head Start program budget must be documented as voluntary goods and services; therefore, a premium is placed on conscientious record-keeping. Types of parent involvement reported by the three study programs, as recorded by the hour on the parent involvement sheets, consisted of home visits, parent meetings, policy council meetings, policy council officer training, parent orientation, open house, health screenings, work in the classroom, work done in the home for Head Start, building a new playground, parties, and field trips.

The Data Collection Process. Prior to administering the baseline interview, each respondent was assigned an identification number to assure confidentiality. The parent interview was conducted by telephone, at a time arranged with the respondent during Open House or Parent Orientation.

At the beginning of each interview the respondent was informed that all responses would be confidential and that she could terminate the questioning at any time. Respondents were also encouraged to voice any questions or concerns. Interviews lasted between ten and twenty minutes. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any questions, and thank you letters were sent on the day of the interview.

Between interviews, Head Start staff in all three locations monitored parents' involvement by logging hours on the parent involvement sheets. The senior author visited Programs 1 and 2 weekly to help in the classroom and to get a better understanding of the program. Program 3 was unresponsive to the this researcher's offer of help in the classroom. The senior author also attended several parent meetings and Head Start staff meetings. Half way between the baseline and follow-up interviews, a postcard was sent to participants to thank them for their participation and to remind them of the upcoming follow-up telephone call.

Coding and Data Reduction. After both pre and post interviews had been conducted those data were coded. Coding of the parent involvement sheets provided by Head Start also took place at this time.

After initial coding of the data and review of basic correlations, a number of potential barriers were dropped from further analysis. Transportation, cultural background, characteristics of the child, and chemical dependency were all arenas within which all parents reported no difficulties.

Within the remaining categories, four new variables were created. The various categories that described a respondent's marital status were combined to form a simple two category variable (married and non-married). Changes in household composition, originally documented separately as marriage, divorce, birth of a baby, relative moved in, relative moved out, and no change, were collapsed into two categories: household change or no change.

A composite variable was also created to summarize responses to the questions on parenting. Each of these five questions had been rated on a five point scale. Total scores for the composite parenting variable ranged from five to twenty-five, with twenty-five being the highest (indicating the most satisfaction with one's parenting skills and abilities). Internal consistency was checked and verified for this measure. Finally, a variable representing the total number of hours of parent participation in the program was created, composed of the sum total of hours spent in the fifteen different types of participation.

Table 2 provides a description of these constructed variables plus the 11 others used to predict amount of parent involvement, divided into four major categories, and the parent involvement measure used as the dependent variable.

(Table 2 about here)

Analytic Methods. Two different approaches were utilized in order to effectively incorporate both discrete and continuous variables. Twelve of the 14 independent variables and the dependent variable were continuous, making a correlational approach appropriate with these data. After examining simple correlations for a basic understanding of potential barriers in relation to hours volunteered, the most powerful predictor variables were selected for inclusion in a regression analysis.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) strategy was used initially with the two discrete variables, marital status and household composition change, to compare mean participation scores. One of these variables was later incorporated into the regression analysis.

All statistical procedures were done with SYSTAT5. Specific procedures include MGLH (Pearson correlation), REGRESSION (simple regression), MODEL (step regression), TTEST, and ANOVA.

RESULTS

The first step in the analysis involved an examination of the bivariate correlations for insights into relationships between the total number of hours volunteered and the independent variables. Relationships among independent variables were also investigated. The matrix of

simple correlations is presented in Table 3. Correlations of particular interest for the purpose of construct validity or for the prediction of parent involvement are shown in boxes.

(Table 3 about here)

Relationships Among Independent Variables. There was a positive correlation between the number of adults in the family (#11) and the financial situation of the household (# 13). As the number of adults increased, the financial situation improved. Finances also showed a strong positive correlation with hours of respondent employment (#2). These patterns make sense. The table also revealed a positive correlation between the respondent's educational level (#3) and size of friend network (#6), another relationship well documented in the literature (Fischer, 1982; Cochran, 1990).

Relationships Between Potential Barriers and Participation Level. The most powerful relationship of this type was between the number of hours the respondent was employed per week (#2) and the total hours volunteered in Head Start (#15). The correlation was negative, suggesting that the more hours a respondent was employed, the less volunteer hours she or he invested.

Volunteer hours also decreased as self-reported financial status (#13) improved. Although this value was not significant at the .05 level, the trend supported the validity of the correlation between hours of employment and total participation, assuming that finances would improve with an increase in the amount of hours worked.

Finally, there was a negative trend in the relationship between a change in household composition during the first six months of the program (#12) and number of hours volunteered, suggesting that coping with such changes may compete with participation in the kinds of parent involvement activities and opportunities provided by the Head Start programs in this study.

In the second stage of the initial analysis marital status (married, not married) and change in household composition (change, no change) were examined as categorical variables for their possible impact on the total number of hours of participation. Table 4 summarizes the results of these t-tests.

(Table 4 about here)

The means shown in the table indicate that parents whose families experienced no change in household composition were more than twice as involved with Head Start-related activities than were those experiencing changes, a statistically significant difference. During one follow-up interview, for example, a mother noted that she would have liked to participate in a field trip with her son in Head Start, but that she was not able to because her new born baby was not allowed on the bus. Married parents were also more likely to participate than their unmarried counterparts, but the difference in these two means was less pronounced and did not reach statistical significance.

The final stage in the quantitative analysis involved entering the three independent variables showing the strongest relationships with level of parent involvement -- hours worked,

financial situation, and change in household composition -- into a step-wise regression equation. The results of this model are shown in Table 5.

(Table 5 about here)

The first variable selected in the step-wise procedure was the number of hours worked by the respondent. This relationship with parent participation reached statistical significance and accounted for fifteen percent of the variance in the overall model. Household change was brought into the model in the second step. It's inclusion reduced the significance of hours worked somewhat, suggesting a modest degree of shared variance between these two independent variables. The relationship between household change and parent participation was not statistically significant, once the variance contributed by hours worked had been controlled, but inclusion of the change variable added 6% to the amount of variance accounted for by the model.

The reader can see in Table 5 that the addition of family finances contributed nothing to the explanatory power of the regression model. This comes as no surprise, given the strong correlation between hours worked and family income (Table 3).

Qualitative Reactions to Participation Options. Several interesting findings emerged from a qualitative analysis of attitudes expressed in the interviews about particular types of parent involvement. Respondents who volunteered in the classroom were positive about the experience. Of the fifteen who reported such activity, fourteen noted that they enjoyed it; everyone agreed

that their children enjoyed it. Nobody reported a child who was embarrassed or upset by the presence of his or her parent in the classroom.

The reactions to participation in parent meetings were quite different. Seventy-seven percent of the fifteen respondents who had attended parent meetings had no opinion or a negative opinion of them. These respondents were eager to discuss their opinions of the meetings. A summary of comments can be found in Table 6.

(Table 6 about here)

Judging from these statements, a number of the Head Start parents interviewed found the parent meetings boring, unorganized and

confusing.

The parents also discussed their willingness to become more involved in the Head Start Program. Ten of twenty-nine respondents indicated that they had no desire to increase their level of participation. Fifteen felt that although increased participation might be desirable, it would be impossible due to other commitments, such as working and taking care of their children. Only four respondents indicated an active desire to become more involved.

Program-level Findings

We also compared levels of parent involvement in each of the three separate Head Start programs. Table 7 shows the percentage of parents in each program that participated in four

different parent involvement activities during the study period, and the average number of per person involvement hours recorded during that same time span.

(Table 7 about here)

This comparison shows that on average the parents in Programs 1 and 2 were more than twice as involved with program activities as were the parents in Program 3. Comparison of the four participation hour means using analysis of variance produced a p value of .057. In her participant observer role, the senior author also noted that Programs 1 and 2 were quick to invite her to become involved as a volunteer and willingly provided school information and newsletters, whereas Program 3 was not nearly as forthcoming.

In our effort to understand factors that might explain the marked difference in participation level by Program 3 parents, we checked to see whether those parents were employed for more hours per week than their counterparts in Programs 1 and 2. This turned out not to be the case: the average number of hours of employment in Program 3 was the same as or lower than that in the other two programs. Our tentative conclusion is that something about the program itself caused the difference in participation levels between it and the other two programs.

Illustrative Cases. Our statistical evidence indicates that number of hours of employment, with its attendant effects on financial status, and change in household composition are two key determinants of parent involvement. Two contrasting examples drawn from the study sample flesh out the picture provided by the quantitative findings. The first case was a mother

whose child was enrolled in Program 2. In her late twenties, and divorced when the study began, she had invested only eight hours in Head Start activities during the six month study period. This woman worked as a prep cook, five days a week, from eight o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. She rated her financial status as comfortable. During the course of the study she remarried. She had very little to say about her experiences with the Head Start program.

A marked contrast was provided by a woman in her mid twenties whose child was enrolled in Program 1. She reported cleaning houses occasionally "under the table" and rated the household's financial status as "one step above poor." The composition of the household remained unchanged during the period between interviews. This woman invested a total of seventy and one half hours in Head Start during the course of the study, an average of more than 10 hours a month. She was very eager to discuss her participation, speaking with the first author for over a half hour during the telephone interview. During the conversation she commented that the teachers were a "very warm group of people" and "easy to work with". At the same time, she expressed the opinion that the parent meetings "Suck (even though I am a Policy Council officer)" and went on to say "I have been at every meeting but it is the same five people all the time."

DISCUSSION

Three major factors, two of them family characteristics and the other related to the nature of the program, emerged from this research as influences limiting the amount of time parents in our study devoted to parent involvement activities organized by Head Start. The first two of these, number of hours of parent employment and change in household composition, combined to account for about 20% of the variance in total participation. Both of these factors can be thought of as demands upon the time and energy of parents that compete directly with the parent involvement expectations of Head Start. Long hours on the job make it impossible to participate in Head Start activities scheduled during those same time periods, as in the case when a day-time worker is invited to volunteer in the classroom, and result in a level of fatigue that will be overcome only if the Head Start activity promises to be stimulating and fun. Parent reports of the evening meetings organized by the three programs included in this study indicate that they provided neither of these inducements. Changes in household composition, in this study primarily marriages and births, place competing demands on parents of a somewhat different sort. Although less rigid from a scheduling standpoint, the demands of child-rearing or a new relationship require a major time investment.

One conclusion that we have drawn from this study is that certain kinds of families "fit" the present Head Start model of parent involvement better than others. As the program is currently structured, there are four basic areas in which parents can participate: decision making

(policy council), classroom participation (volunteering), activities developed by parents for parents (including parent meetings), and parents working on activities with their children. Although all four options are presented to parents, classroom participation and parent meetings are emphasized most strongly. The model of parent involvement that results consists essentially of parent meetings plus classroom volunteering. Families with certain characteristics fit into this model quite nicely: those that include two parents, with one parent spending most of his or her time taking care of the home and the children. In this family form the caregiver with a flexible daytime schedule can find time to volunteer in the classroom, and one of the parents can also participate in the parent meetings during the evening while the other looks after the children.

Fewer and fewer American families conform to this family form, however, and this is especially true for low income families. Increasingly these households consist of a single parent caring for several children, who is responsible for the household chores and parenting and may also work outside the home. The demands of these responsibilities make it difficult or impossible for such a parent to also volunteer in her child's classroom or attend evening meetings. Because these parents do not have the time and energy resources required by the existing parent involvement structure, they are likely to be prevented from fulfilling the expectations for parent involvement placed on them by the Head Start program.

One way to increase involvement by less "traditional" parents would be to "tailor" involvement activities to better suit differing family characteristics and circumstances. This would

require broadening the Head Start definition of parent involvement to include any type of planned activity in which the parent is actively involved with or on behalf of her child. To support this broader definition of involvement, Head Start might need to provide a variety of additional resources for parents. For example, recipes for food items and art work materials could be used to promote home-based interaction between parents and children. Games, puzzles, and simple science projects that build on skills being developed in the classroom and are designed explicitly to foster parent-child interaction would also encourage productive home-based activity on a schedule determined by the parent. Activities that can be carried out on weekend day, like painting a classroom or assisting the teacher by preparing educational materials, would need to be assigned as much value as the more traditional parent involvement activities by program staff. The principle underlying the changes we are suggesting is that parents already facing heavy demands are more likely to participate in parent involvement activities if they can tailor involvement to the constraints imposed by those other demands. The earlier example of a mother who was not allowed to take her infant on the field trip bus provides a good illustration of a program characteristic that could be redesigned to provide access to a parent with a very young child.

Parents are in a better position than program staff to know what time constraints and energy demands are imposed by their family circumstances, and which kinds of parent involvement activities can be fit into their schedules. No process has been undertaken in the

programs we studied to involve parents in defining the family-based constraints to program participation they face, or what kinds of involvement would be most likely to take those restrictions into consideration. Collins (1993) found that a needs assessment instrument is used by three-fourths of Head Start programs, but typically at the beginning of the year, when parents may be least likely to reveal information. Collins also noted that the current instrument does not take into account the worsening social and economic conditions that have been affecting Head Start families. The interview employed by this study could provide a starting point for developing a more broad-based, parent-friendly process for tailoring parent involvement activities to fit the strengths and resources of particular cohorts of Head Start parents.

It is important to underscore that the shift to a parent involvement program shaped more by self-defined parent circumstances will in many instances require a change in program ideology, from the belief that "good parents" fit themselves into the "ideal involvement" mold promoted in the past by Head Start to a belief that the program must be able to respond flexibly to the needs of individual families. More research into the beliefs about parents underlying current Head Start parent involvement ideologies is needed to shed light on what kinds of beliefs and attitudes must be altered in order to permit the kinds of changes in program content that will make the program more accessible to the Head Start families of the 1990s and the beginning of the next century.

At the same time, the finding from this study showing that parents in one program were less than half as involved than those in the other two programs with the traditional parent

involvement activities offered suggests that the level of commitment to even very conventional types of parent involvement may vary considerably from one program to another. Our overall impression was that the program with less parent participation communicated a lack of enthusiasm to parents about the prospect of their involvement, and that the parents responded to these messages by staying away. We need to better understand how such messages are sent, what beliefs and attitudes lie behind them, and how to change those views, if we are truly committed to the involvement of parents in Head Start.

A reassessment of the existing parent involvement component in Head Start is especially important in the light of the recent report by the 1993 Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion, which includes the statement that "As families change, so must the strategies for involving them in the program. HS (Head Start) should support local programs in reviewing their current level of parent involvement in all aspects of the program and make renewed efforts to include parents as decision makers, volunteers and primary educators of their children (p.43)." One of the main pillars of this "Renewed Vision" is a section entitled "Expanding to Better Meet the Needs of Children and Families." The first two action steps in that section involve 1) enhancing family services and increasing parent involvement by increasing efforts to involve parents in all aspects of the Head Start Program, and 2) assessing the needs of children and families and planning strategically to meet these needs. The findings from this study provide empirical support for the importance of those recommendations. By confronting existing

limitations in beliefs about what parent involvement can be, and expanding the definition of parent involvement in ways that parents themselves can identify as meeting their needs, Head Start would be taking a major step forward in creating a program better suited to the changing nature of family life in an evolving society.

1. The interview drew from earlier studies and was also influenced by the Stresses and Supports Interview developed by the Family Matters Project (Cochran, 1988). A copy of the interview protocol can be obtained from the senior author at the following address: 117 Oak Avenue #6, Ithaca, New York 14850.

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Table 1
Sample distribution
by program and classroom

PROGRAM I		13
Classroom A	7	
Classroom B	6	
PROGRAM II		8
PROGRAM III		8
		29

Table 2
Variable Descriptions

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:

Characteristics of the Respondent:

- Respondent's age.
- Number of hours respondent works per week, if employed.
- Number of years of education completed by respondent.
- An index, based on a combination of 5 questions, which measures respondent's perception of own parenting skills (higher number=stronger positive perception of parenting skills).
- Respondent's marital status (married or not married).

Characteristics of Respondent's Network:

- Number of friends in respondent's social network.
- Number of close relatives in respondent's network.
- Number of relatives important to respondent in terms of raising child in Head Start.
- Number of friends important to respondent in terms of raising child in Head Start.

Household Characteristics:

- Total number of children in the respondent's household.
- Total number of adults in the respondent's household.
- Change in number of residents (between interviews).
- Respondent's perception of their financial situation.

Characteristics Relating to the Child in Head Start:

- Scale rating respondent's perception of how the child in Head Start is to raise (1=difficult, 5=easy).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE:

- Total hours respondent volunteered in Head Start (including fifteen possible participation types).

Table 3. Correlations Between Independent Variables, and between Independent and Dependent Variables

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:														
I. Characteristics of the Respondent														
1. Age	-.107	.075	-.223	.088	.134	-.170	-.282	-.254	.123	.425	-.434	.293	-.036	-.046
2. Hours of Employment		.180	-.026	.155	-.159	-.029	.190	-.015	-.018	-.121	.202	.389	.017	-.392
3. Years of Education			-.253	-.040	.371	-.014	.001	-.062	.051	-.268	-.012	-.072	.156	-.070
4. Parenting Skills/abilities				-.187	-.132	-.214	-.385	-.063	-. 47	-.123	-.033	-.007	-.087	-.207
5. Change in Marital Status					-.158	-.301	-.176	.295	.177	-.093	-.117	-.064	.073	-.177
II. Respondents Network Characteristics														
6. Friends in Respondent's Network						+.126	-.082	-.083	-.018	.157	-.249	.043	.262	.176
7. Relatives in Respondent's Network							+.186	-.302	.087	.280	.429	.150	.336	.104
8. Relatives Important in Raising Head Start Child								-.082	.344	-.009	.468	.194	.022	-.198
9. Friends Important in Raising Head Start Child									.182	-.233	.047	-.226	-.078	.278
III. Household Characteristics														
10. Number of Children										.113	.151	-.044	.435	.072
11. Number of Adults											-.017	.537	.151	.020
12. Change in Household Composition												.170	-.050	-.302
13. Financial Situation													-.293	-.286
IV. Characteristics Relating to the Child in Head Start														
14. Perception of How Easy the Child in Head Start is to rear														-.068
DEPENDENT VARIABLE:														
V. Measurement of Participation														
15. Total Participation Hours														1.000

Probability of .37 or higher has p <.05

Table 4. A Comparison of Mean Participation Levels by Marital Status and Household Change

Grouping Variable	Category	Mean Participation Level (hrs per week)	P-level
Marital Status:	Married	20.2 hrs	.180
	Not Married	12.3 hrs	
Household Change:	Change	8.9 hrs	.019
	No change	18.5 hrs	

Table 5. Step-wise Regression of Participation in Parent Involvement Activities with Hours Worked, Family Income, and Change in Household Composition

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	F	Signif.	R squared
Step 1				
HOURS WORKED	-0.392	4.92	.04	.15
Step 2				
HOURS WORKED	.346	3.75	.06	.21
HOUSEHOLD CHANGE	-0.232	1.69	.21	
Step 3				
HOURS WORKED	-0.296	2.34	.14	.22
HOUSEHOLD CHANGE	-0.219	1.46	.24	
FINANCE	-0.134	-0.48	.49	

Table 6. Respondent Quotes Regarding Parent Meetings

- "They are the same all the time. Humdrum..."
- "Sometimes confusing and unorganized."
- "Getting discouraging... it is the same people all the time. Maybe an in-house sitter would help."
- "Very unorganized -- What is the point?"
- "I don't talk much -- the people in charge do most of the talking. I don't always understand."
- "I didn't enjoy it at all. Only a few people ran it and I didn't feel as if I had much control."

Table 7. A Comparison of Classroom Differences in Participation

Classroom	Parent Orientation	Open House	Health Screen	Home Visit	Average Per Person
PROGRAM I					
Classroom A	71.5%	100.0%	100.0%	71.5%	18.4
Classroom B	69.0%	83.5%	100.0%	100.0%	20.8
PROGRAM II	87.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	18.3
PROGRAM III	37.5%	62.5%	50.0%	75.0%	7.8

Figures indicate the percentage of respondents who participated in a given activity.

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