

Hamilton Chinese Child and Family Needs Research

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PREFACE

Deirdre Pike, Social Planner
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

January 2004

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) has enjoyed a good working relationship with the Hamilton Chinese Community Services Centre (HCCSC) since October 2000 when HCCSC was first incorporated. Since that time the SPRC has been the trustee of funds and the sponsor of projects for the HCCSC including website development funds from the Hamilton Community Foundation and a Needs Assessment funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

In fact, during the latter needs assessment the SPRC and HCCSC worked hand in hand in the design, dissemination and research analysis to create a report on the Hamilton Chinese Community in 2004.

From this initial research the HCCSC developed its most recent research project on the needs of Chinese children and families in the community, particularly with regard to childcare.

The SPRC fully supports the work of the HCCSC as it continues to assess the needs of its community members through thorough consultation. This research is important, as it will assist the Chinese community and the community as a whole to work toward creating a healthier Chinese community in Hamilton.

The volunteer commitment in the HCCSC is an integral part of making reports like this possible. The volunteers are to be commended in their tireless energy in this project.

Congratulations to the HCCSC for continuing in its commitment to the Chinese people of Hamilton!

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In the summer of 2004, the Hamilton Chinese Community Services Centre (HCCSC) conducted and completed a “Hamilton Chinese Child and Family Needs Research” initiated through a telephone survey (see Appendices A and B). The survey team got all phone numbers through online Canada 411 by means of identifying well-known Chinese last names (including Mandarin and Cantonese names) and made calls to more than 180 phone numbers. Due to the fact of that some of phone numbers were not in services, some of phone numbers had been changed to western families / individuals, some calls either were met with an answering machine service or were not responded to all because no one was home. Also, a few of the people who did answer our calls either had no time to response to the survey or had no interest in doing the survey. In total, 56% of our phone calls were fully completed.

Reaching approximately 100 Chinese families in the Hamilton area; the survey sought to find what factors were most important to Chinese families pertaining to Childcare and Daycare Services, as well as Child Education and Child Activities. The information also allowed for further understanding of the current situation Chinese families face and the needs of their children. In addition, the survey also provided relevant background information about Hamilton Chinese families in relation to their Identity Status and Length of Time in Canada, Employment Status, Annual Family Income and Children Age Structure.

A. Background Information

The key background information is as follows:

1. Identity Status and Length of Time in Canada

The majority (73%) of respondents had been living in Canada between one and five years, while 23% had been living in Canada for over five years. Only 4% however, indicated they had lived in Canada for less than a year.

The identity status of respondents was also determined and it was found that the bulk of those surveyed (73%) were immigrants while only 24% were recognized as

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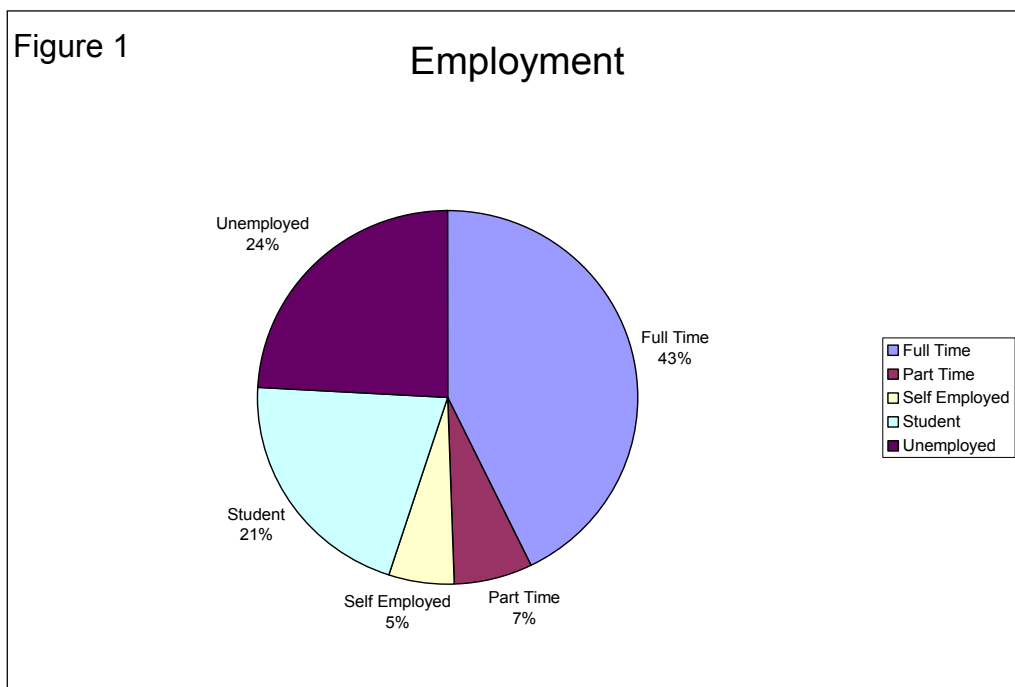
Chinese Canadians. The remaining 3% of respondents were identified as being visa students residing in Canada.

2. Employment Status

Of the 100 Chinese families surveyed in the Hamilton area, 50% were either employed full or part-time and 5% were self-employed, while 24% of the families surveyed, indicated they were currently unemployed. However, there were also a large number of respondents (21%) that indicated they were currently students and were not currently employed. This is shown below in Figure 1.

In a previous study conducted by the HCCSC in conjunction with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) in 2002, a total of 344 survey responses were collected and indicated that about 30% of those employed were not currently working in their field of study.

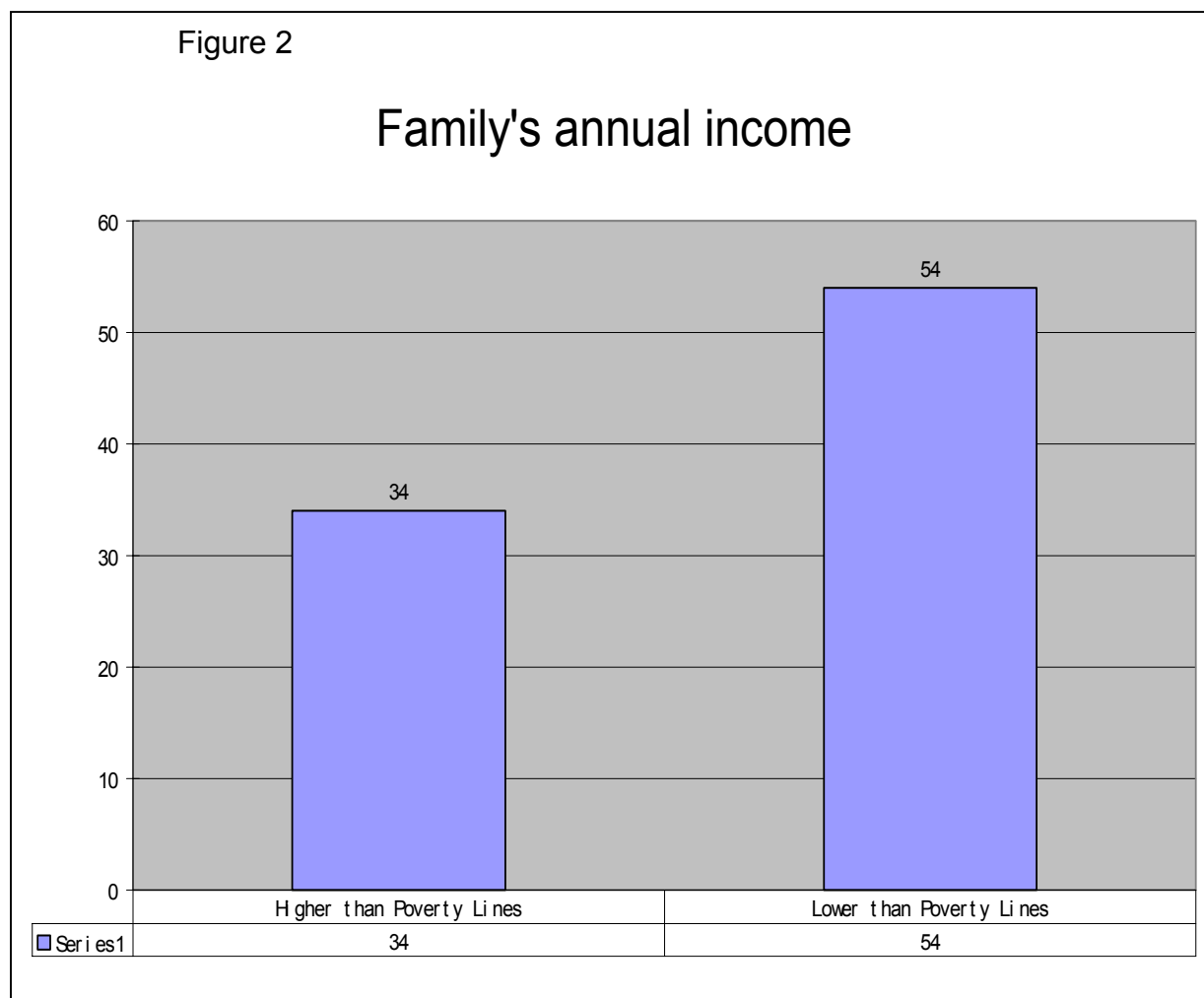
When we interviewed some new immigrants during our services, we found that most of them had got an undergraduate degree of a University in China. As some of them could not find a job related to their education, they had to complete a program for their second degree or graduate degree. This latter reason would explain why so many individuals indicated that they were students.



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3. Family Annual Income

Although half of the survey respondents were employed, Figure 2 clearly illustrates that the annual income of Chinese families in the Hamilton area is fairly low. A total of 54 families or 61.4% reported annual family incomes that fell below the Canada's poverty lines, with only 34 families or 38.6% reporting annual income above the poverty lines.

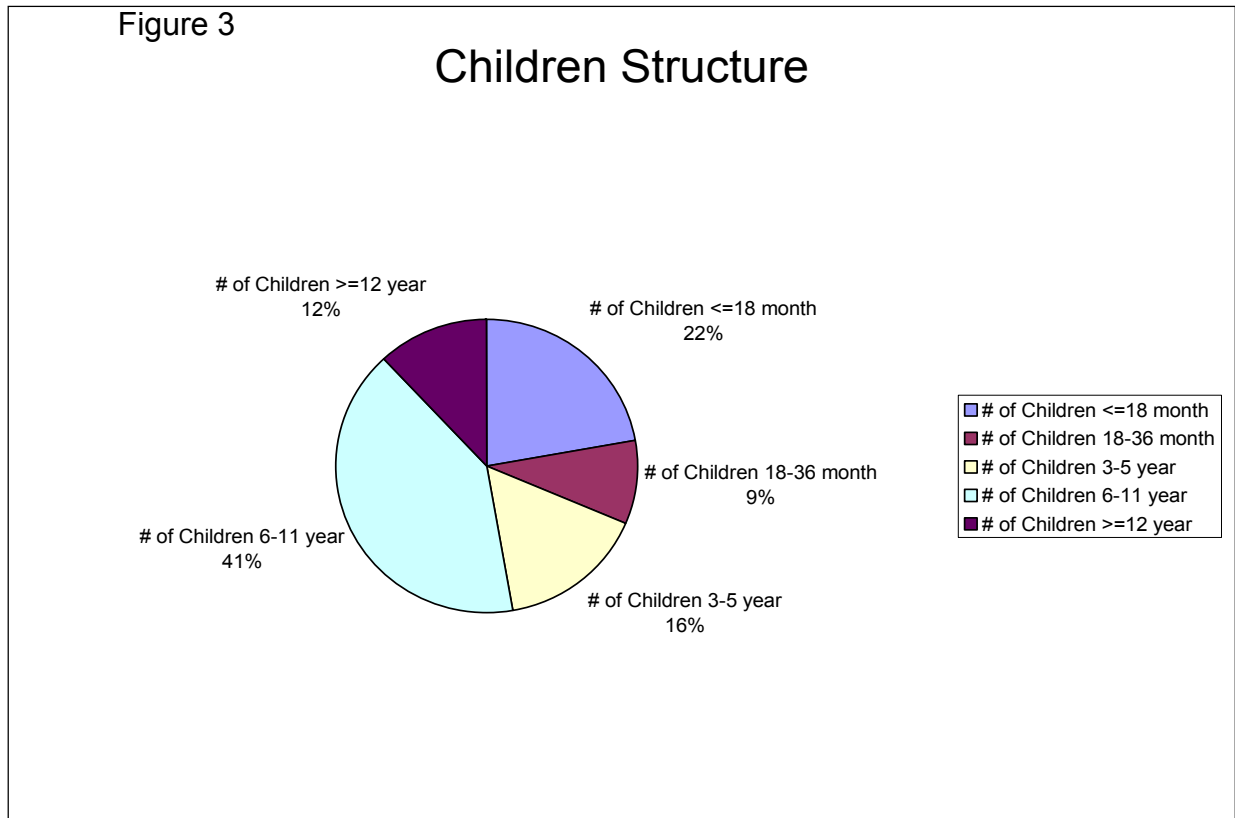


4. Children Age Structure

The ages of Chinese children living in Hamilton was also determined in this needs research and there are broken down in several age categories in Figure 3. Of the 100 families surveyed, there were a total of 108 children. A majority (41%) of these Chinese children were indicated as being between 6 and 11 years of age, while 25% of

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these children were between 18 months to 5 years of age, and 22% of children were also identified as being younger than 18 months old. The remaining 12% of these children were over 12 years of age.



B. Findings

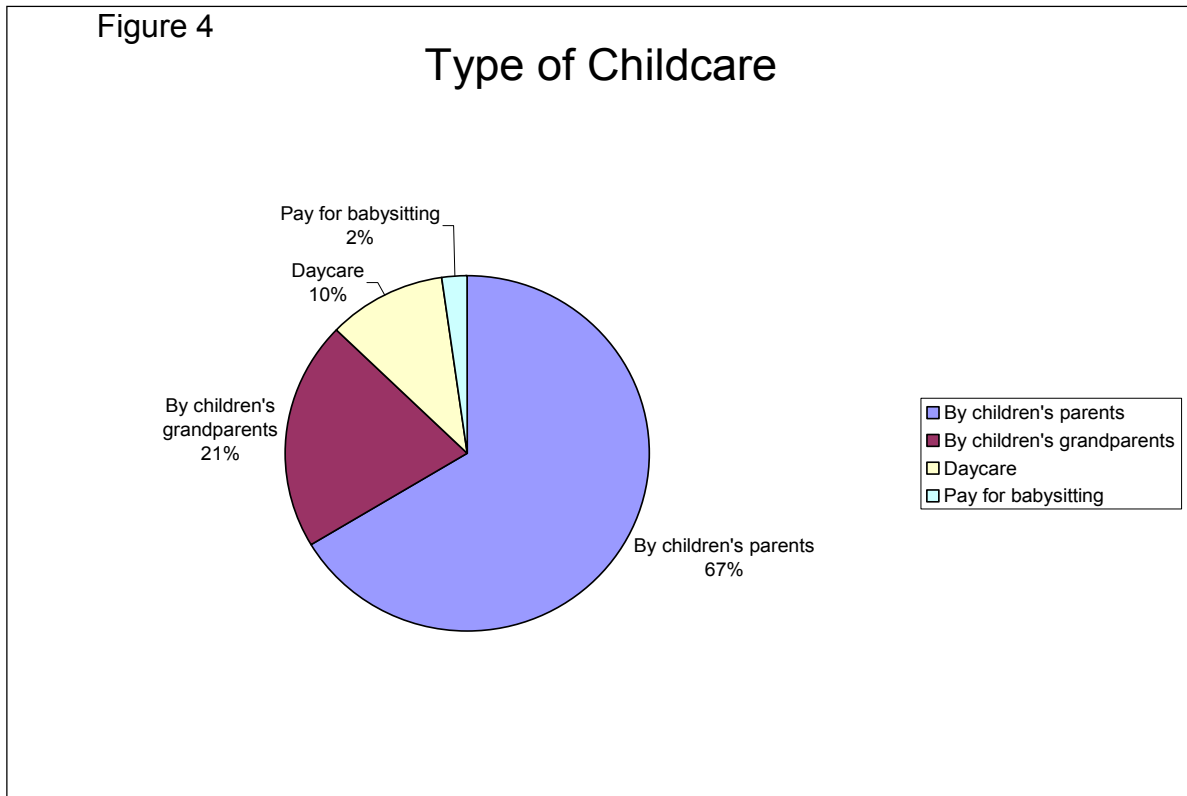
In consideration of the above relevant background information, the key findings about the Type of Childcare and Affordability of Childcare Services, Child Education, Child Activities, the Main Bothers from Childcare and the responses to childcare centre proposal are as follows:

1. Type of Childcare

Since there is large number of Chinese children that are currently under 12 years of age (88%), and while more than half of the families surveyed were currently working either full or part-time jobs, there is an increasing need for adequate childcare services for these children.

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As indicated in Figure 4, at present, 67% of Chinese parents are taking care of their children, while 21% are cared for by their grandparents. However, daycare services account for only 10%, while 2% of respondents indicated that they currently pay for babysitting services.

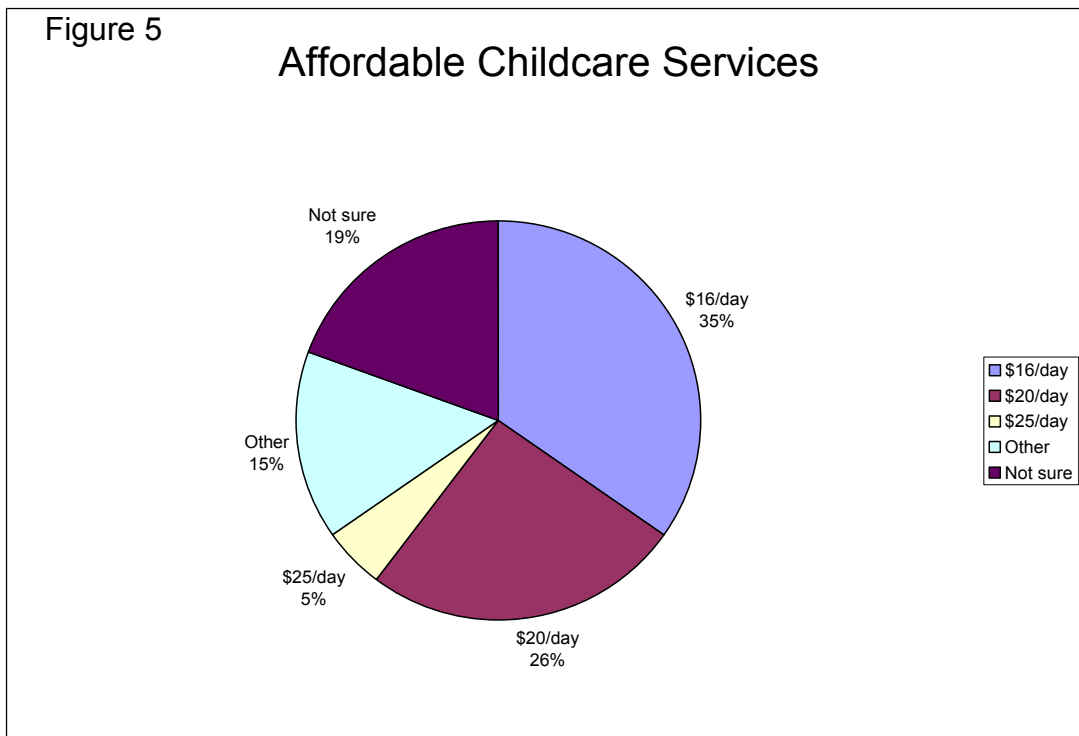


2. Affordable Childcare Services

More than half of the families surveyed indicated that they were currently earning incomes that fell below the Canada's poverty lines, and as a result, it could be concluded that these families would benefit from affordable childcare services, particularly as these families would likely consider sending their children to daycare centers.

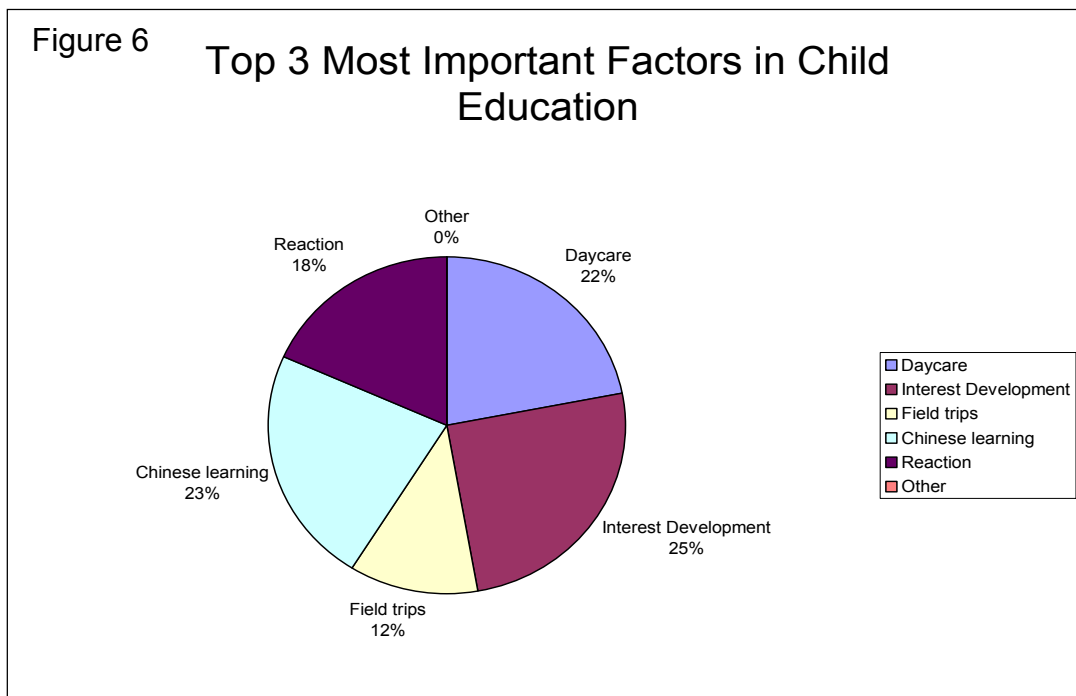
Figure 5 indicates that 35% and 26% of respondents felt that \$16/day or \$20/day respectively, was a reasonable and affordable price for childcare services, while a mere 5% felt that \$25/day was an acceptable price. However, another 34% of those surveyed were either unsure or felt another price was more suitable for childcare services.

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3. Top 3 Child Education Factors

In order to understand the most significant issues and concerns Chinese families have to contend with regarding child education, respondents were given a list of six choices and were asked to rank the top 3 factors which were most important to them.



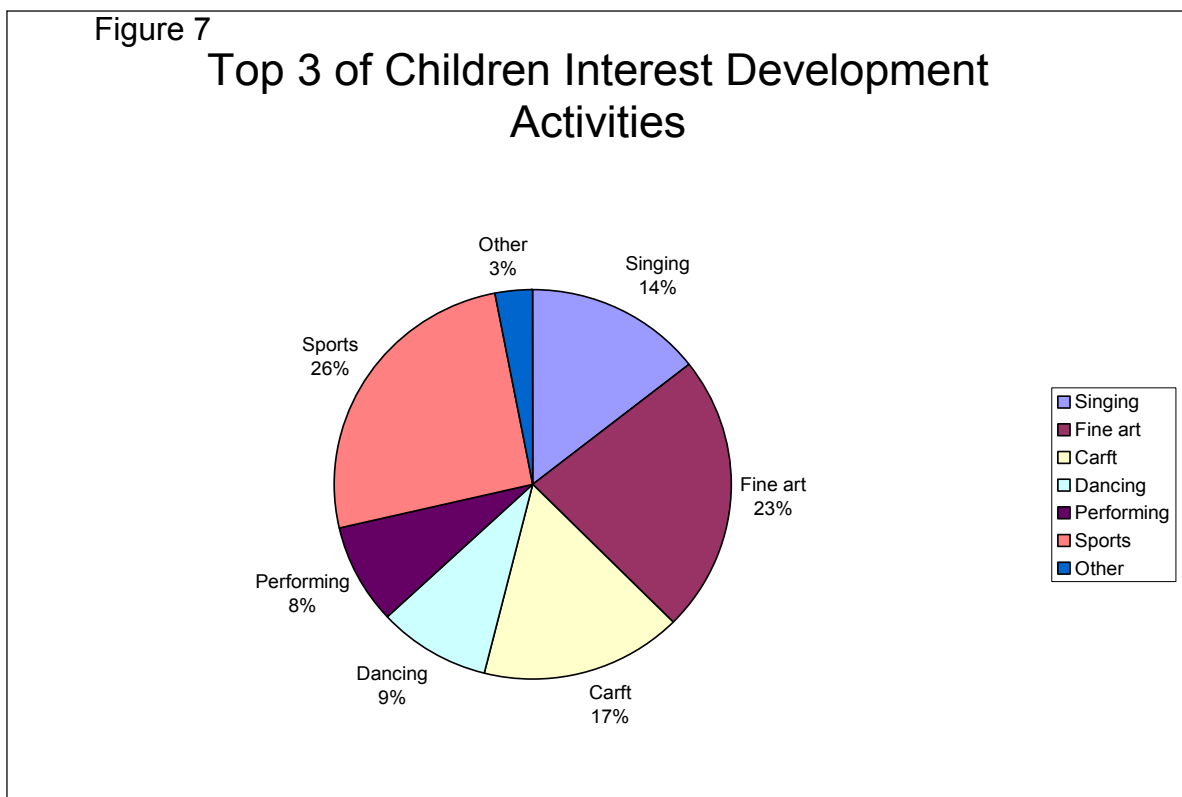
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The three most selected answers as shown above in Figure 6 were: Interest Development (25%), Chinese Learning (23%) and Daycare Services (22%). However, another 18% and 12% of respondents felt that Reaction and Field Trips respectively, were important factors and would be beneficial in child education.

4. Top 3 Children Interest Development Activities

Respondents were also given a list of seven choices pertaining to children's interest development activities and were asked to list the top 3 most important.

The three most selected answers as shown below in Figure 7 were: Sports (26%), Fine Art (23%) and Crafts (17%). However, a total of 23% felt that Singing (14%) and Dancing (9%) were also important in children's interested development activities and felt that these should also be included in daycare services.



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5. Bothers from Childcare

A list of ten choices was given to the 100 families surveyed and they were asked to indicate all issues about childcare services that either bothered or were of a concern to them.

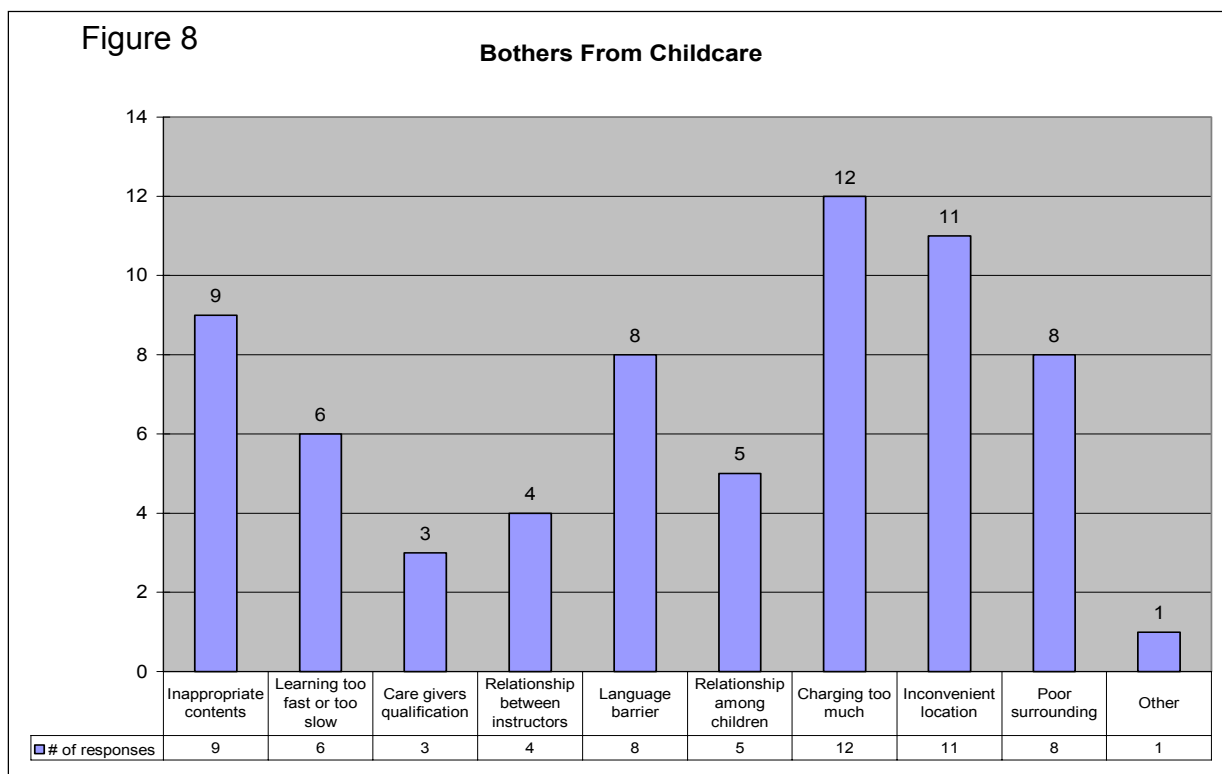


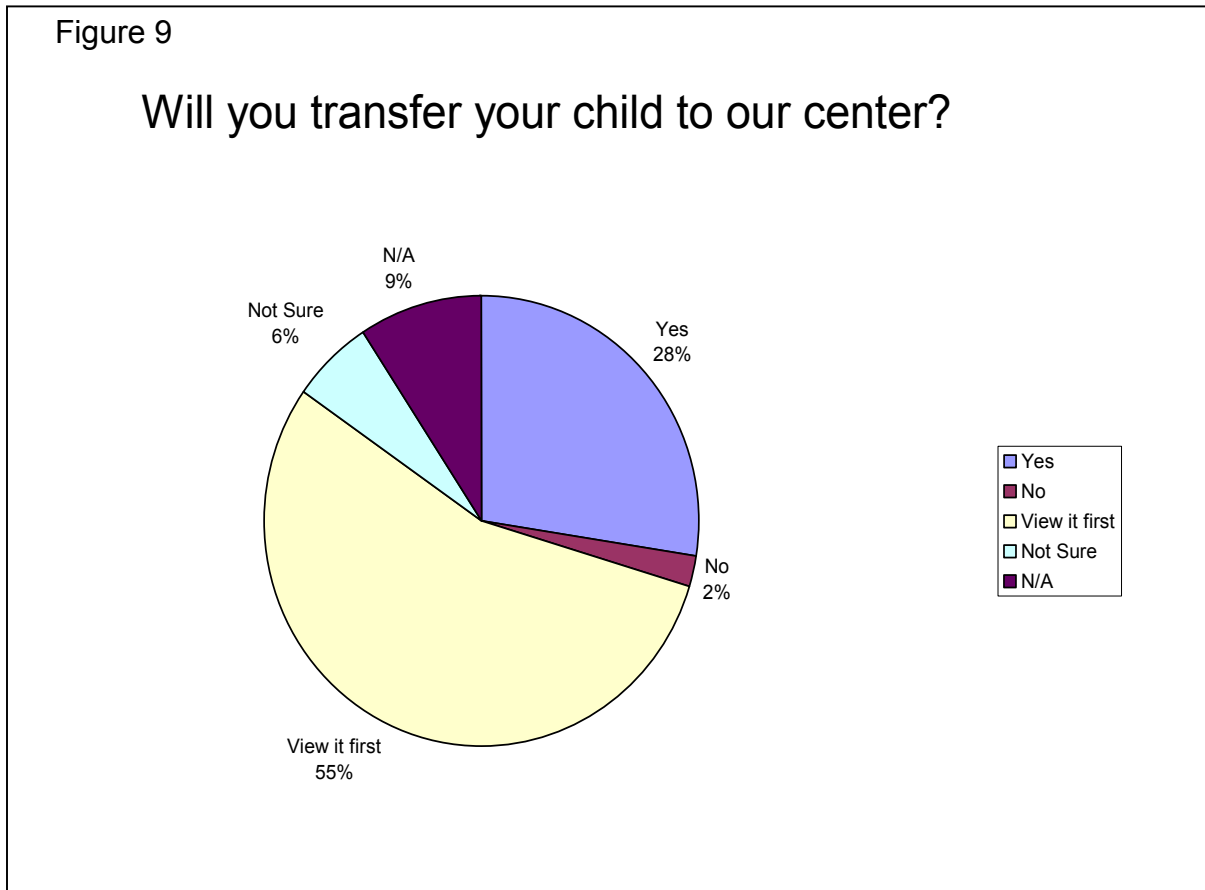
Figure 8 indicates that pricing was the most significant issue to families in regards to childcare services, with a total of 12 responses. Another 11 responses indicated that location was a factor and 9 responses felt that inappropriate contents were an issue in childcare services.

6. Responses to a Childcare Centre Proposal

A long term goal for the Hamilton Chinese Community Services Centre is to establish a physical center where Chinese people in the Hamilton area can meet and interact with one another. With this, the HCCSC also hopes to create a childcare center which will provide affordable and adequate services to not only the parents of these children, but also to the children themselves through interest development activities such as recreational sports, fine arts and crafts.

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When respondents were asked whether they would consider transferring their children to the HCCSC childcare center, 55% indicated that they would like to view the center first before making a decision. However, 28% indicated that they were interested and would definitely send their children to the center while only 2% had expressed that they would not (see Figure 9).



Respondents were also asked when they would expect the center to be open. Most respondents (54%) expected the center to be open anytime in the future, while 37% expected the center to be opened within one month. The remaining 9% expected the center to be open either by the end of this year or the spring of 2005.

C. Conclusions

Clearly, many Chinese families living in the Hamilton area are living in conditions of poverty. Therefore, Chinese parents and their children are in greatest need of

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affordable housing, low cost childcare services and workshops of interest development, free of charge.

Chinese new immigrants, who live in Canada less than 5 years, are an especially vulnerable group. The settlement services should address their needs of employment, childcare and healthcare.

A total of 88% of children surveyed were under 12 years old. This finding points to the fact these children are too young to stay home alone and they still require adult supervision. Also another 88% of families indicated that either the children's parents or their grandparents were looking after these children. Clearly, what these statistics reveal is that there is big potential market of childcare needs within the Chinese community. In other words, many Chinese children and families will become potential target customers when we launch a childcare centre.

In order to accommodate all the families that would be interested in sending their children to the HCCSC childcare center, there are a number of issues that need to be accounted for. Affordable pricing and a convenient location must be established, while appropriate activities must also be incorporated when developing services to be implemented in the childcare center. With over 108 Chinese children in the Hamilton area, there is an increasing need for reliable and sufficient childcare services geared specifically for Chinese children.

This phone survey has resulted in a better understanding of the needs of Chinese families and their children living in the Hamilton area. The survey has provided useful information that can be used to apply for funding as well.