



Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

April 2008

**A Report prepared for the
Communities 4 Families
Downtown Parent-Child Coalition**

Prepared by

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Communities 4 Family Downtown Parent-Child Coalition (“Communities 4 Families”) conducted community based interviews, focus group sessions and an online survey to examine the sources of stress experienced by parents residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg, including ways parents cope and how these stressors and ways of coping impacted on parenting. This report seeks to fill a gap in the research on understanding the stressors experienced by parents and families living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg. The information collected will help inform the work of Communities 4 Families.

Methods

Information from parents residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg was gathered one of three ways:

1. Through 10 *Personal Interviews* with parents living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg (Interviews were conducted throughout the months of July 2007 through February 2008);
2. Through 7 *Roundtable Discussions* with parents in various downtown residential community locations (held during September 2007 through February 2008); and
3. Through a 15 minute *Anonymous Online Survey* targeting downtown residential community parents (conducted through Survey Monkey from July to October 2007).

This report focuses on the aggregate (collective) findings from the personal interviews, the focus group discussions and the online survey conducted during the time period from July 2007 through to February 2008. Recruitment of parents from the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg was done in partnership with community partners involved through Communities 4 Families and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada. Recruitment was done primarily through word of mouth and through email.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic characteristics of interview, focus group, and online participants are set out in two separate chapters.

Chapter two focuses on the characteristics of the participants involved in the personal interviews and the seven focus group sessions. Collectively there were a total of 65 participants involved in both interviews and focus group sessions.

Chapter three focuses on the characteristics of online survey participants. The online survey was open for public input between the months of July and October 2007. A total of 73 responses were received with 31 individuals completing the entire survey. This represents a 41.1% response rate. We originally targeted for 20 individuals to complete the survey. It is clear that we received much more participation in the online survey than originally anticipated. This is a positive response and one that clearly indicates that families residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg have access to both a computer and the Internet. No immigrants participated in completing the online survey.

Key Findings

Chapter four of this report focuses primarily on the key findings from the collective responses provided by participants to the questions asked during the interviews, focus group sessions and the online survey.

The responses provide insight into how parents define and understand how stress impacts upon their parenting. There is general consensus amongst the participants' responses that stress involves feeling tired, overwhelmed, frustrated and often includes difficulties managing various responsibilities and tasks related to family, relationships and work. Many participants stated that it was difficult to define and put into words exactly what stress means for them.

The participants identified a number of stressors that impact upon them. These stressors were categorized into two sets of factors that were either environmental or personal. The environmental factors are things that parents felt powerless to control. These included issues dealing with gangs and crime, addictions, and neighbourhood vandalism and crimes that ultimately impact on the safety concerns of the participants and their children. The personal factors were categorized by parents' ability to deal with their family schedules and personal time management. Other personal factors included parent's personal issues around finances, housing, lack of child care, need transportation and parking, health, dealing with teachers, schools and the child and family services system. Other stressors were also identified, including stressors unique to new parents and immigrants (newcomers).

Participants consistently mentioned crime as being one of the biggest stressors facing families living in the downtown communities of Winnipeg. Gangs in particular were identified as being a major source of concern to parents. Participants feel that gangs are responsible for many of the criminal activities that occur within their communities. Some participants said they feared these gangs and the criminal activities within their communities. This fear along with threats from gangs has led some parents to relocate their families to other communities. Parents indicated that they worried about the influence gangs may have on their children and youth.

The presence of addiction to drugs and alcohol within downtown communities was highlighted by many participants as being another problem associated with gangs and criminal activity. Gangs are seen as openly participating in activities such as property vandalism, drinking, and fighting. In addition, participants note that gang members appear to openly sell and smoke illicit drugs (i.e. pot, crack, meth, cocaine) with impunity.

Participants report vandalism, crime and thefts in their neighbourhoods. Some participants reported feeling generally safe within their neighbourhood. The poverty reflected in the community was also identified as a stressor by some participants.

Because of the crime, gangs, drugs and vandalism in the community, many parents who participated in the interviews, focus group sessions and online survey reported being constantly worried about their own personal safety and that of their children.

Eight personal factors were identified from the interview, focus group and online participants' responses as contributing to stressful experiences. These personal factors deal with family scheduling and personal time management including parent's personal issues around finances, housing, the lack of child care, transportation (lack of funds and/or places to park), health, dealing with teachers, schools, and the fear of child and family services.

Participants who had recently become new parents raised specific concerns around stressors they were dealing with that they had not previously had to deal with when they did not have children. These new parents were primarily new mothers. They spoke of having to deal with reduced incomes once they became parents for the first time. New parents also spoke of the quality of their relationships with their partners as being compromised with a new child. Many of these new mothers indicated feeling they had to sacrifice their relationships with the new family addition and that this is a source of stress for them. The loss of individuality, independence and self-identity was reported as a stressor as well as learning that with a new child, to accept that the schedule is not their own. For some parents this unstructured environment is stressful and many feared losing control. Many new mothers spoke of having difficulty in trying to understand, find and access resources within their communities that would help them deal with being a new parent. Information about community resources, they note, is not readily available.

Many newcomers to Canada shared that they deal with many stressors on a day to day basis. They are dealing with the stress of learning a new language so they can communicate about their own needs and the needs of their children. They indicate that they are stressed with the housing conditions as these homes are often times unsuitable and inadequate for their family needs. And because they are on social assistance, newcomers reported their finances are not enough and that many times they are unable to pay the utilities. Newcomers worry about their children being bullied, not just at school but when they are playing in the neighbourhood. They report being

stressed about the crime in their communities and fear for their own and their children's personal safety.

We asked parents to comment on how they recognize when they are under stress. There is no uniform response from the participants on when they recognize they are under stress. Many of the participants shared feeling "angry, depressed, tense, agitated, impatient and anxious" when stress sets in.

Participants shared various coping mechanism used for reducing the stress they experience on a day to day basis. For some participants, removing themselves from the moment seems to work. This was characterized as "taking a time" out from the situation for themselves. Other reported coping with stress through "*crying, positive self-talk, going to the gym, 'going out for a smoke,' walking, exercising, cooking, taking deep breaths and using relaxation techniques.*" Many of the participants clearly indicated that their sleep patterns were deeply affected by the stress in their lives. When they have difficulty sleeping because they cannot "shut off" their minds, they recognize this as being one of many symptoms related to stress.

Participants indicate that they draw upon internal as well as external resources in helping them cope through stressful situations and events. Parents' defined internal resources as those they are able to draw from within themselves. External resources were characterized as resources that are outside of themselves such as friends, families, and money among other tangible resources and community services.

Participants were able to articulate greatly about how stress impacts on how they parent their children. Parents shared that stress causes them to be less patient with their children. The general observations from most parents are that there tends to be more arguing, less cooperation from children and less patience from parents when stress sets in. Participants reported that their children are for the most part aware when they are dealing with stress. However in other instances parents note that when children don't understand that the parent is under stress, children often believe that they are the cause of parent's stress. The ways that children cope with their parents' stresses are both positive and negative.

Participants shared experiencing many stressful moments with their children throughout various times of the day. By far the most reported stressful moment is in the morning when it is difficult to get children out of bed and out the door in time for school. For some parents, after school was tagged as the most stressful point in their day. For other parents evenings or bedtime was identified as being the most stressful at the close of their day. Children are often restless and resistant to sleep and the parent is so tired from the stress and activities of the day.

The change in weather from fall to winter was flagged by the majority of parents as being the most stressful time of the year. Other participants indicate that the Christmas holiday season and birthdays were especially stressful times within the year as these

events have a detrimental impact on the family's finances. For other participants back to school times within the year (at the end of summer, after Christmas and after spring break) were considered some of the more stressful family events. For other parents, especially those who reported having a low income, summer presents a challenge as there is no school and often times there are no structured activities for children and little money to engage in recreational activities.

Parents note that there are both positive and negative aspects to parental stress. On a positive note, parents say that stress motivates them to make changes to improve their situation. Stress motivates parents to find someone to help them (i.e. like seeking out counselling) or it motivates them to look for resources within their community to help them alleviate the stress in their family life. Stress has been described as having a positive impact on parents in that it helps them grow and learn about themselves and helps parents to "put things into perspective". It teaches and helps parents to look at their situations differently and forces them to find alternative and sometimes creative solutions for dealing with parental stressors. The negative aspects of parental stress deal have been noted to conjure up feelings of depression, sadness, frustration, anxiety, and isolation and makes parents doubt their parental abilities and whether they are doing a good job. The negative side of stress also means that parents sometimes say things to their children that they normally wouldn't say or mean.

Very few of the participants indicated that culture played a part in diffusing everyday stressors faced on a daily basis. Many of the participants clearly indicated that culture is not relevant or that it doesn't play any role in their lives. For the Aboriginal participants in this study many indicated that culture "*helps to reduce the stress*" but no elaboration on exactly how culture helps reduce stress was provided.

Lastly, parents involved in this study identified a number of resources which need to be developed and/or implemented within the downtown communities to better help children, families, communities and newcomers reduce everyday stressors. These recommendations have been divided into sub-categories that focus on parental, family, community and newcomer needs.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview about stress, coping and the impact on parenting in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg Research Project. It represents the collective results of interviews, various focus group discussions and an online survey which were conducted from July 2007 to February 2008.

Demographically the participants who participated in this study come from a broad cross-section of parents residing in various communities within the downtown communities of Winnipeg.

These results provide some understanding of the types of stressors that families in these communities are dealing with on a day to day basis. The perspectives shared by

the interviewees, focus group and online participants also speak to the resilience and strength of families in terms of how they and their children have coped and dealt with stress. Excellent ideas were shared about resources that help. It is clear from the responses that participants underline the need for more community resources within the downtown communities to help alleviate family and community stressors.

Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

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Chapter 1: Project Overview

Introduction and Purpose of Study

Communities 4 Family Downtown Parent-Child Coalition (“Communities 4 Families”) conducted community based interviews, focus group sessions and an online survey to examine the sources of stress experienced by parents residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg, including ways parents cope and how these stressors and ways of coping impacted on parenting. This report seeks to fill a gap in the research on understanding the stressors experienced by parents and families living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg. The information collected will help inform the work of *Communities 4 Families*. It may also help:

- Communities 4 Families better understand the stressors experienced by parents living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg;
- Communities 4 Families understand and acknowledge the creative and resilient ways that parents cope with stress;
- Communities 4 Families understand how stress impacts on parenting; and
- Communities 4 Families know where the coalition can concentrate service improvements for parents experiencing stress in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg.

Background on Communities 4 Families

Downtown Parent-Child Coalition

Communities 4 Families is a network of organizations and residents working together towards supporting families in the downtown residential communities. The coalition is a fluid group of people and organizations that come and go with flexibility. Presently, the organizations involved in the downtown coalition include:

- Bookmates Family Literacy Resource Centre (<http://www.bookmatesfamilyliteracycentre.ca>)
- Greenway School (<http://www.wsd1.org/Schools/Greenway.htm>)
- Healthy Start for Mom and Me
- Valour Community Centre
- Kid Gloves Day Care Incorporated
- Clinic Community Health Centre (<http://www.klinic.mb.ca>)
- Literacy Works (<http://www.litworks.ca/index.shtml>)
- Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc>)

- Manitoba Education and Training, Advanced Education and Training, Adult Learning and Literacy (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/index.html>)
- Manitoba Family Services and Housing (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs>)
- Manitoba Government Employees' Union (<http://www.mgeu.mb.ca>)
- NEEDS Centre for War Affected Families (<http://www.needsinc.ca>)
- Pregnancy and Family Support Services Inc.
- St. Matthews Kids Korner, Inc.
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (<http://www.wrha.mb.ca>)
- Wolseley Family Place (<http://www.wolseleyfamilyplace.com>)
- YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg (<http://www.ymcaywca.mb.ca>)
- Helping Hands Resource Centre for Immigrants, Inc.
- City of Winnipeg (<http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom>)
- Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. (<http://www.kanikanichihk.ca>)

Communities 4 Families' vision is to promote programs and services to support four Healthy Child priorities in the downtown area, which includes and focuses on the following priorities:

- Parenting – supporting parents' ability to nurture the healthy development of their children.
- Healthy Lifestyle – promoting good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
- Literacy – improving family literacy.
- Capacity Building – promoting leadership opportunities, community service, community economic development, and civic engagement.

This research initiative was conducted on behalf of Communities 4 Families through a research partnership with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada¹. The Director of Research was responsible for developing a workplan, designing the questions and data collection instruments, providing supervision to a research assistant in the data collection process of this study, including responsibility for analyzing the data and producing reports on the finding and results of the interviews, roundtable/focus group discussions and the online survey.

¹ The *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada* (www.fncaringsociety.ca) is a national non-profit charitable organization that provides culturally relevant knowledge, skills and resources to over 120+ First Nations Child Welfare agencies across Canada through networking, policy, research and professional development activities. Their mission focuses on "building helping communities."

Research Methodology

The research methodology proposed for this study utilized a mixed methods approach focusing on a variety of data sources using qualitative and quantitative tools. Mixed methods research uses multiple approaches in answering research questions. Information from parents residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg was gathered one of three ways (mixed methods):

4. Through 15 *Personal Interviews* with parents living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg (Interviews were conducted throughout the months of July 2007 through February 2008);
5. Through 7 *Roundtable Discussions* with parents in various downtown residential community locations (held during September 2007 through February 2008); and
6. Through a 15 minute *Anonymous Online Survey* targeting downtown residential community parents (conducted through Survey Monkey from July to October 2007).

This report focuses on the aggregate (collective) findings from the personal interviews, roundtable of focus group discussions held during the period from July 2007 to February 2008 and the aggregate results of the online survey².

Recruitment:

Recruitment of parents from the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg was done in partnership with the community partners involved through Communities 4 Families and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada. Recruitment was done primarily through word of mouth and through an email strategy. Through a mass email strategy, prospective participants were invited to contact the research team if they were interested in participating in an interview. In total there were eight focus group sessions scheduled. Invitation to the one public round table / focus group discussion was circulated via the network of Communities 4 Families coalition members. The other seven focus group sessions were held with specific community groups at specific locations based on the schedule of the organization. The poster advertising the one focus group open to the general public was posted in many downtown communities at schools, service organizations, and community recreation centers. Information was distributed through Communities 4 Families email and through the research team's networks.

In 2007 a questionnaire was developed and posted online through SurveyMonkey.com as a third way in which to capture information from individuals residing in the downtown

² The study's findings and results will be available from the *Communities 4 Families'* website located at <http://communities4families.ca>.

communities about the stressors they face, how they cope and how stress might impact on the ability to parent children. The online survey was comprised of 32 questions divided into four sections for ease of answering the types of questions posed: (1) Background information and why the study was being conducted; (2) General demographic and statistical information about participants; (3) Questions regarding stress, coping and the impact on parenting; and (4) information on how the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition planned on sharing the results of the study with participants. The survey was piloted with members of Communities 4 Families Committee prior to dissemination. It was then made available online in English through the SurveyMonkey.com online. No personal information or IP addresses were collected to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents and visitors.

An email notification advising 500+ people about the opportunity to respond to the survey was forwarded once the survey went “live” (see Appendix H for a copy of the email circulated). The email was forwarded through the IUSCommunityLink mailing list administered through the University of Winnipeg. The email was also sent through various combined contact and network databases of the author and members of the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition. The public online survey requesting feedback and participation from parents residing in the downtown residential communities was solicited from July 2007 October 2007. A copy of the online survey questions can be found at Appendix G of this report.

The chart below sets out the targeted number of participants and the actual number of participants that were interviewed, participated in the focus group discussions and the online survey. The chart also identifies the number of Personal Information Forms were completed by all participants (examined more fully in Chapters 2 and 3 on the demographic factors of study participants):

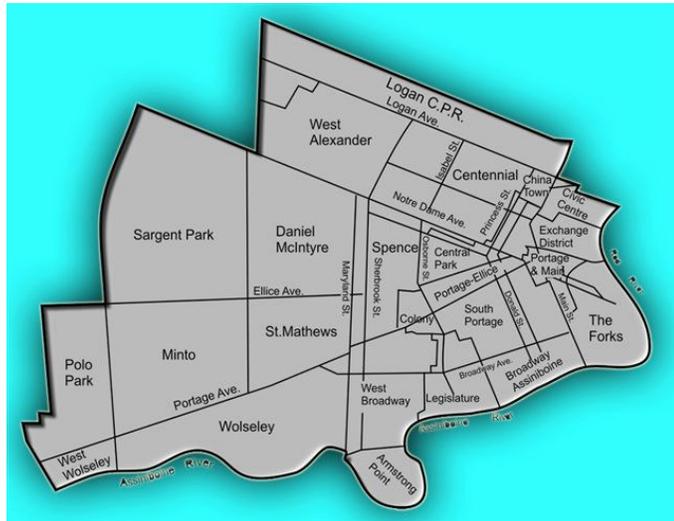
| Key Informants | Estimated Target Number of Participants | Actual Number of Participants | Total Number of Personal Information Forms Completed |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Personal Interviews with Parents | 15 | 10 | 10 |
| Focus Group Discussions with Parents | 8 focus groups (possibly groups of 10-12) = 80-96 | 7 Focus groups held (Total # of participants = 55) | 44 |
| Online Survey | 20 | 60 | N/A |
| TOTAL: | 115-131 | 125 | 54 |

Criteria:

The criteria for participation included:

- Parents / Families residing in the following downtown residential communities of Winnipeg. The boundaries of Communities 4 Families (Downtown Parent-Child Coalition) are: the Assiniboine and Red Rivers to the south and east, the CP yards to the north, and St. James street to the west (see map on following page):

- Logan – C.P.R.
- Central Park
- West Alexander
- South Portage
- Polo Park
- Sargent Park
- Minto
- Centennial
- St. Matthews
- Daniel McIntyre
- Colony
- Main Street North
- West Broadway
- Old Financial District
- Legislature
- Spence
- Broadway – Assiniboine
- North Portage
- Wolseley
- West Wolseley
- North Portage
- The Forks
- Armstrong Point



- Parents with children;
- Parents over the age of 18 years;
- Parents willing to share information about the stresses they experience, how they cope with stress and willing to share how this impacts on their ability to parent their children.

There was no compensation paid to the individuals who participated in this study. However it was a strong belief that there needed to be reciprocal means for recognizing the contributions of participants to the study. Therefore, parents who participated in personal interviews were provided with a gift certificate from Tim Horton's. The gift certificates were provided to participants whether they completed the personal interview or not. Participants were not required to sign a receipt for having received the gift certificate. For those parents participating in the round table discussions, Tim Horton's gift certificates, bus tickets, food and beverages including site access to day care were provided as a means of compensation for their time and attendance. Childminding was organized and provided through the organizations which agreed to host the roundtable/focus group sessions.

Research Instruments:

The research instruments developed include a structured interview questionnaire, roundtable/focus group questions, a Personal Information Form (examining the demographics of interview and focus group participants) including a consent form was also developed. The following research instruments utilized in carrying out this community based research included:

Appendices:

- A. *Questionnaire for Personal Interviews*
- B. *Content of email invitation recruiting for interview participants*
- C. *Questionnaire for Roundtable/Focus Group Discussions*
- D. *Personal Information Form to be completed by personal interviews and roundtable participants only (demographic information of participants)*
- E. *Consent Form for participants involved in the personal interviews and roundtable discussions*
- F. *Poster advertising invitation to public for the general roundtable discussion*
- G. *Online Survey Questions*
- H. *Email Invitation to Participate in Online Survey*
- I. *Summary Results of Survey Respondents' Answers to Online Survey*
- J. *Background Information Sheet about the research project*
- K. *List of community organizations hosting roundtable discussions*
- L. *Feedback/evaluation form for roundtable/focus group participants*
- M. *Evaluation Results of Focus Group Sessions*

These documents can be found in Appendices A through M at the end of this report.

Ethics:

This study complied with the criteria regarding community research as set out in the University of Manitoba's General Guidelines for Human Research (1994). The research commenced once ethics approval was granted by the University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (CRIHS). The project was approved by the Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba in May 2007.

Limitations

Length of time to collect data took longer than anticipated. Data collection depended on the schedules of the focus groups and their ability to fit the research team into their busy schedule. This was beyond the control of the research team tasked with facilitating and collecting the data from the various focus group sessions that were scheduled during the months of September 2007 to February 2008.

Recruitment efforts for interview participants were also less than optimal. The target number of interview participants was fifteen individuals. A total of 10 individuals were interviewed despite repeated efforts by the Coalition and the Research Team to recruit for more participants through their respective networks.

Demographic information about participants was gathered through a document called the “personal Information Form or PIFs.” The demographics do not paint an entirely accurate picture of the participants or the population residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg. It is important that readers understand that the demographic characteristics highlighted in this report should not be generalized as being representative of all the families and individuals residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg given the limited sample size and design.

Lastly, the Personal Information Form and the online survey failed to capture the gender of interview, focus group and online participants. The question focusing on gender was overlooked not only by the research team and Community 4 Families but was not specifically highlighted as missing when the study was vetted through the University’s ethics review process. The fact that the gender question was missing only came to light at the analysis stage. Therefore the report does not take into account a gendered comparison or analysis between the responses provided by male versus female respondents. Generally, the research team tasked with the data collection for this study concludes that the majority of interview and focus group participants were female with minority participation by males.

Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

Chapter 2: Demographic Characteristics of Interview and Focus Group Participants

Introduction

There were a total of 65 participants involved in both interviews and focus group sessions but the following information is based on responses received only from individuals who completed the Personal Information Forms (PIFs). Fifty-four individuals from the interview and focus groups completed PIFs. Eleven PIFs forms were therefore not completed and returned to the research team.

The data from the 54 PIFs is extrapolated into two sections: The First Part (A) is specific to those individuals that participated in interviews (n=10). The Second Part (B) relates to individuals who attended one of the seven focus group sessions (n=44).

Part A: Interview Participants

Ten (10) individuals participated in the interview portion of this study. These individuals reside in the following downtown communities:

- West Wolseley (n=1)
- Wolseley (n=2)
- West Broadway (n=1)
- Spence (n=3)
- St. Matthews (n=1)
- South Portage (n=2)

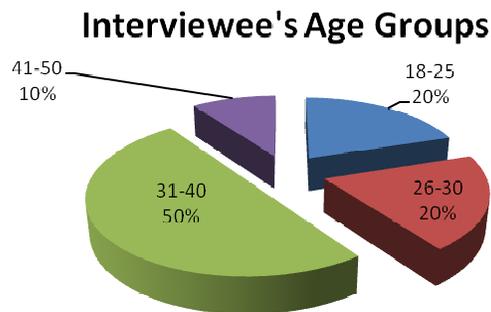
The interviewees indicated a range of cultural backgrounds. The majority of participants identified as being of Aboriginal descent (6 of 10 interview participants). They describe their cultural background as follows:

- Manitoban, white, Scottish/English background, born and raised in Winnipeg (n=1)
- No response (n=1)
- Métis (n=1)
- Aboriginal (n=2)
- Métis, English, Scottish, Danish, French (n=1)
- Cree (n=2)

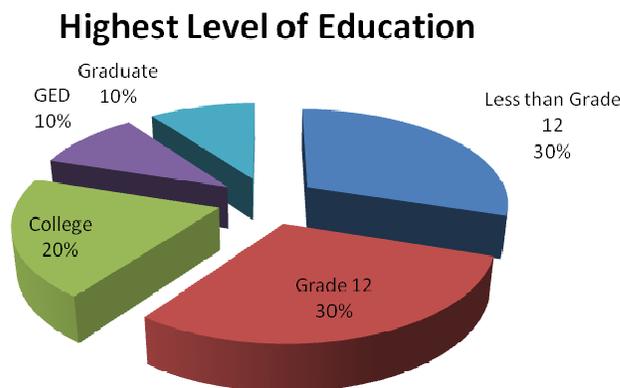
- Khmer (Cambodian) (n=1)
- German, Irish (n=1)

All of the persons interviewed spoke English. Only 2 individuals indicated they speak another language other than English. The languages identified were Khmer and French. None of the Aboriginal interview participants indicated speaking an Aboriginal language.

The majority of the participants were in the age range of 31-40 years of age. The next largest responses came from interviewees who were in the age range of 18-25 (20%) and 26-30 (20%). One interviewee identified being in the 41-50 age range.

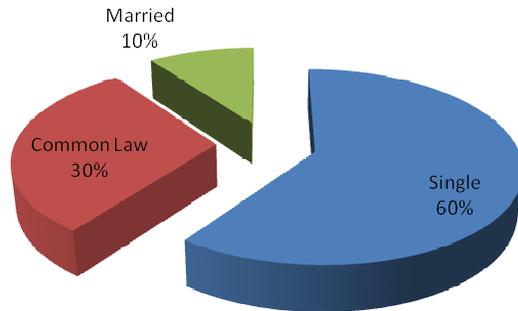


The highest level of education among the interviewees was one individual (10%) who identified having a graduate degree. The majority indicated that they had less than grade 12 or had a grade 12 education. One individual indicated having a college education while another indicated having a certificate representing the equivalent of a high-school diploma (GED).



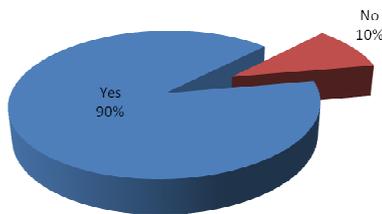
The majority of interviewees indicate they are single. Three (30%) interviewees stated they were involved in a common law relationship. One participant (10%) identified as being married.

Interviewee's Marital Status



The majority of the interviewees (90%) indicated having children under 18 living at home with them. A small percentage (20% or 2 participants) indicated they had adult children living at home with them.

Children Under 18?

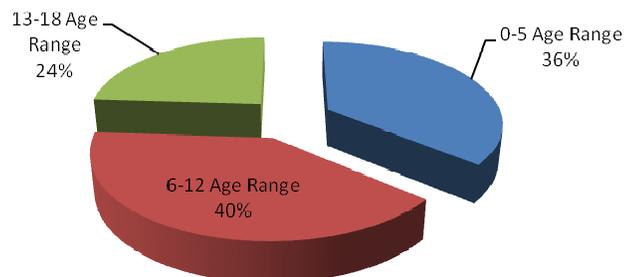


Children over 18+ residing with parent

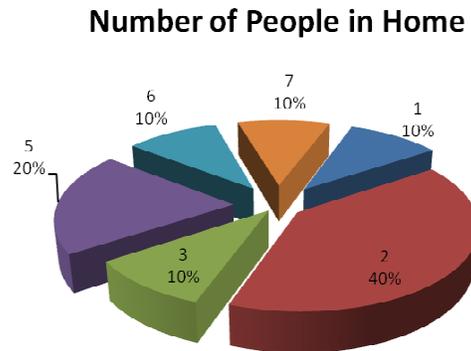


The 10 individuals interviewed for this study had a total of 25 children between them. Nine children (or 36%) were identified as being in the 0-5 age range. Ten children (or 40%) were identified as being in the 6-12 age range while twenty-four percent (or 6 children) were in the 13-18 age range. The age ranges of the children are reflected in the following pie chart:

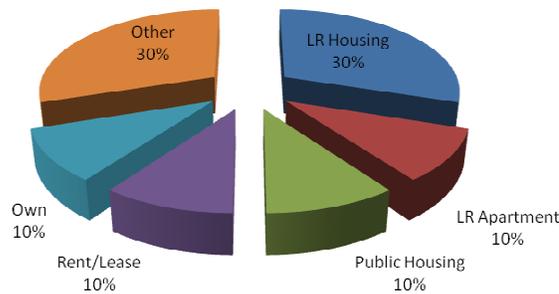
Number of Children under 18 in following Age Ranges



The total number of individuals living in the home was recognized as being anywhere from 1 to 7 individuals, as reflected in the following pie chart:

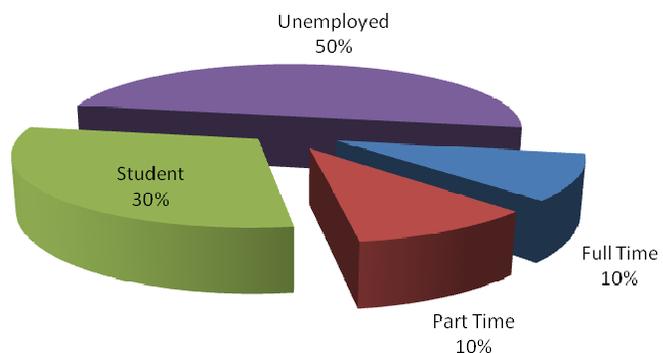


A very small percentage (10% or 1 individual) stated they were home owners. The majority identified as living in either Low Rental (LR) housing (30%) or an LR apartment (10%). Another thirty percent indicated they lived in other arrangements. Other arrangements were identified as residing in a post-natal residency or residing in a privately owned home. The living arrangements identified by the interviewees were as follows:

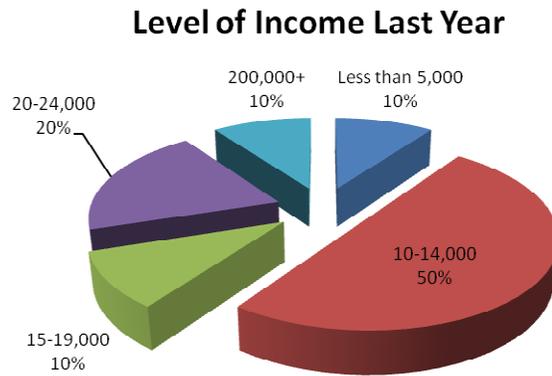


The employment status of the interviewees shows that the majority are unemployed (50%) while a few participants identified as being students (30%). One individual identified as being employed full time (10%). One participant indicated a part time (10%) employment status. The person who identified as working full time had the highest level of education among the interviewees with a graduate degree.

Interviewee's Employment Status

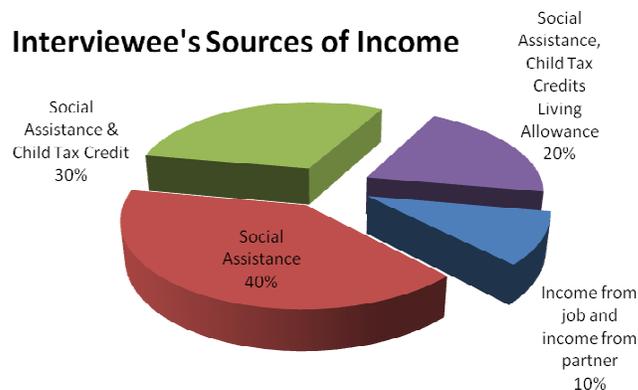


The employment status of the interviewee participants appears to be directly correlated to their level of income. We asked interview participants to provide us with their level of income from the last year. The individual with the graduate degree indicated that the household income for her family was at \$200,000+. This included her income and her partner's income.



The majority of the interview participants (50% or 5 of the 10) indicated their income last year was in the \$10-14,000 income level. Two individuals (or 20%) reported an income in the \$20-24,000 range. One individual reported an income in the \$15-19,000 range while another individual stated receiving less than \$5,000 income last year (this particular individual had less than a grade 12 education, identified as being single, unemployed with one dependent in the 0-5 age range and lived in a post-natal residency in the downtown area of Winnipeg). In total, 90% of interview participants reported incomes lower than \$24,000 per annum.

Another way of asking about the participant's level of income was to ask about the sources of their income. The source of income reported by the majority of participants (80% or 8 individuals) is social assistance, or a combination of social assistance and child tax credit.



Part B: Focus Group Participants

Forty-four (44) individuals completed the personal informational forms out of the fifty-five individuals participating in the various focus group sessions. These individuals indicate that they resided in the following communities:

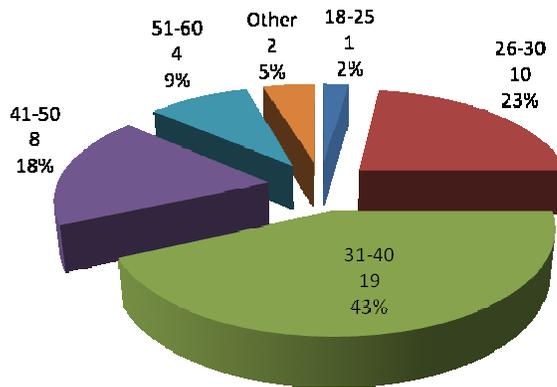
- Spence (n=10)
- Sargent Park (n=5)
- Main Street North (n=1)
- St. Matthews (n=5)
- Centennial (n=2)
- North Portage (n=1)
- West Alexander (n=8)
- Central Park (n=3)
- West End (n=1)
- Daniel McIntyre (n=5)
- Minto (n=5)
- South Portage (n=1)

As with the interview group, the focus group participants come from a range of cultural backgrounds. Again, the majority identified as having an Aboriginal background (15 of 44 focus group participants). The 44 focus group participants described their cultural backgrounds in the following ways:

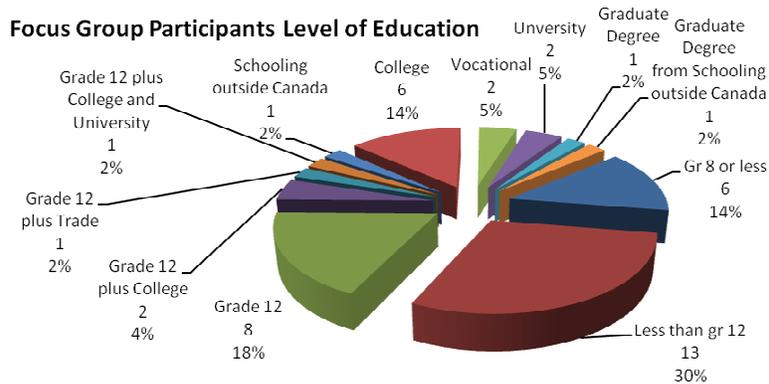
- First Nations (n=2)
- Aboriginal (n=1)
- Ojibway / Ojibwe (n=3)
- Ojibway / Cree (n=2)
- Dakota / Aboriginal (n=1)
- Métis (n=4)
- Métis / Italian (n=1)
- Nish'a (n=1)
- Irish / German (n=1)
- Portuguese (n=2)
- Vietnamese (n=1)
- Ukrainian / Norwegian (n=1)
- Muslim (n=5)
- Brazilian / Ukrainian (n=1)
- Latin Hispanic (n=1)
- Iranian (n=1)
- Dutch / Scottish (n=1)
- Dutch (n=1)
- Scottish / Irish (n=1)
- German / Russian / Dutch (n=1)
- Anglo Saxon (n=2)
- Mixed (n=1)
- Canadian (n=2)
- No response (n=7)

The majority of the persons participating in the various focus groups were in the 31-40 year age range. Twenty-three percent stated they were 26-30 years of age. Eighteen percent (or 8 of 44 participants) said they were in the 41-50 age range while four individuals (or 9%) said they were 51-60 years of age. Only one participant indicated she was in the 18-25 age range while two participants indicated "other." Other was interpreted to mean that participants were in an age range above 65 years of age. The pie chart below reflects visually the different age ranges and percentages of responses from the focus group participants.

Focus Group Participants' Age Groups

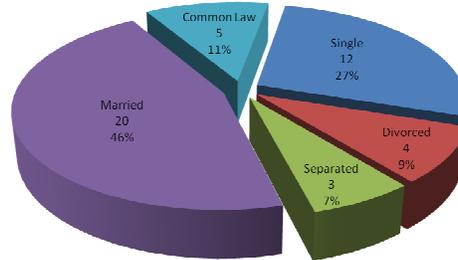


The majority of the focus group participants (30% or 13 out of 44) indicated that they had less than a grade 12 education. Twelve (or 26%) indicated that they had a grade 12 education and/or some other education (i.e. trade, college, or university). Two individuals stated vocational training and six individuals indicated having a college education. Two percent (n=1) had education from schooling outside of Canada. Two focus groups participants indicated they had a university level education. Two individuals (4%) had graduate degrees however one individual indicated that his/her graduate degree was obtained from a university outside of Canada. The percentages setting out the educational levels are as follows:



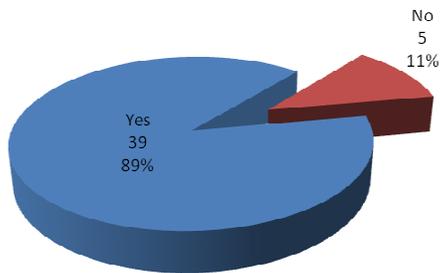
This group of participants indicated they were married (40% or n=20) while eleven percent (or 11 of 44) said they were in common law relationships. Twelve individuals (27%) indicated they were single. Three individuals (7%) identified as being separated and 4 individuals (or 9%) noted they were divorced.

Marital Status of Focus Group Participants

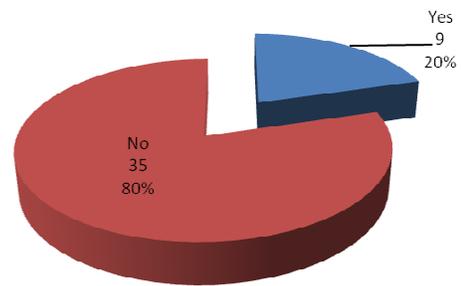


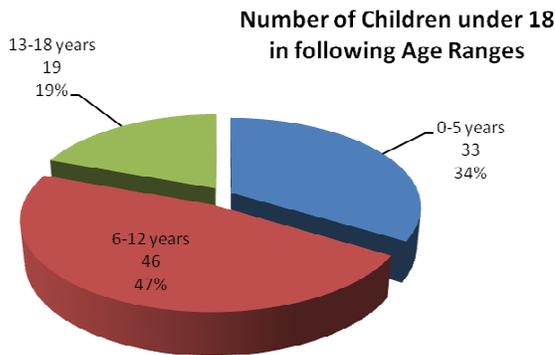
The majority of the focus groups participants (89%) stated they have children under the age of 18 years living at home while five individuals (or 11% of the 44) said they had no children under 18 years of age living with them. Conversely, the majority indicated that they did not have any adult children residing at home. Nine (or 20% of the 44) said that they did have adult children still living at home.

Children under 18 years?



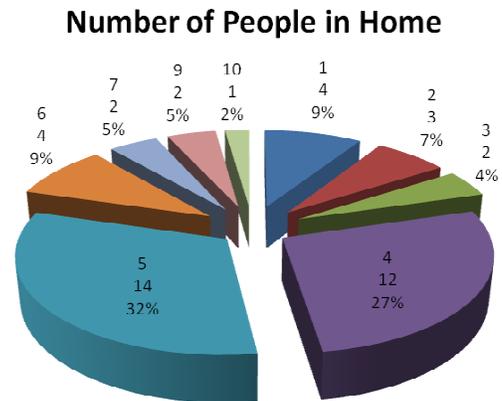
Children over 18+ residing with parent



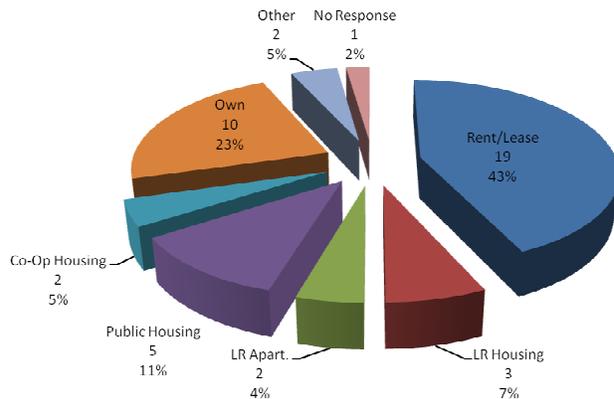


Among the forty-four focus group participants, a total of 98 children were recorded. The largest percentage (47% or 46 children) of children appear to be in the 6 to 12 year age range while thirty-four (34) percent recorded children in the 0-5 year range. Nineteen or nineteen percent were recorded for the 13 to 18 year category.

The total number of individuals living in the home were between 1 and 10 individuals. The majority (32%) indicated a family size of five individuals. Twenty-seven percent (or 12 individuals) said their family size including adults was four. One focus group participant state that her family size including adults was compromised of 10 individuals. A family size of 9 individuals was reported by two participants (or 5%).



Focus Group Participants Living Arrangements



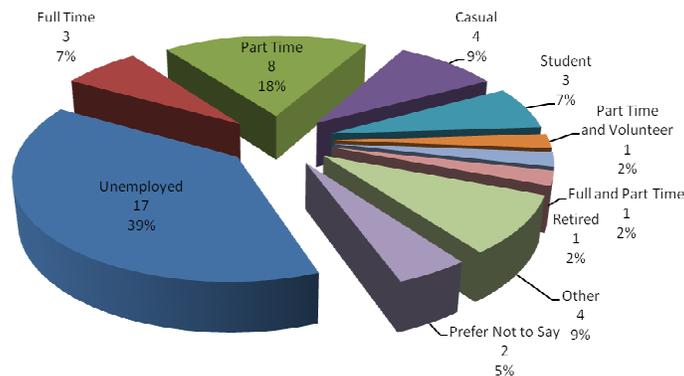
Most of the focus group participants indicated that they paid rent/lease for the family home. A small percentage indicated owning their homes (23% or 10 of 44). Five participants live in public housing arrangements, 3 participants (or 7%) identified living in Low Rental Housing while 2 participants (or 4%) identified Low Rental Apartment as their living

arrangements. Two individuals (or 5%) said they lived in co-op housing. Two participants identified they had other living arrangements – those other living

arrangements included residence in ministry housing or residing within private dwelling with others. One participant did not respond to this question.

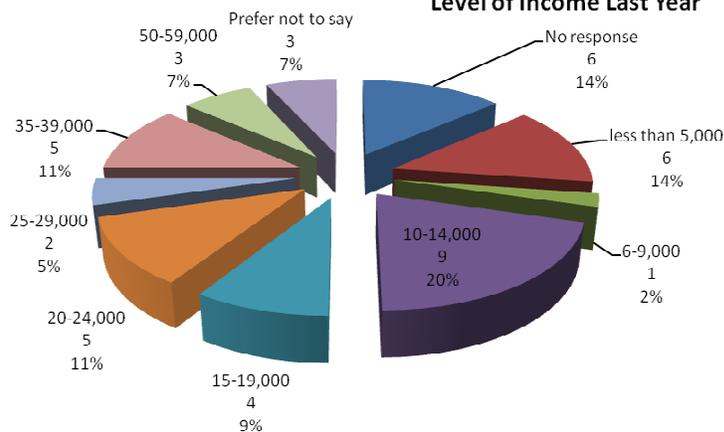
The majority of the participants in the focus group indicated they were unemployed (39% of the sampling). Three individuals (7%) indicated they worked full time while eight (or 18%) said they worked part time. Other responses included four (9%) who work casually; three (or 7%) who stated they were students; and one (2%) said they worked part time and did volunteer work. One individual (2% of 44) stated that she worked both full time during the days and part time in the evening. Two individuals preferred not to respond to the question while four indicated “other” – no elaboration on “other” was provided in these focus group participants’ responses. One person indicated being retired and collecting a pension.

Employment Status of Focus Group Participants



Associated with employment status is level of income.

Focus Group Participants Level of Income Last Year



The chart above shows that six individuals did not provide a response to this question (14%) while 3 specifically preferred not to share information about their income. Fifteen

some adult children over the age of 18 still residing at home. The majority of both interview and focus group participants did not own a home but rather were renting, leasing, or living in public housing arrangements. The total number of people living in the home ranged from one up to ten family members with the average number of people living in the home around five.

There is a mix of educational attainment reported by both interview and focus group participants. Many respondents indicate having a grade 12 plus some other educational experiences through college, trade and/or vocational training. Very few reported having university education. Only three individuals between the interview and focus group participants indicated having a post graduate university degree. The low educational attainment of most of the interview participants maybe directly connected to the low income levels reported in both groups with the majority indicating deriving income from social assistance. The majority of interview and focus participants stated they were unemployed.

This section has attempted to provide an overview on the demographic characteristics of the interview and focus group participants involved in this study. This information was gathered through a document called the "personal information form." It is important to reiterate that these characteristics cannot be generalized as being representative of all the families and individuals residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg given the limited sample size and design. Rather, the information can be viewed as "being a snapshot about the demographics of the specific interview and focus group respondents who chose to participate in this particular study." This information provides contextual information for understanding the demographics of these specific participants.

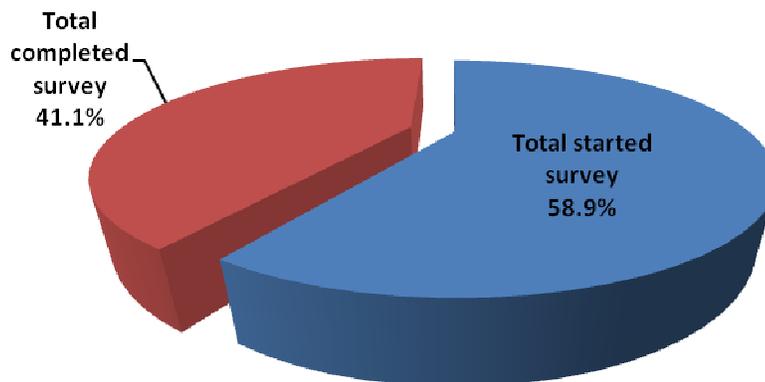
Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

Chapter 3: Demographic Characteristics of Online Survey Participants

Total Responses Received

The online survey was open for public input between the months of July and October 2007. A total of 73 responses were received with 31 individuals completing the survey. This represents a 41.1% response rate. We had targeted for 20 individuals to complete the survey however it is clear that we received much more participation in the online survey than originally anticipated. This is a positive response and one that clearly indicates that families residing in the downtown communities within Winnipeg have both access to a computer and the Internet.



Eleven visitors to the online survey (or 15.1%) indicated that they did not reside in any of the downtown communities. A breakdown of the number of respondents and the questions that they answered as well as the community they were located with including the time it took for them to view/complete the survey can be found at Appendix I of this report.

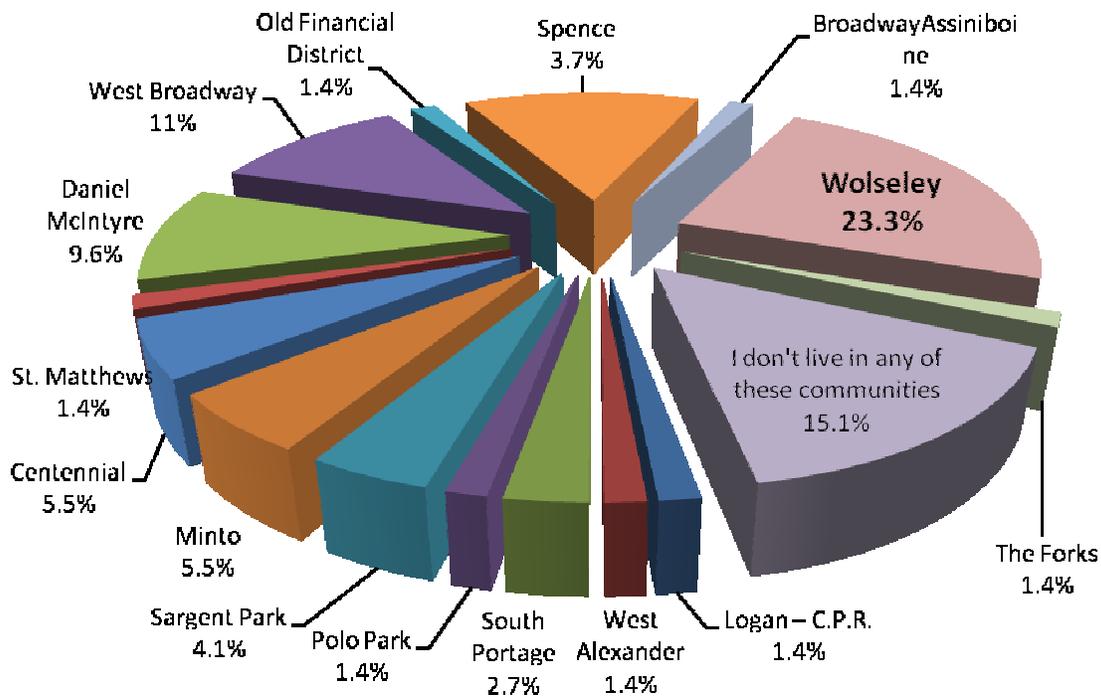
Responses from Communities

The first question was a qualifying question to ensure that we were capturing only responses from individuals residing in the designated downtown communities. We

wanted to ensure that we captured only the responses from individuals who reside in the downtown communities. Responses from 15.1% (or 11) of the 73 responses received were from individuals who indicated that they did reside in the downtown communities. No responses were received from individuals residing in 7 of the 25 downtown communities of Colony, Main Street, Legislature, North Portage, West Wolseley, North Portage and Armstrong Point.

The highest percentage of responses to the survey came from individuals who identified Wolseley as their community. Twenty-three percent (or 17 individuals) survey respondents indicated that they reside in Wolseley. The second highest percentage (13.7% or 10) of responses came from individuals residing in the Spence neighbourhood. Seven responses from Daniel McIntyre residents were acknowledged as having the third highest response at 9.6%, while Minto and Centennial community responses to the survey were each recorded at an equal 5.5% each (in other words 4 individuals from each of these communities completed the survey respectively).

The following chart identifies the percentage of responses received from the remaining 18 downtown communities:



Cultural Backgrounds

The second question of the survey sought to gather information about the cultural backgrounds of individuals who were participating in the survey. Forty-two individuals answered this question while it was skipped by 31 participants. Of the identified number of individuals who did complete the survey, there were a range of responses. Interestingly, the largest percentage of responses came from individuals who identified as being of Aboriginal descent:

- 5 persons identified as being of Metis background;
- 5 individuals identified as being either Aboriginal, Native and/or First Nations;
- 7 individuals indicated that they were of mixed backgrounds but identified as having some Aboriginal background as was indicated in the following types of responses:
 - English, Scottish, Cree (n=1);
 - Cree, British, Scottish (n=2);
 - Metis, Scotch and Irish (n=1);
 - Native / Norwegian (n=1);
 - Aboriginal, Jewish, Ukrainian (n=1);
 - “Aboriginal (from Ontario), my children are Filipino/Aboriginal, white/Aboriginal” (n=1).

The remainder of the survey respondents identified as having the following cultural backgrounds:

- British / English (n=5);
- British Canadian (n=1);
- White (n=2);
- Caucasian, first generation Canadian, parents immigrated from England (n=1)
- Canadian (n=4);
- Canadian, European descent (n=1);
- 3rd generation Canadian, European descent (n=1);
- European (n=1);
- European and German Mennonite (n=1);
- German (n=1);
- Ukrainian (n=1);
- Irish (n=1);
- Irish Canadian (n=1);
- South American from Argentina of Italian and Spanish descent (n=1);
- Latin American / from Argentina of Italian and Spanish descent (n=1);
- Mix of Jamaican and White (n=1);

One unique response was from an individual responded to the cultural question in this way:

"We are pagans, European descent but that is not our culture" (n=1)

As can be gathered from the types of responses to the question about cultural background, no one representative of the immigrant communities participated in the online survey.

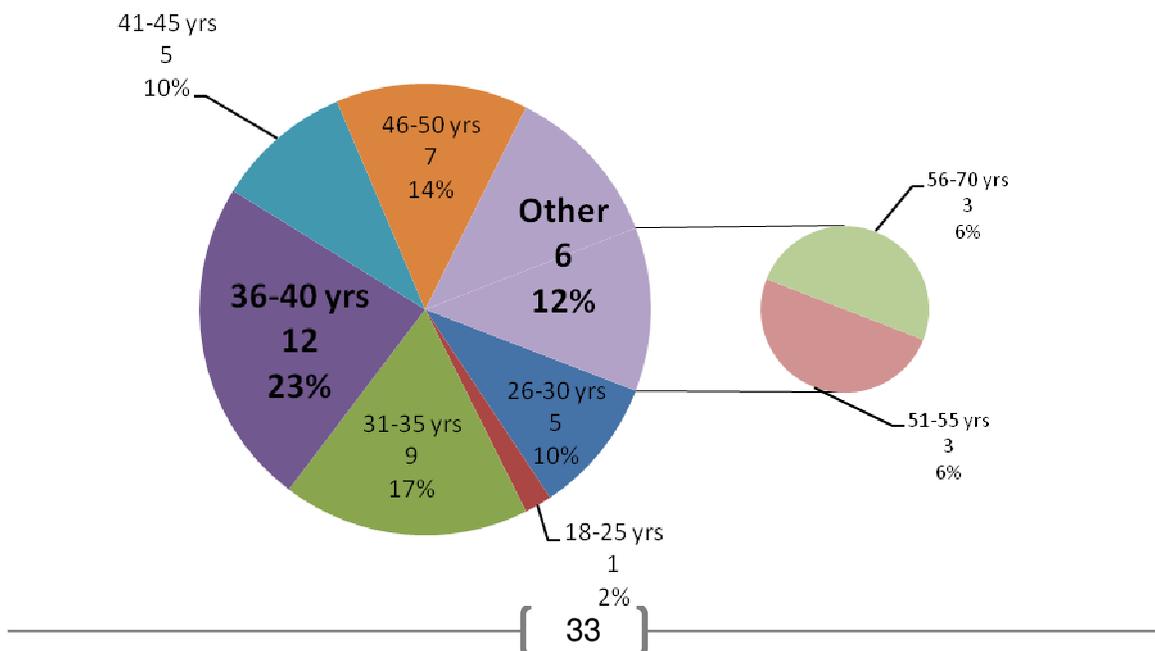
Age of Survey Participants

Of the seventy-three individuals who visited the survey, only 45 participants answered this question. It was skipped by 28 of the respondents. The two significant numbers here are the mean ages of the respondents and the response of "other" in the responses received for this question.

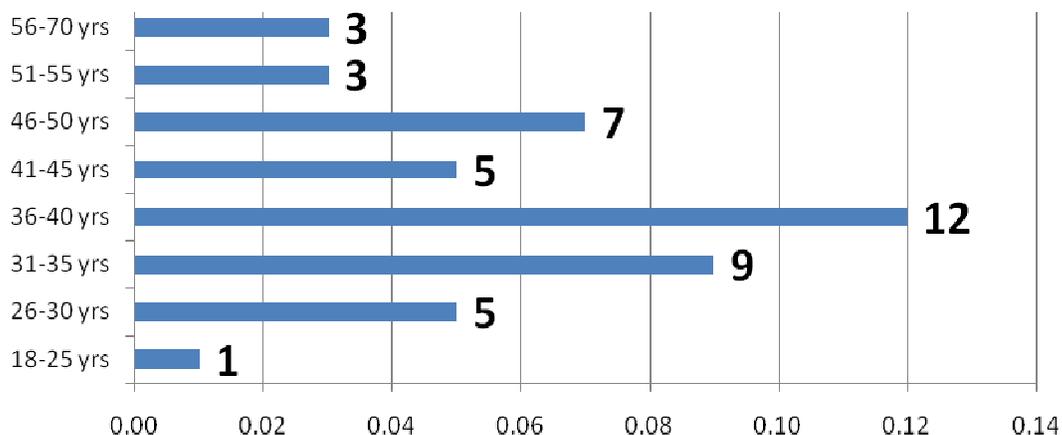
The collective data reveals that the majority of the participants (12 individuals out of 45 or 26.7%) identified themselves as being within the 36-40 year range. Twenty percent of the participants (n=9) identified as being within the 31-35 age range. Seven individuals (or 15.6%) indicated that they were 46-50 years of age, while the age ranges of 26-30 and 41-45 were respectively selected by five participants each (or 11.1% each).

Six individuals indicated "other" in response to this question. Unpacking this response revealed that these six individuals (or 13.3% of the participants) were above the age range of 50. Six percent (or 3 individuals) identified as being somewhere within the 51-55 age category while another six percent (or 3 individuals) stated they were between the ages of 56 and 70 years of age. No exact ages were provided by these respondents.

Expressed visually, the above discussion and percentages are reflected in the pie chart below:



The following chart sets out the age ranges that were clarified by the 45 participants who chose to answer this question:



Primary Languages

The majority of respondents (97.7% or 43 individuals) speak English. At least seven of the forty-four individuals who responded to this question indicated that they also speak another language in addition to the English language. Nine percent (or four individuals) declared they also speak French. And despite the larger number of Aboriginal people who participated in this survey, only one individual (2.3%) indicated that she or he spoke an Aboriginal language as their primary language in addition to English. The specific Aboriginal language or dialect was not identified. Two individual (4.5%) indicated that in addition to English they also speak another language: Spanish.

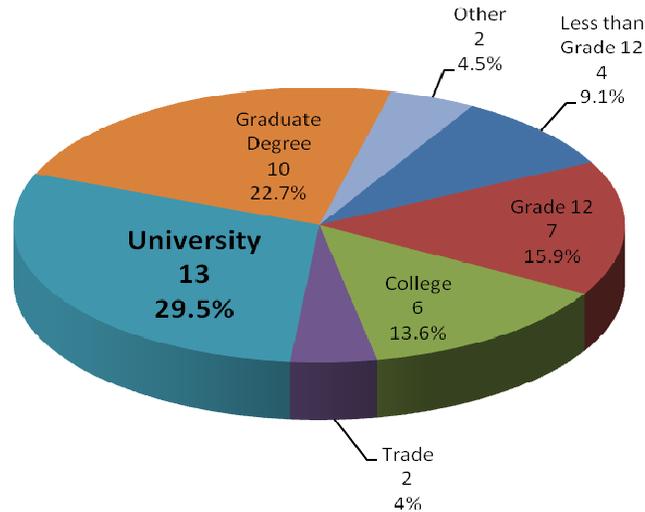
Education Levels

This question was answered by forty-four individuals. Twenty-nine of the seventy-three respondents skipped answering this question. The results indicate that the majority of the survey respondents are university educated. Of the forty-four individuals who answered this question, thirteen (or 29.5%) indicated that they completed a university education. However no distinction as to the types of university degree was established by the respondents. A further ten individuals (or 22.9%) indicated that they had a university graduate degree. Again, the type of graduate degree they completed was not declared.

Seven individuals identified as having a grade twelve education while four persons indicated that they had less than grade twelve but not lower than grade eight. Four (or 9.1%) respondents identified as having a college education. Some kind of trade education was also identified by 4.5% (n=2) individuals. Two survey respondents stated that they had *grade twelve plus two years* of university education.

None of the forty-four individuals who responded to the question were schooled outside of Canada. This further suggests that no immigrants participated in the online survey.

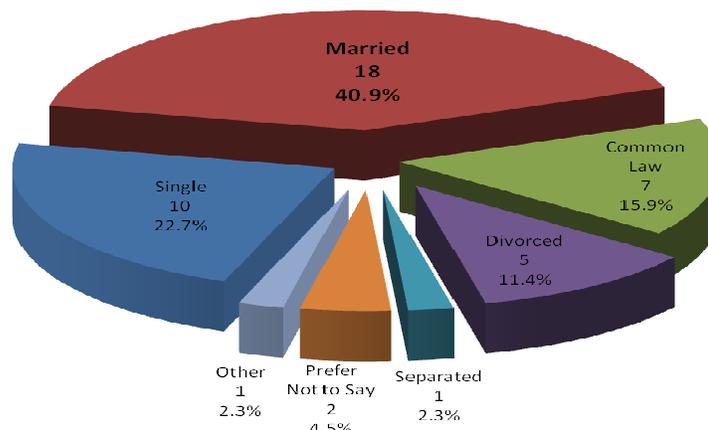
The visual responses to this question are reflected in the chart below:



Marital Status

Forty-four responses were recorded while twenty-nine individuals skipped answering this question.

The majority of the respondents who participated in this survey are married. Forty percent (40.9%) or 18 individuals indicated that they were married. Ten respondents (or 22.7%) identified as being single. A total of seven individuals (or 15.9 percent) identified as living in a common law relationship. Five individuals (11.4 percent) responded that they were divorced while one person (2.3 percent) identified as currently being separated. Two individuals preferred not to share their marital status and one individual identified "other" as being a "single parent." This individual was linked to residing in the Centennial neighborhood. These statistics are visually set out in the pie chart below:



Living/Housing Arrangements

Forty-four responses were recorded while twenty-nine individuals abstained from answering this question.

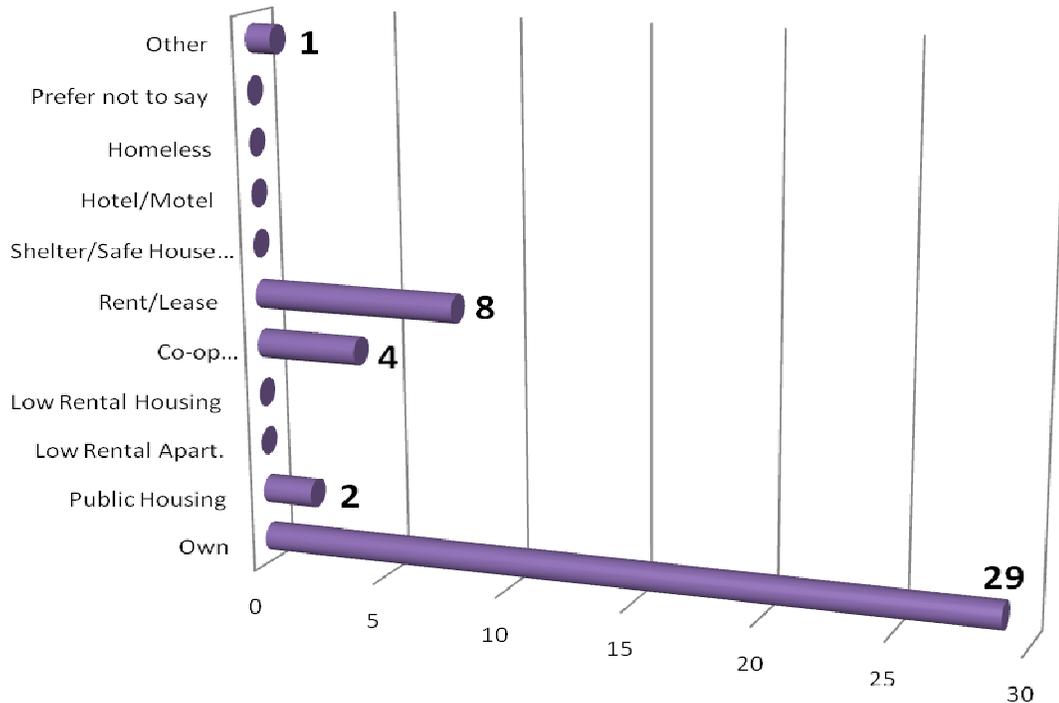
The majority of the survey respondents stated that they owned their homes. Twenty-nine or 65.9 percent stated they were home owners. Renting or leasing appears to be the other predominant living arrangement favored by residents living in the downtown communities of Winnipeg. Homeowners were found in the following downtown residential communities:

- Wolseley (n=11)
- Spence (n= 5)
- St. Matthews (n=1)
- Daniel McIntyre (n=6)
- West Broadway (n=3)
- Sargent Park (n=3)
- Minto (n=1)

Eight of the forty-four respondents or 18.2 percent were living in rental/leasing arrangements. Four identified Housing Co-ops as the type of living arrangements they were living in and these were predominantly identified as being in the neighborhoods of Minto and Spence. A small percentage indicated that they were residing in Public housing situations such as with Manitoba Housing – only 2 individuals or 4.5% percent identified with living in these types of accommodations. A cross tabulation of these results reveals these public housing arrangements were found in the communities of Spence and West Broadway.

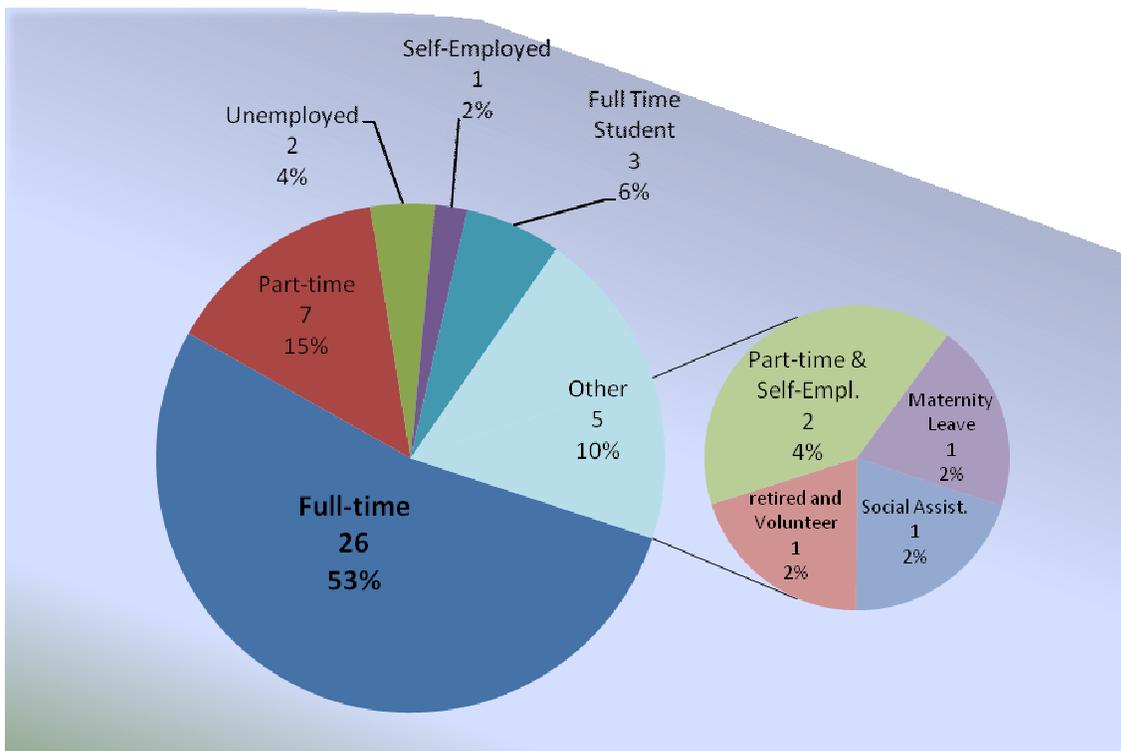
An even smaller percentage of individuals (n=1) or 2.3 percent indicated “other” as being an “infill” type of living arrangement. Infill housing is characterized as affordable, energy-efficient housing for families with low to moderate-incomes that were built in the Lord Selkirk and Spence neighbourhoods as part of the Winnipeg Housing and Homeless Initiative announced in 2001. A cross-tabulation of this particular response with the individual’s community identification reveals this particular person does indeed reside in the downtown Spence neighborhood. It is assumed that this infill housing is owned but is recognized separately as “other” in the chart below.

No responses were marked for individuals living in low rental apartments or housing; nor were there any responses recorded for shelter, transitional, or safe housing types of arrangement. In addition the respondents also did not identify as living in hotels, motels or as being homeless.



Employment Status

This question was answered by forty-four of the survey respondents while it went unanswered by 29 respondents. Twenty-six (or 53 percent) of the respondents participating in the survey are employed full time. 15.9 percent (or 7) were employed part-time. Three individuals (6 percent) were attending school full time. One individual indicated that he/she was self-employed. Two respondents specified that they were unemployed while five provided a response of “other.” In unpacking the other response, it was found that of the five (ten percent) participants responding “other”, two of the individuals (or four percent) worked in a part-time and self employment situations; another respondent indicated she was retired but volunteered. Another participant indicated that he or she was on social assistance and therefore not employed. One individual (two percent) denoted she was on maternity leave at the time of completing this survey. The chart below provides a visual of the employment status of the forty-four individuals who responded to this question:



Number of Children, Youth and Adults in the Home

This section focuses on four interrelated questions dealing with: (1) the number of children (under 18 years) residing with respondents; (2) ages and gender of respondent's children and youth; (3) whether adult children (over 18 years) continue to reside with their parents; and (4) total number of adults, children and adult children that live in the respondent's home.

In the first question (Question 9), respondents were asked to indicate whether they had children under the age of 18 living with them. Forty-four responded to the question while 29 left the question blank. The majority responding to this question indicated that yes they did have children living with them – 88.6% responded yes (that is 39 individuals). Five participants (11.4%) indicated that they did *not* have children under the age of 18 living with them.

The next question (Question 10) asked those that responded to having children under the age of 18 years what the age and gender of their children were at the time of responding to the survey. A lower response rate was recorded for this question. Only thirty-six survey participants (49%) answered this question while it was skipped by 37 respondents (51%). The majority of the respondents (39 percent) had children in the age range of 0-5 years of age. Eleven respondents indicated that they had children 6-12 years of age. Nine parents stated that their children were 13-18 years of age. Two individuals did not wish to share this information.

In terms of adult children over the age of 18 years of age, the majority (9 respondents or 80%) indicated that they did not have any adult children living with them. Nine of the respondents (or 20%) stated that yes they did have adult children residing with them.

Of the respondents who did indicate they had children over the age of 18 living with them, respondents identified that they ranged in ages from 18 to 26 years. The age and gender ranges of adult children were identified by the survey respondents as being:

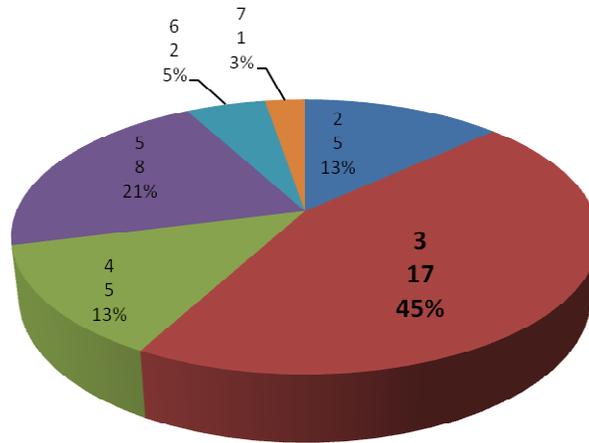
- Female, 18 years of age (n=2)
- Male, 18 years (n=2)
- Female, 19 years (n=2)
- Female, 20 years (n=1)
- Female, 21 years (n=1)
- Male, 24 years (n=1)
- Male, 26 years (n=1)

The responses indicate also that slightly more female children continued to live with their parents upon reaching the legal age of majority than males (six females versus four males). Whether this is true for all communities is a big question. Of all the questions, Question 12 was the most frequently ignored question. Only 14 of the 73 respondents answered this question.

The last question in this set of questions asked respondents to identify the total number adults and children that reside in their home with them. It was answered by 40 recipients while it was not answered by 33 participants. For forty-five percent of the participants (n=17), the most common response to this question was a total of 3 individuals lived in their home – the responses indicate that this number was comprised of at least 2 adults and one child. There are at least three responses that indicate that the average family size of three is also headed by a single parent responsible for raising 2 children.

Overall, it appears that the composition of family size within the downtown communities is relatively small. At least eight of the forty survey respondents (21 percent) indicated that they had a family size comprised of five members while two (or 5%) said they had a family size of six. Only one participant (3 %) indicated that her family size was comprised of seven members – we can determine from this response alone that this is a First Nations family residing in the West Broadway community in public housing.

The chart below identifies the size and the percentages associated with the family composition of the particular participants who responded to this question:



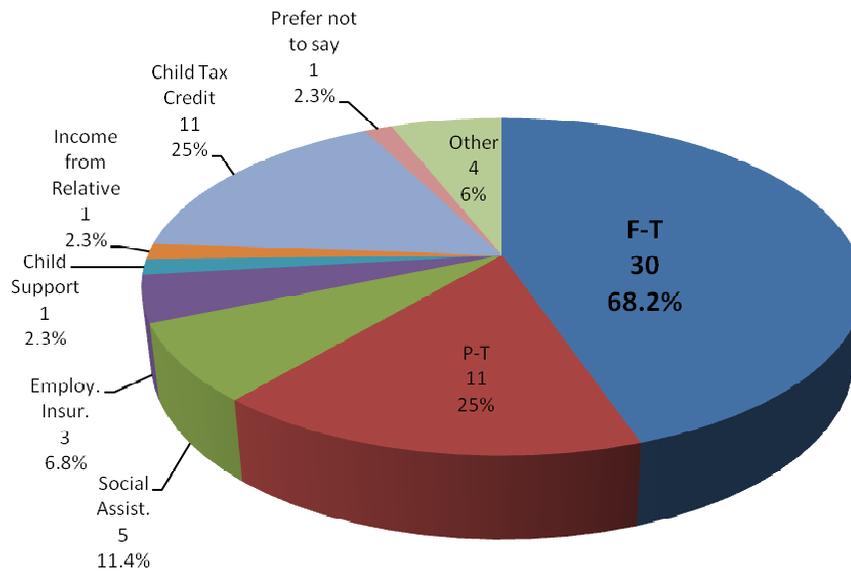
Number of children and adults living in home

Income

These questions highlight the sources of income and the level of income that respondents were willing to share about this aspect of their lives. Forty-four and Forty-five respectively answered these questions.

The families in the downtown communities are primarily employed on a full time basis with thirty of the respondents (or 68.2%) indicating in the survey that they worked full-time. Some full time employed respondents also included income received from the Child Tax Credit. Several of the respondents (n=11 each) indicated that they derived income from a part-time position and, like some of the full time respondents, also received income from the Child Tax Credit. One individual indicated that they received child support but also derived income from other sources (primarily from self-employed contract work). 6.8 percent of respondents identified income from employment insurance. A total of five respondents (or 11.4% of the respondents who answered this question) received social assistance as a source of their primary income. One individual (or 2.3% of response sample) stated that in addition to social assistance, they also received income from a relative as well as from the Child Tax Credit. One participant preferred not to share this information while four respondents identified other income sources. In these cases, the other sources of income identified included self-employed contract work, pension employment, RRSPs and pensions and lastly, employment insurance as a result of being on maternity leave.

The chart below captures the essence of these responses:

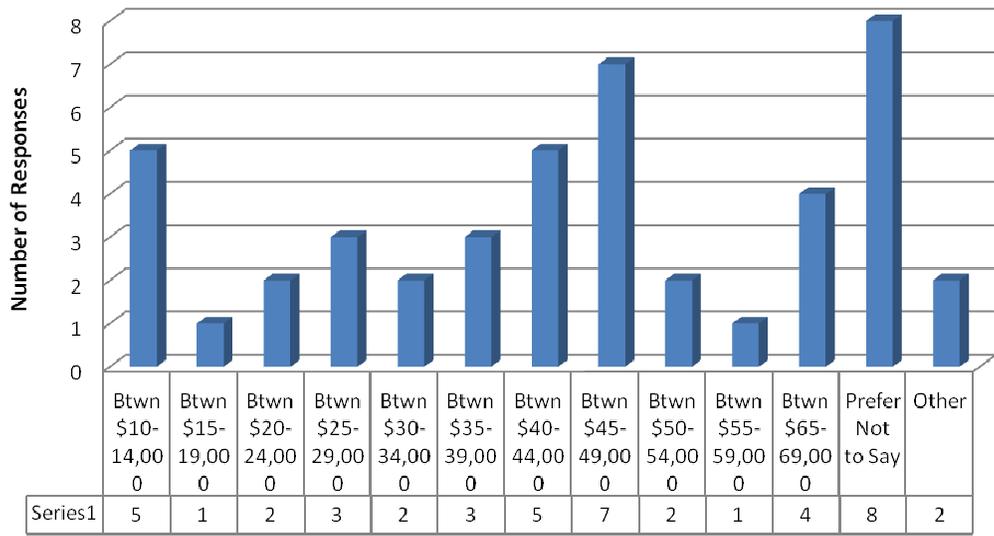


A note of caution is made here as the above chart may not realistically reflect the actual sources of income derived by the individual respondents who answered this question. In this case, many of the respondents indicated that they derived both a full time and part time income which may mean one of two things here: either they were working two jobs (full time and part time) or they were including all the sources of income that the family relied upon and not just that of the respondent.

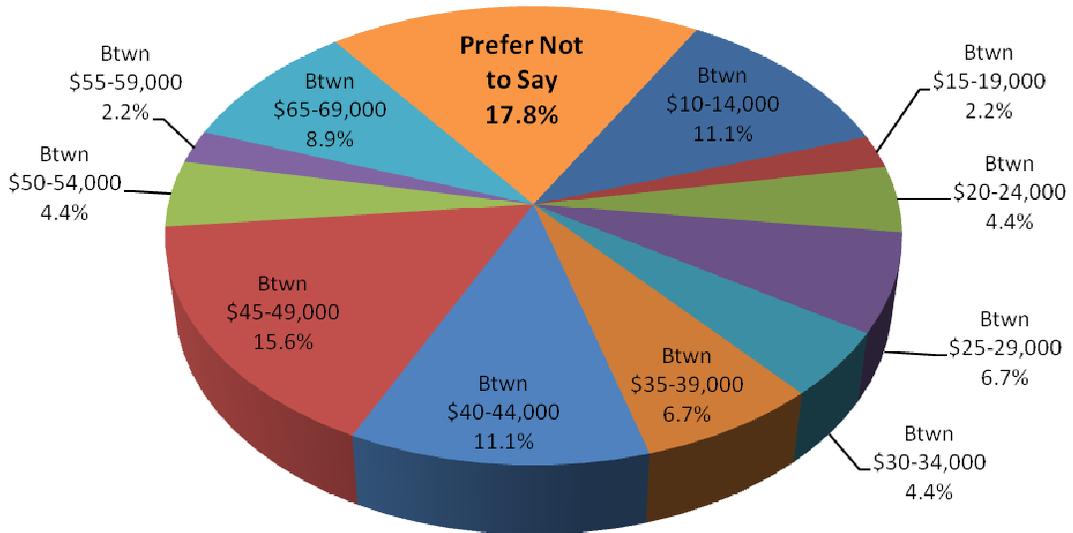
The income levels are harder to identify here as the majority of the respondents (17.8% or 8 of the 45 individuals who chose this response) preferred not to share information about their income levels. Respondents' reported levels of income are varied. The majority of the families (seven or 15.6 percent) reported income levels somewhere between \$45,000 and \$49,000 per annum.

Those that responded "other" reported a much higher income. One respondent said that the combined income of both adults in the home was \$80,000 before taxes. The other survey respondent reported income over \$100,000. Both respondents in this case reside in the Wolseley community.

Based on the responses received, the following charts sets out the linear and percentage range of income levels reported by the participants who responded to this question:



Income Levels



Conclusion

There was a broad cross-section of respondents to the online survey from parents residing in various downtown communities of Winnipeg. The response rate exceeded our expectations in terms of visitors to the online site. However there were not as many responses from newcomers. Limited use of the English language and the access to computers may account for lack of response from immigrant and newcomers and hence knowledge about the online survey.

Most online responses came from individuals who identified as being of Aboriginal descent. The majority of the online participants identified themselves as being within the 36-40 year range. English was the primary language identified by all participants although other languages spoken were also identified. A high percentage of respondents indicated having a university education including individuals with graduate degrees. Majority of online participants indicate they are married, own homes within the Wolseley community, and are employed full time with a range of income levels. The majority of online participants indicated having children under the age of 18 years although some online parents also indicated they had adult children that still lived at home. Slightly more adult female children continue to live at home in comparison to adult male children. The composition of family size within the downtown communities is relatively small. The largest family size reported by online participants was identified as being seven.

This section has attempted to provide an overview on the demographic characteristics of the online participants involved in this study. It is important to reiterate that these characteristics cannot be generalized as being representative of all the families and individuals residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg given the limited sample size and design. Rather, the information can be viewed as "being a snapshot about the demographics of the specific participants who chose to participate in the online survey related to this study." This information provides contextual information for understanding the demographics of these specific participants.

Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This section of the report focuses primarily on participants' responses to the questions posed through interviews, focus group sessions and the online survey. The responses provide insight into how parents define and understand how stress impacts upon their parenting. The italicized texts are quotes taken from comments made by various interview, focus groups and online participants (collectively referred to within this section as "participants", "parents" and/or "respondents"). These comments have been lightly edited for grammar, spelling, and/or for punctuation which does not change either the content or intent of the original comment.

The following section sets out the stressors identified by the parents who participated in this study, including discussions about how participants recognize when they are under stress. The symptoms, ways of coping, and the internal and external resources that parents draw upon to deal with stress were also briefly examined along with the participants' understanding of how stress impacts on their parenting and whether their children were aware of parent's stresses and how children coped. The positive and negative aspects of parental stress were examined as well. This section concludes with a list of helpful community resources that some participants have used in the past. A list of recommendations of resources that would be helpful or should be developed in helping families deal with community and family stresses is also provided.

Defining Stress

The participants involved in this study were able to provide concise definitions on how they define parental stress. Many of these definitions were specific to participant's personal situations and therefore are not generalizable to other families residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg. There is general consensus amongst the participants' responses that stress involves feeling tired, overwhelmed, frustrated and often includes difficulties managing various responsibilities and tasks related to family, relationships and work. Many participants stated that it was difficult to define and put into words exactly what stress means for them. The following bullets cover participants' responses as to how they define stress:

- *Difficulties in managing the various responsibilities of work, relationships, and parenting;*
- *Pressure, initially emotional, becoming physical with time;*
- *Problems in your life such as money, children, or health;*
- *Anything that makes a person distracted, feel their blood pressure rise, feel out of control of a situation or the need to be too in control, anything that makes a person feel they are not able to be honest and truthful or moralistic/have principles, anything that causes a change in a person that they did not expect or desire;*
- *Feeling overwhelmed/unable to cope with daily life problems that are difficult to solve;*
- *Inability to cope leading to physical (eg. headaches) and emotional (eg. irritability)distress;*
- *Being tired – overwhelmed – overreacting;*
- *I get physical reactions of anxiety. I feel edgy and uptight;*
- *Constant avoidance of situations long term anxiety when I have to deal with any sort of authority figure-rental agency, employer, and so on;*
- *Feelings of inability to complete all tasks required. Chest tightness;*
- *Alot of worry.....alot of decisions ...alone...;*
- *I find stress can be a hazard to your health if not properly dealt with.*
- *As worry;*
- *Worry caused by life situations;*
- *The result of pressures that are beyond the individual's capacity to cope with;*
- *Feeling overwhelmed, tired, angry, helpless;*
- *Headaches tired lack of energy to get anything done;*
- *Money, children, every day problems, health;*
- *Difficulty that causes tension and preoccupation - response to deal with daily life difficulties – tension or strain (emotional, physical, mental);*
- *Hard to handle;*
- *Anything that makes me feel overwhelmed and that I am not readily able to control;*
- *Constant worry or thought that you are attempting to solve with little resources or seeing little result to find a positive solution with your current coping styles;*
- *A feeling of being overwhelmed;*
- *Rushed, angry to the point of having chest pain. Worry about losing kids because we can't feed them;*
- *Difficult to put into my own words;*
- *Tired and restless sometimes anxiety and worried;*

- *Stress is both positive and negative. When things happen unexpectedly and you are unprepared it can make you feel sad and be overwhelming. It also lowers your self-esteem;*
- *I don't know how I would define it. There is stress everyday. I don't think a day goes by where I'm not stressed about little things like having enough to eat for the next week or if I'm taking care of my son properly;*
- *Tired, frustrated feeling;*
- *Mostly, probably feeling a lack of control. What I know to be true and right isn't. That I am not able to somehow create a safer environment for good change to occur. I feel like I am screaming from the mountain top "is anybody listening?"*

Stressors Identified by Study Participants

The participants identified a number of stressors that impact upon them. These stressors were categorized into two sets of factors that were either environmental or personal. The environmental factors are things that parents felt powerless to control. These included issues dealing with gangs and crime, addictions, and neighbourhood vandalism and crimes that ultimately impact on the safety concerns of the participants and their children. The personal factors were categorized by parents' ability to deal with their family schedules and personal time management. Other personal factors included parent's personal issues around finances, housing, the lack of child care, transportation, health, dealing with teachers, schools and child and family services. Other stressors were also identified, including stressors unique to new parents and immigrants (newcomers).

Environmental Factors

Four specific environmental factors were identified as being stressors by the parents who participated in the interviews, focus group sessions and the online survey. These environmental stressors were categorized as gangs and crime, addictions, and neighbourhood vandalism that result in safety concerns for parents and their children.

Gangs and Crime:

Participants consistently mentioned crime as being one of the biggest stressors facing families living in the downtown communities of Winnipeg. Gangs in particular were identified as being a major source of concern to parents. Participants feel that gangs are responsible for many of the criminal activities that occur within their communities. Gang members were described by one participant as "*hoodlums*" that run around in the evening. One participant even noted that certain streets are labeled "*gangster streets*" and are generally considered unsafe. It was noted by some participants that the parents who live on these 'gangster streets' are also in gangs and their children appear as

delinquent and intimidating to others who live outside of those streets. Some participants said they feared these gangs and the criminal activities within their communities. This fear along with threats from gangs has led some parents to relocate their families to other communities. Parents indicated that they worried about the influence gangs may have on their children and youth. Some parents note that the presence of gangs means that there is child neglect within the neighbourhood as many children appear to be “*playing by themselves into the late evening.*” For other participants, the presence of gangs within the realm of their communities is just the reality of living downtown and there is a general consensus that gangs are here to stay. For those few participants, gangs were comprised of their own children, adolescents and young adult children. In these instances, gangs were not considered out of ordinary in the context of their lives residing within the downtown areas of Winnipeg. These parents spoke of the worry and heartache of their children/adolescents’ involvement with gangs but feeling powerless to change their circumstances.

Drugs, Alcohol and Addictions:

The presence of addiction to drugs and alcohol within downtown communities was highlighted by many participants as being another problem associated with gangs and criminal activity. Gangs are seen as openly participating in activities such as property vandalism, drinking, and fighting. In addition, participants note that gang members appear to openly sell and smoke illicit drugs (i.e. pot, crack, meth, cocaine) with impunity. Participants spoke of witnessing drug use by neighbours. One participant stated that kids in the neighbourhood are “using, dealing and trading sex for drugs” while other children appear to be “running drugs for grocery and rent money.” Another participant said “*I see unfamiliar vehicles parked outside and I see drug deals happening. I worry they are going to break in.*” As a consequence of witnessing this, the participant feared the possibility of her own children taking drugs and worried for her children’s lives and their future. Another participant who openly shared having an addiction problem, stated that she found it was difficult to stay away from drugs when they seem to be everywhere within her community. There is a perception by participants that the addiction issues reflected in some downtown communities leads to property crimes and vandalism that has been experienced and reported by those residing in the downtown communities.

Neighborhood Vandalism and Property Crimes:

Participants report vandalism, crime and thefts in their neighbourhoods. Some participants noted that personal items have been taken from their yards. Others have noted that at times there have been broken bottles and garbage found in their yards with graffiti on buildings and other structures on their properties. Some participants complained about noise in the area and being unable to sleep at night. Other participants reported feeling scared when there are knocks on their door in the middle of the night. Vehicles have been vandalized and

mailboxes, as noted by one participant, “*are often broken into.*” Some participants reported feeling generally safe within their neighbourhood but they too have noted that small things have been stolen (for instance, bikes, cushions and other small items). Unsupervised children and adolescents was another concern raised by participants. The poverty reflected in the community was also identified as a stressor by some participants.

Personal Safety:

Parental stresses around gangs, crime, addictions, and neighbourhood and property vandalism ultimately impacts on concerns for the safety of the participants and their children. Because of the crime, gangs, drugs and vandalism in the community, many parents who participated in the interviews, focus group sessions and online survey reported being constantly worried about their own personal safety and that of their children. Parents note that it is often not safe to even let their children play unattended in their own backyards. Some parents specified that they personally don’t allow their children to walk to and from school by themselves. As a result many parents expressed frustration as this leads them to be over protective of their children. When children are confined to the home, isolation then becomes a stress factor not only for the children but for their parents as well. As one participant put it “*the crime element is isolating as it makes you afraid to go outside or let your kids play.*” Another parent said the “*fear of children’s safety playing outside makes us all stay indoors.*”

Other stressful areas that compromise the safety of participants and their children are the perceptions that there are a lack of safe streets and crosswalks in some of the downtown communities. Parents note the traffic in their community is dangerous. One parent noted “*there are no cameras at the lights on Sargent and Balmoral where I have to cross the street with my children to take them to school. The cars don’t slow down for us.*” Another participant spoke of people “*driving in the area while under the influence of drugs*” as a stressor she deals with everyday.

Other safety concerns that stress parents relate to property maintenance, especially noted one mother who lived in public housing that the “*outside lights are all burned out*” and that she was often fearful returning home from work especially at night because “*it’s dark and it’s risky.*” For others, it is stressful and their safety is compromised when they are approached by strangers who ask for money when they are walking within their neighbourhoods.

Personal Factors

Eight personal factors were extrapolated from the interview, focus group and online participants’ responses as contributing to stressful experiences. These personal factors deal with family scheduling and personal time management

including parent's personal issues around finances, housing, the lack of child care, transportation, health, dealing with teachers, schools, child and family services and other stressors.

Family Scheduling and Time Management:

Many parents spoke of having to juggle many things in relation to their work, household and child care responsibilities and that this juggling was quite stressful. For some participants, in addition to household and child care responsibilities, they were also attending school and had homework to contend with. In trying to fit school, work and a full schedule in at home and after work, many participants reported a lack of adequate sleep. Some participants spoke of the competing and conflicting demands of work and child care responsibilities as being extremely stressful. It was also noted by some participants that their children's after school activities sometimes conflicted and competed with the work schedules of parents. For other parents their children's after school activities coupled with their own extra-curricular activities was exhausting as they are often driving and attending each of the family members' activities. Juggling the demands of the family, child care and work is particularly difficult for those participants who identified as being single parents with few supports. However, even in two parent families, work related responsibilities and caring for children keeps them constantly in a state of stress as this one participant aptly articulated:

Balancing two very demanding professional jobs with the fervent desire to provide a warm and nurturing environment to our children - the fact that the above has negatively impacted our time for exercise, ability to save money, and has eradicated our time for a marital relationship - our jobs demand beyond "9-5." Almost every night, one of us goes back to work, comes home around midnight, and then gets up and does it all over again. We are forever behind in our work and stressed in all aspects of our lives.

Many participants report a sense of not having enough time for themselves or a perception that they did not have enough time to properly take care of themselves, let alone their children.

Financial Stressors:

Financial issues were raised by many interview, focus group and online participants as being a particularly stressful factor in their everyday lives. Being unemployed or not being able to work because "*immigration papers are needed*" were some of the reasons shared by participants as being stressful situations that impact on their financial situation. For others, become a parent for the first time means they are dealing with reduced incomes. Some participants noted that they are still attending school and/or working part time to make ends meet financially. Other participants shared that they have had to quit work to take care of their children which has caused tension and financial stress in their relationships with their partners. For others, especially those participants who

reported being on social assistance, there is never enough money to pay utilities or purchase healthy and nutritional food. One single mother noted that *“I don’t think a day goes by where I’m not stressed about little things like having enough to eat for the next week or if I’m taking care of my son properly.”* Another participant on social assistance noted that with the 25 cent increase in bus fare there was as *“yet no increase in welfare”* to accommodate her family’s transportation needs. A low income dictates that participants have few choices as one interview participant expressed *“I worry about money cause without money I can’t do anything, so I’m always stuck at home bored.”*

Housing Stressors:

Another key factor that induces stress in parents residing in the downtown residential communities is the lack of affordable, safe and adequate housing. As noted previously in the demographic section of this report, the majority of participants reported living in rental/leasing and public or low rental accommodations. One focus group participant noted her family was committed to the community and the area in which they currently reside, but the home they were renting was sold and consequently they had to find other accommodations. They want to stay in the area in which they currently reside but couldn’t find rental property that is affordable and adequate for their family needs. This was a comment echoed by many of the participants who reported having a low income or who indicated they were new to Canada. Being on social assistance dictated what families could afford and many times the condition of the choice of accommodations was just *“not decent”* or inadequate. Some participants reported that their accommodations were not properly maintained noting the *“landlord doesn’t keep the place up.”* In many instances, participants reported being afraid to complain about the conditions of their housing accommodations because they were *“scared to get kicked out.”* One participant noted that in addition to the inadequacy of her housing that she was *“robbed by her caretaker.”* Some participants also complained of not being able to afford to pay the utilities and believe that owners and/or landlords are charging *“high utilities”* on top of the rent.

Lack of Child Care, Respite and Supports Stressors:

Many participants drew special attention to the fact that there are few child care spaces available to accommodate their family’s needs. They report having difficulty juggling child care needs with their work related responsibilities and that this can be quite stressful. There are few child care choices and the waiting lists are long for quality child care is what was consistently expressed by the parents who participated in this study. For some participants, daycare is too expensive and that it is *“not worth it to work with the cost of lunches, gas, insurance and missing the kids.”* Other parents expressed frustration with the operating hours of daycare. For those that work on shift work, daycare hours often do not accommodate their situations. Many of the newcomers who participated in this

study also noted that they do not have access to affordable day care for their children so that they can attend English classes, shop, attend school or find a job.

Lack of access to respite was also mentioned as stressful for many parents who participated in this study. Participants indicate that there is a lack of information on where to get babysitters for respite. For those parents on social assistance, lack of access to affordable babysitters is complicated further by the fact they cannot afford to pay a babysitter so that they can enjoy respite from their child minding responsibilities at times when their stress is high. Another single mother expressed concern that with another child on the way and being “*pregnant and single*” stressed her significantly. In addition this particular mother noted that when her children (14 and 10 years of age) return home after school, they often fight because of the “*sibling thing*” making her situation all that more stressful and her need for respite.

Being a single mother and having young children under the age of two years was expressed by one mother as being extremely stressful. Many of the single parents noted that they do not have a partner to share childcare, workload or experiences with.

Some parents (primarily mothers) mentioned that they have no support systems as this one mother articulated:

And another thing is I really don't have any supports. I'm here alone in the city. My family all live up north. I don't want to go back up north because I have plans for myself for the future like going back to school. I'm just waiting until the baby comes. Then I have to look for day care but I'm pretty much on my own.

Without supports, access to respite or even money to pay for affordable sitters, single parents in this study noted that they feel isolated as parents.

Transportation Stressors:

Transportation was flagged as another stress by some participants. Stress around transportation issues was raised primarily by those on social assistance. With the amounts they are given, they cannot afford to pay for transportation. One participant noted that when she was pregnant she had to walk in the middle of winter to pick up a food voucher. Because she had no money for transportation it took her longer to walk to pick up the food voucher. Walking consequently caused her to miss out on receiving a food voucher. She noted that “*I called...for a food voucher and on the phone they told me to come down. When I got there they had none left...after I walked all the way just to be turned down. I don't like being let down.*” For other participants the hassle of transportation is difficult for parents with young children as it is difficult to board and get off the bus with a young child and stroller in tow. Those on social

assistance also were stressed by the fact that transportation fees had increased by 25 cents and yet this was not reflected in social assistance payments.

A few participants expressed dismay with the parking situation in some downtown communities. They indicate there literally is no where to park leaving their vehicles open to vandalism if they park farther away from home.

Teachers, Schools and Child and Family Service Stressors:

Some parents in this study raised concerns about the treatment by teachers and principals of their children's schools. These parents report that interaction with school teachers and/or principals was stressful and at times intimidating to them. One parent noted that the "*principal and teachers blame the parent if a child does something bad*" and that this reflects negatively and badly on them as parents. One single parent noted that her son had broken a car window and was acting out in school and that it had become stressful for her to deal with the school. Because of the stress and intimidation the mother was afraid to get help from the school in case they were to call child and family services on her for "*not being able to handle*" her son. Another mother noted that she stressed about her pre-teen's adolescent behaviour and was in constant fear of child and family service involvement. Many of the participants in this study indicated that they worry and stress about child and family services intervention and/or being accused of being neglectful as parents. A mother of a child with very bad eczema explained her stress with her son's school and the fear of being seen as neglectful of her son's educational needs:

The school calls me a lot and sending me letters about how important it is. I kind of got the hidden words of them implying that I'm being neglectful of him. And this is stressful. When I heard that they thought I was being neglectful as a parent, I really felt like...Oh is it right for me to keep him out of school because of this? And then he gets embarrassed when he goes to school and the kids tease him. It doesn't make me feel good to hear him feel that way and he cries. I worry about his feelings and his self-esteem. A concern that stresses me is how teachers are disrespectful to children. The teacher threatened my son that if he didn't come to school or do his homework he would fail and feel bad. The teacher could have spoken to me first as this was threatening to my son!

One father noted that child and family services was his biggest stress as his children had been apprehended by child and family services. He shared that his immigration status coupled with a prior drug charge from before his children were born prevented him from getting his children back and that the mother was uninterested in taking care of them because of her addiction issues. Many of the participants, notably those who identified as being Aboriginal and/or being on social assistance, indicated that the possibility of child welfare intervention was highly stressful as there are no warning signs or ability to control this experience which affects their parenting.

Health of Self and Family Members:

A few participants raised concerns around the health of themselves or family members and identified these health concerns as being somewhat stressful. One mother noted that when she is stressed she starts “*feeling really dizzy.*” She indicated she was aware that stress affects her diabetes and that when this happens she knows that she hasn’t been taking care of herself. Some participants have also indicated that they are concerned for their parent’s health as grandparents are often the primary caregivers of their children. These parents have the added burden of fearing for their parent’s health as well as fears of losing their own source of child care. One mother noted she was especially stressed and concerned about her son’s health who has bad eczema. She notes that:

He has really bad eczema and he itches a lot during the night and it's really bad right now in the winter. I'm up half the night stopping him from itching and he's up half the night.

Some participants mentioned in passing stress regarding healthcare and inadequate access to healthcare and healthy food.

Other Stressors

There were three other minor stressors identified by participants that revolved around the societal expectation of mothers, not being able to care for themselves, and inappropriate television programming. One mother expressed concern about the expectations that are imposed on mothers by society. She indicated that she felt pressured to be a working mother but expressed concern about her inability to have supper on the table each night. She indicated feeling resentment that she had to work when she would have rather stayed home and taken care of her own babies and create a home. It both saddened and stressed her that she was not living up to the societal expectations of mothers. Another mother reported that she was stressed to turn on the T.V. that that “*no matter what time of day there seems to be sex and violence on T.V. and I have to monitor what they are watching all the time. Even the cartoons are violent and offensive. I don't let them watch Family Guy – it's disgusting! Video games are also all violent.*” The last concern revolved around parents’ feeling that they did not have enough time to properly take care of themselves when stressed. Not being able to look after themselves leaves some parents feeling vulnerable to the stresses within their lives and lowers their sense of self and their self-esteem.

Stressors Identified by New Parents

Participants who had recently become new parents raised some concern around stressors they were dealing with that they had not previously had to deal with when they had no children. These new parents were primarily new mothers.

They spoke of having to deal with reduced incomes once they became parents for the first time. New parents also spoke of the quality of their relationships with their partners as being compromised with a new child. The mothers indicate that they are now spending less time with their partners. Many shared that they feel they have to sacrifice their relationships for the new family addition and that this is a source of stress for them. The loss of individuality, independence and self-identity was also reported as a stressor as well as learning that with a new child, to accept that the schedule is not their own. For some parents this unstructured environment is stressful and many feared losing control. Many new mothers spoke of having difficulty in trying to understand, find and access resources within their communities that would help them deal with being a new parent. Information about community resources, they note, is not readily available. Furthermore, new parent participants shared that they faced a great deal of stress in juggling child care responsibilities with other competing responsibilities such as work and for some still attending school (university), their homework. Quality child care was hard to come by and waiting lists were noted to be very long. For some parents, it delayed their ability to go back to work and other mothers need child care so they can return to work to make ends meet financially. A few new parents also indicated that life was stressful with the addition of a new child because they had no support systems. Other new parents reported that without supports they have no time for themselves and at times this is desperately needed, as time alone would help them rejuvenate so they can cope with new parental stressors.

Stressors Identified by New Comers

For newcomers, there are additional stressors that accompany individuals who come to Canada. Many newcomers shared that they deal with many stressors on a day to day basis. They are dealing with the stress of learning a new language so they can communicate about their own needs and the needs of their children. They indicate that they are stressed with the housing conditions as these homes are often times unsuitable and inadequate for their family needs. And because they are on social assistance, newcomers reported their finances are not enough and that many times they are unable to pay the utilities. Newcomers worry about their children being bullied, not just at school but when they are playing in the neighbourhood. They report being stressed about the crime in their communities and fear for their own and their children's personal safety. Language is a concern for many of the newcomers as they shared that they were not able to help their children with homework and nor are they able to communicate with the teachers about the progress of their children in school. Newcomers reported feeling a great deal of stress around language. Not speaking, reading and writing the English language prevents them from being able to apply for jobs, complete application forms, or apply for day care. Many indicate having experienced a great deal of culture shock upon moving to Manitoba. Newcomers also reported not being aware of community resources and are particularly stressed at being

unable to find the food they are familiar with. Some also shared that they were “unaware of the law that doesn’t allow sponsoring spouses or other family if you are on social assistance.” Newcomers indicated that had they known about this law they would have never come to this country. The biggest stress that newcomers face is isolation as low finances and the inability to speak, read and write English keeps them from participating in community events.

Recognizing Stress

We asked parents to comment on how they recognize when they are under stress. There is no uniform response from the participants on when they recognize and are aware they are under stress. The responses were varied. Many of the participants shared feeling “angry, depressed, tense, agitated, impatient and anxious” when stress sets in. Others noted feeling a loss of trust of everyone. For one participant, she recognized stress as leaving her feeling “restless, like I have to do something, keep myself busy, because I can’t relax, because my mind goes wild.” For another participant stress feels like she is going to “have panic attacks. I basically go into survival mode. I have heightened awareness and I try to figure things out in a positive way.” Similarly, another participant recognized stress as “things aren’t right. I become hyper vigilant and investigative.” Stress is also a physical experience as these participants noted:

I start feeling dizzy. But that’s because of my diabetes. So I know when I am not taking care of myself. Stress really affects my diabetes. I don’t sleep and I don’t eat. This is not good.

I’m not aware of my emotional state as much as my physical. Just the physical symptoms...I start feeling dizzy.

Reported Symptoms of Stress

Many of the participants clearly indicated that their sleep patterns were deeply affected by the stress in their lives. When they have difficulty sleeping because they cannot “shut off” their minds, they recognize this as being one of many symptoms related to stress. Other symptoms associated with stress as identified by participants were reported as including:

- *Speaking faster, palms sweat, almost purple in the face, tightness in the chest, felt out of control, feel off balance, feel depressed, feel guilty of my reaction, low self-esteem, get quiet and bury my feelings;*
- *Headaches;*
- *I feel broken hearted, emotional, confused, sad and somewhat angry;*
- *Tense, get very busy and then tired, anxiety, irritated;*
- *Tired and restless, sometimes anxiety and worried;*
- *Jittery, almost like I want to go “fast forward.” I want to make everything right sooner. I talk faster. I feel overwhelmed and closed in;*

- *Anger, irritability. I feel anxious, nervous and depressed. I get sick – strep throat, colds, low immunity I think when I feel stressed. My hair starts to thin.*
- *Sleep affected. I toss and turn. I see unfamiliar vehicles parked outside and I see drug deals happening. I worry that they are going to break in. Worried about my kids on drugs, worried for my daughter's life!*

Coping with Stress

Participants shared various coping mechanism used for reducing the stress they experience on a day to day basis. For some participants, removing themselves from the moment seems to work. This was characterized as “taking a time” out from the situation for themselves. Other reported coping with stress through “*crying, positive self-talk, going to the gym, ‘going out for a smoke,’ walking, exercising, cooking, taking deep breaths and using relaxation techniques.*” In one instance, a mother who was dealing with unhealthy stress shared that she chose to send her children away until she was able to stabilize herself:

I was on medication just antidepressants then I decided that I didn't like the effects. It knocked me right out. I really don't like being under the influence of the medication so they switched me to Valium but I quit cold turkey with the pregnancy. So now I still have that really bad anxiety. So to relieve myself, I sent my kids away for a short period of time just to be alone. I've never been involved with CFS or anything like that but I had some problems from the drug addictions. When I did the drugs it helped me forget all my problems. But it actually made it worse. It actually came to the point where I hit rock bottom. I lost a lot of weight and sold everything I owned. So I sent the kids cause they were suffering up to my Mom's up north until I can stabilize myself and now I'm just looking for them to come back and then they will actually be my support ... the kids. I worry about my kids coming back but I need them.

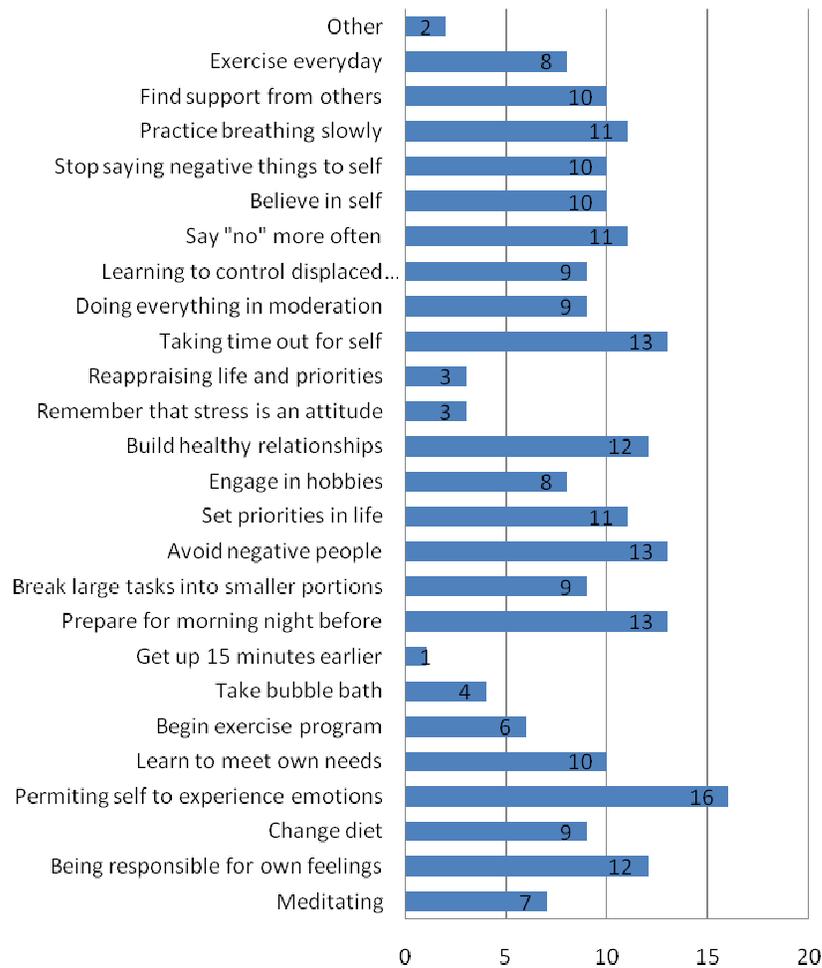
Other ways of coping with stress reported by the participants included “*taking a hot bath while her mother watched the children.*” Talking to others and seeking help from friends and family, about the stressors in their life, was also reported as successful methods for coping with stress. One Aboriginal participant drawing upon her cultural experiences noted that ceremonies help reduce her stress levels:

I go to Aboriginal ceremonies to deal with things that I can't prove. I guess with the Western world I feel that people need things to be seen to be there I guess. Going to ceremonies improves my stress level. It does a lot because it explains a lot of the things that can't be explained to me spiritually. I feel more at ease. It tells me a lot about why things happened for a certain reason and that even the negative stuff can have a positive outcome.

This same Aboriginal participant also stated that the best way she copes with stress in addition to attending Aboriginal ceremonies is by spending a lot of time with her boy where they “*watch movies together and cuddle.*”

Online participants in particular identified “*permitting self to experience emotions*” (for example, crying if they feel it helps) as a means for coping with stress. Other means of reducing stress identified by online participants’ in particular included “*taking time out for self*” “*avoiding negative people*” and “*preparing for the next day the night before.*” The chart below identifies some of the techniques online participants indicated that they relied upon to reduce stress (the chart is based on responses from 30 individuals):

Techniques used for reducing stress



Drawing Upon Internal and External Resources

Participants indicate that they draw upon internal as well as external resources in helping themselves cope through stressful situations and events. Parents' defined internal resources as those they are able to draw from within themselves. External resources were characterized as resources that are outside of themselves such as friends, families, and money among other tangible resources and community services.

Internal Resources:

Internal resources are those things within a person that can easily be drawn upon to help the individual confront day to day stressors. These internal resources are intangible and require the will of the individual to dig down deep inside of themselves for the strength to confront stress. The types of internal resources participants drew upon included *"writing out their thoughts, taking time to talk with friends, chatting with friends and family through email, learning to calm themselves and having faith that things would eventually change."* Others reported drawing upon self control over their own emotions and having the ability to shut off their anger. Other participants shared that past mistakes helped them learn how to look at, understand and deal with the stress from current mistakes. Participants also talked about quitting bad habits (like alcohol) to help them cope with stress. Some participants draw upon Christian and traditional values along with thinking, behaving and upholding positive morals. One participant said that *"my spirituality keeps me strong"* while an Aboriginal participant similarly noted that *"my spiritual and cultural practices...because we participate with the singing and the smudging...we go to ceremonies and it is important and comforting."* The ability to physically be active and participate in walking, yoga and dance were also some internal resources that participants said they drew upon in order to cope with stress. One participant noted that she did not really draw upon anything other than *"just take it on until there is breathing space."*

External Resources:

External resources are things and people that are outside of a person that can help an individual confront day to day stressors. These are essential resources that are outside the person and can include money, time, support from family and friends or other resources such as talking to counselors and attending community events and service organizations.

Many participants note that they rely upon their relationship with their partner and/or spouse as an external source of support for dealing with stress. One participant noted that she likes to talk to her husband who is a scientist *"who is logical, sequential, and analytical."* Other family members were noted as important external sources for helping parents deal and cope with stress. One mother noted that she talks with her mother to vent and although she may not

always like to hear what her mother has to say, talking with her mother helps her to sort out approaches and solutions to dealing and coping with her stress. Many participants reported attending various programs like anger management courses, learning relaxation techniques, and attending exercises (like yoga) that were offered through various community resources such as the Wolseley Family Resource Centre, the West Central Women's Centre, Clinic and Villa Rosa and post-natal residency for young mothers. Food banks were also seen as an external resource that helps reduce the stress of not having enough food to feed their children. One participant in particular noted that even when she attends at community resources within her community, she feels they "*don't seem very open and it shuts me down. I don't feel welcome. I use food banks but it is not enough.*" Many reported that having money to buy meals, go to movies or attend stress relieving exercises like yoga helped in relieving stresses. Many participants also indicated that they had few external resources to rely upon because their family members live elsewhere. Participants also stated that many of their external sources of support like friends and family members were not helpful or "healthy" enough to rely upon and because of this lack of support they feel isolated and left to deal with their stresses the best way they can by themselves.

Impact of Stress on Parenting

Participants were able to articulate greatly about how stress impacts on how they parent their children. Parents shared that stress causes them to be less patient with their children. Parents said that they tend to do things themselves instead of making children do what has been asked of them (for instance, household chores) and they report feeling resentment toward the children at times followed by feeling guilty for feeling this and unsure whether they are doing a good job of parenting and just being there for their children. Sometimes stress causes parents to have unrealistic expectations of their children and many admitted to being easily frustrated with their children. One parent noted that when they return home from work with stress from the day, it affects her "*ability to parent effectively and I become short tempered and disinterested in my role as a parent.*" "*I feel I am inadequate and feel bad at getting mad at my children*" noted one participant while another stated that:

Sometimes I find myself short with my son and then feeling very guilty about it – I'm learning to talk to him about what happened – I tend to blame others for my life – I'm working to take responsibility – it's a tough one – learning to let go of how I was raised as I find myself saying and doing what my mom did to me (shouting, throwing things).

Others parents have noted that when under stress they tend to isolate themselves and family members from the outside world – they don't go anywhere. One mother noted that when under stress she doesn't cook healthy

meals instead she noted that she relies upon cooking easy things like soup and pastas (i.e. Kraft dinner). Other parents state that when under stress they play less and they don't engage in activities with their children as they would when not under stress. Other parents noted becoming listless and tired where they have no energy to do anything with their children or just too tired to deal with normal child behaviour. An example of why this is so was explained by one parent in this way:

Stress leaves you without the patience to deal with issues effectively. I find that I tend to react instead of listening and choosing my words carefully. I find that I work full time and my job is very demanding which leaves me with no energy for my family. I am the sole contributor and need to be in a position to make enough money to support my family.

Others tend to get extremely busy when under stress and as one parent noted "my rush becomes theirs." One mother aptly summed up the impact of her stress on her parenting in this way:

Due to stress I yell, I get critical, I judge, I don't understand and accept as many things as I should, I am not willing to be as affectionate as my children need, I am not as supportive as my partner needs me to be, I don't get the things done that could alleviate my stress, I am not able to focus on reducing the stress because I'm all wrapped up in the stress, so the situation just builds and builds and builds - until I feel I'm going to burst. I am not a good parent when I am under stress. I manage it every day the best I can, so that it does not build up as much. But without appropriate affordable resources, stress is a basic fact of life, just the same as getting up and starting every day. It is always there and doesn't go away, no matter how much I breathe or meditate or believe in myself and hope for the best. I am always preparing for the worst secretly inside. Stress is a part of my life and doesn't seem to be leaving, no matter how much I improve my situation. So my children are growing up knowing what stress is because I explain my actions and apologize to them often - but they are also growing up to become anxious and stressed people themselves. It's a cycle and there doesn't seem to be an end to it because so many causes of stress are actually outside my realm of control - overdue utilities, landlords that don't care, neighbours that are insane, politicians that set terrible laws and regulations that affect my family, a lack of resources no matter how much I try to bring resources into the community;

The general observations from most parents are that there tends to be more arguing, less cooperation from children and less patience from parents when stress sets in.

Children's Awareness

Participants report that their children are aware when they are dealing with stress. Many times parents say they share with their children that they are experiencing stress and that if it appears they are angry, frustrated or impatient that it is not their children's fault, which it is because of other factors which have

nothing to do with the children. Other parents note that when stressed they feel short tempered and often out of frustrations they will snap at their children. In these instances parents note that children don't understand that the parent is under stress and children often believe that they are the cause of their parent's stress. New mothers on the other hand note that their babies are very perspective and can feel their mother's tenseness when they are stressed. Parents have also noted that their children can feel their mood changing and this causes their children to be uneasy and they experience stress themselves. Other parents note that they usually are "*pretty calm and easy going.*" Children become aware that parents are dealing with stress when there is a change in parents' moods. Another mother noted that "*my son knows that I am stressed – it usually comes out in his behaviour. If I want space, he clings to me more. Sometimes he is angry and it's hard for a three year old to be rushed around all the time.*" One very perceptive mother noted that her child doesn't like to be with her when she is stressed and exhibits a reaction that mirrors what the mother feels when under stress:

My child prefers to be with other people when I'm stressed. She doesn't want to play with me because I'm not fun. She doesn't want to eat because I'm not eating. She cries more. She wants to be held more. She feels bad because I feel bad.

Other parents said that they try hard not to let their children know they are under stress. They try to keep the stress they are experiencing to themselves as they note parent's stress doesn't benefit children in any way and in most cases it is unfair to children because they are not equipped to help parents deal with adult stressors. As one participant said "*kids learn by observation and this is why I strive to handle stress in the healthiest way possible! If they are snapped at...they aren't learning positive ways to deal with stress.*"

Children's Ways of Coping

The ways that children cope with their parents' stresses are both positive and negative. Parents note that older children act out at school and the younger children "*get crabby and are easily frustrated.*" Sometimes parents keep their children so busy that they are not aware of their parent's stress. Other parents indicate that their children are understanding and supportive when times are stressful for their parents. One parent noted that her children cope "*by hanging out with each other and they try to be really good.*" Some parents note that their children try to distract them from their stresses by asking their parents to do things or go places with them.

Some participants report that sometimes their children are afraid to discuss problems with their parents if they are under stress. One parent observed that her children "*feel worried/stressed themselves and don't want to "burden" their*

parents so they try to solve their own issues without getting help from the adults in their lives.” Another mother observed that stress has been a constant factor in her life and that her son “seems to be OK with no overly negative behaviours; however it may be that he is internalizing stress.”

One mother felt that poverty plays a big factor not only on her stress but on the way her children cope with the stress of being poor:

I know we have a been so poor that I would have to buy 1 chocolate bar or 1 can of pop and split it for all the kids. When poverty plays such a big part of your life, the stress causes the kids to get symptoms. Sore stomach was the worse. When they could not handle the stress in the home or school that would be the symptom. It would take a while for me to recognize. They also became so attached because of the unrest in the home. As I saw it the children were affected differently. The youngest child in the family has little worries or concerns whereas the oldest has anxiety problems.

Another participant noted that her children:

... are anxious, easily stressed and show signs of stress-induced behaviour. As they become older and more responsible, they understand the reasons of stress more, the things that cause it and they are taught the ways to handle it but there is an in-between period where they do not apply the stress handling techniques but definitely live in a stressful situation. I do not want them to think that life equals stress but they do.

One mother shared that she now talks calmly to her son when she is experiencing stress because

When he was younger, I used to yell lots. I wasn't a very good parent...in the beginning. If I started yelling he would cower and I noticed myself that it's causing a reaction and I'll stop myself and I'll apologize to him and he says he understands. He'll say "you really scared me when you were starting to yell."

Two other mothers similarly noted,

I try not to let it affect my abilities to parent my children. I teach my children how to vent their feelings appropriately because they strongly sense how I feel and I watch my behaviour and they learn from me and they see how I react to my feelings. I don't want for them to learn nothing can be out of control.

Dealing with stress in a healthy manner role models to my children how to handle stress. I know that they have a long way to go but I try to be a support as well as a role model.

Identification of Stressful Times

This section focuses on parents' perceptions about what they consider to be the most stressful times in relation to the time of day and year that they have experienced with respect to parenting.

Stressful Times in the Day

Participants shared experiencing many stressful moments with their children throughout various times of the day. By far the most reported stressful moment is in the morning when it is difficult to get children out of bed and out the door in time for school. One mother stated that *"mornings are bad because I often stay up too late and am so tired. I also have to feed all five of them and get the older ones off to school. Morning is when all five of them have needs all at the same time."* Other participants reiterate that mornings are definitely stressful in that they are trying to get everyone out the door on time but once they are out the door, everything is fine.

For some parents, after school was tagged as the most stressful point in their day because *"school is out, home has to be done, the babies are up from their nap, dinner needs to be made and housework still needs to be done and the babies need a bath."*

Other parents have flagged evenings or bedtime as being a very stressful event that happens at the close of their day. Children are often restless and resistant to sleep and the parent is so tired from the stress and activities of the day. Some parents wait for the evenings when children are in bed as this is the only opportunity when they have time to themselves, do housework or complete homework. Parents report waiting until the child is asleep before they are able to take on other household tasks and chores.

Stressful Time of Year

Again the responses provided by the study participants are as varied as the holidays within the year. The change in weather from fall to winter was flagged by the majority of parents as being the most stressful time of the year as noted in the comments by these participants:

Winter is the hardest when the children spend most of their day in the house, or trying to keep them busy and going and getting ready for school;

Winter – getting the kids ready to go out takes a lot more time and effort;

Winter – it's so cold to go outside and the apartment is so dry;

Winter – it's darker earlier...in the summer there is more to do, swimming pools, programs and camp.

November and December – the change of season, the cold weather. Needing to buy new clothes and winter wear.

Also winter is a stress all of its own because of how hard it is in Winnipeg to be poor and have to survive winter.

Winter with the extreme cold and kids have to stay in and they get sick of each other and start to fight a lot amongst themselves. It's isolating and there is not much to do.

Other participants indicate that the Christmas holiday season and birthdays were especially stressful times within the year as these events have a detrimental impact on the family's finances. For other participants back to school times within the year (at the end of summer, after Christmas and after spring break) were considered some of the most stressful family events in the year. For other parents, especially those who reported having a low income, that summer presented a challenge as there is no school and often times there are no structured activities for children. One parent noted that weekends were considered stressful as this is usually a time when there is not as much adult supervision especially for older teenagers. For another participant, busy work periods or when they or their spouse are required to work evenings and/or weekends were considered to be stressful events.

Other Stressful Times

Participants also identified unique situations as being stressful events that happen at various times within the year. For one parent tax time was considered stressful because she noted that *"I tend to do them every three years and then do them all at one time – tried so many times to do my taxes yearly but I can't seem to get it done – procrastination and avoidance of doing them."* A divorced parent indicated that it was stressful time when his children returned from their mother's home because the *"rules are different there and I feel like it takes a few days to deprogram them."* One participant said that becoming a new parent and drawing upon Employment Insurance was stressful because the income it provided was not enough to cover regular expenses plus the new expenses that arose from having her first child. Other parents stated just trying to get their children to participate and contribute to house work and not having to argue with them each and every time was a reoccurring stress they dealt with on a daily basis that seems to last all year. Another stressful moment is when parents have to leave the house to do important errands. Taking children with them to conduct these errands was identified as causing stress because their children can be irritable and uncooperative on these outings. Recreational summer trips were given as another example of a stressful event experienced by some parents.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Parental Stress

Parents note that there are both positive and negative aspects to parental stress.

Positive

Parents say that stress motivates them to make changes to improve their situation. Stress motivates parents to find someone to help them (i.e. like seeking out counselling) or it motivates them to look for resources within their community to help them alleviate the stress in their family life. Stress has been described as having a positive impact on parents in that it helps them grow and learn about themselves and helps parents to “*put things into perspective*”. It teaches and helps parents to look at their situations differently and find alternative and sometimes creative solutions for dealing with parental stressors. Positive aspects of parental stressors mean that other family members (children) recognize that parents have a lot of serious responsibilities to contend with and as a result children learn to begin to take responsibility for their own actions to help reduce parent’s stress. The positive side of stress is that children learn and internalize from their parents how to deal with stress in healthy ways.

Negative

The negative aspects of parental stress deal have been noted to conjure up feelings of depression, sadness, frustration, anxiety, and isolation and makes parents doubt their parental abilities and whether they are doing a good job. Sometimes parental stresses can cause misunderstandings and parents report that it is “*easy to get angry at the wrong person.*” Sometimes stress makes it easier to ignore the kids or get mad at them even though it is not their fault. The negative side of stress also means that parents sometimes say things that they normally wouldn’t say or mean. Other negative aspects of stress included their children being afraid of them. Some parents report that when they are stressed it is very difficult to discipline their children. One mother noted that,

Whenever my children feel they are not getting what they want or “need” it’s becoming more than just general teenage attitude, they have become more willing to be violent with other family members (such as grandparents) since moving downtown. They have heard how their friends can just walk in and take what they want without resistance so now they think they can behave that way at home, they have taken the arguments over simple things like regulating food for the week to the point of fist fightings.

Children learn quickly and participants agree that the presence of stress generally causes negative energy overall and distresses the entire family if it not effectively dealt with.

Role of Culture in Diffusing Stressors

Very few of the participants indicated that culture played a part in diffusing everyday stressors faced on a daily basis. Some of the participants clearly indicate that culture is not relevant or that it doesn't play any role in their lives. For the Aboriginal participants in this study many indicated that culture "*helps to reduce the stress*" but no elaboration on exactly how culture helps reduce stress was provided. Although one Aboriginal participant in particular noted that culture helps to reduce her stress as the seven teachings learned through Aboriginal ceremonies and teachings "*reassures her that she is on the right path and helps her to be a strong woman and mother.*"

Resources That Are or Would Be Helpful

This section focuses on resources interview, focus group and online participants identified as being helpful. Parents identified resources that need to be developed and/or implemented within their communities that would help children, families and communities in reducing everyday stressors. Rather than summarize the suggestions shared with us we have retained their comments and replicated them in bullet form.

A few participants noted that there are many community resources if you look although it was also noted by other participants that not everyone knows how to go about seeking out these resources. As one participant noted:

I believe that there are a lot of resources available. It may be just a matter of how those are advertised or them made known to people who are not connected to services. I tend to use the internet, talk to friends, phone some services and the public health nurse.

Helpful Resources

The following bullets are based on some of the participants' perspectives about community resources used in the past which they found helpful.

- *Baby Home visitor;*
- *Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata Centre counselors – they have info re accessing needs like diapers, etc.;*
- *Food banks;*
- *St. Matthews drop in centre has food, phone, games, coffee, sandwiches, computer access, private counselors and a minister that you can talk to;*
- *Klinik is helpful – I use the counseling, therapy, doctors and medication;*
- *Villa Rosa resources from breast feeding support to school classes and finding family doctor. They also have classes on parenting, budgeting and decision making;*

- *West Central project for Women; The Life Training Program; McDonald Youth Services, Community Newspapers; Healthy Start – Mom & Me; Downtown Day Care is good with lots of options; Family Community Centre (I can finally live my childhood); We go skating, strawberry picking and to the water slides and it's FREE!;*
- *Pregnancy Distress; West Central Women's Resource Centre and Maryland Church;*
- *Aboriginal ceremonies help with stress reduction;*
- *I really enjoyed attending a drop in program when my son was smaller;*
- *Library programs;*
- *I go to the Family Community Center and I get involved at the school and try to be a good person in the community;*
- *The Winnipeg Adult Education Centre was not supportive at all. Not enough information given. A complete dead end; and*
- *Wiggle, Giggle & Munch program was running for a while at Isaac Brock Community Centre but no longer.*

Resources That Would Be Helpful

The following bullets are based on recommendations made by interview, focus group and online participants about what resources would be helpful and should be developed and available in their communities. These recommendations have been divided into sub-categories that focus on parental needs, family needs, community needs. Many of these recommendations are interchangeable and could easily fit into any one of the other categories. They are in no particular preference and/or order.

Parental Needs:

- *Community billboard for temporary employment that pays weekly for small jobs;*
- *Skills bank;*
- *Need ways to cope with anger without fighting;*
- *Service to help get photo identification to open a bank account;*
- *There should be career / education resources and guides that are informative and realistic;*
- *A way of getting information to parents. A community bill board or email system that lets parents know what's available out in the community;*
- *Parenting sharing circles;*
- *More support groups for pregnant mothers;*
- *Need "mom's helper" (support line) on phone – 24/7;*
- *More programs for fathers and children;*
- *Working single parent social groups;*
- *Parent groups for parents with preschool kids;*
- *Groups for blended families;*
- *Dealing with shared custody issues;*
- *More programs for couples on parenting;*
- *Being around other parents and talking about personal experiences;*
- *Mom's groups other parents at play structure/school pick up; and*

- *I want the government to hold my job for me for 3 years and pay me a living wage (not \$100 per month) to stay home with my child.*

Family Needs:

- *There are no community programs for family activities just for kids;*
- *Need to show kids a positive lifestyle;*
- *We need more centers that introduce new elements and holiday celebrations. Celebrations help balance the work load stress of school and home life;*
- *More counselling services;*
- *Needs – it's difficult to find a place that offers free counseling (therapy) for a parent and child together;*
- *There's also no free sports activities for the kids even just getting a few kids together to teach them how to play basketball or something;*
- *Playgroups – right now it is difficult to fit schedules;*
- *Make programs available in the evenings because difficult to fit family's schedules;*
- *Need family activities in the evenings and on weekends;*
- *Needs supports open longer hours;*
- *More programs for parents and kids;*
- *Age appropriate activities for children across the different age ranges; and*
- *Women's and men's sharing circles – a ladies craft night on the weekend – more evening activities in the evenings for parents and children.*

Community Needs:

- *An accessible central resource list;*
- *Library has a lot of programs and information about free programming – information not available / known to community residents – there needs to be a better way to make this information known;*
- *Affordable respite centers;*
- *Babysitting co-ops;*
- *CFS Community advocates;*
- *A tool lending library;*
- *Activity centers with later hours for the older kids/teenagers;*
- *All night sports programs. Supervised night activities;*
- *More information about Healthy Child;*
- *Public Health Nurse;*
- *Cultural programs – different cultures – share;*
- *Kids going to outings (hockey games, etc.) – aren't getting the free tickets – community women don't know how to access;*
- *Need place for kids to run in winter (safe environment)*
- *More help with children with special needs (respite, groups with others in like situations);*
- *engage youth in healthy, non-violent activities - enforce by-laws regarding public drunkenness - more public education teaching acceptable parenting practices and personal responsibility - community policing;*

- *I wish they would make a building that is more child friendly--such as a high rise that has a community centre attached to it and a floor as common area for visiting--like on the fifth floor a space for people to have tea, coffee, resources, and outside bar-b-que area, and a room for children's parties, and if possible the roof top with a high fenced in area with a playground and trees). An ideal dream I think needs to happen--a community centre in a high rise or a high rise for families and working poor;*
- *Quality accessible daycare is very helpful but it can be VERY stressful trying to find a space in a quality daycare – we need community support and pressure so that all kinds of workplaces provide flexible scheduling for workers who are parents;*
- *I think kids need to be involved in sports, music or other initiatives that interest them. There needs to be more programming out there that is publicly known with little or no cost to children and families;*
- *Community patrols, more police presence;*
- *More policing and security in the community; and*
- *More or a constant police presence in the neighborhood. 24/7 patrol of a community – officer/team with increased property taxes. They would be part of the neighborhood and may deter the drive-in criminal element. They would be more of a health and wellness focus and not punitive;*

One particular participant suggested that by improving access to community resources it would be helpful in raising unstressed individuals:

Non-denominational programs that don't have to be aboriginal-oriented, though I know the importance of programming like that and don't expect it to be changed. When I was a teenage mother, there was no programming telling me how to be a good person, how to run a household, how to handle conflict, how to be a good role model or leader. There were basic programs that felt they did these things. I feel they were wrong and not oriented towards a general attendance. I would like to see a wading pool every few blocks but maybe that's the heat wave talking. I would like to see park programs, where every playground has summer activities for kids, possibly run by local teens. Every school should have a summer program, not as a daycare but running almost as often, with crafts, a healthy lunch and outdoor/gym activities. I would like to see more supervision in every community, more role modeling for young parents and families over all. I would like to see people go into communities to do things, rather than just leaving communities to make things happen. I would like to see more guidance, less governance. People need to stop taking for granted that we as parents know what's best for our kids. We know what's best for US to survive. We don't always know how to raise them to be good unstressed people. We don't have any examples. There are too many assumptions made.

Lastly, one important comment made by an interview participant revolved around the importance of getting people in the community more involved on a voluntary basis. This person indicated that,

There is a need for more volunteers to run programs as there aren't enough (volunteers) so programs shut down...actually, these positions should be paid so

that they attract people who then become vested in running the programs because they get paid to carry out these activities.

Needs identified by Newcomers

The immigrants that participated in this study noted specific needs that should be implemented in order for them to live stress free in their adopted country. These were highlighted as:

- *Tutors for us and our children to learn English;*
- *Orientation for immigrants with a sponsor person assigned to a family for 6 months to 1 year;*
- *Resources for people of the same culture and language;*
- *More free or affordable activities in the community;*
- *Drop in for kids or community centre sports;*
- *Our own resource centres;*
- *Parenting support groups and orientation to parenting “Canadian Style”;*
- *More cultural awareness and support in the schools;*
- *People of the same culture get together and read the Koran and pray – this is supportive; and*
- *“Teach us and give us time!”*

Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

Conclusion

This report provided an overview about the Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg Research Project. It represents the collective results of interviews, focus group discussions and online survey conducted from July 2007 through to February 2008.

Demographically the participants who participated in the interviews, focus groups sessions and online survey come from a broad cross-section of parents residing in the residential communities of downtown Winnipeg. The results show significant participation from the Aboriginal population residing in these communities. Overall the average age of interview and focus group participants were between the ages of 31-40. The fifty-four interview and focus group participants had between them approximately 125 children. The average age of the children were reportedly between the ages of 6-12. Participants indicated that they still had some children over the age of 18 residing at home.

Parents in the downtown communities clearly deal with stress on a day to day basis. They identified very specific definitions as to what stress means to them. Their stressors are personal and extend to environmental factors within their specific communities. New parents and newcomers to Canada also identified stressors that are unique to them. Sleep deprivation was often cited by parents as being one of the biggest symptoms of stress although many other symptoms associated with stress were also identified (being tired, sad, angry, anxiety, etc.). Various coping methods were shared and it was noted by parents that these coping methods could be both positive and negative and that participants drew upon both internal and external resources to help them deal with their stresses. Internal resources were characterized as being something within which participants drew upon for strength to get through stress (i.e. writing, talking, waiting out the stress, having faith that things will change). External resources included friends, spouses, attending community events and having money.

The participants in this study were able to articulate greatly about how stress impacts on their ability to parent. They note being irritable, less patient and having no energy or interest in parenting their children during these times. Parents are very aware that their stress impacts on how their children feel. Parent note their children may not be aware that their parents are dealing with stress. Parents noted that their children often believed they are the source of the stress. Parents identified getting ready in morning for school and work tends to

be the most stressful time of the day for the family. Other parents noted that “after school” was stressful while for some parents it was “evenings or bedtime” was more stress. Winter was identified as the most stressful time of the year.

Culture was not identified as having any significant role to play in helping to reduce stress although for some Aboriginal participants said attending cultural ceremonies helps to reduce stress.

Lastly, participants shared information about resources they have used in the community that have been helpful in the past. In addition, various ideas and/or recommendations were provided as to what might help or could be developed within the community to alleviate stress for families. Ideas were organized into recommendations that focus on parents, the family, and the community. Newcomers also provided insight into some of the things that should be implemented that would be helpful to them in dealing with stress.

These results provide some understanding of the types of stressors that families deal with on a day to day basis. The comments also speak to the resilience and strength of families in terms of how they and their children have coped and dealt with stress. Excellent ideas were shared about resources that help. It is clear from the responses that participants underline the need for more community resources within the downtown communities to help alleviate family and community stressors.

The author and the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition wish to express appreciation to everyone who took the time to participate in the interviews, focus groups sessions and online survey who shared their insights to stress, coping and the impact on parenting.

Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Interview, Focus Group and Online Survey Results

Appendices

- A. *Questionnaire for Personal Interviews*
- B. *Content of email invitation recruiting for interview participants*
- C. *Questionnaire for Roundtable/Focus Group Discussions*
- D. *Personal Information Form to be completed by personal interviews and roundtable participants only (demographic information of participants)*
- E. *Consent Form for participants involved in the personal interviews and roundtable discussions*
- F. *Poster advertising invitation to public for the general roundtable discussion*
- G. *Online Survey Questions*
- H. *Email Invitation to Participate in Online Survey*
- I. *Summary Results of Survey Respondents' Answers to Online Survey*
- J. *Background Information Sheet about the research project*
- K. *List of community organizations hosting roundtable discussions*
- L. *Feedback/evaluation form for roundtable/focus group participants*
- M. *Evaluation Results of Focus Group Sessions*

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Personal Interviews

Definition: Stress is any demand you feel unable to manage. Stress is your body's reaction to the demands of work, family and personal life. Life changes and traumatic events can also cause stress. For parents, it is important to learn about stress because parenting can be very stressful. When parents are under stress, it can affect the family. Stress is a natural part of life and learning to handle stress is vital to the health and happiness of your family. When faced with stressful situations, for example, your heart may beat faster, your mouth may get dry, your palms get clammy, your muscles tense and you perspire. However, specific reactions to stress will vary from person to person.

1. As a parent living in one of the downtown communities of Winnipeg, what kinds of stresses do you deal with on a day to day basis? (Please rate what you believe are the top 3 stresses)
2. Do you recognize when you are under stress (how do you know you are stressed)?
3. What symptoms do you experience when you are under stress?
4. How do you react (cope) when you feel stress?
5. What internal/personal resources do you use to help you confront stressors?
6. What external/outside resources do you use? (i.e., money, time, support from family/friends, or other resources)
7. Does stress impact your ability to parent? If so, could you explain how you think stress might affect your parenting?
8. Are there techniques that you have learned from your family or from others within your community whom have helped you cope with parental stress?
9. How do you make your children aware that you are experiencing stress?
10. How do you think your children cope when you are under stress?
11. What time of the day is most stressful for you and your children?
12. Is there a part of the year that is more stressful you and your children?
13. Based on your personal experiences as a parent, are there positive and negative aspects to parental stress? Please explain.
14. What role, if any, does culture play in alleviating or exasperating the stress you experience as a parent (for example, do your cultural perspectives and methods help reduce or does it increase your parental stresses)?
15. What community resources would be / are helpful to you and your family in dealing with stress?

APPENDIX B

Content of Email Invitation Recruiting for Interview Participants

Hello

If you are a parent residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg, or know any parents residing in these downtown communities, please forward this email and the attached recruitment poster – we are looking to recruit parents to participate in personal one-on-one interviews for a parental stressors study being conducted by the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition. More information about the study can be found at the Communities 4 Families website <http://www.communities4families.ca/rp.html>. Interested participants can contact me at the number and email provided below.

Many thanks!

Linda Lamirande
783-9190 Ext 230
Lindalamirande@yahoo.ca

(Recruitment poster on next page)

Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN A PARENTAL STRESSORS STUDY

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study examining the sources of stress experienced by parents residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg, the ways parents in these communities cope with the stress, and how parents think stress may impact on their parenting. More information about this study and which downtown communities are part of this study please visit <http://www.communities4families.ca/rp.html>

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in a one-on-one personal *interview*.

Your participation would involve *one interview* session, that may be anywhere from 1 to 1 ½ hours in length.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive *a gift certificate for Tim Hortons*.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Linda Lamirande

at

Linda Lamirande @ 783-9190, Ext. 230 or

Email: lindalamirande@yahoo.ca

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire for Focus Groups Discussions

Definition: Stress is any demand you feel unable to manage. Stress is your body's reaction to the demands of work, family and personal life. Life changes and traumatic events can also cause stress. For parents, it is important to learn about stress because parenting can be very stressful. When parents are under stress, it can affect the family. Stress is a natural part of life and learning to handle stress is vital to the health and happiness of your family. When faced with stressful situations, for example, your heart may beat faster, your mouth may get dry, your palms get clammy, your muscles tense and you perspire. However, specific reactions to stress will vary from person to person.

1. **As a parent living in one of the downtown communities of Winnipeg, what kinds of stresses do you deal with on a day to day basis? (Facilitator to list and then have group rate the top 3-5 stresses faced specifically by parents in the downtown communities)**
2. **Does stress impact your ability to parent? If so, could you explain how you think stress affects your parenting?**
3. **Based on your personal experiences as a parent, are there positive and negative aspects to parental stress? Please explain.**
4. **Does living in the downtown residential areas of Winnipeg impact on the stress you experience as a parent? If so, please explain why or why not.**
5. **What are the cultural ways and means that you draw upon to help you cope with stress?**
6. **What community resources would be / are helpful to you and your family in dealing with stress?**

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM
(To be completed by Personal Interviewees and Focus Group participants)

Project Title: *Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg*

Duration of Study: July 2007 – February 2008
Research Team: Marlyn Bennett,* Principle Researcher @ (204) 783-9190 Ext. 229
mbennett@fncfcs.com
Linda Lamirande (Assistant Researcher) @ (204) 979-0955
lindalamirande@yahoo.ca

Sponsor: *Communities 4 Families (Downtown Parent-Child Coalition)*
Ethics Approval #: _____, University of Manitoba

To be completed by Research Team:

Date: _____

Personal Identification No: C4F-2006/07-_____

Name of Researcher: _____

Types of Questions

Which inner city community do you live in?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Logan – C.P.R. | <input type="checkbox"/> South Portage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Alexander | <input type="checkbox"/> Polo Park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sargent Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Minto |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centennial | <input type="checkbox"/> St. Matthews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daniel McIntyre | <input type="checkbox"/> Colony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main Street North | <input type="checkbox"/> West Broadway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old Financial District | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spence | <input type="checkbox"/> Broadway – Assiniboine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> North Portage | <input type="checkbox"/> Wolseley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Forks | <input type="checkbox"/> West Wolseley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armstrong Point | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

What is your cultural background?

What age group do you belong to?

- 18-25
 26-30

- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60

What is your primary language? Which other languages can you speak or read?

- English
- French
- Aboriginal
- Other: _____

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- Grade 8 or less
- Less than grade 12
- Grade 12
- University
- College
- Vocational
- Other: _____
- Schooling outside of Canada (please specify): _____

What is your marital Status?

- Single
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Common Law
- Married

What type of dwelling (housing) do you live in?

- Public housing (Manitoba Housing)
- Low rental apartment
- Co-Op Housing
- Own
- Rent/Lease
- Shelter/Safe House/Transitional Housing
- Homeless
- Hotel/Motel
- Other: _____

What is your employment status?

- Full Time
- Part-time
- Casual
- Unemployed
- Self Employed
- Student at School
- Volunteer
- Other: _____

Do you have dependent children (under 18 years) currently live with you? Yes No

Do you currently have any adult children living with you? Yes No

If so, how many? _____

How many people live in your home including children and other adults? _____

What are your sources of income?

Check all that apply.

- No income
- Income from job
- Income from partner
- Income from relative
- Social assistance
- Employment insurance
- Child support
- Spousal support
- Child tax credits
- Prefer not to say
- Other (Please explain): _____

What is your income level last year?

Check all that apply.

- Less than \$5,000
- \$6,000 – 9,000
- 10,000 – 14,000
- 15,000 – 19,000
- 20,000 – 24,000
- 25,000 – 29,000
- 30,000 – 34,000
- 35,000 – 39,000
- 40,000 – 49,000
- 50,000 – 59,000
- 60,000 – 64,000
- 65,000 – 70,000
- 71,000 – 74,000
- 75,000 – 80,000
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

* This research initiative is being conducted on behalf of Communities 4 Families through a research partnership with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society through Marlyn Bennett, an adjunct professor affiliated with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba.

APPENDIX E



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Canada R3T 2N2

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (For interviews and roundtable participants)

Title of Study: Research Project on Parental Stress, Coping and the Impacts on Parenting in the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg

Principal Investigator: Marlyn Bennett, Adjunct Professor affiliated with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, (204) 783-9190, Ext. 229, mbennett@fncfcs.com

Co-Investigator: Linda Lamirande (Assistant Researcher), (204) 783-9190, Ext 229, lindalamirande@yahoo.ca

Sponsor: Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to review this consent form and discuss any questions you may have with the research staff. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends and/or family before you make your decision. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the research staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

Purpose of Study

This research study is being conducted to study and identify the sources of stress experienced by parents in the downtown communities of Winnipeg, the ways parents cope with stress and how these stressors impact on their parenting. This research is being conducted on behalf of the Communities 4 Families (Downtown Parent-Child Coalition). The information collected will help inform the work of Communities 4 Families and may result in policy, delivery and/or practice recommendations and/or approaches that will help improve support, provide options and an understanding of the contemporary stressors experienced by parents of these areas. Additional information can be found on the attached summary which provides background information about this research study.

A total of approximately 100 participants may participate in this study.

Participant Initials: _____

Study procedures

As a parent residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg you are invited to take part in a personal interview that may last anywhere from 1 – 2 hours or participate in a roundtable discussion. You will be asked about parental stress, ways of coping and identifying how your stress might impact on your parenting. In addition, we will ask you to complete a personal information form that addresses some demographic background about the parents who are participating in this study.

With your permission we will tape the interview and or roundtable discussions. The tape(s) will be transcribed (written onto paper) and shared with you for accuracy. Your name and any transcribed documents will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and there will be no way to identify who you are from reading these transcripts. We might quote what you have said, but there will be no way to know that it is you as we will use false names.

You can stop participating at any time and any notes and or recordings will be destroyed immediately. However, if you decide to stop participating in the study, we encourage you to talk to the research staff first.

The Research Staff will share the final report and an executive summary of the study's results at a community forum presentation in the fall of 2007.

Risks and Discomforts

There is one possible risk to you:

1. If you indicate that a child is at risk of abuse this must be reported to the appropriate Child and Family Services agency (All Nations Coordinated Response) in accordance with the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. We hope the information learned from this study will provide the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition know where we can concentrate service improvements for parents experiencing stress in the downtown residential communities in Winnipeg in the future.

Payment for participation

You will receive no payment or reimbursement for any expenses related to taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however your name and other identifying information will not be used or revealed. Despite efforts to keep your personal information confidential, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law.

Individuals participating in the roundtable discussions are reminded that everything they say in the roundtable discussion is to be held in confidence and not to be repeated outside the roundtable discussion.

Transcribed documents will be entered into a password file stored on a computer at the offices of the Research Team (located at 100-696 Portage Avenue).

Participant Initials: _____

All study related documents and transcriptions will bear only your assigned study number and/or initials.

All records will be kept in a locked secure area and only those persons identified will have access to these records. No information revealing any personal information such as your name, address or telephone number will leave the offices of the Research Team (located at 100-696 Portage Avenue).

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you.

Questions

You are free to ask any questions that you may have about your participation and your rights as a research participant. If any questions come up during or after the study, please contact the principal investigator: Marlyn Bennett at 783-9190, Ext 229.

If you have any concerns or complaints about this research study you may contact any of the Above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122, or email margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca.

If you have additional concerns about your rights or your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Genny Funk-Unrau at Communities 4 Families, 475-5755 or by email at dpccoalition@shaw.ca.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

Statement of Consent

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research study with Marlyn Bennett and or her Research Team. I have had my questions answered by them in language I understand. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I believe that I have not been unduly influenced by any Research Team member to participate in the research study by any statements or implied statements. Any relationship (such as employer, supervisor or family member) I may have with the research team has not affected my decision to participate. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time. I freely agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that information regarding my personal identity will be kept confidential.

By signing this consent form, I have not waived any of the legal rights that I have as a participant in this research study.

Participant printed name: _____

Participant signature: _____ Date _____
(day/month/year)

I, the undersigned, have fully explained the relevant details of this research study to the participant named above and believe that the participant has understood and has knowingly given their consent.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____
(day/month/year)

Relationship (if any) to research team members: _____

This project was approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba. If you have additional concerns about your rights or your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact Genny Funk-Unrau at Communities 4 Families, 475-5755 or by email at dpccoalition@shaw.ca. A copy of this consent form is provided to you to keep for your records and reference.

APPENDIX F

THE COMMUNITIES 4 DOWNTOWN PARENT-CHILD COALITION

Invites Parents from the Downtown Residential Communities of Winnipeg
to participate in a Roundtable Discussion

TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A PARENT DEALING AND COPING WITH STRESS, AND IDENTIFYING HOW STRESS IMPACTS ON YOUR PARENTING

Come and share your experiences and perspectives. Your information and knowledge will help inform the work of COMMUNITIES 4 FAMILIES DOWNTOWN PARENT-CHILD COALITION and will help improve and inform community supports in understanding the stressors experienced by parents residing in the downtown residential communities in Winnipeg.

WHEN: OCTOBER 2ND, 2007, 7:00-8:30 PM
WHERE: VALOUR COMMUNITY CENTRE, 715 TELFER ST. N.

**SNACKS AND BEVERAGES WILL BE SERVED. CHILD CARE WILL BE PROVIDED ON SITE.
BUS TICKETS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE.**

If you want to attend and require child care, please call the COMMUNITIES 4 FAMILIES DOWNTOWN PARENT-CHILD COALITION at 475-5755 or send an email to dpccoalition@shaw.ca



www.communities4families.ca



APPENDIX G

Online Survey Questions

Background information and why we are doing this survey

The Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition is conducting a survey to understand what stressors parents in the downtown residential communities are facing as parents, the ways that parents in these communities cope with stress, and how parents think stress may impact on their parenting.

It is hoped that responses will help Communities 4 Families better understand some of the issues facing parents in the downtown residential communities and in addition, help inform the development of community resources.

There are approximately 4 pages of questions for those who qualify (that is, individuals who live in one of the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg). Questions on each page range from 1 to 13 questions per page. These questions relate to:

1. Identification of the downtown community in which you reside;
2. General demographic and statistical information about you;
3. Specific questions respecting parental stress, coping and impact on parenting; and
4. How you would like the results of this study shared with you.

The survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Access to this survey will be available until October 30th, 2007.

By advancing to the first question of this survey, you are giving consent and agree to participate in this online survey. Your participation in this online survey is voluntary. You are not required to answer all of the questions if you do not want to. Should you decide not to complete the online survey, you can discontinue your participation, thus withdrawing consent.

You may exit this survey at any time by clicking on the words "exit this survey" found at the top right hand corner of each page.

Criteria for Participating

You must reside in one of the downtown residential communities to participate (see map below for a listing of the downtown communities).

The criteria for participation include:

- Parents with children;
- Parents over the age of 18 years;
- Parents willing to share information about the stresses they experience, how they cope with stress and willing to share how this impacts on their ability to parent their children.
- Parents residing in the following downtown residential communities of Winnipeg. The neighbourhood boundaries of the downtown communities are: the Assiniboine and Red Rivers to the south and east, the CP yards to the north, and St. James Street to the west.

PART 1: Community Identification

1. Which of the downtown residential communities do you live? (See map above)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Logan – C.P.R. | <input type="checkbox"/> Old Financial District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Alexander | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Portage | <input type="checkbox"/> Spence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polo Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Broadway – Assiniboine North Portage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sargent Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Wolseley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minto | <input type="checkbox"/> West Wolseley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centennial | <input type="checkbox"/> North Portage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St. Matthews Daniel McIntyre | <input type="checkbox"/> The Forks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colony | <input type="checkbox"/> Armstrong Point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main Street North | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't live in any of these communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Broadway | |

IF YOU INDICATED THAT YOU DO NOT RESIDE IN THE DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES OF WINNIPEG ...

We're sorry but only responses from those who currently reside in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg will be accepted at this time! Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in our survey!

If you have any questions about this online survey and/or the study, please contact Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition at 475-5755 or visit www.communities4families.ca.

Goodbye!

PART 2: General Demographic and Statistical Information about You

The questions in this section ask you to share a little bit about yourself. The information collected in this section is primarily for statistical and demographic background purposes regarding the individuals who agree to participate in this study. The information collected in this form will be based on collective rather than individual responses for the purposes of the final report.

Your answers are confidential and **WILL NOT BE SHARED** with anyone outside of the Research Team.

2. What is your cultural background?

3. What age group do you belong to?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

4. What is your primary language? Which other languages can you speak or read?

- English
- French
- Aboriginal
- Other (please specify)

5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> Schooling outside of Canada |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than grade 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

6. What is your marital Status?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Separated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

7. What type of dwelling (housing) do you live in?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Own | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter/safe house/transitional housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/motel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low rental apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low rental housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Co-op housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent/Lease | |

8. What is your employment status?

- Full time employment
- Part-time employment
- Unemployed
- Casual employment

- Self Employed
- Student at School (full time)
- Student at School (part time)
- Volunteer
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

9. Do you have dependent children under the age of 18?

- Yes No

10. How many children do you have in the following age ranges?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 13-18 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-12 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

11. Do you currently have any adult children (over 18 years of age) living with you?

- Yes No

12. If you answered yes to the previous question, how many children (over 18 years of age) currently live with you? Please indicate their age and gender. (Skip question if you answered no to previous question).

13. How many children and adults currently live in your home?

14. What are your sources of income?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No income | <input type="checkbox"/> Spousal support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income from full-time position | <input type="checkbox"/> Income from relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income from part-time position | <input type="checkbox"/> Child tax credits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please explain) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child support | |

15. What was your income level last year?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 35,000 – 39,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between \$6,000 – 9,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 40,000 – 49,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 10,000 – 14,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 50,000 – 59,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 15,000 – 19,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 60,000 – 64,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 20,000 – 24,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Between 65,000 – 70,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 25,000 – 29,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between 30,000 – 34,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

PART 3: Questions Regarding Stress, Coping and Impact on Parenting

16. How would you define stress? Responses on point form are acceptable.

17. As a parent living in one of the downtown communities of Winnipeg, what kinds of stresses do you deal with on a day to day basis? (Please rate what you believe are the top 3 stressors in the additional comments box below).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Stress caused by partner | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Children's after school activity schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Stress caused by children | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Transporting children to extra curricular activities outside of school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Stress caused by living situation/arrangement | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. property and/or vehicle vandalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Stress caused by housing conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Death of close family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Stress caused by inadequate financial resources | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Divorce or marital separation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Inability to influence decision making (powerlessness) | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Marital reconciliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Unrealistic high self-expectations (perfectionism) | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. Change in health of family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Peer pressures experienced by children | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. Recent birth of child |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Stressed caused by children/youth's involvement with gangs | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. Retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Change in responsibilities at work | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. Personal injury or illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Arguments | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. Daily hassles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Personal conflicts | <input type="checkbox"/> 30. Child with a behaviour problem (i.e. ADD, ADHD, FASD) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Clutter/disorganization | <input type="checkbox"/> 31. Child with disabilities and/or illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Son or daughter leaving home | <input type="checkbox"/> 32. Child with development disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Stress caused by having to deal with agencies to which you are dependent (i.e. social assistance, child welfare) | <input type="checkbox"/> 33. Worry about employment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Bullying or harassment | <input type="checkbox"/> 34. Domestic Abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Long term unemployment | <input type="checkbox"/> 35. Dysfunctional family relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Feeling trapped or unhealthy | <input type="checkbox"/> 36. Prefer not to say |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 36. Other (please explain further in box below) |

Additional Comments:

18. What symptoms do you experience when you are under stress? (Check all that apply).

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. Depressed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Can't sleep / Insomnia | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. Feeling totally overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Sore neck | <input type="checkbox"/> | 21. Indigestion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> | 22. Moody |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Impatient | <input type="checkbox"/> | 23. Inability to eat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Feeling powerless | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24. Overindulging (intake of food, alcohol, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25. Backaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Hostility / Irritability / Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> | 26. Weight Gain / Loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> | 27. High / Low blood pressure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> | 28. Ulcers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Fatigue / Tired | <input type="checkbox"/> | 29. Negative self-talk and attitudes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Apathy – don't really care about anything | <input type="checkbox"/> | 30. Confusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Difficulty concentrating or staying on task | <input type="checkbox"/> | 31. Restlessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Muscle tension or pain | <input type="checkbox"/> | 32. Chest pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Self-blame | <input type="checkbox"/> | 33. Excessive worrying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. Compulsive or obsessive behaviours | <input type="checkbox"/> | 34. Desire to cry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. Over-react to unexpected situations or events | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35. Nervous habits (i.e. nail biting, hair twisting, pacing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. Guilt / Shame | <input type="checkbox"/> | 36. Other (please explain further in box below) |

Additional Comments:

19. What time of the day or week is most stressful for you and your children? (Check all that apply).

- 1. Mornings - getting ready for work /school
- 2. After work / school
- 3. During Nap times (preschool children)
- 4. Meal times
- 5. Bed times
- 6. After school activities
- 7. Seasonal changes (i.e. winter)
- 8. When home alone all day with preschoolers
- Other (please explain further in box below)

Additional Comments:

20. Is there a part of the year that is more stressful for you and your children? (Check all that apply).

- 1. Christmas
- 2. New Years
- 3. Spring Break
- 4. Summer Time
- 5. Vacation Time
- 6. Seasonal Changes (i.e. winter)
- Other (please explain further in box below)

Additional Comments:

21. What personal and/or outside resources do you draw upon to help you deal with stress? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Money | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Seeking support from family / friends | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Attend programs and services offered in the community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Hire housekeeper/nanny/babysitter | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Personal inner strengths |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Religion | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Other (please explain further in box below) |

Additional Comments:

22. What techniques do you use to reduce your stress? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Meditating | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Building healthy relationships (having someone to talk to) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Being responsible for own feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Remember that stress is an attitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Change diet (i.e. eating less fat, more fresh fruits, vegetables and fiber) | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Reappraising your life and priorities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Permitting self to experience your emotions (i.e. crying if you feel like it) | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Taking time out for yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Learn to meet your own needs | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Doing everything in moderation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Beginning an exercise program | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Learning to control displaced aggressions (i.e. not yelling) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Take bubble bath | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Say "no" more often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Get up 15 minutes earlier | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Believe in yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Prepare for morning the night before | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Stop saying negative things to yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Break large tasks into smaller portions | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Practice breathing slowly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Avoid negative people | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Find support from others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Set priorities in your life | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. Exercise every day or every other day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Engaging in hobbies | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain further in box below) |

Additional Comments:

23. How did you learn to cope with stress? (Who taught you or whom did you learn from about how to deal with stress?) (Check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. From both parents | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Doctor (specializing in stress related illnesses and concerns) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. From mother | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Self-help book(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. From father | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Family friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. From siblings | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Watching television programs about parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Attending programs and accessing community services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Parenting Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please explain further in box below) |

Additional Comments:

24. How do you think your stress affects the way you parent? (Responses in point form are fine).

Please explain briefly in your own words:

25. How do you think your stress impacts your children? (Responses in point form are fine).

Please explain briefly in your own words:

26. How does living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg impact on the stress you experience as a parent? (Responses in point form are acceptable).

Please explain briefly in your own words:

27. What role, if any, does culture play in hindering or helping you overcome the stress you experience as a parent? (Responses in point form are acceptable).

Please explain briefly in your own words:

28. What community resources would be/are helpful to you and your family in helping you deal with stress? (Responses in point form are acceptable).

Please explain briefly in your own words:

PART 4: How can we share the results of this study with you?

Thank you for your responses! You are almost finished!

Please take the time to provide us with information about how you would like to be notified about the findings related to this survey.

29. Would you like to receive a copy of the Research Project's findings and results?

- Yes
 No

30. Are you interested in receiving a comprehensive full copy of the research results or a two page summary of the research results?

- Full comprehensive copy of the research results
 Two page summary of the research results

31. What is the best method for sharing this information with you?

- By Mail (Canada Post)
 By Email
 At community presentation (date, time and location to be determined)
 Not interested in receiving further information

32. If you indicated an interest in receiving a copy of the research results, please provide Communities 4 Families with your email and/or mailing address in the box below so that you can be notified when the report is finalized and/or the date, time and location of the community presentation when it is determined.

Your personal information is confidential and WILL NOT BE SHARED with anyone outside of the Research Team.

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO DO LIVE IN THE DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES OF WINNIPEG, FOR PARTICIPATING.

Your responses will:

- Help Communities 4 Families better understand the stressors experienced by parents living in the downtown residential communities in Winnipeg;
- Help Communities 4 Families understand and acknowledge the creative and resilient ways that parents cope with stress;
- Help Communities 4 Families understand how stress impacts on parenting; and

- Let Communities 4 Families know where it can concentrate service improvements for parents experiencing stress in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg.

If you have any questions about this online survey and/or the study, please contact please contact Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition at 475-5755 or visit www.communities4families.ca.

Many thanks for helping with this important study.

Goodbye!

APPENDIX H

Email Invitation to Participate in Online Survey

The Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition (C4F) is conducting a study looking at what stressors parents in the downtown communities are experiencing, the ways that parents in these communities cope with the stress, and how parents think stress may impact on their parenting.

A short anonymous online survey has been developed to address these issues. We would appreciate assistance from parents residing in the downtown communities of Winnipeg in completing the online survey over the next few days (the closing date to participate in the online survey is October 30th). The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. There is no anticipated risk to participating in this online survey. Your name and any other personal information will not be collected. Your responses will be kept confidential. No identifying links between responses and your IP address will be retained. While completing the survey online you are free to withdraw from the survey at any time without prejudice or consequence to you.

Those interested in participating in the anonymous online survey can click http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=HR3QWkbR9sLloKjPZCRfBw_3d_3d here to participate immediately or copy and paste the following address in your browser: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=HR3QWkbR9sLloKjPZCRfBw_3d_3d (By clicking on the link provided, individuals agree to participate in the online).

PLEASE NOTE: You must be a parent over 18 years old and residing in one of the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg to participate (see list and map of communities in the attached document).

If you would like more information about this study, please contact Linda Lamirande @ 783-9190, Ext. 230 or email her directly at lindalamirande@yahoo.ca

Please pass onto those who you think might be interested in completing this online survey. Many thanks!

Marlyn,

Marlyn Bennett, Director of Research
First Nations Research Site, CECW
First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada
100-696 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0M6
Phone (204) 783-9190 Ext 229
Fax (204) 783-7996
Cell (204) 803-0206
Email: mbennett@fncfcs.com or mbennett@southernauthority.org
Website: www.fncaringsociety.ca

APPENDIX I

Summary Results of Survey Respondents' Answers to Online Survey

| Response Number | Questions not answered | Community | Length of time to complete/view the survey | Time Survey completed |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1 of 73 | 10, 12, 16, 18-28, 32 | Spence | 8 minutes | 4:52 am |
| 2 of 73 | 10, 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 4 minutes | 5:28 am |
| 3 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 3 minutes | 5:31 am |
| 4 of 73 | 10, 12, 26 | St. Matthews | 17 minutes | 7:23 am |
| 5 of 73 | 10, 12, 17, 24-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 4 minutes | 7:52 am |
| 6 of 73 | 10, 27, 30-32 | Wolseley | 14 minutes | 5:59 pm |
| 7 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Spence | 16 minutes | 7:25 pm |
| 8 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 9 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 10 of 73 | 24-28 | Spence | 9 minutes | 2:00 pm |
| 11 of 73 | 12, 29-32 | Daniel McIntyre | 41 minutes | 9:57 am |
| 12 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Centennial | 1 minute | 9:36 am |
| 13 of 73 | Completed all questions | Daniel McIntyre | 15 minutes | 10:18 am |
| 14 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Logan – CPR | 2 minutes | 7:03 am |
| 15 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 16 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | The Forks | 3 minutes | 8:27 am |
| 17 of 73 | Completed all questions | West Broadway | 35 minutes | 10:26 am |
| 18 of 73 | 27, 28 | Sargent Park | 34 minutes | 10:49 am |
| 19 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 1 minute | 11:51 am |
| 20 of 73 | 12, 30, 32 | Daniel McIntyre | 24 minutes | 8:40 am |
| 21 of 73 | 12 | South Portage | 1 hour, 23 minutes | 7:08 am |
| 22 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 2 minutes | 7:33 am |
| 23 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Centennial | 2 minutes | 11:11 am |
| 24 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 25 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 1 minute | 11:02 am |
| 26 of 73 | 2, 11, 12, 16, 24-28, 30, 32 | Minto | 8 minutes | 11:38 am |
| 27 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 28 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Daniel McIntyre | 3 minutes | 2:12 pm |
| 29 of 73 | 27 | Spence | 9 minutes | 3:41 pm |
| 30 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | South Portage | 2 minutes | 5:01 am |
| 31 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 1 minute | 10:16 am |
| 32 of 73 | 12, 16 | Spence | 49 minutes | 7:25 am |
| 33 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Centennial | 10 minutes | 12:29 pm |
| 34 of 73 | 12, 27 | Spence | 15 minutes | 11:26 am |
| 35 of 73 | 12 | Spence | 39 minutes | 12:59 pm |
| 36 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 37 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 38 of 73 | 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 2 minutes | 12:03 pm |
| 39 of 73 | 12, 32 | Spence | 12 minutes | 12:16 pm |
| 40 of 73 | 12, 27 | Daniel McIntyre | 27 minutes | 8:22 am |
| 41 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 4 minutes | 7:31 pm |
| 42 of 73 | 12, 27, 30-32 | Wolseley | 29 minutes | 7:14 am |
| 43 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 44 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Minto | 3 minutes | 1:38 pm |
| 45 of 73 | 10, 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Daniel McIntyre | 3 minutes | 5:46 pm |
| 46 of 73 | 10, 12, 13, 16-28, 29-32 | Old Financial District | 2 minutes | 6:00 pm |
| 47 of 73 | 12, 30, 32 | West Broadway | 20 minutes | 6:24 am |
| 48 of 73 | 27, 28 | Sargent Park | 17 minutes | 7:37 am |
| 49 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Polo Park | 2 minutes | 8:48 am |
| 50 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 4 minutes | 6:24 am |
| 51 of 73 | 24-28 | Spence | 11 minutes | 7:58 am |

| | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|----------|
| 52 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 4 minutes | 7:50 am |
| 53 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 54 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 55 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 2 minutes | 8:20 am |
| 56 of 73 | 12, 30, 32 | Wolseley | 41 minutes | 10:29 am |
| 57 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 3 minutes | 4:57 pm |
| 58 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 9 minutes | 5:03 pm |
| 59 of 73 | 12, 16, 27 | Wolseley | 9 minutes | 5:17 pm |
| 60 of 73 | Not from these communities | | | |
| 61 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Broadway-Assiniboine | 3 minutes | 11:30 am |
| 62 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 5 minutes | 11:32 am |
| 63 of 73 | Completed all questions | Centennial | 17 minutes | 1:08 pm |
| 64 of 73 | 30, 32 | Spence | 15 minutes | 8:56 am |
| 65 of 73 | 19, 20, 29-32 | Wolseley | 15 minutes | 5:09 pm |
| 66 of 73 | 2-15, 16-28, 29-32 | Minto | 1 minute | 6:21 pm |
| 67 of 73 | 12 | West Alexander | 10 minutes | 6:50 am |
| 68 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Wolseley | 6 minutes | 6:09 am |
| 69 of 73 | 2, 4-15, 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 34 minutes | 6:50 am |
| 70 of 73 | Completed all questions | Daniel McIntyre | 37 minutes | 7:34 am |
| 71 of 73 | 16-28, 29-32 | West Broadway | 5 minutes | 9:36 am |
| 72 of 73 | 12, 16-28, 29-32 | Minto | 9 minutes | 9:44 am |
| 73 of 73 | 27 | Sargent Park | 20 minutes | 11:48 am |

Explanations:

- Red highlight text (12) = indicates that this particular question was not answered as the majority of respondents did not have children over the age of 18 living with them at the time of completing the survey.
- Grey highlighted text = indicates that 17 respondents only answered question 1 and skipped answering the rest of the online survey.
- Strikethrough text = indicates that respondent was not from the community and therefore was disqualified from completing the rest of the online survey.
- White text with black background = indicates that only four individuals completed all 32 questions.

Summary of Statistics (incorporated into the body of report text)

- 73 individuals started to respond or visited the survey online from August to October 2007.
- 30 individuals completed the survey (represents 41.1% return).
- 28 surveys were partially or not completed entirely.
- 11 of the 73 respondents (visitors) indicated that they were not from any of the downtown communities listed in the survey and as a result the survey was not completed.
- 17 respondents only answered the first question and left the rest of the survey unanswered.
- The survey was divided into four parts, there are 9 surveys where respondents only answered the questions in Part 1 but did not complete the rest of the survey (in other words, only questions 2-15 were completed).
- There are only 4 completed surveys where respondents answered all 32 questions (2 of the responses come from individuals residing in the Daniel McIntyre community).
- There are 5 surveys where respondents completed all but one question (31 completed)
- There are 6 surveys where all but two questions were completed (in other words 30 of the 32 questions were answered).
- There are 4 surveys where respondents answered all question except for three (29 of the 32 questions were answered).
- On average, completing the survey took respondents anywhere from 15 to 37 minutes to complete (in the instances where the survey was completed by the four respondents).
- The majority of respondents (n=43 or fifty-nine percent) completed or viewed the online survey in the morning.

COMMUNITIES 4 FAMILIES DOWNTOWN PARENT-CHILD COALITION
Background Information about the
“Stress, Coping and the Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential
Communities of Winnipeg” Research Project



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Introduction

Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition (or “*Communities 4 Families*”) is undertaking a Research Project examining the sources of stress experienced by parents residing within the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg, the way parents cope with stress how these stressors and ways of coping impact on their parenting so that community resources and program services can be developed to fit the needs of parents and families. Information (or data) will be gathered from three sources: (1) personal one-on-one interviews with parents; (2) through eight focus groups with parents in various communities; and through (3) an online survey targeting parents.

Background on the Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition

Communities 4 Families is a network of organizations and residents working together towards supporting families in the downtown residential communities. The coalition is a fluid group so people/groups come and go and so therefore the composition is fairly fluid. Presently, the organizations involved in our coalition include:

- Bookmates Family Literacy Resource Centre (<http://www.bookmatesfamilyliteracycentre.ca>)
- Greenway School (<http://www.wsd1.org/Schools/Greenway.htm>)
- Healthy Start for Mom and Me
- Valour Community Centre
- Kid Gloves Day Care Incorporated
- Klinik Community Health Centre (<http://www.klinik.mb.ca>)
- Literacy Works (<http://www.litworks.ca/index.shtml>)
- Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc>)
- Manitoba Education and Training, Advanced Education and Training, Adult Learning and Literacy (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/index.html>)
- Manitoba Family Services and Housing (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs>)
- Manitoba Government Employees' Union (<http://www.mgeu.mb.ca>)
- NEEDS Centre for War Affected Families (<http://www.needsinc.ca>)
- Pregnancy and Family Support Services Inc.
- St. Matthews Kids Korner, Inc.
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (<http://www.wrha.mb.ca>)
- Wolseley Family Place (<http://www.wolseleyfamilyplace.com>)
- YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg (<http://www.ymcaywca.mb.ca>)
- Helping Hands Resource Centre for Immigrants, Inc.
- City of Winnipeg (<http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom>)
- Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. (<http://www.kanikanichihk.ca>)

Vision

Communities 4 Families' vision is to promote programs and services to support four Healthy Child priorities in the downtown area, which includes and focuses on the following priorities:

- Parenting – supporting parents' ability to nurture the healthy development of their children.
- Healthy Lifestyle – promoting good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
- Literacy – improving family literacy.
- Capacity Building – leadership opportunities, community service, community economic development, and civic engagement.

Research Steering Committee

Sharon Taylor (Wolseley Family Place)
Frank Liebzeit (Community Member)
Carole Hudek (YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg)
Jo-anne Palanuk (Family Services & Housing – Child Day Care)
Genny Funk-Unrau (Communities 4 Families)

Research Area of Inquiry

This research seeks to fill a research gap in the research on understanding the stressors experienced by parents and families living in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg. The information collected will help inform the work of *Communities 4 Families* and may result in policy, delivery and/or practice recommendations and/or approaches that will help improve support, develop programs and provide options that focus on understanding the stressors experienced by parents and families residing in the downtown residential communities of Winnipeg.

Methodology

The research methodology proposed for this project utilizes a mixed methods approach which focuses on a variety of data relying both on qualitative and quantitative tools. Mixed methods research also is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices (i.e., it rejects rigidity). It is an expansive and creative form of research, not a limiting form of research. It is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, and it suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and the thinking about and conduct of research (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzi, 2004). What is most fundamental is the research question(s)—research methods should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers for understanding how parents cope with stress and how these stressors may impact on their parenting. Many research questions and combinations of questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research solutions (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzi, 2004).

Methods

The methodologies involve conducting a literature review on parents and stress, development of a online based type of questionnaire, including conducting one-on-one interviews with individuals parents who are either single, married and/or cohabitating, and facilitating a series of focus groups sessions with parents within the inner city of Winnipeg regarding stressful issues, coping mechanisms and the impacts on parenting children.

Ethics

This study complies with the *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society's* criteria regarding community research as well as the University of Manitoba's General Guidelines for Human Research (1994). The research will not commence until ethics approval has been granted by the University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (CRIHS). All research conducted by the *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society* on behalf of the *Communities 4 Families* conforms to the guidelines as described by the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (MRCC, NSERC, and

SSHRC, 2003). These principles are guidelines to ensure the respectful treatment and human dignity of all people involved as participants are maintained in this Research Project.

This project was approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba. Any questions, concerns or complaints about your right as a participant in this study can be directed toward any of the persons on the Research Team persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122, or email margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. Additional comments and concerns can be addressed directly with *Communities 4 Families* by contacting Ms. Genny Funk-Unrau at 772-7998 or by email at dpccoalition@shaw.ca.

All the information gathered for this Research Project will be kept on a password protected computer in a locked room at the offices of the principle researcher at 100-696 Portage Avenue. All raw data (tapes, transcripts) will be kept for five years after the end of the study and then destroyed. The Research Team and Research Steering Committee of *Communities 4 Families* will maintain the confidentiality of all Participants.

The findings from this Research Project will be shared with the community, interested community organizations, and with all interested individuals who participated in either a: (1) personal one-on-one interview; (2) in one of the eight focus groups sessions; or through (3) the online survey developed for this Research Project. All participants will be entitled to receive information about the Research Project's findings and results upon the conclusion of the Research Project. Participants will be asked if they wish to receive a copy of the Research Project's Final Report and the best way to share this information with them (i.e. by mail, email, or at a community presentation). Once completed, the findings and results of this Research Project will also be freely available on the *Communities 4 Families*' website located at <http://communities4families.ca>.

Background on First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

This research initiative is being conducted on behalf of *Communities 4 Families* through a research partnership with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society through Marlyn Bennett, an adjunct professor affiliated with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba.

The *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada* (www.fncaringsociety.ca) is a national non-profit charitable organization that provides culturally relevant knowledge, skills and resources to over 120+ First Nations Child Welfare agencies across Canada through networking, policy, research and professional development activities. Our mission is about "building helping communities." The Caring Society is involved in this research project through the Director of Research who has been contracted by *Communities 4 Families* to carry out and oversee the research activities outlined in this background paper and provide supervision to the assistant researcher who will assist in the collecting data for this study.

Biography of Research Team

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR:

Marlyn Bennett (783-9190 Ext 229)

Ms. Bennett is the Director of Research for the *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada* and oversees a variety of research based projects through its Winnipeg-based office. Marlyn is a First Nation woman from Sandy Bay First Nation in Manitoba. Marlyn currently holds an interdisciplinary Masters and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba and has completed 2 years of law school at the universities of Ottawa and Manitoba respectively. She is an active board member of Child Find Manitoba, Beyond Borders and Animikii Ozoson Child & Family Services. Marlyn's primary research interests include the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children, the evolution of Aboriginal child welfare in relation to self-government as well as an interest in ethics, research capacity building and the development of holistic evaluation frameworks in Indigenous child welfare research. Marlyn has authored and co-authored various articles on Aboriginal Child Welfare in Canada. She edited the inaugural issue of the online journal *First Peoples Child & Family Review* and is on the editorial boards of *Envision* (an online journal dedicated to child welfare research in Manitoba) and *Native History of Manitoba* (which publishes manuscripts on Native history in Manitoba in conjunction with the University of Manitoba Press). As an independent researcher Marlyn has

been instrumental in conducting research on Aboriginal women's health and healing and has been involved in a number of program evaluations for Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, universities and colleges, provincial and federal governments. As a child, Marlyn grew up in foster and group home care during the time she was 12-18 years of age. Marlyn currently resides with her partner and 13 year old daughter in Winnipeg.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT:

Linda Lamirande (783-9190 Ext. 230)

Linda Lamirande is an independent research technician currently involved in several research based projects in Winnipeg and across the Prairie Provinces. Linda is a First Nations woman from Peguis First Nation in Manitoba. Linda is an inaugural graduate of the Red River Community Colleges Clinical Research Certificate Program. Linda recently developed a course outline/objectives Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in Clinical Research for a new Laboratory Technician/Research Assistant course for the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD). Linda worked for several years in the Health Sciences Centre Women's Hospital and the Clinical Investigations Unit of Children's Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba where she developed a strong interest in Aboriginal women and child health care issues. Linda hopes that her efforts in research will help to develop better policies and programs to improve Aboriginal women and children's health. Linda currently resides in Winnipeg with her husband and youngest of three sons.

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APPENDIX K

List of Community Organizations Hosting Focus Group Discussions

LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUPS:

1. **General Public Focus Group**
Isaac Brock Community Centre site
715 Telfer St. N

2. **Somali Women’s Group**
Knox United Church
400 Edmonton Street

3. **Pinkham School Parent Room**
765 Pacific Avenue

4. **Greenway School Parent Room**
390 Burnell Street

5. **Breastfeeding Buddies**
Klinic Community Health Centre
870 Portage Ave.

6. **Peace Begins at Home**
West Central Women’s Resource Centre
583 Ellice, Lower Level

7. **Isaac Brock School Parent Room**
1265 Barratt Avenue

8. **Family Community Centre**
Pregnancy and Family Support Services
100 – 475 Sargent Avenue

APPENDIX L



Communities 4 Families Downtown Parent-Child Coalition
 Stress, Coping and Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Residential
 Communities of Winnipeg Research Project
Feedback/Evaluation Form (revised)

Please assist the Research Team. You can do this by completing this short survey before you leave. The Research Team will use this feedback to inform the Research Steering Committee of *Communities 4 Families* on the practicality and delivery of these focus groups. We strongly urge you to rank your views and write your comments as soon as possible while the materials and presentations are still fresh in your mind. We are also interested in knowing if this session has been of value to you personally and why.

| For each point please circle the number corresponding to your level of satisfaction | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|---|------|---|
| (1 = unsatisfied; 2 = somewhat unsatisfied; 3 = neutral/satisfied; 4 = somewhat satisfied; and 5 = the highest level of satisfaction): | | (--) | | | (++) | |
| 1 | Facilitation of the focus groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Location of the focus groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Level of satisfaction with the meeting room(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Refreshments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Satisfaction with the types of questions discussed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Satisfaction with rhythm of the focus group (i.e. time allowed for questions, the agenda, evaluation, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | Your OVERALL EVALUATION of your experience participating in this focus group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

What kind of community resources/programs would you like to see in place for parents/families dealing with stress in the downtown communities of Winnipeg?

Any other comments or feedback are welcome (please use the back of this paper if you need more space to write):

Thank you once again for your attendance and participation!

APPENDIX M

Stress, Coping and Impact on Parenting in the Downtown Communities of Winnipeg Research Project

Evaluation Results of Focus Group Sessions

Focus Group Participants were provided with a simple one page evaluation form that was designed to help the organizers assess participant satisfaction with the types of questions asked and the rhythm of the focus group sessions including facilitation, location and refreshments. A total of 38 completed evaluations were received from participants who attended one of the seven focus group sessions. The first part of the evaluation form asked participants to rank their satisfaction with 5 aspects of the focus group. The responses to these questions were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being unsatisfied (--) and 5 being Excellent or the Highest level of satisfaction (++). The evaluation questionnaire is set out as follows:

| For each point please circle the number corresponding to your level of satisfaction (1 = unsatisfied; 2 = somewhat unsatisfied; 3 = neutral/satisfied; 4 = somewhat satisfied; and 5 = the highest level of satisfaction): | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|---|------|---|
| | | (--) | | | (++) | |
| 1 | Facilitation of the focus groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Location of the focus groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Refreshments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Satisfaction with the types of questions discussed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Satisfaction with rhythm of the focus group (i.e. time allowed for questions, the agenda, evaluation, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | Your OVERALL EVALUATION of your experience participating in this focus group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

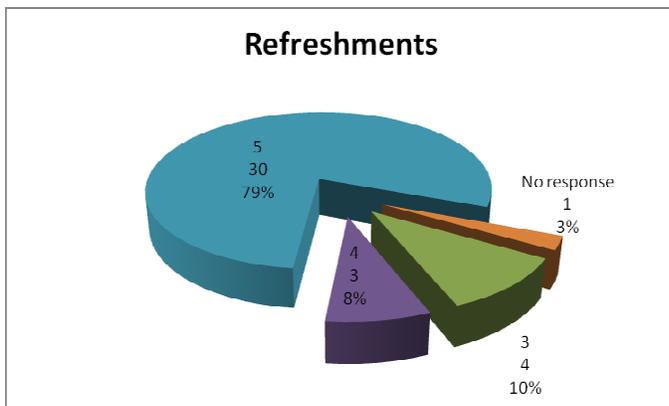
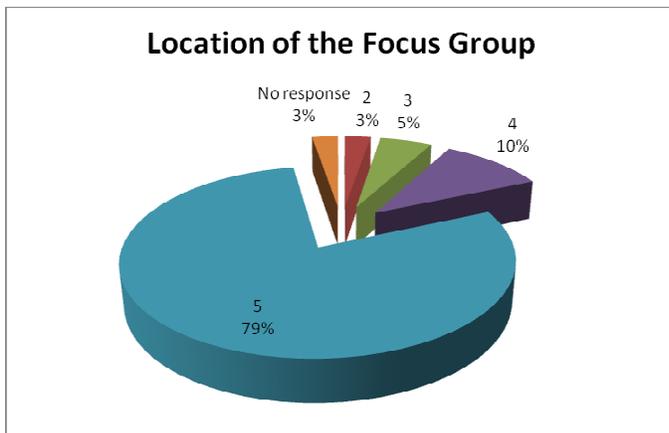
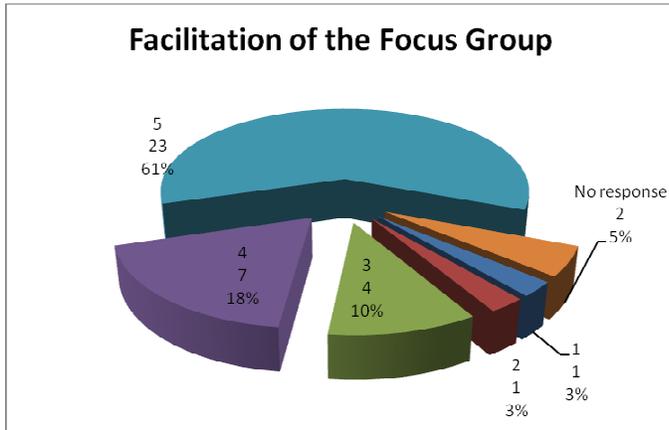
Feedback Evaluation Results

Total feedback/evaluation forms returned (number = 38)

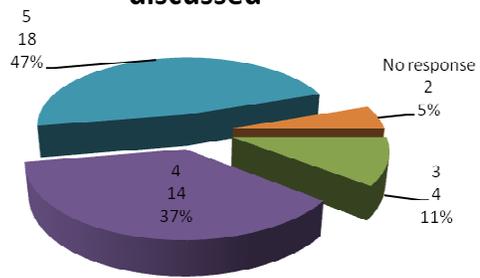
The Focus Group Participants rated all aspects of the focus group sessions very favourably as is reflected in the response rate and percentages in the chart below.

| Respondents' Ratings <small>(1 = unsatisfied; 2 = somewhat unsatisfied; 3 = neutral/satisfied; 4 = somewhat satisfied; and 5 = the highest level of satisfaction):</small> | (--) | | | | (++) | | No Response | Total |
|--|---------|---------|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---------|-------------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | | |
| Facilitation of focus groups | 1 3% | 1 3% | 4 10% | 7 18% | 23 61% | 2 5% | 38 100% | |
| Location of focus groups | | 1 3% | 2 5% | 4 10% | 30 79% | 1 3% | 38 100% | |
| Refreshments | | | 4 10% | 3 8% | 30 79% | 1 3% | 38 100% | |
| Satisfaction with the types of questions discussed | | | 4 11% | 14 37% | 18 47% | 2 5% | 38 100% | |
| Satisfaction with rhythm of the focus groups (i.e. time allowed for questions, the agenda, evaluation, etc.) | 1 3% | 1 3% | 2 5% | 14 37% | 19 50% | 1 3% | 38 100% | |
| OVERALL EVALUATION | | 3 8% | 4 10% | 8 21% | 23 61% | | 38 100% | |

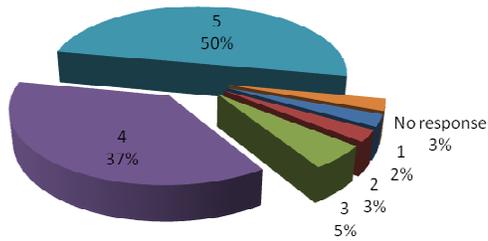
These results are reflected in the following pie charts:



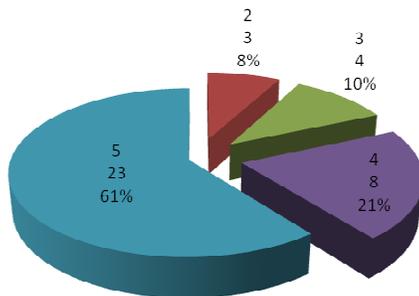
Satisfaction with types of questions discussed



Satisfaction with rhythm of focus group



Overall evaluation



Written Comments

Total feedback/evaluation forms returned with written comments (number = 30)

In addition to ranking various aspects of the focus group sessions, 30 of the 38 participants who chose to complete an evaluation of the focus group session also wrote additional comments. Many of the participants provided words of encouragement and advice for other parents residing in the downtown communities. A few participants also provided additional feedback and comments. These written comments are set out below.

| # assigned to Feedback/Evaluation forms | Written Comments: |
|--|--|
| Q.1. What advice would you give to parents in the downtown areas of Winnipeg? | |
| 5 | Get involved with the community. Know who the teachers are, what the programs are, who your kids' friends are. Walk around and talk to people. Volunteer if possible. |
| 7 | It takes people who care to make a better community to make neighbourhoods BETTER! |
| 8 | I would say they should move and find better place or find their child, rent a activity place. |
| 9 | To help each other and to get involved ... like a networking. |
| 10 | Support yourself and do not hesitate to ask for help where ever you can get one. |
| 11 | Let us keep in touch and involve each other and help each other and the community. |
| 12 | Get involved. |
| 13 | To get involved and learn the language and be aware, take care of your kids, open your eyes and ears. |
| 14 | I would tell them to get to know their neighbours well. |
| 15 | I would like to see more of where single parents can have a get together with the kids in other room. Having to discuss some family issues with parenting, to school, etc. |
| 16 | Family get togethers to meet with other families. For kids to have something to do with other kids, an outing for the kids (i.e. wheelies). |
| 17 | Run programs evenings on regular basis out of the school (in direct vicinity of homes). |
| 19 | More family programs to visit places like YMCA, skating, museum, pools, sporting events, theatre, etc. |
| 20 | Keep strong and together we can make a more secure and friendly environment for our children. |
| 21 | Have a community centre of place where families can meet and do activities, gym, crafts, etc. Family oriented programs. |
| 22 | Community centres for families, children and parents and age oriented crafts and/or activities. Low cost or free! |
| 23 | Ask more questions, investigate more options in your community, and explore the resources. |
| 24 | Get involved; find resources for yourself. |
| 25 | Supervise your children as much as possible. Talk to your children and ask questions. |
| 26 | Get more community resources; be more involved in community centres. |
| 27 | Seek out resources in your area. |
| 28 | Look to community centres for programs, which are offered, swimming pools for free swim times, check schools, etc. |
| 30 | Find your local community centre and inquire as to what programs and services are |

| | |
|---|---|
| | available. Find your local play areas, play groups, parent centers. |
| 31 | Stay involved with your children – they learn from you. |
| 33 | I think there are lots of great programs available already but perhaps there needs to be more communication that these groups are available. |
| 34 | More groups. It's good to talk with others to know that we are not alone. Maybe more groups (if any) that include the daddy. |
| 35 | Play groups. |
| 36 | Play groups at regular times/locations. Lists and resources for childcare. |
| 37 | An integrated place (website) to learn about all resources available. |
| 38 | Prenatal options. |
| Q.2. Other comments and/or feedback? | |
| 5 | I'd like to see some sort of gross motor activities happen in doors (i.e. the gym at the community centre being open for activities. I would be willing to start this, but I'm not sure how). |
| 6 | More free activities for younger kids age 1-6. Indoor, drop-in perhaps at the community centre or school (preschool). |
| 10 | It is always good idea to communicate and find out through communities if new comer parent or non-parents to come together and help each other. |
| 15 | Like to see more of facilitators talking in schools. |
| 17 | Need housing geared to working families (something similar to Habitat Housing), rent to own therefore have a vested interested in the community. |
| 19 | Thank you for hearing us! |
| 22 | Thanks for taking the time to listen. |
| 24 | Thank you. |
| 30 | Thank you for the very informative morning. |
| 31 | Stress is always a part of life but with resources available like this session we can find ways to cope. |
| 37 | I find parenting not very stressful at all. It is quite enjoyable! I am not sure that point of view came through in the focus group. |