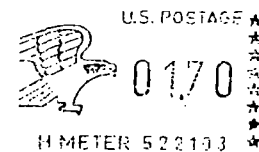




National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

734 15TH STREET, N.W., SUITE 1000
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-1013

INSPECTED
BY USSS
X-RAY



CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

Jenifer Klein
The White House
West Wing, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20050-2000



National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

Lynette A. Ciervo, APR

Director of Communications

734 15th Street, N.W., Suite 1000, Washington, D.C. 20005-1013

(202) 638-1144 • Fax: (202) 638-0851 • **For Orders Only:** (800) 899-4301

Internet Address: <http://www.zerotothree.org>

E-Mail Address: L.Ciervo@zerotothree.org



National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

NEWS

Board of Directors

Kathryn E. Barnard
T. Berry Brazelton
Maria D. Chavez
Robert N. Emde
Linda Gilkerson
Stanley I. Greenspan
Robert J. Harmon
Irving B. Harris
Gloria Johnson-Powell
Sheila B. Kamerman
Anneliese F. Korner
J. Ronald Lally
Bernard Levy
Alicia F. Lieberman
Samuel J. Meisels
Dolores G. Norton
Joy D. Osofsky
Jerec H. Pawl
Kyle D. Pruett
Arnold J. Sameroff
Marilyn M. Segal
Rebecca Shahmoon Shanok
Jack P. Shonkoff
Lynn G. Straus
Ann P. Turnbull
Bernice Weissbourd
Serena Wider
G. Gordon Williamson
Barry S. Zuckerman

Life Members

Mary D. Salter Ainsworth
Peter Blos, Jr.
Peter B. Neubauer
Arthur H. Parmelee
Julius B. Richmond
Mary Robinson
Pearl L. Rosser
Albert J. Solnit
Edward C. Zigler

Founding Members

T. Berry Brazelton
Selma Fraiberg
Stanley I. Greenspan
J. Ronald Lally
Bernard Levy
Reginald S. Lourie
Peter B. Neubauer
Robert A. Nover
Sally Provence
Julius B. Richmond
Albert J. Solnit
Leon J. Yarrow

Executive Director

Matthew E. Melmed

Associate Directors

Carol P. Berman
Emily S. Fenichel
Fluella S. McGovern

Embargoed for Release:

April 17, 1997

7 a.m.

Contact: Lynette Ciervo

202/638-1144

301/251-8564 (h)

Parents of Babies and Toddlers Face "Information Deficit" on Healthy Child Development:

National Poll Reveals Less Knowledge about Emotional, Social and Intellectual Development

Washington, D.C. -- A national survey released today by ZERO TO THREE revealed that parents of babies and toddlers have much less knowledge and information about their children's emotional, intellectual and social development than about their physical development. Parents thirst for more information on how to promote their young children's healthy development.

The national poll of more than 1,000 parents, conducted by Peter Hart Research Associates between March 21 and April 1, 1997 and funded by the Teresa & H. John Heinz III Foundation, found that while parents know they have an important influence on their children's development, they do not fully understand how their *day-to-day interactions* with their babies and toddlers affect early child development and learning.

Also, while parents believe that what they do as parents has the greatest influence on their children's emotional development, they also say they have the least information in this area.

For example, the majority of parents of children under three (53 percent) feel "totally sure" that they know what signs to watch for to see if their child's physical development is on track. But only 38 percent of parents feel totally sure that they can tell if their young child's emotional development is healthy and about right for his or her age. About two in five parents (44 percent) feel totally sure that they can tell if their infant or toddler's intellectual development is on track; 37 percent feel this way about milestones of social development.

--more--

Almost all parents (95 percent) understand the central message of recent child development research -- that babies are learning from the moment they are born. But parents of infants and toddlers are confused about important details. Many parents **don't** know that:

- *"Stimulation" isn't always good for children.* 87 percent of parents thought that the *more* stimulation a baby receives, the better off he or she is. (In fact, parents and caregivers need to carefully match the amount and kind of stimulation they offer to a baby to that child's level of development, special interests, temperament, and mood at the moment.)
- *Too many changes in caregivers can slow a child's development and leave children reluctant to form new relationships.* Half of all parents thought that the *more* caregivers a child has before age three, the better that child will be at adapting and coping with change. (In fact, when very young children switch repeatedly from one caregiver to another, the time they spend grieving the loss of the old caregiver and learning the new caregiver's ways may slow down their overall development.)
- *Parents' and caregivers' interactions with babies and toddlers influence children's intellectual abilities.* One in four parents either thought or was unsure whether every baby is born with a certain level of intelligence, which cannot be either increased or decreased by how parents interact with him or her. (In fact, parents' involvement and support can enhance young children's problem-solving skills, increase children's curiosity about their environment, and build children's confidence in their own ability to learn.)
- *Babies less than six months old can get depressed.* Less than two-thirds of parents (65 percent) realize that this statement is true. (In fact, experts in child health and development can now identify many emotional problems in very young children and work with families to treat these difficulties.)

In addition, parents' uncertainties lead to a strong desire for more information:

- Though 39 percent of parents believe that they have the **greatest influence** over their children's emotional development (compared to intellectual, social, or physical development), more than one in four parents (26 percent) said that they had the **least information** about emotional development (compared to intellectual, social and physical development).

--more--

- Sixty percent of parents report being extremely or very interested in information on brain development and how young children learn. An additional 21 percent said they were fairly interested.
- Nearly half of all parents of infants and toddlers (46 percent) report they pay serious attention to news reports and newspaper articles about early childhood development issues. In addition, 36 percent regularly look for information in magazines and 39 percent say they pick up literature in their pediatrician's office on a very or fairly regular basis.

Two major barriers exist to better parenting: "an information deficit" and a time crunch:

- One in 5 parents say they feel the need to improve as a parent because they find it hard to understand their child's feeling and needs (19 percent), or don't know how to handle difficult situations with their child (19 percent).
- Almost two in five parents (37 percent) say that one of the chief reasons they may need to improve as parents is that they don't spend as much quality time with their child as they'd like to.
- Half of all parents say they end most days feeling that they spent less time than they wanted to with their young child -- either a lot less time (20 percent) or a little less time (27 percent). With more than 10 million children age birth-to-three in this country, this means that five million infants and toddlers have parents who personally feel they don't spend enough time with them, including two million kids whose moms or dads say they get a lot less time together than they want.

Caregivers other than mothers and fathers play a major role in the lives of young children.

- Only 1 in 5 babies and toddlers have been cared for exclusively by their father or mother since birth.
- Sixty percent of all children under age three are currently cared for on a regular basis by someone other than their parents. This is true for 48 percent of babies from birth to 8 months, 59 percent of children from 9-18 months, and 66 percent of children from 19 months to 3 years old.
- Grandparents are the regular caregivers for 23 percent of babies and toddlers; other family members care regularly for an additional 9 percent of young children.

--more--

- Overall, 16 percent of children from birth to three are in child care centers (8 percent of infants from 0-8 months, 21 percent of children from 19-36 months). 9 percent of infants and toddlers are in family day care.

Survey findings reveal that while parents understand that their children's earliest years powerfully shape later development and learning, they are often unsure about what they should be doing to promote healthy emotional, social, and intellectual development. *The scientific community, communications media, and health and development professionals need to translate research and practice findings into clear, practical messages for parents.*

"Parents need to trust themselves -- they know their children better than anyone else," says Matthew E. Melmed, ZERO TO THREE executive director. "They also need to understand that how they 'are' with their baby has a tremendous impact on the emotional, intellectual and social development of that child. Parents can benefit from the growing knowledge base in these areas."

Parents, grandparents, other family members, and professional caregivers are all sharing the care of today's infants and toddlers. *Child development researchers, families, health care providers, and the early care and education community must share their expertise and experience, and, with the active support of the business community, promote public and private policies that support the healthy development of our nation's infants, toddlers and families.*

ZERO TO THREE, which for 20 years has served as the nexus of the multidisciplinary "infant/family" field, is committed to these goals. ZERO TO THREE will continue to translate scientific research and disseminate it to a wide variety of audiences -- including parents. ZERO TO THREE will also continue to assist individuals, organizations, and policymakers working to address the needs of America's infants, toddlers and families.

Funding for communicating the importance of the earliest years to parents through a ZERO TO THREE public education initiative is being provided by: AETNA Foundation, Inc.; Gerber Companies Foundation; Lynn and Philip Straus; Fannie Mae Foundation; The Harris Foundation; Glickenhau & Co.; and the McCormick Tribune Foundation.

ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit dedicated to advancing the healthy development of babies and young children through training infant/family professionals, disseminating scientific and public information, and promoting policy relevant to infants, toddler and their families.

The Executive Summary Findings and the Focus Group Report are available for viewing on our web site at www.zerotothree.org.

KEY FINDINGS FROM A NATIONWIDE SURVEY AMONG
PARENTS OF ZERO- TO THREE-YEAR-OLDS

CONDUCTED BY
PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

FUNDED BY THE
HEINZ FAMILY FOUNDATION



National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

APRIL 1997

PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.
1724 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20009

i

Between March 21 and April 1, 1997, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted an in-depth telephone survey among a representative nationwide sample of mothers and fathers and legal guardians of children age 36 months and younger. The survey includes supplemental "oversample" interviews among African Americans (100) and Hispanics (100), which were then weighted back into the sample in their proper proportions according to U.S. Census figures. A total of 1,022 interviews were completed. Overall, this poll has a margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$.

In each household, the parent was asked to answer the survey questions by referring to a specific child age zero to 36 months (in households with more than one child age three or younger, the respondent was asked to focus his or her answers on one of those children, as determined by a random process). The poll includes 243 parents of children age zero to eight months, 279 parents of children age nine to 18 months, and 501 parents of children in the oldest and broadest category, age 19 to 36 months.

This report highlights the principal findings that emerge from the research.

ZERO TO THREE SURVEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

1 Parents know that they have an important influence on their infants' and toddlers' development, but they do not fully understand the connection between their own parenting practices and the social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of child development.

Majorities of parents grasp certain fundamental concepts about child development, but many are confused or hold misconceptions about others.

Though they are most likely to believe that their child's *emotional* growth and development is the domain over which they have the greatest influence as parents, this aspect of early child development – along with intellectual and social development – is the area in which parents feel *least knowledgeable*.

While half of parents (53%) say they are totally sure that they know what signs to watch for in their youngster when it comes to physical development, far fewer say this for emotional (38%), social (37%), or intellectual (44%) development.

WHAT PARENTS KNOW ABOUT EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Most parents understand that babies are learning from the moment they are born; that babies are communicating before they can do so in words; that parents' *emotional* closeness with their baby can strongly affect his or her *intellectual* development; that the brain of a baby who lacks appropriate stimulation – such as being read to, played with, or touched and held – will not develop as well as that of a baby who does receive such stimulation; and that what a child experiences from birth to age three can influence his or her ability to do well in school.

Fewer parents recognize that a baby's intelligence can be increased or decreased by how parents interact with that child; that babies less than six months old can get depressed; that having more rather than fewer caregivers before age three is *not* good for a child's healthy development; and that the *more* stimulation (as opposed to *appropriate stimulation*) a baby receives does not mean he or she is better off.

2 Parents of babies and toddlers expect a great deal of themselves, and many feel that they want to improve as parents. Though many are confident in their ability to respond to the various parenting challenges they face each day, they also identify a number of barriers standing in the way of better parenting.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOURSELF AS A PARENT SO FAR?

Just 8% of parents rate themselves as "outstanding" and say they don't feel a need to improve; all others indicate that they'd like to improve their parenting skills.

Forty-seven percent say they are excellent parents but would like to improve just a little; 43% say they are good but definitely want to improve in several areas; and 2% say they are somewhat below average and are working hard at improving.

For families with children age zero to three, two fundamental barriers stand in the way of better parenting. First, from parents' own point of view, time is an acute concern, with over a third saying that one of the top reasons they may need to improve as parents is that they don't spend as much quality time with their child as they'd like to (37%).

A second critical type of barrier to better parenting is the "information deficit": one in five parents, for example, say that they feel they need to improve as a parent because they find it hard to understand their child's feelings and needs (19%) or don't know how to handle difficult situations with their child (19%). One in 10 parents say that they lack confidence in their parenting skills overall.

3 Few parents of young children say that they felt totally prepared for parenthood when they had their first child. Those who are the youngest and have the lowest income, or those who are going it alone as single parents feel particularly unprepared for the daunting new role they've taken on.

HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME A PARENT?

The vast majority of parents say that when they had their first child, they felt "in love" with their baby and happier than ever before. Many also say that they felt stressed and worn out, afraid of doing something wrong, afraid of not being a good parent, and unsure about what to do a lot of the time.

Young parenthood is both a time of deep joy and wonderment and a time of worry, uncertainty, and questioning, and parents seem thirsty for information and advice to help them understand and respond to their child. Not all resources that young families typically turn to, however, provide the quantity or quality of information that parents need at present.

When parents seek information or advice about parenting, they turn to both informal networks – such as their own mother, mother-in-law, another family member, or a friend – and to professionals: namely, their child's pediatrician. They also pay significant attention to the news media's reports about infants and toddlers and their development.

A quarter of all parents of young children say that as brand new parents they felt only slightly or not really prepared, while almost two in five felt totally or quite well-prepared. Among those who are *least* likely to have felt prepared are younger, lower-income, and single parents. Low-income and single parents also are more likely than others to have felt that they lacked emotional support.

4 To be the parent of a baby or toddler as the end of the 20th century approaches is to face myriad challenges and pressures, chief among them the time crunch in trying to “be there” for that young child.

A PORTRAIT OF YOUNG FAMILIES

Sixty percent of children age zero to three currently are cared for on a regular basis by someone other than their parents. Only one in five have been cared for exclusively by their mother or father since birth.

Non-parental care providers for this age group are about equally likely to be a grandparent or other family as they are to be a professional or non-family caregiver.

Though most babies and toddlers today live in two-parent households, 14% are being raised by single parents.

The majority of mothers of very young children work at a paid job: 40% full time and 19% part time; another 8% who aren't working now plan to return to the work force within the next six months.

The facts of daily life and work for America's young families mean that about half of all parents say that they end most days feeling that they spent less time than they wanted to with their young child.

Translated into hard numbers, this finding suggests that, every day, five million infants and toddlers across the country have parents who personally feel that they don't spend enough time with them.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AMERICA'S YOUNG FAMILIES

To be the parent of a baby or toddler as the end of the 20th century approaches is to face myriad challenges and pressures, chief among them the time crunch in trying to "be there" for that young child.

All across the country, the morning scene in households with children under age three is a similar one: in most cases, both parents are getting ready for work and tending to their child's needs; baby will be handed over to someone else – a relative or a professional caregiver – to be cared for while mom and dad are at work. In most homes, too, there's more than one child to attend to.

For the parents of young children, each day is filled with the multiple and conflicting demands and obligations of work and family. For the young children themselves, each day means being taken care of for some period by someone who is not mom or dad.

Though most babies and toddlers today live in two-parent households, 14% are being raised by single parents. The presence of two adults in a majority of young family households, however, does not mean that most of these children are being raised solely by their parents. In fact,

A SOCIOECONOMIC SNAPSHOT OF YOUNG FAMILIES

✍ More young parents have only a high school education or less (37%) than have a college degree or more (29%).

✍ While three in 10 households with kids age zero to three are headed by a parent who works as a professional or executive, 44% are headed by skilled laborers.

✍ Though 25% of young families in this country have a household income of \$50,000 or more, 13% are barely making ends meet, reporting an annual household income that's roughly at or below the poverty level of \$15,000.

60% currently are cared for on a regular basis *by someone other than their parents*, and only one in five have been cared for *exclusively* by their mother or father since birth. The vast majority of children under age three (80%) have had at least one other non-parental care provider (who is about equally likely to be either a grandparent or other family member or a professional or non-family caregiver) during their brief lifetimes, and half have had two or more. Single parents, African Americans and Hispanics, and – notably – first-time parents are the most likely subgroups to have a regular caregiver for their child under age three.

Indeed, caregivers play a major role in the lives of America's young families. Whether out of economic necessity or personal choice, most mothers of very young children work: 40% full time, 19% part time, and another 8% who aren't working now plan to return to the work force within the next six months. Al-

though the days when most women “stayed home” to raise their children are past, it continues to be the nation’s moms – whether working outside the home or not – who bear the largest part of the day-to-day responsibilities of child-rearing: 64% of parents report that this is the case in their household. Twenty-five percent say mother and father share these duties equally, and only 10% indicate that dad does most of the basic caregiving each day.

Given the simple logistical facts of the workday situation in so many young family households, then, it’s hardly surprising *that about half of all parents say they end most days feeling that they spent less time than they wanted to with their young child* – either a *lot* less time (20%) or a little less time (27%). Given estimates of over 8,800,000 families who have children under age three, with a total of more than 10 million children of age zero to three, this suggests that *it’s likely that, each day, five million infants and toddlers have parents who personally feel that they don’t spend enough time with them*, including two million kids whose moms or dads say that they get *a lot less* time together than they want. There is no question that time is one of the top pressures of family life these days, and that parents are all too aware of this.

The time crunch is especially acute, of course, in families in which the mother is working at a paid job. Half of all parents in households with moms who work full time say the chief reason they may need to improve as parents is because they don’t spend as much quality time with their kids as they’d like.

THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PARENTHOOD

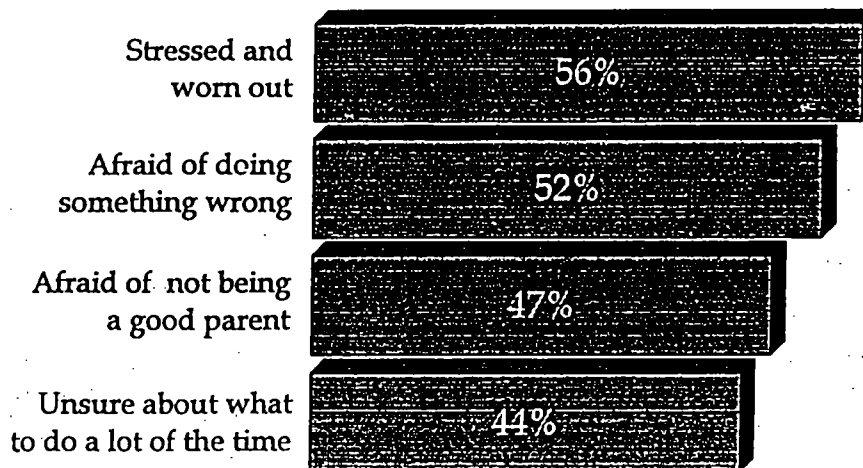
Parenthood, especially for those who are new to the experience, is both a time of deep joy and wonderment and a time of worry, uncertainty, and questioning.

As they think back and recount the array of feelings they experienced when they had their first child, parents say almost universally that they felt "in love" with their baby (96% indicate that this sentiment matches their own experience almost exactly or pretty closely) and happier than ever before (91%). They express, as well, a sense of amazement at their baby's changes and development (70%) and acknowledge the depth and intensity of the newly formed parent-child bond by explaining that they felt as if they couldn't bear to be apart from their baby when they first became parents (68%).

Along with the head-over-heels happiness and excitement of first-time parenthood, however, also come, for many young parents, new stresses, uncertainty about what to do, and a fear of making mistakes or of not measuring up as parents.

How Did You Feel When You First Became A Parent?

(% who say statements match their feelings exactly/pretty closely)



PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

Few parents of young children say they felt totally prepared for parenthood when they had their first child. Those who are the youngest, have the lowest income, or who are going it alone as single parents feel particularly unprepared for the daunting new role they've taken on.

Moms and dads approaching their first experience in parenting react in various ways. When it comes to gathering information or advice before their baby's birth, a handful (9%) say they think they "went overboard" in this type of preparation. A third of parents say they did a great deal or quite a bit (34%) to

seek information, a quarter did a moderate amount (27%), and about another quarter say they either did just a little or simply waited to see what it would be like (28%).

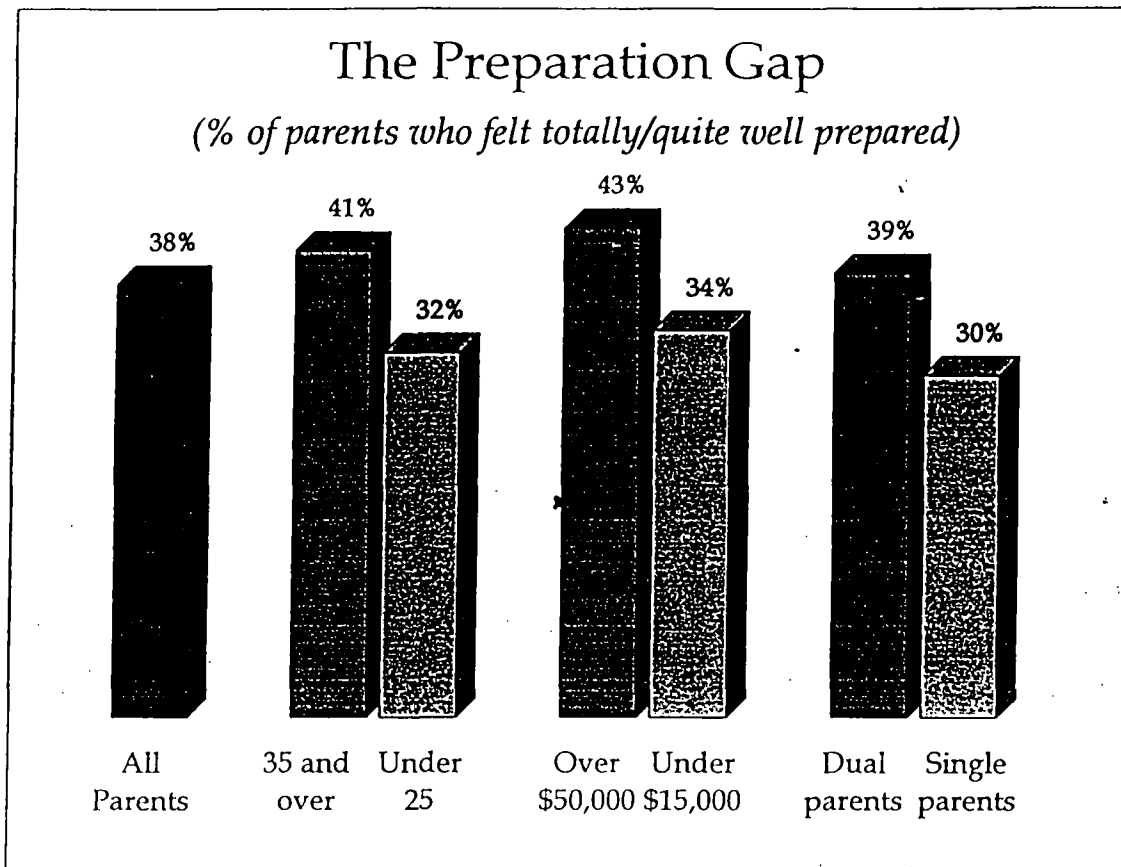
When it comes to how prepared they *felt* for the new experience of parenting once they actually had their first child, only about two in five parents assert that they were either totally prepared (12%) or quite well-prepared (26%) for the job at hand. One in four, on the other hand, report that they felt only slightly prepared (12%) or not really prepared at all (13%), while roughly one in three put themselves in the middle, saying they seemed to be pretty well-prepared (37%).

Perhaps equally important as gaining knowledge and information is having emotional support, and seven in 10 moms and dads say that as new parents they got about the right amount of this kind of support. Some say they actually got more than they really wanted (13%), but 16% say they didn't receive as much emotional support as they needed at the time.

Beneath the surface of these figures lie significant differences in terms of *which* parents felt more prepared and supported and which ones less so. Younger and lower-income parents are as likely to have felt only slightly or not really prepared for their first experience of caring for a child as they are to have felt totally or quite well-prepared.

In the same way, this insufficient preparation hits single parents hard, as they are particularly likely to be young and low-income. Compounding this problem is that single parents, along with low-income parents in general, are

especially prone to feel that they didn't get as much *emotional* support as they wanted when they were new parents.



Preparation improves the chances of a positive parenting experience. The importance of having sufficient information about babies and parenting before the baby's arrival is underscored by the differences between the first-time parenting experiences of those who felt well-prepared and those who did not. Parents who felt only slightly prepared or not really prepared at all are far more likely than are well-prepared parents to begin their lives as mothers or fathers feeling *stressed and worn out*: 59% say that this matches their own feelings *almost exactly*, compared to 31% of totally or quite well-prepared parents who feel this way. The same is true

of feeling *afraid of doing something wrong* (48% of less-prepare parents, 27% of well-prepared parents), *afraid of not being a good parent* (43% versus 23%), and feeling *unsure about what to do a lot of the time* (39% versus 18%).

WHERE PARENTS FIND INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Essential to caring well for a young child is learning how to understand and respond to that child's needs, changes, and behaviors. Parents seem thirsty for information and advice in these regards. Not all resources that young families typically turn to, however, provide the quantity or quality of information that parents need at present.

When parents of young children seek information or advice on kids and parenting, they tend to rely on informal networks, turning most frequently to their own families – two in five say they put in a call to mom (or their mother-in-law), and about the same proportion seek another relative's help – even in these days of geographic mobility and long distances between family members. Friends and neighbors also are a source of help for one in five parents of infants and toddlers.

Beyond the realm of family and friends, pediatricians are the professionals that parents consult most (15%) when they feel they need advice in their day-to-day life with their child. Day care providers and baby sitters, on the other hand, do *not* appear to be a significant resource for information, from parents' point of view; only 2% mention their child's caregiver as someone they usually turn to for help.

The news media are an important source of information about babies, toddlers, and parenting today, as nearly half of all parents of kids age zero to three indicate that they pay a great deal or quite a bit of attention to newspaper articles and news reports about issues related to early child development. As well, 36% of parents look for information in magazines, and 39% pick up literature in their pediatrician's office on a very or fairly regular basis.

PEDIATRICIANS AND PARENTS

Pediatricians have the potential to play an increased role in advising parents of young children and helping them better understand child development issues. Although 55% of parents say that their pediatrician discusses their child's *emotional, social, and intellectual* development—as opposed to his or her *physical* health and development—during every visit or most visits, a substantial 40% indicate that their child's doctor talks about these matters only on some visits, rarely, or never. It is these less easily observed or comprehended aspects of development about which parents say they know the least.

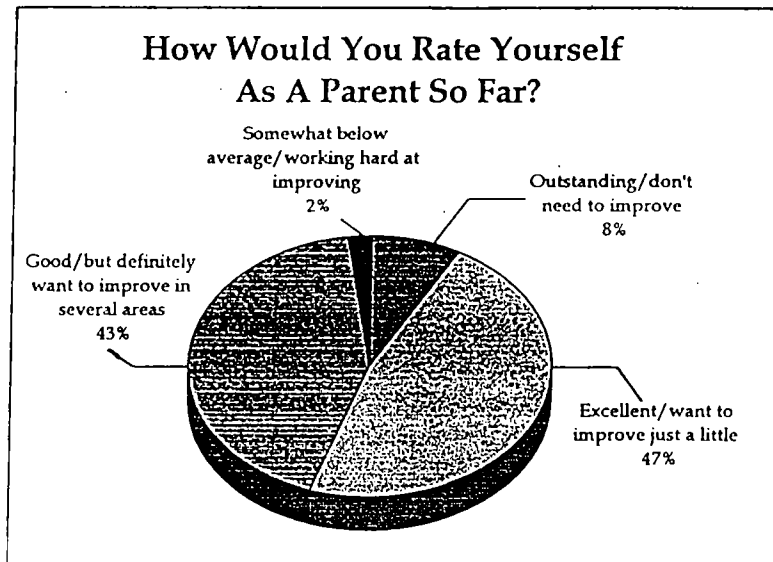
As a potential adjunct to advice and interaction with the pediatrician, the services of a child development expert would appeal to many parents: 65% say it would be a very important consideration to them if they were looking for a new doctor and found one who offered the services of a person whose job it is to get to know them and their child, answer questions, and provide guidance on what to expect in their child's development.

Parents are more likely to seek information very early in their child's life, rather than later. Whether it's looking for tips or articles on parenting in magazines or gathering literature from the pediatrician's office, it is parents of infants (age eight months or younger) who are the most likely to seek out such information. As

parents come to know their child and gain confidence in their own parenting abilities, they become less likely to look for such counsel. It is thus important to get such information to new – and expectant – parents as early as possible.

FACING THE CHALLENGES OF PARENTHOOD

Young parenthood is a time of questioning and learning as parents try to fulfill their parental obligations and live up to the very high expectations they have of themselves. While many parents display confidence in their abilities and think of themselves generally as good parents, they also reveal some uncertainty and concern about child development and parenting practices.



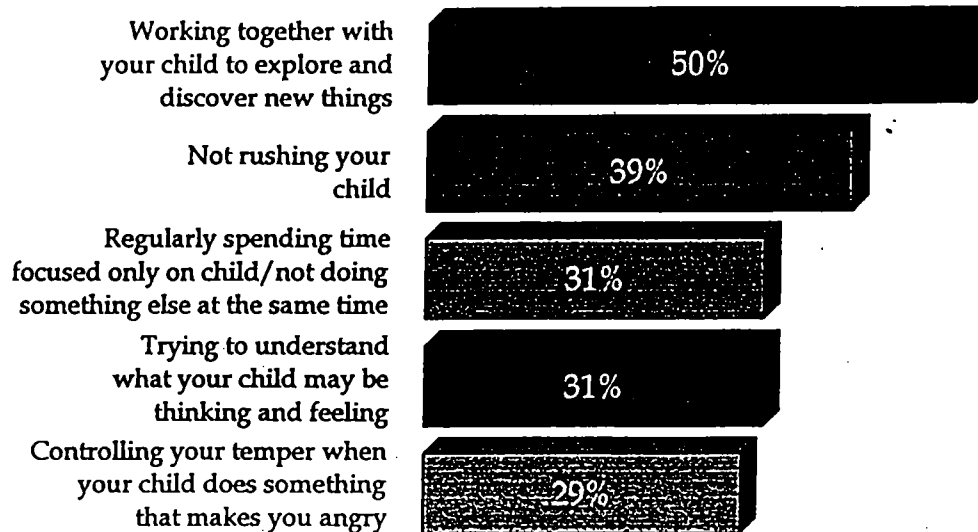
Though just a handful of parents of children age zero to three consider themselves to be an "outstanding" parent, with no need for improvement (8%),

most mothers and fathers feel good about themselves as parents, while also admitting that they could improve in some ways – either just a little (for the 47% who consider themselves "excellent") or in several areas (for the 43% who think of themselves as "good" parents). A few parents (2%) rate themselves as "somewhat below average" so far and say they're working hard at improving.

Similarly, when it comes to some of the specific parenting challenges they face, many parents feel good about how they're doing, although they do *not* give themselves straight "A"s. Parents give themselves the highest marks for one of the most exciting and gratifying aspects of parenting – working together with their child to explore and discover new things – and they are toughest on themselves when it comes to measuring their ability to control their temper when their child does something that makes them angry. Parents of young children are more likely to give themselves "B"s than "A"s for trying to understand their child's thoughts and feelings, and for regularly spending time when they're focused exclusively on their child and not doing something else at the same time. Patience with their youngster is a quality on which as many parents give themselves "A"s as give themselves "B"s.

How Would You Grade Yourself On . . .

(% of parents who give themselves an "A")



When it comes to knowing the most appropriate way to handle particularly puzzling or trying child behaviors, however – from a temper tantrum to a crying child late at night, from a fussy and irritable little one to a baby who’s ready to play but can’t verbalize what he wants to do -- parents tend more to feel “pretty” confident than “totally” confident that they know the most appropriate ways to deal with such situations.

For families with children age zero to three, two fundamental barriers stand in the way of better parenting. *First, from parents’ own point of view, time is an acute concern, with over a third saying one of the top reasons they may need to improve as parents is that they don’t spend as much quality time with their child as*

they'd like to (37%). Related to the time problem is some parents' concern that someone other than themselves or their spouse has more influence on their child (11%) – a significant concern, given that three in five households regularly entrust their child's care to another person. If that care provider is a family member, who may be more likely than a non-relative to be especially close and loving with the child, the level of parents' worry about influence is even greater.

A second, and critical, type of barrier to better parenting is the "information deficit": one in five parents, for example, say that they feel they need to improve as a parent because they find it hard to understand their child's feelings and needs (19%) or don't know how to handle difficult situations with their child (19%). One in 10 parents say that they lack confidence in their parenting skills overall.

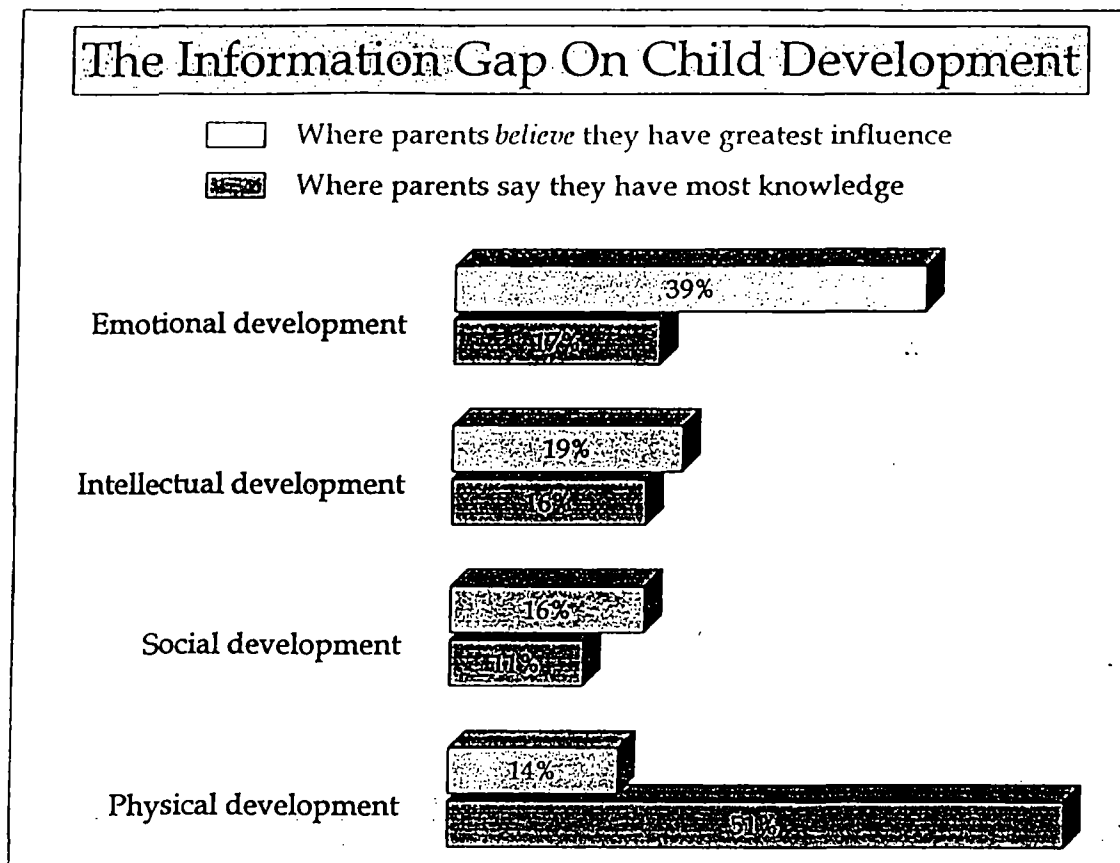
Indeed, life with infants and toddlers gives rise to many questions and concerns, and the questions that these parents articulate have much less to do with day-to-day physical care (*What do I do if my baby is sick?*) and more to do with the emotional, intellectual, and social development of their children.

In their own words, mothers and fathers ask a barrage of questions about what their child's emotional state means, how to prepare their child for school, how to establish an appropriate bed time and sleeping habits, how to deal with discipline issues, how to respond when kids fight or throw temper tantrums, and what's the best way to potty train their child.

PARENTS AND EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Parents know that they have an important influence on their infants' and toddlers' development, but they do not fully understand the connection between healthy child development and their own parenting practices.

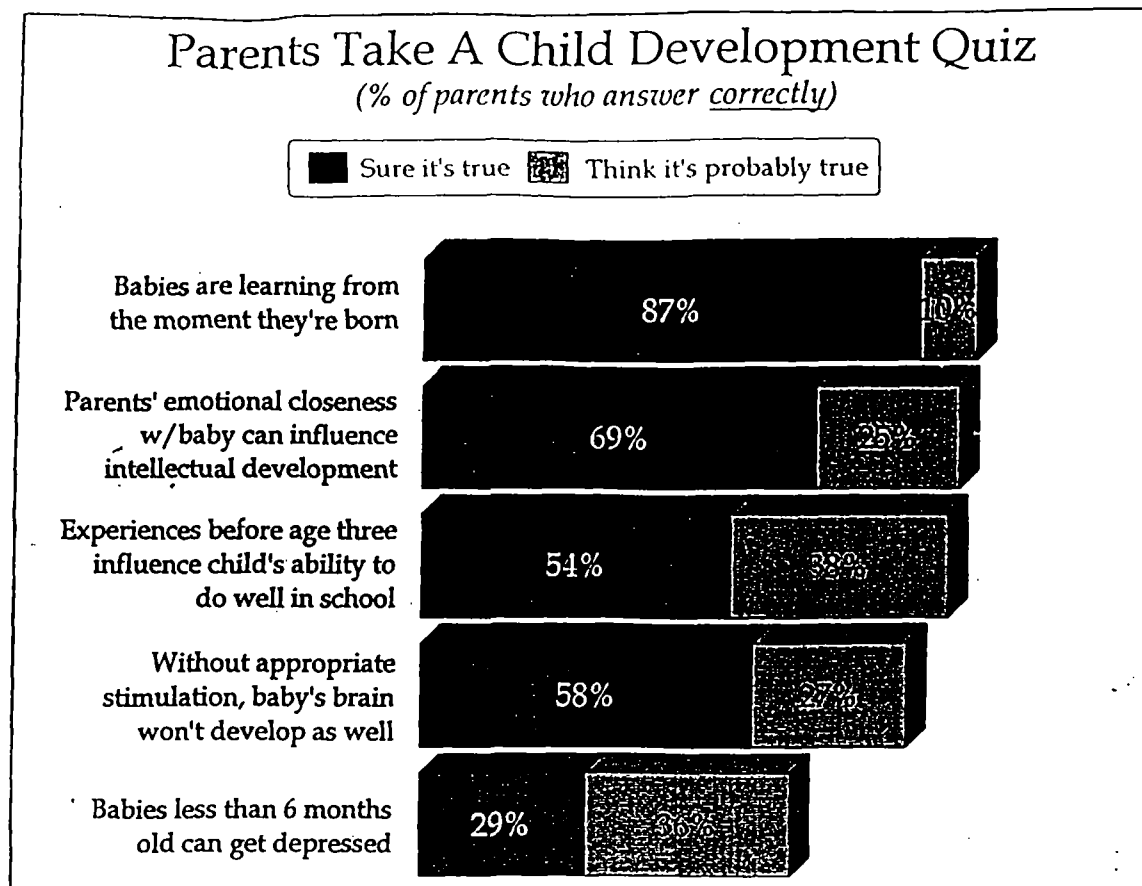
The most observable developmental mileposts – those that are largely physical – are the ones that mothers and fathers feel most knowledgeable about. Well-informed though they may be in this regard, however, parents clearly lack information about the less tangible developmental domains; *indeed, parents report that they know the least about babies' and toddlers' emotional, social, and intellectual development.*



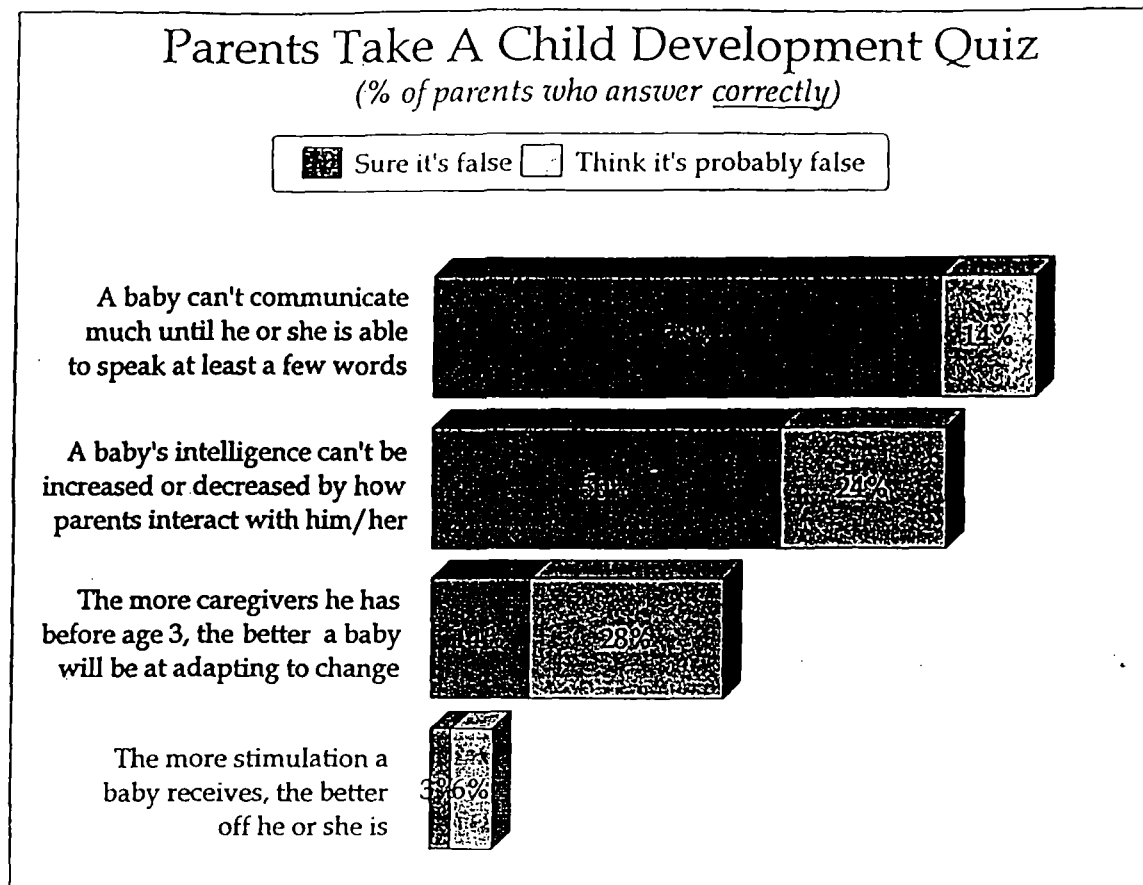
Despite this self-reported information gap, *parents believe they have the greatest influence on their child's emotional development (39%)* – more than twice as many as say their child's intellectual (19%) or social (16%) development is most susceptible to their sway – and the least influence on his or her physical changes and growth (14%).

In more specific terms, parents seem well-apprised of certain parenting concepts (such as the importance of spending quality time with their baby or toddler), but are less familiar with others (such as the importance of continuity of caregivers, or the fact that *quality* of stimulation for young children matters more than sheer *quantity*).

Some fundamental concepts that child development experts believe are important clearly are grasped by most parents, though with varying degrees of certainty. Best understood is that babies are learning from the moment they are born; 97% of all parents of zero- to three-year-olds say that they are sure this is true (87%) or think it's probably true (10%). Similarly, most (94%) correctly acknowledge that parents' *emotional* closeness with their baby can strongly influence that child's *intellectual* development (69% say they're sure it's true, 25% say it's probably true.) In addition, the idea that the things a child experiences before the age of three will greatly influence his or her ability to do well in school is correctly identified as true by 92%, though here parents begin to hedge their bets (54% say they're sure it's true, but 38% guess that it's *probably* true).



As both graphs illustrate, other concepts are less understood, whether phrased in their "true" or "false" configuration.



Though understood less universally than the top three ideas, one key concept in brain development, specifically, appears to be comprehended by quite a few parents: more than four in five are sure that it's true (58%) or think it's probably true (27%) that if a baby does not receive appropriate stimulation – such as being read to, played with, or touched and held – his or her brain will not develop as well as the brain of a baby who *does* receive these kinds of stimulation. More unfamiliar to parents is the fact that babies less than six months old can get depressed; just three in ten parents say they are certain that this is true, though an additional 36% guess that this is *probably* true.

A large majority of parents (87%) correctly reject the assertion (73% with certainty) that a baby can't communicate much until he or she is able to speak at least a few words (a false statement). Only half say they're *sure* that it's untrue that parents' interactions with their baby do not play a part in increasing or decreasing that child's intelligence (another quarter take a correct guess on this item).

Two critical child development concepts are not well-understood by parents. First, less than half know that it is *not* true that the more caregivers a child has before age three, the better that child will be at adapting and coping with change – an absolutely essential message that must be communicated to parents, given the need in a majority of young families for non-parental caregivers.

Second, very few parents seem to recognize that it is *not* the case that the more stimulation a baby receives, the better off he or she will be. From an intellectual or emotional (or perhaps even social) development standpoint, this concept is an important one to explain to parents of young children. Parents have reported that they face significant time pressures but don't believe that they have a powerful influence on their child's intellectual growth, and thus may mistakenly think that *any* stimulation they can provide will be appropriate and healthy stimulation.

Information and clearly presented messages about early child development – from research on brain development (60% of parents assert that they'd be extremely or very interested in learning more about this subject) to advice on effective parenting practices to guidance on responding to the most challenging

child behaviors – clearly would be well-received by the audience of parents who have young children or of adults who are planning to start their families.

The survey results in their totality suggest that parents seem well aware of the general importance of the love and time they give their infants and toddlers, but want more information about exactly *how* to influence their children in positive ways. America's moms and dads also feel good about many aspects of being parents to the youngest children. Yet they recognize their ability to improve and display a genuine interest in doing so.

Indeed, the survey data reveal parents' desire to play the most positive role they can in their children's development. They want to understand how to prepare in advance for parenthood; where to turn for day-to-day information, especially when their babies are young; how to provide the best care for their children, even when they cannot always provide it exclusively themselves; how to recognize signals and cues to inform them about their children's development; how they can affect most positively a young and growing brain; and what specific strategies and techniques they can use to help practice better parenting and give their young children the best possible start in life.

Study #4852—page 1

PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.
1724 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234-5570

Interviews: 1022 parents
Dates: March 21 - April 1, 1997

[5]	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.
Fathers.....	41	35	41	43
Mothers....	59	65	59	57

FINAL

Study #4852
Zero To Three
March 1997

SAMPLE POINT				STATE		FORM	EXTRA	DATE	
								March	
[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]	[13]		[14] [15]

FORM A = PARENTS OF CHILD AGE 0 TO 8 MONTHS
FORM B = PARENTS OF CHILD AGE 9 MONTHS TO 18 MONTHS
FORM C = PARENTS OF CHILD AGE 19 MONTHS TO 36 MONTHS

- 1a. First, do any children age three or younger (that is, 36 months or less) live in this household with you? (IF "YES," ASK:) Are you the parent, step-parent, or legal guardian of any of those children?

Yes, child age 36 months or under in household.....	100	CONTINUE	[16]
No, no child age 36 months or under in household	-	TERMINATE AND	
Not sure/refused	-	DO NOT COUNT	

- 1b. How many children age 36 months or under live in your household?

One	77	[17]
Two or more.....	23	
Refused	-	

1c.e. AGE OF CHILD

0-8 months.....	24	USE FORM A	[20/24]
9-18 months.....	27	USE FORM B	
19-36 months.....	49	USE FORM C	
37 months or older....	-	TERMINATE	
Refused	-	AND DO NOT COUNT	

1d.f. SEX OF CHILD

Boy.....	52	[21/25]
Girl	47	
Refused	1	

(ASK OF ALL RESPONDENTS WITH ONLY ONE CHILD AGE 36 MONTHS OR UNDER IN Q.1b.)

- 1g. Am I correct in assuming that you're a first-time parent?

First-time parent	48	[26]
Not a first-time parent.....	48	
Refused	4	

Study #4852—page 2

In this survey, we'll be discussing some issues related to raising children, and we'll be trying to learn how parents all across the country think about those issues. It's important to the success of this research project that you provide your honest answers and opinions when we ask what you feel or believe. Please keep in mind that we're not looking for "right" or "wrong" answers, but just want to understand your family's experiences and your own insights and attitudes.

2. Let's start the main part of this interview. If I asked you to tell me about (your child/the child we're focusing on for this interview), what would you say you most enjoy about (him/her) at this age? (PROBE:) What gives you the greatest joy or pleasure in interacting with your child these days?

On the other hand, is there anything you do *not* particularly enjoy about your child at this age? (PROBE:) What do you find most difficult or challenging about interacting with (him/her) these days? [27-34]

	All Parents 96%	Child 0-8 Mo. 96%	Child 9-18 Mo. 97%	Child 19-36 Mo. 96%
Net Joys and Pleasures				
New things, discoveries	15	10	21	14
Smiling, laughing, giggling	14	32	10	7
Trying to talk, learning to communicate, new words	14	2	12	20
Everything	11	16	11	8
Good personality, good-natured, happy, good baby	7	7	9	6
Say and do funny things, sense of humor	7	3	6	9
Affectionate, loving, hugs and kisses	4	1	3	6
Active	4	3	4	4
Facial expressions	4	4	5	3

	All Parents 28%	Child 0-8 Mo. 24%	Child 9-18 Mo. 27%	Child 19-36 Mo. 31%
Net Difficulties and Challenges				
Temper tantrums, yelling, screaming	6	1	6	8
Stubborn, hard-headed, saying "no!"	5	-	3	8
When baby doesn't want to sleep, waking up at night	3	7	5	1
Not potty trained, diapers	3	2	2	4
When baby cries	3	5	2	2
Climbing, walking away, keeping up with baby	3	1	5	3
When baby is fussy, cranky	2	4	1	2
Don't know; no response	3%	4%	2%	3%

- 3a. Different people have different ways of dealing with their very *first* experience as parents, of course, and I'd like to ask you to think back to the time *before* you had your first child. If you were describing how you prepared for the experience of parenthood — in terms of reading things, talking to others, and getting information or advice — would you say you went overboard and did too much, did a great deal, quite a bit, a moderate amount, just a little, or basically just waited to see what it would be like?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Went overboard/did too much	9	8	11	8	[35]
Did a great deal	18	22	13	18	
Did quite a bit	16	16	16	15	
Did a moderate amount	27	24	28	29	
Did just a little	10	11	8	11	
Waited to see what it would be like	18	17	23	17	
Not sure	2	1	1	2	

- 3b. And then, when you actually had your first child, how prepared for parenthood did you feel – totally prepared, quite well-prepared, pretty well-prepared, only slightly prepared, or not really prepared at all for what the reality was like?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Totally prepared.....	12	13	12	12	[36]
Quite well-prepared	26	28	21	27	
Pretty well-prepared	37	38	42	34	
Only slightly prepared.....	12	10	12	13	
Not really prepared at all	13	10	13	14	
Not sure	-	1	-	-	

- 3c. Overall, how would you describe the *quality* of the information and advice about parenting that you received – was most of it extremely helpful to you, very helpful, fairly helpful, only slightly helpful, or not at all helpful to you?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Extremely helpful.....	16	21	17	14	[37]
Very helpful.....	47	52	44	46	
Fairly helpful	22	18	26	22	
Only slightly helpful	9	6	7	12	
Not at all helpful.....	4	1	4	5	
Not sure	2	2	2	1	

- 3d. And what about the amount of *emotional* support you got when you first became a parent – do you feel you got more than you really wanted, about the right amount, or didn't get as much emotional support as you really wanted at that time?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Got more emotional support than wanted	13	15	15	12	[38]
Got about the right amount of emotional support.....	69	71	68	69	
Didn't get as much emotional support as wanted	16	13	16	17	
Not sure.....	2	1	3	2	

4. I'm going to mention a number of feelings that some people say they experienced when they first began caring for a child. Please tell me how closely each of these matches *your own* feelings when you first became a parent. For instance, some first-time parents have said that they felt (READ FIRST ITEM, THEN ASK:) – does this match *your experience* almost exactly, pretty closely, only a little, or not at all

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY MATCHES ALMOST EXACTLY

	Matches Almost Exactly	Matches Pretty Closely	Matches Only A Little	Does Not Match At All	Not Sure	
"In love" with their baby						[42]
All parents	87	9	2	1	1	
Child 0-8 months.....	89	9	1	-	1	
Child 9-18 months.....	85	9	3	2	1	
Child 19-36 months.....	87	10	1	1	1	
Happier than ever before						[39]
All parents	55	36	6	3	-	
Child 0-8 months.....	58	35	5	2	-	
Child 9-18 months.....	53	36	8	3	-	
Child 19-36 months.....	56	36	5	3	-	

Q.4 (cont'd)

	<u>Matches Almost Exactly</u>	<u>Matches Pretty Closely</u>	<u>Matches Only A Little</u>	<u>Does Not Match At All</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	
Surprised by their baby's changes and development						[44]
All parents	47	23	15	14	1	
Child 0-8 months.....	46	22	18	12	2	
Child 9-18 months.....	48	24	14	14	-	
Child 19-36 months.....	48	23	14	15	-	
Like they couldn't bear to be apart from their baby						[41]
All parents	45	23	20	11	1	
Child 0-8 months.....	46	20	21	12	1	
Child 9-18 months.....	46	23	17	12	2	
Child 19-36 months.....	44	24	21	11	-	
Stressed and worn out						[46]
All parents	39	17	24	20	-	
Child 0-8 months.....	30	20	25	25	-	
Child 9-18 months.....	42	19	22	16	1	
Child 19-36 months.....	42	14	24	20	-	
Afraid of doing something wrong						[45]
All parents	32	20	26	22	-	
Child 0-8 months.....	32	17	28	22	1	
Child 9-18 months.....	30	20	28	22	-	
Child 19-36 months.....	32	20	26	22	-	
Afraid of not being a good parent						[40]
All parents	27	20	21	32	-	
Child 0-8 months.....	22	19	20	38	1	
Child 9-18 months.....	24	20	21	34	1	
Child 19-36 months.....	31	20	21	28	-	
Unsure about what to do a lot of the time						[43]
All parents	23	21	32	23	1	
Child 0-8 months.....	20	20	32	28	-	
Child 9-18 months.....	23	22	33	21	1	
Child 19-36 months.....	24	21	31	23	1	

Study #4852—page 5

- 5a. Switching to the present now, in your day-to-day life, who do you usually turn to for information or advice about kids and parenting when you feel you need it?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Mother/mother-in-law.....	42	44	47	37	[47]
Father/father-in-law.....	4	4	5	4	>
Both parents/in-laws.....	14	14	11	15	
Spouse/partner.....	11	8	14	11	
Grandparent(s)/other relative(s).....	11	16	11	9	
Other parent(s).....	5	4	4	7	
Friend(s).....	18	19	18	17	
Neighbor(s).....	1	2	1	1	
Child's baby-sitter/care provider.....	2	2	2	3	[48]
Child's doctor/pediatrician.....	15	21	13	13	>
God.....	3	1	4	3	
Books/magazines.....	5	5	3	5	
Other.....	3	2	2	4	
Do NOT usually seek information/advice (VOL)	5	4	5	6	
Not sure.....	1	1	-	1	

- 5b. How often do you look for information about babies, toddlers, and parenting issues in magazines -- very regularly, fairly regularly, once in a while, or hardly ever?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Very regularly.....	18	24	18	15	[49]
Fairly regularly.....	18	23	17	16	CONTINUE
Once in a while.....	32	28	36	32	
Hardly ever.....	31	25	29	36	SKIP TO Q.5d
Not sure.....	1	-	-	1	

(ASK OF ALL RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY LOOK FOR MAGAZINE INFORMATION AT LEAST ONCE IN A WHILE IN Q.5b.)

- 5c. Which magazines do you read most often for this kind of information? (ACCEPT AS MANY ANSWERS AS RESPONDENT OFFERS.)

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Parenting magazines (net)	82	87	82	78	
Child.....	12	13	11	11	[50]
Family Fun.....	1	-	1	2	>
Family Life.....	1	-	1	2	
Parenting.....	39	46	40	34	
Parents.....	37	38	33	39	
Working Mother.....	3	2	2	4	
Baby Talk.....	3	4	3	2	
American Baby.....	1	1	1	-	
Other parenting magazines.....	17	21	16	15	
"Women's" magazines (net)	8	7	6	10	
Better Homes & Gardens.....	2	-	2	3	[51]
Family Circle.....	3	2	2	4	>
Good Housekeeping.....	2	1	2	3	
Redbook.....	1	1	1	-	
Woman's Day.....	2	1	1	3	
Other women's magazines.....	3	3	3	3	
News magazines	3	1	2	3	[52]
All other magazines.....	7	7	7	8	>
Not sure.....	10	6	11	12	

(ASK EVERYONE)

- 5d. And how often do you get information about babies, toddlers, and parenting issues from brochures and literature from your pediatrician's office — very regularly, fairly regularly, once in a while, or hardly ever?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Very regularly	18	24	17	16	[53]
Fairly regularly	21	26	22	19	
Once in a while	30	28	31	29	
Hardly ever	30	21	29	35	
Not sure	1	1	1	1	

- 5e. Parents of young children don't have a lot of free time, as you well know. Given that, how much attention do you usually pay to newspaper articles or news reports about issues related to infants and toddlers and their development — a great deal, quite a bit, only some, or very little?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
A great deal of attention	19	17	23	17	[54]
Quite a bit of attention	27	29	28	25	
Only some attention	28	29	28	28	
Very little attention	24	21	19	28	
Depends (VOL)	1	2	1	1	
Not sure	1	2	1	1	

- 5f. If you could talk with someone who's an expert on child development and parenting issues, what are the main things you'd want to ask him or her about children who are your child's age or about parenting?

(PROBE:) Specifically what kinds of questions would you have or what information would you want to get from a child development and parenting expert? [55-58]

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.
Questions about discipline	10	4	10	12
Questions about development stages	9	13	8	8
Health questions, what to do if baby is sick	7	10	5	6
How to deal with kids who fight, bite, punch, throw temper tantrums	5	3	4	6
What baby should be eating, what is good for baby and what isn't	5	4	4	5
Bed time, sleeping habits, patterns	4	4	6	3
Best way to potty train	4	2	3	5
Questions about emotional state, development	3	1	2	5
Education, how to prepare them for school	3	2	3	3
Don't know; no response	23	30	25	19

6. Now I'd like to get a picture of what things are like in your daily life with (your child/the child we're focusing on in this interview). First, thinking back to *yesterday*, which of the following things – if any – did *you personally* do, that is, you, and not your spouse or partner or someone else in the household? (ACCEPT AS MANY AS APPLY.)

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Talked to your child	96	96	98	96	
Cuddled your child for more than a few seconds	96	95	96	96	
Played with your child	93	95	96	91	
Ate with your child	90	81	94	93	
Dressed your child	83	87	87	80	
Gave your child a bath	68	64	70	69	[59]
Sang to your child	65	71	69	61	
Read to your child	62	43	62	72	>
Other (VOL)	2	2	1	2	
None (VOL)	-	1	1	-	
Did not see child/was out of town (VOL)	-	1	-	1	
Not sure/refused	-	-	-	-	

- 7a. Most parents try to do their best for their children, of course, and different people have different ideas and expectations about how they're doing as parents. How would you rate yourself as a parent so far – would you say you're outstanding and don't feel a need to improve; are excellent but would like to improve just a little; are good, but definitely want to improve in several areas; or are somewhat below average and are working hard at improving?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Outstanding/don't need to improve	8	8	8	8	SKIP TO Q.7c [60]
Excellent/want to improve just a little	47	52	46	45	
Good/definitely want to improve in several areas	43	39	45	45	CONTINUE
Somewhat below average/working hard at improving	2	1	1	2	
Not sure	-	-	-	-	

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO GIVE THEMSELVES ANY RATING LOWER THAN "OUTSTANDING" IN Q.7a)

- 7b. To the extent that you may not consider yourself a totally "outstanding" parent, which one or two of the following reasons best explain why you feel you may need to improve? (ACCEPT UP TO TWO.)

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
You lack confidence in your parenting skills	11	16	11	9	[61]
You find it hard to understand your child's feelings and needs	19	21	20	16	>
You worry that someone other than you or your spouse has more influence on your child	11	10	10	11	
You don't know how to handle difficult situations with your child	19	14	20	21	
You don't spend as much quality time with your child as you'd like to	37	31	37	40	
There is always room for improvement	1	1	1	1	
Other	3	3	3	3	[62]
None (VOL)	13	15	13	12	>
Not sure/refused	4	3	3	4	

(ASK EVERYONE.)

7c. Everyone has some things that they do well as parents and some things that they do less well as parents. I'm going to read you some qualities and characteristics, and ask you to give yourself a letter grade of "A," "B," "C," "D," or "F" on each one.

On this grading scale, an "A" means you feel that, most of the time, you are excellent on a particular quality or characteristic, and an "F" means you feel that, much of the time, you are poor on that particular quality. Please be as honest as you can in doing this "report card," even if it means you have to be a tough grader, and please feel free to use pluses or minuses in grading yourself.

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE GPA

	<u>GPA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
Working together with your child to explore and discover new things							[65-66]
All parents	3.40	50	40	9	-	-	1
Child 0-8 months	3.44	50	41	6	-	-	3
Child 9-18 months	3.41	51	40	8	-	1	-
Child 19-36 months	3.36	49	40	11	-	-	-
Trying to understand what your child might be thinking and feeling							[63-64]
All parents	3.14	31	53	14	1	1	-
Child 0-8 months	3.14	31	56	11	1	1	-
Child 9-18 months	3.12	31	50	17	1	1	-
Child 19-36 months	3.15	32	53	14	1	-	-
Regularly spending time when you're focused only on your child and are not doing something else at the same time							[69-70]
All parents	3.05	31	45	19	3	1	1
Child 0-8 months	3.17	38	43	18	1	-	-
Child 9-18 months	3.01	29	47	21	3	-	-
Child 19-36 months	3.01	30	45	20	3	1	1
Not rushing your child							[71-72]
All parents	3.13	39	38	17	3	1	2
Child 0-8 months	3.35	47	36	11	1	-	5
Child 9-18 months	3.25	44	38	13	1	1	3
Child 19-36 months	2.96	32	39	23	5	1	-
Controlling your temper when your child does something that makes you angry							[67-68]
All parents	2.95	29	42	22	4	2	1
Child 0-8 months	3.31	46	40	10	1	1	2
Child 9-18 months	3.02	33	44	18	3	2	-
Child 19-36 months	2.73	20	44	29	5	2	-

- 8a. I'd like to focus on your child care situation for a moment. *Not counting you and your spouse or partner* – how many child care providers, in total, has your child had since (he/she) was born? (THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE OCCASIONAL BABY-SITTERS. IF THERE ARE MULTIPLE CAREGIVERS IN ONE SETTING – SUCH AS AT A DAY CARE CENTER – RESPONDENT SHOULD INCLUDE ALL OF THEM, IF THEY ALL TAKE CARE OF CHILD.)

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
None/no other caregivers.....	20	31	18	17	[73]
One.....	29	33	31	25	
Two.....	23	18	21	27	
Three.....	14	11	12	16	
Four.....	6	3	9	7	
Five.....	3	1	3	3	
Six or more.....	4	3	5	4	
Not sure/refused.....	1	-	1	1	

- 8b. And right now, do you have someone else – besides your spouse or partner – who takes care of your child on a regular basis, such as when you're at work or in school? (IF "YES," ASK:) And who is that? (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES IF OFFERED.)

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Yes, currently have regular caregiver (net)	60	48	59	66	
Child's grandparent.....	23	21	21	26	[74]
Other family member.....	9	11	8	8	>
Day care/child care center.....	16	8	13	21	
Provider who comes to respondent's home.....	4	3	5	3	
Provider who cares for child in provider's home.....	9	7	10	9	
Other.....	4	4	5	4	
Refused.....	-	-	-	-	
No, currently do not have regular caregiver.....	40	51	41	34	
Refused to say whether have caregiver.....	-	-	-	-	

- 8c. On most days, do you end the day feeling that you spent too much time with your child, spent about the right amount of time, or spent less time with your child than you wanted to? (IF "LESS TIME," ASK:) And do you usually feel like you spent a lot less time or just a little less time with your child than you wanted to?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Spent too much time.....	6	5	6	5	[75]
Spent about right amount of time.....	44	53	45	39	
Spent a lot less time than wanted to.....	20	17	18	23	
Spent just a little less time than wanted to.....	27	24	28	29	
Depends/varies (VOL).....	3	1	3	4	
Not sure/refused.....	-	-	-	-	

- 9a. In terms of your family circumstances, are you married, living with a partner, separated, divorced, widowed, or single?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Married.....	76	75	74	76	[76]
Living with a partner.....	10	10	12	9	CONTINUE
Separated.....	4	2	5	5	
Divorced.....	2	1	1	3	SKIP TO
Widowed.....	-	-	-	-	Q.10a/b
Single.....	8	12	8	7	
Refused.....	-	-	-	-	

Study #4852--page 10

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY ARE MARRIED/LIVING WITH A PARTNER IN Q.9a.)

- 9b. And which one of you has the *primary* responsibility for your child's basic care each day -- you, your (spouse/partner), do the two of you share that responsibility equally, or does someone else have that responsibility?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Mother/female partner has primary responsibility	52	54	56	50	[77]
Father/male partner has primary responsibility....	6	6	5	7	
Share responsibility equally.....	25	23	24	26	
Someone else has responsibility.....	1	1	1	1	
Depends/varies (VOL).....	1	1	-	-	
Not sure/refused.....	1	-	-	1	
Parents Without Spouse/Partner (Q.9a)	14	15	14	15	

- 10a/b. If you were to generalize, about how much of the time do you feel sure that you really understand what your (baby's/toddler's) behaviors and nonverbal communications mean -- all the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or do you hardly ever feel sure that you really understand your baby's signals?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
All the time	13	13	9	14	[78-79]
Most of the time	73	72	76	72	
Only some of the time.....	13	12	13	13	
Hardly ever	1	2	2	1	
Depends/varies (VOL).....	-	-	-	-	
Not sure	-	1	-	-	

11. Parents face all kinds of challenging situations with their babies and young children, and though most parents try to do their best in handling every situation most of the time, they're not *always* at their best, of course, and they may not *always* know what to do. For each of the following difficult scenes I describe -- whether you've actually faced it yet or not -- please tell me how confident you feel that you would know the best and most appropriate way to handle it.

For instance, imagine that (READ FIRST ITEM) -- do you feel totally confident, pretty confident, somewhat doubtful, or very doubtful that you know the most appropriate way to handle this?

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY TOTALLY CONFIDENT

	Totally Confident	Pretty Confident	Somewhat Doubtful	Very Doubtful	Not Sure	
Your child drops an object over and over again and waits for you to pick it up						[81]
All parents	46	44	5	1	4	
Child 0-8 months.....	43	45	5	-	7	
Child 9-18 months.....	47	44	5	1	3	
Child 19-36 months.....	47	44	6	1	2	
It's late at night, and your child can't stop crying and go back to sleep						[80]
All parents	35	56	7	1	1	
Child 0-8 months.....	33	55	9	2	1	
Child 9-18 months.....	32	57	8	2	1	
Child 19-36 months.....	38	56	5	-	1	
Your child is irritable and fussy and keeps kicking and squirming when you try to hold (him/her)						[82]
All parents	34	51	11	2	2	
Child 0-8 months.....	34	49	12	2	3	
Child 9-18 months.....	34	51	11	1	3	
Child 19-36 months.....	35	51	10	2	2	

Q.11 (cont'd)

	<u>Totally Confident</u>	<u>Pretty Confident</u>	<u>Somewhat Doubtful</u>	<u>Very Doubtful</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	
You and your child are ready to play, but (he/she) can't talk to let you know what activities (he/she) is ready for						[83]
Child 0-8 months.....	35	51	7	1	6	
Your child keeps wandering away from you						[86]
Child 19-36 months.....	38	44	11	2	5	
Your child is having a temper tantrum						[85]
Child 19-36 months.....	37	48	11	2	2	
Your child is always hitting or biting other children						[84]
Child 19-36 months.....	33	43	14	5	5	

- 12a. Sometimes it's hard for parents to know whether their baby or young child is changing and developing in healthy and positive ways. Thinking about your own child's development so far, how sure do you feel that you know what signs to watch for that would indicate that your child's *physical* development – that is, (his/her) ability to sit up, crawl, or walk – is healthy and about right for (his/her) age – are you totally sure, pretty sure, only somewhat sure, or not sure at all?

	<u>All Parents</u>	<u>Child 0-8 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 9-18 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 19-36 Mo.</u>	
Totally sure.....	53	47	55	56	[87]
Pretty sure.....	40	45	41	37	
Only somewhat sure.....	5	6	3	5	
Not sure at all.....	1	1	1	2	
Don't know/refused.....	1	1	-	-	

- 12b. And how sure do you feel that you know what signs to watch for that would indicate that your child's *emotional* development – that is, the ways (he/she) expresses moods and feelings like contentment, happiness, sadness, or fear – is healthy and about right for (his/her) age – are you totally sure, pretty sure, only somewhat sure, or not sure at all?

	<u>All Parents</u>	<u>Child 0-8 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 9-18 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 19-36 Mo.</u>	
Totally sure.....	38	41	34	39	[88]
Pretty sure.....	48	44	52	48	
Only somewhat sure.....	13	13	13	12	
Not sure at all.....	1	2	1	1	
Don't know/refused.....	-	-	-	-	

- 12c. How sure do you feel that you know what signs to watch for that would indicate that your child's *social* development – that is, the way (he/she) acts toward the people around (him/her), like family, friends, or strangers – is healthy and about right for (his/her) age – are you totally sure, pretty sure, only somewhat sure, or not sure at all?

	<u>All Parents</u>	<u>Child 0-8 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 9-18 Mo.</u>	<u>Child 19-36 Mo.</u>	
Totally sure.....	37	40	38	35	[89]
Pretty sure.....	51	44	51	53	
Only somewhat sure.....	11	13	9	11	
Not sure at all.....	1	2	1	1	
Don't know/refused.....	-	1	1	-	

- 12d. And finally, how sure do you feel that you know what signs to watch for that would indicate that your child's *intellectual* development – that is, (his/her) ability to think, explore things, and be curious – is healthy and about right for (his/her) age – are you totally sure, pretty sure, only somewhat sure, or not sure at all?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Totally sure.....	44	40	45	45	[90]
Pretty sure.....	46	45	46	46	
Only somewhat sure.....	8	11	8	7	
Not sure at all.....	2	3	1	2	
Don't know/refused.....	-	1	-	-	

- 13a. Which one of these four main types of development in babies and young children, if any, do you feel you have the *most* information and knowledge about – physical, emotional, social, or intellectual development? (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES IF OFFERED.)

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE IN Q.13a

	Q.13a. Most Information				Q.13b. Least Information				
	All	0-8	9-18	19-36	All	0-8	9-18	19-36	
Physical development.....	51	54	53	49	7	7	8	7	
Intellectual development.....	16	10	13	21	24	30	26	19	
Emotional development.....	17	20	17	15	26	21	26	29	[91-92]
Social development.....	11	10	13	11	23	23	21	25	>
All (VOL).....	15	14	15	16	-	1	-	-	
None.....	1	1	1	1	14	14	14	15	
Not sure/refused.....	2	2	3	1	6	5	6	6	

- 13b. And in which area, if any, do you feel you have the *least* information or knowledge? (REPEAT CHOICES, LEAVING OUT RESPONDENT'S ANSWERS IN Q.13a. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES IF OFFERED.)

- 13c. Which of these four main types of development in babies and young children do you believe you have the greatest influence on as a parent – physical, emotional, social, or intellectual development – or do you believe you can't really have much influence on these types of development? (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES IF OFFERED.)

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE IN Q.13c

	Q.13c. Greatest Influence				Q.13d. Least Influence				
	All	0-8	9-18	19-36	All	0-8	9-18	19-36	
Emotional development.....	39	38	41	38	10	7	8	12	[93-94]
Intellectual development.....	19	18	17	22	14	16	13	14	>
Social development.....	16	17	17	15	19	17	20	19	
Physical development.....	14	16	13	15	30	29	31	30	
All (VOL).....	21	22	20	20	1	-	1	1	
None.....	1	1	-	1	19	21	19	18	
Not sure/refused.....	2	2	1	2	7	10	8	6	

- 13d. And which of these four main types of development do you believe you have the *least* influence on as a parent? (REREAD CHOICES, LEAVING OUT RESPONDENT'S ANSWER IN Q.13c. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)

Study #4852—page 13

- 13e. Leaving aside your child's *physical* health and development, how often does your pediatrician talk to you about your child's emotional, social, and intellectual development — during every visit, during most visits, during some visits, rarely, or has your pediatrician never discussed your child's emotional, social, and intellectual development with you?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Every visit.....	34	42	34	31	[95]
Most visits	21	22	24	18	
Some visits.....	16	14	14	18	
Rarely.....	13	7	14	16	
Never.....	11	9	11	12	
Don't know/refused	5	6	3	5	

- 13f. If you had just moved to a new town and were looking for a doctor for your child, how much would it influence your decision if one of the doctors you were considering offered the services of a person whose job it is to get to know you and your child, answer questions, and provide guidance on what to expect in your child's development — would it be a very important factor, a fairly important factor, an only somewhat important factor, or not an important factor in your decision?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Very important factor	65	63	68	64	[96]
Fairly important factor	19	21	18	19	
Only somewhat important factor.....	9	10	9	9	
Not an important factor	5	4	3	6	
Don't know/refused.....	2	2	2	2	

14. As you may be aware, there are various theories about babies and toddlers being discussed these days. For each of the ideas or statements I mention, please tell me whether you're sure it's true, think it's probably true, think it's probably false, or are sure it's false.

THIS TABLE HAS BEEN RANKED BY THE DIFFERENTIAL
(PROPORTIONS WHO GIVE THE CORRECT ANSWER MINUS PROPORTIONS WHO GIVE THE INCORRECT ANSWER)

	Differ- ential	Sure It's True	Think It's Probably True	Think It's Probably False	Sure It's False	Not Sure	
Babies are learning from the moment they are born¹							[98]
All parents.....	95	87	10	1	1	1	
Child 0-8 months	96	88	9	1	-	2	
Child 9-18 months	96	86	11	1	-	2	
Child 19-36 months	94	87	10	2	1	-	
Parents' <i>emotional</i> closeness with their baby can strongly influence that child's <i>intellectual</i> development¹							[105]
All parents.....	91	69	25	2	1	3	
Child 0-8 months	88	65	27	2	2	4	
Child 9-18 months	94	70	26	1	1	2	
Child 19-36 months	92	71	24	2	1	2	
The things a child experiences before the age of three will greatly influence his or her ability to do well in school¹							[97]
All parents.....	86	54	38	5	1	2	
Child 0-8 months	87	52	40	4	1	3	
Child 9-18 months	84	54	37	6	1	2	
Child 19-36 months	88	55	38	4	1	2	

¹The correct answer is "true".

Q.14 (cont'd)

	<u>Differ- ential</u>	<u>Sure It's True</u>	<u>Think It's Probably True</u>	<u>Think It's Probably False</u>	<u>Sure It's False</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	
A baby can't communicate much until he or she is able to speak at least a few words²							[104]
All parents.....	76	4	7	14	73	2	
Child 0-8 months	78	5	4	16	71	4	
Child 9-18 months	78	3	7	13	75	2	
Child 19-36 months	75	5	7	14	73	1	
If a baby does not receive appropriate stimulation -- like being read to, played with, or touched and held -- his or her brain will not develop as well as the brain of a baby who does receive these kinds of stimulation¹							[106]
All parents.....	74	58	27	8	3	4	
Child 0-8 months	66	55	25	10	4	6	
Child 9-18 months	73	57	28	8	4	3	
Child 19-36 months	79	60	28	6	3	3	
Every baby is born with a certain level of intelligence, which cannot be either increased or decreased by how parents interact with him or her²							[103]
All parents.....	53	7	14	24	50	5	
Child 0-8 months	54	8	12	24	50	6	
Child 9-18 months	52	7	14	23	50	6	
Child 19-36 months	54	7	14	25	50	4	
Babies less than six months old can get depressed¹							[100]
All parents.....	47	29	36	12	6	17	
Child 0-8 months	43	28	35	14	6	17	
Child 9-18 months	45	30	35	15	5	15	
Child 19-36 months	49	28	38	10	7	17	
By age one, a baby's brain is fully developed²							[101]
All parents.....	36	8	15	30	29	18	
Child 0-8 months	28	10	16	30	24	20	
Child 9-18 months	40	7	15	27	35	16	
Child 19-36 months	36	8	15	31	28	18	
The more caregivers a child has before age three, the better that child will be at adapting and coping with change²							[99]
All parents.....	-8	20	30	28	14	8	
Child 0-8 months	-13	23	30	25	15	7	
Child 9-18 months	-10	22	29	24	17	8	
Child 19-36 months	-4	18	30	32	12	8	
The more stimulation a baby receives, the better off he or she is²							[102]
All parents.....	-78	58	29	6	3	4	
Child 0-8 months	-79	54	33	5	3	5	
Child 9-18 months	-73	56	29	8	4	3	
Child 19-36 months	-78	60	27	6	3	4	

¹The correct answer is "true".²The correct answer is "false".

- 15a. As it turns out, researchers have discovered that if a baby's parents interact with him or her appropriately – such as by talking, hugging, playing, and responding in ways that match the baby's interests and attention level – that baby will tend to experience greater intellectual and brain development than a baby whose parents don't interact with him or her in these ways. Researchers also have learned that the more love and *emotional* security a baby gets from parents, the better he or she will do when it comes to learning and doing well in school later in life.

Based on this new information, is there anything you'd want to know more about in terms of your role in affecting your own child's intellectual development and ability to learn?

(PROBE:) What questions would you as a parent want to ask a child development expert who has done research on these issues of brain development and how babies and young children learn? [107-114]

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.
Activities that stimulate, enhance development	7	6	6	7
What parents should do to make sure they are interacting the correct way, what parents should do to help	2	3	2	1
What to do to improve intellectual development	2	3	1	2
How to prepare for school, teach baby to like school	2	1	2	2
What books to read	1	1	2	1
Don't know; no response	35	33	37	36

- 15b. How interested would you be in learning more about brain development and how very young children learn – extremely interested, very interested, fairly interested, just somewhat interested, or not interested?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Extremely interested.....	28	31	30	25	[115]
Very interested	32	32	31	31	
Fairly interested	21	21	19	23	
Just somewhat interested	12	10	13	13	
Not interested	5	3	5	7	
Not sure	2	3	2	1	

FACTUALS: Now I just have some questions that are for statistical purposes only.

F1. What is your age, please?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Under age 18	2	4	3	1	[116]
18-24	21	25	22	18	
25-29	21	24	19	20	
30-34	28	22	28	31	
35-39	17	15	18	17	
40-44	6	4	6	7	
45-49	2	2	1	2	
50-54	1	-	1	1	
55-59	-	-	-	1	
60 and over	-	1	-	1	
Refused	2	3	2	1	

F2a. What type of work does the head of your household do? What is the job called?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
High-level professional	12	12	9	13	[118]
Middle-level professional	11	10	11	11	
Executive, manager	6	3	8	7	
Sales, proprietor	9	6	11	9	
White collar worker	9	9	8	9	
Skilled laborer	44	48	43	42	
Semi- and unskilled laborer ...	-	-	1	1	
Farmer/rancher	1	2	1	1	
Homemaker	1	2	1	1	
Retiree	1	1	1	1	
Student	2	2	1	2	
Other	1	1	1	1	
Not sure/refused	3	4	4	2	

(ASK OF ALL WOMEN)

F2b. Are you currently working at a paid job? (IF "YES," ASK:) Do you work full time or part time?

(IF "NO," ASK:) Were you working at a paid job before having your child? (IF "YES," ASK:) And do you have any plans to go back to work within the next six months?

(ASK OF ALL MEN)

F2c. Is your spouse or partner currently working at a paid job? (IF "YES," ASK:) Does she work full time or part time?

(IF "NO," ASK:) Was she working at a paid job before having your child? (IF "YES," ASK:) And does she have any plans to go back to work within the next six months?

	Women				
	All Par- ents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Currently work full time	40	34	42	41	[119-120]
Currently work part time	19	14	14	24	
Was working before having child -- will go back to work	8	10	6	9	
Was working before having child -- will not go back to work	10	14	10	7	
Was working before having child -- not sure about going back to work	3	4	5	2	
Not currently working and was not working before having child	15	18	17	13	
Not sure/refused	5	6	6	4	

(ASK EVERYONE)

F3. What is the highest level of education you have completed

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Eighth grade or less	1	1	2	-	[121]
Some high school	7	13	8	4	
High school graduate	26	21	25	28	
GED/HS equivalency	3	1	3	3	
Post-HS vocational training	2	3	2	2	
Some college, no degree	18	20	16	19	
2-year college graduate/associate's degree	12	11	14	12	
4-year college graduate	18	17	18	18	
Postgraduate work, master's degree	9	8	9	10	
Doctoral/law degree	2	2	1	2	
Not sure/refused	2	3	2	2	

F4. For statistical purposes only, could you please tell me whether you happen to be of Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background? (IF "NO," ASK:) What is your race or ethnic group – white, African American, Asian, or something else?

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Hispanic/Latino	10	8	11	11	[122]
White	70	71	71	69	
African American/black	14	15	13	14	
Asian	1	2	2	1	
Other	2	2	2	2	
Refused	3	2	1	3	

F5. And finally, again just for statistical purposes, could you please tell me which one of the following categories represents your total household income? Just stop me when I get to the correct category.

	All Parents	Child 0-8 Mo.	Child 9-18 Mo.	Child 19-36 Mo.	
Below \$5,000	2	3	2	2	[123]
\$5,000-\$10,000	4	5	4	3	
\$10,000-\$15,000	7	7	8	6	
\$15,000-\$25,000	13	16	11	14	
\$25,000-\$35,000	16	10	15	18	
\$35,000-\$50,000	18	16	19	19	
\$50,000-\$75,000	14	13	16	13	
\$75,000-\$100,000	6	5	4	7	
Above \$100,000	5	7	6	4	
Not sure/refused	15	18	15	14	

Parents Speak: Findings from Focus Group Research on Early Childhood Development

April 17, 1997

How much do parents of babies and toddlers know about their children's intellectual, social, and emotional development at the earliest ages? What are parents doing to encourage healthy development of their babies in these interrelated domains? Belden & Russonello recently conducted eight focus groups for ZERO TO THREE, among parents of children under age three and expectant parents, to explore their knowledge and perceptions of child development before age three.

As new findings in brain research emerge, they should provide a major impetus for parents to understand their own ability to improve their children's lives, and indeed how all of us -- parents, grandparents, relatives, educators, child care providers, employers, policy makers and others -- can positively impact children's development. What we have found in our research discussions with parents is that we have a long way to go in informing them. Chief among our conclusions are these:

1. Parents do not see the full significance of early childhood: There is much progress to be made to convince parents of babies that the period from birth to age three is *particularly* significant and provides a unique opportunity. Parents feel that all of childhood is important, and while they tell us that zero to three is important to child development, they believe this only in general terms and within limits. We feel parents lack much of the new information that can help them as their child's first teacher. Our focus groups indicate parents understand that babies need more than love, including stimulation, consistency and sense of security, but parents are mostly unaware of the depth of their influences on their babies' long-term development.

2. Parents feel most able to impact babies' emotional development: Our inquiry looked at attitudes and knowledge in three developmental domains: intellectual, emotional, and social. Of the three, *emotional development may be the area in which parents believe they can have the most impact.* They stress the importance of making babies feel secure and loved from the very beginning. The parents in our research groups believe babies' feelings can be hurt, and that babies read and interpret their parents' and other people's emotional cues.

3. Laying down a foundation for social growth in the early years is not seen as critical: On the other hand, when it comes to social development, we have found attitudes to be quite different. Parents in our research were often unsure that long term impact on social development results from what happens to a child from birth to age three. They see *social development as an area where a child can "catch up"* and feel this area is less serious than the other domains.

4. Impacting intellectual development significantly seems least likely to parents: Parents say their young children are always learning. Yet, they feel *less able to impact intellectual development than other areas of childhood development.* The parents in our research describe intellectual development as a process of absorption -- rather than *creation* of more capacity or development of cognitive abilities. Some say that an unstimulating environment does not deny a child intellectual development, because much of the intellectual self is nature not nurture.

"If they get the emotional -- the proper attachments, the love, the support that they need, they will feel confident to go out in the social situations. . . explore things and learn intellectually." -- *mother, Richmond*

"No matter what you do . . . not everything is programmable....whether a child's going to be intelligent or not is more or less something they're born with, the level of intelligence they can achieve. That is kind of hard wired." -- *father, Boston*

"Really [it] is your innate abilities which affect how you do in school, more so than your experiences. But the more experience you have, that's going to give you more curiosity and interest. But your performance is really based on your native intelligence." - *mother, New York*

5. Caregiver overload: According to scientific research, the individuals with whom an infant or toddler spends the most time play a critical role in that child's emotional, social and intellectual development, and limiting the number of caregivers is important for creating strong relationships that form the basis of learning. Yet, the focus groups found *limiting the number of caregivers is a hot button issue* for parents. The suggestion that the consistency or limited number of caregivers matters makes some parents -- particularly those with multiple child care arrangements -- uncomfortable, guilty, or nervous. These feelings may potentially lead to some parents rejecting the notion that caregivers have important relationships with babies. Some parents believe that if a child has a stable home life, whatever happens during the day with child care may not be very important.

6. Get the good news about the opportunity of zero to three to parents early: The parents in our research groups made it clear that they learned about child development *on-the-job* as parents. It is important to raise the consciousness of parents *before* they have children or when their babies are very young. Reaching parents early may avoid having to battle guilt feelings of parents who feel they have failed if their child is past two or three years old and they took few steps to enhance their child's development.

Parental guilt and denial could be enemies of efforts to increase parents' involvement in their children's early development. Learning that the period from birth to age three is extremely important in child development and that parents can actively influence it, is not good news for those parents who feel they have now missed the boat. It is motivating, on the other hand, to new and expectant parents.

"I hope [having a limited number of caregivers is] not that important, because my child's on her third. Just don't tell me that I'm wrong." -- mother, Boston

"I feel that I'm getting better, that when she was born I was just so new at everything and I'm hoping I get better and better day by day, month by month, and year by year. It scares me to death thinking [that in] a year, that's it. My time is up." -- mother, Richmond

"[The statement about child development before age three] makes me paranoid...even though I'm trying, I do the best I can, like if I do one thing wrong... I'm an idiot...So, I think you always question yourself, even though you do the best that you can for them." -- mother, New York

7. Specific ideas and actions: Parents of young children need guidance if they are to maximize experiences in the early years. What they lack is not just information as to the importance of the earliest years, but also specific steps, ideas, activities, and concepts for making the most of this time. Parents want specific information on what they should do and how they should "be" with their child. For example, the parents in the focus group research have said they believe babies communicate and are interpretable almost from birth. However, they have difficulty understanding what their babies are communicating and what their behaviors mean. Many believe it is hard to read a baby's cues, and would appreciate help in learning how to do so.

8. Creating capacity by stimulating the brain: According to the focus group research, many parents see their role largely as keeping their children from harm. The participating parents in our groups often stress the negative impact of a poor emotional or social environment -- situations they seek to avoid. ZERO TO THREE and other advocates for children want parents to seek out *superior* experiences for their children -- not just adequate or base line "appropriate" interactions for social, emotional, and intellectual development. Our focus group research indicates that making a creative difference in the lives of children, through *improving the quality of their experiences and their "relationships" with the important people in their lives*, is a different way of thinking for many parents than what they have traditionally held to be their obligations to their children.

Many people may be missing the point that all of us - parents, grandparents, child care providers, aunts, uncles, and friends -- can help *create* capacity in children, by virtue of what we *do with* and *for them* when they are babies and toddlers.

"It is like you communicate with someone who speaks a foreign language and basically that's what you're doing." -- mother, Richmond

"[Babies] don't have instructions." -- mother, Boston

Eight focus groups were held from October 10, 1996 to February 23, 1997 in Boston, Richmond, New York City, and Philadelphia. The groups were held among parents of varying levels of education and income and were segmented by gender and race. Belden & Russonello is a 14 year old public opinion research firm in Washington, D.C. serving the media, non-profit, educational, and political organizations throughout the U.S. and Latin America.