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Who's Caring for the Kids? The Status of the Wages and Working Conditions of the Early Childhood Workforce in Minnesota

Jennifer L. Andres

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This thesis submitted by Jennifer L. Andres in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by _____

**WHO'S CARING FOR THE KIDS? THE STATUS OF THE WAGES AND
WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD
WORKFORCE IN MINNESOTA**

by

Jennifer L. Andres

B.S., St. Cloud State University, 2001

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

Dennis Nunez
Dean
School of Graduate Studies

St. Cloud, Minnesota

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This thesis submitted by Jennifer L. Andres in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD
WORKFORCE IN MINNESOTA

Jennifer L. Andres

The purpose of this study was to determine the wages and benefits that Minnesota center-based early childhood teachers received during 2007. The study utilized a questionnaire that was distributed to a random sample of licensed, center-based child care programs in Minnesota. Five hundred programs were randomly selected and surveyed with a response of 247 programs (48.4%). The results were compared to the results of a similar study completed in 1996.

Results of the study indicated that a large percentage of the teachers (45%) still received less than \$10.00 per hour for their work. Only 5% of the teachers earned \$18.00-\$20.00 per hour or more. The majority of teachers (60%) had been employed in their present positions for less than 3 years compared to 19% in the 1996 study. The results indicated that 44% of child care teachers told the common reason they left their positions was that they were dissatisfied with the wages they had received; an increase of 5% from 1996. Again, many teachers (32%) reported they left their positions to work in a different field or profession (32%).

Glen Pelt

Chairperson

Kathleen K. Ostedal

Michelle M. Mays

The education level of child care teachers in the 2007 study was compared to the 1996 sample, with the number of teachers in the workforce having some college or a Bachelor's degree or higher decreasing from 72% in 1996 to 45% in 2007. The study documented a 31% decrease in the number of teachers with a Master's degree when compared to the 1996 study. Child care teachers with a 2-year degree increased by 18% from the original study. Directors indicated that 65% of their programs still did not offer

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any type of health insurance coverage. A significant increase in the working conditions of child care teachers was indicated in the certain benefit areas as more than 60% of the programs indicated they offered paid sick days, paid vacations, paid holidays, free parking, compensation for attending staff meetings after hours, and telephone access for staff.

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Results of the study indicated that a large percentage of the teachers (45%) still received less than \$10.00 per hour for their work. Only 5% of the teachers earned \$18.00-\$20.00 per hour or more. The majority of teachers (60%) had been employed in their present positions for less than 3 years compared to 37% in the 1996 study. The results indicated that 44% of child care teachers told their directors that the most common reason they left their positions was that they were dissatisfied with the pay they had received; an increase of 5% from 1996. Again, many teachers (37%) reported they left their positions to work in a different field or to work in a public school setting (32%).

The education level of child care teachers showed notable changes in comparison to the 1996 sample, with the number of teachers in the workforce having some type Bachelor's degree or higher decreasing from 72% in 1996 to 45% in 2007. The study documented a 31% decrease in the number of teachers with a Master's degree when compared to the 1996 study. Child care teachers with a 2-year degree increased by 18% from the original study. Directors indicated that 65% of their programs still did not offer

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Sincere appreciation is given to my colleagues and family for the support and

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Approved by Research Committee:

Glen Palm

Glen Palm

Chairperson

Special thanks to the members of my committee, Dr. Nicky
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Boyer, Director of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals, for your willingness to
again collaborate this study.

To my parents, thank you for your encouragement to just "buy the shoes," your
financial assistance, and consistent assurance that I could and would complete this
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To my husband, Shane, my deepest thanks for the technological assistance you
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To my children, my sincere appreciation for demonstrating that life is short and
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Special thanks to the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Mick Mayhew, Dr. Kathy Ofstedal, and Dr. Glen Palm. I could not have completed this undertaking without all of the time and expertise you have offered me. And thanks to Margaret Boyer, Director of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals, for your willingness to again collaborate this study.

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Demographic Information

Measures

Chapter		Page
IV.	ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS	24
	Teacher Wages	25
	Teacher Benefits	28
	Teacher Working Conditions	Page
	LIST OF TABLES	viii
Chapter	Length of Teacher Employment in One Program	34
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Purpose of the Study	2
V.	DIS	4
	Definition of Terms	4
	Limitations of the Study	6
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
	Historical Overview of the Child Care Compensation Movement	7
	Naming the Problem: 1970-1985	8
	Worthy Wages as the Key to Better Child Care: 1985-1995	10
	The Compensation Issues Goes Mainstream: 1995-2001	13
REFEREN	Working for Worthy Wages: 2002 and Beyond	16
III.	METHOD	20
	Participants	20
	Procedure	20
	Demographic Information	21
	Measures	22

Chapter	Page
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS	24
Teacher Wages.....	25
Teacher Benefits	28
Teacher Working Conditions.....	30
Teacher Level of Education.....	32
Length of Teacher Employment in One Program.....	34
Child Care Teachers' Reasons for Leaving a Program	36
Jobs for Which Teachers Left Their Positions	37
V. DISCUSSION.....	40
Compensation	40
Benefits and Working Conditions	41
Education	43
Retention.....	44
Limitations.....	45
Recommendations.....	46
REFERENCES	49
APPENDIX Survey Invitation Letter and Survey.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
INTRODUCTION	
1. Program Demographics: Program Type, Program Classification, Funding Source	25
2. Comparison of Teachers' Hourly Wages, 1996 to 2007	27
3. Comparison of Benefits Provided for Full-Time Teachers, 1996 to 2007	29
4. Comparison of Working Conditions Provided for Full-Time Teachers, 1996 to 2007	31
5. Comparison of Education Levels of Teachers, 1996 to 2007	33
6. Comparison of Amount of Time Teacher had been Employed in the Child Care Program, 1996 to 2007	35
7. Comparison of Reasons Most Often Given when Child Care Teachers Left Their Positions, 1996 to 2007	37
8. Comparison of Jobs for Which Teachers Left Their Positions, 1996 to 2007	38

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Over two thirds of Minnesota's children under age 6 have both parents or their single parent in the labor force (Minnesota Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women, 2004), making early child care and education a necessity for most families with young children. Each weekday in Minnesota, over 40% of children ages 3 to 5 (preschoolers) are in center-based care as their primary non-parental care arrangement, where they spend most time during the week (Chase & Shelton, 2001).

Child care centers are an essential resource for parents who rely on directors and teachers to provide a safe and healthy environment that is stimulating, nurturing, and responsive to each child's unique talents, personality, needs, and cultural background. The interactions, activities, and relationships children experience in their classrooms will play a vital role in shaping their development and preparation for school.

A convergence of research shows that the quality of children's early care and education is linked to a range of developmental outcomes that are important for early school success, including cooperation with adults, positive play with peers, and skills in language and math (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). And as the mounting research continues to support and promote the message that the

early years represent a time of fantastic brain growth and development for children, growing numbers of parents and policymakers are coming to understand the need to connect children with well-trained teachers and high-quality programs to stimulate their learning (National Institute for Child Health and Development, 2001).

But child care centers in Minnesota, and across the nation, continue to face multiple challenges in this role. Although there has been a growing public consensus that in order to improve the quality of child care services in the United States the child care workforce must be better compensated, it is unclear if there has been any movement in that direction over the past decade.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to answer the question: Has there been a change to the wages, benefits, and working conditions offered to teachers who were employed in Minnesota's center-based child care programs compared to those reported a decade ago? This study will also address the question: How do the levels of education the teachers obtained compare to those reported a decade ago? Finally, this study will answer these questions:

1. For what length of time had teachers been working in their present position?
2. What were the reasons teachers gave for leaving their positions?
3. For what positions did they leave?

The results of this study were compared to the results reported in a study completed in March of 1996 by Joy Lein, graduate student at St. Cloud State University in

cooperation with the Alliance of Child Care Professionals in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Lein, 1996). The results of this study were used by the Alliance of Child Care Professionals to develop additional strategies to inform the public and Minnesota legislators on the status of the wages and working conditions of Minnesota child care workers.

A major ongoing challenge for child care centers has been to seek a balance in employing and retaining well-trained teachers who are compensated for their education, knowledge, and skills while being able to provide a quality child care environment with which to promote and stimulate the development of young children. The increased recognition of this issue through research and public awareness over time has aided in the recent development of federally funded programs through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Tout & Sherman, 2005). These initiative programs were designed to assist states with retaining teachers and reducing turnover. For example, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Minnesota (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) program is an education scholarship program for early childhood teachers that provides incentives to stay in the child care field. The REETAIN (Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now) program, started in 2003, is for early childhood teachers that provides financial incentive based on level of education attained, length of service in the field, salary, and other considerations. The inception of these programs is the result of a historical movement to improve child care compensation that began over a quarter of a century ago.

This researcher hopes that this survey and the analysis of its results will provide assistance to Minnesota's child care workers and their advocates in the continued effort to find a viable solution to the problem of providing fair wages and improved working conditions for Minnesota's child care workers. It is also the hope of this researcher that the results of this study will demonstrate if the implementation of such programs, like those mentioned above, have had any positive impact on the wages, benefits, and working conditions of Minnesota's child care center workers. It is hypothesized that this study will show that Minnesota child care workers continue to be severely underpaid and under compensated for their levels of education despite the increased public awareness and program implementation aimed at changing this very situation.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, center-based child care programs are defined as programs that provide child care, preschool/nursery school programs, Head Start programs, night care, drop-in, and sick care for fewer than 24 hours a day in a setting that is not a residence (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2007). A center must have a director and the appropriate number of staff qualified as teachers, assistant teachers, and aides based on the staff ratio and distribution requirements.

A Head Start child care program is defined as a federally funded government program where 90% of the participants must have incomes at or below the federal poverty guideline. The program provides comprehensive services to its participants

including language and literacy, health services, social services, and social/emotional early childhood education.

Nursery school and or preschool programs are defined as day programs that serve children ages 33 months to 5-years-old only and operate with an educational emphasis.

A school-age program is defined as a program licensed as a child care center, serving more than 10 children, with the primary purpose of providing care for children in Kindergarten to under 13 years of age only.

For definition purposes, the turnover rate of child care teachers reflects the annual percentage of staff departures by position. It is calculated by the division of the number of staff by position who left the child care center in a single year by the number of staff employed in the center in that position (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2004).

A teacher is defined as a child care worker who works in a center-based child care program that is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services under Child Care Center Rules: Chapter 9503. A teacher must be at least 18-years-old and meet one of nine possible combined credential, education, and experience requirements such as a high school diploma with 4,160 hours of experience as an assistant teacher and 24 quarter credits in a child care related field (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2007).

An assistant teacher is defined as one who must work under the supervision of a teacher, must be at least 18-years-old, and meet one of the nine combined credential,

education, and experience requirements such as a high school diploma with 2,080 hours of experience as an aide or intern and 12 quarter credits.

An aide is defined as a child care worker who carries out the child care program activities under the supervision of a teacher or an assistant teacher. They must be at least 16-years-old.

No data specifically regarding directors, assistant teachers, or aides will be included in this report. The main focus of the study will be on child care teachers in center-based child care centers.

Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to have few limitations: a large random sample of the 1,500 actively licensed child care centers in Minnesota was taken. However, just 4 months prior to the beginning this study, the Wilder Foundation completed and published a large survey project for the Department of Human Services. The study focused on the wages, working conditions, benefits, education, and turnover rates of early childhood workers in child care centers, preschool programs, school-age programs, and family child care homes (Chase, Moore, & Arnold, 2007). It is highly probable that some of the same participants were asked to complete this survey as well. This duplication may have influenced some directors from completing the survey from this study, therefore potentially impacting the overall response rate.

Naming the Problem: 1970-1985

President Nixon's veto of comprehensive child care legislation in 1971 plunged child care advocates into a defensive mode. This chapter has persisted in some respects to the

Chapter II

present. While his claim that such a program would "endanger" American children sounds strangely archaic in the post-Cold War era, it resonated at the time with many

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Overview of the Child Care

Compensation Movement

(Belsky & Steinberg, 1978). Advocates would wait nearly 30 years before moving federal child care legislation forward again and, even then, what was proposed and passed was far less ambitious. An historical overview of the child care compensation movement in this country would be beneficial to the reader in that it will provide a better understanding of how the present dilemma in child care compensation came to be. This chapter will

During the 1970s and early 1980s, discussion about child care was overwhelmingly disapproving. Noted child care researcher Ellen Belsky recalled the predominant tone used when describing child care in those days (Belsky, 1984): When was identified and publicly articulated, primarily by teachers of young children.

I first became involved in the issue in the late 80s and the child care was seen as universally negative. That is, I always had the feeling that people thought that children were cordoned behind barb-wired fences looking out at the world because their mothers had left them to have other people raise them. In the research, the typical phrase was "daycare-reared children" (Belsky, 1984). Between 1985 and 1995, researchers demonstrated the link between low wages and the quality of services as it related to the well being of children. Between 1995 and 2001, the movement achieved greater visibility through sustained grassroots organizing efforts and public policy responses, driven largely by a growing child care staffing crisis, an overall economic boom in the United States and the passage in 1996 of

Indeed, child development researchers in the 1970s became entangled in their own Cold War about the effects of out-of-home care on children, particularly for middle-class children, echoes of which we heard even today (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Belsky, 1984; NICHD, 2001). national welfare reform legislation. From 2002 and beyond, public monetary investments and advocacy initiatives have again brought the child care compensation issue to the forefront. But has it been enough?

1978; Belsky, 1984; NICHD, 2001).

Naming the Problem: 1970-1985

President Nixon's veto of comprehensive child care legislation in 1971 plunged child care advocates into a defensive stance which has persisted in some respects to the present. While his claim that such a program would "sovietize" American children sounds strangely archaic in the post-Cold War era, it resonated at the time with many citizens who believed that young children should be cared for at home by their mothers (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978). Advocates would wait nearly 20 years before putting federal child care legislation forward again and, even then, what was proposed and passed was far less ambitious.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, discussion about child care was overwhelmingly disapproving. Noted child care researcher Ellen Galinsky recalled the predominant tone used when describing child care in those days (Belsky, 1984): When I first became involved in the issue, in the late 60s and 70s, child care was seen as universally negative. That is, I always had the feeling that people thought that children were cordoned behind barb-wired fences looking out at the world because their evil mothers had left them to have other people raise them. In the research, the typical phrase was "daycare-reared children" (Belsky, 1984).

Indeed, child development researchers in the 1970s became entangled in their own Cold War about the effects of out-of-home care on children, particularly for middle-class children, echoes of which are heard even today (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Belsky, 1984; NICHD, 2001).

Meanwhile, throughout this period, mothers of young children, along with women at all stages of life, entered the paid labor force in unprecedented numbers only to face a grossly inadequate supply of services. The child care workforce expanded rapidly during these years, particularly in the center-based sector and, then as now, the workforce was predominantly female. Nearly three quarters of center-based workers were Caucasian in contrast to today, when women of color comprise nearly half of this sector of the industry (Krajec, Bloom, Talan, & Clark, 2001; Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). Turnover was low by today's standards, at about 15% a year. Center-based workers, on average, were slightly better educated as a group than they are today (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979). Home-based providers during this period were found to be exclusively female, but diverse with respect to licensing status, level of education and training, and number of children cared for (Divine-Hawkins, 1981; Keyserling, 1972). Their educational levels were generally lower than those of center-based employees and their earnings were exceptionally low.

In its landmark 1972 report, *Windows on Day Care*, the National Council of Jewish Women spoke to the inadequate supply and quality of childcare services. "Large numbers of children are neglected; still larger numbers now receive care which, at best, can be called only custodial, and which, at its worst is deplorable. Only a relatively small portion are benefiting from truly developmental quality care"

(Keyserling, 1972, p. 28).

The plight of child care workers was central to the report's analysis. Along with a large investment in child care services and the expansion of training

opportunities, it recommended eliminating the “substandard wage scales and excessively long hours of day care personnel,” and making “professional salaries commensurate with those in elementary education” (Keyserling, 1972, p. 28).

Anticipating criticism of such a recommendation, the report argued:

Those interested in children must face the reality that good care is expensive, because good care requires people of ability and training who must be paid adequately if they are to be attracted to this field of work. The quality of day care depends on what we are willing to pay those responsible for it. We are shortchanging children when pay scales such as those reported by survey participants were found characteristic of so large a proportion of centers, both nonprofit and proprietary.

Clearly, when wage scales such as those reported occur so widely and on such a large scale, we are asking thousands of non-professional workers to subsidize the care of children of other women. We are also excluding from the day care field many women of intelligence and competence who cannot afford to accept salaries as low as some of those described no matter how rewarding is work with youngsters in human terms. (Keyserling, 1972, p. 29)

By and large, neither the labor movement nor the women’s movement actively pursued child care policy and organizing strategies during this period. The organized women’s movement was deeply ambivalent about taking a leading role around child care. In some ways, feminist activists wanted to get as far away from traditional women’s work as they possibly could (Maclean, 1999). Advocates focused on young children ignored the compensation problem as well, their energies drawn into the massive transformations occurring within the early childhood field during this period.

Worthy Wages as the Key to Better Child Care: 1985-1995

Tremendous changes occurred in child care during the decade spanning the late

1980s and early 1990s. Fueled by the ongoing influx of mothers with young children into the labor force, expansion in the industry gave rise to new institutions, strengthened previously ignored or weak sectors, and diversified the number and types of players in the field. Resource and referral agencies multiplied, supported by corporate as well as state dollars. For-profit child care chains mushroomed and joined conservatives to exert pressure on policy makers to limit standards, expand vouchers as the vehicle for subsidizing low-income families, and allow for-profit programs to access such subsidy. Child care advocates and other stakeholders once again began to organize around federal child care policy, building a broad coalition around the Act for Better Child Care (ABC), which ultimately became the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) (Cohen, 2001).

Research during this period also exposed widespread problems in the quality of child care for most of the nation's children at a time when government and business leaders were finally acknowledging that child care had the potential to make a major contribution to the economic and social well-being of children and the country as a whole (Committee for Economic Development 1991, 1993; Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990). Perhaps more importantly, starting with the release of the *National Child Care Staffing Study* (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990) followed by the *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study* (Helburn, 1995) and the *Families and Relative Care Study* (Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995) research explicitly drew the link between the quality of children's experience in child care and the compensation, stability, and training of their teachers and providers. Questions of child care financing arose as

stakeholders began to understand the consequences of a system resting on an underpaid, unstable and often untrained workforce (Alliance for Early Childhood Professionals, 1994, 1996; Hill-Scott, Grossman, & Pendley, 1994).

During this same period, the two largest federally supported early care and education systems demonstrated that public dollars could be used to dramatically improve salaries and reward professional development for child care teachers and providers. The 1990 Head Start Expansion and Quality Improvement Act, later renewed, led to the allocation of some \$470 million in salary increases for approximately 1,000,000 Head Start personnel—an average per-employee increase of about \$1,500 per year from 1991 through 1994 (Center for Child Care Workforce, 2004).

With the expansion of child care services, the ranks of the child care workforce soared. While the workforce continued to be predominantly female, the proportion of women of color caring for and educating young children increased. Public dollars, which were once the exclusive domain of better-paying nonprofit or government-operated center programs, were now diffused across all sectors of the industry, fueling the expansion not only of child care services but of lower paying child care jobs (Tuominen, 2001). Center-based workers were still better educated than women in other parts of the child care field and in the workforce as a whole, but the first signs emerged that formal educational levels were slipping in this sector (Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 1993). Turnover rates also began to soar, more than doubling in center-based care to nearly 40%. During this period, wages for center-based child care

workers, as for many other low-wage workers, failed to keep the pace with inflation (Child Care Employee Project, 1988).

From 1985-1995, the fledging efforts of earlier years blossomed into a creative, identifiable movement. By demonstrating the link between low pay and poor-quality care, the widely publicized National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook et al., 1990) drew supporters into the movement who had previously been reluctant, but now felt more comfortable talking about compensation as it related to the well being of children. The study carried more validity and drew more attention than previous research, partly because the Child Care Employee Project (1988) conducted it jointly with respected researchers, and also because it broke new ground in linking the adult work environment with children's learning environment, revealing the relationship between low wages and the widespread problem of poor-quality care.

The Compensation Issue Goes Mainstream:

1995-2001

Economic and political forces beyond the child care field have dramatically increased receptiveness to the compensation movement since 1995. A soaring demand for child care, resulting from the 1996 passage of national "welfare reform" legislation, focused necessary attention on who might provide services for the many children whose mothers were now required to enter the labor force. Some states and communities looked to these mothers to become child care workers themselves, but a heightened social awareness around low-wage jobs, brought on by welfare reform

itself, tended to dampen this enthusiasm, since most child care jobs offer meager hope for economic advancement or self-sufficiency.

Massive increases in child care funding resulting in the new welfare law—in a program now called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF—did greatly expand the number of family members and friends of former welfare recipients who received public dollars to care for children. In most states, the “informal” or license-exempt child care market quickly became a larger proportion of the industry, further diversifying the existing child care workforce with respect to ethnicity, language, formal education and occupational identity (Whitebook & Phillips, 1999).

A few states have managed to use new funds to build the regulated system or to support salary enhancement strategies, as in Washington and Wisconsin (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002). Mary Tuominen, a sociologist who studies child care workers, noted:

It's the other side of the coin on welfare reform, but in Washington State, our Early Childhood Education wage and Career Ladder is funded with welfare reform 'savings.' We were one of the states that initially targeted child care as a desirable occupation for women coming off welfare. And the argument was made that because child care was a low-income occupation in which people were likely to go on assistance, these TANF 'savings' should be used for the child care wage enhancement. There are certainly elements of robbing Peter to pay Paul, but it has been a resource that has enabled us to move ahead with implementing some of these compensation strategies. (cited in Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001, p. 88)

Adding to the pressure caused by welfare reform were the moves by many states to reduce class size in elementary schools and to expand state-funded pre-kindergarten programs. These policies, in combination with an economic boom in most sectors of the economy, led to severe shortages of teachers in many community-

based child care centers, since newly-created public school jobs, for example, could easily attract many of the most qualified child care workers by paying nearly twice the best available child care wage. Although not all pre-K programs paid as well as public schools, these positions also drew trained teachers away from other early childhood and Head Start programs. Jobs in other fields also offered more alluring financial opportunities—between 1996 and 2000, for example, nearly half the teaching staff who left a group of high-quality centers in California earned on average \$4.00 more per hour in positions unrelated to working with young children (Whitebook et al., 2001).

This mass departure of many of the best-trained teachers, providers, and administrators made it difficult to meet rising demand, or even to maintain existing levels of service. Child care centers found it impossible to fully staff their classrooms, often reporting staff vacancies that lasted for months. Directors complained that the skill and training levels of new recruits was sinking lower and lower (Whitebook et al., 2001). Similarly, in many communities, parents' already challenging search for child care grew more difficult and public dollars began to go unspent or contracts to be returned, all due the effects of the staffing shortage on child care programs' capacity. As a result, many who had been lukewarm to the compensation movement now jumped on the bandwagon to support policies that would retain and recruit people to the field (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002).

Alongside these trends, new research on brain development focused massive attention on the importance of the early years for children's optimal development (Carnegie Task Force, 1994; Shore, 1997), and good quality child care was also

identified as essential to school readiness (Stone & Mitchell, 2001). Media personalities and government leaders who cared about early childhood development, such as Rob Reiner and the Governors of Colorado, Georgia, and North Carolina, appropriated financial resources for several new approaches to early childhood services, including provisions or initiatives that supported financial reward and more training for child care providers (Askew & Wallace, 2001).

The compensation movement, the combination of welfare and educational reform, the economic boom and labor shortages, and the labor movement's awakening interest in child care workers all signaled new opportunities to win reforms to improve child care pay. Many advocates took advantage of this climate by designing and advocating for new initiatives to recruit and retain teachers and providers (Whitebook & Phillips, 1999). Many states also expanded pre-kindergarten programs which, although was not an explicit strategy of the compensation movement, held out promise in some communities of expanding the pool of better-paying work with young children. But, at the same time, it can be said that this period was one in which the inadequate, poor-quality child care system in the United States grew larger rather than better.

Working for Worthy Wages: 2002 and Beyond

Even before the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001, the signs of a major downturn in the economy were evident and child care advocates had begun to wonder whether this would diminish interest in compensation strategies or undermine existing initiatives. There were signs in some states that it might be a struggle to maintain

existing direct child care funding, let alone quality enhancement dollars. But during 2002, many efforts to create or strengthen state-funded universal preschool systems gathered momentum across the United States, emphasizing the need to provide better learning opportunities for 3- and 4-year-olds and to increase their school readiness (Bellm, Burton, Whitebook, Broatch, & Young, 2002). However, recent reports raised concerns about states' ability to adequately recruit, compensate, and retain the skilled teaching force that universal preschool systems require (Tout & Sherman, 2005).

In 2001 and 2002, over \$100 million dollars was spent to augment the earnings of child care teachers across the United States (Lynch, 2004). These financial rewards came in the form of annual stipends, health insurance coverage, and, for a small number, targeted, sustained pay increases. Driven in part by a healthy economy in the late 1990s, combined with growing demand for child care services and a shortage of trained child care workers, many states including California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin have initiated or expanded publicly-funded programs focused on building a more skilled and stable child care workforce. Initiatives have also been developed in Connecticut, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. Additionally, workers in Head Start, Department of Defense, and some pre-kindergarten early childhood programs are benefiting from salary enhancements built into those delivery systems (Montilla, Twombly, & De Vita, 2001; Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002).

While most child care teachers and providers continue to earn poverty-level wages, and many beneficiaries of the above-mentioned compensation initiatives still

are underpaid, there is little argument within the child care field, and a slowly dawning awareness among policy makers, that improved services for young children in the United States require better compensation for the child care workforce. This level of acknowledgement became present only a little over a decade ago, even within the child care community. In many communities, the focus is not on whether to raise wages, but on how best to do so, and a great deal of experimentation and debate continues to take place (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002).

Low wages, high turnover, and out-of-reach educational options have shown to represent a significant strain on child care teachers in Minnesota (Tout & Sherman, 2005). Since 1995, Minnesota policy makers have attempted to address these issues by increasing funding allocation for programs improvement grants, educational scholarships, and supplementary income grants. For example, the Child Care Assistance Program in Minnesota provided \$160,467,650 in direct service payments to child care programs on behalf of families in 2004 (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2007a) In addition, the T.E.A.C.H. program purchased 2,221 college credits on behalf of child care workers in 2005, while the REETAIN program awarded \$393,500 in grants to child care workers in 2006 (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2007a).

So where are we at today in Minnesota with regards to this compensation movement? Has the increased public awareness and current public investments in child care jobs positively influenced the wages, benefits, and working conditions of early childhood teachers in Minnesota? Are early childhood teachers obtaining the

same levels of education that they reported a decade ago? Are center-based child care centers able to retain their teachers for longer periods of time? This study will hopefully provide the reader with the answers to these questions and provide a better understanding of the current status of the wages and working conditions of the early childhood workforce in Minnesota.

Participants

A list of all of the active center-based child care programs (including Head Start, school-age child care, child care centers, and nursery schools) that were licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services was obtained from the organization's website. Programs that were mailed a survey were randomly selected from the list through the utilization of a random number sample program through the Microsoft Excel program. The surveys were number-coded for identification purposes only. A copy of the survey and accompanying letter can be found in the Appendix of this paper. Participants were not compensated in any way for completion of the survey. Participants were offered the opportunity to receive a copy of the study results if they provided an email address on the returned survey.

Procedure

A total of 500 surveys were mailed because this researcher desired to obtain responses from at least 10% of all of the licensed, center-based child care program directors and because there were approximately 1,500 center-based child care programs in Minnesota. A period of 1 month was allotted for the completion and return of the surveys.

It was requested that the surveys be returned to the Child and Family Studies Department at St. Cloud State University. Of the 500 surveys that were sent out, 263

Chapter III

(53%) were completed; 247 (49%) were returned for this study. This number represents 16.4% of the total number of center-based child care programs in Minnesota. Several

METHOD

items were partially completed and, therefore, that information was not feasible for use

Participants

There were no follow-up reminders sent to those centers who had not

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Demographic Information
Of the 247 programs that were surveyed, 120 (49%) were child care centers, 81 (33%) were nursery schools, 25 (10%) were school-age child care programs, and 21 (8%) were Head Start programs. There were approximately 719 teachers employed in the child care programs that were discussed in this survey. In only 10 (4%) of the programs did teachers work under a collective bargaining agreement. The surveys were mailed a survey were randomly selected from the list through the utilization of a random number sample program through the Microsoft Excel program. The surveys were number-coded for identification purposes only. A copy of the survey and accompanying letter can be found in the Appendix of this paper. Participants were not compensated in any way for completion of the survey.

Of the child care programs that were surveyed, 132 (53%) indicated that they were located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area. This includes the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Anoka, Carver, Scott, and Washington. Sixty-one percent

Procedure

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It was requested that the surveys be returned to the Child and Family Studies Department at St. Cloud State University. Of the 500 surveys that were sent out, 265 (53%) were completed; 247 (49%) were usable for this study. This number represents 16.4% of the total number of center-based child care programs in Minnesota. Several items were partially completed and, therefore, that information was not feasible for use in this study. There were no follow-up reminders sent to those centers who had not returned their surveys.

Demographic Information

Of the 247 programs that were surveyed, 120 (49%) were child care centers; 81 (33%) were nursery schools; 25 (10%) were school-age child care programs; and 21 (8%) were Head Start programs. There were approximately 719 teachers employed in the child care programs that were discussed in this survey. In only 10 (4%) of the programs did teachers work under a collective bargaining agreement.

Of the child care programs that were surveyed, 132 (53%) indicated that they were located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area. This includes the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Anoka, Carver, Scott, and Washington. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the 1,500 child care centers licensed in the state of Minnesota are located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area.

The programs in this study provided child care for a total of 14,103 children; 324 infants; 1,784 toddlers; 8,409 preschoolers; 3,586 school-age children.

Of the program directors that were surveyed, 63% indicated that their programs were incorporated as non-profit; 28% stated that their programs were classified as for-profit, and 9% indicated that their programs were part of a school system.

The programs in this study indicated that 59% were funded by parent fees only; 21% were funded in part by parent fees/in part by subsidies from the child care assistance fund; 11% were completely government funded; and 9% were church sponsored (Church sponsored is defined as a child care program that is primarily owned and operated by a religious group or organization. The program may or may not be incorporated as non-profit.).

Measures

The survey questionnaire was adapted and modified from the 1996 Minnesota Child Care Center Early Childhood Work Force Study by the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals and St. Cloud State University. The survey assessed the wages and benefits that child care teachers received as well as their working conditions, levels of education, reasons child care workers gave for leaving their positions, the positions for which they left, and the length of time they had been employed in their present position. The original survey was piloted by six directors of licensed child care programs located in St. Cloud and the Minneapolis area.

The current survey was the result of collaboration with the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals and its director, Margaret Boyer. The sections of the adapted survey included staff turnover—to determine the number of child care teachers who

left their positions in the previous year and the reasons they gave for leaving; staff benefits and working conditions—to determine the types of compensation, benefits, and privileges that were offered to child care teachers; and educational and professional training—to determine the levels of education child care teachers held. Demographic information related to the child care programs was collected. Some of the questions on the survey were listed solely for the purpose of gathering the information for the Alliance and were not included in the analysis of the results. Responses to the questionnaire were solicited from the directors of the child care programs in an effort to receive factual information regarding the wages and working conditions of child care teachers. The length of time they had been in their present positions.

- The reasons child care teachers gave for leaving their positions
- The positions for which teachers left.

Table 1 represents the demographic comparison of the subject groups in 1996 and 2007. In Tables 3-8, the statistical method of chi-square tests was used to test for significant differences between the 1996 and 2007 results.

Table 1

Program Demographics: Program Type, Program Classification, Funding Source

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

1996 Percentage
N=206

The results of this study will describe:

- The current wages and benefits that child care teachers received
- The conditions under which they did their work
- Their levels of education
- The length of time they had been in their present positions
- The reasons child care teachers gave for leaving their positions
- The positions for which teachers left.

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Child Care Program	42	18
Nursery School	10	4
School Age Program	9	4
Head Start Program	9	4
Program Classification		
Non-Profit Program	83	61
For-Profit Program	26	12
Part of a School System	9	4
Funded by Parent Fees/Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program	21	28
Government Funded Only	11	5
Church Sponsored Program	9	NR

Teacher Wages

The results for the survey item that address teachers' wages are reported in Table 2. Following each pay range, the frequency and percentage are given. Program

Table 1

Program Demographics: Program Type, Program Classification, Funding Source

	2007 Percentage N=247	1996 Percentage N=206
<u>Program Type</u>		
Child Care Center	49	44
Nursery School	33	42
School-Age Program	10	18
Head Start Program	9	4
<u>Program Classification</u>		
Non-Profit Program	63	63
For-Profit Program	28	18
Part of a School System	9	15
<u>Funding Source</u>		
Funded by Parent Fees Only	59	67
Funded by Parent Fees/Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program	21	28
Government Funded Only	11	5
Church Sponsored Program	9	NR

Teacher Wages

The results for the survey item that address teachers' wages are reported in Table 2. Following each pay range, the frequency and percentage are given. Program

directors were asked to indicate the number of teachers that received hourly wages in each category. The lowest hourly wage category was increased from \$3.00 in 1996 to \$6.00 in 2007 to adjust for the current minimum wage rate. All other categories were increased accordingly. The last column displays the 1996 hourly wages when adjusted for inflation/cost of living changes (31.1%) for 2007 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). For clarity in reporting results, the responses were collapsed into the following hourly pay ranges: \$6.00-\$9.99, \$10.00-\$14.99, \$15.00-\$17.99, \$18.00-\$20.00, or more.

Almost half (47%) of the teachers received \$6.00-\$9.99 as an hourly wage, resulting in a yearly income range of \$12,480-\$20,779. A large percentage (29%) of child care teachers received \$10.00-\$14.99 per hour for their work. This results in a gross yearly income of \$20,800-\$31,179 for teachers who worked 40 hours per week and 52 weeks per year. Directors indicated that 19% of the teachers in their programs earned \$15.00-\$17.99 hourly, or \$31,200-\$37,419 yearly. Only 5% of the teachers in this survey received \$18.00-\$20.00 or more per hour, \$37,440-\$41,400 or beyond yearly, for their work.

Table 2

Comparison of Teachers' Hourly Wages, 1996 to 2007

Hourly Wage for 2007	2007 N=719		Hourly Wage for 1996	1996 N=713		1996 Hourly Wage w/Inflation/COL Adjustment for 2007
	N	%		N	%	
			\$3.00-\$6.99* (\$6,240-\$14,539)	199	28	\$3.84-\$8.95
\$6.00-\$9.99 \$12,480-\$20,779)	326	45	\$7.00-\$9.99 (\$14,560-\$20,779)	334	47	\$8.96-\$12.78
\$10.00-\$14.99 \$20,800-\$31,179)	225	31	\$10.00-\$14.99 \$20,800-\$31,179)	148	21	\$12.79-\$19.18
\$15.00-\$17.99 (\$31,200-\$37,419)	133	19	\$15.00-\$18.00+ (\$31,200-\$37,440+)	32	4	\$19.19-\$23.04
\$18.00-\$20.00+ (\$37,440-\$41,400)	35	5				

* Minimum wage in 1996 was \$4.75 per hour (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007)

Between 1996 and 2007, after adjusting for inflation, child care teacher pay rates substantially decreased. This study found that in 2007, 45% of child care teachers still earned below \$10.00 an hour, which results in a yearly income of \$20,800 for full-time employment. While this figure is lower than the 75% of child care teachers who earned below \$10.00 in 1996, it includes a raise in the minimum wage rate to \$6.15 per hour. The federal poverty rate for a family of four was \$20,650 in 2007 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2007a). To further demonstrate the severity of the lack of comparable compensation for child care teachers, it is significant to mention that the mean annual salary for elementary school teachers in Minnesota was \$45,560 (for a

month contract) in 2005 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). These results indicate that teaching staff wages continue to remain at substantially low levels.

Teacher Benefits

Directors were asked to indicate the benefits that were provided for full-time teachers in their programs. The responses listed in Table 3 indicate that only 12% of the programs offered a reduction in the fees that teachers paid for their children to receive care in the center in which they worked. An even smaller percentage (8%) provided paid maternity/paternity leave for full-time teachers. However, 75% of the programs offered paid sick days and 60% provided paid vacations for teachers. Note that only 2% of the programs offered fully paid health insurance for teachers and their dependents and 7% offered fully paid health insurance for teachers. Partially paid health insurance for the employee and dependents was provided by 14% of the programs and partially paid health insurance for the employee was provided by 12% of the programs. Dental care was offered by 1% of the programs and 5% offered financial assistance to attend conferences or for college tuition courses. A retirement plan was offered by 19% of the programs and paid holidays were provided by 75% of the programs in this study.

* Indicates statistically significant difference at $p < .0001$ between 1996 and 2007 benefits. Only these five items were compared because of the high percentage of change that was noted.

Table 3

Comparison of Benefits Provided for Full-Time Teachers, 1996 to 2007

Benefits	2007		1996		Change %
	N	%	N	%	
Reduced Child Care Fees*	27	12	75	36	-24
Paid Maternity/Paternity Leave*	18	8	26	13	-5
Paid Sick Days*	181	73	146	71	+2
Paid Vacations*	149	60	108	52	+8
Paid Holidays*	185	75	119	58	+17
Fully Paid Health Insurance for Employee and Dependents	5	2	9	4	-2
Fully Paid Health Insurance for Employee Only	16	7	13	6	+1
Partially Paid Health Insurance for Employee and Dependents	35	14	36	17	-3
Partially Paid Health Insurance for Employee Only	30	12	16	8	+4
Retirement Plan	44	19	62	17	+2
Dental Care	4	1	NR		
Financial Assistance to Attend Conferences	7	3	NR		
Financial Assistance for College Tuition Courses	5	2	NR		

* Indicates statistically significant difference at $p < .0001$ between 1996 and 2007 benefits. Only these five items were compared because of the high percentage of change that was noted.

In 1996, 65% of the child care programs did not offer any type of health insurance coverage to their employees. Other than paid sick days, holidays, and vacations, the only other benefit offered to a significant portion of the child care teachers was a reduced fee for child care services for their own children.

In 2007, directors were asked about the health insurance benefits offered to center staff. The majority of programs had neither improved nor reduced their health insurance options from the original study. Overall, 65% still did not offer any type of health coverage benefit to their employees. In addition, there was a significant decrease (24%) in the number of programs that offered reduced child care fees to program teachers. And although the paid sick days, holidays, and vacations increased, paid maternity/paternity leave decreased from 13% to only 8%.

Teacher Working Conditions

Table 4 indicates the conditions under which teacher performed their work. Directors were again asked to indicate the items that were provided for teachers in their programs. Over three fourths of the programs offered telephone access for staff (88%), paid breaks during the workday (83%), and free parking (78%). A slightly smaller percentage (71%) provided compensation for lunch breaks. Furthermore, half or more of the programs provided paid preparation/planning time (50%), compensation for attending staff meetings after working hours (65%), or offered a yearly cost-of-living wage increase (52%). About half of the programs (50%) had a staff bathroom that was not used by children and just over half provided a staff break room (59%). Less than

half of the programs provided paid time while attending on-site training (41%) or paid time attending off-site training (37%). Only about one fourth of the programs offered periodic merit increases (24%) or free beverages and snacks for staff (26%). An even smaller percentage (14%) offered a staff library of reference books.

Table 4

Comparison of Working Conditions Provided for Full-Time Teachers, 1996 to 2007

Working Conditions	2007		1996		Change %
	N	%	N	%	
Paid Breaks*	206	83	67	33	+50
Paid Lunch Break*	176	71	54	26	+45
Paid Prep/Planning Time	123	50	101	49	+1
Paid while Attending Staff Meetings after Working Hours*	160	65	92	45	+20
Yearly Cost of Living Increase*	129	52	81	39	+13
Staff Break Room*	145	59	103	50	+9
Staff Bathroom Not Used by Children	119	49	123	60	-11
Periodic Merit Increases in Wages	59	24	NR		
Paid while Attending On-Site Training	100	41	NR		
Paid while Attending Off-Site Training	91	37	NR		
Free Parking	192	78	NR		
Free Snacks and Beverages for Staff	59	26	NR		
Telephone Access	218	88	NR		
Staff library of Professional Books	32	14	NR		

* Indicates statistically significant difference at $p < .0001$ between 1996 and 2007 working conditions. Only these five items were compared because of the high percentage of change that was noted.

The 2007 data indicates a significant increase in the working conditions of child care teachers when compared to those in 1996. The number of programs that offered paid breaks and paid lunch breaks more than doubled from 1996 to 2007. Yearly cost of living increases and compensation while attending staff meetings after working hours increased 13% and 20%, respectively. Child care teachers with access to a staff break room increased by 9% while access to a staff bathroom not used by children decreased by 11%.

Teacher Level of Education

Various levels of education were listed on the survey. Directors were asked to report the number of teachers that had obtained the level of education in each category. The responses in Table 5 indicated that 29% of the teachers had obtained a master's degree and 16% had obtained a bachelor's degree. It was noted that 50% of the teachers in this study had less than a 4-year degree: 17% were technical college graduates, 8% had received some college credits, 19% were high school graduates and 6% had taken some technical college credits. The Chi Square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference of 150.91, $df = 2$, $p < .0001$ between 1996 and 2007 education levels.

Table 5

Comparison of Education Levels of Teachers, 1996 to 2007

Education Levels	2007		1996		Change %
	N	%	N	%	
Doctorate	NR		16	2	
Master's Degree	210	29	471	60	-31
College Graduate	115	16	81	10	+6
Some College Credit	55	8	90	11	-3
Technical College Graduate	121	17	27	3	+14
Some Technical College Credit	42	6	8	1	+5
High School Graduate	134	19	27	3	+17

Note: 1996 teachers who obtained a Doctorate Degree are included in the Master's Degree total and teachers who obtained a CDA in 1996 are included in the Technical College Graduate total as these categories were not included on the 2007 survey.

Child care center directors in 2007 indicated a large decrease (31%) in the number of child care teachers who had obtained a Master's degree than those in 1996. The results indicate that half as many teachers have an education level of a Master's level graduate in 2007 than in 1996. However, data from the current study show a 14% increase in the number of teachers with an education level of a technical college graduate as well as a 17% increase in the number of teachers with the education level of a high school graduate. A slight increase (6%) is seen in those teachers with a college degree. These results suggest that a considerable number of child care teachers

are not electing to pursue higher education beyond the bachelor or technical college education level.

Length of Teacher Employment in One Program

Directors were asked to indicate the number of teachers who had been employed in their child care program for the periods of time specified in the survey.

Table 6 indicates that 13% of the teachers had been employed in the program for less than 1 year. The majority (47%) of the teachers in the study had been in the program for 1-2 years. Less than one fourth (21%) of the teachers had been in their positions for 3-5 years; and 13% had been employed in the program for 6-12 years. The smallest percentage (6%) had been in their positions for more than 12 years. The Chi Square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference of 96.43, $df = 4$, $p < .0001$ between the 1996 and 2007 amount of time teachers had been employed in the child care program.

Directors in this study reported the total number of teachers employed in their program in the previous year and the number of staff that had left in the previous year. This information was used to calculate the annual turnover of staff, which was 24%. Although this rate is a decrease (4%) from 28% reported in 1996, these results indicate that a significant number of child care teachers are still leaving each year and are not staying employed with child care centers for as long as they used to.

Table 6

Comparison of Amount of Time Teacher had been Employed
in the Child Care Program, 1996 to 2007

Length of Time	2007		1996		Change %
	N	%	N	%	
Less than 1 Year	97	13	104	15	-2
1-2 Years	330	47	153	22	+25
3-5 Years	153	21	245	35	-14
6-12 Years	97	13	143	20	-7
More than 12 Years	42	6	54	8	-2

The original 1996 Minnesota Child Care Teacher study found that over one third (35%) of the teaching staff had been employed in their present positions with the child care centers for 3-5 years. The current sample found that over half (60%) of the teachers had been in their present positions 2 years or less. The longevity rates of teachers employed in their present positions for 3 or more years are shown to have decreased by 23% overall since 1996.

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Child Care Teachers' Reasons for Leaving a Program

Given a list of the common reasons that are frequently given when child care teachers leave their positions, directors were asked to rank these reasons from 1 to 10 with one being the most commonly given reason for leaving. The cumulative rank listing of the most often given reason for leaving can be found in Table 7. The frequency responses (N) cited in the table indicates the number of directors who stated that the corresponding reason was the one that they were most commonly given when staff left their positions. The responses indicate that 44% of the directors reported that the most common reason they were given when child care teachers left their positions was that they were dissatisfied with the pay they had received.

Directors in 22 % of the programs indicated that the reason they were most given when staff left their positions was for a personal reason. Just over one tenth (12%) of the directors indicated that the reason they were given most often for leaving a position in their program was for maternity/paternity leave. A family move (7%), attending higher education (6%), and dissatisfaction with benefits (4%) were reasons most frequently given to some directors in their programs. Four reasons were rated as the most frequent reason given by 2% of the directors: conflict with co-worker/parents, problems with own child care arrangements, health, or for other reasons. The Chi Square analysis of 2.78, $df = 4$, $p < .5953$ did not indicate any statistically significant difference between the 1996 and 2007 reasons teachers gave for leaving their positions.

Table 7

Comparison of Reasons Most Often Given when Child Care Teachers Left Their Positions, 1996 to 2007

Reasons	2007		1996		Change
	N	%	N	%	
Dissatisfied with Pay	78	44	59	39	+5
Other Personal Reason	38	22	22	14	+8
Maternity/Paternity Leave	21	12	14	7	+5
Family Move	12	7	11	7	0
To Attend Higher Education	10	6	11	7	-1
Dissatisfied with Benefits	7	4	11	7	-3
Health	3	2	3	2	0
Conflict with Coworkers/Parents	3	2	6	4	-2
Problems with Own Child Care Arrangements	3	2	2	1	+1
Other	3	2	NR		

Between 1996 and 2007, the reason most often reported to directors for why child care teachers left their positions remained that they were dissatisfied with the pay they received. Forty-four percent of child care teachers in 2007 gave this as the primary reason they left their jobs. This is a slight increase (5%) over the 39% reported in 1996. Other personal reasons and maternity/paternity leave increased by 8% and 5%, respectfully. The reasons for leaving because of health and for a family move remained stable over the past decade.

Jobs for Which Teachers Left Their Positions

Directors were asked to indicate the number of teachers who left their positions

in the last year for each of the jobs that were listed in the survey. The results listed, in rank order, in Table 7 indicated that 37% of the teachers left their positions to work in a different field. Work in the public school system was the position for which 32% of the teachers left their jobs and 24% of the teachers left their jobs for another child care program. Only 4% of the teachers left for another position within the program and 2% left for either a position with special needs children or to work in a family child care home. Directors indicated that only 1% of the teachers left their positions to work in an Early Childhood Family Education program. The Chi Square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference of 17.19, $df = 4$, $p < .0018$ between 1996 and 2007 jobs for which teachers left.

Table 8

Comparison of Jobs for Which Teachers Left Their Positions, 1996 to 2007

Jobs	2007		1996		Change %
	N	%	N	%	
Job in Different Field	56	37	33	26	+11
Public School	48	32	23	18	+14
Other Child Care Program	35	24	31	24	0
Other Position within the Program	6	4	12	9	-5
Special Needs Setting – Children	3	2	10	8	-6
Family Child Care	3	2	10	8	-6
Early Childhood Family Education	1	1	7	6	-5

In 1996, results indicated that 26% of the teachers left their positions to work in a different field, 24% left to work in another child care program, and 18% took positions in the public school system. One third (31%) of the teachers left for some other type of employment setting. In 2007, there was an 11% increase in the number of teachers who left their child care programs to work in a different field. Moreover, a large increase (14%) is shown in this study in the number of teachers who left their positions to work in the public school system. Teachers leaving their positions for another child care program remained the same.

Of the programs whose directors did respond, 102 (49%) were child care centers. The remaining 51% of the programs were nursery schools (33%), school-age programs (10%), and Head Start programs (9%). The data from this study profiled a number of notable changes from 1996 to 2007, both positive and negative, in the Minnesota child care center workforce and its working conditions. The results will be discussed in the context of changes in compensation, benefits, and working conditions, education and retention over time. The limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research studies will also be discussed.

Compensation

Over the past 10 years, the child care teacher workforce had significant losses in overall hourly wage compensation. The results of this study indicated that 47% of child care teachers still earned below \$10.00 an hour, which results in a yearly income of \$20,800 for full-time employment. The federal poverty rate for a family of four was

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

This study surveyed a sample of the 1,500 licensed, center-based child care programs in Minnesota. The directors of 500 of these programs were given the opportunity to respond to this survey. Two hundred forty-seven surveys (247) were returned and usable for this study. Of the programs whose directors did respond, 102 (49%) were child care centers. The remaining 51% of the programs were nursery schools (33%), school-age programs (10%), and Head Start programs (9%). The data from this study profiled a number of notable changes from 1996 to 2007, both positive and negative, in the Minnesota child care center workforce and its working conditions. The results will be discussed in the context of changes in compensation, benefits, and working conditions, education and retention over time. The limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research studies will also be discussed.

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\$20,650 in 2007 (Department of Labor Statistics, 2007). In 1996, 75% of child care teachers earned less than \$10.00 per hour. However, over the past 10 years, the federal minimum wage increased by \$1.40 per hour and the cost of living/inflation adjustment increased by a rate of 31.1%. Using these two figures, it could be presumed that the hourly wage equivalent to \$10.00 in 1996 would be \$12.78 per hour in 2007. To demonstrate the severity of the lack of comparable compensation for child care teachers, it is significant to mention that the mean annual salary for elementary school teachers in Minnesota was \$45,560 in 2005 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). These same elementary teachers work under contract 40 weeks out of the year while child care teachers work year round (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). This salary amounts to \$28.48 per hour for 9 months of work. Only 5% of child care teachers earn \$18.00 to \$20.00 or more per hour per year. Therefore, it is not surprising to this researcher that 44% of the directors in this survey indicated that the reason they were most often given by child care workers for leaving their positions was that they were dissatisfied with the wages they had received for their work. Thus, wages continue to play a key role in helping to stabilize the child care workforce (Tate & Sherman, 2005).

Benefits and Working Conditions

In the past 10 years, the child care teacher workforce had gains and losses in benefits and working conditions. It was determined in this study that the majority of programs had neither improved nor reduced their health insurance options from the

original 1996 study. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the child care programs still did not offer any type of health insurance benefits to its full-time teachers. Although this study did not gather information regarding the extent of the type of coverage, cost to the employee, deductibles or co-payment charges for services, the researcher feels it is important to recognize that even those staff whose programs offered some type of health insurance (35%) may be paying additional charges when seeking health services. Given the extremely low wages indicated in this study and the ever increasing health care costs, paying these charges may be difficult or impossible for these full-time teachers, particularly in the case of chronic illnesses.

Child care teachers also saw a loss of 24% in the benefit of receiving a reduction in child care fees for child care services for their own children. Child care centers may no longer be able to subsidize the child care costs of its teachers due to the continuation of rising operating costs. Since 1996, child care teachers did see a small but real increase in their benefits that include paid holidays (+17), paid vacations (+8), and paid sick days (+2). Continued research in this area may benefit the overall retention rate of child care teachers as data from other research identifies teacher's attitudes about employer-paid benefits as a significant factor in determining turnover rates for child care employees (Bellm et al., 2002).

Child care teachers achieved significant gains in the working conditions offered by their child care programs. It is significant to note that the majority of working conditions in this study were shown to have an increase of at least 13% or more over the past decade. More teachers were offered paid breaks (50%) and lunch breaks

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Child care teachers achieved significant gains in the working conditions offered by their child care programs. It is significant to note that the majority of working conditions in this study were shown to have an increase of at least 13% or more over the past decade. More teachers were offered paid breaks (50%) and lunch breaks

(45%), compensation when attending after-hour staff meetings (20%), and yearly cost of living increases (13%). It would seem to this researcher that attempts have been made in this area by child care programs to improve the working conditions of their teachers. While unable to offer increased wages, child care programs may be attempting to compensate and retain child care teachers with more economical benefits.

Education

Teacher education showed notable changes in 10 years, with the number of teachers in the workforce having some type Bachelor's degree or higher decreasing from 72% to 45% from 1996 to 2007. Increased learning opportunities, school readiness, and increased quality were identified as reasons to strengthen the early childhood system in 2000 (Lynch, 2004). The growing demands for trained child care teachers initiated the addition of more publicly funded programs at that time. So it is interesting to this researcher that the most dramatic decrease with this population of child care teachers was a 31% decrease of teachers with a Master's degree. It could be suggested that child care teachers have come to realize that obtaining higher education does not provide a wage commensurate with a higher educational level. The low compensation rates may have deterred many from seeking additional higher education opportunities.

However, significant gains were seen in technical college graduate rates showing an increase in 14% over the past 10 years. This researcher believes this could be the result of the government's recent attempts to implement financial incentive

programs like the T.E.A.C.H. programs to those seeking a 2-year degree. This researcher suggests that it may be beneficial to increase the educational funding opportunities for those child care teachers who wish to seek a 4-year degree instead of a 2-year degree. Loan forgiveness incentives could also be beneficial for those child care teachers considering obtaining additional education while remaining employed in the child care work force. Or loan forgiveness may be an incentive for students who are considering a career in early child care. Future research opportunities may consider exploring the attitudes and the impact of offering loan forgiveness incentives to current and potential child care teachers.

Retention

In recent years, center-based staff turnover in the United States has been estimated at about 30% annually, which is one of the highest turnover rates among all professions and markedly higher than the 7-10% national rate cited for public school teachers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Turnover rates in this child care workforce study decreased slightly, down from 28% in centers in 1996 to 24% in 2007. Given the continuance of high turnover rates overall, the researcher believes it is realistic to suggest that child care teachers still leave their positions at a high rate.

This study indicated that only 19% of the child care teachers had been employed in their present positions for more than 5 years compared to 28% in 1996. It is significant to note that the majority of teachers (60%) had been employed in the same program for less than 3 years compared to 37% of teachers in the 1996 study.

Given that 44% of child care teachers in this study left their positions due to their dissatisfaction with the pay they received, it is not surprising to this researcher that 37% of teachers reported obtaining employment in a different field and 32% went to work in the public school system; an 11% increase and a 14% increase respectively from the 1996 study. Minnesota child care programs would be much more successful at retaining skilled staff if they modeled their wage scales after the salaries of workers in other fields who have comparable levels of education and training (Montilla et al, 2001).

Recommendations

Limitations

Prospective respondents were randomly chosen from listings on the Minnesota Department of Human Services website. While these programs were listed as actively licensed when originally obtained early on in the study, some programs may not have been in operation by the time the surveys were sent out. Furthermore, participation in this study was voluntary and not all individuals chose to respond.

In addition, over half (53%) of the directors of child care programs located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area chose to respond to the survey. Given that 61% of the 1,500 licensed child care centers in Minnesota are located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area, it may indicate overrepresentation of those centers. Caution must be exercised when generalizing the findings of this study to the entire population of Minnesota center-based child care teachers.

Lastly, the survey sent to directors did not request specific demographic information regarding the child care teachers represented in this study. Information about the age, marital status, number of children, and family income status of the teachers may have given the researcher additional data for collection and analysis. Future research studies may consider collecting this information to gain a better understanding of the teachers represented in the early child care programs in Minnesota.

Recommendations

The child care workforce has recently become an important research topic. Within the academic world, a growing interest in the quality of care giving and in the economics of low-wage work has drawn women's studies scholars, sociologists, and economists to examine child care workers in greater depth. Initially the need for research on the workforce came from teacher and provider activists but, because most child care teachers are not represented by a collective bargaining agreement or are not members of a work-related or professional organization, they have not necessarily been represented or engaged in the development or implementation of policy initiatives intended to meet their needs. In order for the child care compensation movement to continue its efforts, it will be essential to have teachers who are prepared and trained to play a leadership role in pursuing higher wages and better working conditions.

The child care compensation movement got its start in 1970 when poverty level wages were brought to the public forefront. But even with this continued advocacy

movement over the last quarter century and despite the recent increases in public awareness and public investments in child care jobs in the past decade, the early childhood workforce remains severely underpaid. The challenge to improving this situation will involve finding solutions that raise wages without increasing the cost of child care to parents or reducing the quantity of child care services. Future studies could consider how aspects of state policy and funding for early care and education play a role in the wages of center-based child care programs. In addition, it may also be beneficial to conduct more research to understand how different education levels and different combinations of education and training relate to the quality of child care programs. Moreover, future research could involve additional identification of specific factors of quality that promote long-term stability in the child care workforce.

Stability in the child care workforce has been found to be a significant factor affecting the quality of child care (Chase & Shelton, 2001). Quality of child care services is linked to the compensation and education of the child care work force (Stone & Mitchell, 2001). The data from this study suggest that investments in education and retention have had little impact on child care center teaching staff turnover. Without wage improvements, these incentives may merely train teachers for their next jobs, some of which will be in child care and many of which will be in other fields. This study also suggests that the overall quality of child care centers remains worrisome as indicated by low wages, lack of health coverage, and high turnover among teaching staff. As a nation who believes that children are the most precious resource, our current child care system reveals a different reality. The child care

compensation movement will need to continue to build on this remarkable and creative history of creating better child care jobs and better care for children in Minnesota and in the United States.

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September 15, 2007

Dear Child Care Center Director,

In order to gain a better perspective on the current status of the wages and working conditions of the child care work force, the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals is conducting this survey. This survey is the result of a collaboration of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals and St. Cloud State University, and is a follow up to a study completed in 1996. Results of this survey will be compared to the results of the survey completed in 1996.

The results of this survey will be used to inform the legislature and the Department of Human Services about any changes to the wages and working conditions for people working in this field. This may possibly be the most important child care survey you have been asked to fill out.

You are one of the small number of early childhood practitioners being asked to give their opinions on these matters. Your center was randomly drawn from a list of Minnesota child care centers. In order for the results to truly represent the opinions of people in this field, it is important that each center be completed and returned.

APPENDIX

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that we may check your center off our mailing list when your survey is returned. **Survey Invitation Letter and Survey** Please complete and return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope at your earliest convenience. The survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. Survey results can be emailed to you at your request.

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals, or the researchers. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call during business hours. The telephone number is 612-731-4148. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Margaret Boyer, Director, Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals

Glen Paine, Chair, Child and Family Studies Department, St. Cloud State University

Jessica Archer, St. Cloud State Student



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Sincerely,

Margaret Boyer - Director, Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals

Glen Palm, Chair, Child and Family Studies Department, St. Cloud State University

Jennifer Andres, St. Cloud State Student

MINNESOTA CHILD CARE CENTER EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE STUDY

Cooperative Effort with Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
and
St. Cloud State University

**THIS SURVEY IS INTENDED TO BE FILLED OUT BY THE DIRECTOR.
PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH CORRESPONDS TO THE ANSWER
CLOSEST TO YOUR PROGRAM'S CURRENT SITUATION.
ALL RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.**

1. Which one of the following descriptions best describes the child care program in which you work? Circle one.

	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Child Care Center			
2. Nursery/Preschool			
3. Headstart			
4. School-Age Child Care			

2. Is your program located in the Seven County Twin Cities Metro area? (Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Anoka, Carver, Scott, or Washington)

___ Yes

___ No

3. How are you incorporated? Circle one.

	Director	Asst. Teacher	Aide
1. Not incorporated			
2. For profit			
3. Partnership			
4. Under public school system			
5. Non-profit—separately incorporated			
6. Non-profit—under a church, synagogue, or multi-service agency			

4. Circle **all** that apply to your program.
 1. Funded by parent fees only
 2. Funded with part parent fees/part subsidies from child care assistance fund
 3. Completely government funded
 4. Headstart certified
 5. Part of school system
 6. Church sponsored
 7. NAEYC Accredited
 8. Other Accreditation
 9. Other _____

5. For how many children are you licensed for in each category?

1. Infants (0-12 months) _____
2. Toddlers (12-24 months) _____
3. Preschoolers (24 months-5 years) _____
4. School age (6-11 years) _____

6. How many full time and part time employees do you have? Answer by number of staff in each category.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
Full Time (35 or more hours per week)				
Part Time (Less than 35 hours per week)				

7. How long have the director, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides been working in your child care program? Fill in each blank with the number of people who fit each category.

	Director		Teacher		Asst. Teacher		Aide	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
Less than 1 year								
1-2 years								
3-5 years								
6-12 years								
More than 12 yrs								

8. How many directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides left their position as your program between 7/1/06 and 7/1/07?

_____ Director

_____ Teachers

_____ Assistant Teachers

_____ Aides

9. In the last year, for which positions did the director, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides leave? Fill in each blank with the number of people who fit in each category.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Special needs setting- or children				
2. Public School				
3. Other child care program				
4. Resource and Referral program				
5. Family Child Care				
6. Early Childhood Family Education				
7. Job in different field				
8. Changed position in the program				
9. Other				

10. What are the top 10 reasons that you have been told by your staff as a reason for leaving their work? Rate "1" through "10," with "1" being the **most** important.

_____ Dissatisfied with the pay

_____ Dissatisfied with the benefits

_____ Dissatisfied with the program policies and procedures of the following

_____ Dissatisfied with the working conditions

_____ Job too stressful

_____ Conflict with coworkers/parents

_____ Health

_____ Maternity/paternity leave

_____ Family move

_____ Other personal reason

_____ To attend higher education

_____ Problems with own child care arrangements

_____ College graduate

_____ Masters Degree

11. What specific early childhood training (highest level) do you and the people you work with have?

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. No formal training in early childhood				
2. High School Diploma or GED				
3. CDA				
4. Birth-Grade 3 License				
5. PreK License				
6. Early Childhood Special Education License				
7. Elementary Education				
8. AA Degree in Child Development or Early Childhood				
9. Other teaching license <u>not</u> early childhood				
10. Other				

12. Indicate the number of staff that has an education level in each of the following categories.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Some high school				
2. High school graduate or GED				
3. Some technical college credits				
4. Technical college graduate				
5. Some college				
6. College graduate				
7. Masters Degree				

13. Indicate how many directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides receive hourly wages in each of the following categories.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
\$6.00-\$6.99				
\$7.00-\$7.99				
\$8.00-\$8.99				
\$9.00-\$9.99				
\$10.00-\$10.99				
\$11.00-\$11.99				
\$12.00-\$12.99				
\$13.00-\$13.99				
\$14.00-\$14.99				
\$15.00-\$15.99				
\$16.00-\$16.99				
\$17.00-\$17.99				
\$18.00-\$18.99				
\$19.00-\$19.99				
\$20.00 +				

14. Indicate which benefits are provided for **full-time** directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides. Fill in all that apply.

	Director	Teachers	Assistant Teachers	Aides
1. Reduced child care fees for parent employee				
2. Paid maternity/paternity leave				
3. Financial assistance to cover fees for in-service workshops				
4. Financial assistance to attend conferences				
5. Financial assistance to cover college tuition for courses				
6. Early Childhood Family Education				

15. Indicate which of the following benefits **full-time** staff in your child care center receive? Check all that apply.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Paid sick days				
2. Paid vacations				
3. Unemployment				
4. Disability insurance				
5. Health insurance				
6. Retirement plan				
7. Paid holidays				
8. Year end bonus				

16. Indicate what health benefits plan (if any) are available for the **full time** director, teachers, assistant teaches, and aides. Check each one that applies.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Fully paid health insurance for employee and dependents				
2. Full paid health insurance for employee only				
3. Partially paid health insurance for employee and dependents				
4. Partially paid health insurance for employee only				
5. Insurance is available but unpaid for employee or dependents				
6. Dental care				
7. Do not have health insurance coverage				

17. Which of the following does your center provide to **full-time** directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and aides? Fill in all that apply.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
1. Paid breaks				
2. Paid lunch break				
3. Paid preparation/ planning time				
4. Paid while attending on-site training				
5. Paid while attending off-site training				
6. Paid while attending staff meetings after working hours				
7. Yearly cost of living increase				
8. Periodic merit increases in wages				
9. Retirement				

18. Do the following part-time staff receive pro-rated benefits?

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
YES				
NO				

19. Which of the following are available at your child care facility? Circle **all** that apply.

1. A locked storage place for staff belongings
2. A staff bathroom not used by children
3. A staff break room
4. A staff work room
5. Free parking
6. Free snacks and beverages for the staff
7. Free meals for the staff
8. Telephone access
9. Staff library of professional books

20. What do you think would be a fair annual salary for full time:

Director \$ _____
 Teacher \$ _____
 Assistant Teacher \$ _____
 Aide \$ _____

21. Do teachers in your center work under a collective bargaining unit or union?

_____ Yes
 _____ No

22. Indicate the number of staff the participated with the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. grant program for the TEACH Early Childhood Minnesota scholarship program.

	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Aide
R.E.E.T.A.I.N.				
TEACH				

23. How have the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. and TEACH programs impacted your child care program?

24. Were the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. and TEACH programs beneficial in reducing turnover and increasing teacher education levels?

- ** If you would like the survey results sent to you, please provide your email address below:
