

ED 021 624

PS 001 073

By- Horton, Donald; And Others

HEAD START EVALUATION AND RESEARCH CENTER. PROGRESS REPORT OF RESEARCH STUDIES 1966 TO 1967. DOCUMENT 2, STUDIES OF THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HEAD START CENTERS.

Bank Street Coll. of Education, New York, N.Y.

Spons Agency- Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C.

Pub Date Dec 67

Note- 113p.

EDRS Price MF-\$0.50 HC-\$4.60

Descriptors- \*ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS, FIELD STUDIES, \*INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS, INTERPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP, INTERVIEWS, OBSERVATION \*ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, PARENT COUNSELING, PARENT PARTICIPATION, PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, \*PROGRAM EVALUATION, ROLE CONFLICT, SOCIAL WORKERS, STAFF ROLE, SUBPROFESSIONALS, VOLUNTEERS

Identifiers- \*Head Start

An exploratory, qualitative, and comparative research study concerning sociologically relevant aspects of project Head Start (HS) was conducted in two New York City HS centers. The study investigated (1) the internal organizational development of the HS centers, (2) teacher-parent relations in HS, (3) HS in relation to the family life of the participants, (4) the HS program of organizing parents for group action, (5) organizational relations between HS and the public schools, and (6) the characteristics of the sponsoring agency and the participating population. An inductive method was employed in the study. Theoretical formulations were developed as the project proceeded and were refined as new data were obtained. Data were collected chiefly through observation and informal interviewing. An overview of the first year of the research study is presented in this project report, which includes information concerned with (1) the chronology of activities and of program development, (2) the formulation of research problems, (3) research methods, (4) field procedures, (5) special problems of field work, (6) analytic procedures, (7) a review of findings on two selected problems (internal organizational development and the HS program of organizing parents for group action), and (8) future directions of the project. (JS)

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE  
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS  
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
POSITION OR POLICY.

**HEAD START EVALUATION AND RESEARCH CENTER**

**Progress Report of Research Studies  
1966 to 1967  
(Documents 1 - 6)**

Document 2

**STUDIES OF THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HEAD START  
CENTERS**

Staff

Donald Horton, Ph.D. (Principal Investigator)  
Carla Drije, M.A.  
Claire Jacobson, Ph.D.  
Mary Queeley, Ph.D.

Research Division  
Bank Street College of Education  
216 West 14th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10011

December, 1967

EDUCATION  
201073

## ABSTRACT

The research reported here is focused on sociologically relevant aspects of Project Head Start as contrasted with other research currently under way at Bank Street that is concerned with psychological questions. The report includes a brief discussion of the formulation of the research problems and procedures, activities involved in gaining and maintaining access to the field, and some theoretical considerations. In order to give the reader a picture of the substantive concerns of the research, we have included some findings and ideas drawn from a preliminary analysis of the data collected in two areas of concern ("Internal Organizational Development of the Head Start Center" and "The Head Start Program for Organizing Parents for Group Action"). We show that preliminary analysis has identified areas of strain between professionals and subprofessionals, difficulties associated with the involvement of parents as active participants in the organization, and the processes and practical problems of organizing parents for group action.

STUDIES OF THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HEAD START CENTERS  
Bank Street College of Education, Research Division

PS001073

## Table of Contents

Page

### DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chronology of Project Development	2
Formulation of Research Problems	4
Research Strategy	8
Some Theoretical Considerations	9
Research Procedures	12
Next Stage of the Work	13
Some Social Problems of Field Work	14

### A REVIEW OF FINDINGS ON SELECTED PROBLEMS

#### A. INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

##### CENTER ONE

I. The Structure and Organization of the Center	21
II. Intra-staff Relationships	27
III. Participation of the Indigenous Population as Salaried Subprofessionals and as Volunteers	34

##### CENTER TWO

I. Social Worker	49
II. Social Service Aides	50
III. Relations between Social Service Aides and the Social Worker	54
IV. The Issue of Professionalism: Professionals and Subprofessionals	56
V. Relations between Social Service Aides	59
VI. Relations between the Teaching and Social Service Staffs	60
VII. Relations between the Social Service Staff and the Director	61

#### B. HEAD START PROGRAM OF ORGANIZING PARENTS FOR GROUP ACTION

##### CENTER ONE

I. Parent Groups and Projects	63
II. Recruitment Procedures and Efforts	76
III. Psychological and Cultural Difficulties of the Lower Class Inhibiting Participation in Organizational Activity	77
IV. Organizational Problems which Affect Parent Participation	81
V. Role of Staff and Outside Resource Persons as Advisers and Teachers of Organization	86
VI. Problem of Involving the Man in the Family	91

CENTER TWO

	<u>Page</u>
I. Recruitment Procedures and Problems	96
II. Psychological and Cultural Difficulties Inhibiting Participation in Organizational Activity	98
III. Role of Staff as Advisers and Teachers of Organization	100
IV. Recognition and Development of Leadership Capacity	106
FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH	109

## INTRODUCTION

The sociological part of the Bank Street Head Start research program began in November, 1966 with a small-scale exploratory phase, and has since developed into a study of the social organization of Head Start centers.

As we have become acquainted with the Head Start program, we have become interested in its attempt to solve a novel set of problems of organization; problems arising from its aim to integrate into each center as a working organization or system the otherwise disparate elements of classroom education, family social service, employment of indigenous subprofessionals, parents' participation in the operation of the center, and community social-political action. The fact that the people involved are predominantly lower class and (at least in New York City where our research is being done) Negro and Puerto Rican introduces additional problems. Aside from the theoretical interest of many aspects of this development, as well as the practical value that organizational studies may have for Head Start administrators, the Head Start program seems to us to have the special significance of pointing the way in which the public schools of the urban ghettos (and perhaps beyond the ghetto) will have to move. They too will have to combine educational and social services in order to meet the current educational crisis.

The Head Start program provides a favorable research situation in several respects. It is new enough to give us an opportunity to observe an innovative educational institution in the course of its development. The centers are small enough to be comprehended by a single field worker, and are, therefore, amenable to qualitative, comparative study of whole units within a reasonable period of time, an ideal of organizational research which is seldom possible with the resources available.

Although the specific combination of elements that gives the Head Start center its unique character is something new, the Research Division of Bank

Street College has had experience in the study of several of these components, including the relations between teacher and parents, and between parents and the school as a whole; school organization and administration; and problems of racial and ethnic integration.

The research reported here is an exploratory, qualitative, comparative study of two Head Start centers in New York City. Other centers are to be added as the research progresses.

The professional staff for this project consists of Donald Horton, Ph.D. (Anthropology), Director; Carla Drije, M.A. (Sociology), Claire Jacobson, Ph.D. (Anthropology) and Mary A. Queeley, Ph.D. (Sociology).

The present report is intended to give an overview of the first year's work. It will be divided into sections dealing with a chronological account of activities and program development, formulation of research problems, research method, field procedures, special problems of field work, analytic procedures, and a review of the findings on selected problems.

#### Chronology of Project Development

Initial investigation of the research possibilities of the Head Start program began in November, 1966. Miss Drije was assigned part-time to this work. We were impressed by the variety of centers and the possibilities of comparative study. At the conclusion of this preparatory period, we thought that the next step should be "a rapid survey of a large number of centers to identify significant variations which may be associated with differences in the sponsoring delegate agency, dominant philosophy (of education) of the Director, social-cultural characteristics of the clientele, and stage of program development." (First Progress Report)



As we were planning to make arrangements for such a survey, the opportunity arose to observe a group of Head Start centers operated by a church-affiliated agency (called Neighborhood North in this report) in a predominantly Negro section of the city. Although this did not offer the possibility of comparing the effects of sponsorship of different types of agencies, it did offer an opportunity to become acquainted with the details of Head Start structure and operations in a number of centers without having to negotiate with several different sponsoring agencies. From late January through April, 1967, observations were conducted in several centers of Neighborhood North. This work was conducted by Miss Drije and Dr. Jacobson (who joined the staff in March).

Early in April we reviewed our exploratory observations at these centers and prepared a new statement of the problems of interest to us. This formulation will be described below.

As a result of certain difficulties in the field (to be discussed later), our field work was suspended until early in June. At this time we shifted from observation of all the <sup>of Neighborhood North</sup> centers/to an intensive study of one of them, and adopted the present plan of intensive study and comparison of a small number of centers, instead of surveying a large number.

In July arrangements were made to have Dr. Jacobson begin a study of Center Two, sponsored by a settlement house in another part of the city. This center has a mixed lower-class Negro, Puerto Rican and white clientele. Intensive field work began here in September.

In September, Dr. Queeley joined the staff and was assigned to Center One for a few months to familiarize her with the Head Start operation.

The next stage of the work is expected to begin with the assignment of Miss Drije and Dr. Queeley to new centers shortly after the start of the



new year. We hope that it will be possible to obtain the cooperation of a center connected with a public school and one connected with a community-action project. The criteria for selection of the other centers have not yet been decided upon.

The final analysis of the data and preparation of the report of findings are expected to occupy us during the last half of 1968.

#### Formulation of Research Problems

In April, 1967, after a month and a half of observation of the Neighborhood North centers, we found that we had become interested in six aspects of the social organization of the centers as subjects for further research. As formulated in an intra-staff memorandum of April 12, these six aspects were:

1. The internal organizational development of the Head Start centers
2. Teacher-parent relations in Head Start
3. Head Start in relation to the family life of the participants
4. The Head Start program of organizing parents for group action
5. Organizational relations between Head Start and the public schools
6. Sponsorship and participation

On the basis of the preliminary data we formulated some leading hypotheses and questions for each of these aspects to guide the next phase of research, the beginning of an intensive and comparative study of a small number of Head Start centers. In summary form, the leading ideas for each of these areas were as follows:

1. Internal organizational development

- a. The centers are working out the relations (role definitions, reciprocal obligations, etc.) between professional staff members representing different professions (e.g., teachers and social workers), between the professional and their respective lay assistants (teacher aides and family workers), and between the lay assistants.
- b. It was hypothesized that the development of the organizational structure and of the program would be influenced by the degree to which actual (as against nominal) leadership was assumed by

one professional or the other, and by the professional ideological orientation of the professionals, e.g., casework vs. group work orientation of the social worker, traditional or modern educational philosophy of the teacher.

- c. The basic role relationships will be modified by differences among the participants in race, ethnicity, social class and relationship to the community (as indigenous members or as "outsiders").
- d. Efforts to bring parents into an active role in the life of the center will give rise to the issue of lay vs. professional authority, and to problems due to differences in the perspectives of lower-class parents and middle-class professionals on child rearing and education.
- e. With respect to the development of indigenous people as volunteers and paid workers, there will be problems of recruitment and training to be investigated.

## 2. Teacher-parent relations in Head Start

What assumptions about the values of communication between teachers and parents underlie the Head Start emphasis upon such communication?

- a. There is an implied division of responsibilities for the child and his education as between teacher and parents. What are the consequences of these assumptions for their respective roles in the educational process?
- b. How is the reciprocal character of these roles defined? It may be predicted that the center program will attempt to develop, correct, regulate and monitor their reciprocal relationship.
- c. How is home visiting by the teacher expected to contribute to this process of adjustment? The process will be affected by cultural, ethnic, and racial differences between teacher and parents.
- d. The indigenous workers in the center may act as mediators and facilitators of teacher-parent communication.

## 3. Effects of the program on the family life of the participants

The Head Start program is intended to influence parents to improve their child-rearing practices and to stimulate their personal and social development in ways that will be beneficial to family life and, therefore, to the child's intellectual, emotional and social development.

It is evident that a large number of variable social conditions will have to be taken into account in attempting to assess the

program's influence on parents and how this influence is exerted under different conditions.

- a. The center will have different kinds and degrees of influence on the families of indigenous paid workers, volunteer assistants and parent leaders, rank-and-file parent participants in parents' activities, and non-participant parents.
  - b. Its influence will be felt differently in intact, nuclear families; one-parent nuclear families; extended families based on intact nuclear families, etc.
  - c. Another relevant condition is the extent to which the family is involved in other community activities such as the church or public school PTA.
  - d. The role of the father in the program, if there is a father in residence, is a significant factor in the problem of influence. We need to investigate the aims of the program with respect to the father. What assumptions are made about the father's role in relation to early childhood development? Is he expected to have a significant role and if so, how should it be enacted?
  - e. The program may have some negative consequences, e.g., generate conflicts between wife and husband, between mother and grandmother, etc.
  - f. In many families, older siblings may have a role in the rearing of younger children. What is the significance of this role and how does, or could, the Head Start program affect it?
4. The Head Start program of organizing parents for group action

From a sociological viewpoint, this is an especially crucial aspect of the program. The kinds of community action fostered by O.E.O. could have consequences for American life beyond the specific program (such as Head Start) in which they occur. But the poor, as compared with the middle class, are notoriously hard to organize for constructive action either in effective numbers or over an adequate period of time. What is learned about this problem in the experience of Head Start may be of value in helping to solve the problem in other contexts as well.

- a. Over and above the practical difficulties in the way of participation in organizational activity, do lower-class people have special psychological and cultural impediments to overcome? What is involved in teaching Head Start parents to participate in organizational activities?
- b. What is the role of staff professionals and lay assistants as advisers and teachers of organizational forms and procedures?

- c. Problems of recruitment and of maintaining participation.
  - d. Recognition and development of leadership.
  - e. The problem of involving the man of the family.
5. Organizational relations between Head Start and the public schools

The Head Start program may be expected to affect the local public elementary schools both indirectly through the preparation given the children and through the expectations of Head Start-trained parents; and directly, through reciprocal contacts between Head Start and public school staff members.

- a. Relations mediated primarily through children

This is a matter primarily of educational preparation which will exercise a pressure upon the public schools to upgrade their own kindergarten programs.

- b. Role of the parents

It may be anticipated that parents trained by Head Start will expect a greater degree of participation in school policy-making than the public school people are accustomed to giving and that they will expect more communication with the teachers than the latter are prepared for.

Head Start parents are likely to give a greater militancy to the existing Parents' Associations in public schools.

6. Sponsorship and participation

- a. Sponsorship

How do the structure, purposes, ideology and other activities of the delegate agency (when Head Start is not its only interest) affect the Head Start operation?

- b. Participation

What population is being reached and recruited for Head Start? Is it reaching the people at the bottom of the social scale -- the "lower-lower class" in Warner's terminology, or Myrdal's "underclass"?

How does the nature of the recruitment process affect the achieved social composition of the Head Start clientele? Who joins and who refuses? Who drops out and why?

### Research Strategy

Starting with the rough indicators just described, we began a concentrated field study of one of the Neighborhood North centers (Center One) and later added Center Two at the Bridgeside Settlement. Our method is intended to be primarily inductive, developing its theoretical formulations as it proceeds and refining them as new data are obtained, both from renewed observation of earlier centers, and from new observations at the centers to be added. One might describe this as a process of successive comparisons, in the course of which generalizations suggested in one case are tested on successive cases. In the course of the generalizing and testing process, one discovers what are the essential and comparable features (for these particular centers) and what are the variable conditions with respect to a given kind of interaction or structural change. This method has been described as the method of constant comparison.<sup>1</sup>

The kind of theoretical formulation aimed at is of a relatively low level of generality: it starts as a theory of a particular kind of phenomena in a particular situation, such as the process of voluntary organization among lower-class parents in Head Start. Some of the more general formulations arrived at may have a presumptive validity for voluntary organization among lower-class people (at least, lower-class Negro and Puerto Rican women); and for voluntary organization generally, at least among Americans. At some points the propositions emerging from this study may be integrated

---

1. For discussion of the method of constant comparison, see Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, Anselm, "Discovery of Substantive Theory: A Basic Strategy Underlying Qualitative Research," American Behavioral Scientist, 8 (Feb., 1965), pp. 5-12, and, by the same authors, The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967.



with those of more abstract and general sociological theories of interaction and organization. Our immediate concern, however, is the lower levels of theory. Glaser and Strauss have used the term "substantive theory" for this kind of theory about a particular kind of behavior in a particular kind of situation.

Ideally, in work of this sort, the development of theory should occur along with the field research, each modifying the other.

Concepts and propositions from existing theory may be incorporated as the need for them arises, but we are rejecting the model of research in which a set of propositions is developed in advance of the research from existing theory and is then tested. There are several reasons for this choice; among them the fact that a suitable body of theory with respect to the phenomena of education, of teacher-parent relations, and of voluntary organization does not exist; secondly, that even if it did, testing theoretical propositions formulated deductively would oblige us to discard too much of our data; and thirdly, theory at high levels of generality is less useful for practical administrators. One might add to these considerations the personal preference of the researchers for the observation and appreciation of the concrete details of social life.

#### Some Theoretical Considerations

Since it is impossible to set down all the theoretical assumptions and conceptions with which we approach the work reported here, we can only state some of those parts of our theoretical scheme which might differentiate us from other researchers.

Our purpose is to discover the patterns of social interaction observed in the Head Start centers and to explain them by describing the processes and conditions under which they are initiated (if we are lucky enough to

be on hand when this occurs), or maintained, or changed over the course of time. Of the conditions under which interaction occurs, we are especially interested in the cultural and institutional structures (of role, norm, ideology, etc.) which regulate interaction. Interaction is viewed as a process in which people attempt to deal with their common problems of action by "solving" them, or coming to terms with them, or trying to redefine them, or in some other way settling them. Institutional structures are viewed as the relatively (but only relatively) stable products of past problem-solving action which to some degree govern, or are intended to govern, current action. We are especially interested in discovering the processes through which the interaction of the moment may be generating new elements of this structure or modifying old ones.

Interaction is viewed as a process in which the participants interpret the situation and its governing structures according to their different perspectives and attempt to find ways of acting which take into account the perspectives of the others (accepting, compromising, opposing, ignoring, etc.). Included in the perspectives of the participants, and important in understanding them, are their witting or unwitting assumptions about the situation and the institutional structure governing it. Many assumptions (norms, values) are inherent in the institutional structure itself. Often these are so taken for granted as to be unobserved and un verbalized by the participants, but they underlie and help to determine conscious perspectives. One of the most significant questions that may be asked with respect to any institutional situation is whether the perspectives of the participants actually "fit" the assumptions upon which the institutional rules and expectations are built.



For example, it is assumed in the basic value structure and in the practical arrangements of the school that the teacher, responsible for a group of children, will see them as a group and will attempt to maintain a group morale by being "fair" to all, that is, avoiding favoritism, holding all accountable to the same rules, etc. The parent approaching the situation with an overriding interest in his own child is likely to make demands that, translated into action, would amount to favoritism. This nearly inevitable difference in perspective is one of the conditions of tension that may be incorporated into a substantive theory of teacher-parent relations as a near universal (applicable wherever a teacher is responsible both to a class of pupils and also to their several parents). To take another example: in developing a theory of voluntary associations, we note that the association typically adopts a modified version of parliamentary procedure in the conduct of its meetings, and that there appear to be implicit in these procedures certain assumptions about the democratic process which imply that the people participating should have certain attitudes, certain capacities for mutual tolerance, consideration, etc. Variations in the actual operation of parliamentary procedures in an organization may be attributable to attitudes or perspectives which are not congruent with the rules of procedure and their underlying values.

When we speak of the development of substantive theory for an area like teacher-parent relations or the voluntary parents' association, we mean the development of an interconnected set of propositions of the kind just stated, and a statement of the patterns of interaction to which they give rise under various controlling cultural and institutional conditions. We are especially interested in arriving at the description of patterns of development, sequences of change, which may be predicted under given

conditions, for example successive stages in the "life-history" of a voluntary organization.

### Research Procedures

The data are collected chiefly through participant-observation and informal interviewing. The discovery of the perspectives of the actors, both individual and collective or group perspectives, is a result of direct questioning, listening to what people say in the normal course of events, and inference from observed behavior. The underlying institutional assumptions are inferred from institutional rules and customary procedures (as well as from previous research and from the researchers' previous experience with such institutions as the school). Since much of the Head Start activity in which we are interested consists of the communication exchanges of groups meeting as committees, clubs, classes or taking part in picnics, parties, etc., or as action-groups (e.g., demonstrations), much of the field data consists of stenographic accounts of the transactions and conversations of these groups, plus the observer's notes on non-verbal action, and reports of subsequent private comments on the events of the meeting. There are also field notes on casual encounters and conversations and transcripts of some tape-recorded interviews.

The question of reliability of observational notes is, of course, difficult to answer satisfactorily. Theoretically, all observations should be done by a team whose members subsequently compare notes and check on each other's interpretations. This is an expensive procedure and sometimes is impractical because the field situation cannot accommodate several observers (e.g., at a small meeting). We have obtained a degree of control by arranging that at least two of the three field workers will have worked in the same center each for some period of time, although only one of them

has full responsibility for work at the center. The point of this arrangement is that there is always another staff member who knows the people involved and can be consulted or even brought in temporarily as an assistant observer where an additional interpretation of the situation is called for. However, continuity of relationship with the center over a period of time is one of the best guarantees of the quality of the reporting, since it is increasing familiarity with the people, the procedures, the problems and issues, and, most important, the immediate past history of events, that permit the observer to understand what is happening and what is important. For this reason, each of our field workers is, or will be, responsible for work in one center over a period of some months.

#### Next Stage of the Work

In a later section of this report, we present initial summaries and interpretations of data from the two centers now under observation. It will be seen that the data are only partly parallel, and that they are still primarily descriptive. The next stage of the field work will be directed to filling out the comparisons, while concurrently the theoretical interpretation of this material is being carried forward and made progressively more systematic and integrated as a feedback control on the continuing data collection. Such a procedure, of course, imposes a very heavy burden on the researchers (as compared with the kind of research procedure in which, after some preliminary investigation, one returns to the field with prepared and limited interview and observational schedules.) We may find it necessary, in pursuing this strategy of inquiry, to reduce further the number of substantive areas to which the research

is directed.

### Some Social Problems of Field Work

During the first year of the project we have had some difficulties in the field that may be of interest because they have been to some extent reflections of the current mood in the poor and/or Negro neighborhoods.

The research bargain is hard to maintain when the research project requires the presence of one or more observers in a social group as small as a Head Start center over a considerable period of time. The procedure imposes physical and psychological burdens: the presence of an alien intruder (more alien in the case of two field workers who are white, than in the case of the other, a Negro, but all highly educated "outsiders"), and the anxiety provoked by a continuous note-taking which remains mysterious and threatening (perhaps by analogy with the note-taking of welfare case workers) even when the eventual purpose of the note-taking is believed to be benign. At Neighborhood North, where we were visiting all of its centers, there was the additional difficulty that the delegate agency staff was unwilling to give us carte blanche to make our own appointments for visits and interviews and then complained about the "burden" we were imposing upon them.

But we have also run into additional obstacles related to current feeling in the Negro ghetto. At Neighborhood North we found the Negro leadership itself ambivalent and disposed to drive a hard bargain in return for defending us against race-conscious and hostile members of the staff whose view was that the Negro community had been "researched to death," without noticeably improving the ghetto. To them "research" is, from the point of view of community welfare, just another of Whitey's

stalling devices, the academic "put-off." We attempted to meet these difficulties by taking the staff into our confidence with respect to our research interests. A memo containing an abbreviated statement of the research questions previously outlined in this report was mimeographed and distributed to the staff members of the delegate agency and the several centers, but this communication brought no response in the way of awakened curiosity about the questions raised or inclination to collaborate with us in trying to answer them.

In one of our meetings with the staff it was suggested that the researchers themselves were exploiting the Negro and the poor for their own personal benefit. The question of compensation was raised -- by some as a demand for direct payment in money, and by others as a question of collective rewards for the cooperating centers. The director of the delegate agency raised it as a question of some sort of certificate of training which would have some value in the job market to be issued by Bank Street College to those who cooperated. The question of employing indigenous people in our work was also raised. At one point, permission to carry on our work at Neighborhood North became contingent on our answering some of these demands satisfactorily, and for a period of two months the field work at Center One had to be suspended. During the period we applied to Washington for permission to give some kind of compensation to the center in money or kind, but this application was denied. In the end we were able to continue with the work as a result of insisting that the research we were conducting would (and will, in fact) be of value in improving the Head Start program nationally, and by promising that at the conclusion of our work we would have some practical suggestions to make to the staff of the center for improving their own work.

We also agreed to discuss with them the possible initiation of any experimental or developmental project that might seem called for by our comments. However, once the work was resumed, and as the people involved in the center became accustomed to and friendly towards our field workers, all these resentments and resistances seem to have disappeared, at least at the center level.

At Center Two we have had difficulties in the form of evasions, broken promises, failure in cooperation, etc., rather than in the form of open conflict and demands. This opposition, too, is gradually diminishing as the people of the center become accustomed to the researcher's presence, which no longer appears threatening to them.



## A REVIEW OF FINDINGS ON SELECTED PROBLEMS

The field-notes are voluminous, even at this stage of the research; and it is difficult to find a meaningful way of reporting them. What is most significant in the notes will become clearer as we proceed to compare the findings from later centers with the findings from the earlier ones and as the problems become progressively better defined. In order to give some idea of the nature of our observations, we have prepared brief descriptions of the two centers and a summary of data from these centers relevant to the first and fourth sections of our initial formulation of research problems: Internal organizational development and The program of organizing parents for group action. Under the first heading we note particularly the relations between professional staff members, indigenous lay assistants, and the parents. Under the second, we present some information about procedures and problems involved in organizing parents for group action. But it should be understood that the following presentation, having been especially prepared for the purposes of the report, does not review all the material available, nor does it touch on all the implications of the material it does report. There is no attempt made here to present a systematic comparative analysis, nor to develop the questions, hunches and theories which the data obtained so far suggest we pursue in the next phase of field work. The actual organization of our material for the purposes of the research at the present stage is a process of coding, cross referencing, charting, etc., which does not lend itself to display.

### Summary Description of Center One

Center One consists of two classrooms which are technically two separate



Head Start centers (Center One A and Center One B), but they are housed in a common building and engage in many common activities. The building is a three-story church of a major denomination with a Negro pastor and congregation. It is well kept up but is located on a rather deteriorated city block. The physical facilities include two adjoining classrooms (one for each center) located on the second floor, and a large meeting room and kitchen located in the basement. The family staff uses one corner of the meeting room as an office. As of November 15, 59 children were enrolled in the two classrooms. All the children and the entire staff are Negroes. According to one of the staff members, one third of the families are welfare clients.

The dual purpose of the Head Start program, which involves working with parents as well as children, is reflected in the staff organization and activities of the two centers. Although ordinarily each classroom has a licensed teacher as well as a teacher aide, currently at Center One, because of a lack of teachers, there are four teacher aides. The teaching staff is largely responsible for implementing that part of the Head Start program concerned with providing educational and enrichment experiences for the children. The responsibility for the other part of the program, i.e., work with parents, is assumed by the family staff, which consists of one family assistant and two family workers (one for each center). A food aide completes the staff roster at Center One; she is assisted by the church custodian.

As mentioned above, the program of Center One provides activities for two groups -- children and parents. The children are inducted into a variety of educational activities (spoken of as "learning experiences") including sight-seeing trips (called simply "trips"), recreation, classroom games and singing, "art work" and some formal academic training (first steps in arithmetic and reading).

The pivotal activities of the program for parents

are regularly scheduled PTA meetings in which issues are aired and subsidiary parent programs are planned and implemented. At Center One, such issues have included the recent teachers' strike and the recruitment of new teachers for the children. Projects have included an adult education class, a club for welfare recipients, a sewing class, a typing class, as well as a committee to plan a proposed playground. The PTA and its activities are carried on jointly by parents from both classrooms.

#### Summary Description of Center Two

Center Two is housed on the ground floor of a building belonging to a City Housing Authority project. Physical facilities include three fully equipped classrooms, a large meeting room, a lounge for teachers, an office used by social service staff, and a kitchen. As of November 1, 80 children were enrolled in the program. Their ethnic composition is the following: 47 per cent Negro, 45 per cent Spanish speaking, and 8 per cent White and Oriental.

Although ordinarily each classroom has a licensed teacher as well as a teacher aide, currently at Center Two, because of staff shortages, there are two teachers for three classrooms. Three teacher aides are each responsible for a classroom and they are assisted by parents who volunteer their services for a few hours each week. The teaching staff is largely responsible for implementing that part of the Head Start program concerned with providing educational and enrichment experiences for the children. The responsibility for the other part of the program, i.e., work with parents, is assumed by the family staff, which consists of one family assistant and three family workers. The family staff recruit children and parents to the program, investigate absentees and dropouts, provide escort services for children, check to see

that medical and dental services are provided to the children, mediate relations between parents and a variety of bureaucracies, and guide parent activities at the center. A secretary, a records clerk, a cook and a cook aide who prepare lunch and snacks for children, and a custodian complete the staff roster at Center Two.

A variety of different types of educational experiences comprise the children's program. Included are trips, games, singing, story telling, art work, outdoor physical activities and formal academic work. The parent program includes irregularly scheduled meetings of the overall parent association and a variety of other activities: school committee, neighborhood improvement committee, food cooperative, newspaper committee, sewing class and weight watchers' club.

The integration between the two parts of the program is achieved mainly by the family staff, who have responsibilities to both parents and children, and by the parents who assist in the classroom and on trips.

The overall administration of the center is provided by the director, assisted until recently by a social worker. She holds weekly meetings with the entire staff to keep them abreast of developments in different parts of the program. She consults frequently with the director of the settlement house which sponsors the center and acts as liaison between the center and the city central office.

The director of the center, a teacher by training, meets weekly with the teaching staff in an effort to upgrade their performance. Weekly inservice training for family staff is provided by a social work consultant from a local university. A workshop for the entire staff is also given monthly by a specialist in early childhood education.

A. Internal Organizational Development of the Head Start Center

CENTER ONE

The following discussion of the internal organization of a Head Start center includes: (1) a brief description of the various levels of personnel in the center, their prescribed duties as well as the recruitment and training of the subprofessional group; (2) the patterns of interaction between these levels of personnel in performing their duties and implementing the goals of Head Start; and (3) problems and strains arising from the implementation of these goals and the sociocultural characteristics of the staff and target population. These areas are the major foci of this preliminary analysis of the data; however, in the following discussion their order is somewhat revised for clearer presentation.

I. The Structure and Organization of the Center

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, Center One is formally two Head Start centers, designated as One A and One B.

There are two major levels of personnel at Center One -- the salaried staff and the parents. The inclusion of the latter may appear unusual since descriptions of internal organizational structure ordinarily do not include the client population of the organization. However, in view of the formal goals of Project Head Start and of the integral role parents play in the functioning of this center, their inclusion appears justified.

1. The Staff

The paid staff is divided along functional lines into teaching staff and social service staff (family staff).

The teaching staff, Each of the classrooms at Center One had, until September, 1967, a teacher-director who was a certified professional and a teacher aide who was a salaried subprofessional and considered an

"indigenous worker." Since the resignations of the two teacher-directors in September, 1967, responsibility for the educational program has devolved on the teacher aides. These two teacher aides have been assisted by newly assigned teacher aides and by parents acting as volunteers in the classroom.

The teaching staff is under the supervision of the education director at the delegate agency. The teacher-director has formal responsibility for classroom activities and the teacher aide assists her in fulfilling it. In practice, they work as a team in carrying out the educational program with the teacher-director taking the more active role in teaching. For example, the teacher-director would do the formal teaching in colors, numbers, words, etc., while the teacher aide did "table work" with the children, helping them to practice what they had been taught. She would also perform custodial duties, such as clearing the table, while the teacher-director read a story to the whole group or was singing with a subgroup. The daily duties of the teaching staff included not only formal teaching, but also outdoor and indoor play periods for the children, preparing the classroom before the children arrived and keeping various records on the children. Center One has a strong academic orientation in teaching pre-schoolers. The family assistant describes this orientation and makes note of the parents' preference for it:

Now, there are different theories, I know, in teaching. Everyone does not believe that children of this age can do fractions and read words. I met a girl on the street just this morning who was taking her child to another Head Start (evidently the child was not at Center One), and she said she didn't know what the purpose was, because all they did was play. Now, of course, it's possible that children learn by playing, but here (at Center One) the parents see that the children are learning fractions and can read words. They have an idea of what "one half" is, for example, and the parents prefer to keep this system.



The social service staff. The social service staff of the center consist of a family assistant and two family workers -- one for One A and another for One B. These three individuals are salaried, subprofessional, indigenous workers (however, at least one of them does not live in the neighborhood). They are under the supervision of a professional social worker whose office is at the headquarters of the delegate agency. Consequently, there are no professionals in a social service capacity working at the local center.

The family assistant is responsible for parent and community activities. In addition, she acts as a liaison between the delegate agency and the parents (especially the assistant administrator and the social worker) and between the parents and the director of parent activities at the city central Head Start office. Her relationship to the family workers appears to be partially supervisory. This is reflected in the salary differential (about \$40.00 weekly) and the fact that they often consult with her regarding the disposition of problems. In the following statement, one of the family workers describes the relationship between the family assistant and family workers at Center One:

The family workers only assist the family assistant. The family assistant is responsible for the PTA, for coordination of the two centers. Our job consists of helping her.

The family workers at Center One, a female and a male (later transferred to a new position at another center in October, 1967) have a wide range of prescribed duties. The male family worker described his job in the following way:

I see myself principally as a liaison between the parents and the school. I'm a non-professional social worker....We (the family workers) work with parents

and the school. We have community projects and the adult education course -- and we recruit children.

They work with "community projects" and "the adult education course" in their capacity as assistant to the family assistant. Other duties for which they are specifically responsible include: the recruitment and registration of children in the Head Start program, taking children to the hospital and dentist, relieving teachers, arranging appointments for parent-teacher conferences, checking up on absent children, making home visits to get information on any of the foregoing or to gather knowledge about the home situation that would be useful to the teachers, keeping records on all these and other activities as well, and advising and aiding parents with personal problems. One family worker describes in the following excerpts what is involved in some of these tasks:

**RECRUITMENT** -- We recruit children...through publicity, i.e., signs and posters in stores in the neighborhood. Laundromats are a good place. Mothers hang around them and talk with each other. We also put posters in the dry cleaners, barber shops and beauty shops....Sometimes we just approach people on the street who have small children with them. We ask them if they are in a Head Start program already and if they aren't we invite them to come to Center One....One of the best ways to recruit children is through mothers who are already in Head Start. They tell their friends and they tell others and this is really a good way.

**CHECKING ON ABSENTEES AND DROPOUTS** -- Another thing we do is a lot of following through, that is, following through on children who are absent from class....You have to stay on some parents and prod them gently -- some of them have a pattern of absenteeism....You can get bogged down for a whole day following through on some children. Just this morning, I have already spent an hour on the telephone, but many parents don't have telephones so that you have to go to their homes and then you may not find them in. That's why I often go to homes at 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning before I come to the center....In the mornings I come upstairs to check on attendance of the children and then those who aren't there, we follow up on....



RECORD KEEPING -- Downstairs (where the family staff keep their records and work) we keep a file of the children who are registered...that has to be kept up to date because sometimes they drop out. Upstairs we have personal files of the parents and the children. The teachers keep up the records of the children and we keep up the parents' activity file. That is, we make notes about those parents who are agreeable, disagreeable, hard to reach, ones who go on trips (classroom trips for the children). We have such a folder on every parent.

CONTACTING PARENTS FOR MEETINGS -- We are supposed to contact parents at 12:00 and 3:00 (when they come to pick up their children) to remind them about the meetings. We are also supposed to be here at 9:00 to see the parents.

## 2. The Parents

The parents constitute the third major personnel level of the center. One reason for their importance is the fact that they have played a vital role in the day-to-day functioning of the center, especially since September, 1967, when the two teacher-directors resigned.

Parents participate in a variety of ways. In their role as parents of children enrolled in the Head Start program, they observe in the classroom, assist with children on trips, attend PTA meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Their volunteer work in the class on a regular basis has enabled the center to weather a crisis period from September to date. Several parents offered their services in the classroom on a regular basis. For example, one or two parents would work in one classroom each morning session, and another one or two each afternoon session. This was done for both classrooms. In addition, when one of the teacher aides was absent, other parents would offer their help during her absence. The availability, willingness and dependability of these parents have allowed the center to deal with some degree of success with two deterrents to the effective functioning of the organization -- staff

mobility and staff absenteeism (to be discussed later).

In addition to the teaching staff, the family staff and the parents, there are other individuals and groups who play a role in the internal functioning of the center. The food aide prepares the children's meals and the church's custodian delivers the food to the classrooms on the second floor from the kitchen in the basement. A psychologist meets weekly with the teachers to discuss children, and with the parents individually and in groups to discuss problems they are having with their children and to advise them on child-rearing methods. The delegate agency staff plays an important role in the internal functioning of the center.

The center has close and essential ties to the delegate agency. Meetings of the center staff with the staff of the delegate agency are held monthly. The agency staff consists of the Director, an Educational Director, a Social Service Director, and an Administrative Assistant. The latter has requested minutes of all center staff meetings and the agendas of all PTA meetings. The Social Service Director attends some PTA meetings and the Education Director occasionally visits the classrooms. The family and teaching staffs of all the centers meet separately with some members of the delegate agency staff. Directives are given at these meetings and some policies formulated. The delegate agency has also held a conference for the entire staff and parents of all the centers. All supplies for the classroom, kitchen and office are ordered through the delegate agency. It also handles all financial transactions with the host church. The telephones at the center are part of the telephone system at the delegate agency.

## II. Intra-staff Relationships

In addition to the array of roles that constitutes the structure of an organization, the patterns of interaction are of importance in describing its internal organizational development. In this section, we shall be concerned with the patterns of interaction and the areas of strain among the staff.

### 1. Working Relationships of the Staff

In the description of the various staff roles above, mention was made of the working relationships between individuals in the same functional category, i.e., between the teacher-director and teacher aide, and between the family assistant and the family workers. Here, we shall focus on such relationships between the two major functional staff categories at the center -- the teaching staff and the social service staff.

There are many areas of interaction between these two staff groups with regard to the children. There are several regular occasions on which the family staff and the teaching staff interact with regard to routine matters. In the morning and afternoon, the family worker checks with the teacher on absent children so that the former can make home visits to find out reasons for absence. Between 12:00 and 12:30, the family worker relieves the teaching staff and is present in the classroom to supervise any morning session children who are obliged to linger because their parents are late in calling for them and any afternoon session children who arrive early. Again, at 3:30, the family workers return to the classroom to supervise children until their parents arrive.

An important area of cooperation between the family and teaching staffs is the former's function as a link between the school and the parent. This was summed up by one of the consulting psychologists at a

family staff meeting:

Your position as family staff is understanding the parent and the home situation and reporting this to the teacher....

The hope is that this will be of assistance to the teacher in handling the child in the classroom. One teacher-director expressed it in this way:

...the family workers...work with the teachers in terms of any problems...in the home; and they let us know if there is something really serious there, that we (the teaching staff) need to know.

If the teacher has a child who is a problem, she may ask the family worker to investigate the home situation in order to secure information that may be of assistance to her in handling the child in the classroom. She may also request the family worker to arrange a parent-teacher conference.

The discussion of the psychological and educative problems of individual children is another area of cooperation between the family staff and the teaching staff. This occurs at center staff meetings, as well as informally between a family staff member and the teaching staff. Informal discussion often takes place in the morning (when the family worker goes to the classroom to check on absent children). There has been a lag in such discussion at Center One for several months. This, one of the teacher-directors attributes to poor staff relationships at the center and the advent of a consulting psychologist with whom she (the teacher-director and/or the teacher-aide) discusses individual children.

Teaching staff and family staff cooperated in making home visits during last winter and spring (1967). The delegate agency decided that these visits should be made. One member of the teaching staff and one

member of the family staff went on each visit. The family worker arranged the appointment with the parents. One teacher-director explains why she thinks this staff combination was a good idea:

I preferred it because most of the parents knew Mr. I (the family worker); he had been in their homes before, and even though they knew me, it was sort of a different atmosphere when the teacher comes with the family worker.

The family worker gives his conception of the purpose of the visits:

The teacher would ask mainly what the parent thought about the school and it gave the family worker an idea of what the building was like. (The family worker mentioned that they needed information on the condition of the buildings in which the children lived for the records.)

Family and teaching staff members also meet at staff meetings at the center, and at meetings of the center staff with the staff of the delegate agency.

The two staffs cooperate in introducing the parent of a newly registered child to the center program. After the child is registered by the family staff, the parent is told about the various parent activities, and then taken upstairs to the teacher who is supposed to describe the educational part of the program for the child. PTA meetings provide another opportunity for cooperation between the family and teaching staffs. The family worker also cooperates with the teaching staff by asking parents to observe or to help in the classroom.

## 2. Areas of Strain in Intra-staff Relationships

In the following description of strains in intra-staff relationships, we are concerned with universal problems of organization as expressed under the special conditions of Head Start.



Division of labor. Strain in this area usually arises from:

(1) the occurrence of problems unforeseen by those who wrote the job descriptions for the various positions in the center and the blueprint for the program; and (2) in those areas of the center's operation where two different functional staff levels deal with a common object. For example, with regard to (1), a problem arose at Center One regarding who was to take responsibility for children who arrived early and stayed late in either the morning or afternoon sessions. The official working hours for the staff are 9:00 to 4:00, and the morning session for the children, 9:00 to 12:00 and the afternoon, 12:30 to 3:30. Members of the teaching staff and one of the family staff were reluctant to arrive at the center before 9:00. One family worker often made home calls before 9:00 a.m. on those parents who worked. This problem was resolved by an agreement according to which the teaching staff members would alternate in arriving at 8:30 daily and leaving at 3:30 and the social service staff would alternate in staying in the afternoon until all the children had been picked up; this was likely to extend beyond 4:00.

In those areas in which both family workers and the teaching staff deal with a common object, strains also occurred with respect to the division of labor and responsibility. The object usually is the parent, and occasionally the child. For example, strain also seems to be apparent on occasions when there is a "problem" child in the classroom. Who makes the decision to contact the parent? The teacher-director recounts an incident that relates to this problem area:

Sometimes F, the family worker, and the family worker before her would ask parents to come in, particularly parents of children they felt were behavior problems...sometimes they (the family workers) feel that they should ask the parent (to come in) without...talking to me; not because there

is anything...underhanded, but because they see the children in the classroom and sometimes they see her in a different way than M (teacher aide) and I because we're there all the time....So, they (the family workers) might see a child....Like, I remember once F (family worker) said to me, "I think Daryl really is a problem...and I want to speak to his mother. He's just not doing very well." So, we argued about it because I thought he was doing better than he had been doing. But she saw him like once in the situation...and she was right in that situation....He was being a miserable little kid....

The differing perceptions of the situation may have been due to differences in exposure to the child, but also to differences in professional perspective.

The family assistant is in charge of PTA meetings, and usually the family workers are also present at such meetings. The name "Parent-Teacher Association" (PTA) implies that the teacher is expected to be present and involved in the meetings and activities. The family staff, however, complained of the teachers' non-attendance and tardiness. In PTA meetings observed, the members of the teaching staff were seldom present, and when they were, they made very little contribution.

Communication. Problems in intra-staff communication occur in large and small organizations. Center One is not different. In many situations, the problem of communication was complicated by differences in professional status, the functional division of labor and racial differences. At staff meetings attended (during the period when there were teacher-directors at the center), the observers noted feelings of ill will, antagonism and distrust between the family staff and the teaching staff. However, it can be said, parenthetically, that the relationship between the two staffs has improved since September, 1967, when the teachers resigned and the teacher aides took over their responsibilities. The reasons for this change of tone are being investigated.



In addition to impressions received by our researchers while observing staff meetings and other work situations, we have information from interviews and conversations in which several staff members expressed concern about the lack of communication or poor communication between the family staff and teaching staff. For example, one teacher-director said:

Recently, things haven't been in a good working relationship, and I don't know what it stems from, probably personal feeling. I don't know...but we haven't...really discussed the children since about June....Well, also, another thing that happened is that we got a psychologist on the staff and now...I discuss with him the children in terms of behavior and any psychological problems, that I feel are psychological problems....So that kind of cut it off again, too, in terms of discussing with the family worker the children....The family worker, at the same time, has gotten a lot more paper work in terms of medicals for children and the whole medical aspect of the program.

This quotation suggests that poor communication resulted from changes in work relationships and duties. The teachers preferred to discuss the children with the new psychological consultant rather than with the family staff and the family staff was at the same time given additional clerical duties.

In a meeting of the consulting psychologist and the family staff, the problem of communication is apparent from the psychologist's opening remarks regarding the purpose of the meeting:

We are meeting together today to talk about the Head Start program and how to make it better in the long run, how to make it more effective. We have met with the teachers and they have spoken of some disagreements with the family staff. There seems to be some clashing of interest and competitiveness between the teaching and the family staff. So, that is something we would like to discuss today.

The desire to alleviate the problem is evidenced by the reply of a family worker when he was asked, at the end of the meeting, his opinion regarding

having another meeting: "It was all right today, but let's have the teachers in with us next time."

Preliminary analysis of the field notes suggests many reasons for the poor communication. Most are related to professional, functional and socioeconomic status differences. The first (professional) is very strongly evidenced in an exchange between the family staff and the consulting psychologist at the meeting mentioned above. Family workers related incidents in which the professional teaching staff antagonized parents. The psychologist suggested that briefing the teacher on the family situation might help. One family worker replied:

Well, now, let's face it. She (the teacher-director) is a professional. She is going to get resentful and it will create furor if we say things that she might not want to hear.

At the same meeting, another family worker related an incident in which a teacher was talking about a parent within earshot of the parent and the child. When she told the teacher that she should not do that, she alleged that the teacher replied, "So what? I don't care." The psychologist suggested that she should not tell the teacher she was wrong, but to say that she (the family worker) thought the parent was resentful about what she (the teacher) said. The family worker, asked about his opinion of the meeting above, countered the psychologist's response with the following comment:

I don't think we should say anything to the teacher. There should be no recrimination against the teacher. Just try as hard as possible to make up for the damage she has done.

He added:

The teacher is an adult and she is qualified. She has been employed as a professional. I'm not going to tell her anything.

Other areas of strain among the staff. Our data suggest some additional problem areas which cannot be elaborated in this report because of limitations in time and space. They include: the exposure of strains in intra-staff relationships to the parents and its consequences; the problems arising from racial differences within the staff and between the staff and parents; lack of followup of parents and newly introduced programs; and the relationship between the center and delegate agency (the staff complained of insufficient contact with and "harassment" by the delegate agency).

### III. Participation of the Indigenous Population as Salaried Subprofessionals and as Volunteers

In spirit and in fact the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 stressed the participation of the "indigenous" population of the communities in which its various antipoverty programs were to be carried on. The use of indigenous people in addition to "external caretakers" in alleviating the difficulties of the poor has a history going back several decades. The use of the indigenous population in the Head Start program has included the employment of individuals in the local community as subprofessionals in a variety of job categories and the use of others on a volunteer basis. In this section, an attempt will be made to: (1) briefly describe the salaried members of the Center One staff who are of the indigenous population with respect to their background, recruitment and training, and; (2) elaborate on the problems of internal organizational development that have emerged as a result of using these people both as salaried workers and nonsalaried volunteers and participants in the center.

#### 1. Salaried Indigenous Staff

Before we describe this group and discuss its problems,

some comments need to be made about the term "indigenous" as applied in the context of the Head Start program. Indigenous workers are usually thought to be members of the specific group being served by the anti-poverty project, or people of the same (poverty) class and ethnicity from the neighborhood or community. Our observations suggest that in practice workers may be accepted as "indigenous" if they have simply the socioeconomic and ethnic/racial qualifications. It seems likely that the sponsoring agencies find it impractical to look for their aides within the relatively small group of Head Start parents and they may not have the local contacts through which to find them in the neighborhood. Agencies whose connections extend throughout the city might logically consider the entire city as the pool from which to draw people with the requisite qualifications and talent.

Background, recruitment and training of the salaried "indigenous" subprofessional staff. The salaried indigenous subprofessional staff at Center One includes: two teacher aides, one family assistant, two family workers and a food aide. Comments here are limited to the first three categories. A member of the delegate agency staff mentioned that all the individuals in these categories were born and raised in the neighborhood; however, we know that at least one of these individuals is from a small town in upstate New York. At least two others were born and educated in the South although they have spent some part of their adult life in the neighborhood. All members of the subprofessional staff are high school graduates. Of the five individuals on whom we have information, three have some college training, two of these are currently pursuing college studies, and the third is now attending a business school. Their prior work experience is varied. It includes work in other community action agencies and programs and in other jobs such as teacher-helper, nurse's aide, waitress,

interviewer for survey research organizations, and postal employee. One of the family workers was a welfare recipient before being hired. The same individual had one and a half years of college in the South and is now in business school at night.

The indigenous workers have received both formal and informal training. The family workers and teacher aides at Center One have participated in two formal training programs. One, conducted at New York University for the city-wide Head Start organization, included lectures, field work, visits to agencies and other Head Start centers. This training usually took place after the family worker or teacher aide had worked in this position for a while. During their absence for training, their positions were filled by parents. One family worker who had taken the course made the following comments about it:

Yes, that is an eight-week course that I took in April and May of this year. The teacher aides worked in other agencies during their training period, but the family workers and family assistants do not do that. We made many visits to different Head Start centers and different service agencies. We went to the Mobilization for Youth center and some other centers on the East Side and the Bronx. We also went to the Welfare Department, to the Legal Aid Society and the Juvenile Court....(The training program consisted of) mostly discussion, but we did have lectures from people on the staff and visiting professors on poverty and welfare. There were social science courses and sociology courses. Some of it was irrevelant (sic) but especially some of the lectures were good. They dispelled myths about people on welfare and about black people and it's a good thing when this is done. People think that everyone on welfare likes it and is happy to be on welfare, and of course this isn't true. We talked about our field experiences, and related to each other. We had worked in different areas so we talked about that. We would set up dramatizations of situations where one person would be the family worker and another the parent, and then we would criticize



the way the situation, acted out, had been handled.  
It helped us to get to understand ourselves.

In October, 1967, the same family worker advised one of the researchers that there had recently been an all-day conference at New York University attended by people who had taken the inservice training course there. At this meeting, the former students discussed the assets and limitations of the course in the light of their subsequent experiences on the job.

Another formal training program was held at the delegate agency's office once weekly last winter. This program was conducted by an instructor from New York University and was designed to provide inservice training on a continuing basis after the staff member returned from the course at New York University. The program was discontinued. One family worker described this training program in the following way:

At first, we gave case presentations, showing how we had proceeded so far. For example, the R case -- despite all we had done, the parents still hadn't brought the child back. The group was supposed to give their solutions. Usually they came up with no solutions or else what we had already tried. We took that trip to \_\_\_\_\_ (an experimental educational program sponsored by a local college). That was good. There were speakers -- I don't remember who they were -- it (the training) was nothing.

Another training program that might be considered formal in nature was the Child Development Discussion Group attended by some staff members and parents. These were conducted at the home of the director of the delegate agency by a member of the faculty of one of the city colleges. At two of the three meetings of this group observed by the research staff, there was a teacher-director and a teacher aide from Center One present. The program of the meetings included movies on Head Start projects around the country, discussions of math and science concepts, and demonstration and

implementation projects that could be done with children to enhance their cognitive and social development.

By informal training, we mean those prior and current experiences of the indigenous subprofessional staff that are non-academic in nature, but which they (the staff) felt were beneficial in preparing them to perform their assigned duties at the center. The male family worker mentioned how his job as a letter carrier enhanced his understanding of people, which certainly has aided him in working with parents and others in his current position:

I worked for the Post Office as a letter carrier and that's really public relations work. You meet many people in this work. I have always said that the cop and the letter carrier have more contact with people on the street than anyone else. People talk to you, where they wouldn't talk to their neighbors. It gives you insight into people.

A teacher aide has drawn many ideas for creative class art projects from her own experience as a mother of six. She remarked that with six children one has to be creative to keep them busy. Another family worker thought that living in the ghetto herself provides training for doing her current job:

The only thing I go by is my personal insight and my experience. I sit down and work things out on my own. I read a few things that I think will be helpful, but you don't have to read very much when you were born and raised in poverty as I was. I didn't need and need and need, but I knew people who did. I understand what the parents are going through and yet I try not to let my personal feelings get involved. But I tell the parents what I think the normal and best thing to do is.

Problem areas in internal organization related to salaried indigenous subprofessional workers. Preliminary analysis suggests the following problem areas:

a. Mobility. Much job mobility has occurred at the center level. For example, one of the family workers was previously a teacher aide and just recently was transferred to another center to become a family assistant (which involved a salary increment and promotion); one of the teacher aides had previously been a family worker at the center. Also, there has been mobility to positions outside the Head Start project. Mobility is not limited to the subprofessional staff, of course. For example, mention has already been made of the fact that the two teacher-directors at Center One resigned in September, 1967. During this year at the delegate agency, there was a change in educational directors and the nurse resigned, leaving the position vacant. These facts are relevant to the internal functioning of the center because the change in educational directors involved changes in policy and procedures at the center level. The resignation of the nurse pushed additional duties upon the social worker at the delegate agency, thereby decreasing the amount of time she could spend supervising the social service programs at the center level. With respect to promotions and transfers of the subprofessional workers, the situation is somewhat paradoxical: the goals of Project Head Start include raising the aspirational level of its indigenous participants; however, an increase in aspirations and its consequences in terms of mobility interfere with smooth organizational functioning.

As part of the anti-poverty program, Head Start is also committed to encouraging its workers and parents to prepare themselves for new occupations and careers; but the aspirations stimulated may be frustrated by the educational requirements of the occupation. The two teacher aides and a family worker at Center One would like to become teachers, but that they might acquire the educational credentials seems improbable.

b. Professional marginality. The current attempt to incorporate nonprofessionals into traditional professions as "aides" or "assistants" has been geared to freeing the professional from clerical and other duties in order to allow him to devote more energy to strictly professional duties. It also represents an attempt to provide job opportunities in humanitarian service occupations for people with little formal education. However, preliminary analysis of the data suggests some problems that result from this attempt. We have subsumed these problems under the heading "professional marginality." For example, one teacher-director expressed in the following way the problems of a teacher aide who is a part of the teaching staff, but who is not a teacher in terms of the client population's conception of what a teacher is:

You know she's (the teacher aide) not a teacher, in terms of the qualifications....Yet, she's a teacher in the classroom. And there is that status thing too, in the neighborhood. You know (the parents) could say to N (the teacher aide), "Well, you're not a teacher, so why do you come and visit my house like you were a teacher...." But to come into the home as the teacher, you know, sometimes the teacher aides are in a position that is difficult because they are supposed to be the teacher and yet they aren't really the teacher and it puts them in a spot more than it does anybody else....

The male family worker at Center One defined his position as a "nonprofessional social worker." Although not articulated by him, his statement suggests the marginality of the indigenous workers on the social service staff.

c. Role confusion among the salaried indigenous subprofessional workers. Many of this group are not only members of the staff, but also parents of children in other Head Start centers sponsored by the delegate agency. For example, the new family worker and one of the parents at

Center One both have children enrolled in other programs. This dual role may limit their participation as parents in Head Start. That is, because of their job commitments, they would not be able to participate in some parent activities, for example, PTA meetings, at the centers where they are parents. In addition, it suggests potential conflict in their role as staff members: the family worker at times appears more as a parent than as a staff member. At a meeting of the psychologist and parents, she participated as parent, elaborating on her problems with her son in Head Start and requesting the psychologist's advice in solving them. At another center, during a discussion of parents' problems with the public schools, it was hard to distinguish between the family staff and the parents. The family staff reported their difficulties with the public schools as parents and became as emotionally aroused as many of the parents over their unhappy experiences with these institutions. Granted that this dual role facilitates rapport, empathy, etc., it may also inhibit the guidance and supervisory function of the individual as a staff member and present a distorted view of the role of the staff to parents. While the mutuality of experiences between the staff members and the parents will enhance communication between the two in the discussion of an issue and in the formulation of action directed against it, the emotional involvement of the staff member as a parent may preclude the objectivity needed for good judgment and careful planning.

d. Attitudes of the workers towards the target area and its population. Preliminary analysis also suggests another problem area unforeseen by the advocates of the use of indigenous personnel. One of the basic assumptions underlying this practice is that because these people are



familiar with the neighborhood and its residents, they would not experience some of the problems of rapport nor have the negative attitudes that outsiders would. Preliminary analysis suggests that this assumption needs refinement and modification. For example, fear of the neighborhood is a common feeling among those from outside the ghetto. One teacher-director at Center One, in discussing why the family workers went with her on home visits, made this fear quite explicit: "I preferred it because most of the parents knew Mr. I (the family worker)...and I didn't like going into some of the neighborhoods." However, members of the indigenous staff share this reservation. The social worker at the delegate agency said to one of the research staff: "Our family workers were born and raised in the neighborhood and only three of them will go alone into these streets." A teacher aide who had been a family worker said: "I got the job as family worker, which I didn't care for, because I didn't care for going into apartment houses (and) buildings." We see that this problem of fear of the neighborhood is just as real for some indigenous workers as it is for professionals from outside the area. The fear may be justified by some of the conditions that exist in the neighborhood. However, as the educational background of these indigenous workers indicates, they may be considered middle class or at least upwardly-mobile members of the lower class. Because of this, they may be partially alienated from and feel threatened by the ghetto and may exaggerate its dangers. The social class position of these workers may also imply the presence of other negative attitudes towards the target population. Although it has not been observed at Center One, the director of another Head Start center reported negative attitudes on the part of her indigenous family staff towards the parents.

They felt that the parents should be able to pull themselves up by their "bootstraps" as they themselves had done.

Parents as volunteers and as active participants in the internal organizational development of the center: associated problems. Although we have ample evidence attesting to the positive consequences of the Head Start effort to have parents play an active role in the life of its centers, this section will focus on the problems affecting internal organizational development that arise from this effort, as suggested by a preliminary analysis of existing data. (In our final report, we shall extensively discuss the positive consequences.)

Parents are encouraged to participate at the center in many ways. With regard to its educational program for children, parents observe in the classroom, help on a regular volunteer basis in the classroom, and assist with the children on trips. The program of parent activities includes the PTA, a variety of classes and projects for self-improvement socially and economically, provision of services to meet existing problems of the parents, and a concerted effort to stimulate the parents to act on their own behalf.

a. Classroom observation. As observers in the classroom, it appears that some parents may need more training in observation and interpretation of classroom activity than they now receive in order to prevent their distortion of what they observe. As evidenced by the comment made by one parent to the family assistant mentioned above (p. 22), many parents feel that children are only "playing" and "doing art" in these classes, and fail to see any educational component in such activity. In addition, parental emphasis on academic development rather than social

development inhibits the parents' understanding of what is taking place in the classroom. It seems necessary to explain to many parents the "what" and "why" of classroom activity if their role as observers is to contribute to their meaningful involvement in and understanding of their child's education.

In the role of observer, the parent may have a deleterious effect on her child's adjustment in the classroom. Observations and staff comments indicate that often the presence of the parent encourages dependency on the part of the child, and permits the parent to use threats and other negative techniques on the child to encourage obedience and participation in the classroom. This neutralizes the teacher's efforts to handle the child in a potentially more effective manner. This issue also points up the need of providing the parent with some orientation to the role of classroom observer.

b. Providing assistance with children on trips. The staff attempts to involve parents actively in the center by requesting parents to assist with the children on trips, but such volunteer assistance appears to be highly undependable. Arrangements were made this summer to take the children to the circus, but they were unable to go because not enough parents turned up to accompany them. One of the teacher aides mentions this same problem:

I have asked a few (parents to come in and help) and they have promised, but I'm waiting, still waiting....They have promised but I haven't seen them.

A teacher-director also comments:

I think that's really what Head Start wanted, to have a parent. But it hasn't always worked out that well. It would be very helpful, but it hasn't

worked out to the point where you can always depend on the parents. It's on a voluntary basis and if she has a family and she's just volunteering, you can't depend on her, so she isn't responsible.

c. Consequences of motivation for self-improvement. One of the goals of Project Head Start with respect to parents is stimulating their personal and social development. When the effort to stimulate motivation succeeds, and provision is made or sought to implement such motivation, one of the consequences is less participation in parent activities. That is, in the attainment of one Head Start goal, attainment of another may be sacrificed. Two examples may be cited from Center One. One active mother became involved in a job training program as a result of the efforts of members of the Head Start staff. Subsequently, she started regular employment and was no longer able to participate much in parent activities. Another very active parent leader recently entered a job training program, further depleting the parent organization's leadership pool.

d. Regular volunteer work. Volunteer work as traditionally conceived is usually done by those who are not in need of the funds that would be derived from a salaried job. However, when the volunteers are from the lower-income group in the population who could use additional funds, such work on a regular basis has problematic implications. First, the question arises of paying the parent who contributes three or four hours daily to classroom work because of the teacher shortage when the parent could use additional income. Project Head Start does not permit paying such parents unless the absent staff member has exhausted her sick leave quota. In addition, such regular participation often results in an increase in the parent's aspirational level. That is, she may feel, as

a result of her classroom experience, that she would like to become a teacher aide or a teacher.

e. Group action initiated by the parents. Encouraging the poor to initiate action on their own behalf is a focal point in the "War on Poverty" effort. If such an effort is to be effective and not lead to the reinforcement of apathy and a sense of powerlessness among the poor, some provision must be made to educate them with regard to the bureaucratic intricacies of our society. An example from Center One will illustrate this problem. With the resignation of the two certified teachers in September, and the assumption of full responsibility for educational program by the teacher aides, parents became more involved in this program as regular volunteers in the classroom. In October, the parents petitioned the delegate agency to retain the teacher aides as teacher-directors and not to bring into the center a new certified teacher who would be subordinate to the teacher aides. (A copy of this petition is attached at the end of this section.) The resolution of this issue involves state regulations beyond the control of the delegate agency and not known to the parents probably because of their socioeconomic position or because of the general ignorance on the part of most laymen of bureaucratic requirements. One of the regulations to which Head Start centers in New York are subject states that there must be a certified teacher in each classroom.

Another problem suggested with regard to group action initiated by parents involves parents' confusion over the indigenous staff's role in action initiated by them (the parents). With regard to the petition, parents requested active staff participation, e.g., obtaining parents'



signatures. A staff member explained to them that the function of the staff was to provide guidance, but not to actively participate in this action of their own choosing. This problem may be exacerbated by role confusion among the indigenous staff as discussed above.

Petition from (Center One A) Parents Concerning Retention  
of Teacher Aides as Teacher Directors

1. We, the parents of (Center One A),\* hereby petition to have our teacher aide, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, established in the position of teacher director. We feel she is the most qualified to fulfill this job.
2. We have observed her work in the classroom, which reflects a very warm relationship with the children.
3. Since Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ has been in charge of the children, in the absence of the teacher director, there has been a tremendous acceleration in the teaching of the children. We have seen great improvement in our children's performance during the past three weeks.  
Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ also uses her skills to encourage parent participation in a meaningful way.

---

\*The identical petition (except for the name of the teacher aide) was circulated by Center One B.

CENTER TWO

The social service staff consists of a full-time white social worker whose training is in psychiatric casework, a part-time Negro social worker who is trained in group work, a Negro family assistant with a college background and two Negro and one Puerto Rican family workers with a high school education.

I. Social Worker

The social worker sees the social work role in Head Start as involving generic social work skills, that is, casework, group work and community organization. Although, ideally, the Head Start program, to fulfill its goals, requires a generic social worker, social work training programs produce social workers specialized in one area of social work practice. Thus the social worker felt that she needed a consultant who could provide help to her in those areas of social work practice in which she was deficient.

Her aims were threefold: (1) to train family staff particularly with respect to dealing with problems of parents involving contacts with such bureaucratic organizations as the Department of Welfare and the City Housing Authority; (2) to consult with parents about the emotional problems of their children; (3) to organize the parents for group action. While she stated that family staff should be able to handle bureaucracy and help the parents learn how to handle it, she herself confessed to a feeling of failure in her own attempts at dealing with bureaucracies to help relieve client needs.

She furthermore thought that the parents were not amenable to help with personality and emotional problems of their children. Thus, she felt that her training in psychiatric casework was to a great extent irrelevant

to the work which she was able to do and that her training did not prepare her for dealing with a disadvantaged population or for organizing parents for group action. She perceived a serious mismatching between her skills on the one hand and the needs of the program and the kind of population served on the other.

She also thought that the social worker's role in Head Start should include observing in the classroom and providing guidance to teachers with respect to the emotional and behavioral problems of the children. This she was not allowed to do.

Since the job was both demanding (requiring skills which she did not possess) and yielded little satisfaction (not permitting her to exercise skills which she did possess), she left the center after four months of employment. Her grievances also centered on working conditions: the lack of space for interviewing in privacy and the length of the working day (her reference group was the teachers in the center who left an hour earlier when the children were dismissed), and the lack of fringe benefits (her reference group consisted of social work professionals who usually enjoy these benefits in whatever setting they are working).

## II. Social Service Aides

The social service aides include a family assistant and three family workers. The family assistant is expected to provide direct supervision of the family workers and she is the channel through which the overall supervision of the social worker is exercised.

In actual practice, her chief area of supervision of workers is the checking of children's attendance. The family assistant gets a list from teachers of the children who have been absent for more than three days and

asks the family workers who are assigned to these families to pay home visits, find out the reasons for the absences and the date when the children will come back to the center and report back their findings to the teachers.

Outside of this area of differentiation of roles, the family assistant and family workers have a similar role. The components of this role are the following:

1. The Vital Base of the Organization: Securing and Retaining Members

Recruitment of children and parents to the program. This is done by home visits to families living within a prescribed area to determine which have children within the Head Start age range and to persuade those defined as living in poverty to send their children to the center. The parents of the children accepted into the program are similarly persuaded to participate in parent activities through a followup formal social work interview at the center.

Sustaining participation of members in the program. For the children this is done by checking attendance and making home visits to find out reasons for non-attendance and reporting to the teachers; and by providing escort service if a mother is ill and cannot bring in or pick up her child. Sustaining parent participation is done by socializing with parents and making them feel welcome at the center, setting up notices of meetings, and letting parents know about meetings by word of mouth.

2. Enhancing the Health Status of Participants

Making sure that medical and dental services are provided for the children is done in the following ways:

- a. Helping mothers to fill out Medicaid applications.
- b. Seeing that children are registered at a clinic and given regular examinations and laboratory tests.



- c. Enrolling them in the dental program at a local clinic.
  - d. Giving out names of doctors and dentists who accept children receiving Medicaid.
  - e. Making available to parents pamphlets on health.
3. Enhancing the Individual Welfare Status of Families

The social service staff provide advice and help to parents with respect to home-management problems, e.g., how to shop on a limited budget. They also act as advocates of or brokers for individual parents, i.e., as mediators and facilitators in their relations with government and private bureaucratic organizations. They may do this by contacting the Department of Welfare or City Housing Authority to elicit or speed up action on client demands, or by escorting non-English-speaking parents and children to a hospital and acting as interpreters.

4. Organizing Parents for Group Action

The social service staff act as guides or advisors to groups of parents who are organizing to press their demands for better schools, a cleaner neighborhood, etc.

5. Enhancing Teacher-Parent Communication

The social service staff here take the role of mediating teacher-parent relations at the center by setting up parent-teacher conferences at the request of either party.

6. Miscellaneous

Other role components include providing babysitting services at the center for the period of time between when children are dismissed from class and parents pick them up, and helping in the kitchen and the classroom when the cook or teacher is absent.

The social service staff all express satisfaction with their work, save one family worker who takes exception to such tasks as babysitting

and escort service, which are not providing her with a "learning experience": "A family worker should be an aide to the social worker. Many jobs are not a learning experience for me because I've done it for my own children."

The staff also take pride in their accomplishments, particularly with respect to stimulating the growth of parent activities and clubs. The family workers think that their training and experience have prepared them adequately to handle their manifold tasks. The family assistant, on the other hand, thinks that she does not have the "know-how" to mediate adequately the relations between clients and bureaucracy and she turns to the social worker, who she feels has the training and the "pull" to perform this task better than she. Since the social worker often felt that she was not able to secure action on client demands, it would seem that the higher one goes in the social service hierarchy, the less feeling of competency prevails in the ability to mediate client-bureaucratic relations.

The social service aides are very concerned about not overstepping the boundaries of their role. Commenting on the barring of social service staff from access to social work records, one family worker says: "We wouldn't want to know if we're not supposed to because sometimes it's not too good to know too much."

When the social worker was on the point of leaving the center and she did not have the chance to put the part-time assistant social worker abreast of matters pertaining to the registration of children, she asked the social service aides to transmit the information. This they refused to do because "it looks like you're taking authority" and "the director is the boss," and "she has the last say on everything."

Another instance where family staff showed concern over overstepping the boundaries of their role was in the matter of elections for officers of the parent association. The social work consultant advised the social service

aides to take an active role in setting up an election committee, advising the committee members and discussing the duties of the new officers with them, but the aides claimed that the elections were not in their hands, that they were being managed by the administration. The family assistant commented: "Everything was ready. There was nothing we could do about changing it." A family worker said: "You still have a boss....We take a back seat. We follow the leaders."

Playing a well-defined and limited role may well have been an emphasis of inservice training. One worker, commenting on what she had learned through training, said:

I learned how to get back to the center and not let the director know how smart you are and she'll fire you.... This is what the instructors told us. The director might feel we were trying to get her job and tell her what to do. You can't go back to the director and tell her you should do this and that or she says she has no use for you.

### III. Relations between Social Service Aides and the Social Worker

The social worker supervises the social service aides directly and indirectly: indirectly, by making suggestions to the family assistant, who channels them to the family workers, and directly, by scheduling conferences with each worker one hour per week.

In publicly evaluating her aides, the social worker has stated that they have matured considerably and become more professional over the four-month period that she has been associated with them. Nonetheless, in private, she has been critical of them in various respects:

a. Problems of supervision. Social service aides do not always act on the recommendations of the social worker.

b. Problems of professionalization. Social work aides are reluctant to formally put into writing the contacts they have with parents; they are reluctant to attend staff meetings.

c. General job orientation. "They're supposed to come in on time in the morning and not sit two hours drinking coffee."

d. Specific role performance. Social service aides use techniques disapproved of by the social work profession:

Social workers are trained to be polite and not to get angry -- they mustn't call names or ridicule their clients....The family workers are prone to use this approach. They do gentle teasing; they call it "dishing" -- it's a Negro term. They say, "How come your house isn't clean!"....Or the worker says, "Your kid needs changing. Take him home."

It should be noted that the social worker was ambivalent toward this approach rather than outspokenly critical. She said that she "was shocked by some of the things family workers did with parents but that they worked." She, however, could not use such a technique because the parents "wouldn't speak to me ever again. I'm white and a professional."

On the basis of our observations, we have documented the validity of the first criticism with respect to a specific issue. Two social service aides have disregarded the recommendations of both the social worker and the social work consultant with respect to the advisability of organizing parents to push their demands for better education in a local public school. We also have evidence that at least one aide is reluctant to attend meetings of any kind, whether within the center or outside, because "I find it pretty boring at times." We have observed that the aides come late and leave the center early. That they sit around drinking coffee can be interpreted as a natural accompaniment of one of their role prescriptions, which is to socialize with parents. We have no evidence for the fourth point of criticism.

The social worker's opinions of her staff's performance were embodied in a written evaluation submitted to the administrator of the center. They were sufficiently negative in tone to have surprised the social work consultant, who expressed his feeling of "shock" to the social service aides. He was dismayed by the discrepancy between the social worker's publicly laudatory

attitude toward the aides and her official evaluation of them. At least one aide stated that she was not surprised, for she had always distrusted the social worker: "It was bad faith. I suspected it all along, while she was here. I knew it." Whether this was a long-standing attitude or a rationalization is difficult to determine. On another prior occasion the same aide publicly told the social worker that she had learned a great deal from her.

#### IV. The Issue of Professionalism: Professionals and Subprofessionals

In evaluating the utilization of indigenous persons as social work aides, the social worker pointed out the usefulness of indigenous workers in performing tasks not requiring professional skills:

Indigenous workers do what they're supposed to do: to bridge the gap. The functions conceived by Head Start are best fulfilled by nonprofessionals. It's a waste of time and money to have more than one or two professional social workers. Many of the things done a nonprofessional is capable of performing with training. It doesn't require six years of college. They are often better at meeting people at their own level than a professional social worker would be....You don't need an MSW to deal with Welfare; you don't need an MSW to teach someone how to shop properly or how to be a better homemaker. She needs to get along with people and all family workers have this.

At the same time, the social worker expects the social service aides to become "more professional" in the course of their association with her, and criticizes them for specific instances of nonprofessional behavior (see preceding section on Relations between the Social Service Aides and the Social Worker).

The attitude of indigenous workers toward professionals is expressed by one family worker as follows:

Some professionals tend to look down their noses to you.... Professionals are not born professionals....I find professionals think you can't compete with them knowledge-wise. Many of them feel they know all the answers because they have studied and have more knowledge. They are not willing to realize experience is the best teacher. Sometimes you



can't practice what you're taught. You have to use your own judgment about many things.

Yet, in specific instances social service aides turn to the social worker for help:

If problems get too great and I don't think I could handle it, I would go to the social worker....At times with Housing or Welfare or maybe medical, something came up I don't understand. I would get a better understanding from my superior. I find out before giving the information to a parent to make sure it's correct information.

While there is a basic appreciation by the social worker of the valuable contributions made by indigenous workers, coupled with a criticism of their nonprofessional performance, there seems to be on the part of the indigenous worker a basic rejection of the professional's greater expertise based on formal training, accompanied by a willingness to turn to the professional for help with specific problems.

Not all professionals hold indigenous workers in contempt. According to one family worker, "Some of them are just people." In other words, their qualities as human beings are perceived as having primacy over their status as professionals.

This primacy of personal over occupational characteristics also affects the indigenous workers' self-perception in their roles. Willingness to be of service, helping parents with their problems, "letting them know you're interested in them for themselves" are stressed. With respect to making home visits, a worker said:

You can't go in as a professional: you go in as yourself. You let the parents know that you're not putting on, that you're leveling with them. Don't pretend to be something you're not.

In their attitude toward their work, family workers appear to de-emphasize the formal occupational aspects, such as getting paid and doing a job. They stress the human desire to help people: "What you do for parents is not for money but because of a want to do. We try to show

them this is something to do because you want to do, not because you're paid." Another worker pointed out:

I do work that the average social worker would be doing, but I consider it part of everyday living. You'd help any neighbor or member of your family if they need it. To give service to someone who needs it isn't a job. It's part of life. It doesn't require extra effort for me to do it.

One of the two family workers who were interviewed devalues the formal knowledge component of her work. Experience in the ordinary course of life is what counts and she stresses what indigenous workers and parents have in common. In answer to the question, "What of your previous experience have you found to be most helpful in your work here?" she responded, "The role of the housewife. It helps you understand other mothers and housewives, children." With respect to what she had learned in a two-month inservice training course, this family worker said, "I didn't get anything out of it that I didn't know before." She qualified her answer as follows: "I learned something, but not too much I didn't know before -- just about OEO. I know the culture of the Negro. I learned about Puerto Ricans."

The other family worker thought that inservice training qualified her to understand the financial benefits and services welfare recipients are entitled to and to cope with problems parents experienced in dealing with the Department of Welfare.

Both family workers were receptive to once-weekly inservice training provided by a social work consultant who specializes in group work and advises them on how to organize the parents for group action.

We conclude that there is great ambivalence about professionals and the acquisition of formal knowledge. The indigenous workers want respect

from professionals and are saying that "fundamentally we are equal: professionals are not born professionals and our experience is a match for their greater formal training." At the same time, they grudgingly admire the professional's greater training, as when one of the family workers advises parents to talk more often to the teacher, for "she has four years of schooling more." They also point out that they regret having been obliged to interrupt their own education and speak of plans to resume it in the future.

While the social worker would like to "upgrade" the performance of indigenous workers to make it more "professional," the indigenous workers resist professionalization and would like to see the behavior of the professionals "de-professionalized." Each status occupant attempts to assimilate the role of the other to the perception of his own role.

#### V. Relations between Social Service Aides

According to the family assistant, the social service staff share information, experiences and ideas among themselves, "so each knows what's going on" and "so if one leaves Head Start, the others can carry on, so we are not at a complete loss." But, according to at least one family worker, all information which staff members have is not freely communicated, particularly the information which the family assistant possesses. "There are things which the family assistant knows and family workers are not supposed to know....The family assistant shares what she's supposed to share. Some things she can't." The family worker was not explicit about the matters on which knowledge is monopolized by the family assistant.

Although she claimed that family workers "share what pertain to the families," this is doubtful since she also stated that if a problem arises

with a family and the worker who is assigned to work with that family is absent, another worker does not substitute for her but rather the social worker consults the social work record of the family and handles the problem.

The same family worker, reflecting on her role and that of the family assistant, saw them as essentially similar, but pointed out the differential in pay:

The jobs of family assistant and family worker are basically the same. The difference is in the pay.... They're doing the same things. I think there are no educational requirements except to be a high school graduate.... Maybe the family assistant knows more what's happening at the center; she confers more with the director.

This statement was based both on her observations of role similarities at the center and her own previous experience as a family assistant at another center where she was performing tasks similar to those she is now carrying out as family worker.

#### VI. Relations between the Teaching and Social Service Staffs

We have not yet interviewed teachers, so our comments will be brief and confined to the perspectives on communication between teaching staff and social service staff.

The contacts of social service aides with teachers are limited to the checking of children's attendance and communication to teachers of the reasons for children's absences. Also, in cases where there is no direct teacher-parent contact, social service aides may foster communication by setting up individual parent-teacher conferences or by setting up an appointment for a parent to observe in the classroom.

One family worker evaluates teachers as follows: "I have good contacts

with them. They're nice and capable. I don't see any faults. The job they've done is wonderful." Another family worker says, "I don't relate to teachers, really. If one of my families wants a conference with the teacher, I can set up a date and time, but otherwise I don't relate to teachers."

The social worker points out that there is not enough communication between the educational and social service components of the program and that teachers are in a particularly isolated position since very little information is transmitted to them by social service staff and, furthermore, they have few conferences with parents and make no home visits. There have been occasional staff conferences whose purpose is to share information among the entire staff on all aspects of the center's program. The social worker evaluates these staff conferences as follows:

The staff meetings have not fulfilled the purpose for which they were set up. They were devoid of any real information. Also, there was resistance on the part of staff to go because they are after hours for most staff members.

#### VII. Relations between the Social Service Staff and the Director

The social worker has noted that the director is performing a task which is ideally within the social worker's sphere of competence, namely, observing in the classroom and consulting with teachers about the emotional and behavioral problems of the children.

The social work consultant has pointed out that the director has taken over the administration of the election of officers for the parent association, which should have been managed by the social service aides jointly with the parents. The social service aides evidently were buffeted between contradictory demands for active involvement in the election on the part



of the social work consultant and passivity on the part of the director.

The social work consultant, evaluating the relationship between the director and the social service aides, perceives the director as being overcontrolling and not trusting and valuing sufficiently the social service aides. This is confirmed by comments made by a family worker who feels that the director expresses distrust of the staff by attempting "to know everything that's going on" and to find out "everything they're saying" when staff members get together to talk.

B. HEAD START PROGRAM OF ORGANIZING PARENTS FOR GROUP ACTION

CENTER ONE

Head Start can be viewed as a training ground for the parents, preparing them to take active roles in such organizations as PTA's and community action groups. At Center One, the PTA and its various projects and classes for adults are activities in which such training could occur through the organizational experiences they provide.

In the following sections attention is focused not only on the various parent groups and projects but also on the strategies used by the staff in gaining participation and in training parents, and the problems faced in doing so. A description of parent groups and projects is followed by a discussion of recruitment procedures and efforts; psychological and cultural difficulties of the lower class inhibiting participation in organizational activities; organizational problems affecting parent participation; the role of the staff and outside resource people as teachers and advisers of organization; and the problem of involving the man of the family.

I. Parent Groups and Projects

During the period of our observations at Center One the following parent groups and major projects have existed: Parent Teacher's Association (PTA), Welfare Mothers' Club, Wholesale Buying Club, Adult Education Class, Typing Class, Sewing Class, Open House, and playground project. We have attended meetings or planning sessions of all of these groups and activities. In this section we shall describe briefly their emergence and development.<sup>2</sup>

1. Parent Teachers' Association

The PTA is viewed by the staff as the centralizing and coordinating agency for all parent activities. All parents are welcomed to join and

---

2. The members of the family staff are referred to by their initials: CL, family assistant; FI, female family worker; DI, male family worker.

there are no dues. Since July its regular meetings have been held once a month, but during the summer many additional meetings were called primarily in order to plan the use of the special summer parent activity fund.<sup>3</sup> The twelve meetings held between July 13 and November 13 which we observed were attended by an average of 9.5 parents. (Thirteen meetings took place during this period.) A core group of from six to eight mothers attended almost every meeting; a total of 34 parents attended at least one, and they included 30 mothers and four fathers. There are approximately 60 children enrolled in the two classrooms, so that the mothers attending at least one meeting represent about half of their total number. Until October, meetings were held at 12:30 p.m. in order to be convenient for all parents, i.e., those who were picking up their children from the morning classes and those who were bringing them to the afternoon classes. However, meetings are now held at 2:00 p.m. one day a month at the request of the delegate agency. The PTA is at present the only parent organization with elected officers. They are the chairman, co-chairman, secretary and treasurer.

Meetings are conducted along formal parliamentary procedural lines, with minutes and committee and project reports presented at the beginning of each meeting. Committee chairmen and members are appointed by the chairman at meetings. Staff and parents raise issues and make suggestions for action. All decisions for action are voted on by the members.

In February, CL said to one of the research staff that the staff had found that there were too many activities: the welfare mothers met once a

---

3. This fund was set up by OEO for parent activities at centers in New York City only. It consisted of a sum for each center equivalent to \$3.00 per month per child, for the period between June 1 and September 30, 1967. Staff members were first instructed in its use at the end of May and at the middle of July the center received a check in the amount of \$720.00.

week; the Wholesale Buying Club did meet once a week and at that time was meeting every other week; the adult education class met three days during the week; and there had been three sessions for all mothers with a nutritionist from the Board of Health. The staff encouraged the mothers to participate in only one activity. However, CL said, they all belong to the PTA. She went on to say that the PTA used to meet once every two weeks, but as of the end of February it was meeting only when there was a "general question" to be discussed.

From CL's remarks it is not clear if the frequency of meetings had been burdensome for the staff and/or for the parents. Her statements are our only evidence of dissatisfaction on this account. Later during the field work, when she was asked why the Welfare Mothers' Club had stopped meeting, CL said, "There has been a lot of change in the structure of the parent activities, and I think this has strengthened the group. Now activities are centralized through the PTA. Before there were relatively separate groups."

## 2. Welfare Mothers' Club

This club was in existence when we began the research at Center One. It met only twice, in February, and there were four mothers present at each meeting. CL had said that about one-third of the approximately 60 families at the center were welfare clients and, therefore, the mothers at the meetings represented about 20 per cent of this group. The meetings were attended by the social services director from the delegate agency and her assistant, in addition to the family staff of the center.

Discussion at the meetings was focused on obtaining maximum benefits for which the mothers were eligible. Staff and parents seemed to assume that only by special efforts could funds the welfare client was legitimately

entitled to be obtained. The staff gave significant assistance to the mothers by contacting the caseworker or the supervisor directly. Thus specific complaints, such as getting a questioned utilities bill paid, or obtaining winter clothing for children, were settled in the mothers' favor.

Another tactic employed by the staff was using the Welfare Department's own "minimum standards" forms. These forms listed all the clothing, furniture, housekeeping items, etc., that welfare clients were supposed to have. None of the mothers had all the items listed and the staff helped each person to complete the forms, indicating what she did not have. The forms were submitted to the Welfare Department, which was then theoretically obligated to bring the families "up to standard." The staff also gave the mothers flyers to post in their buildings; the flyers invited people to join the club. This indicates that the club was not intended to be limited to Head Start mothers.

The staff was quite militant in its support of the parents' right to make demands of the Welfare Department for their legitimate rights. The following excerpt from field notes of CL's remarks to the mothers at one meeting illustrated this:

...we must be brave, we must not be afraid. You cannot be put off of welfare because you protest. The mothers must speak for themselves...you have paid taxes, this welfare is coming out of your own pocket and you deserve to have it.

The staff had also encouraged affiliation with a city-wide welfare mothers' group.

Replying to questions asked by a member of the research staff about why the club had stopped meeting, the family staff referred to the need to centralize activities and to reduce the number of meetings to attend,



as mentioned above. DI raised another, more psychologically oriented reason:

...we used to have a Welfare Club, but now people come in on an individual basis and we help them in filling out forms, for example. I think this is better. It was more or less like a segregated thing before.... It was like a caste system.

It is possible that the poor attendance at the meetings may also have been a factor in the discontinuation of the club, but we have no evidence that this was a consideration by the staff. However, a complaint made by the social services director to the club members about how some mothers do not return to the club after they have been helped by the staff, does indicate dissatisfaction on the part of the staff.

### 3. Wholesale Buying Club

This group was organized in December 1966. In recounting its history, CL said that parents had indicated concern over the high prices and poor quality of foodstuff in their neighborhood. The parents were interested in "forcing merchants" to improve these conditions. CL referred to the "community dynamics" that this situation involved.

When the club was first organized it worked with two other centers. One withdrew soon after the project was begun. CL said that the groups became "center conscious," each wanting to organize the club in a different way. Center One and the second center held a joint fund-raising dinner but later discontinued working together. CL said that the other center had wanted to buy food directly from wholesale dealers, while Center One preferred to purchase from an established food cooperative. The two centers divided the profits from the dinner; the amount came to \$12.30 each and this was the balance of the club's treasury when we first visited the center in February.

The February meeting of the club was the only one held during our work at the center. Sixteen people were present, including three men. This represented better than average total attendance and above average attendance by men. At this meeting orders for food were placed by the parents for the first time. It was the only occasion on which this took place, and only rice and sugar were actually purchased. As was mentioned previously, the parents' inability to pay for the food in advance resulted in severely limiting fulfillment of the goals of the club.

In addition to the difficulties involved in paying for food items before receiving them, there was another potential problem which was pointed out by one of the fathers. He thought that many parents would be disappointed when they learned that they could not get every item they had ordered because items could be purchased by the club only if orders amounted to a full case. This father was of the opinion that orders should have been tabulated during the meeting at which they were ordered so that the parents would know right away which items they would not receive.

By July the club was being administered by the advisory board of the delegate agency. During the period when we had very little contact with parent activities at Center One, the only activity of the group had been the distribution of the few food items purchased. The advisory board recommended that all of the centers join together to form a buying club, and in July the PTA voted to do this. In late August, at the last summer meeting of the PTA, a committee was appointed to see the director of the delegate agency about the club. This committee did not report back to the PTA. The topic of the club was not raised again until the middle of September when a parent asked CL what stage of organization the Wholesale Buying Club was in. CL replied that at this point the decisions were still

in the hands of the advisory board and that Center One could not act until the board had. She reminded the group that it had already approved of an all-center club and there was no further discussion. The club was not mentioned again until the next month when the members were discussing use of the proceeds of book sales, amounting to \$40.00. FI suggested adding the money to the treasury of the Wholesale Buying Club. One of the mothers commented that it did not look as if they were going to "start back on the club" and there was no further discussion.

There had been considerable initial interest in the Wholesale Buying Club. When funds became available through the special summer parent activity fund, one alternative for their use could have been adding a certain amount of money to the treasury of the club. This alternative was never suggested. Perhaps the parents had lost interest because of inaction by the advisory board, or because they felt the problems of financing and organization were too great.

#### 4. Adult Education Class

This class was held three mornings per week in the basement meeting room of the center and was attended by from ten to fifteen women. Basic English and mathematics were the principal subjects taught. The teacher had formerly taught adults for the Board of Education. CL said that at first the course had been financed by the Board of Education, but it withdraws funds once two hundred hours of classroom time have elapsed. The Board's funding had supported approximately the first five months of the class. Subsequently CL tried using volunteers but had found them unreliable. She had sought funds elsewhere and eventually the city / office agreed to pay the salary of a teacher from March until the end of the summer. The class was discontinued in August. Members of the class wanted to continue

with high school level courses but funds were not found to do so. CL had sought assistance from the Board of Education but learned that it did not pay the salaries of teachers of high school level classes in community organization settings.

Describing the genesis of the adult education class, CL said:

One of the first things I saw when I first came here was to find out what the parents really wanted. The first thing they said was, we want jobs, we want training, we want to get off of welfare. I think that this is important for the overall picture of these families. This is fundamental -- that is, finding work -- to the problem that exists in many homes. A person needs a skill, they need to complete high school. And especially our men, they are frustrated. When they come back home without a job, this can lead to problems between husband and wife. So we asked what kind of work do you want to do, and many said they wanted to be secretaries. However, the realistic situation is that they don't have a background in math and English. So we set up the adult education course and it went through the eighth grade because that was the level that many of the parents needed. Now we need to carry on with high school equivalency training.

Nevertheless, there was difficulty in starting the class, according to CL. She said that at first it had been a problem to find people to enroll in the course. The staff had recruited practically from the street, approaching people who were "sitting idly" on the stoops or standing on the corner.

Partly as a consequence of the recruitment procedure just described, not all of the members of the class were / <sup>Head Start</sup> mothers. CL said that the class represented a "cross-section" of the community and she elaborated on this to the extent of saying that some participants were elderly and some young. Our observations confirm this; the age range seemed to be from the early twenties to the sixties, with most in the twenties and thirties age group.

CL named several goals of the adult education class: to prepare people

to take civil service examinations, employment aptitude tests and the high school equivalency test. We do not know if any of the students did go on to take and pass these tests. If instruction was limited to elementary school levels, as CL said, such examinations might have been too difficult for the students. The teacher of the class organized several trips for its members. They included a visit to the Metropolitan Museum, a boat excursion around Manhattan, and attendance at Radio City Music Hall. We had very little contact with her and so did not learn what she conceived of as the purposes of these experiences.

#### 5. Open House

In May each center held an open house for parents and the community. The classrooms were open all week to visitors and on one day there was a program put on by the children. Their program was followed by statements by the director of the delegate agency and some of the parents. After the program lunch was served in the basement meeting room. There were between 100 and 150 people present and the event was regarded as a distinct success. (We attended the open house but, as was mentioned previously, we had few contacts with parent activities during the period in which it was being planned.)

The open house had required a great deal of planning by the staff and parents. The parents played an essential part on the day of the program. Some served as hostesses in the classrooms and in the meeting room. Others helped with the luncheon. Books were sold by the mothers in the classrooms. Commenting on sources of strength for the parents' group, CL referred to the open house:

Another source of strength, I think, was the open house. That brought the parents together, working on different committees, and they felt that this was their project,



that they were actually having something for the community...  
While working on the open house, they decided that they  
wanted to have their own school colors.

#### 6. Sewing Class

This project was begun in August, when the PTA voted to spend part of the special summer parent activity fund on the purchase of four sewing machines. Committees were formed to gather information on the equipment and to find a place for the class to be held. The minister of the host church asked for additional rent for the storage and use of the machines in the meeting room. The amount requested was beyond the resources of the group and they considered it unreasonable. The PTA members resented the minister's action because they did not think that the church would be inconvenienced in any way by their using the machines in the meeting room, which the center occupied during the day anyway. This situation was resolved in November through a discussion between the minister and the director of the delegate agency. The former agreed to allowing the PTA to keep the sewing machines in the meeting room, but not the typewriters. CL did not know what agreement had been reached with regard to the rent; in any case the PTA had not been asked to pay an increased amount. (Rent is paid directly to the host church by the delegate agency.)

The delegate agency pays for the instructor of the class. She spoke to the PTA at a meeting in October and talked very enthusiastically about how useful knowing how to sew could be to them. She said that they would start with those who do not know how to thread a needle. Besides learning sewing techniques, they would learn about different fabrics and pattern usage. She said that department stores and cleaners need people to do alterations. She thought of the class being a way for some of its members

to become directed toward work as designers, drapers, or even opening their own "boutiques." "The sky is the limit," she said. One of the mothers responded saying that it is wonderful when you find that you can do something yourself.

#### 7. Typing Class

The PTA also voted to purchase typewriters with part of the money in the special fund. In September a committee was appointed to investigate the purchase of machines, and three/typewriters were bought the following month. They are being kept in the home of the chairman of the PTA because there is no other place for them. CL and FI instruct interested mothers in their use two afternoons during the week. At each of the first three sessions there were two mothers present.

FI had expressed interest in a typing class for the parents when she was interviewed in July and it was she who suggested it at a PTA meeting in September. At that meeting CL asked each of the eight mothers present how she felt about the suggestion and three said they would be interested in learning how to type. An exchange then occurred between the secretary of the group, Mrs. H, and the family staff, that raised the perennial question of group representation. The following excerpt from the field notes paraphrases this exchange:

Mrs. H: It seems to me that every time we want to decide something, there are just a handful of people here. At other times there have been twice as many mothers present.  
CL: Right. But today we have a nucleus of parents, and this nucleus represents a consensus. The consensus here is pretty good, and this is the way we will have to work it. (CL spoke in a conciliatory but firm manner.)  
FI: It is true that the other parents are not here, but in this country you need as much training as possible and your decision affects all of the parents coming after you.

CL then remarked that she thought it was a worthwhile project if there

were five interested ladies and she asked how many were in favor of it. All of the mothers raised their hands and the chairman went on to appoint a committee to investigate the purchase of the typewriters. In this incident the family staff took a very directive role and CL superceded the authority of the chairman, since the decision to buy the typewriters was not introduced nor voted on as a motion.

#### 8. Playground Project

The playground project was introduced in mid-September. There is an empty lot owned by the church in which the center is housed, and adjacent to it. The PTA contemplated constructing a playground in the lot. The project was discussed and investigated for the next month and a half.

While the playground was being planned, there was considerable enthusiasm about it. An architect, invited by CL, spoke to the PTA about planning their project. He was very enthusiastic about it, and stressed that they should try to raise money in their own community before turning to government agencies or foundations. After he spoke to the group they planned what they would want in the playground and where they would want the various equipment to be placed. On another occasion the family staff spoke to a Parks Department representative, who made many suggestions. The field supervisor from the <sup>Head Start</sup> city / office was very enthusiastic about the project and came to a meeting of the PTA to speak to them about it. She brought the film, "Chance for Change," because of its sequence about a playground constructed by <sup>Head Start</sup> / parents. CL obtained brochures of equipment. One of the parents visited a playground with CL and reported on it to the PTA, using a rough diagram to illustrate her report. The PTA voted to use the last \$200.00 of the special summer parent activity fund for the playground, and the parents expressed their willingness to volunteer their labor.

However, the project was dropped by mutual agreement of the mothers. They felt that the minister's prior insistence on their paying the increased rent for keeping and using the new equipment for the sewing and typing classes in the meeting room was indicative of an uncooperative attitude on his part. Consequently, they hesitated to plan a project that would involve the use of church property.

#### 9. Other Activities

The PTA has also planned and carried out several other projects and activities. The mothers held Christmas and Halloween parties for the children, and a farewell luncheon for DI, who has transferred to another center. Efforts were made to have the teacher aides assigned as teachers. The parents also sent a telegram to the Board of Education during the teachers' strike in September, stating their position on the dispute. There is a standing committee that works on a monthly newsletter published by all of the centers of the delegate agency. A center-wide advisory committee was organized by the delegate agency and three mothers were appointed to it by the PTA. During the recent crisis in Congressional funding of Head Start the parents collected signatures calling for the passage of the anti-poverty bill and some parents attended city-wide meetings in connection with this effort.

The most concrete results of the parents' own action have occurred through activities associated with utilization of the special fund. However, it is probable that a few of the leading parents gained valuable experience in planning and organization, and added to their knowledge of their own and the larger community through their activities in connection with the Wholesale Buying Club and the playground project, even though both of these projects failed to get beyond planning stages. It is also possible that such failures may contribute to feelings of powerlessness and futility

in the rank and file members.

Parent activities involve women in the large majority. Participation represents a small proportion of the total parent population, but those who take part in the various projects form a loyal and active group. An overview of the parent clubs and activities at Center One indicates a variety of pursuits, which are largely aimed at improving the economic circumstances of the parents. Another focus is on the center itself, as exhibited in the planning of the Open House, parties for the children, and the playground project.

## II. Recruitment Procedures and Efforts

The family staff has principal responsibility for recruiting parents to attend meetings of the PTA and to participate in other organized activities. During the registration procedure, which is conducted by a member of the family staff, parents are told about opportunities to participate in the activities of the center. In answer to the research staff member's question to CL concerning what she tells the parents about why they should attend PTA meetings, she replied:

First I tell them what the issue at this particular time is, for example, of a sewing club that is being established, and I talk about events of the past, things that have been done like the Open House or the Wholesale Buying Club. And if there is a host of programs, then I run down the list of them, and I tell them that they could participate in whichever activity they are interested in. Just to say the PTA...well, that's no good, but an elaboration of what it does is a good thing to talk about.

Other tactics aimed at recruiting parents, which we have observed, are: (1) the posting of announcements of meetings of the PTA and other clubs and groups outside of the classrooms, where parents will see them when they bring and pick up their children; and (2) the sending of notices home with the children about PTA meetings. At a PTA meeting attended by the field adviser



of the city Head Start office, she very enthusiastically suggested that each of the eight mothers present undertake to contact a certain number of parents who never or very infrequently attended PTA meetings. As far as we know, this suggestion was not followed through.

### III. Psychological and Cultural Difficulties of the Lower Class Inhibiting Participation in Organizational Activity

Low-income groups have repeatedly been described as being characterized by feelings of powerlessness and futility with respect to their ability to improve their personal lives and environment. These feelings may contribute to "indifference to and disengagement from any affairs beyond the person or a small circle of friends and family," as one author remarks.<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say that this attitude can be seen in all strata of American society, but that it is exaggerated amongst slum dwellers. Since Project Head Start is aimed at low-income families, many of whom live in slum neighborhoods, it is necessary to consider psychological and cultural factors that may affect the participation of families in parent activities. We have not systematically investigated this subject at Center One, and we have been in contact only with those parents who do participate in the parent program. Thus we cannot yet say why some parents have not joined center activities, nor why others are active.<sup>5</sup> However, some comments made by staff members are relevant to this concern, and they are referred to below.

Various situational-personal factors may affect parents' participation in center activities. For example, one of the possible reasons for mothers not attending meetings is that different commitments may compete for their

---

4. David R. Hunter, The Slums: Challenge and Response, The Free Press, New York, 1964, p. 73.

5. However, it can be pointed out that if those parents who do participate have feelings of powerlessness and futility toward efforts to change their situation, these feelings have not prevented them from engaging in parent activities.



time and attention. CL referred to this in the following comment: "...perhaps they are involved in things they must do like apartment hunting. Of course some of them work..." On the other hand, she went on to point out parents such as:

...Mrs. H., who is the secretary (of the PTA), works every night, but she comes to the meetings. However, she has only one child. Another parent who works at night has seven children, and she still comes when she can.

CL's remarks make the point that despite the presence of seemingly inhibiting conditions, some parents do attend. She seems to be implying that the strength of these impediments is relative to the parent's interest. However, care of children was mentioned specifically by DI as a reason preventing mothers from attending meetings. He remarked:

Of course I understand that those mothers with several children find it hard to participate -- maybe they would more if there was someone at home to help with the children.

Another reason cited by CL was related to more personal matters of the mothers. She said, "...the ones who don't come are usually burdened down with personal problems. They are depressed. They don't feel like bothering to come to a meeting..."

DI may have touched on a more profound obstacle to participation in remarks he made during an interview:

Here in this area, there is an immediacy, an immediacy of problems. You speak to them and they'll say I've heard that before. You've got to show them something, here and now. Why should they come and sit for two or three hours. Everybody knows what's wrong and there are no results. But when the parents can see something done, then some of them may come for a little while, but some of them don't come back ....the parents ask why, what for; we must have something to show them, something that they can see will benefit themselves and their community. We just have to keep trying.

It might be supposed that in a population that included both recipients and non-recipients of public welfare, the former might subtly be assigned a

lower status by the latter. This could operate to make parents who are welfare recipients feel unwelcome in parent activities. However, CL has said that one half of the active parents are welfare clients and this is larger than the proportion they form of the total center population. The only indication we have of negative feelings toward welfare recipients are the reports of teachers that some new parents have asked them if any of the children are from welfare families. The new parents were not pleased when they received an affirmative answer. (We do not know if they became active in parent functions.) In addition, it is possible that the very limited participation in and the eventual demise of the Welfare Mothers' Club (described in the section on parent groups and projects) was related to reluctance on the part of parents to distinguish themselves so openly as welfare recipients.

In appearance the welfare clients are not distinguished from non-clients: all of the mothers who attend PTA meetings are well-dressed. It is possible that some mothers, for various reasons, cannot maintain such an appearance and might therefore be discouraged from taking part in center activities. However, we have no evidence for these speculations. We have only once seen a mother whose appearance was shabby, when she came to the center to confer with CL.

Most of the parents have had very limited experience in voluntary organizations, as for example, in knowledge of parliamentary procedure. The family staff have established it as a standard and gradually the officers have come to use it. The only times when it has been a "problem" during meetings have been when a member, Mrs. I, who knows the correct procedure, has called attention to mistakes and has irritated the chairman because of her insistent manner. Other tentative evidence of this limited

experience is that most of the members seem shy about speaking during meetings, and when they do they make very brief statements.

The very limited economic circumstances of the parents may operate to restrict the experiences they can have, even within the scope of activities that are suggested from time to time in the course of their meetings. For example, the Wholesale Buying Club suffered in its development because it was necessary for items to be paid for a week before they were delivered to the parents, and the families did not have the resources to pay in advance.

Two members of the delegate agency staff have expressed opinions about values of the mothers. They said that some of the mothers at Center One and other centers are particularly eager to plan social affairs. The field notes of a conversation on this subject between the social services director and the education director, both of whom are Negro women, and a member of the research staff read as follows:

We discussed how happy some of the parents seemed to be about the proposed dance and how their eyes lit up and how they offered to sell tickets. Mrs. N (the social services director) said that they seemed to be very interested in social affairs and that parents at various centers were always trying to plan social affairs, and there was a great emphasis on having parties....Mrs. Y (the education director) said that they could dig up three dollars for a dance but they can't find carfare to go to \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital. (At a meeting with the staff of the delegate agency, the family staff of Center One had mentioned that some of the mothers could not afford the carfare to accompany their children on visits to the hospital arranged by the center.)

These comments were made in a disapproving tone. The parents were being charged with frivolous pleasure seeking and a lack of serious interest in the welfare of their children or in their own self-improvement.

It is worth noting that these disapproving remarks came from the educated, middle-class officials of the agency and that no comparable attitudes towards "social functions" were expressed by any of the local or indigenous workers. In fact, the first project carried out with the special summer parent activity fund was a family excursion to a state park and beach; and there had been several other sociable occasions, including a theater party and visits to the center of the city, during the course of the year. It seems likely that such affairs have a special value for slum dwellers, if it is true, as is often said, that slum life breeds distrust, isolation and loneliness. Welfare clients especially may feel deprived because they have so little money for entertainment. It might also be observed that, perhaps because deprived of other forms of group action and achievement, the Negro community has traditionally given great prominence to social affairs held by clubs, church groups, sororities and fraternities, etc. Reports of such events are a prominent feature of newspapers such as The Amsterdam News. In short, sociability, a necessary element in all organizations, may be an especially important element in an organization of the Negro poor.

#### IV. Organizational Problems which Affect Parent Participation

##### 1. Lack of Autonomy of the Parent Organization

The staff must cope with directives from the delegate agency and from "downtown," the city Head Start office. Thus, both staff and parents must adapt to conditions that sometimes chafe and seem arbitrary -- especially directives from the delegate agency. For example, the agency very recently decided that PTA meetings must be held at all the centers on the second Monday of each month between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. (The delegate agency had introduced this policy so that it could plan its own schedule for attending PTA meetings more efficiently.) At the second such meeting, one of the

members suggested that they begin at 1:00 p.m. instead of 2:00 p.m. because then those attending could get home earlier, which is especially important if they have older children in school. There was general approval of this suggestion. However, CL said such a change would have to be approved by the delegate agency. Her remark was met with expressions of irritation on the part of the mothers. One of the unplanned consequences of the new policy may be that teachers can now attend meetings. On the day they are held the classrooms are closed so that the teachers (and family staff) can meet with the staff of the delegate agency and also have conferences with parents. In the past, the teachers rarely attended PTA meetings, ostensibly because it was difficult for them to leave the classroom. It should be pointed out, however, that increased teacher attendance was not the focus of the delegate agency's policy. The introduction of the policy stemmed rather from the needs of the delegate agency staff.

In another instance, the advisory board of the delegate agency has for several months been considering a club for wholesale buying of foodstuff, in which membership would be open to all of the centers. Center One had been one of the initiators of the idea of such a club. (This was described in detail in the previous section on parent groups and projects.) Now it can take no action until the advisory board does. It is possible that such delays result in loss of interest and perhaps in reducing feelings of power and autonomy.

One of the conditions associated with the use of the special summer parent activity fund was that any expenditure over \$24.99 had to be approved "downtown," and several times the family staff and some parents reminded the PTA of this. Another condition was that all of the funds had to be



spent by September 30. This resulted in some pressure in the case of the purchase of the sewing machines and typewriters, because the group had difficulty in finding a place to store and use the equipment. The resolution was to purchase the items and to store them at the office of the delegate agency, and then to continue the search for a permanent place for them. These purchases were a matter of concern to the delegate agency because the administrative assistant expected that "downtown" would want to see the records of the center and would discover that all the money had not been spent by the deadline.

The careful planning needed to best utilize the money provided by the special fund may have been somewhat curtailed by this pressure. But it is also possible that the deadline prompted an efficient organization of the parents' activities. Initially there had been few suggestions for the use of the fund. However, by the end of August decisions had been made for its allocation and committees worked diligently investigating the best purchases. It was then that serious difficulties were encountered in acquiring space for the new equipment.

## 2. Mobility of Parents

Another problem is related to the mobility of the parents. In this connection, Head Start faces a situation that public schools are not as likely to confront. Many children are in the center for only one year and so there may be few interested parents with experience valuable to the PTA remaining beyond the year. On the other hand, those families who have younger children and who enroll them, can maintain their association even when their older child leaves the center. We have observed that the core group of parents who attended most PTA meetings in the summer and fall were also present during the preceding spring. We have not yet learned the



#### Head Start

nature of their continuing affiliation with / . Some parents are lost by residential mobility. A few parents have simply dropped out of the PTA, including the co-chairman. However, both types of events have occurred infrequently. They are problems confronted by all voluntary organizations.

#### 3. Staff Mobility

Another problem is the high rate of turnover of staff members. This is likely to be disrupting to the parent program insofar as it is important that parents and staff get to know each other and staff members learn to work with each other. There was considerable turnover in the family staff before we began working at the center. Between April 1966, when the center opened, and the following September there had been four different family workers for one of the classrooms. The other classroom had had two family workers since the center opened. However, the family assistant has been the same person since the beginning. We do not know the reasons for the change-over, except in the case of the most recent, which took place about a month ago. DI was promoted to the position of family assistant at another center. We have limited evidence concerning the effects of this staff mobility. On one occasion, one of the teachers said that she thought the other teacher had found the changes disrupting. Recently, after a teacher aide left the staff, a parent complained about the mobility of the teaching staff. She said that she didn't think it was good for the children to have so many changes in teachers.

#### 4. Children's Presence at Meetings

There usually are from five to ten children present during the meetings. They make a considerable amount of noise so that it is often difficult to hear what is being said. There has been no provision made for the care of the children during the meetings. However, a few unsuccessful attempts

have been made to cope with the situation, such as sending the older ones to the classrooms. Only on one occasion was the difficulty resolved when a teacher aide attended the children in one corner of the meeting room. However, we have heard complaints from parents and staff about the noise on only two occasions. It is possible that the noise level is not conceived of as a problem, or perhaps the mothers feel that nothing can be done about it anyway. Perhaps they feel it would be discourteous to complain.

##### 5. Staff Conflict

There is evidence of conflict between the teaching and family staffs and this is dealt with in another part of this report. We wonder if and to what extent it may affect the organizing and participation of the parents, but we have no evidence to answer these questions. There is evidence of disagreement on one occasion between the family staff and the adult education teacher. The latter asked the PTA to cover the cost of a boat excursion her class had already taken. She thought the money could come from the special summer parent activity fund, and she said that the administrative assistant of the delegate agency was in favor of this procedure. CL and DI expostulated that according to the guidelines, the group must vote on every expenditure. Later, DI said that he admired the teacher for trying to get all she could for her parents, but it was up to the PTA parents to decide on the use of the special fund. (Only a few of the members of the adult education class were Head Start mothers.)

Conflicts occur between the family staff and the delegate agency, and we may ask again if these have any effect on the staff's activities with parents. Again we have no evidence of effects but we can cite an example of felt disagreement between a family staff member and a member of the staff of the delegate agency. Recently the agency added a parent activities

coordinator to its staff, a Negro woman in her 50's. She spoke at a PTA meeting about various programs she could bring to their meetings. One of them was having a local caterer talk to the parents about opportunities in catering. She said that he was willing to conduct classes on how to serve at parties and dinners. The coordinator said that the caterer's clients were people like the Roosevelts and Kennedys and so to work for him would mean being in nice, beautiful homes and seeing how nice people behave. After the meeting FI voiced her reaction to the coordinator's statement to one of the research staff members. The field notes read:

FI fumed over the statements of the coordinator, saying that these mothers know how nice people act because they are nice people. She also disapproved of training them for work as servants. In addition, she thought that the parents had enough to do during their meetings and did not need the programs the coordinator wanted to introduce. FI said that the director (of the delegate agency) had recently expressed interest in training the mothers for homemaking so that they could be domestic servants. She was shocked by this suggestion.

It is possible that FI's reactions may affect the extent to which she is willing to cooperate with the staff of the delegate agency.

#### V. Role of Staff and Outside Resource Persons as Advisers and Teachers of Organization

There are various levels of staff involved in this aspect of parent work. The center staff has the most frequent contact with the parents, but on occasion the staff of the delegate agency has direct contact with the parents, when they make suggestions, give advice and provide information. At other times their advice or directives are relayed through the center staff. The field adviser also offers advice and information when she visits the center. Outside resource persons may be called upon to provide specialized information.

1. Giving Instructions and Advice

Often specific instructions regarding organization for a specific project or some other action are given by staff members. Sometimes they offer advice on a problem being discussed. However, the distinction between specific instructions and advice may be a subtle one, resting in part as much on the manner and context in which the statement is made as on the phrasing of the statement. We have not examined how individual parents perceive the advice and instructions of the staff, but the actions of the PTA usually follow them.

Examples of suggestions made by staff members, that may be interpreted as specific instructions, occurred when the PTA was discussing plans for a family trip to a state park. DI enumerated the information the parents would need, for example, how much the buses would cost and how many passengers there would be. He also stated that everyone should bring his own food, and in answer to a question about bringing others, he replied that they should bring their husbands or boyfriends. He said that they would be defeating their purpose if they invited too many guests. CL also told the group that someone had to "be right there (at the classrooms) holding the paper, instead of just posting it." This was in reference to a sign-up list for the trip. Another instance involved FI, the other family worker. An architect had spoken to the PTA about their plan to convert a vacant lot into a playground. As he concluded his talk, FI whispered a suggestion to the secretary to thank the speaker for coming.

On another occasion the mothers were discussing plans to clean up the lot for the playground. DI said that the contractor could perform that task much more easily than they could and suggested that they wait until they had talked to him. At another time he suggested that a group of ladies

go to the minister of the host church and talk to him about lowering the rent he was asking for storage and use of the sewing machines and typewriters the PTA was planning to purchase. DI said that they should smile very nicely and show the minister that it was his civic duty to rent to them at a lower price. DI thought that maybe if a group of ladies went and smiled at the minister, they could convince him. At another meeting the mothers were discussing the subject of retaining the teacher aides as teachers. They did not want licensed teachers brought into the classrooms over the aides. DI said that if they were all agreed on this, they should call the delegate agency immediately and make an appointment to see the director.

The illustrations cited above involved only the center staff. However, the staff of the delegate agency is also an essential source of instructions and advice to the parents. The social services director and her assistant have the most direct contact with them through their occasional attendance at parent meetings. However, the administrative assistant may affect activities of the parents through suggestions and directives given to the family staff. For example, at a meeting of staffs of the center and the delegate agency, she said that she "prefers" that the parents keep the special summer parent activity fund in a savings account, rather than a checking account, because one center did not write any checks during one month and still had the expense of a three-dollar service charge to pay. Direct staff involvement with parents is illustrated by the following incident. TC, the assistant social worker, was present at a meeting of the PTA when the purchase of sewing machines was being discussed. CL said that a cabinet would be needed in which to store the machines, and



she remarked that TC had a catalogue of storage cabinets. TC said she thought the group should have the cabinet before purchasing the machines. DI stressed the importance of finding a place for the cabinet before purchasing it. One of the mothers then joined the discussion to say that the very first question to be decided was where the sewing area was going to be -- at the center itself or in a storefront, which the delegate agency was considering renting for all of the centers. Both TC and the director of social services were closely involved in the Welfare Mothers' Club and in the action the PTA took on the teachers' strike, as advisers.

## 2. Providing Information

Staff members also have provided information on some issue or topic under discussion in parent meetings. When action on the teachers' strike was being considered, a question came up about the process of expelling a child from school. FI explained the procedure in detail. At another time, nominations were being sought for the center advisory board. When this was announced some of the mothers seemed puzzled about the functions of the board, and so CL explained them, at the suggestion of DI.

## 3. Giving Instructions on Parliamentary Procedure

Another way in which the staff play a teaching a role is by providing instruction regarding parliamentary procedure during the course of a meeting. For example, CL often prompts the chairman on when to ask for a motion or a vote. At one PTA meeting, a parent, Mrs. I, corrected the chairman on the way she was asking for a motion. FI consulted a book on parliamentary procedure and then whispered something to the chairman. This book is available to the parents; the chairman and secretary have consulted it.



#### 4. Introducing Resource People

The staff have also provided resource people (and materials) with whom parents may consult regarding their projects. For example, the manager of a successful wholesale food-buying club had spoken to the advisory board of the delegate agency when it was considering setting up a similar club for all of the centers. He had been invited by a member of the delegate agency staff. And, as mentioned previously, the playground project had generated considerable contact with experts, who had been sought out by the family staff at Center One.

#### 5. Encouraging Parents to Act Independently

Encouraging parents to act on their own, without staff participation, is another way in which the center staff act as teachers of organization. CL frequently remarks to them at meetings that they should do only what they want to do. A major project initiated by parents was a campaign to have the teacher aides promoted to the status of teacher. This was referred to in a previous section of this report. After the teachers for both of the classrooms had resigned at the end of the summer, the teacher aides had asked the parents to volunteer in the classrooms on a regular basis, in order to ease the shortage in staff. Six parents had responded and some said they had never realized before how very good the teacher aides were. After a short period of working in the classroom, one of the mothers told the others at a PTA meeting how very fine she thought the work of the aides was.

The initial discussion of this issue provides an example of the parents generating action, with the staff both indicating that they should act on their own, and offering advice at the same time. The topic

was raised at a meeting by the chairman, who said that "the parents" don't want teachers brought in over the teacher aides. She and CL then asked each parent present what she thought and all agreed with the chairman's stand. Responding to a probing question FI asked the mothers, DI said that this was not something in which the family staff should be involved, and that they (the staff) should let the parents work on this situation. However, CL had called the delegate agency to make an appointment for the mothers with the director. Seeing the director had been DI's suggestion. The parents had adopted it and had wanted to meet with the director that day. He had not been in but the administrative assistant had said she would be glad to meet with the mothers. She suggested that they write a petition stating their demands and have it signed by center parents. After the meeting, four of the core group of mothers gathered to talk over how to proceed. They decided who would be in charge of getting signatures on the petition. They chose two parents among themselves for each classroom, and then the chairman said, "And let's have Mrs. I (FI) help in \_\_\_\_\_ (one of the classrooms) and C (CL) help us (in the other classroom)." CL smiled and asked what they had in mind. FI said that she did not think that it would be a good thing for staff members to solicit signatures because parents will think that the staff want them to sign and they might feel coerced. She added that it is also better in relation to the delegate agency that the staff were not involved. CL agreed with her but added that the staff was ready at any time to advise and consult with the parents.

## VI. Problem of Involving the Man in the Family

### 1. Male Participation

The parent activities just described have actually been the activities of mothers. Out of the 13 meetings held between July 13 and November 13,

only four were attended by male parents, and in each case by only one. The same father attended two meetings. In three of the four cases the father participated in discussion and in the fourth case he spoke with several of the staff members before and after the meeting. When the Wholesale Buying Club was being planned, at least three fathers had been involved. The family assistant said to the observer that husbands should have something to say where money was concerned. She said that some fathers had visited the cooperative supermarket from which the group had planned to purchase the food.

We have not systematically gathered information on fathers' participation in conferences with teachers. Our records indicate only one occasion when a father came to the center for a conference. We have been told that the family and teaching staffs visited the homes of the children in the fall and winter of 1966. In the future we should ask the staff what contacts they had with fathers during those visits. One of the teacher aides has mentioned that quite a few of the fathers bring their children to the center and we have also observed this. She also said, "We've had fathers that are just interested in the program. They just want to come in and see what it is all about." One of the teachers spoke of a father coming in to hang pictures during the Open House.

## 2. Attempts to Encourage Male Participation

Men who attend PTA meetings are given a "red carpet treatment" by the staff. For example, at one meeting attended by a father, he was warmly greeted when he arrived and at the close of the meeting the FI thanked him for coming and remarked that he came to meetings whenever he could. After the meeting the DI walked outdoors with him

to explain the plan for the playground. DI, the male family worker, said that he always tries to get in an extra word with a father when one attends.

There have been no activities or projects that were geared specifically to attract male participation. However, recently the parent activities coordinator of the delegate agency offered the PTA a program on "handyman" activities, that is, instruction in making improvements in the home. She also raised the possibility of having an evening course on the same subject for all the centers. So far there has been no parent response to either suggestion and no one has pointed out its possible interest to men. On a visit to the center, the field supervisor stressed to DI the importance of getting men to participate in the parent program. She said that when she had been on the family staff of a center, men had been involved in the planning of programs from their beginning. She thought this was an important reason for men continuing to participate in parent activities.

The staff repeatedly remind the mothers that the PTA is not an all-female affair and it encourages them to involve their spouses in projects and social outings. For example, when the playground project was first raised, DI said that if they wanted to start on such a project, the ladies' "husbands and men" must assist in getting the project underway and carrying it out. He said that he was the only man around and he could not do it all alone. At a meeting the next month he reminded the mothers of this and they said they were going to get their husbands and friends to help. At the PTA meeting at which the architect spoke, FI said to him that they had thought of the playground project as something men and women

coming together could do. "For example," she said, "we could mix cement if that were necessary. We could do it. The benches and chairs, perhaps, could be partly done by parents." On another occasion, when an outing was being planned, DI urged the mothers to bring their "husbands or boy friends."

### 3. Problem Areas

Low male attendance at parent activities of school-centered groups is by no means unique to Head Start, nor to low-income groups. However, in light of the current debate over the family role of the Negro male, his involvement in Head Start is of particular interest.

DI has said that there are few fathers at the center, so that it is hard to have a program for them. He said that they have some complete families, but "not a lot." His use of the terms "friends" and "boy friends," when addressing the mothers, was a practical recognition of this situation. He also said that after all, the program is for small children and it's hard to get fathers involved at that level. To the problems DI raises, we may add that when the father is present in the family, his work may prevent him from engaging in many of the meetings and activities, most of which are held during the day. In addition, there are few, if any, activities which are geared toward male interests. The newest programs are the typing and sewing classes and they would be of minimal interest to men, even if they could attend during the day. Opportunities to play the traditional male role are very few. Such an opportunity did come up when a father was elected treasurer of the group, thus putting into the hands of a man the responsibility for financial concerns. He had attended a PTA meeting while on vacation and it was

arranged that his wife would assist him since he would not be able to attend many meetings. He has not attended any since the one in July when he was elected to office. DI has remarked that it is hard to get and keep fathers. They may come once or twice and then do not appear again. It is possible that men may feel overwhelmed by the preponderance of women at the meetings they do attend. CL has commented that it was very good for the children that one of the family workers was a man, because of the "problem with the Negro male image in poor ghetto neighborhoods." It may be concluded that the staff thinks the man of the family should be involved in the parent program, but they have not been able to develop activities to attract his participation.



CENTER TWO

I. Recruitment Procedures and Problems

The initial recruitment of parents to the parent association and committees is carried out as follows. In the words of the social worker:

When the parent registers, the worker tells her about the parent activity program. When she comes in for a social work interview, a review is made of parent activities. When the parents bring the children to class, they are brought to the family room to introduce them to other parents and invite them to the meetings. Often, because the parents wait for the children, they will converse with other parents. For the Spanish mothers this is important because they are isolated, less able to talk with other people.

The initial recruitment effort thus centers around providing information about the parent program, inviting the new parents to meetings and introducing them to the other parents. This effort is followed by continuing attempts on the part of social service staff to inform parents of meetings by word of mouth and by notices.

The social service staff are aware that not all parents are reached by their recruitment efforts or participate regularly in parent programs. One family worker is reluctant to probe into reasons for non-participation and comments on her difficulties in reaching parents as follows:

My problems are like if I contact the parents and ask them to attend meetings....I just try to reach parents. It's difficult to come up against some parents. You have to push them to do something.... Some parents didn't care or weren't interested....If they don't tell you (about the reasons for non-participation) I don't push them. I don't want to get into their business.

The family assistant states that "the parents have other things to do. They have small children at home. They always have an explanation why they can't come. Nothing you do can get them all."

About the minority of parents who attend some meetings, the social worker says:

It's very difficult to get a turnout for any kind of meeting. Those who come come late. Those who come on time get tired of waiting and leave. The mothers who get involved don't work. They have a poor sense of time and are not faithful about attending meetings to which they have given their commitment. Sustaining interest is a major problem in the program. I have no answer to that.

Both the social worker and the family assistant believe that Spanish-speaking parents are underrepresented in the parent programs. How to achieve greater participation on the part of these parents is defined as a problem to which the social worker has no ready answer. Many of the Spanish-speaking parents are bilingual and can therefore readily understand and participate in the proceedings of a meeting. One family worker of Puerto Rican background is expected to interpret for non-bilingual parents, but she has never been observed to do so.

Our own observations show that over a one-month period, for a total number of eight meetings of the parent association and a variety of parent committees, 40% of the mothers with a child in the center have attended at least one meeting. Of the mothers who participated at least once in the parent program, 52% are Negro, 42% Spanish speaking and 6% white. On the basis of the ethnic proportions in the overall center population, these figures would indicate a slight overrepresentation of Negro parents and a corresponding underrepresentation of Spanish-speaking parents.

For the two meetings of the parent association, 15% of the entire parent body attended each meeting, but only 6% attended both meetings. The committees appear to have a shifting membership. Only two or three parents attended all meetings of their respective committees. An "active" group

of parents was defined as having attended half or more of all meetings over a one-month period. It constitutes 12.5% of the entire parent body and is made up of four Negroes, four Spanish-speaking mothers, and two whites.

## II. Psychological and Cultural Difficulties Inhibiting Participation in Organizational Activities

The following psychological or cultural factors may inhibit participation in organization:

a. School and community conditions may not be perceived as problematic, thus making participation in organization irrelevant. Thus, a mother says to a family worker who asks her how she feels about the schools: "I don't know much about the schools. This is my first time." (I.e., she had recently registered her child in public school and was not or not yet cognizant of problems.)

b. Some parents may not be aware that individual grievances can, through group discussion, be translated into collective demands and action. There may also be a preference for dealing with problems on an individual basis.

c. Lack of self-confidence, lack of assertiveness and passivity make it difficult for the individual to meet the requirements of participation in organization. Some parents who attend meetings may happen to be at the center when the meeting takes place; thus attendance may involve no planning and conscious decision making.

Passivity is also exemplified in the fear of expressing opinions which both social service staff and the social work consultant recognize as an impediment to effective organization. The social work consultant remarks to social service staff with respect to parent passivity about a specific school problem:

You must do something. Parents have no reactions. You have to say: "Do you care about it; do you want to look into it?" You can't let them sit there passively. You got to push it forward, explore it. You have to stimulate them.

d. Alienation and a feeling of powerlessness generate fears of confrontation with the representatives of powerful bureaucratic organizations, such as the school system. Parents and family staff report prior unpleasant experiences such as having been kept waiting for an inordinate period of time, not having been permitted access to the classroom.

Responding to the social work consultant's assertion that disadvantaged people participate in organization to a lesser degree than do the affluent, the family assistant comments: "Middle-income people can go to schools. They're not kicked out. Poor people are not welcome. Middle income are not thrown out. Low-income people feel rejected. They feel reluctant to come in." The felt low status of parents is also indicated in the following remarks by a family worker:

They don't recognize you as being parents. The social worker tells you what's best for your child. The teacher tells you what's best. I don't agree with that. Don't tell me what to do with my child. I am the woman who brought this child in the world and make it possible for you to have this job. Respect me.

e. Most parents lack time-consciousness. The social worker comments:

It's very difficult to get a turnout for any kind of meeting. Those who come, come late. Those who come on time get tired of waiting and leave....They have a poor sense of time and are not faithful about attending meetings to which they have given their commitment.

f. Some parents may be disconcerted by the formal nature of organizational proceedings and they prefer to discuss their problems and grievances in informal get-togethers and conversations. Most meetings are rife with private exchanges of views and comments. During one meeting between parents

and a local school teacher, some parents gathered outside the meeting room to discuss an important issue affecting the children who were attending that school.

g. The more activist parents may experience a loss of faith in the effectiveness of organization. One parent has been heard to remark that very little could be accomplished by the School Committee in view of the small number of parents who were actively involved. Some parents are also discouraged because organization has not been productive of social action. Several have expressed the opinion that there is a great deal of talk but that grievances are not consolidated and nothing is being done about them.

h. The language barrier acts as an impediment to participation for non-English-speaking parents. Although many Spanish-speaking parents understand English to some degree, they are unable to speak it fluently. The need for simultaneous interpretation at meetings was only recognized by the social service staff when a crisis affecting the survival of the center developed, which made it mandatory for the staff to try to reach all parents.

### III. Role of Staff as Advisers and Teachers of Organization

Our observation of organizational efforts at the center over the course of two months, with an especially close followup of developments in two parent committees -- the School Committee and the Neighborhood Improvement Committee -- has shown that the role of social service staff can be examined from two points of view: their role in influencing the internal development of the organization, and their role in mediating between the organization and the external world. We are also interested in the perception by staff members of their role responsibilities to parents. In the following section, these three aspects will be discussed.



Role of the staff in influencing internal development. The social service aides (family assistant and family workers), as integral members of the parent committees, engage in the following kinds of behavior:

- a. Providing leadership in the initiation and closing of meetings, in the conduct of elections, in the presentation of issues to be discussed and of alternative courses of action, and in the setting of limits to the actions which can profitably be undertaken at any particular time.
- b. Supporting the parents' grievances by adding their own, relating anecdotes illustrating the grievances and providing evidence.
- c. Instructing club officers in how to carry out their roles, such as telling the secretary what to write in her minutes of a meeting or telling the chairman when to adjourn. Yet the social service staff are reluctant to discuss with the officers the nature of their roles. One family worker comments: "We must explain to them their duties. I couldn't tell them....It was never discussed. No list of duties was made up."
- d. Encouraging passive parents to express themselves. This technique is not always applied, as when, for instance, the chairman of a parent committee makes a whispered suggestion to the family worker, who then voices her suggestion for her.
- e. Occasionally making decisions on actions to be undertaken without consultation with the parents. This behavior violates the social service staff's own norm of "we do what the parents want."

Role of the staff in mediating between the organization and the external world. The following observations relate to the role of the social service aides as mediators between parent committees and the outside world:

Observation a. A family worker invites a speaker from a community organization to a School Committee meeting to provide information about the



school system and the rights of parents and to exhort them to translate their rights into action. From other evidence, we know that the family worker felt that her lack of knowledge about the school system had led to an impasse in her work with the School Committee with respect specifically to arranging for a meeting between the committee and local school officials. Thus the meeting at which a knowledgeable outside guest spoke provided a learning situation for the family worker and set the stage, along with suggestions made by the social work consultant, for renewed confidence and leadership of her committee.

Observation b. A family worker acts as an advocate of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee in presenting complaints of committee members to the management of the housing project in which they reside. She is only the initial spokesman, however, for during the course of the meeting the parents present other grievances. Similarly, at a mass parent meeting attended by a teacher from a local public school, a family worker leads the parents in formulating grievances about the school system.

Observation c. The social service aides act as a funnel through which suggestions are received on the kinds of attitudes which should be cultivated by parents in their relations with bureaucracies. Thus the social work consultant, in response to the social service staff's claim that parents trust teachers and that they "swallow a pack of lies," tells them: "You must develop distrust. If parents are still trusting, this is going to be phony. Develop distrust....If they're going to kiss the principal, you're wasting your time." The social service aides also receive suggestions from the social work consultant on ways of formulating demands, presenting grievances, etc.

Observation d. The social service aides do not encourage parents to work closely with or incorporate their groups into larger organizations which can more effectively put pressure on a variety of bureaucracies. For instance, the manager of the housing project in which most parents reside has repeatedly suggested that the center's Neighborhood Improvement Committee join forces with the project's tenant association to press their demands upon the City Housing Authority. The family worker assigned to the committee has disregarded this suggestion even though she knows that the tenant association is meeting with the housing management on exactly the same problems that the Neighborhood Improvement Committee has raised.

Observation e. In steering the School Committee's attack on school problems, two family workers have veered from continuing the dialogue which had been established between parents and teachers of one local public school to focusing attention on the conditions of another school which they feel are worse than those of the first. This decision was taken against the following background: (1) their immediate superior, the social worker, and the social work consultant made recommendations to concentrate attention on the first school; (2) the evidence in the form of published reading scores showed, as one parent correctly pointed out, that the performance of children was inferior in the first school to that of the second; (3) nonetheless, the family workers believed, probably on the basis of unpleasant personal experience with teachers at the second school, that conditions were worse there. The family workers could have built on the relationship already established between parents and teachers of the first school. Instead they chose to "start from scratch," so to speak, in another school where teachers were less receptive and cooperative. This raises the question of whether these family workers

function more effectively or more comfortably in a climate of opposition and resistance wherein they can be militant. Or perhaps their experiences at the second school had been so unpleasant that they wanted to have the opportunity to exert pressure against the teachers there.

Role Perceptions of the staff. The social worker defines her role in the parent association as follows:

I try to keep myself in an advisory capacity and let the parents provide leadership and initiative. I make suggestions for easier ways....I bring up things they wouldn't have thought. I apply what little I know of group work and community organization principles. Generally I follow my own intuition. I generally remind workers about setting up meetings and the need for publicity. I keep an eye and see that things get done because if we have a couple of flops parents won't get involved.

The social service aides have advisory and leadership functions. The family assistant helps the president lead the parent association meetings and each committee has a family worker assigned to it to advise the elected committee chairman. A division of labor is expected to prevail between social service aides with respect to committee assignments, but in practice, as the social work consultant has noted critically and we have observed, several social service aides may be working with any one committee.

One family worker defines her role with respect to organizing the parents for group action as follows:

I am supposed to be the organizer, to get parents together to try to get them motivated to carry on for themselves. They're supposed to carry on the meeting and I am supposed to serve as a guide.... People need to be shown the way. You can only lead so far. If they're interested, they will take it up and carry on.

She has several times emphasized at meetings of the social service staff that family workers "are just aides or guides," that "parents should run

this thing completely by themselves," that "parents should go fight (the school system) and do what I did, but I won't take them by the hand." The social worker has responded to these remarks by saying that the social service aides should take a more active role in motivating the parents to put pressure on the school system: "You got to push parents so they learn." Another family worker also takes exception to the notion of "pushing" parents and considers herself to be an "aide" or "guide":

When we say that we mean don't push the parents, but try to encourage them. You can't take them by the hand; you can't do it for them. You can only advise them how it can be done, give suggestions and if they like them, give them a chance in expressing how they feel it could be carried out.

One family worker expresses her major aim for the parents in the following terms:

I'd like to see the parents pick themselves up by their bootstraps so they don't need Head Start. Be leaders of their community and pass it on to their children so they can pass it on to their children

When her expectations and those of her co-workers for greater parent participation are not fulfilled and they are angry at the parents, according to the social worker, "they ventilate with me."

The social worker has explained that the family workers see no difference between themselves and the parents: "We came up the hard way. The parents are no different from us." But she noted that the workers are incipiently middle class and that the parents do not have the same "drive" as the workers.

The social work consultant is attempting to change the workers' attitudes toward the poor and welfare recipients, which he describes as contemptuous.

He states:

Family staff don't consider themselves the "poor poor." These people are self-directing. They were leaders in the community. That's why they got the jobs. The family staff says, "Let the parents do it on their own. They haven't got guts." The family workers feel disgust and contempt for the parents. It's a long-time thing to change this attitude. They have made it. Why can't other people make it?

#### IV. Recognition and Development of Leadership Capacity

The social worker defines leadership capacity as follows: A good parent leader is

someone who commands the respect of other parents, someone responsible and honest, someone who has the ability to plan, to talk to people, and who has a reasonably good intelligence. It helps if she has imagination and time to put in to involve other people.

A family worker describes her conception of a good parent leader in these terms: "A person I feel that will stand up to anyone, that's not afraid, even a shy person, a person who wants to do it but had no opportunity to express themselves."

It is recognized that potential parent leaders may be timid and may need nurturing of their leadership abilities. According to the social worker:

Many parents who did not have leadership experience are still shy and need encouragement in the organization as followers. As they become committee members they become comfortable with people and express their own ideas. A perfect example is Mrs. X. Two years ago she wouldn't dream of going to school, of becoming an officer of the PTA. She is now secretary or treasurer of the PTA and she is the driving force behind the Coop Committee. Through contact here and learning through experience she was able to develop her abilities. She started out as a follower.

The social worker also gave as an example of transition from followership to leadership behavior a Puerto Rican mother who, when she substituted for a family worker for two months, "made great gains." The social worker



apparently feels that possession of a Spanish cultural background may be an impediment to the acquisition of leadership skills, for she comments:

She is intelligent, articulate, with real leadership ability. It's unusual considering she's Spanish and not Negro. It takes a lot more drive for someone coming from a Spanish background. The culture is against a woman being aggressive.

Yet several Puerto Rican parents have recently assumed leadership roles in the parent clubs, including one mother described by the social worker as "much too dependent: she wants the Spanish-speaking family worker to go every place with her." This mother, encouraged by the social service aides, has assumed the chairmanship of two parent clubs. So far her activities have been limited to opening and adjourning meetings: she expresses her opinions privately to the family worker, who makes them public, and she allows the family worker to run meetings. She is at the initial stage of developing leadership behavior, wherein she has accepted the role of chairman because she would "enjoy the responsibility" and hopes that the experience she will acquire in this role will help her overcome her shyness and her self-perception as not being "a good talker."

The fact that this mother has accepted the chairmanship of two different clubs has been a matter of concern to the social work consultant, who believes that social service aides should aim at distributing the leadership of parent clubs among as many parents as possible. The social service aides, however, face serious problems in recruiting parents to leadership positions. The family worker assigned to the School Committee has been trying, without success, to induce one mother, described by the social worker as having "tremendous skills to provide to this organization -- she's a leader obviously and a thinking person" -- to assume the chairmanship. At

a meeting of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee, when elections were held for the chairmanship, several nominations were offered and all but one were declined.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

Of the several aspects of Head Start organization selected for attention earlier in the year, we expect to concentrate upon three during the next months -- the two described in this report (internal organization, and especially the relations between professional and subprofessional staff members; and the organization of parents for group action) and a third, the relations between parents and teachers. Two others will be treated only in passing: the effects of Head Start upon family life, and the effects of the Head Start program upon the public schools (especially as regards school-parent relations). Both of these subjects, we have concluded, would require extensive field work outside the centers themselves and would therefore require a larger staff than we have, or currently wish to develop.

With regard to the work in progress, we expect to begin interviewing parents connected with the centers, a step we have put off until we could be sure that we had the confidence of the staff, a group which at first is inclined to feel threatened by the prospect of our interviewing their clientele.

A third center will be added to the study soon, and others when we are satisfied that we are beginning to get diminishing returns from those under study.

During the next stage of its development, the work will become less restricted to description (as in the present report) and more concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the three substantive areas of the research.